

Chapter 2

Policy Entrepreneurship and Agenda Setting: Comparing and Contrasting the Origins of the European Research Programmes for Security and Defense

Andrew D. James

Abstract This chapter builds on the theoretical and empirical insights of Edler and James (Res Policy 44:1252–1265, 2015) to examine the origins of the European Defence Research Programme (EDRP).

Edler and James (Res Policy 44:1252–1265, 2015) used a process tracing methodology to examine the emergence of the European Security Research Programme (ESRP) as part of the Seventh Framework Programme (FP7). The case study shows that the emergence of the ESRP could only be understood by taking into account the policy entrepreneurship of the European Commission. In particular, the paper identifies the role of individual mid-ranking Commission officials who identified a window of opportunity to put the theme on the agenda and mobilized the political and financial resources of selected Directorate Generals of the European Commission. The policy entrepreneurs orchestrated the framing of this policy through managing ideational discourse and mobilizing existing and novel actor networks. In doing so the Commission gained the credibility to be the venue for science and technology policy in the area of security research. The paper also showed how the policy entrepreneurs used ambiguity in the definition of the meaning, scope and rationale for “security research” as a means of assembling a transnational coalition of interests and masking the initial cognitive and normative differences that existed between the various interest actors. The chapter will use process tracing to examine the origins of the EDRP. Specifically, the chapter will consider whether – following neofunctionalism (Haas EB, *The uniting of Europe: political, social and economic forces 1950–57*. Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1958; Sandholtz W, Stone Sweet A (eds), *European integration and supranational governance*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1998; Stone Sweet A, Sandholtz W, Fligstein N (eds), *The institutionalization of Europe*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001) – the EDRP is simply an

A.D. James (✉)
University of Manchester, Manchester, UK
e-mail: andrew.james@manchester.ac.uk

instance of “spillover” from security research to defense research or whether other factors are at play.

2.1 Introduction

The emergence of a security and defense dimension to European Union (EU) science and technology policy should be a source of fascination (and perhaps concern) to the academic community that studies science and technology policy. Paradoxically, given its potentially significant implications for the character of EU science and technology policy, the topic has been more or less ignored by that academic community, and it has been left to students of European integration and security policy to examine these developments. They are clearly important since security and defense have until relatively recently been separate from the supranational mainstream of European integration, including EU science and technology policy.¹ ESRP moved EU science and technology policy into a field once regarded as strictly of member states competence. Potentially, the idea of an EDRP is an even more dramatic shift in competencies which has been argued by some advocates to be a political “game changer” for the relationship between the EU and member states in defense research (Fiott and Bellais 2016).

Other chapters in this volume will examine the political and security implications of the ESRP and EDRP. This chapter will focus on the origin of these policies since the origin of a policy can have a profound impact on its shape, scope and objectives. Why issues emerge as policy “problems”, the timing of their emergence, the representation of the “problem” and its acceptance by politicians and policy-makers are all too often ignored by public policy analysis (Edler and James 2015). This chapter compares and contrasts the emergence of the European Security Research Programme (ESRP), which was established as a new research theme under the Seventh Framework Programme (2007–2013), and the European Defence Research Programme (EDRP), which emerged on to the policy agenda around 2010.²

This chapter makes three contributions. First, it mobilizes the political science literature as a conceptual lens to help us compare and contrast the emergence of the

¹The European Union has funded projects of relevance to defense and security through its Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development. The Commission has been keen to emphasize that there has always been an important “dual use” dimension to the Programme. Indeed, defense contractors such as Thomson CSF (now Thales) and GEC and British Aerospace (now BAE Systems) were closely involved in the foundation of the Framework Programme, not least through the ESPRIT program (see Edler and James 2015).

²It should be noted that this chapter covers the period to December 2016. In December 2016, the European Council indicated its support for the European Defence Action Plan which included the so-called research window that contained proposals for a European Defence Research Programme (European Council 2016). There was still a considerable way to go until its introduction, and this includes the fundamental question of whether this program would be funded within a future Framework Programme or through another EU instrument.

two programs and emphasizes in particular the crucial role in both programs of the European Commission as policy entrepreneur. Second, it introduces the idea of “serial policy entrepreneurship” to explain the important role of the same individual policy entrepreneur in identifying and utilizing political windows of opportunity to get both programs onto the policy agenda. Third, it emphasizes the importance of ambiguity as a key feature in the process of framing and mobilization that underpinned both programs and in so doing broadens and deepens the discussion of ambiguity begun in an earlier paper (Edler and James 2015).

This chapter is structured as follows. It starts by developing our conceptual framework, building on the literature on policy entrepreneurship and agenda setting at the EU level. Section 2.3 introduces the actor arena and problem space for European security and defense and emphasizes how – until relatively recently – the actor arena for defense science and technology policy in Europe has been dominated by the member states and their agencies. Section 2.4 discusses the origins of ESRP, emphasizing the important policy entrepreneurship role of mid-ranking European Commission officials, the way that they identified a window of opportunity, framed the idea of the ESRP and mobilized an interest coalition in support of that idea as well as the important role in the agenda setting process of ambiguity in the definition of “security”. Section 2.5 compares and contrasts the origins of EDRP with that of the ESRP. There are important differences – not least the new legal and political environment created by the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the growing budget pressures faced by member states after the Eurozone crisis, the political push for “more defense in the Union” of the Juncker Commission and the inter-institutional competition between the European Commission and European Defence Agency (EDA) for “ownership” of the EDRP. However, there are also important similarities in the process by which it emerged not least the policy entrepreneurship of mid-ranking Commission officials as well as the importance of ambiguity in getting the program onto the policy agenda. Section 2.6 concludes with an expanded discussion of the nature of serial policy entrepreneurship and the importance of ambiguity in the agenda setting process.

2.2 The Dynamics of European Integration and the Role of Policy Entrepreneurship³

This section develops the conceptual framework for the chapter, building on the academic literature on policy entrepreneurship and agenda setting at the EU level. This section begins by introducing the concept of policy entrepreneurship and then looks at the characteristics and stages of the agenda setting process at EU level before discussing the role and capabilities of the European Commission in agenda setting.

³This section draws on an earlier paper (Edler and James 2015).

2.2.1 *Policy Entrepreneurship in the Agenda Setting Process*

There is an extensive literature in political science on the role of policy entrepreneurs in the agenda setting process, not least in the EU. Policy entrepreneurs influence political processes in a way that alters policies or institutions. Policy entrepreneurs “seek to initiate dynamic policy change” (Mintrom 1997: 739) and are “willing to invest their resources—time, energy, reputation, and sometimes money—in the hope of a future return” (Kingdon 1984: 122). Policy entrepreneurs can be organizations (Perkmann 2003), individuals or teams (Mintrom and Norman 2009). The literature stresses the *personal* or *organizational characteristics* and the institutional context conditions of the entrepreneur in shaping her capabilities to influence policy change (Mintrom and Norman 2009; Kingdon 1984; Metcalfe 1995; Witt 2003; van der Steen and Groenewegen 2008).

Policy entrepreneurs are said to play an important role in identifying opportunities for new policy initiatives, creating new policy venues and framing policy debates, mobilizing and linking interests and forging coalitions (Doig and Hargrove 1987; Roberts 1992; Mintrom and Norman 2009; Cohen and Noll 1991; Mintrom 1997; Cohen 2012). Their key functions thus relate to the process of agenda setting, policy formulation and decision-making, less so to the implementation of policy.

The role of policy entrepreneurs in the agenda setting process links to the well-known “three-stream model” of Kingdon (1984). In this model, there are three streams of policy problems, policy solutions and political processes. A “window of opportunity” for policy change opens when these three streams are linked, i.e. when a dominant problem definition emerges, a solution that is seen to be appropriate is formulated and the politics – interest mediation and the general political climate – are favorable or can be organized in a favorable way. Policy entrepreneurs play an active role in not only opening those windows but as “purposeful opportunist” (Cram 1994: 197) cocreating those opportunities by organizing the coupling of streams (Kingdon 1984; Bendor et al. 2001; Bossong 2012). Thus, policy entrepreneurs identify and even create windows of opportunity and mobilize and link interests to create winning coalitions.

Ambiguity – the quality of a policy problem or solution being open to more than one meaning – is an important feature of institutional change and agenda setting (for a comprehensive review, see Mahoney and Thelen 2010). A policy “problem” may be open to multiple interpretations and that ambiguity may be used to create and sustain winning coalitions in favor of a particular policy solution. There is a growing body of literature on agenda setting at the EU level that emphasizes how policy entrepreneurs use ambiguity to construct meaning and place particular policy problems on to the policy agenda (Ackrill et al. 2013; Ackrill and Kay 2011; Borrás and Radaelli 2011; Zahariadis 2008). In particular, this literature emphasizes the *institutional ambiguity* that exists in EU agenda setting. The EU is characterized by a high level of vertical and horizontal fragmentation and a complex interplay of policy levels. This institutional ambiguity over the appropriate location of policy “ownership” is used by the European Commission as policy entrepreneur.

Edler and James (2015) examine policy entrepreneurship and the role of the European Commission in the emergence of a new science and technology policy. What emerged out of their case study was the importance of ambiguity as a key feature in the complex process of framing and mobilization associated with the emergence of a new policy. They identify three forms of ambiguity, alongside institutional ambiguity, and they also identify *normative ambiguity* (different interpretations of the contribution and effects of a proposed policy) and *cognitive ambiguity* (different interpretations of the causal and conceptual underpinnings of a policy). Edler and James (2015) emphasize that while much of this ambiguity is genuine and inherent to the complex subject matter of many policy ideas, ambiguity may also be used instrumentally by policy entrepreneurs to build and sustain winning coalitions. As Hooghe and Keating (1994: 371) observe, “A policy with a single rationale, based on a well-defined and delimited problem, would have been unlikely to assemble a winning coalition in a decision-making system as complex as that of the European Union”. Further, Edler and James (2015) found that ambiguity changed its nature and function over the different stages of the agenda setting process.

2.2.2 *Agenda Setting in the European Union*

In the study of agenda setting in the EU, particular attention has been paid to the role of policy entrepreneurship and the specific role of the Commission in the process. It has already been noted that institutional context conditions shape the capabilities of policy entrepreneurs to affect policy change. In this respect, the EU has been characterized as an “agenda setter’s paradise” (Peter 1994: 21) with multiple opportunities for policy entrepreneurship.

The EU offers an unusually high number of entry points for policy ideas and a high number of potential venues within which policy can be formulated and decided upon. Compared to most other political arenas, EU is characterized by a high level of horizontal and vertical fragmentation and a complex interplay of policy levels, where different policy areas have different combinations of supranational, national and regional competencies and transnational issue networks.

To analyze the agenda setting process at the EU level, Princen (2011) and subsequently Stephenson (2012) have developed a framework that can help us to understand the strategic actions of the Commission as policy entrepreneur. In order to successfully put an issue on the agenda and reach decisions favorable to the entrepreneur, an entrepreneur needs to create broad *attention* for the issue and *credibility* as an actor who is capable and legitimate to deal with the issue. These conditions are linked to venue choice and issue frame.⁴

⁴According to Baumgartner and Jones (1991), policy *venues* are institutional settings in which policies are taken up and binding policy decisions are made. The *image* of an issue consists of the dominant beliefs and values inherent in a policy, underpinned by rhetoric, symbols and evidence. Images, or issue frames, are more than a labeling of policy, as they convey causality and demarcate

To gain attention for a policy issue, the policy entrepreneur can pursue two strategies (Princen and Rhinard 2006; Princen 2011; Stephenson 2012): first, the mobilizing of supporters to maximize the attention for an issue. This is linked to the choice of venue, both horizontally (where within the Commission an issue is located) and vertically (at which level it is located), whereby each venue mobilizes a different set of actors.

Second, attention is created through arousing interest by framing an issue as being linked to the normative core of an organization and through underpinning it with favorable evidence and an evidence-based expert discourse. At the EU level, with many different institutional entities influencing decision-making and a high level of heterogeneity both horizontally and vertically, mobilizing actors is a politically delicate and important matter (Borrás and Radaelli 2011).

2.2.3 *The Specific Entrepreneurial Role and Capacities of the Commission*

The entrepreneurial role and capacities of the European Commission are increasingly recognized in the literature. A range of authors have stressed the proactive role of the Commission in the European integration process (Edler and James 2015; Stephenson 2010, 2012; Niemann and Schmitter 2009; Spence and Edwards 2006), identifying the Commission as the most important driver of what has been labeled the “cultivated” or “actor-centered” spillover process (Stephenson 2010). The *entrepreneurial role of the Commission* is fundamental as the driver of the process that leads to the formulation of sufficient transnational interests that can lead to integrative policies and institutional change (Richardson 1994; Garret and Weingast 1993; Radaelli 1995). Simply put, the Commission acts as an advocate for the increasing interdependence of societal and economic actors across Europe and increasing the perceptions of societal and governmental actors as to the functional necessities of this integration.

Scholars of European policy-making agree on the *means* and *ways* the Commission can employ for the agenda setting process. The most important means is a legal one, i.e. the right to initiate the policy-making process and to draft concrete policy proposals (Bauer 2006, 2008). As the main actor for drafting policies, the Commission is above all an “idea exchange” (Mazey and Richardson 1994). By linking policy solutions to expert input and technical rationality (Kohler-Koch 1996; Edler 2000) and by linking to shared normative beliefs at the level of high politics (Edler 2000; Borrás 2009), the Commission can raise its political credibility and thus enlarge its space of influence (Wallace 1996; Edler 2003). A complementary means is as a venue creator or interest broker. It is mainly the Commission which sets up tailored expert groups at EU level, sponsors expert studies and forges discursive interactions with other international bodies and a broad range of stakeholders.

the policy issues. They influence interest definitions and political constituencies (Daviter 2007: 655) and shape advocacy coalitions (Sabatier 1998).

By controlling the policy formulation process this way, the Commission plays a strong role as an “interest broker” in European policy-making.

2.3 National Security, Defense Research and the European Union: The Actor Arena and Problem Space

In the process of European integration, national security and defense has until recently remained an area of exclusive member state competence. In the early 1950s, there was a failed attempt to create a supranational European Defence Community (EDC) that envisaged the creation of a European army, a common defense budget and permanent military structures and centralized military procurement (Trybus 2006). Accordingly, in recognition of its political sensitivity, the 1957 Treaty of Rome founding the EEC provided, through Article 223 (Article 296 of the EC Treaty; Article 346 TFEU), the possibility for a member state to exclude certain activities from the provisions of the Treaty on the grounds of “essential interests of its security”.

Between 1993 (the coming into force of the Treaty of European Union) and 2009 (the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty), the EU comprised three “pillars”. The first pillar addressed single market issues and was the domain of the European Commission. The second pillar included the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and European Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) and was the domain of intergovernmental politics between member states. This three-pillar structure meant that the CFSP/ESDP was governed by the intergovernmental method, and the powers of the European Parliament, the Commission and the European Court of Justice were significantly limited. The consequence was to clearly separate defense and security from the supranational mainstream of European integration (Trybus 2006).

Accordingly, the actor arena for defense science and technology policy in Europe was dominated by the member states and their agencies. National governments engaged with one another bilaterally and multilaterally, through NATO and in European intergovernmental organizations for defense cooperation such as the Western European Armaments Group (WEAG) and the associated Western European Armaments Organisation (WEAO). Critically, these bodies were outside the EU framework (James 2004). With the establishment of EDA in 2004, some cooperative defense research projects were managed at the EU level, but the budget of the EDA was provided directly by member states, and projects were undertaken on an intergovernmental basis.

Thus, security and defense lay outside the supranational mainstream, including outside EU science and technology policy. The EU’s Framework Programme did, however, fund projects that were of interest to security and defense. Although the Framework Programme was formally civilian in focus, it was acknowledged that its investments in science, engineering and technology had a strong “dual-use” dimension with both civilian and military applications in areas such as aeronautics, information technology and materials. By the 1990s, the Commission sought to justify a

role for itself in the defense science and technology field by noting that dual use accounted for perhaps half of all projects funded under the Framework Programme (Commission of the European Communities 1996).

Throughout the 1990s, there were calls for closer links between the Framework Programme and defense research as a means of addressing two of the great mobilizing “problems” of European Union politics at the time (James 2004, 2006; Citi 2014). The first “problem” was that of Europe’s military capabilities. The 1990s saw the emergence of CFSP and ESDP that focused on the development of civilian and military capabilities for international conflict prevention and crisis management. The experience of the Kosovo crisis emphasized the shortfall in European military capabilities and led to calls for more coordination and investment at the European level. The second “problem” was that of European economic competitiveness. Some Europeans argued that the gap between European and US defense R&D and procurement spending had implications not only for the European defense industries but also gave US civilian industries an edge in transatlantic and global competition in civilian aerospace and other sectors such as computing and advanced materials.

Nonetheless, such policy ambitions were constrained both politically and legally. In the 1990s, the European Commissioner for Industry Martin Bangemann published an action plan for the European defense industry. This included a proposal for an explicit dual-use dimension to the Framework Programme and its coordination with defense research programs conducted by European governments through WEAG (Commission of the European Communities 1997). The response to the so-called Bangemann initiative illustrated the huge sensitivities around the idea of a closer relationship between the European Union and defense research. member states saw it as an unwelcome attempt by the Commission to expand its competences into the domain of the second pillar and rebuffed the initiative. Within the European Commission, the Commission’s Directorate General for Research (DG XII) and the Cabinet of the Commissioner for Research expressed concerns that the introduction of an explicit dual-use technology program in to the Framework Programme could “militarize” European science and technology policy (Mörth 2000).

The Commission, however, continued to probe the field, emphasizing the “dual-use” nature of many of its research programs (Commission of the European Communities 2000) and, through its European Advisory Group on Aerospace (“STAR 21”), calling for greater coordination of defense procurement and research (European Advisory Group on Aerospace 2002: 9). The Commission also found allies in the European Parliament. With the establishment of the single currency, advocates of closer European integration turned their attention to security and defense not least through the “Kangaroo Group” — an influential group of MEPs, business people and academics.⁵ The failed Convention on the Future of Europe

⁵The Kangaroo Group describes itself as “an association with the goal to enhance European unity around the pursuit of concrete common projects. Its main goals are the full implementation of the internal market, the stability of the euro and a common Security and Defence Policy. It is open to representatives of the European institutions, academia, media and the business community who are interested to foster these goals. The motto of the Kangaroo Group is free movement and security” (source: <https://www.kangaroogroup.de> Accessed 22 May 2017).

(2002–2003) included a Working Group on Defence that proposed the establishment of an intergovernmental European Armaments and Strategic Research Agency.⁶ This provided the foundation for the establishment of the EDA in 2004.

2.4 The Emergence of the European Security Research Programme: A Story of Commission Policy Entrepreneurship

The establishment of ESRP as a new theme under the EU's Seventh Framework Programme for Research and Technological Development (2007–2013) was of considerable political significance. It moved EU science and technology policy into a field that had hitherto been regarded as strictly a member state competence, namely, civil security, and the terms of the Seventh Framework Programme allowed the European Commission to formally engage with the EDA on dual-use matters.

The emergence of the ESRP can only be understood if one recognizes the central role of European Commission policy entrepreneurship (Edler and James 2015). The idea of a closer relationship between defense research and the Framework Programme had been “in the air” for almost two decades but neither Bangemann or the Constitutional Convention process nor the STAR 21 initiative had led to significant developments. Indeed, it is an open question as to whether it would have emerged onto the agenda in the form that it did had Commission policy entrepreneurs not identified the 9/11 attacks on the United States as a window of opportunity.

The “purposeful opportunism” of Commission policy entrepreneurs identified the 9/11 attacks on the United States as a window of opportunity to place the idea of EU *defense* research onto the policy agenda. Those policy entrepreneurs were a small number of mid-ranking European Commission officials who persuaded more senior figures in the European Commission of the potential of a research program in this area and mobilized the resources of the European Commission. By January 2002, and only 5 months after 9/11, it was being reported that Commission officials were urging the creation of a single research fund to support the needs of the EU's military forces (Aguera 2002). Later that year, an article reported that the issue of using EU funds to directly finance defense research projects was being discussed by Commission officials, EU diplomats and independent policy experts (Tigner 2002).

Those Commission officials set about mobilizing key actors into an interest coalition in support of their policy idea. The policy entrepreneurs took the initiative to create a new discourse arena by bringing together what became known as the Group of Personalities on Security Research (GoP). The GoP comprised senior executives from leading European defense companies, the heads of a number of

⁶The working group was chaired by Michel Barnier, then European Commissioner for Institutional Affairs and Regional Affairs. Barnier was to be an important figure in the emergence of the EDRP.

research institutes together with senior political figures. Although the Commission attempted to present this as an independent initiative, it was tightly managed by the Commission; its membership was carefully selected as was the Rapporteur who formally wrote the final report (albeit in close coordination with the Commission). As such, the GoP was used as a means of generating an interest coalition, legitimizing the Commission's policy entrepreneurship and firmly establishing the Commission as the policy venue responsible for the ESRP. It must be stressed that it was the Commission that created the venue. This is in contrast to a number of accounts of the emergence of the ESRP that see it as evidence of what they characterize as the role of the "military industrial complex" in European politics (Hayes 2006; Mawdsley 2009; Bigo and Jeandesboz 2010; European Parliament, 2010). What Edler and James (2015) make clear is that the emergence of the idea was not a case of an established and self-organized policy network forcing an issue onto the policy agenda. Instead, it was the process leadership of the Commission.

A further feature of the emergence of the idea was the role of what Edler and James (2015) call "instrumental ambiguity". During the complex process of framing and mobilization, there was a notable degree of ambiguity in the definition of the meaning, scope and rationale for the Commission's initiative. The policy entrepreneurs had conceived the idea as an opportunity to establish an EU defense research program. This idea was controversial among member states who saw it as an unwelcome extension of Commission competence into a "second pillar" inter-governmental realm and by parts of the European Commission and the European Parliament who saw it as the militarization of European science and technology policy. "Security research" was capable of being understood in different ways by different actors depending on their interests and positions. Ambiguity was used instrumentally by Commission officials to blur pre-existing boundaries and to enable the development of new types of interest coalitions. This accompanied the normative ambiguity as to what the new policy should contribute to and what the desired effects should be. Indeed, this normative ambiguity rendered the policy dialogue led by the Commission to be acceptable to a diverse range of actors.

The policy entrepreneurship of the European Commission officials successfully mobilized a transnational interest coalition and placed the ambiguously defined idea of "security" research onto the policy agenda. However, for security research to become part of the Seventh Framework Programme the Commission required support from the member states and the European Parliament. In this shift toward the arena of high politics, a tension played out between the initial ambiguity around the meaning and scope of "security research" necessary to generate a transnational interest coalition and the need for sufficient clarity to allow implementation through legislative action. Some member states worried that the establishment of a security research program would represent an unwelcome expansion of Commission competencies into the field of defense and security. In the European Parliament, the proposals were subject to some criticism by those who saw it as a step toward "armament by stealth". Faced by these pressures, the Commission sought to reassure

member states and the European Parliament that there would be a clear and exclusive focus on civil security research, albeit with the coordination of ESRP with EDA.

2.5 The Origins of the European Defence Research Programme

The program on *civil* security that emerged fell short of the ambitions of the policy entrepreneurs who placed it onto the EU agenda. Those policy entrepreneurs had conceived the idea as an opportunity to create an EU *defense* research program and were forced to focus on civil security in the face of opposition from some member states, some political groupings within the European Parliament and parts of the European Commission. This was regarded as “unfinished business” to which one of the policy entrepreneurs was to return when a window of opportunity emerged for a defense research program less than a decade later.⁷ This section compares and contrasts the origins of EDRP with that of the ESRP. There are important differences, not least the new legal and political environment created by the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty and the calls for “more defense in the Union” of the Juncker Commission, the growing budget pressures faced by member states after the Eurozone crisis and the inter-institutional competition between the European Commission and EDA for “ownership” of the EDRP. However, there are also important similarities in the process by which it emerged, not least the policy entrepreneurship of mid-ranking Commission officials as well as the importance of ambiguity in getting the program onto the policy agenda. Figure 2.1 sets out the key events and reports in the emergence of the EDRP.

2.5.1 *The Actor Arena, Problem Space and the Window of Opportunity*

The actor arena in which the EDRP emerged was very different to that in which the ESRP was established. To begin with, the introduction into force of the Treaty of European Union (2007) (i.e. “The Lisbon Treaty”) changed the institutional environment in the EU. The Lisbon Treaty brought to an end the three-pillar structure introduced under the Maastricht Treaty. It will be recalled that this had acted as a constraint on the Commission’s ambitions for the ESRP. The Lisbon Treaty had consequences for the role of defense within the EU not least in creating a CSDP with the aim of the progressive framing of a common EU defense policy. Further, advocates of closer defense cooperation pointed to the wording of Title XIX TFEU

⁷ Author interview with a former Commission official, December 2016, and the Defence Counsellor, Permanent Representation of a mid-sized member state, December 2016.

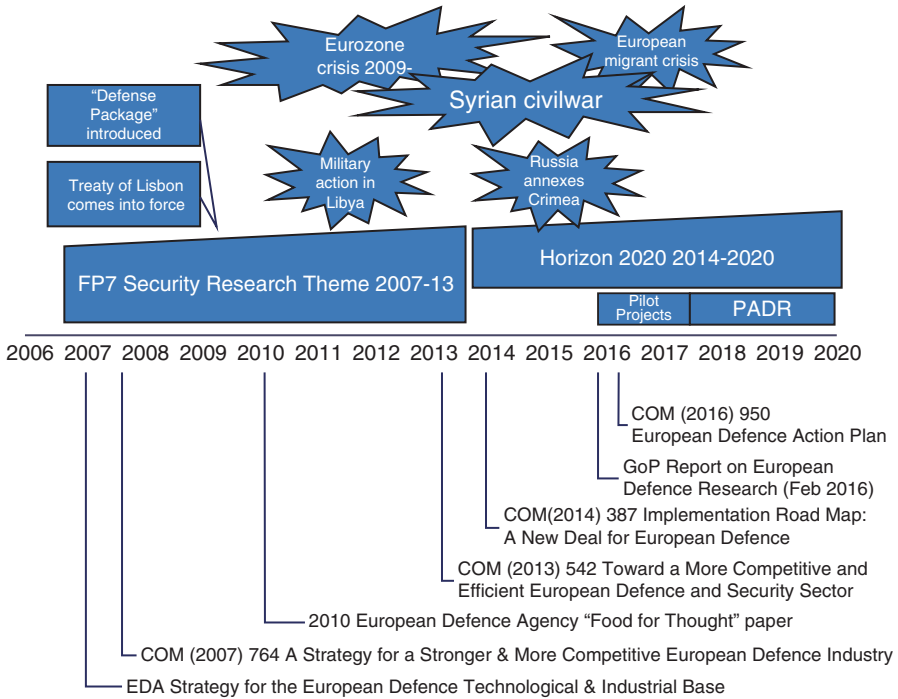


Fig. 2.1 Key events and reports in the emergence of the European Defence Research Programme

("Research and technological development and space") under which Article 179 states that the EU shall promote "all the research activities deemed necessary by virtue of other Chapters of the Treaties". This was seized upon as giving legal support to EU defense research (Mauro and Thoma 2016). In addition, the European Parliament acquired a greater role in the fields of foreign policy oversight and budgetary scrutiny.

A further important change in the actor arena was the increased role of the European Commission in the defense field. The ESRP emerged when the idea of Commission involvement in defense was contested by some member states and political groupings of the European Parliament. By the time that the idea of the EDRP emerged, the Commission had established competence in the defense field. In 2009, member states agreed the Commission's proposals for the "Defence Package" – two Directives on Procurement (Directive 2009/81/EC) and Intra-European Arms Transfers (Directive 2009/43/EC) – that extended the European Commission's competence into the regulation of the defense equipment market (Official Journal of the European Union 2009a, b; Trybus 2014). At the same time, the ESRP had led to coordination between the ESRP and European defense research activities with meetings between officials from the Commission and EDA and several small jointly funded "dual-use" research programs. One member state offi-

cial commented on the Directives: “These were the starting point for normalising defence”.⁸

The policy “problem” that the EDRP claimed to address was the same as that which had motivated the policy entrepreneurs who placed the ESRP on the policy agenda. Concerns about *European military capabilities* had, if anything, become more acute. At the 2005 Hampton Court Summit, EU leaders had called for “more R&T spending and more spending together” and asked Javier Solana, EU High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy and head of the EDA, to come up with proposals to strengthen European defense Research and Technology R&T. At an EDA R&T Conference the following year, he repeated the call for more and better spending on defense R&T and more spending together. Commission Vice President Gunter Verhagen called for coordination between civil and military security research agendas (EDA 2006). The European Council of December 2008 made a declaration on the enhancement of the capabilities of the ESDP, noting the limitations of European military capabilities. Like the Kosovo crisis of the 1990s, the Libyan air campaign of 2011 had again illustrated Europe’s military capability shortfalls and its dependence on US military assets to support military action, even in “the European neighborhood”. The Commission repeatedly noted that while other countries (including the United States, Russia, China) were increasing their defense spending, EU spending was being cut. At the same time, concerns about the consequences for the competitiveness of the European defense industrial base remained as did the belief that the US economy was benefitting from the “spillover” effect of higher defense research and procurement spending (Commission of the European Communities 2007).⁹

The “window of opportunity” identified by the policy entrepreneurs was provided by the sharp decline in defense research spending among EU member states. The global financial crisis that began in 2007 and the crisis that engulfed the Eurozone from late 2009 led to austerity and budgetary pressures. European defense spending – already low and declining relative to the United States – fell by 7% in real terms between 2007 and 2010. Most dramatic was the fall in R&T spending which dropped by more than 20% from €2.66 billion (2006) to €2.08 billion (2010) and R&T as a percentage of defense expenditure fell steadily from 1.32% in 2006 to 1.07% in 2010 (EDA 2011).¹⁰ European cooperation on defense R&D declined as member states sought to direct their declining budgets to sustain their own research and technological capabilities. At the same time, plans for new European cooperative weapon programs slowed to a trickle.

⁸ Author interview with the Defence Counsellor, Permanent Representation of a mid-sized member state, December 2016.

⁹ Questions of strategic competition in the transatlantic relationship remained close to the surface. In the late 2014, the United States announced its Defence Innovation Initiative as part of its so-called Third Offset Strategy in what was seen by some European policy-makers as another threat to European defense industrial and technological competitiveness. Further, there was growing discussion of the need for European “strategic autonomy” in defense technology versus dependence on other (read US) countries.

¹⁰ EU defense research fell by almost 30% between 2006 and 2013 (Mauro and Thoma 2016: 7).

Concerns mounted among EU defense policy-makers, member state Ministries of Defence and the defense industry about the consequences for European defense capabilities, the credibility of the CSDP and the economic and technological competitiveness of the European defense industry. One official from the Ministry of Defence of an important member state commented: “The time was politically right for this. Legally and institutionally it would have been impossible to do what we are trying to achieve now [before Lisbon and the EuroZone Crisis]”.¹¹

2.5.2 *Commission Policy Entrepreneurship*

This chapter has already emphasized that the idea for a EU defense research program had been “in the air” since the 1990s. However, the emergence of the EDRP can be traced back to discussions during 2010 among member states within EDA stimulated by EDA officials. One member state official recalled: “From 2010, the sharp decline in defense R&D was seen and it was clear that this decline would continue if someone didn’t do something, [and] that someone was the EU. In Brussels, EDA argued that this required a European response”.¹²

Prima facie this is more in line with the view of the emergence of policy ideas as the realm of high politics with the member states, at the initiative of the intergovernmental EDA, trying to take the lead. In April 2010, member states Defence Ministers in the EDA’s Ministerial Steering Board discussed a “Food-For-Thought” (FFT) paper prepared by EDA officials. The FFT paper noted the possibilities the changes to the EU Treaties created to establish defense research as what was referred to as Union Defence Research (UDR). It recognized the need for a political decision settling both the institutional framework and the operational rules for such defense research. A Preparatory Action was suggested, as part of the Seventh Framework Programme for 2011–2013 in which the EDA envisaged it would play a role in selecting and managing defense research projects.

Catherine Ashton, the EU High Representative for CFSP and head of the EDA, proposed the idea of a Preparatory Action to European Commissioner for Industry and Entrepreneurship Antonio Tajani. The proposal was opposed by the Commission on the grounds that the current financial crisis did not provide any opportunity to increase the budget of the future Framework Programme and consequently the creation of a Preparatory Action for defense research in FP8 would mean reducing funding for civilian research which he found unacceptable. Further, the Commission argued that there was little political appetite in the EU Parliament for defense research (Jehin 2010). The same hesitation was reflected in most member states”.¹³ At the

¹¹ Author telephone interview with a member state participant in EDA research meetings, September 2016.

¹² Author interview with the Defence Counsellor, Permanent Representation of a mid-sized member state, December 2016.

¹³ Personal correspondence with a member state participant in EDA research meetings, October 2016.

same time, Jehin argues that inter-organizational politics was at play, arguing that DG Enterprise was concerned that the responsibility for the budget for a defense research program would be under EDA and not DG Enterprise (Jehin 2010). These were the first indications of the inter-institutional competition between the European Commission and the EDA that were to characterize the emergence of the EDRP.

The EDA Steering Board returned to this issue in meetings of member states Research Directors and Defence Ministers in the same year, but now with a focus on the 8th Framework Programme against the background of updated FFT papers from the Agency. By December 2010 the member states Defence Ministers Steering Board meeting was calling for “a constructive dialogue” between the European Commission, EDA, European Parliament and member states to prepare UDR at EU level. Significantly, and as a consequence of Commission opposition, the supporting documents did not mention a Preparatory Action specifically but talked only about UDR.¹⁴

The Commission may have rejected the idea of a Preparatory Action, but this was not due to a lack of interest in the defense field. Nonetheless, in November 2011, Antonio Tajani and Commissioner Michel Barnier¹⁵ established a “Defence Policy Task Force” including the Commission, EDA and European External Action Service. The agenda for the Defence Policy Task Force focused on the implementation of the Defence Directives, a strategy for the European defense industry, exploiting synergies between the security and defense industries and security of supply issues. Defense research was not explicitly mentioned (Hale 2011). In 2012, the Commission announced that it would produce a Communication on defense as a contribution to the December 2013 European Council meeting. The European Council had generated considerable expectations among the European Defence Community since it was the first time that defense was to be discussed since the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty. Commission preparations initially focused on the agenda of the Defence Policy Task Force.

The idea of a Preparatory Action re-emerged as a result of the actions of a small number of mid-ranking European Commission officials.¹⁶ One of the policy entrepreneurs recalled what happened: “Two Germans came together, we could work together. [Name] proposed the idea to his director. We spoke to him. He accepted the idea of letting the idea of a Preparatory Action fly. We smuggled it into the Communication. I had direct access to [Michel] Barnier.... Barnier and Tajani saw the benefit. They didn’t know the detail but they saw the politics”.¹⁷

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Michel Barnier was European Commissioner for Internal Market and Services. In 2001, he chaired the Working Group on European Defence as a member of the Convention on the Future of Europe. In 2015, he was appointed by EU President Jean-Claude Juncker as his special advisor on defense.

¹⁶ Personal correspondence with a member state participant in EDA research meetings, October 2016.

¹⁷ Author interview with a former Commission official, December 2016.

Nonetheless, the idea generated tensions within the European Commission. There were “major internal battles” within the Commission.¹⁸ The main debate was between DG Research and DG Enterprise. Commissioner for Research Maire Geoghegan-Quinn had expressed skepticism about the idea of ESRP and was even more vigorous in her opposition to the idea of EU defense research. Her Cabinet argued once again that EU science and technology policy was a civil project. They questioned whether it was really the role of the EU to support defense research, especially given that only six countries had significant national defense research programs.¹⁹ A second debate emerged about the budget for the proposed defense research program and where the money for defense research would come from. DG Research asked whether it would take money from Horizon 2020. DG HOME expressed concerns that its security research budget would be diverted to defense research.²⁰

Ultimately, the efforts of the policy entrepreneurs were rewarded. The Commission’s 2013 Communication on the defense and security sector proposed that: “The Commission will consider the possibility to support CSDP-related Research, such as through a Preparatory Action. The focus would be on those areas where EU defense capabilities would be most needed, seeking synergies with national research programmes where possible”. This CSDP-related research would go beyond the security-focused scope of Horizon 2020 (European Commission 2013: 11).

What is striking is that the two policy entrepreneurs were mid-ranking officials. This was also the case with the emergence of the ESRP. One of the officials was from DG Enterprise and one from DG Market. Both were German and had worked closely together on the formulation and implementation of the Commission’s “Defence Package”. Indeed, we can characterize one of the officials as a “serial policy entrepreneur”.²¹ He had used his position in the EU Institute for Security Studies to draft a highly influential “Green Paper” on European defense procurement that formed the basis for the Commission’s Defence Procurement Directive. He had been rapporteur for the GoP report on security research (see Edler and James 2015). In 2006, he entered the European Commission when he was appointed as a defense expert to the European Commission where he played a key role in the legislative process leading to the Defence Procurement Directive.

¹⁸ Author interview with a European Commission official in DG GROW, December 2016.

¹⁹ The six were France, the UK, Germany, Italy, Sweden and Spain.

²⁰ Author interview with a European Commission official in DG GROW, December 2016.

²¹ Author telephone interview with a member state participant in EDA research meetings; author interviews with a European Commission official in DG GROW, December 2016 and former official, ASD, May 2017.

2.5.3 *Mobilization of an Interest Coalition*

With the publication of the Communication, the policy entrepreneurs set about mobilizing an interest coalition in support of their proposal. One of the policy entrepreneurs commented: “You get allies. Industry. MODs [Ministries of Defence]. Money makes the world go round”.²²

2.5.3.1 The Member States

The policy entrepreneurs were apprehensive about the response of member states to the proposal for a Preparatory Action. The Commission officials knew that Defence Ministries were interested, not least because of the earlier efforts of the EDA and the positive response of member states’ Defence Ministers and Research Directors. However, in an environment of Eurozone crisis and budgetary austerity, there was considerable anxiety about how the member states finance ministers would react to a proposal with potentially significant implications for the EU budget.

The policy entrepreneurs were buoyed, therefore, by the support that the idea of the Preparatory Action received from member states’ Heads of Government at the December 2013 European Council. The European Council noted that a Preparatory Action on CSDP-related research would be set up while seeking synergies with national research programs wherever possible (European Council 2013: 8). The support of Prime Ministers and Presidents was taken by the Commission as an indication that member states support went beyond Ministries of Defence.²³ Significantly, it was the idea of a Preparatory Action that received support. The other proposals in the Communication related to an internal market in defense equipment made less progress since many member states remained anxious about further Commission intervention on national procurement matters. As one Commission official commented: “[There was] less tension with research, especially because defence research was being cut. EDRP was seen as free money. From an MOD perspective, you have nothing to lose”.²⁴

Why did member states support the Preparatory Action given that it presented a potential “game changer” in the relationship between themselves and the EU in the field of defense research and a potentially dramatic extension of Commission competence? After all, less than a decade before, many member states had acted to limit the scope of the ESRP to “civil security” as a means of avoiding just such a development? There are several reasons. First, in an environment of budget austerity and declining defense spending, the prospect of “free money” for defense research was attractive to Defence Ministries. Second, the member states with large defense industries provided their support in the expectation that they would receive the bulk

²² Author interview with a former Commission official, December 2016.

²³ Author interview with a European Commission official in DG GROW, December 2016.

²⁴ Ibid.

of any EU funding.²⁵ Third, member states with small or no defense industrial and technological capabilities calculated that they might also benefit. As one observer from the industry commented: “The small ones have nothing to lose; not only do they spend next to nothing but, on the contrary, they expect a proportionate share of the budget”.²⁶ Nonetheless, there were also differences in interests between the member states. Net contributors to the EU budget such as Sweden expressed concerns about the budget implications. member states were still concerned about moving beyond the intergovernmental principle.²⁷ The larger member states worried that funds would be allocated politically rather than on ability.

2.5.3.2 Industry

Industry’s support for the idea was more qualified than might have been anticipated. Industry had been deeply skeptical about the involvement of the European Commission in defense research. Initially (2010–2012), the membership of the industry association Aerospace, Space and Defence (ASD) was opposed to Commission involvement in defense research. Industry was frustrated with its experience of the ESRP, the lack of connection between ESRP-funded research projects and procurement and the politics of the Framework Programme that required the building of coalitions within research teams to include range of interests from different countries even when there was little scientific merit in some partners.²⁸ The idea raised concerns among some companies. In France, Airbus and Thales (who have benefitted from EU funding) were broadly supportive although there were concerns about the need for a link between research funding and national procurement contracts. Other defense companies (not least Dassault) with an exclusive relationship with their national government were fearful that the emergence of EDRP might be used as an excuse by the government to cut national funding and/or means that they will have to compete for funding at European level against others.²⁹

However, the prospect of the new source of funding suggested by the Preparatory Action eventually outweighed industry’s skepticism.³⁰ The Commission looked to industry, in the form of the AeroSpace and Defence Industries Association of Europe (ASD) and its members, to provide specialist expertise and resources to develop the detail of the Preparatory Action. ASD emphasized the importance of member states Ministries of Defence in determining capability requirements, procurement opportunities and market take-up of the intellectual property generated by any research

²⁵ Personal correspondence with a former official, ASD, May 2017. The official added that “France had been trying for years to convince the EU on the merits of industry-led research”.

²⁶ Author interview with a former official, ASD, May 2017.

²⁷ Author interview with the Defence Counsellor, Permanent Representation of a mid-sized member state, December 2016.

²⁸ Author interview with a former official, ASD, May 2017.

²⁹ Author interview with a senior executive, Airbus, February 2017.

³⁰ Author interview with a former official, ASD, May 2017.

program. The importance of large-scale technology demonstrator programs was also emphasized (ASD 2015a, b).

2.5.3.3 The Group of Personalities on Defense Research

The Commission also sought to gain support from industry, and other influential figures support by creating the Group of Personalities on Defence Research. This Commission venue creation mirrored the approach that the Commission took with the ESRP. On the one hand, the GoP was a tool used by the Commission to gain attention for the Preparatory Action and mobilize support for the idea. On the other hand, the GoP can be seen as part of the on-going institutional competition between the Commission and the EDA for “issue ownership” and was used by the European Commission to raise its political credibility as the venue for EU defense research – a subject over which the EDA had historically had dominance.

The Commission announced the establishment of the Group of Personalities on Defence Research in June 2014 as part of a second Communication on defense (European Commission 2014). The GoP was described as “an independent advisory body made up of top level decision-makers and experts” (European Commission 2014: 10) and was launched in late March 2015. In reality the GoP was not an independent body but a closely controlled device to bring together key interests and mobilize support for the idea. Membership of the GoP was carefully selected by the Commission and comprised Chairmen and Chief Executives of Europe’s leading defense companies, a number of defense-related research institutes and politicians favorable to the project. The rapporteur was Antonio Missiroli, the Director of the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS).

The GoP became a venue in which the inter-institutional rivalry between the European Commission and the EDA was played out. There were intense debates about institutional “ownership” of the EDRP, and the EDA contested any language that wasn’t supportive of the EDA. Similarly, industry sought to place their interests onto the agenda. The process involved a large amount of work, drafting and redrafting, dealing with conflicting interests.³¹

2.5.3.4 The European Parliament

In the mobilization of interests, the role of the European Parliament was striking. European Parliament concerns about the militarization of EU science and technology policy had acted as a constraint on the scope of the ESRP and had ultimately contributed to its civil focus. Political divisions again emerged within the European Parliament over the idea of EU funding for defense research with opposition being led by the Greens and Left Alliance. However, there was also strong support not least from the European People’s Party. One of the most energetic supporters of the idea of EU

³¹ Author interview with an EU official close to the Group of Personalities, February 2017.

defense research was Michael Gahler. Gahler was a German MEP and a member of the German Christian Democratic Union, part of the European People's Party. He was Chair of the European Parliament's Security and Defence Committee (SEDE) and the Chairman of the Kangaroo Group. His role in the Kangaroo Group is noteworthy since his predecessor in that role, Kurt Von Wogau, had been a key Parliamentary supporter of the Commission's proposals for the ESRP (see Edler and James 2015).

In November 2013, the Commission's Communication received the support of the European Parliament in a resolution on the European Defence and Technological Base (European Parliament 2013: 2013/2125 INI). Indeed, some MEPs pushed the Commission to move further and faster, criticizing the Commission for being slow to use the new legal possibilities created by the Lisbon Treaty.

Reflecting this mood, Gahler went a significant step further by using new European Parliament budgetary powers to include funding for a Pilot Project on CSDP-related research into the 2015 European Union budget.³² Although the Pilot Project was limited in size, its political symbolism was enormous. For the first time, it allowed EU funds to be transferred to EDA in support of research on military requirements and opened up a new source of funding to EDA other than the member states. The Pilot Project was another focus for inter-institutional conflicts between the European Commission and the EDA. EDA argued that it should not only manage the research projects (like other executive agencies) but that it should be able to select which projects would be funded. This was resisted by the European Commission, and it was ultimately the Commission that won out, with selection of projects undertaken by the Commission through a program committee under the Commission with member states, industry and EDA having seats.³³ In October 2016, the EDA announced the first grant agreements for defense research under the Pilot Project declaring that it was "an important step in EU defence integration". A senior European Commission official added: "EU funding for defence research was almost inconceivable a few years ago for EU institutions, member states and the defence community. This Pilot Project is therefore the precursor of a new era" (EDA 2016).

The political climate in Brussels was changing, and the European Commission was taking a more active and confident approach to defense and security matters. In June 2014, Jean-Claude Juncker had been proposed by the European Council as candidate for President of the European Commission. In July 2014 he set out his political guidelines for the next Commission in a speech to the European Parliament in which he declared: "I also believe that we need to work on a stronger Europe when it comes to security and defence matters" including using the Lisbon Treaty and increasing defense procurement cooperation.³⁴ The Juncker Commission was to repeatedly argue for "more defense in the Union".

³² The Pilot Project (PP) is an instrument envisaged under Article 54 of the European Union's 2014–2020 Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). Pilot Projects support new policy initiatives for a maximum of 2 years and with funding limited to around €2 million.

³³ Author interview with the Defence Counsellor, Permanent Representation of a mid-sized member state, December 2016.

³⁴ "A new start for Europe: my agenda for jobs, growth, fairness and democratic change". There was no mention of defense R&D in the speech.

2.5.4 Framing the Policy Problem and Policy Solution: The Role of Ambiguities

The policy entrepreneurs were able to create a coalition in favor of the idea of EU defense research because of the ambiguity that surrounded that idea. Member states, the EDA, the European Commission and industry had very different – and often competing – aspirations for EU defense research. Nonetheless, all could agree on the idea of EU defense research because its goals and scope as well as institutional responsibility for the program were all open to more than one meaning. These ambiguities were used instrumentally by the policy entrepreneurs as an important device as they sought to create and then sustain a coalition in favor of the idea. As one of the policy entrepreneurs observed: “Everyone can see what they want, the question is what is going to happen”.³⁵

2.5.4.1 Institutional Ambiguity

The emergence of the EDRP reaffirms the importance of institutional ambiguity in EU agenda setting and its use by the European Commission as policy entrepreneur (Ackrill et al. 2013; Ackrill and Kay 2011; Borrás and Radaelli 2011; Zahariadis 2008). As one member state official commented: “A big issue is ‘who is EU’? Where you stand depends on where you sit. [Is it the] Commission? Intergovernmental? EDA”?³⁶

While this ambiguity made coalition building easier as soon as the policy moved toward implementation, there was a requirement to gradually eliminate that ambiguity. We see the consequences in the inter-institutional tensions that arose between the EDA and the Commission as they sought to assert ownership over EU defense research. The EDA had been created by the member states with a mandate to strengthen the European defense technological and industrial base and promote EU defense research cooperation. As such, it was seen by EDA officials as the natural institutional owner for EU defense research issues. The European Commission worked to create credibility as an actor that was capable of managing defense research and was seen as legitimate in that role. The Commission emphasized its own experience in managing the Framework Programme. It also emphasized its experience in the defense field through the Defence Directives and the ESRP’s relationship with the EDA. At the same time, the Commission and its supporters sought to undermine the EDA by pointing to the fact that member states were unable to meet their military capability commitments and (by implication) the intergovernmental approach to European defense R&D had failed (European Commission 2014, 2016). There was a need for funding to promote European research

³⁵ Author interview with a former Commission official, December 2016.

³⁶ Author interview with the Defence Counsellor, Permanent Representation of a mid-sized member state, December 2016.

cooperation, and the Commission was the institution with the capabilities to undertake that role (Mauro and Thoma 2016).

2.5.4.2 Normative Ambiguity

There was also considerable ambiguity over the ultimate goals of the EDRP: its aims and desired effects were open to different interpretations, and – again – this was cultivated by the policy entrepreneurs as part of their instrumental strategy. In its 2013 Communication, the Commission proposed a Preparatory Action on “CSDP-related research” in areas where EU defense capabilities were most needed. It further justified its proposal on grounds of competitiveness, noting the growing potential for synergies between civil and military research in key-enabling technologies and the spin-off benefits from defense research for civilian innovation. This created three areas of ambiguity.

First was the aim to support military capabilities or industry competitiveness. Between 2013 and 2015, the legal basis for the EDRP was the subject of considerable debate (Mauro and Thoma 2016: 46). The legal changes introduced by the Lisbon Treaty were noted earlier, and there was a long debate as to whether the legal basis for defense research should be CSDP or EU research. Beyond the legal basis was the worry among member states and industry that defense research would follow the path of the ESRP which they felt lacked a strong link between the research projects and procurement by users. One official from the Ministry of Defence of a member state observed: “It is enough for the Commission if it [ESRP] contributes to prosperity and growth [but] governments want to exploit results for [military] capabilities”.³⁷ One of the policy entrepreneurs observed:

Ambiguity is crucial.... If you look at the language used in 2013 it was very carefully worded. ‘The Commission will explore defence related CSDP research....’ the CSDP theme was there at the beginning. If you look at the Defence Action Plan the CSDP thing has gone. The reference to CSDP is important because research has to support EU policies so it has to be CSDP or industry policy.³⁸

The second area of ambiguity was whether the aim was to support CSDP capabilities or the capabilities of member states. The 2013 Communication’s focus on CSDP-related capabilities reflected the Commission’s concerns about the legal basis for its actions. However, it became a source of tension between some member states and the EDA with member states concerned that a research program focused on CSDP would not necessarily meet national defense priorities. As one official commented: “Some countries recognised that if EDA runs the programme they will take the CDP [Capability Development Plan] as basis for requirements.”³⁹

³⁷ Author telephone interview with a member state participant in EDA research meetings, September 2016.

³⁸ Author interview with a former Commission official, December 2016.

³⁹ Since 2008, the EDA has produced a Capability Development Plan (CDP) to address European security and defense challenges that makes recommendations about the capabilities European militaries will need to react to those challenges.

[This is] Not necessarily the same as capability needs of individual member states”.⁴⁰ In the second half of 2016, the EDA pushed hard for the CDP to be the driver of research priorities only to face opposition from the larger member states, including France, Italy and Sweden who stressed that there were other capability priorities for member states beyond the requirements of the CSDP.⁴¹ By the time the Defence Action Plan was published in 2016, the reference to “CSDP-related research” had been replaced by reference by defense research (European Commission 2016). This widened the scope of the program and opened up the possibility of EU funding of defense research that would support broader member state capabilities beyond the CSDP.

A third and very important ambiguity was the extent to which EU defense research would fund research on offensive weapons. One of the policy entrepreneurs interviewed observed that there was a conscious effort to sustain such ambiguity since there was a concern that some sections of the European Parliament especially might oppose EDRP if it explicitly mentioned weapons.⁴² As a member state official commented: “What we haven’t seen – and this is partially for legal and for political reasons – is proposals for offensive weapons, new artillery systems, etc ... [communication systems] for example are much more politically acceptable to the European Parliament”.⁴³

2.5.5 Political Momentum and Open Questions

The political momentum was building. In February 2016, the Group of Personalities published its report on European Defence Research, making the case for an EU-funded defense research program. In November, the Commission published the European Defence Action Plan which included the so-called research window that contained proposals for an EDRP (European Commission 2016). The European Parliament (2016) backed a motion calling for the EU to devote 2% of GDP to defense. In December, the European Council indicated its support for the Defence Action Plan (European Council 2016). By 2017, the Commission had sufficient confidence in the support for the Preparatory Action that it made its intentions clear. In evidence to a European Parliament defense hearing a senior European Commission official told MEPs the purpose was about developing Europe-made

⁴⁰ Author interview with the Defence Counsellor, Permanent Representation of a mid-sized member state, December 2016; author interview with a European commission official in DG GROW, December 2016.

⁴¹ Author interview with the Defence Counsellor, Permanent Representation of a mid-sized member state, December 2016; author interview with a European Commission official in DG GROW, December 2016.

⁴² Author interview with a former Commission official, December 2016.

⁴³ Author telephone interview with a member state participant in EDA research meetings, September 2016.

weapons: “Should we seek to produce weapons in Europe or should we turn away from our industry and look to the US and places like India for our weapons? It is better for them to be produced in Europe” (Kelly 2017).

There was still a considerable way to go until its introduction, and this included the fundamental question of whether the program would be funded within a future Framework Programme or through another EU instrument. This was perhaps the most important source of ambiguity. The questions raised by critics within the Commission as to whether the EDRP would be funded through the Framework Programme or elsewhere remained unanswered. The Commission was aware that this was a key source of tension in a funding environment where growth in budgets was judged unlikely. Thus, if the EDRP was to be funded from the Framework Programme, it could mean loss of funding for other activities. The Secretary General of The League of European Research Universities expressed anxieties that new money for military research could impact existing Framework Programme activities (Kelly 2016). The alternative was for it to be funded from the general budget of the EU, potentially through a cut to funding for the Common Agricultural Policy.⁴⁴

2.6 Discussion and Conclusion

In comparing and contrasting the origins of EDRP with that of the ESRP, we can identify important differences. These include the new legal and political environment created by the coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty, the growing budget pressures faced by member states after the Eurozone crisis, the political push for “more defense in the Union” of the Juncker Commission and the inter-institutional competition between the European Commission and EDA for “ownership” of the EDRP. However, there are also important similarities in the process by which the two programs emerged not least the policy entrepreneurship of mid-ranking Commission officials as well as the importance of ambiguity in getting the program onto the policy agenda.

Both cases illustrate once again that the European Union is “an agenda setter’s paradise” (Peter 1994: 21) with multiple opportunities and venues for policy entrepreneurship. They also emphasize the potential for mid-ranking officials to place a policy idea onto the agenda and use the resources and institutional position of the Commission to promote that idea. In addition, they both illustrate the importance for policy entrepreneurs to identify a “window of opportunity” for their ideas. What is striking is that the two cases provide evidence of “serial entrepreneurship”. One of the policy entrepreneurs played a key role in getting both security research and defense research onto the EU policy agenda. His serial entrepreneurship was due to a combination of external factors and individual characteristics. With respect to

⁴⁴ Author interview with the Defence Counsellor, Permanent Representation of a mid-sized member state, December 2016; author interview with a European Commission official in DG GROW, December 2016.

environmental factors, the policy entrepreneur had the “good fortune” to institutionally “exploit” two windows of opportunity, the 9/11 attacks on the United States and the rapid decline in defense research spending in Europe as a result of the financial crisis in favor of his agenda. However, individual characteristics were also very important. The policy entrepreneur held strongly beliefs about the value of closer European integration. Indeed, he acted as an “institutional memory” for the European Commission through his experience with what he saw as the “unfinished business” of the ESRP. He was well known for his deep knowledge of the defense sector as well as his extensive network of contacts within and outside the European Commission. He had also learned from experience how to get an idea adopted, not least “learning by doing” with the security research program and the “template” of instruments that had been used there, including the Group of Personalities and the Preparatory Action. He said of himself:

I'm not interested in money.... I like ideas and projects. Gramsci said that to take power you need to win the battle of ideas. The Commission is good at this. You can consult and consult and debate and debate and at some point people get used to the idea. You have to smuggle your keywords into documents. You have to bring your message into one official document and once it is in there you can refer to it. You smuggle it in like a virus.⁴⁵

Significantly, neither of the policy entrepreneurs who placed the idea onto the agenda is now working on EDRP. One has left the Commission. The other has moved to another position within DG Internal Market. Their key role as they saw it was to get the idea on to the agenda; it was for others to implement it.

Ambiguity was a key feature in the complex process of framing and mobilization that characterized the emergence of the ESRP and the EDRP. The fact that a policy “problem” may be open to multiple interpretations and meanings means that this ambiguity may be used to create and sustain winning coalitions in favor of a particular policy solution. In the case of the EDRP, two forms of ambiguity were important. Institutional ambiguity (i.e. who “owns” the policy) is a common and well-documented feature of EU agenda setting that is the subject of a growing literature in political science. Normative ambiguity was equally important (i.e. what are the aims and objectives of the policy).

Policy entrepreneurs can use those ambiguities to create a coalition of different interest actors. Ambiguity makes coalition building easier because actors can attribute all kinds of meaning to a policy idea, and ambiguity, thereby, moderates conflict between potentially competing interests and views on a “desirable” policy. Thus, the more contentious the policy, the more likely that is that policy entrepreneurs will seek to use ambiguity. The challenge for the policy entrepreneur is to maintain those ambiguities long enough that key actors in the coalition have invested such reputational capital or other resources that they find it difficult to abandon the idea. This is critical since the closer to implementation a policy reaches, the less room there is for ambiguity to continue to exist. By the end of 2016, many of the institutional and

⁴⁵ Author interview with a former Commission official, December 2016.

normative ambiguities that had characterized the emergence of the EDRP had been disambiguated. Nonetheless, the critical issue of funding remains to be resolved.

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