

Speaking points
International conference OSS 21
“Information-Sharing Scenarios Panel”
“The birth of OSINT in Italy”
dr. Alessandro Politi
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1. The use of open sources by the Italian intelligence in the period following the II WW is as old as the birth of free press after Fascism. That said, it was mainly a mass media monitoring through the use of more or less useful press reviews.
2. The same was done by private and state-owned industries, both for PR, external image and commercial purposes.
3. Concerning the needs of the external intelligence, FBIS and RFE/RL were considered the ideal models, although they remained mainly an object of desire, because the allocation of resources and the prejudice against a real OSINT (Open Source Intelligence) were very unfavourable at that time.
4. The crisis of long standing attitudes started with the end of the Cold War and the beginning of the globalisation (end of narrowly defined collection requirements, more instability in the post-Soviet era, more intelligence targets, more political requirements, the explosion of open sources).
5. The crisis in former Yugoslavia was the primer for a wider, in not more systematic, exploitation of open sources in several languages. One should not forget, however, that some key sectors of the Italian intelligence had a certain tradition in the use of these sources (problems for anti-Mafia and anti-terrorism units with low quality of media).
6. In the decade following 1989, the problem of the link between macroeconomics and national security became more acute and here again open sources were

- an indispensable starting point for the useful employment of covert assets. Special governmental decrees, assigning to external and internal intelligence services the task to fight against organised crime and to investigate on certain covert speculations against the Italian lira before entering the Euro system, reinforced the importance of the collection and analysis requirements entailed by the economics-security link.
7. Further developments in this field took place with the so called "Jucci committee" (1996) and with a memorable speech of the chairman of the parliamentary Information and Security Services Committee, hon. Franco Frattini (Institute for High Defence Studies), on the problem of economic intelligence and the global diffusion of OSINT .
 8. Another important contribution was given by the then Defence minister, hon. Beniamino Andreatta, who sponsored the presentation of the first Italian book on information warfare and promoted the study of the lessons learned by the *Eligible Receiver* exercise.
 9. Some of these concepts were introduced in the presentation of the intelligence reform, proposed to the Parliament by the first D'Alema government and drafted by the then deputy-premier, hon. Sergio Mattarella.
 10. In the meantime, pressing operational needs created the conditions for a decisive effort in order to put OSINT on par with other INTs.
 11. A first experiment was made, again, by Mr. Andreatta, who created, for the first time in Italy, an OSINT collection and analysis cell, directly tasked by himself. I had the honour and the privilege to direct this unit. The staff was very small, but had access to the open sources available to some key ministries. In some cases we worked on specific tasks supporting the development of the national defence diplomacy, in another case we had to produce a biweekly integrated

OSINT analysis of the Balkans in order to plan future political actions. The fall of the Prodi government interrupted this interesting initiative, but the systematic use of internet to support the Defence cabinet became irreversible.

12. The first organic initiative was started by the *Segrecesis* (General Secretariat of the Intelligence and Security Services Executive Committee, depending from the Presidency of the Council of Ministers, i.e. the premier), lead by the prefect Mr. Berardino.
13. *Segrecesis* has co-ordinating functions *vis-à-vis* the SISMI and the SISDE. Most probably this peculiar function induced the leadership to be more eager to exploit the possibilities offered by a real OSINT.
14. At the beginning of this year a Multimedia Room was set up at an experimental level. This unit is capable to work with every type of open source in Italian and in both diplomatic languages. The training phase is ongoing and the initial operational capability will follow in the coming weeks.
15. Two training criteria: to extract the signal from the noise and to offer to the analysts an interesting and helpful product. The first criterion is in common with every knowledge-based work and the second derives from an environment that has to absorb the advantages of a rigorous and systematic OSINT. The top management is strongly supporting, but the direct users too have to be convinced about the usefulness of OSINT.
16. Under the stimulus of these needs I have devised a new role: the OSINT researcher-analyst. The mass of open information is such that a hybrid professional role is the only one capable to search intelligently, select thoroughly and to provide the analyst with a product where the data are collated with a critical attitude. The analyst can always go back to the raw data, but has a high-quality product that is readily

employable in the interpretation of the data of other sources.

17. An evergreen in this training: the humanistic approach, both in the management of sources and information technology, in synergy with media-specific training.
18. The common matrix of information based professions: finding sources, collating data, analyse, sum up, present the product in time. This means to use a philological approach: find a text, validate it, formulate sensible hypotheses on the missing pieces (be it the text of an international agreement or of the human genome).
19. The Multimedia Room offers three products:
 - Daily collection of information useful for the analysts within a multimedia database, using fairly wide and flexible research criteria;
 - Tasked information research;
 - Medium-short term researches in order to supply the analyst with a high value added product.
20. The first product is based on the open source synergies among different national ministries, enriched by autonomous research. It is immediately available to the top management and the analysts via intranet. The remaining products are intermediate steps towards an all source analysis.

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