

01/05/02 5.54.36

**Paper for the OSS 02 Conference
“The new craft of intelligence”
Washington DC, 10th of May 2002**

The 11th of September and the Future of European Intelligence

*dr. Alessandro Politi
Independent Strategic & OSINT Analyst
Italy-EU*

Opinions are strictly personal and should not attributed to any Italian or European government, agency, communitarian or intergovernmental body.

It has become particularly fashionable to start with this tragic date almost any strategic argument, but frankly in too many cases it resembles very much a new way to introduce, like the older “After the fall of the Wall...”. I will try therefore to use this chronological reference just to highlight what is really relevant for Europe’s policy and therefore for European intelligence.

In a first part I will outline the continuity factors underlying the development of European intelligence, trying also to define what we mean by this word. In the second I will sketch, according my personal views, what are EU’s main political and strategic interests, since these will contribute to shape intelligence requirements. Thirdly, I will try to see what real elements of change might have introduced 11/9. Finally, I will explore the possible futures of European intelligence.

By European intelligence we can define either the different intelligence agencies existing in the EU countries or the different co-operative intelligence arrangements or mechanisms that should facilitate collaboration and, if possible, synergies.

Continuity and change date back at least 13 years ago (yes, the end of the Cold War), but in the case of military/external intelligence co-operation we have a solid record of 50 years (NATO, COCOM), while for internal security agencies it goes back at least 25 years (TREVI group). It should not be surprising, because: Europe is a long-term affair; crises and reforms are but critical short-term elements of longer change cycles; politics and intelligence are organised around short-term decision cycles rooted in medium-term decisions and in long-term realities.

The fundamentals of EU countries' intelligence agencies are basically the same since some 50 years: regional presence of larger political and intelligence realities (USA, USSR-Russia); overall dependency from US wealth of information and especially on hi-tech collection and information management systems; stronger HUMINT and cultural intelligence capabilities; relatively balanced ratio between collection and analytical resources; varying SIGINT capabilities; very limited satellite capabilities; major countries possessing decent technical collection means on conventional air, sea, land platforms; major and some minor countries having interesting links with former colonies; competition in the Arab/Gulf area with Israeli intelligence services; strong persistence of quid pro quo arrangements; frequent budget limitations.

Traditional co-operation areas, apart from the Soviet threat, have been: anti-terrorism, non-proliferation and technology control exports, radical extremist groups, military intelligence both on technical aspects and in crisis management. In the past 20 years organized crime emerged as an increasing law enforcement concern, leading gradually also to a higher internal intelligence involvement. Economic intelligence, for what it means and it may offer, has remained in most cases a strictly national affair and especially a preserve of private, commercial or OSINT-based organizations.

1 Fora for intelligence co-operation have been: NATO itself (mainly military and more recently crisis management/peacekeeping; Totem analysts' exchanges); the WEU (Western European Union) in the last six years of existence (voluntary intelligence clearing house, open sources and satellite IMINT); the Berne club; the TREVI group (terrorism and subversion); the Kilowatt group and its successor; ENFOPOL. Part of the covert operation side was managed by the then Stay Behind NATO and multilateral network. Some of them have disappeared, replaced by more robust and structured EU-wide arrangements. A much more limited scheme, but of Euro-Atlantic relevance, can be considered Echelon, whose political and operational problems have sometimes being exaggerated.

Once one has set this scene it appears increasingly clear that any talk of a future Euro-CIA is just political speculation, mostly driven by party prejudice. This will appear even more evident if we look at European political and strategic interests.

According to a rough scale one could list them in this order: 1) to get off the ground the Euro-economy / to move on with the constitutional process / to keep NATO as vital as possible / to keep the EU social environment reasonably stable; 2) to concentrate the effort on realistic intelligence and military capabilities; 3) to achieve the convergence of European military

budgets; 4) to concentrate the expenditures in the transatlantic arena on C3I systems, taking into account balanced and common requirements; 5) to standardise armaments procurement.

The first priorities listed together are quite connected to each other. The Euro exists, but, without its economy developing, much of the needed reforms and changes will be impossible to manage. At the same time the political integration process is indispensable to boost the other three priorities.

I would like to draw your attention on the importance of the political dimension on two accounts. You seem to have painfully re-discovered the importance of political decisions precisely with the 11/9, because not economy rose to the challenge, but politics. We all knew that "It's economy, stupid" was a half-baked truth. Yet in Europe the supremacy of politics is simply impossible to forget because Europe is a political product, using the economic lever to achieve wider goals.

If you ask to a Euro-sceptic what is his vision of the future, at best you get the status quo, in most cases you have just arguments on the speed of integration and at worst he would like, just as Bossi in my country, a Balkanisation of existing nation-states. Hardly something that will keep the European society open or global and NATO viable.

Europeanists are struggling to define a new multi-level, flexible, networked federal integration which has to be invented practically from scratch, but they know that actual nation-states will be simply bypassed and devitalised, if they insist in retaining a fictive national sovereignty. They simply do not have critical resources and capabilities to satisfy their citizens' needs because issues are in most cases transnational from the start.

Here comes the problem of NATO and of the future of an important aspect of the transatlantic relationship. After a ten-year debate on coalition warfare, begun immediately after the war against Iraq, we find ourselves using *de facto* the notion of coalition as the yardstick for effective transatlantic collaboration within a predetermined mission.

We understand the enthusiasm here for this formula, but we do not share it. Having experienced coalition warfare since 950 years, we know that this is bad money in international politics, driving out the good one represented by stable political alliances. Two world wars were our financial crash.

The way NATO and its art. 5 were used until today is allows the spreading within this organisation of a coalition mentality, which is incompatible with an alliance. Instead of becoming a relic, as former US DoD Secretary Cohen feared, we might risk to see the Alliance turning into a Pickwick club. This is not an issue concerning military or technological

capabilities, it is a political stake: this Alliance is founded on a democratic co-decision and on shared interests, not so a coalition. In fact the latter is a fleeting arrangement.

Starting from the realistic assumption that the European Union needs just one superpower in the world, the EU will define a realistic military security perimeter where it can operate frequently as a first resort. Concerning multidimensional security, which includes the risk of terrorism, the EU is the ideal interface between NATO, third pillar (Justice and Home Affairs), the USA and other countries.

For this reason, in the framework of a new NATO, the role of Europe as a civil power is not only complementary, it is quite indispensable. In the light of the actual transatlantic political situation, without an effective European role there will be no more a functioning NATO, because Congress will constantly reduce US engagement in this organisation.

At this point we are ready to look into the often-mentioned changes brought by 11/9. The EU and its people have paid a heavy price in this disaster, since, among the some 3.160 innocents slaughtered, 600 European fellow citizens lost their life, including 40 Italians. A fact often overlooked by media, which has political consequences.

The 11th of September has been a political, intelligence and law enforcement failure, but not a military one. In fact, the Islamist extremist terrorist were capable to achieve a murderous feat, but the basics of US political, economic, technological, strategic and cultural power were practically untouched. The individual relative weight of other major powers and political entities (Japan, Russia, China, EU) is exactly the same as before; the problems of each continent and those posed by the globalisation continue to be the same. Naturally perceptions have changed, but hard facts tend to change at a much more slower pace and it is too early to measure any impact on the US prestige.

Three are the real direct effects of the 11th of September attacks:

1. they proved that the continental US territory was not invulnerable;
2. they were successful at mass level, even by more ruthless military standards (one light brigade has been exterminated in one day);
3. they were the most powerful attack so far carried out by a non-state actor against a superpower government.

All the rest is the product either of trends that were already developing (i.e. the economic recession) or of deliberate US and international political decisions in an environment of long-term trends that are scarcely affected even by these tremendous events. One can easily accept the argument that they may

have acted as a catalyst, accelerating the critical time dimension of existing processes, but again this is connected to existing facts.

The actions of the US administration were both reactive and proactive. The single most important proactive decision was the attempt to transform a self-defence reaction into a lasting international political paradigm, using it to reorganize the political and institutional map world-wide. Then comes the reassertion of the primacy of policy on economics and the recapture of the political initiative by the US presidency *vis-à-vis* the Congress.

What are the consequences for the European Union? Five: a) it has to redefine its role *vis-à-vis* an ally that is engaged in two long-term wars (this one plus the 20-year old war on drugs); b) it must accelerate both the deepening of political integration and the widening through the twin enlargement mechanisms (EU and NATO); c) it must be ready to take planned security responsibilities by 2003 (activation of the European Rapid Reaction Corps); d) it needs to secure a balanced access to energy sources, taking into account new US-Russian relationships; e) it has to integrate successfully the political, diplomatic economic, humanitarian dimensions of its traditional "civil power", with the newly acquired military instruments and with the dovetailing of external and internal security.

The future of European intelligence, as we have seen, has been already oriented many years ago. Even the convergence and the blurring between external and internal security, now so strongly stressed, were a reality accepted during the last decade of the last century. The end of the Cold War was the beginning of the end of state regulation on terrorist activities, signalled the burgeoning of new global criminal groups and families, led to the explosion of both legal and illegal economy, re-privatised a number of wars.

In fact, it is not a chance that law enforcement and justice collaboration (the so-called EU third pillar) got a decisive impulse by the Treaty of Amsterdam (1999) with the creation of the Schengen system. European decision-makers were quick in recognising the main threats to citizens, society and stability. The swift neutralisation of several Islamist terrorist cells during the last months demonstrates the soundness of the system.

Actually the European intelligence (and/or law enforcement) collaboration network is based on four mechanism or organisations: Schengen, Europol (and its institutional liaison with FBI, ENFOPOL), the EU EMS INT division and the EU SATCEN. Eurojustice is strictly a judicial co-operation network, launched last 1/1/2002, but it is evident that it favours, by its mere existence, an enhanced exchange on information.

Instead of detailing known facts about these entities, I would like to underline the differences and the common traits that mark the European scene.

Firstly, as mentioned, the third pillar is much more advanced than the second (Common Foreign and Security Policy). The SIS (Schengen Information System) is a centralised database, build upon voluntary contributions, accessible in a very decentralised way. It is highly structured, respects relevant data protection and privacy EU criteria and is a central piece to favour the freedom of circulation within the EU, while assisting in a more effective border control. In its advanced version it will include wider personal files and allow access to Europol and Eurojustice members, possibly also to intelligence agencies.

Europol is not a federal police, but it is body where criminal and terrorist intelligence can be collated, evaluated and disseminated, with continuously increasing competencies on serious crimes. This year TECS (The Europol Computer System) has begun its operations, including an analysis system. Already since year 2000 it can recommend a member state to initiate, conduct or co-ordinate investigations in specific cases, although the member country can stop this co-operation at any stage. Common training standards across senior police officials will be attained by the creation of the European Police College (CEPOL), a network of police colleges that will operate in Denmark.

The strong advantages within this pillar are: structured information supply; common evaluation of transnational crimes and terrorism; clear and quick dissemination channels; increasing future training.

The second pillar has a relatively more mixed record. The creation of the SATCEN (Satellite Centre) has been a first in terms of multinational co-operation and training in the exploitation and analysis of satellite images, both commercial and HELIOS.

SITCEN (Situation Centre) was a good OSINT start, but apparently has not progressed and is now considered less relevant than at the start in the WEU days. Part of its problems derive from the transition towards a structure like the EU, much bigger than the WEU, part from its less focused customer (the Political Directorate of the EU Council) and part from the growing effectiveness of the EMS INT Division.

This division of the European Military Staff has started as a post box for voluntary national military intelligence contributions and has developed into an effective clearing and fusion centre of national information at the service of Mr. CFSP, Javier Solana de Madariaga. During the FYROM crisis it was particularly effective, also because the UK, French, German and Italian military intelligence services are among the main drivers.

The good news are that there could be a reassignment of the SITCEN to Mr. CFSP and that the wider political intelligence dimension, until now

non-existing, could be managed a “mixed intelligence cell” which should supply strategic intelligence evaluations to the Political and Security Committee (COPS). The bad news are that we are still very far from the level of information sharing and evaluation that characterises the third pillar.

I would this time avoid easy linear predictions on how these entities might develop in time into a more coherent and effective whole, because something essential will be decided in one year by the future European Charter (i.e. constitution) and because I feel it is more useful to put some requirements which have still to be addressed.

The first one is just political common sense: the Chairman of the European Commission must receive a daily intelligence briefing and it must be prepared by a Euro-JIC. He should be briefed on all aspects where the Commission activities are bound to interlock with second and third pillar activities. Information must go where it can give a premium: intergovernmental co-operation is OK, but when Europe has to pull its weight it happens regularly through the Commission. Once one admits that there are strong connections, established by the hard realities of life, between the three pillars, one should stop fussing and be consequent. European governments will take some time, but, starting from now, time is ripe for a joint intelligence committee that prepares an all-source integrated product.

The second one is a paradoxical lesson of 11/9: the EU governments need to have a coherent intelligence satellite and UAV programme, only one and fast. The fact that our US friends were surprised by their apparent lack of HUMINT, does not mean that we have not to fill a huge gap in satellite and unmanned collection systems. We need less, so we can better analyse the output, but satellites and UAVs are like eyes: the non-duplication argument simply does not hold. Useless to say that the EU SATCEN should be the main operator.

The third proposal is that European agencies can obviously use the terrorist threat as an agenda driver, but it would be unwise to make it the main shaping factor. We live in a multidimensional security risks world and we could pay dearly an excessive specialisation. Terrorists rarely change the political landscape, corruption and organised crime often, regional conflicts almost always.

Under an apparently sticky surface, European intelligence services are discovering in increasing numbers that OSINT is not a toy, but very serious business. Again many of them are internal security services, which feel immediate political pressure and have to understand from their political masters that we live indeed in the information age, i.e. the open source age. They are not alone, because also enlightened external services and intelligence

assessment bodies have started to use OSINT as the old/new almost normal complement.

European intelligence should use this opportunity in two ways: one institutional and one at citizens' level. The institutional approach should go beyond the national level and allow regular rotations between national agencies and the SITCEN in order to ensure a high qualitative standard and constant international relationships.

Approaching the citizens needs a cultural revolution, because it should be something beyond the usual source-handling, commercial intelligence hiring etc. The usual relationship is based on the fact that somebody with superior knowledge (the agency official) interacts with somebody who is not within the inner circle. Especially analysts should begin to tap that enormous resource that in US is the "intelligence minuteman" and in Europe is the "no-logo intelligencer". Citizens ready to provide information and also to challenge in free discussion old and new assumptions and prejudices, but who refuse to wear some badge, either commercial or governmental. They could be patriots, but also radicals with strong anti-system beliefs, and yet ready to have a good argument even with a spook.

Analysts should not regard themselves as secluded alchemists, but as specialised information intellectuals that need the contact with the wider social body in order to give their best. They should not forget that their country has prospered within a Europe that was and has to remain a civil power. Just as diplomacy and economy are the means of first resort for this type of global power, OSINT can be a starting intelligence tool, smoothly interacting with other branches. Naturally it is not a panacea, but it can contribute to set up a healthy basis for the creation of a vital European intelligence community, for instance through a joint European OSINT school.

OSS '02 PROCEEDINGS "The New Craft of Intelligence: Brainpower, Webpower, & Ground Truth" - Link Page

[Previous](#) [COMMAND-DRIVEN INTELLIGENCE](#)

[Next](#) [Competitive Intelligence Analysis Tools](#)

[Return to Electronic Index Page](#)