

CALL FOR PAPERS

Special Issue on War & Academia

1. Who we are

SIRIUS – Zeitschrift für Strategische Analysen (SIRIUS – Journal of Strategic Analysis) addresses key strategic challenges and offers policy options in the areas of security, foreign affairs, and defence. It serves as an established forum for academics and practitioners from Germany as well as those beyond, to engage with German-speaking policy and scholarly security communities. SIRIUS is a peer-reviewed open access journal published by De Gruyter Brill.

2. Topic

Contemporary wars—from Ukraine to Gaza and beyond—have sharply increased Europe's demand for expertise on war and strategy. Television programmes, radio shows, and newspapers regularly feature the “military expert.” In Germany, many of these voices come from academia and think tanks, while active military personnel—despite being at the forefront of conflict—are comparatively rarely heard. Yet this visibility tells only part of the story: the growing demand for expert advice is not always met with a deep and broad supply of relevant expertise. In Germany, there are few dedicated chairs and research institutes specialising in security, defence, and strategic studies in comparison to countries of similar size—a problem recognised for action in the coalition treaty. Furthermore, the visibility of an expert may not translate into advice being accepted or acted upon.

Against this backdrop, the Special Issue aims to foster a problem-oriented debate on knowledge about war and the expectations placed upon academia. On the one hand, there are epistemic limits: what can scholars realistically know about war, particularly when questions concern the future? On the other hand, there are institutional, political and cognitive limits in relation to the use of expert knowledge: whose knowledge is “in demand”, and what kind of impact does such knowledge have on decision-making and policy? Where can academic insights add the most value and necessary critique, where does practitioner knowledge and craft dominate, and where do these spheres intersect—or collide?

3. We invite submissions that address, but are not limited to, the following themes

Competing Expert Cultures and Epistemic Frictions

- **Self-Understanding and Self-Critique:** How do scholars and practitioners perceive their own roles in public and policy-making debates, and how do they see the boundaries of their expertise?
- **Practitioners' Expectations of Academia:** Is scholarship primarily valued as a source of background information, a challenge to think differently about problems, or also as actionable recommendations? How do practitioners see academics contributions in public debate; explanation and education versus critique and advocacy for doing things differently? What role can and should they play in current wars and violent conflicts.

- **Academia's Critique of Practitioners:** How do researchers perceive the epistemic cultures of the military and other national security actors and communities? Where does collaboration succeed, and where does disillusionment occur?

War and the Boundaries of Knowledge

- **Divergent Methods, Divergent Data, Divergent Conclusions:** How do differences in methodology and access to data shape analysis in different disciplines and subfields, and how can such divergences be critically assessed?
- **Uncertainty as Practice:** How do scholars and practitioners confront institutional and methodological limits to their knowledge?
- **Forecasting or Fortune-Telling?** In the detailed realities of conflict, knowledge often becomes opaque. How do experts manage ambiguity when predictions are demanded of them?

Lessons Learned vs. Lessons Ignored

- **Learning Mechanisms:** What institutional pathways—or blockages—exist for systematic learning involving external experts during and after conflict? Can transnational or cross-sectoral learning between academia and practice occur? What are the strengths and weaknesses of Germany's learning and accountability mechanisms, such as the Enquete Commission on Afghanistan?
- **Token Consultation or Meaningful Influence:** What roles do academics play in commissions, advisory bodies, and public debates, and to what extent is their knowledge utilised?

4. Publication format

- Full-length Articles: 5,000 to 10,000 words
- Brief Analysis & Commentary: 2,000 to 5,000 words

We welcome submissions in German and English.

5. Deadline

Submissions are due by Tuesday, 31 March 2026. All accepted contributions will be published Ahead of Print (AoP). The full Special Issue is expected to appear in Summer 2026.

6. Contact

Prospective authors are encouraged to contact the editorial team regarding topic proposals or questions:
sirius@swud.org