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Evidence from Heads of Mission's Reports

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Abstract

This paper focuses on the role of information and knowledge in the EU foreign policy system. In particular, it examines the case of HoMs reports, which are drafted by Heads of Mission (HoMs) in non-EU countries about the situation on the ground and what the EU could/should do about it. They include both information, such as data, and more complex cognitive schemata defining problems and their potential solutions, here referred to in general terms as knowledge. The paper argues that information and knowledge included in HoMs reports can be both useful to member states and European in nature. It can be useful because the empirical evidence surveyed shows that the majority of HoMs reports cover areas in which few member states have a diplomatic representation. Member states might double-check the information summarized in the reports, but the knowledge included is considered useful. Moreover, the drafting process of a HoMs report does not necessarily reflect a common minimum (or maximum) denominator, but can also emerge from genuine cooperation and reflect a European approach, as shown in the case of the HoMs report on East Jerusalem. As the European External Action Service (EEAS) multiplies its capacity for information gathering and knowledge construction, the issue of whose information and knowledge informs policy proposals is likely to become even more relevant in the future.

Keywords

Common Foreign and Security Policy — Democracy — Diplomatic Network of European Countries — East Jerusalem — European Integration — European Foreign Policy — Information Gathering — Information Processing — Knowledge

Introduction[1]

While much of the interest in European Union (EU) studies has centred on decision making and negotiations (e.g. Risse 2000; Schimmelfennig 2001; Deitelhoff and Müller 2005; Dür et al. 2010; Panke 2010; Grobe 2010), the focus of this paper is on the pre-negotiation stage and more precisely on the cognitive processes leading to policy proposals. It does so by analysing how the EU can provide useful and European (as opposed to purely national) information and knowledge to be used in EU foreign policy making.

There is a fundamental difference between, on the one hand, information, and, on the other, knowledge. Information is generally understood as data that contributes to meaning by reducing ambiguity and equivocality. Knowledge is more complex, as it entails the interpretation of information in the form of 'cause and effect' relationships, as well as 'means and ends' propositions (Huber 1991: 89). Knowledge is thus closer to analysis and prescription, whereas information is closer to thin description. Acquisition of information and interpretation of information are thus two different phenomena (Dekker and Hansén 2004: 217–18).

The argument of this paper is that the EU is in the business of providing both information and knowledge, and member states tend to find both useful. This paper is an empirical investigation of one source of information and knowledge, namely reports prepared by Heads of Missions (HoMs) of EU member states and the (now EU) Delegation, generally referred to as HoMs reports. This basically means that diplomats from member states and officials of the Delegation abroad put their heads together and aim to draft a document that reflects their shared understanding of the situation on the ground and of what the EU could do about it. It is a well-established way of inputting both data and policy recommendations in the EU foreign policy making process in a negotiated way.

The record of the past 13 years of HoMs reports, gathered thanks to data provided by the Council Secretariat, shows that HoMs reports are a regular feature in the EU foreign policy system and they tend to provide detailed information especially about countries where the diplomatic network of most member states is thin or non-existent. While member states might double-check the information summarized in the reports, most are interested in the knowledge included, as shown by a number of targeted interviews, although this does not necessarily entail they will embrace it. Moreover, the process of drafting HoMs reports can emerge out of genuine cooperation, rather than purely an attempt by member states to secure their national preferences, as shown in the case of the report on East Jerusalem.

The paper starts with an overview of the empirical evidence of HoMs reports. It then tackles two crucial aspects. First, it analyses the potential usefulness of HoMs reports for member states by focusing on the diplomatic outreach of member states and on the reception by member states of HoMs reports. Second, it asks whether HoMs reports can be considered 'European' information and knowledge and it suggests that such a possibility cannot be excluded, given the type of process that has led to the drafting of the report on East Jerusalem.

[1] I am very grateful to Benedetta Voltolini for assisting in the research for this paper, which stems from RECON (Reconstituting Democracy in Europe), an Integrated Project supported by the European Commission's Sixth Framework Programme (contract no. CIT4-CT-2006-028698).

HoMs reports: An empirical exploration

The practice started in 1986, at the time of the signing of the SEA, when cooperation among European officials in non-EU countries was formalized. It was agreed that Heads of Missions and the Head of the Delegation were to meet regularly and prepare joint analyses and reports.[2] The decision to prepare a report could come either from Brussels or from local actors in third countries. The Presidency (in the form of, pre-Lisbon, a member state and now, post-Lisbon, of the European External Action Service, EEAS) could request a HoMs report for the Political Committee or for a Working Group. But HoMs can also act on their own initiative where the situation so requires,[3] and draft a report to be sent to Brussels. In fact, several HoMs reports have acquired a semi-automatic character, linked to the regularity in the timetable of meetings or as annual round-up documents to track developments (e.g. about human rights) on the ground. Reports, now collected by the EEAS, are then circulated via COREU to member states' European Correspondents[4] in the 27 ministries of Foreign Affairs, to member states' Permanent Representations in Brussels, as well as to the European Commission and to the General Secretariat of the Council. It is then the responsibility of the European Correspondents to make the reports available to specific desks within the Ministries, of Permanent Representatives in Brussels to circulate to members of Working Groups or of the Political and Security Committee (PSC), and of the European Commission and of the Secretariat to pass on to the relevant people inside their organizational hierarchies. Reports might also be shared to other EU Delegations if relevant.

A different case are the reports from Special Envoys/Representatives, which also send (on request or on their own initiative) reports about their missions in third countries.[5] Reporting tends to be part of the mandate of EU Special Representatives (EUSRs), who are expected to 'regularly provide the PSC and the HR [high representative] with oral and written reports [as well as] to Council working parties as necessary'.[6] Some of these reports, such as for instance those sent by the EUSR for Bosnia and Herzegovina to the European Parliament, contained broad assessments summarizing developments over six months.[7] Other EUSRs reports are much more specific, reporting on meetings in relation to negotiations in which the EUSR might be the only European official present to the table. Pierre Morel, who is EUSR for Central Asia and was also EUSR for Georgia, has written reports considered 'invaluable'.[8] In the case of Transnistria, where the member states' diplomatic presence was very limited, EUSRs reports were 'a key source of information, analysis and policy advice for EU member states' (Popescu 2011: 49).

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[2] As stated in the Decision of 28 February 1986 adopted on the occasion of the signing of the Single European Act by the Ministers of Foreign Affairs

[3] See 'Report from the Council to the European Parliament on the main aspects and basic choices of CFSP, including implications for the Communities' budget', Doc 7051/99, PESC 71, Brussels, 29 March 1999. p. 44.

[4] The European Correspondents are the main referents for CFSP in national ministries of Foreign Affairs. There is a European Correspondent also for the European Commission and for the EEAS.

[5] Data on EUSRs reports is however not available.

[6] See for instance Art.11 Reporting, in Council Decision 2011/425/CFSP of 18 July 2011 extending the mandate of Pierre Morel as EUSR for Central Asia.

[7] See Reports to the European Parliament, 2001-2008. Available at: <http://www.eusrbih.org/reports/> (accessed 9 November 2011).

[8] Interview national diplomat, 18 May 2010.

Typically, HoMs reports tend to be divided, more or less clearly, between a more descriptive part and a more prescriptive component. The former assesses the situation or the impact of a specific instrument, while the latter raises options for future actions or recommends a specific course of action. In the case of the HoMs report on Moldova commissioned by the EEAS and delivered in February 2011,[9] for instance, the focus was on assessing progress against the criteria laid down in Council Decision 2010/573/CFSP, which once again extended and provisionally suspended a travel ban against Transnistrian leaders.[10] The report analysed progress in reaching a political settlement to the Transnistrian conflict, addressing the remaining problems of the Latin-script schools, and restoring free movement of persons. It concluded that little progress had been made and this, together with the inadequate human rights situation in the Transnistrian region, did not allow for the lifting of the existing sanctions. At the same time, given some positive dynamics in connection with the EU/OSCE Confidence Building Measures Working Groups and informal consultations, the report recommended maintaining the suspension of the travel ban for a further six months, especially in the light of the increasing role that the EU aimed to play in the region. The report was then discussed at EU level on 22 February,[11] with unanimous member states' agreement for the proposal. The Foreign Affairs Council Decision taken on 21 March 2011 reflected the recommendations made in the HoMs report.

In their structure, HoMs reports therefore mirror the same format of diplomatic messages between Embassies and capitals. There is however a substantial difference in terms of their frequency and length. The diplomatic messages sent by Heads of Missions to their respective capitals tend to occur daily and to be short, a paragraph or two. George Kennan's famous 'long telegram' stood out not only because of the clarity of its analysis, but also because it was more than 5 000 words long. HoMs reports often take after Kennan's approach and are long and detailed affairs. The HoMs report on East Jerusalem in 2008 exceeded 6 000 words, while the one drafted in 2009 was over 4 000. Other reports are shorter, even to 500-700 words. But they never approach the brevity that characterizes national diplomatic messages. This is both an advantage and a disadvantage. On the positive side, reports are exhaustive and offer an in-depth analysis for a whole set of issues. On the negative side, their length puts them at a disadvantage in the world of time-pressured diplomats.[12]

The number of HoMs reports has fluctuated over time (Figure 1). Between 1999 and 2002 there was a substantial growth in numbers, with the overall number approaching 400 in 2003. Since then, numbers have ranged more or less between 300 and 250. This means that on average one HoMs report is sent every working day to the ministries of Foreign Affairs of the 27 and to EU institutions. As it has been put by a practitioner, 'it has become reasonably common practice for the bodies in Brussels to invite the EU Heads of Mission to submit a collective report'[13] to kick off the

[9] Summarised at length in 'Documents considered by the European Scrutiny Committee', House of Parliament, UK, 9 March 2011. Available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmeuleg/428-xix/42810.htm> (accessed 9 November 2011).

[10] On relations between EU and Moldova, see Popescu (2011) and Giumelli (2011).

[11] Most likely in the Political and Security Committee meeting.

[12] Interview with deputy European Correspondent, 25 March 2010.

[13] House of Lords, Minutes of evidence, Examination of Witnesses, Mr William Shapcott (FCO), 3 November 2004, Q158. Available at:

discussion in the Working Parties or to establish the state of the art in the PSC negotiations. In the words of another practitioner, it has become roughly 'equivalent to asking the opinion of the Legal Service' of the Council.[14]

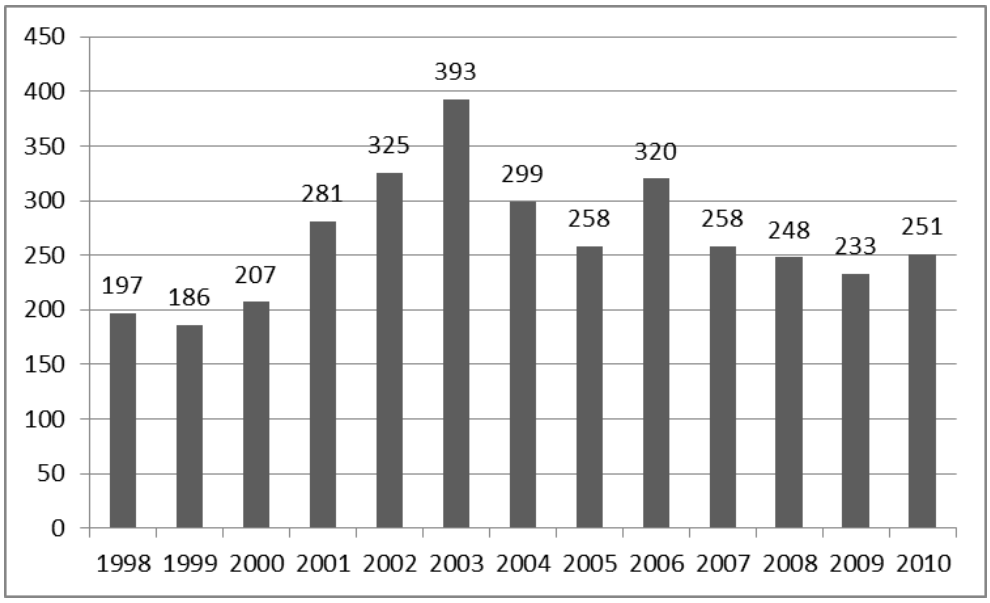

Figure 1: Number of HoMs Reports per year, 1998-2010.

Interestingly, the geographical spread of the reports is grossly uneven (Figure 2). HoMs reports devoted to Africa represents the majority, and increasingly so, of the total, with 57 percent of messages devoted to Sub-Saharan African countries in 2010. Asia is the subject of circa 20 percent HoMs reports, while Latina America, Europe, the Middle East and North Africa do not reach 10 percent of the total. A very small per-

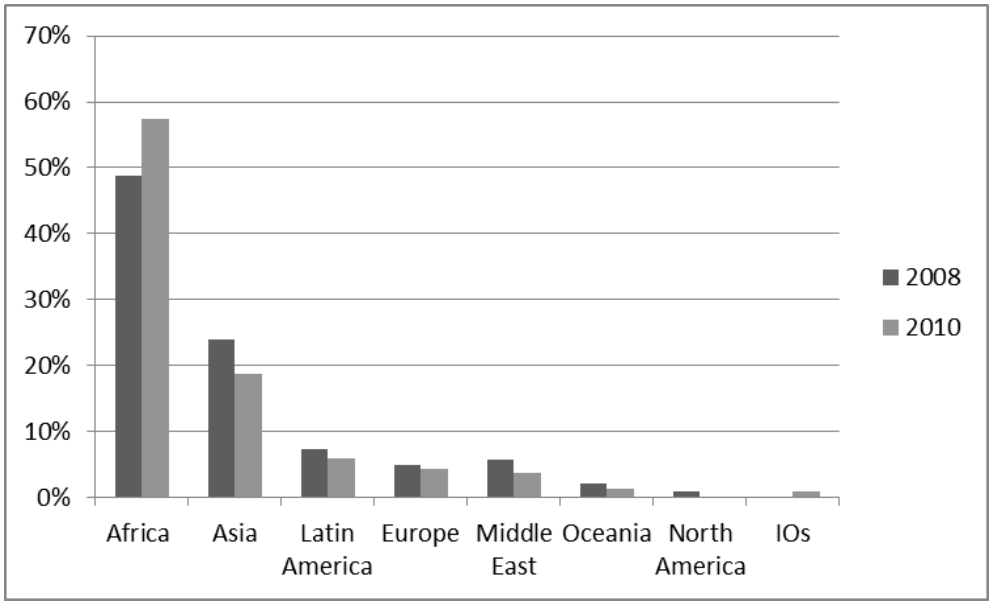

Figure 2: Number of HoMs report per macro-region, in percentage, 2008 and 2010.[15]

<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/ld200405/ldselect/ldeucom/53/4110307.htm> (accessed 9 June 2010).

[14] Interview with a European diplomat, Tel Aviv, 18 May 2010.

[15] All distinctions are arbitrary and the purpose of this one is purely illustrative. The Middle East and

centage of reports addresses international organisations (IOs), while North America barely registers, and only so because of the EU-Canada summit in 2008. During 2008-2010, the highest number of reports was issued from Zimbabwe, which stood out of the rest with 19, nine and 12 reports respectively for 2008, 2009 and 2010. Burma/Myanmar has been the subject of increasing attention with five reports in 2008, eight in 2009 and seven in 2010. Kenya has also often been scrutinized (nine reports in 2008, five in 2009 and six in 2010) and so has China (seven reports in 2008 and in 2009 and six in 2010). Not all countries were the subject of a HoMs report. Still, HoMs in 122 countries sent at least one or two reports over the period 2008-2010.

HoMs reports tackle a number of issues, as summarized in their titles.[16] Human rights are a traditional topic of concern. Several reports (20 in 2010) assess in as many countries the implementation of the various human rights guidelines adopted by the EU. After the adoption of guidelines on violence against women and girls in December 2008, moreover, HoMs reports from more than 80 countries included a part assessing the implementation of this specific set of guidelines.[17] Several reports specifically record the discussion in and the outcome of local political dialogues (often referred to as Art. 8 dialogues for ACP countries). The vast majority analyses the political situation, e.g. before or after elections, or during the unfolding of a crisis. For instance, in 2008, several reports devoted to Zimbabwe focused on the period around the elections, when on average three reports per month were sent. Similarly, as the crisis in Sudan gathered momentum, so did the number of HoMs reports. While just one report was sent on Sudan in 1998 and three reports in 1999, the numbers escalated thereafter (eight reports in 2000, 13 reports in 2001, 20 reports in 2002). A similar escalation occurred in the case of Eritrea, peaking with 13 reports in 2002, and Ethiopia, with 10 reports in same year.

Useful information?

To what extent, then, do HoMs reports contain information that can be useful to national representatives? More precisely, to what extent is that information taken into account at the national level? In order to answer these two questions, I will examine two issues. First, I will look at the extent of member states' national representation networks.[18] The assumption here is that the fewer 'eyes on the ground' a country has at its disposal from its own national channels, the more interesting it might find the HoMs reports produced by its EU partners. However, this is neither a sufficient nor a necessary condition for a country to act on that information. Second, I have partly crosschecked the outcome with qualitative interviews with European correspondents, which present a variegated picture.

North Africa includes Iran and Afghanistan, but not Pakistan, while Russia is in Asia.

[16] While the text of HoMs reports is confidential, the succinct title is available.

[17] See 'Report of the Swedish Presidency of the European Union in the field of human rights and democracy', by Elinor Hammarskjöld, chair of the COHOM (Council Working Group on Human Rights), at the European Parliament Subcommittee of Human Rights, 30 November 2009. Available at: <http://www.se2009.eu/en/meetings_news/2009/11/30/report_of_the_swedish_presidency_of_the_european_union_in_the_field_of_human_rights_and_democracy> (accessed 9 June 2010).

[18] I do not take into account the consular network, but just the representations that in 2009 could have taken up the local Presidency, based on the assumption that they are able to perform political tasks, rather than simply administrative ones. The full list is in General Council Secretariat, 'Note – Presidency diplomatic representation in third countries – Second half of 2009', Brussels, 3 July 2009. This is unfortunately the last year when the EU collected this information.

The analysis of the diplomatic reach of member states shows that several countries have a limited or very limited representation abroad. Apart from a small group of member states, all the others have missions in circa one third or less of existent countries (see Appendix 1).[19] Based on information gathered by the Council Secretariat in 2009,[20] we can distinguish in roughly three groups of states. In the top group, composed of six countries, France has the best outreach, with 133 missions abroad, followed by Germany, with 121 missions, and the UK, with 113 missions. Italy and Spain have a similar number (94 and 93 respectively), followed by the Netherlands (84 missions). In the second, most numerous, group, the average number of missions drops to cover circa one third of the globe. In the last group, composed of nine countries, the number of representations drops even further, to 30 or less. At the bottom of this last group, Estonia, Malta and Luxembourg have ca 10 or fewer missions abroad.

While on average, across the 172 countries taken into account by the Council Secretariat's statistics, there are nearly 10 European missions represented per country, representation is in fact heavily biased in favour of the Northern hemisphere. In just three countries all member states have a representation: China, Russia and the United States. Beyond this small group, Egypt and Japan both have 26 missions, while Canada, Israel and Turkey have 25. Numbers then decline and at the other end of the spectrum 21 (mostly micro) states have no European representation at all. Following the same categorization in macro-regions as of above, the highest average number of representation after Northern America is in the Middle East and North Africa, with an average of over 16 missions per country. (Non-EU) Europe comes next, with an average of circa 13 missions, while Asia comes shortly after, with roughly 12 missions per country. There is a wide gap in representation then, with Latin American and African countries hosting ca seven missions on average. Oceania is a case apart. With the notable exception of Australia (24 missions) and partially also New Zealand (nine missions), the other (micro) states in Oceania have very small numbers of European missions, or none at all. The overall picture, therefore, is that European countries' own 'eyes on the ground' are overwhelmingly in the Northern hemisphere, while they have very limited national sources of information in the Southern one. Moreover, the trend is towards some reduction in numbers of missions abroad.[21]

EU Delegations[22] have no such a geographical bias, plus their numbers are expanding. Since the first Delegation of the European Coal and Steel Community was created in London in 1956,[23] the Delegations' number has constantly increased. While there were 123 Commission Delegation in 2007 (Keukeleire and MacNaughtan 2008: 134), their number has climbed to 137 at the end of 2011.[24] Therefore, with some omissions in

[19] There are at the moment 192 countries that are members of the United Nations. <http://www.un.org/en/aboutun/index.shtml> (accessed 14 November 2010). The file of the General Secretariat of the Council however counts 170 countries.

[20] General Council Secretariat, 'Note – Presidency diplomatic representation in third countries – Second half of 2009', Brussels, 3 July 2009.

[21] For an analysis of the debate about current trends, see Emerson et al. (2011), as well as Tiilikainen and Korhonen (2011). Unfortunately the data presented in Emerson et al. is not compatible with the data gathered by the Council Secretariat in 2009 because it includes the consular network.

[22] Prior to the Lisbon Treaty, EU Delegations were Delegations of the European Commission.

[23] On this, see Carta (2011).

[24] At the end of 2011, the EU has 130 Delegations to third countries and seven to international organisations. Data available at: <http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/repdel/edelhrm/index.cfm?fuseaction=crepdel.europa&lang=EN> (accessed on 11 November 2011).

micro-states, the EU has 'eyes on the ground' in the vast majority of countries and especially there where most member states do not. In Sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, EU Delegations are in all countries apart from Somalia and three micro-states. In half of the countries, there is one EU Delegation amid the one to four representations on the ground. Therefore, although there is no country in which the EU is represented while member states are not, EU Delegations have become a staple of contemporary diplomatic life.

In terms of whose 'eyes on the ground,' therefore, the conclusion is that the large majority of member states do not have a national source of information on the ground in Africa and Latin America, while the EU as such does. Therefore, as HoMs reports can be expected to be more interesting where member states are less represented, it is arguable that HoMs reports on African and Latin American countries will speak more to the circa 70 percent of member states that are not represented there, while those on Asia and on the Middle East are likely to be read with particular attention by approximately half of member states.

It remains however to be assessed to what extent member states with no representation on the ground take HoMs report into account when deciding their national position, as reports might be well read but no further action might come out them. This aspect was investigated thanks to a number of in depth interviews with European Correspondents and parallel interviews with officials in the EEAS.[25] The findings point to two different aspects, namely: (1) the information about facts on the ground; (2) the information about member states' positions about facts on the ground, or, more precisely about the structured knowledge and recommendations that emerges from the interpretation provided. While the latter is relevant to all countries, the former only in some cases.

The country appreciating information about both member states' positions and facts on the grounds is for instance a small, new member state from Central and Eastern Europe. Its embassy network is limited, especially in Africa, although it belongs to the middle group of countries in terms of numbers of embassies. As the interviewee put it, '[s]ometimes we double-check [the information included in the HoMs reports], but I would say that in general we rely upon this information. […] these reports prove to be extremely useful […] relatively unbiased and balanced'.[26]

Another example is a relatively small European country, having joined the EU long ago, with a relatively extended network, but not to the point of making it to the first group of 'big states' together with the Netherlands. Its position is not to trust HoMs reports for facts on the ground, not even in the Caucasus, where it has very little representation. The European Correspondent would rather rely for instance on their mission in Moscow to provide their version of facts than on HoMs reports. Still, s/he reads all HoMs reports because they provide her/him with an excellent insight on what is the 'European consensus' on the ground, i.e. what local HoMs think is feasible or useful as a joint position/action.[27]

A similar case is represented by a big member state, with an extensive network of embassies. It learns little from HoMs reports and it actually uses the drafting process

[25] Because of anonymity, it will not be possible to identify the countries.

[26] Interview with deputy European Correspondent with five years of experience, November 2009.

[27] Interview with European Correspondent, 4 June 2010.

to make sure that its 'vision' is taken into account and its preferences reflected in the final text. Therefore, this country does not value HoMs reports as sources of information about facts on the ground and partly manipulates for national purposes the interpretation of what is going on. Still, this country's representative displays an attitude similar to the previous case, by which HoMs reports are read 'as summary of what HoMs think,' and 'of what the EU might do',[28] i.e. of what kind of consensus might emerge.

While these suggestions need further research, the preliminary conclusion points in the direction that knowledge is more widely considered important than information. Fresh information is relevant (and at times extremely relevant) for a minority of member states, which do not have national sources to gather data on the ground, not even indirectly. But most members, even those with a diplomatic reach that extends to the country in question, seem to value the second part in HoMs report, namely the more structured interpretation of facts accompanied by policy recommendations. The empirical question for research thus suggests that a majority of states take into account knowledge and policy recommendations included in HoMs reports when preparing national policy positions.

European information? A case study of the HoMs report on East Jerusalem

To what extent can HoMs reports be considered to be 'European' information and knowledge? Do the negotiations involved in the drafting of HoMs reports lead to a '*communauté de vue*' or rather to a 'Christmas tree approach,' in which all participants make sure that their preferred outcome or issue is taken into account? These questions raise a few thorny methodological issues. On the one hand the 'European-ness' of HoMs reports can be considered as intrinsically linked to several procedural conditions. HoMs reports are circulated via COREU, which is an EU instrument, thus technically becoming European documents. Moreover, they are prepared on the basis of HoMs coordination, which is a mechanism established by the common foreign and security policy (CFSP). Also, HoMs coordination in third countries includes the Head of the Delegation of the European Commission, who is again by definition the representative of the EU interests. On the other hand, however, the information included in HoMs reports does not automatically reflect the outcome of a collective, European endeavour.

It is in fact very plausible that HoMs reports do not express European information and knowledge. Big member states are most likely to use their extensive knowledge of foreign affairs and their extended network of representations to affect the type and format of the information collected in HoMs reports. If only because they are more represented abroad than smaller member states, thus outnumbering their colleagues in HoMs meeting, big member states are in a strong position. In fact, it is reasonable to expect, as a default option, that big member states use this opportunity to promote their own views and their own interests. As put in the case of the HoMs report on Moldova and the Transnistrian conflict delivered in February, '[t]he British Embassy Chisinau has taken a leading role in influencing and drafting this report.'[29] As in the

[28] Interview with deputy European Correspondent, 17 May 2010.

[29] 'Documents considered by the European Scrutiny Committee', House of Parliament, UK, 9 March 2011, available at: <http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmselect/cmeuleg/428-xix/42810.htm> (last accessed 9 November 2011).

third face of power (e.g. Lukes 1974), because of European cooperation in third countries, member states with an extensive national knowledge of international affairs are in a position to affect what less knowledgeable states believe as possible and doable.

If the influence of big member states does occur, it could still be considered a 'European' outcome, as it would take place within the context of EU cooperation. But it would represent the 'hybridization' (or 'colonization') on the part of few member states of the CFSP mechanisms, with smaller, less knowledgeable member states adopting the position of their bigger partners in their search for reliable information.

How likely is this to happen? Can we just assume, rather than test, that big member states multiply their power by feeding data into HoMs reports, which less knowledgeable member states then use as a basis for preference formation, as in the case of the small, Eastern European country analysed above? It is the contention of this paper that this is not necessarily the case, as shown by the process leading to the adoption of the HoMs report on East Jerusalem.

The HoMs report on East Jerusalem is probably one of the most widely known HoMs report, given its relevance in terms of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It tackles a very politically sensitive issue. According to the United Nations (UN) 1947 partition plan of Palestine, Jerusalem was to be under a special international regime ('*corpus separatum*') administered by the UN.[30] During the 1948 war, Jordan invaded and annexed Jerusalem, while during the 1967 war Israel did the same and declared Jerusalem its capital. Since then, endless negotiations have taken place about the 'final status' of Jerusalem and the situation remains very tense, especially in the North-Eastern areas that have come to host the majority of Arab Jerusalemites. An assessment of developments on the ground is thus particularly important in terms of this key area of foreign affairs.

The report is prepared every year by the 22 European diplomatic missions in Jerusalem and Ramallah, together with the representative of the European Commission. This is a fair number of HoMs, compared to other countries. The status of these missions is special. Because of the dispute about Jerusalem's role as a capital, all Embassies to the state of Israel are based in Tel Aviv, as no country recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. In retaliation, Israel does not allow for high level diplomatic representations in Jerusalem beyond the General Consulates traditionally present in Jerusalem prior to 1967 (Belgium, France, Greece, Italy, Spain, Sweden, UK, as well as Turkey, the Vatican and USA).[31] Fifteen other EU countries have opened a representation in Ramallah, while five do not have a representation in Jerusalem, Ramallah or Tel Aviv (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovakia). The European Commission has a 'technical office' in East Jerusalem with competence over Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza. The 22+1 European missions started to produce a yearly report on East Jerusalem in 2004, although in the previous years a 'Jerusalem Watch' HoMs report was occasionally circulated.[32] At first the report was public, but it became confidential in 2005, although it was leaked to the press in 2008 and in 2009.

[30] UN GA Resolution 181, 29 November 1947.

[31] Given the special status of Jerusalem as 'corpus separatum', these missions do not present their credentials to Israel and focus exclusively on Jerusalem, West Bank and Gaza.

[32] Interview with EC official, 17 May 2010. See also HoMs report 'Jerusalem watch (9/97-12/97)', 28 January 1998 and 'Jérusalem Watch', 8 July 1999.

The 2009 report was divided in five parts, three descriptive ones and two prescriptive ones.[33] The first part is a political assessment of the situation in East Jerusalem. It tackles the issue of settlements in and around East Jerusalem, demolitions and restrictions on Palestinian housing, access to the city for Palestinians, Palestinian institutions in the city and the sacred sites. The second part is a case study of Sheikh Jarrah, an area where tensions have escalated in the last couple of years. Both these descriptive parts are factual, very detailed and quoting specific figures. The third part copied an UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) document on the demolitions and displacements in East Jerusalem. The fourth one included general recommendations, most notably the request to expand the mandate of HoMs in Jerusalem to address some specific points, listed in the fifth part. This last part is striking because it mentions a few very contentious points, on which there is no agreement among EU member states, notably the possibility to prevent financial transactions from EU member states' actors supporting settlers in East Jerusalem, 'by adopting appropriate EU legislation', and information sharing on violent settlers to assess 'whether to grant entry into the EU'. While the word 'sanctions' is banned from EU-speak, there is a flavour of 'smart sanctions' in the recommendations.

For the purpose of this paper, the important part of this HoMs report is the process leading up to it. As customary, the report was requested by the Swedish Presidency of the Council Working Group on the Middle East Peace Process (COMEP), with a view to contribute to the drafting of the Council Conclusions for December 2009. Sweden, as the local Presidency, kicked off the process in Jerusalem, by convening the first meeting during the summer 2009. Most importantly, however, Sweden did not prepare a draft of the report. On the contrary, at their first meeting, the political officer of Sweden in Jerusalem raised a number of points for discussion with her colleagues such as the exact definition of the term 'Jerusalem,' the structure of the report, the need to update and prioritise facts, as well as to discuss the EU interest.[34] After three or four meetings addressing these general aspects, national representatives agreed to share the load in drafting the report.[35] One country focused on social services, another one on ID cards, a third one on religious affairs, etc.,[36] in an *ad hoc* manner and without '*domaines réservés*'.[37] On the contrary, political officers discussed openly the sources they were thinking of consulting and received suggestions about further sources who might be able to deliver useful information.[38] They then pieced it all together, refined it as much as possible, and passed it on to the HoMs. The HoMs went over every single word, consulted bilaterally with their capitals and finalized the text. The process therefore was a 'collective endeavour,' as a diplomat put it, with 'red lines' being decided 'en route,' rather than a priori.[39]

The report went then on to have quite a relevant role in the controversial Declaration issued by the Council on 8 December 2009. The controversy focused on member states' intention, then partially downsized, to declare East Jerusalem as the capital of the future Palestinian state. As the draft of the Declaration prepared by the PSC was

[33] A copy of the report is available at: <http://www.scribd.com/doc/23721677/EU-heads-of-mission-reports-on-East-Jerusalem-Jerusalem-and-the-Middle-East-peace-process#> (accessed 24 March 2010).

[34] Interview with European diplomat, Jerusalem, 18 May 2010.

[35] Interview with two European diplomats, Jerusalem, 20 May 2010, 9am and 1.30pm.

[36] Interview with two European diplomats, Jerusalem, 20 May 2010, 9am and 10.30am.

[37] Interview with European diplomat, Jerusalem, 20 May 2010, 1.30pm.

[38] Idem.

[39] Interview with European diplomat, Jerusalem, 20 May 2010, 10.30am.

leaked to the press, Israel started a diplomatic battle to tone it down, with some success.[40] Still, the Declaration was unusual for the emphasis on the issue of Jerusalem, which directly relied on the content of the HoMs report.

The story of the HoMs report on East Jerusalem might be exceptional or unusual, but only up to a point. The case of Jerusalem is certainly exceptional in terms of the sheer amount of available information and number of member states' representations involved. Due to the number of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and international organizations, Jerusalem resembles a 'primeval soup', in which all diplomats go native and converge on a similar vision.[41] However, as information has long since become part and parcel of the Arab-Israeli conflict, there is at times a paucity of easily accessible, reliable information, reflecting a set of well engrained, shared principles. Moreover, diplomats tend to 'go native' regardless of their destination, although there might be a degree of variation. Another point worth considering is the long-lasting meddling of European countries with the area, which has favoured well engrained national preferences. Still, despite a remarkable convergence since the 1960s, at times profound divergences remain.[42]

While 'colonisation' of information and knowledge included in HoMs reports is possible, a process leading to a shared, 'European' understanding of the 'common good' is also possible, as shown in the case of the HoMs report on East Jerusalem. If the possibility of a collective endeavour in the assembling of political information can and does exist, it then becomes an empirical question to assess how often and under what conditions it occurs.

Conclusions

This paper has contributed to highlight the role of information and knowledge in the EU foreign policy system. It did so with an empirical investigation of HoMs reports, of their usefulness for member states and of their nature. The conclusion, in this specific case, is that the EU produces documents that contain both information and knowledge, which member states find useful and can under certain conditions be considered as European information and knowledge. HoMs reports are relatively sophisticated diplomatic documents. They include a part describing the situation on the ground in a non-EU country and a second part that articulates more in detail what the EU could and/or should do about it. They are likely to be more useful for small and medium countries, especially for new member states with less experience of the EU, and for issues arising from Africa or Latin America. Big member states tend to be interested in HoMs reports for what they highlight as likely and possible in the EU's name. Moreover, the case of the HoMs on East Jerusalem suggests that genuine cooperation between officials in third countries is possible, thus leading to a collegial, European drafting process.

It remains to be seen whether the insights put forward here are an exception or the rule, and under which conditions can they apply beyond the limitations of the

[40] See Tony Barber, 'Protests force EU to drop Jerusalem plan', *FT*, 8 December 2009; Natasha Mozgovaya, Barak Ravid, 'US: Only Israel, Palestinians should decide Jerusalem's future', *Haaretz*, 9 December 2009; 'Israel dodges EU bullet', *Jerusalem Post*, 9 December 2009.

[41] Interview with European diplomat, Tel Aviv, 18 May 2010.

[42] On this topic, see Musu (2010).

evidence presented here. Both usefulness and 'European-ness' are likely to depend on issues such as number of national representations in the country and degree of interest on the part of one or more member states. Further investigation is needed to tackle for instance the possibility that when information and knowledge are sorely needed (i.e. very few eyes on the ground), it is most likely to be biased due to big member states' monopoly of information. Similarly, it is crucial to assess whether there is an inverse correlation between the two aspects, i.e. whether the more European the nature of the information and knowledge, the less relevant (and the less useful) the content of reports. This research indicates in fact a more complex picture, in which some member states (possibly a majority) might rely for one reason or another on information and knowledge such as included in HoMs reports, which might be European in nature. The proposal advanced here is thus that while 'red lines' change the nature of the game, much of EU foreign policy is in fact not about 'red lines' issues.

More generally, this paper contributes to flag the relevance of an analysis of cooperation based on information, knowledge and more generally cognitive processes. While negotiations are a powerful element of change for national positions, the national character might already be diluted and transformed by the increasingly thick circulation of information and knowledge within the EU foreign policy system. Moreover, as the European External Action Service is creating its own information gathering capabilities in the form of political reports,[43] a very likely scenario is that the EEAS will end up having better information and better knowledge about international affairs than the majority of member states. An analysis of how cognitive processes affect policy making is thus imperative in order to grasp current transformations in the EU foreign policy system.

[43] On this, see Bicchi (2012).

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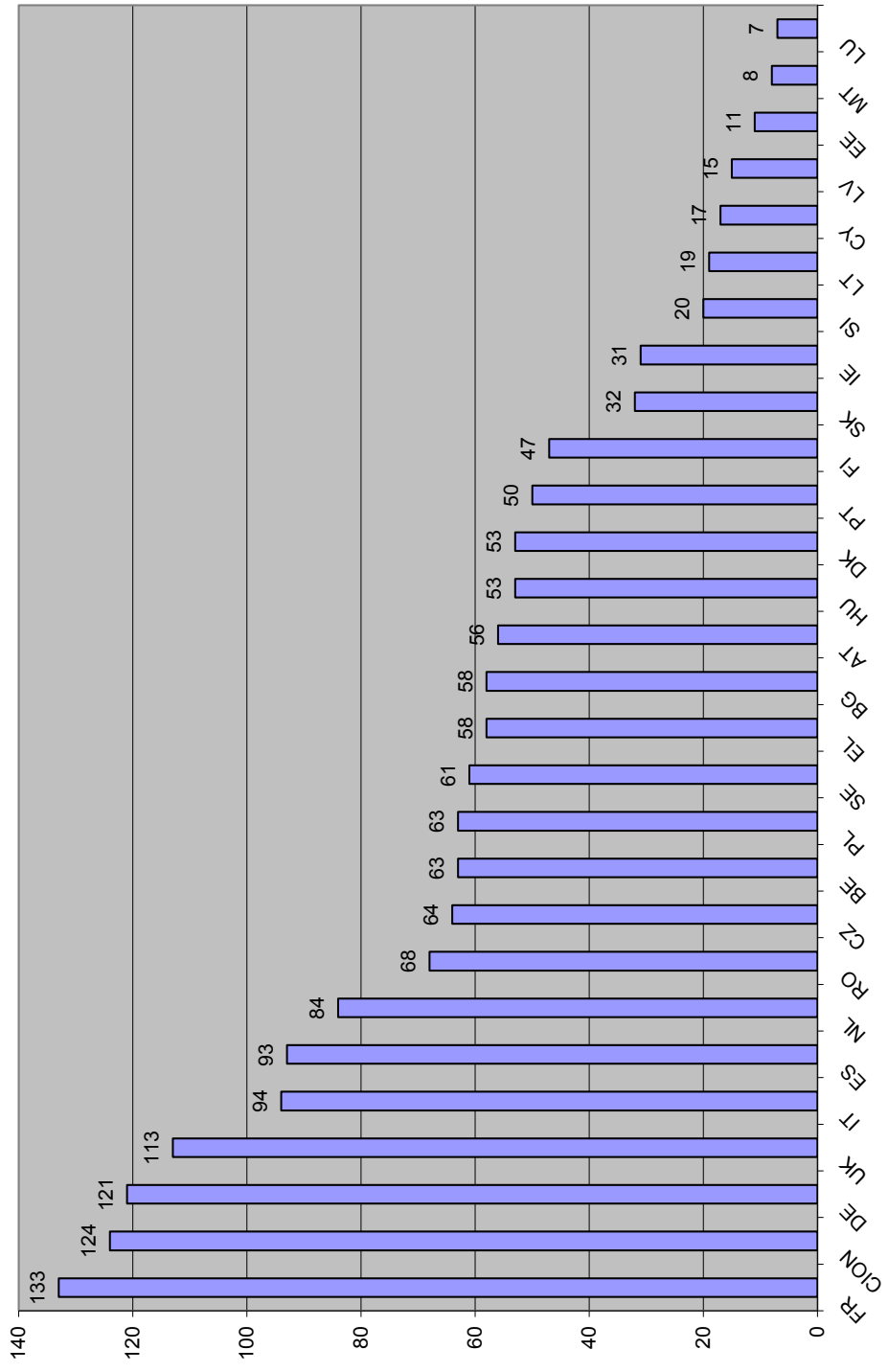
Appendix

Total number of missions in third countries by country, 2009



CION = European Commission

Source: General Council Secretariat, 'Note – Presidency diplomatic representation in third countries – Second half of 2009', Brussels, 3 July 2009.

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