

## Abstract

The main purpose of this research is to explore the relationship between the EU and UK in terms of space defence policy developed from the viewpoint of historical institutionalism. As a research objective, it is intended to assess the nature of historical institutionalism as a concept and its applications to space defence policy. Another objective is to trace the historical development of the relationships between the EU and the UK in the space sector. Finally, this historical development is discussed through the lens of historical institutionalism.

The attainment of these aims and objectives requires an optimal choice of methodology and research design. This study has been guided by the principles of interpretivism, a dominant philosophical stance in social studies. This philosophy emphasises the role of interpretations in the attainment of knowledge due to a lack of absolute truth, as according to interpretivism, the truth depends on the observer and their interpretations. In line with this philosophical stance, this research is conducted using an inductive approach, which stipulates theory development, hypothesis formulation, or new proposition statements based on observations. This contrasts with deductive testing of existing research hypotheses. The choice of an inductive approach has determined the use of a qualitative research design for this study.

The main feature of the qualitative research design is that the study relies on both qualitative data and qualitative methods of data analysis. Qualitative data implies non-numerical information. The study uses secondary data retrieved from open sources such as academic journals, books and government official documents. The qualitative methods used in this research are narrative and thematic analysis. Narrative analysis implies storytelling and the historical discovery of the studied phenomenon through the lens of historical institutionalism. Thematic analysis implies summarising key findings, finding similarities and differences, extracting common themes and makes conclusions based on the observations. While the qualitative research methods adopted in this study do not allow for making generalisations of the findings or allow for the testing of research hypotheses, they

do however allow for an in-depth evaluation of the space security policies of the UK and the EU as viewed from the perspective of historical institutionalism.

The main feature of historical institutionalism is that it combines the concepts of structure and processes, which makes it different from alternative theories such as Rational Choice Theory and Sociological Institutionalism. The findings of the first objective of this research study suggest that historical institutionalism explores historical processes over time and through the institutionalisation of these processes. Historical processes are a combination of deterministic elements and random events that shape the ultimate norms and rules in space security policies.

In particular, the results of this study reveal that these space security policies have been developed in the wake of the post-war period in Europe where the United Kingdom took the lead in the space sector as a leading economy and military power of that time. However, these attempts to lead independently resulted ultimately in failure. The UK had to resort to partnerships with European countries once funding was insufficient and costs were too much for the UK to manage alone. Partnerships with European countries allowed the UK not to waste funds that had already been invested in its own space programme.

The development path of UK space security policies could have been different if it had continued to partner with other allies such as the United States instead of Europe. Nevertheless, their final choice was in favour of European countries, which in turn were not supportive of the idea of partnering with the US in space security as more autonomy was sought. Over the historical period of its space policy development, the UK had occasionally turbulent relationships with European countries such as Germany and France. Ultimately, the UK and EU have parted company with regards to their space security policies. The latter was more recently facilitated by Brexit and the withdrawal from the international space programme, Galileo. Historical Institutionalism is in part focused on the concept of junctures and the results of this study reveal that there have been several critical junctures in the space security policy of the EU and the UK such as the refusal to accept the UK as a member of the EEC, the Kosovo conflict in the 1990s that led to the emergence of an autonomous EU satellite infrastructure, and the UK's withdrawals from Galileo and its past economic failures.

The results of this study bear witness to its limitations such as the relatively scarce amount of theory-based literature analysing space security policies. Another limitation is that the results of this study are not generalisable because they focus on a specific context. The theoretical framework of historical institutionalism is effective in analysing past events, but it is a poor fit for making projections about the future. An effective framework that would be more forward-looking could be beneficial for policymakers. It is also valid to mention the lack of access to primary data as a serious limitation to this research. In light of the limited information available from secondary sources, future studies should arrange interviews with experts in the field from both the UK and the EU to also gain their insights on the historical development of their space security policies and their vision for the future of these policies. It is also recommended that future studies should compare the development of UK and EU space security policies with those of the US, as a major strategic ally. Moreover, it would be interesting in future studies to divide the policies into military and civil segments to gain more insight into the influence of both and to trace the differences in their historical development.