

THE CASE FOR A EUROPEAN UNION INTELLIGENCE SERVICE

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We are in the grip of a global economic crisis. Like crises in the past, it threatens to drive us apart, with nations struggling to survive rather than cooperate. We have only to remember the 1930s to see how grim the prospects could be. Desperate politicians then erected trade barriers, extreme nationalism took hold, and in 1939 a second world war broke out.

Against that background, it at the same time the least propitious and the most urgent moment to make the case for further cooperation. But as Barack Obama reminded us when campaigning for office, we must all be ready for change. We should seek more integration, and this is true not just for economic policy, but also in the realm of security.

The idea of pan-European intelligence is by no means new. The intelligence-gathering Proxenia of classical Greece were scattered over an area that embraces several present-day nations. (2) But in more recent times there have been new stimuli to integrated intelligence. In the last century, two world wars with horrendous casualties spurred new thinking. The newly enfranchised masses did not want to see their best and bravest young men return home in body bags. One solution was nuclear deterrence to keep the peace. Another was international cooperation through the United Nations. Still another was recourse to secret intelligence.

For in the last century it came to be accepted that effective intelligence can not only win wars and minimize civilian casualties, it can also help to prevent war -- precisely the main aim of the European Union (EU), as its recent Nobel Prize confirmed.

My book *In Spies We Trust: The Story of Western Intelligence* (Oxford University Press, June 2013) (3) shows how British intelligence was dominant at the start of the last century. It gave way to Anglo-American intelligence, but then the United States came to dominate. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, America dominated alone.

Here, we see the seeds of the case for a European Union Intelligence Service. For the American record in recent years has been ethically poor. For example, the CIA's drone attacks inflict indiscriminate assassinations on the innocent as well as the guilty. Just as seriously, U.S. intelligence has exhibited lapses in competence. There was a failure to predict and preempt the 9/11 attack; Iraq's "Weapons of Mass Destruction" did not exist; Washington failed to remember that it is a mistake to invade Afghanistan. What I indict here is not individual intelligence officials, some of whom saw what was coming, but the U.S. intelligence system.

Finally, America is losing interest in Europe. Light-skinned Americans will soon be in the minority. Obama has defined new security goals in his "Pivot to the Pacific".

Time, then, to rejoice that the European Union began to integrate further towards the last century, and started to develop joint intelligence facilities. The French, in particular, awoke to the significance of the fact that in the Balkan upheavals of the 1990s, Europe had to rely on U.S. intelligence. The French response was to invest in satellite technology and invite other European nations to share in the expenditure and benefits, the beginning of what is now developing into a potentially potent satellite intelligence capability. Meantime, a European Police Office (Europol) came into being. Notably, this is an intelligence organization. Instead of putting men with guns on the street, it collates and analyses information for the benefit of the police forces of member states – on international terrorism, cybercrime, drugs, child prostitution. (4)

There also developed a unit called SITCEN. Currently headed by Finland's Ilkka Salmi, it reports to the EU's External Action Service and informs the European Parliament, for example in 2011 on how to deliver humanitarian aid to strife-torn Libya in spite of military chaos in that country. SITCEN also contains INTCEN, whose job is to analyze more confidential information.

Informed observers like John Nomikos a few years ago began to ask whether there was a case for a more powerful European intelligence service. Generally, they shrank from suggesting that there should be a "European CIA". (5)

For there is some way to go. Current arrangements make no provision for the independent collection of secret information – yet how high a value should we place on secrets, when in our digital/electronic surveillance age the main challenge is to make sense of the super-abundance of open information? The EU lacks a code breaking facility; the British could provide that, though the current Tory government would be disinclined to do so. Stronger oversight by the European Parliament would be necessary, as would a great toleration of ethnic and religious diversity than that shown by some national police forces. Yet there must be room for hope even in our present crisis. The EU has overcome more serious problems in the past.

Notes:

- 1) http://www.shca.ed.ac.uk/staff/hon_fellows/rjeffreys-jones/
- 2) Fig. 1: 'Distribution of Proxenia Engaged in Intelligence Activities', in André Gerolymatos, *Espionage and Treason: A Study of the Proxenia in Political and Military Intelligence Gathering in Classical Greece* (Amsterdam: J.C. Gieben, 1986), p. 137.
- 3) <http://ukcatalogue.oup.com/product/9780199580972.do#.ULYn2q5dqTs>
- 4) For a scholarly study of the background of Europol, see John D. Occhipinti, *The Politics of European Police Cooperation: Toward a European FBI?* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Reiner, 2003). Other information in my article (and book) comes from interviews with senior European intelligence officials.
- 5) John Nomikos, 'A European Union Intelligence Service for Confronting Terrorism', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 18 (Summer 2005): 191-203. Other studies of the phenomenon included Villadsen, Ole R. 'Prospects for a European Common Intelligence Policy', *Studies in Intelligence*, 9 (Summer 2000): 81-95, Björn Müller-Wille, *For Our Eyes Only? Shaping an Intelligence Community Within the EU* (Paris: EU Institute for Security Studies, 2004) and Jean Heinrich, "The Case for a European CIA," *Europe's World* (Spring 2006), 138-39. For a recent critical study, see Richard J. Aldrich, 'Intelligence and the European Union', in Erik Jones and others, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of the European Union* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012). Pp. 627-42

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