

European Intelligence Cooperation: A Greek Perspective

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*The article is written and dedicated
for the Memory of Prof Dr.
Miroslav Tuđman, a Man of
Vision and good human being!*

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Abstract: European intelligence cooperation is the most important weapon in the fight against the new threats in the 27 member states. The article emphasizes the reasons that make the European Union Intelligence

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Analysis Centre (INTCEN) more towards an independent operational agency into the European mechanism as well as the roles of the Intelligence College of Europe founded in France and the European Intelligence Academy established under the auspices of the Research Institute for European and American Studies (RIEAS) in Athens, Greece. Even though, effective intelligence cooperation is hard to achieve even at the national level as different services compete for resources and attention from the decision makers, past terrorist incidents in Europe served as a wake up for the public and private institutions to promote intelligence sharing and cooperation among European Union institutions and Member States.

Introduction

The end of the Cold War more than 20 years created a world in which the relatively stable between the two superpowers has disappeared. During the Cold War, a country's every action was conducted in the light of the adversary relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union. On 9/11 the international community was introduced to a new type of terrorism, one that was truly global in the organization and impact. In both the European Union, and the United States and Asia, it was immediately clear that an effective response would require new levels of intelligence cooperation in order to confront new threats such as biological warfare (covid 19), hybrid warfare, extremism, illegal migration, human and illicit trafficking, radical networks, transnational organized crime, money-laundering, and terrorism.

The post-September 11, 2001, and following the terrorist acts in Madrid (2004), London (2005), Burgas (2021) in Bulgaria as well as more terrorist incidents (in France, Belgium, UK, Spain, Germany, Nordic states) that already happened until now in the European Union member states has challenged governments, policy-makers, religious leaders, the media and the general public to play both critical and constructive roles in the war against hybrid warfare and terrorism as well as radical Islamic extremism. (1)

As the intelligence community works its way into the twenty-first century, it faces an unprecedented array of challenges. The chaotic world environment of the post-Cold War era (Islamic State in Syria and Iraq – ISIS – Arab Spring, Syria, Libya, and Ukraine crises, COVID 19, Iran nuclear issue, hybrid-biological warfare, and jihadi networks) offers a wide range of different issues to be understood, and a variety of new threats to be anticipated. The rapidly developing Information Age presents a process that needs to be a joint intelligence partnership which emphasizes the differences and grievances, and builds a future based upon the recognition that all face common threats, one that can effectively contained and eliminated only through a recognition of mutual interests and the use of multilateral alliances, strategies, and action. (2)

It is in this context the article highlights the reasons for a European Union Intelligence Agency; points out the role of the European Union Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN) towards a prospective independent operational agency into the European Union Mechanism; points out the synergies between public and private institutions that specialize on intelligence studies by promoting intelligence collaboration such as the Intelligence College of Europe (France) and European Intelligence Academy (Greece), and it concludes with the need for a substantial intelligence

sharing between the European Union (EU) and United States (USA).

European Union Intelligence Agency: Is it necessary?

The European Union as an entity has become an increasingly important factor in the European continent since the revival of the European Community through the Single European Act (SEA) signed in 1986. SEA is the official name for the 1992 program for the opening borders among the 27 European member states. However, the instability in the North Africa (Arab Spring, and Middle East (Libya, Syria, Kurdish issue and Iraq crises, water conflicts) has affected the security and border control of the European Union member states by the huge flow of illegal immigration to the shores of Greece, Cyprus, Italy, and Spain. The European Union's interior and justice ministers were clearly reluctant to hand over any major national intelligence functions to a European Commission at a time when ad hoc arrangements among the major national intelligence services in Europe – and with the United States – are recently in the forefront in the campaign against hybrid-biological warfare (Chinese virus, COVID 19), terrorism and Islamic extremism (particularly in France).

The European Union member states interior and justice ministers did agree on closer collaboration on some security issues and appointed a counterterrorism coordinator who oversees monitoring the work of the European Union Council in the field of counterterrorism, better communication between European Union (EU) and United States (USA) and ensure that the European Union plays an active role in the fight against radical extremism. An important point of agreement was to “create a clearinghouse, where for the first-time investigating judges, police and intelligence services in the European Union member states

can direct information which becomes available in real time to all members”, stated a Commission spokesman.(3)

Instead of the proposal of Belgium and Austria to create a European Union Intelligence Agency in order to fight international terrorism, the interior ministers from top five European states – Britain, Germany, France, Spain, and Italy – were unwilling to agree on how to share intelligence with all European Union member states and other nations. (4)

From Joint Situation Centre (SitCen) to Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN)

European Union Intelligence Centre (INTCEN) joined the European External Action Service (EEAS) in 2010, but it has a far longer history, its origins, as “a structure working exclusively on open-source intelligence (OSINT)”, lie in the Western European Union (WEU), an intergovernmental military alliance that officially disbanded in June 2011 after its function were gradually transferred over the last decade to the European Union’s Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP). (5)

In 2012, INTCEN’s predecessor organization was established as a directorate of the General Secretariat of the European Council and given the name European Union (EU) Joint Situation Centre (SitCen). Staff from seven EU member states (France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and the United Kingdom) intelligence services were seconded to the center and started to exchange sensitive intelligence as part of an “insider club” made up of intelligence analysts from the seven member’s states. (6)

In 2007, the European Union Joint Situation Centre’s (SitCen) ability to analyze situations outside the European Union was strengthened by the establishment of the Single

Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC), which pools civilian intelligence with that obtained by the European Union Military Staff's intelligence Division. SIAC provides "intelligence input to crisis response planning and assessment for operational and exercises" (7). The European Union Military Staff was transferred to the European External Action Service (EEAS) in 2010 at the same time as European Union Joint Situation Centre (SitCen), although the institutions themselves have not been merged.

In 2010, European Union Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN) became part of the EEAS and expanded to cover internal and external threats, and to allow for collection, processing, analysis, and sharing of classified information. Referring to the former director of INTCEN, Ikka Salmi, points out: "EU INTCEN's mission is to provide intelligence analyses, early warning and situational awareness to the High Representative and to the European External Action Service (EEAS), to various European Union decision making bodies in the fields of the Common Security and Foreign Policy (CSFP) and the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) and Counterterrorism, as well as to the European Union member states. EU INTCEN does this by monitoring and assessing international events 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, focusing particularly on sensitive geographical areas, terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and other global threats." (8)

Today, INTCEN has its headquarters in Brussels (Belgium), and it employs European Union analysts and military background analysts. The analysts are seconded to INTCEN by their national intelligence services, as well as INTCEN employs European Union officials, temporary agents, and national experts from the security and intelligence community of the European Union member states. In addition, the INTCEN personnel has access to the

European member's satellites, such as France's Helios and Pleiades, Germany's SAR-Lupe, Italy's Cosmo-Sky Med, and U.S. – owned commercial satellites. INTCEN receives diplomatic reports from the European Union 135 official delegation around the world, and classified intelligence from the European Union's monitoring missions such as Georgia. However, INTCEN receives finished products from the European Union member states' intelligence services rather than raw intelligence.

Synergy of Public and Private intelligence institutions

In the European Union member states, there has been a growing concern on the role of public and private partnerships in intelligence issues. In Greece, there is no synergy of the public authorities with private institutions (research think tanks and companies) even though Greece is surrounded by a plethora of threats. The lack of substantial reforms in the Greek security and intelligence community has left Greece vulnerable to potential threats in the future.

However, the situation is similar to EU member states in the Balkan and Mediterranean states which the intensity of public and private partnership in intelligence affairs is below owing to poor understanding. The European Commission must take an initiative to promote an education program on the importance of public and private intelligence partnership in the European Union member states.

The increasing development of research in intelligence studies has cultivated widespread awareness of the need to strengthen the collaboration between academia and the intelligence community. (9).

On November 19, 2018, the European Union foreign and defense ministers approved the project of a joint intelligence training school (Joint European Union Intelligence School – JEIS), led by Greece with Cyprus. This

project is part of a list of 17 joint projects signed within the PESCO framework. (10) The purpose of the Joint European Union Intelligence School – which would be based in Cyprus – is to “provide education and training in intelligence disciplines and other specific fields to European Union member states intelligence personnel in cooperation with national agencies and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)”. (11)

In Greece (2013), the Research Institute for European and American Studies (RIEAS) founded the European Intelligence Academy (EIA) – a specialized network of academia and former practitioners – in order to promote intelligence studies from an academic point of view; design and introduce intelligence courses for decision-makers in the public and private sector; and establish a database of international intelligence literature. (12)

In 2017, French President Macron in his speech on Europe at La Sorbonne University announced the idea of a “European Intelligence Academy” (EIA) as a key policy initiative since France did not step to cooperate with Greece and Cyprus in the PESCO project.

The Intelligence College in Europe (ICE) was launched on 5th March 2019 in Paris, France. ICE brings together 23 member states, which signed a letter of intent on 26th February 2020 in Zagreb, Croatia. ICE is a platform for reflection and outreach. Intelligence communities, academia, European decision-makers, citizens, and executives work together in order to raise awareness about intelligence-related challenges and issues via publications and the implementation of an academic program dedicated to intelligence professionals. (13)

Intelligence is a national prerogative above all, and the sharing of information is not always the most effective

way to counter-threats. As John M Nomikos, RIEAS director, points out, “trust is far more important than institutions for intelligence sharing” and Lelia Rousselet, RIEAS senior analyst, states “a joint intelligence school to share best training practices will definitely assist to create a more inclusive intelligence community at the European level and could be seen as a first step towards a more operational intelligence cooperation. A common intelligence culture would certainly be beneficial for European security.” (14)

Today’s realities – political, social, medical (COVID 19), international, economic – impose limitations upon governments never seen before in democratic societies. Therefore, academic curricula for intelligence studies should put special emphasis on how to develop policy “mindsets.”

As Prof Anestis Symeonides, RIEAS academic advisor, points out, “intelligence studies fill the vital need for trained, capable individuals ready to take up the challenge of observing, understanding and explaining an increasingly chaotic and dangerous international environment. Building an “intelligence culture” is the ultimate goal. It is also important that governments, academic institutions, research institutes, dedicated international bodies and individual scholars continue to build collaborative ventures.” (15)

In the end, understanding intelligence and security enable European citizens to make enlightened judgement in the field. The development of European networks (16) has paved the way for future transnational cooperation. At the end, the European Union Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN) personnel can substantially cooperate with the European College of Europe (ICE) and the European Intelligence Academy (EIA) on promoting public and private intelligence affairs.

Concluding Remarks

Intelligence cooperation is the most important weapon in the battle to contain the new threats (illegal migration, human trafficking, foreign jihadi networks, transnational crime, money-laundering, radical extremism, and hybrid-biological warfare) in the European Union member states, but its significance is ever greater than that. The first few years of the twenty-first century have witnessed a change in the role of secret intelligence in international politics. Intelligence and security issues are now more prominent than ever in Western political discourse as well as the wider public consciousness.

The current environment in the European Union member states is less benign with multiple sources of insecurity. Societies across the southern and eastern shores of the Mediterranean (Syria, Iraq, Libya,) energy security issues in Eastern Mediterranean Sea and central Europe (Ukraine) are experiencing rapid geopolitical and geoeconomics changes. For the foreseeable future, security agenda in the southeastern part of NATO (especially Turkey) will be driven to a considerable extent by internal security concerns.

In this context, the synergy of public and private intelligence institutions must be introduced in the European Union member states, the European Union Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN) needs to be strengthened to be able to have an independent operational role inside the EU mechanism and actively collaborate with the Intelligence College of Europe (ICE) and the European Intelligence Academy (EIA) as well as research think tanks that focus its research agenda on promoting intelligence cooperation between the European Union (EU) and the United States (USA).

Finally, intelligence profession is at a watershed in its intellectual history. For nearly a hundred years, the focus of intelligence operations had remained unchanged. (17) The categories of information required for national states and the analysis of civilian and military capabilities and intentions were largely the same in 1909 and 2021. In the twenty-first century, intelligence work promises to be fundamentally different. If so, an evolutionary approach towards the training of intelligence personnel and the development, as well as institutions of collection methods and systems (including technological advances, artificial intelligence – AI) – even toward the process of analysis itself- will no longer suffice to assure timely and accurate intelligence about the threats in the coming decades.

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