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The Citizen as "Intelligence Minuteman"

In the aftermath of the 11 September 2001 airborne terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, United States government officials proposed the creation of Operation Terrorism Information and Prevention System (TIPS) program. Civil libertarians of both the political Left and Right expressed considerable concern about its perceived resemblance to the neighborhood watch mechanisms of social control in totalitarian states. But a democratic nation's underlying cultural and ethical values help channel its intelligence organizations in vastly different directions from those of authoritarian states. Urging a democracy's citizens to exercise caution, and encouraging them to report suspicious behavior can be a valuable self-defense mechanism when used to protect the public, rather than keep it under surveillance for political purposes and social control. The issue has been fervently discussed in many nations as part of the continuing search for a sound relationship between intelligence and the public good.

THE ETHICAL CONSIDERATION

A major contradiction can be found in the relationship between "intelligence" and "ethics." As the ongoing national legislative debate in

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Italy over the Frattini reform proposals has shown, intelligence officers need a legal framework in order to avoid prosecution when they commit, during their missions, some types of crime. The cultural foundations of current Italian legislation avoid extreme authorizations, such as the license to kill *summum ius, summa iniuria* (the extreme judgment is the supreme breach of the law), although political necessities could at times strongly nudge responsible officials toward this solution to vexing problems.

The important thing to consider in exploring the link between intelligence and ethics is the source of the craft, that is, the always ambiguous and yet never ending relationship between ethics and politics.

Italians have the privilege of becoming immediately absorbed, almost instinctively, in Niccolo Machiavelli's lesson about politics, without some of the complications introduced by the successive Protestant debate or present in the Anglican approach to politics, found in Great Britain and much of the rest of Western Europe. According to Machiavelli, politics is clearly distinct from the wide moral sphere, and, to borrow a Clausewitzian metaphor, has its own moral grammar.

Nevertheless, Italians are often victims of the vulgarized version of Machiavelli's thought. "The ends justify the means," which is, in reality, a brilliant falsifying shortcut of his original precept, "Let the means be adequate to your ends."

Machiavelli did not dream of abolishing the moral horizon from his political view because he knew all too well that a self-contained moral grammar does not make a moral logic. Politics has practical priorities, but invariably needs a vision, that is, moral values, if good governance is to be produced. In the past, good governance distinguished an illuminated autocracy from tyranny, and today makes the difference between a democracy and a kleptocratic demagoguery with an illusory parliamentary image.

Understandably, tolerance and moral relativism are not identical, nor is it impossible to distinguish good from bad, although morals can pose dilemmas as difficult as those encountered in politics.

Returning to intelligence, its definition in the Italian Strategic Defense Review's "2001: New Forces for a New Century" should be analyzed:

216. Intelligence is a non-conventional instrument used in international relations to safeguard and foster national interests as a whole, also within alliances. Intelligence is basically the product of a thorough effort of collection, processing and dissemination of value-added information that is considered to be relevant to the government's political decisions and to the country's security.

The expression "non-conventional" means something "not submitted to covenants," a rough play unconstrained in principle by rules. In practice, unwritten rules do exist among countries—friends, and in many cases,