# The social ties that bind: the role of social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation

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# The Social Ties That Bind

## The role of social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation

Pepijn Tuinier

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The role of social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation

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*There are three things which inspire confidence in the orator's own character; the three [...] that induce us to believe a thing apart from any proof of it: good sense, good moral character, and goodwill.*

Aristotle, *Rhetoric*, Book II, paragraph III

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# Chapter 1

# Chapter 1: Introduction

## Relevance, Aim, Topic and Paradigm of this Research

### 1.1. Relevance

#### 1.1.1. The Importance of International Intelligence Cooperation

> *'I believe there has been too little public explanation of the depth and quality of intelligence and security cooperation within Europe. [...] I've heard our European partnerships characterized dismissively in terms of 'simple' intelligence sharing [...]. But this totally misrepresents the advanced arrangements, systems and structures that European security services have together built, and that we need to continue to build on to keep pace with shifting threats and technologies.'*[1]

In may 2018 Sir Andrew Parker, Director-General of the UK Security Service MI5, spoke at the yearly conference organized by the German Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (BfV). He did so in the presence of key officials from the international intelligence community, amongst others Arndt Freiherr Freytag von Loringhoven, NATO's Assistant Secretary-General for Intelligence, and Sir Julian King, the EU's Commissioner for the Security Union. It might thus come as no surprise that Parker spoke warmly about intelligence cooperation between intelligence services from across Europe. Likewise, it could be dismissed as mere professional courtesy that he spoke of his German host Dr. Hans-Georg Maaßen as his 'close colleague and friend'. Nevertheless, his statement is clear. He asserts that there is too little public explanation of the depth and quality of intelligence cooperation within Europe. For him, the relevance of cooperation for intelligence work is beyond doubt. His words carry strong indication that times have changed since his predecessor Sir Stephen Lander described international intelligence cooperation as 'something of an oxymoron' in a lecture fifteen years earlier.[2]

While international cooperation between intelligence services has been a common feature of intelligence practices in the last century, now its prevalence is rising.[3] Without exploring the effects of globalization in detail, it is safe to acknowledge that the current security environment qualifies as highly complex, meaning that it forms a diverse, interconnected,

1 Parker, 'Speech to BfV Symposium', May 2018, Berlin.

2 Lander, 'International Intelligence Cooperation', 481.

3 Alexander, Knowing Your Friends, 1–17; Aldrich, 'Global Intelligence Co-Operation versus Accountability', 27; Rathmell, 'Towards Postmodern Intelligence', 92; Svendsen, 'Connecting Intelligence and Theory', 700; Herman, Intelligence Power in Peace and War, 200.

interdependent and adaptive system.[4] To cope with this highly demanding reality, intelligence services turn to cooperation to increase their capabilities.[5] Multiple examples exist. A month before Sir Andrew Parker made his speech at the BfV, multilateral intelligence cooperation had a significant role in bringing down five Russian spies in a counterintelligence operation by the Netherlands' Defence Intelligence and Security Service, the Militaire Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst (MIVD).[6] A month after the speech cooperation between the Netherlands' General Intelligence and Security Service (Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst; AIVD) and various international partners resulted in the arrest of three suspected terrorists planning an attack in France.[7] On their public websites and in their annual reports intelligence services themselves underline the importance of international cooperation in terms like 'significant', 'vital', 'crucial', 'irreplaceable' and as 'a mandatory condition for the success of their specific missions'.[8]

Studying international intelligence cooperation is relevant for two reasons. First, it will complement theoretical understanding of intelligence as a function of government.[9] As such, examining international intelligence cooperation between intelligence services could, for example, provide insight in state behavior in the complexity of the current international security environment. Second, studying current-day international intelligence cooperation has a practical value. It offers insight in how intelligence cooperation can best support decision advantage for policymakers. Theory could, as Treverton puts it, help practitioners 'do better'.[10] For this PhD thesis the scientific relevance is pivotal, but that does not exclude practical considerations. As far as this research is concerned, studies *on* intelligence can go hand in hand with studies *for* intelligence. A better understanding of intelligence will undoubtedly help practice as well. However, notwithstanding its scholarly and operational relevance, international intelligence cooperation has long been a neglected topic within Intelligence Studies (IS). In 2012 it was still 'substantially under-theorized'.[11] Chapter 2 demonstrates that this picture has changed significantly since then, but it will also show that there are still important conceptual blind spots in the study of intelligence cooperation. These blind spots blur our understanding.

4 See for example: Tucker, The End of Intelligence; Lahneman, 'Is a Revolution in Intelligence Affairs Occurring?'; Denécé, 'The Revolution in Intelligence Affairs'; Treverton and Wolf, Reshaping National Intelligence for an Age of Information; Barger, 'Toward a Revolution in Intelligence Affairs'.

5 Clough, 'Quid Pro Quo', 608–9.

6 Bijleveld, 'Russian Cyber Operation, Remarks Minister of Defence, 4 October in The Hague'.

7 Algemene Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst (AIVD, NL), "Annual Report 2018", 12.

8 Sigurnosno-obavještajna agencija (SOA, HR), "Public Report 2022," 36; Bezpečnostní informační služba (BIS, CZ), "Annual Report 2022," 34; Veiligheid van de Staat (VSSE, BE), "Intelligence Report 2021-2022," 4; BIS, "International Cooperation"; Serviciul Român de Informații (SRI, RO), "Cooperation and Partnership."

9 Marrin, 'Improving Intelligence Studies as an Academic Discipline', 266.

10 Treverton, 'Theory and Practice', 473.

11 Svendsen, The Professionalization of Intelligence Cooperation, 68.

### 1.1.2. Research Puzzle

International intelligence cooperation poses a dilemma that puts intelligence services 'in something of a mental split'.[12] On the one hand, cooperation is a risky business. Intelligence services deal in secrets and disclosing these could diminish the competitive advantage they bring. There is no guarantee that partners will return the help given in kind. In addition, by opening up intelligence services show what they are capable of and allow partners to come close. It makes them vulnerable to exploitation, manipulation or even subversion. On the other hand, cooperation is an essential activity that increases capabilities in a time that no intelligence service can do its job alone. The number and diversity of threats these organizations are facing is growing. Moreover, the threats are increasingly transnational and non-state.[13] Instead of being in total competition, national intelligence services now often are strongly interdependent for their task accomplishment. It challenges the predominance of simple and direct partnerships and redirects attention to more strategic and normative arrangements; partnerships in which cooperation is broader and more long-term.[14]

Scholars struggle to understand the conditions under which intelligence services cooperate despite the vulnerability and uncertainty involved. Traditionally, explanations in IS focus on the importance of egoistic self-interest and geopolitical rivalry by states. Contrary to the (new) institutionalist and constructivist turns in International Relations (IR) and Security Studies, these publications still hold a predominantly neorealist presumption. In this setting, intelligence services seem to have no other choice than to shirk away from full cooperation, holding back and achieving no more than suboptimal results.[15] Yet, this perspective is unable to fully explain what is happening in international intelligence cooperation 'against all odds'[16], especially in multilateral arrangements. For this reason, an increasing number of intelligence scholars advocates a more sociological approach to international intelligence cooperation; focusing on the interaction between institutions and individuals and examining the way their relations construct preferences in (cooperative) behavior.[17] They depart from a purely rational approach based on control measures and the mitigation of risk. The breadth and depth of current-day intelligence cooperation cannot be explained based on these considerations alone. As General Jan Swillens, former director

12 Swillens, Former Director of Netherlands Defence Intelligence Service, 'Introduction to Lecture on Intelligence Cooperation in the EU', December 2022.

13 See for example: Bigo, "Shared Secrecy in a Digital Age and a Transnational World"; Shiraz, "Globalisation and Intelligence"; Degaut, "Spies and Policymakers."

14 Røseth, "How to Classify Intelligence Relations," 57; Sims, "Foreign Intelligence Liaison," 196–200.

15 See for example: Walsh, "Defection and Hierarchy in International Intelligence Sharing"; Sims, "Foreign Intelligence Liaison"; Richelson, "The Calculus of Intelligence Cooperation."

16 Davis Cross, *International Cooperation Against All Odds*.

17 See for example: Hoffmann, Chalati, and Dogan, "Rethinking Intelligence Practices and Processes"; Nolan, "A Sociological Approach to Intelligence Studies"; Bigo, "Sociology of Transnational Guilds."

of the MIVD, put it when still in office: 'intelligence cooperation is not just about Quid pro Quo'.[18]

Trust is often mentioned as one of the most important facilitators for international intelligence cooperation.[19] Yet, at present we know little about the underlying conditions shaping trust among intelligence services and personnel. Despite its presumed importance, trust has hardly been conceptualized in this context, let alone operationalized for use in empirical research. It hampers a nuanced understanding of this activity and runs the risk of getting stuck in oversimplified dichotomies like 'friend or foe'. When turning to publications outside the field of intelligence, trust is generally accepted as a central belief that enables the acceptance of uncertainty and vulnerability. An in-between for effective social relations in cooperation. Interorganizational relations are seen to rely heavily on trust, especially in diffuse multilateral settings and among organizations operating in secret. Trust enables these organizations to suspend their vulnerability, not because they are not aware of being vulnerable, but because they believe that their partner will not (overly) exploit this situation.[20] Reasonable expectations based on trust are seen to lead to a situation in which organizations are in 'coopetition', being competitors and co-operators at the same time.

By addressing this research puzzle on a very important topic, this study provides a valuable addition to the existing body of knowledge. It offers a strong conceptual and empirical basis. Contrary to many studies on international intelligence cooperation, the research works from a conceptual framework that systematically unravels trust in conditions and factors of influence. It uses this frame to critically examine the beliefs and perceptions of intelligence practitioners working in national intelligence services and EU intelligence organizations. This inside perspective is absent from most research in IS. It enables this study to include relations and interaction on the organizational and personal levels, providing a more nuanced insight in the dynamics of international intelligence cooperation than so far has been achieved.

18 Swillens, "Director of the MIVD General Swillens Visits ISGA to Talk about Intelligence Cooperation."

19 See for example: Omand, *How Spies Think; 10 Lessons in Intelligence*; Ballast, "Merging Pillars, Changing Cultures"; Fägersten, *For EU Eyes Only?*; Bures, "Informal Counterterrorism Arrangements in Europe"; Aldrich, "US-European Intelligence Co-Operation on Counter-Terrorism."

20 See for example: Lewicka and Zakrzewska-Bielawska, "Interorganizational Trust in Business Relations: Cooperation and Coopetition"; Raza-Ullah and Kostis, "Do Trust and Distrust in Coopetition Matter to Performance?"; Kollock, "The Emergence of Exchange Structures: An Experimental Study of Uncertainty, Commitment, and Trust"; Todeva and Knoke, "Strategic Alliances And Corporate Social Capital."

### 1.2. Research Aim and Questions

The primary aim of this research is to contribute to an empirically informed understanding of the conditions for international intelligence cooperation. Examining this activity through the lens of social relations and trust will produce a more nuanced understanding and one that has so far been largely absent from the debate. It will do so following the avenues for closing the research gap that will be further elaborated on in chapter 2; including the organizational and personal levels, looking at the interaction once a cooperation arrangement is decided upon, and applying a sociological approach. It will take EU intelligence cooperation as its subject of study. This brings in a type of arrangement in which these three avenues are thought to come together and which traditional approaches have the hardest time explaining. The EU will provide a deviant case of intelligence cooperation; a context of structural and repeated interaction in which it is expected that - if present - trust issues will appear at multiple levels and beyond the initial phase of cooperation formation. As such it will offer fertile soil for studying cooperative behavior from a relational point of view. The argument for using this particular case will be discussed in-depth in chapter 4.

Unravelling trust in the context of EU intelligence will introduce sociological notions into the debate on intelligence cooperation, complementing the now prevailing rational perspectives. The core assumption is that social relations and trust play an important role in determining cooperative behavior in intelligence. Yet, it is unclear how. Therefore, the main question that this thesis will answer is:

*How do social relations and trust influence EU intelligence cooperation?*

The first sub-question this raises is how this mechanism of social relations and trust relates to the mechanism of rational calculations mostly used in explanations of international intelligence cooperation. How does it work? Is it a totally different way of achieving cooperative behavior or can an overlap with the traditional mechanism be distinguished? A second and related sub-question is about the exact role of trust in this mechanism. What is trust exactly and what function does it have in achieving cooperative behavior in a relational setting? The third sub-question then is about what trust is made of. What are the conditions on which trust is built and maintained? It is interesting to evaluate how these conditions play out on the different levels identified. To see what adding the interorganizational and interpersonal levels does for our potential understanding of international intelligence cooperation. The fourth sub-question then is how the conditions for trust materialize in the context of EU intelligence cooperation. It requires an understanding of the contextual setting of the EU intelligence system and a thorough examination of the beliefs and perceptions of practitioners in that particular setting. A last sub-question is what the insights produced mean for international intelligence cooperation in general. This study will be wary of

extrapolating its findings into general theory, but it does provide general notions. Although strictly outside the scope of the main research question, it will answer how the empirical results contribute to conceptual understanding on international intelligence cooperation. It will produce a more refined substantive theory that can be applied to other cases in future research.

## 1.3. Demarcating the Topic

### 1.3.1. Defining Intelligence

A solid definitional foundation is a prerequisite for any conceptual study of intelligence and the start of any delineation of the topic. The term intelligence holds an important place in the research question. Yet, among scholars in IS there is no agreed definition of intelligence to go with. It is telling that 'virtually every book written on the subject of intelligence begins with what intelligence means, or at least how the author intends to use the term'.[21] Apart from the traditional distinction between intelligence as a product, process or organization, two debates stand out. First, there is a difference of opinion about the place secrecy holds within intelligence. Although secrecy is agreed to be central to many kinds of intelligence work, it is disputed whether or not it is essential.[22] Second, there is a debate over the inclusion of covert action in intelligence. Although direct action aimed at collecting information or countering an adversarial service is at the heart of intelligence, it is disputed whether this means that intelligence also encompasses clandestine operations or other controversial activities that governments would like to keep secret or at least plausibly deny. Whereas the first is supportive to knowledge building or safeguarding it, the latter is a separate task.[23] In the absence of consensus about what intelligence is, many scholars have tried to clarify the topic by adding a wide variety of adjectives to the word. Nevertheless, instead of simplifying what we mean with intelligence, these adjectives often complicate the discussion further and '[diminish] explanatory power across a number of case studies at the outset of the twenty-first century'.[24] In the face of this unclarity, a workable definition for intelligence needs to seek the middle ground. It must find a frame that is specific enough to be discriminate,

21 Lowenthal, *Intelligence*; Phythian, "Intelligence Theory and Theorie of International Relations," 55; Wheaton and Beerbower, "Towards a New Definition of Intelligence"; Warner, "Wanted: A Definition of 'Intelligence.'"

22 Breakspear, "A New Definition of Intelligence," 685–87; Phythian, "Intelligence Theory and Theories of International Relations: Shared World or Separate Worlds?," 57; Shulsky and Schmitt, Silent Warfare: Understanding the World of Intelligence, 3rd ed., rev:171; Warner, "Wanted: A Definition of 'Intelligence.'"

23 Stout and Warner, "Intelligence Is as Intelligence Does," 518; Gentry, "Toward a Theory of Non-State Actors' Intelligence," 469; Hulnick, "The Future of the Intelligence Process: The End of the Intelligence Cycle?," 54; Tucker, *The End of Intelligence*, 31; Wheaton and Beerbower, "Towards a New Definition of Intelligence," 327.

24 Rogg, "'Quo Vadis?," 544, 546.

while avoiding to become so detailed that it diminishes its explanatory value in comparative cases.[25]

For the case of the EU, this research defines intelligence as 'a competitive knowledge advantage for decision-makers deliberately brought about by a range of partially secret activities concerning the collection and enhancing of data and information'. This definition combines elements from a number of leading publications.[26] First, it places knowledge building at the heart of intelligence. In general, scholars agree that intelligence has something to do with the acquisition and use of information.[27] Nevertheless, most also think that 'information alone does not constitute intelligence'.[28] These scholars see intelligence as a form of knowledge for its purpose of understanding and its attributes of validity and plausibility.[29] Addressing intelligence as a specific form of knowledge transforms it from a mere product to include the processes and organizations leading to this product. In similar fashion Sherman Kent understood intelligence to be useful knowledge that for him was intrinsically linked to the originating activity and the enabling organization.[30] Second and related, the definition used emphasizes the deliberate nature of intelligence. Intelligence is not just any kind of knowledge.[31] It is 'targeted, actionable and predictive knowledge for specific consumers'.[32] Intelligence does not just happen by accident and not for any purpose. It is an organized attempt by dedicated organizations to reduce levels of uncertainty by a range of planned activities, from planning and information collection to analysis and dissemination. In addition, intelligence is supposed to generate action. It excludes knowing for the sake of knowing or for just being informative or educative as can be the case with for example journalism and science. Even when not acted upon, intelligence provides consumers with 'competitive' or 'decision' advantage.[33] Third, it states that intelligence is at least partially secret. The exclusivity of intelligence leads to a business model that involves keeping secrets in achieving relative gain. That is not to say that all steps of the intelligence cycle are - or need to be - secret. The increasing importance of open-source intelligence (OSINT) and the

25 Rønn and Høffding, "The Epistemic Status of Intelligence," 700; Sims, "Defending Adaptive Realism: Intelligence Theory Becomes of Age," 159, 161.

26 Derived from, among others, Warner, 'Wanted: A Definition of "Intelligence"'; Wheaton and Beerbower, 'Towards a New Definition of Intelligence'; Breakspear, 'A New Definition of Intelligence'; Warner, 'Theories of Intelligence'; Lowenthal, Intelligence, 10; Gill and Phythian, Intelligence in an Insecure World, 7, 29; Walsh, The International Politics of Intelligence Sharing, 5–8; Svendsen, Understanding the Globalization of Intelligence, 10–16.

27 Rønn and Høffding, "The Epistemic Status of Intelligence," 697.

28 Wheaton and Beerbower, "Towards a New Definition of Intelligence," 321, 329; Lowenthal, *Intelligence*, 2; Breakspear, "A New Definition of Intelligence," 679–80.

29 Gill and Phythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 34.

30 Kent, *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*, vii, 3, 69, 151.

31 Lowenthal, *Intelligence*, 2; Breakspear, "A New Definition of Intelligence," 679–80; Rønn and Høffding, "The Epistemic Status of Intelligence," 709–11; Wheaton and Beerbower, "Towards a New Definition of Intelligence," 321, 329; Agrell, "When Everything Is Intelligence - Nothing Is Intelligence," 702–9.

32 Rathmell, "Towards Postmodern Intelligence," 88–89.

33 Omand, *Securing the State*, 23; Warner, "Intelligence as Risk Shifting," 17; Wheaton and Beerbower, "Towards a New Definition of Intelligence," 329; Sims, "Defending Adaptive Realism: Intelligence Theory Becomes of Age," 154.

use of external knowledge shows that it is perfectly feasible for intelligence organizations to be open or outreaching in certain steps of the process.[34] Yet, even when doing so, the mechanism for processing, analyzing or dissemination will be at least partially secret. An opponent, once aware of the intelligence you have, will be able to change his stance and thus deprive intelligence of its actionability, degrading it to general knowledge.[35]

### 1.3.2. Defining Social Relations, Trust and Cooperation

The remaining concepts mentioned in the research question will be explicated in detail when constructing the conceptual framework for this study. Yet, at this point a brief introduction is helpful. First, there is 'social relations'. Two words often used in general speak, but like 'intelligence' hardly defined as a concept. The term serves a wide range of related concepts, all describing some form of social connection and interaction. This research defines a social relation as 'a relatively durable match of mutual expectations between a set of interconnected actors'.[36] Social relations require a succession of interactions between two (or more) individuals.[37] They are often described in terms of their effects, for example social support and social cohesion, two terms that will return in chapter 8. Social relations can be classified at different levels, ranging from the micro-level of relations between individuals, to the meso-level of communities and the macro-level of states.[38] These levels will play an important role in this study.

The second concept mentioned in the research question is trust. It is the key concept in this study and will be covered in detail in chapter 3. Schilke et al. see trust as essential in understanding the dynamics of social relations. They define trust as 'the willingness of an entity (i.e., the trustor) to become vulnerable to another entity (i.e., the trustee) [under the presumption] that the trustee will act in a way that is conducive to the trustor's welfare despite the trustee's actions being outside the trustor's control'.[39] In doing so, they are consistent with many authoritative publications on this topic.[40] Trust stands at the forefront of sociology and is seen to influence various relational outcomes, like collective action and

34 Wheaton and Beerbower, "Towards a New Definition of Intelligence," 326; Sims, "Defending Adaptive Realism: Intelligence Theory Becomes of Age," 161–62.

35 Shulsky and Schmitt, Silent Warfare: Understanding the World of Intelligence; Warner, "Wanted: A Definition of 'Intelligence'"; Gill and Phythian, Intelligence in an Insecure World, 4–5.

36 Azarian, "Social Ties," 325–27.

37 Hinde, "Interactions, Relationships and Social Structure," 3, 5–6.

38 Vonneilich, "Social Relations, Social Capital, and Social Networks: A Conceptual Classification," 24.

39 Schilke, Reimann, and Cook, "Trust in Social Relations," 240–41.

40 See for example: Oomsels and Bouckaert, "Studying Interorganizational Trust in Public Administration," 578–84; Hardin, *Trust and Trustworthiness*, 1–27; Nooteboom, *Trust; Forms, Foundations, Functions, Failures and Figures*, 36–61; Rousseau et al., "Not So Different After All," 394–95; Ring and van de Ven, "Developmental Processes of Cooperative Interorganizational Relations," 93; Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," 712–14.

solidarity. Cooperation is also one of these relational outcomes, often seen as a behavioral manifestation of trust.[41]

Cooperation is a well-covered academic topic outside the field of IS and it would be preposterous to try to sum up the entire debate here. Like trust, the concept of cooperation will be addressed in more detail when constructing the conceptual framework for this study. For now, it is sufficient to bring forward a simple working definition; cooperation is the practice of people or entities working together for mutual benefit, with commonly agreed-upon goals and possibly methods.[42] First, cooperation is for a common goal. This means that the parties involved all benefit in some way, albeit perhaps not in the same manner or degree. There is always some reciprocity involved in the activity. Simply giving someone what he wants out of fear does not qualify as cooperation, because it does not involve a mutual benefit (except from avoiding punishment). Second, it involves actions by more than one participant. This research will focus on collective action for collective gain; cooperation by all for all. It helps delineating EU intelligence cooperation.

### 1.3.3. Delineating EU Intelligence Cooperation

Intelligence cooperation is a complex multidimensional phenomenon. It occurs in all phases of the intelligence process, encompasses a range of activities at multiple levels and is done by a variety of actors. First, although the focus will be on joint analysis, this research will include other parts of the intelligence process as well. Cooperation can be advantageous in collection, processing as well as in dissemination. For example, in the case of dissemination, issuing a joint threat analysis can bolster its eloquence with decisionmakers and possibly ease an intergovernmental response. Second, although the emphasis will be on information-exchange, this research will include position alignment and co-creation as well. The latter two are often associated with coordination and collaboration, but these concepts are closely related and are often used intermingled with cooperation.[43] Cooperation can produce mutual benefit through a range of activities. For example, in the case of coordination, an orchestrated division of labor can produce both efficiency and bring in fresh perspectives. Third, and already mentioned, cooperation plays out at multiple (interrelated) levels; the international, the organizational and the interpersonal. They cannot be seen in isolation.[44] For example, the political stance of a Member State with regard to EU integration will have

41 See for example: Molm, Collett, and Schaefer, "Building Solidarity through Generalized Exchange"; Ostrom, "A Behavioral Approach to the Rational Choice Theory of Collective Action."

42 Khamis, Kamel, and Salichs, "Cooperation."

43 Castañer and Oliveira, "Collaboration, Coordination, and Cooperation Among Organizations."

44 Koops, "Inter-Organizationalism in International Relations: A Multilevel Framework of Analysis," 207.

its effect on the directives given to its bureaucracies and possibly the attitudes of Brussels-based personnel. This research will include all these levels.

The complex reality of EU intelligence cooperation obliges to keep an open mind, but before starting the study it is important to further delineate this subject of study. The discussion on what 'real intelligence' means lies at the heart of this research into trust, as will be shown mainly in chapter 8. Therefore, the broad definition of intelligence presented above holds few restrictions in itself. The same goes for social relations, trust and cooperation. Their meaning in the context of the EU intelligence system will take center stage in the remainder of this thesis. As for intelligence in the setting of the EU, this research will focus on intelligence aimed at supporting strategic and operational decision-making in the realm of defence and external security issues; the fields of 'war, diplomacy and security'.[45] The study will therefore include counterterrorism only in as far as external (outside EU borders) action is involved. Domestic intelligence and criminal intelligence are excluded, although in practice connections exist with the research topic. In sum, for this research EU intelligence cooperation is reduced to 'collective action by EU intelligence organizations and Member State intelligence services aimed at establishing a competitive knowledge advantage for EU decision-makers in the realm of Defence and External Security'.

In terms of product, intelligence in this case provides a knowledge advantage for the formulation and execution of EU policies aimed at enhancing external security or exploiting opportunities in foreign relations. In the case of the EU intelligence system, cooperation must directly or indirectly help the relevant decision-makers within the European Union, specifically the European External Action Service (EEAS). In terms of organizations, this research will be limited to those organizations dedicated to produce this kind of intelligence for the EU. This means that it will focus on the intelligence services of EU Member States and the EU intelligence organizations EUMS INT and INTCEN. The latter organizations will be discussed in detail in chapter 5. Other (non-EU) arrangements and organizations like the Counter Terrorism Group (CTG) and NATO will only be included by comparison and when mentioned by the respondents. In terms of process, there will be no limitation upfront on the exact intelligence activity concerned. Nevertheless, as will also be explained in chapter 5, the nature of the EU intelligence system dictates that in practice this research is primarily about analysis and dissemination. Covert and clandestine action hold no place in this research at all. Although intelligence services are certainly engaged in these activities, either in service of their own process or as part of foreign policy, actionable intelligence in the context of the EU is (for now) limited to providing useful knowledge based on earlier collection.[46]

45 Stout and Warner, "Intelligence Is as Intelligence Does," 519.

46 Degaut, "Spies and Policymakers," 516; Omand, "The Future of Intelligence: What Are the Threats, the Challenges and the Opportunities?," 14; Shiraz and Aldrich, "Globalisation and Borders," 268, 271; Lahneman, "Is a Revolution in Intelligence Affairs Occurring?," 14; Sims, "Defending Adaptive Realism: Intelligence Theory Becomes of Age," 519, 521; Warner, "Intelligence as Risk Shifting," 24; Scott, "Secret Intelligence, Covert Action and Clandestine Diplomacy," 322–25.

## 1.4. Research Paradigm: Ontology and Epistemology

### 1.4.1. A Post-positivist Stance to Finding 'Truth'

This research takes a post-positivist stance towards scientific progress. This stance is important as it determines what is actually meant when aiming - as this research does - for a 'more comprehensive understanding'. The most fundamental questions to be answered are what the study considers to be reality and to what extent this reality can be objectively measured. Whereas the first involves the ontological issue of 'truth' (what is true), the second concerns the epistemological issue of 'knowledge' (what can be known). Of course, the two are intimately linked. Together they constitute the research paradigm, defined by Kuhn as 'a cluster of beliefs and dictates which for scientists in a particular discipline influence what should be studied, how research should be done, [and] how results should be interpreted'.[47] This paradigm forms the basis for the research design and - ultimately - the methods used. In the social sciences the prevailing paradigm varies, depending on the discipline at hand. In general, a dichotomy exists between positivists on the one side, and post-positivists[48] on the other. The former group believes in the existence of an objective, static and lawlike reality, whereas the latter believes that reality is a subjective construct built by people who attach meaning to events. For post-positivists, multiple, even conflicting, truths may exist that together shape reality and can vary over time depending on context and antecedents.

Intelligence Studies harbors a predominantly positivist tradition that is linked to its neorealist presumption, one that will be explored in depth in chapters 2 and 3.[49] Intelligence scholars in this tradition object to stating value over facts, as this would make all knowledge relative. This, in in their opinion, makes any attempt for scientific progress irrelevant.[50] Some of these scholars simply question the added value of post-positivist approaches, like Lillbacka who claims that 'non-realist-perspectives have hitherto been unable to present anything that would benefit IS'.[51] Few go as far as to outright denounce post-positivists as dangerous to the field. Instead, they argue that gaining knowledge is about finding intelligence theories that can objectively explain reality and enhance the intelligence trade. This emphasis on general theory might stem from the practical origins of IS where a debate by and for practitioners

47 Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*.

48 Several paradigms are distinguished that criticize positivist belief in empiricism and objectivity, for example, 'postmodern' and 'critical' or even 'anti-positivist' or 'interpretivist'. Although they go by different names and vary in their precise methods of inquiry, they all adhere to a value-based view of truth (ontology) and non-linear approach to knowledge (epistemology). For these essential differences with positivism, they are labeled here as being 'post-positivist'.

49 Gill and Phythian, Intelligence in an Insecure World, 27.

50 Davies, "Theory and Intelligence Reconsidered", 199.

51 Lillbacka, "Realism, Constructivism, and Intelligence Analysis," 305.

was to retain and further professional standards and tradecraft.[52] A trade in which 'speaking truth to power' has been paramount for a long time.[53]

The view that research can be conducted completely free of values and subjective meaning is losing ground in the social sciences, for example in IR and Security Studies.[54] By comparison, for quite some time there has existed only a 'small, mostly undifferentiated group of constructivists, critical, and post-structuralist theories' in the margins of IS.[55] Yet, in recent years their numbers seem to be growing. Instead of searching for a grand theory of intelligence, these scholars advocate the use of theories in understanding multiple and overlapping narratives, address the complex nature of intelligence, acknowledge fluid boundaries and knowledge networks and recognize the effect of challenged identities.[56] For example, Davies states that 'while one might benefit from making use of selected tools of theory, one is always best-off avoiding schools of theory'.[57] In similar fashion, Spoor and Rothman claim that a 'positivist monoculture' stands in the way of 'diversity of theory [...] necessary to explore alternative explanations to engage with modern intelligence complexities'.[58]

It is important not to over-emphasize the scientific-philosophical entrenchment within the intelligence debate, let alone exclude one or the other approach from the academic debate. De Werd convincingly argues that this would deny the progress that has been made by several authors and would probably hamper advancement.[59] Moreover, it distracts attention from the reason why these differences are important in the first place. Lacking a common paradigm, theory and definition of intelligence risks scholars talking past each other rather than to each other. It hampers a cumulative build-up of knowledge. Already in the early days of IS Kent insisted that discussions needed to cumulate within the terms of a common conceptual frame and common terminology.[60] More recently Marrin considered the failure to adequately aggregate knowledge and make it cumulative the primary problem within

52 Kent, "The Need for an Intelligence Literature."

53 Spoor and Rothman, "On the Critical Utility of Complexity Theory in Intelligence Studies," 4–5.

54 Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 34.

55 Bean, "Intelligence Theory from the Margins," 528; Johnson, "The Development of Intelligence Studies," 10; Spoor and Rothman, "On the Critical Utility of Complexity Theory in Intelligence Studies," 9.

56 Johnson, "Sketches for a Theory of Strategic Intelligence," 51–52; Davies, "Theory and Intelligence Reconsidered," 188; Rogg, "'Quo Vadis?," 547; "Toward a Theory of Intelligence. Workshop Report," 10; Phythian, "Intelligence Theory and Theories of International Relations: Shared World or Separate Worlds?," 54–72; Davies, "Theory and Intelligence Reconsidered," 186–88; Gaspard, "Intelligence without Essence," 558–60; Gill, "Theories of Intelligence," 212; Marrin, "Evaluating Intelligence Theories," 479; Warner, "Intelligence and Reflexivity," 169; Rathmell, "Towards Postmodern Intelligence," 97–98; Gill and Phythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 29.

57 Davies, "Theory and Intelligence Reconsidered," 196.

58 Spoor and Rothman, "On the Critical Utility of Complexity Theory in Intelligence Studies," 23.

59 de Werd, "Critical Intelligence: Analysis by Contrasting Narratives: Identifying and Analyzing the Most Relevant Truths," 50–52.

60 Kent, "The Need for an Intelligence Literature."

IS.[61] For all their differences of opinion, all intelligence scholars make assumptions that are based on some theory of the world.[62] Rather than fight each other's dogmas, it is important that authors make clear their position to enable others to evaluate and challenge their presumptions, methods and findings.[63] Therefore, the following subsection will explicate the approach adopted in this study.

### 1.4.2. A Critical Realist Approach to Intelligence Practices

This research will turn to the approach of critical realism and the adjoining 'practices' to achieve its aim; a more comprehensive understanding of international intelligence cooperation. In doing so, it takes scientific middle ground. Critical realism, initially introduced by Bhaskar, is a dualistic approach. It starts from a realist ontology, but advocates a relativist (critical) epistemology.[64] Because of this, it adheres to a stratified perspective on social reality. Moreover, it acknowledges the notion of a transcendental social reality, more than the sum of its participants and their actions. Systems of durable dispositions and 'generative mechanisms' govern human behavior, consciously and unconsciously.[65] From this viewpoint, when looking at intelligence and intelligence cooperation, there will be recurring patterns in what intelligence services and personnel do (and do not do). These patterns can be observed in the real world and are practical manifestations of the more abstract realities of intelligence.[66] It is possible to gain insight and understanding of the broader phenomenon by studying these manifestations. Nevertheless, critical realists also acknowledge that social systems, contrary to natural ones, are open systems by definition. They 'do not exist independently of the activities of people'.[67] Therefore, the empirical effects of generative mechanisms are constantly being intermediated by subjective belief systems, meaning attribution and knowledgeable perception as well as context and circumstances.[68] We can only hope to uncover portions of this reality by using as many perspectives or lenses as possible.

61 Marrin, "Improving Intelligence Studies as an Academic Discipline," 269.

62 Gill, "Theories of Intelligence," 209.

63 Marrin, "Evaluating Intelligence Theories," 481; O'Mahoney and Vincent, "Critical Realism as an Empirical Project," 19.

64 Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 2–3.

65 O'Mahoney and Vincent, "Critical Realism as an Empirical Project," 11; Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 186.

66 Stout and Warner, "Intelligence Is as Intelligence Does," 517.

67 Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, xxi, 20, 38.

68 O'Mahoney and Vincent, "Critical Realism as an Empirical Project," 9; Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*, 2–4.

Critical realism is well suited for studying the workings of cooperation as a complex social phenomenon.[69] Due to its conception of a stratified reality, it meets two avenues of approach that will be advocated in chapter 2; viewing it as a process and on multiple levels. First, the existence of multiple levels of reality defies simple (linear) explanations. Instead of horizontal and linear explanations relating one independent variable to one dependent other, the introduction of structural - and therefore conditional - intermediates necessitates vertical explanations linking different levels of understanding.[70] Trust will be presented as such an intermediate belief system. Second, as all levels of social reality are indeed social, this means they are not immutable. Even the most 'real' or objective level is subject to change. Generative mechanisms have 'the capacity of changing [their] shape or form' over time as the result of repeated social activity. They are only relatively enduring and current processes and outcomes will influence future mechanisms for behavior.[71] It opens the floor to dispositions on intelligence cooperation that have been considered non-existent or marginal for a long time or that have been overlooked. Moreover, from this perspective human behavior can only be studied in practices; the result of an interplay between generative mechanism, individual action and specific circumstances.[72]

In a critical realist approach, practices offer a fitting window to study cooperation as a form of collective action.[73] Practices are composed of a group of people's shared skills, competences and practical understanding.[74] The members of the group display meaningful behavior based upon them. Bourdieu, one of the most well-known practice theorists, positions them as part of what he terms 'habitus':

> *'Systems of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends'*[75]

As such, practices commute to the lower levels of a stratified social reality; the vanguard of generative mechanisms so to say. They are 'a conception of human action or practice that can account for its regularity, coherence, and order without ignoring its negotiated

69 Archer, "Morphogenesis versus Structuration; on Combining Structure and Action," 104–5, 113–14; Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 181.

70 Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 29.

71 Crossley, "The Phenomenological Habitus and Its Construction," 87–91; Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 186.

72 Archer, "Morphogenesis versus Structuration; on Combining Structure and Action," 112; Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 180–81; Archer, "Realism in the Social Sciences," 195–96; Schatzki, "Practice Theory," 14.

73 Barnes, "Practice as Collective Action," 27–31.

74 Schatzki, "Practice Theory," 18.

75 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 2019, 53.

and strategic nature'.[76] Through practices it is possible to critically examine the complex 'interconnections and distinctions between systematic forces and individual judgment and decision making' of international intelligence cooperation.[77] A turn to practices therefore transcends the 'rigid action-structure opposition', or 'theory-practice' divide, associated with the dichotomy between positivists and post-positivists.[78]

Turning to practices in this study will generate shades of grey, providing nuanced insight in the way trust influences cooperative behavior in EU intelligence. First, practices offer room to the intangible or abstract. They enable to study trust - and its deeper layers or conditions - as an intermediate, or empowering effect for the social relations there. Preferences for (cooperative) behavior are constituted by underlying 'motives, reasons and meanings, ideas, rules, norms and discourses [for activities], and the way these are influenced by the social context'.[79] The way people consciously and unconsciously understand and value the world, influences perceptions about how goals can be achieved in specific circumstances. Second, practices are field specific. They enable to study the meaning of trust in the specific context of intelligence. Social actors are like 'players in a game, actively pursuing their ends with skill and competence, but always doing so within the bounds of the game'. Nevertheless, 'as in games, these [rules] only matter to or have meaning for those involved, those who know how to read the game and have a stake in it. Outsiders can see these practices as peculiar of even meaningless'.[80] Third, practices acknowledge the importance of specific circumstances. They enable to study trust beliefs and perceptions where they meet practical considerations.[81] Actual events in EU intelligence cooperation are the result of an interplay between social structure and individual action in a very specific context and circumstance. In this, social actors negotiate their position and action on an ongoing basis. The analytical dualism inherently present in critical realism and the study of practices shapes the design and methods of this study. Both will be presented in chapter 4. The multifaceted nature of intelligence, the social fabric of meaning, as well as its changing and complex environment render understanding trust in this context a matter of interpretation and sensemaking.

76 Crossley, "The Phenomenological Habitus and Its Construction," 83, 107; Herepath, "In the Loop," 858; Barnes, "Practice as Collective Action," 25–26.

77 Bean, "Organizational Culture and US Intelligence Affairs," 492; Gill and Phythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 31; Svendsen, "Connecting Intelligence and Theory," 709, 729; Svendsen, "Contemporary Intelligence Innovation in Practice," 108.

78 Schatzki, "Practice Theory," 10.

79 de Werd, "Critical Intelligence: Analysis by Contrasting Narratives: Identifying and Analyzing the Most Relevant Truths," 62.

80 Crossley, "The Phenomenological Habitus and Its Construction," 84, 86; Coulter, "Human Practices and the Observability of the 'Macro-Social,'" 46–47; Archer, "Addressing the Cultural System," 511.

81 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 18, 158–59; Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 40–41; Crossley, "The Phenomenological Habitus and Its Construction," 88; Archer, "Realism in the Social Sciences," 200.

## 1.5. Thesis Structure

There are several building blocks that will help us answer how social relations and trust influence EU intelligence cooperation. This study is roughly divided in a conceptual and an empirical part. The conceptual part will provide the framework for studying the empirics, but is valuable in its own right as well. It ranges from chapters 2 to 4. Chapter 2 identifies the research gap. It answers what the current state of the debate on international intelligence cooperation is, an endeavor that has not been done with the same profundity since the excellent encyclopedic overview by Timothy Crawford in 2010.[82] By doing a systematic literature review on leading publications in the period between 1990 to 2019, this research shows that the debate has evolved considerably both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Yet, it also makes clear that there still is a research gap stemming from a neorealist presumption. A gap that can be closed by researching intelligence cooperation at multiple levels, in the interaction phase, and by using a sociological perspective. Chapter 3 provides such a sociological perspective by unravelling the role of social relations and trust in intelligence cooperation, using theories from sociology and interorganizational relations. It shows how the mechanism of social relations in cooperation is empowered by trust and what conditions determine the degree of trust. In doing so, this chapter provides a viable conceptual framework for studying social relations and trust in international intelligence cooperation. A conceptual approach that has not been applied with the same rigor since - and is a next step to - the outstanding work by Fägersten, also done in 2010.[83] The theoretical section ends with chapter 4, in which the research design and methods are discussed. It substantiates the choices made in strategy, methods for data collection and data analysis, as well as clarifying the quality indicators used. It answers how this research comes from A to B; the logic guiding it from questions to conclusions.

The empirical section will zoom in on the case of EU intelligence cooperation, based on the concepts and methods introduced earlier. It ranges from chapters 5 to 8. Chapter 5 answers what the EU intelligence system is, where it came from and what the current ideas for its future are. Primarily based on desk research, it will scrutinize the setting in which EU intelligence cooperation takes place. Beliefs and perceptions of intelligence practitioners in this system cannot be properly understood outside this context. It influences the way their preferences are shaped and the manner in which these preferences can play out. The following chapters will then critically examine the role of social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation. Based on in-depth interviews with 47 senior intelligence professionals from national services and EU intelligence organizations, as well as numerous conversations and focus groups, these chapters uncover how relational perceptions of trust influence cooperation practices.

82 Crawford, "Intelligence Cooperation."

83 Fägersten, *Sharing Secrets*.

Chapter 6 answers how perceptions of ability influence EU intelligence cooperation. This first condition for trust is the most cognitive of the three, depicting how well partners in the network know each other and what reputation does for their cooperative behavior. Chapter 7 answers how perceptions of integrity influence EU intelligence cooperation. This second condition for trust is the more normative of the three, depicting how partners recognize each other's institutions and what acceptable principles do for their cooperative behavior. Chapter 8 answers how perceptions of benevolence influence EU intelligence cooperation. This third condition for trust is predominantly affective, depicting to what extent partners can identify with one another and adjust their cooperative behavior based on attachment.

Chapter 9 concludes this research, answering its main question and inferring its broader meaning. From a conceptual point of view, this research concludes that social relations play a far bigger role in international intelligence cooperation than is often assumed. The mechanism of social relations and trust provides a valuable complement to traditional explanations of rational calculations and control. From an empirical point of view, the research concludes that social relations and trust positively influence EU intelligence cooperation through benevolence and on a personal level. They provide reasonable expectations about outcome and vulnerability, compensating for the absence of direct organizational gains and a formal obligation to share. In addition, this last chapter identifies the contribution of these conclusions for the study of EU intelligence practice, patterns of cooperation in European intelligence, the concept of trust in intelligence cooperation, and theories of social relations in intelligence. In addition, it reflects on the research process, poses recommendations for future research and holds considerations for practice. The structured outline for this thesis is summed up in figure 1.

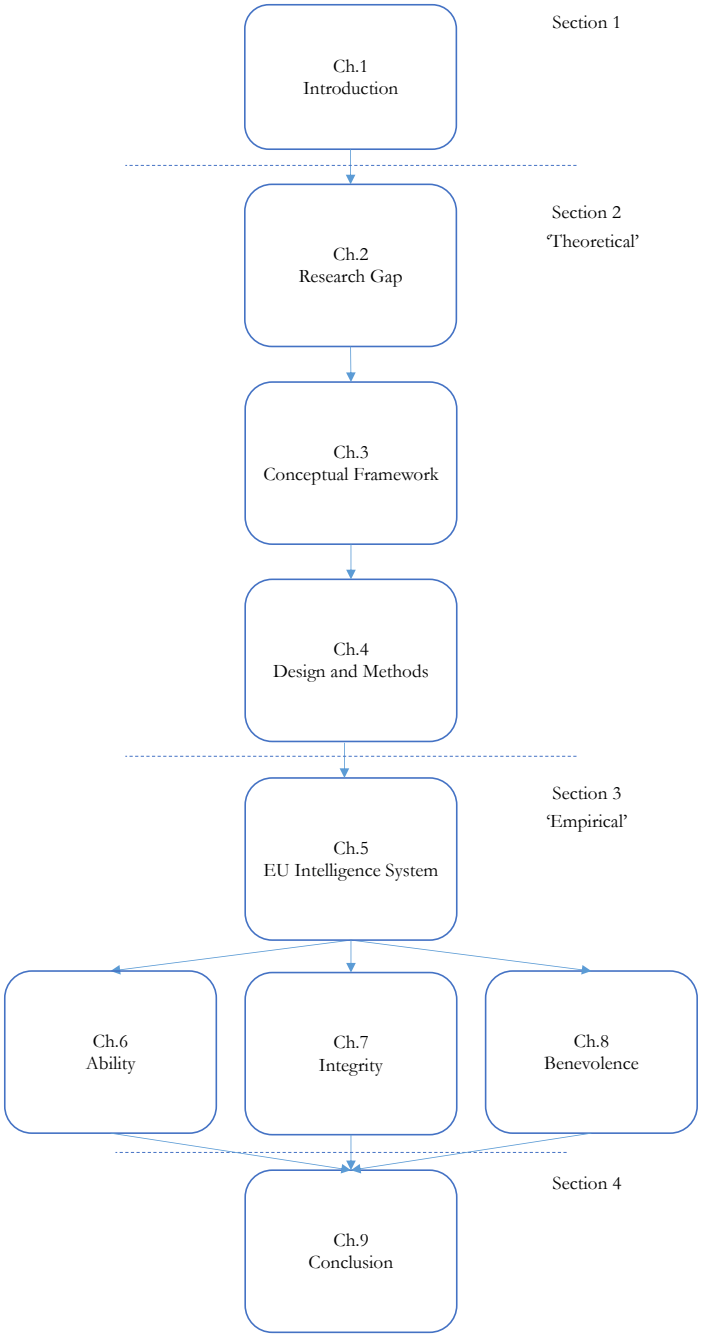


*Figure 1; Thesis Structure*

# Chapter 2

# Chapter 2: The Research Gap

## Explaining the Depth and Breadth of International Intelligence Cooperation[1]

### 2.1. Introduction

> *'...ultimately intelligence agencies deal in secrets and instinctively hate pooling and sharing. Most of all they hate multilateral sharing, which is exactly what globalization seems to require.'*[2]

Despite the rapidly increasing interest of both scholars and practitioners in international intelligence cooperation, there has not been a sufficient explanation for the current depth and breadth of the phenomenon. Most puzzling of all is why international intelligence cooperation does occur, and is even rising, in multilateral settings such as the EU.[3] Even advocates of increased multilateral intelligence cooperation approach it as being 'counter-natural'. In their view, the core characteristic of intelligence is international competition, not cooperation.[4] Currently, there seem to be clear limits to our understanding of international intelligence cooperation. In chapter 1 it was already mentioned that building knowledge in the disjointed field of IS is challenging as 'advancing our understanding requires a systematic literature to make its findings cumulative'.[5] Troubling is the conclusion by Marrin in 2016 that IS is 'anything but cumulative', not having 'a structured process for compiling and evaluating the literature'.[6] Equally disturbing is Svendsen's observation that intelligence cooperation is 'even less systematically [...] studied than intelligence as a whole'.[7] Aiming to contribute to a better understanding of international intelligence cooperation, this chapter will identify the research gap for this study. It sets out to critically examine the current state of the debate, to identify where 'progression of knowledge has stalled' and to suggest avenues for further research.[8] To do so, it answers three questions. First, what has been written so far on international intelligence cooperation both in quantity as well as in content? Second, what

1 An earlier version of this chapter has been published as peer-reviewed article: Pepijn Tuinier, 'Explaining the Depth and Breadth of International Intelligence Cooperation: Towards a Comprehensive Understanding', Intelligence and National Security 36, no. 1 (January 2021).

2 Aldrich, "'A Profoundly Disruptive Force,'" 153.

3 For an overview of the debate on EU Intelligence cooperation, for example see: Gruszczak, Intelligence Security in the European Union, 9–12.

4 Lander, 'International Intelligence Cooperation', 483–84; Wippl, 'Intelligence Exchange Through InterIntel'; Hulnick, 'Intelligence Cooperation in the Post-cold War Era', 458.

5 Kent, 'The Need for an Intelligence Literature'.

6 Marrin, 'Improving Intelligence Studies as an Academic Discipline', 269.

7 Svendsen, The Professionalization of Intelligence Cooperation, 72.

8 Marrin, "Improving Intelligence Studies as an Academic Discipline," 278; Machi and McEvoy, *The Literature Review: Six Steps to Success*, 185–89.

gaps still exist that are worth exploring further? Third, and maybe most important for this thesis, how can these gaps be best addressed?

This chapter will answer these questions in succession based on a systematic literature review. Section 2.2 shows that cooperation is no longer a neglected topic. Not only is the number of publications rising, the scholarly and content diversity is cautiously widening as well. In section 2.3 this chapter asserts that a research gap still exists. Contrary to the constructivist turn to practice seen in International Relations, most research into international intelligence cooperation still holds a neorealist presumption albeit used mostly implicitly. This research gap clarifies why the debate has difficulties in explaining the increasing depth and breadth of international intelligence cooperation, especially in established multilateral settings. In section 2.4 this chapter suggests three avenues along which the debate can be systematically advanced. It forms the basis for the way this study fills the research gap. It advocates exploring the activities following the initial decision to cooperate, further examining the interorganizational and interpersonal levels and using a sociological perspective. Accordingly, the final section discusses these results and reaches the conclusion that a more comprehensive understanding of international intelligence cooperation is within reach. The debate has grown to a point that it invites new approaches and these approaches are readily available in neighboring disciplines of IS. This literature review covers the period from 1990 to 2019 and has been published as a peer-review article in the journal of Intelligence and National Security shortly after. Publications on international intelligence cooperation dating after 2019 are not included in the systematic review, but will be mentioned and used in the rest of the thesis. They do not alter the conclusions in this chapter.

## 2.2. Reviewing the Debate on International Intelligence Cooperation

### 2.2.1. Framing the Topic of International Intelligence Cooperation

This chapter provides a systematic literature review of the academic debate on international intelligence cooperation. Although it strives to be comprehensive, choices on definition, focus and methods inevitably demarcate the topic. As seen in the previous chapter, within IS there is no consensus about the definition of 'intelligence'.[9] The same applies to cooperation. It is not within the scope of this study to cover this debate in depth, let alone try to resolve it. Nevertheless, to conduct a proper literature review, one has to define the topic at hand. Based on the definition and demarcation of the research topic presented in chapter 1, here international intelligence cooperation is defined as 'intelligence organizations from different

9 Warner, 'Wanted: A Definition of "Intelligence"'; Wheaton and Beerbower, 'Towards a New Definition of Intelligence', 319–20.

countries working together for mutual benefit in the deliberate collection and enhancing of data and information, aimed at establishing a competitive knowledge advantage in matters of national security'. This inclusive definition suits a literature review meant to identify conceptual research gaps and explore worthwhile avenues for this research. It is not limited to the EU or its particular fields of interest and covers various types of partnerships, in formal and informal arrangements, and in bilateral as well as in multilateral settings.[10] The review is nevertheless limited by its frame in two ways; its focus and the methods employed.

The focus in this chapter is on the activity of international cooperation leading to intelligence for national security. First, it is international which means that cooperation within national intelligence communities is no part of the review, no matter how extensive or well-documented like is the case with the US intelligence community. Second, it is about cooperation which means that not all activities executed in international intelligence organizations or systems are included in the review, as they are not considered to be primarily about cooperation. For example, the way information is processed in structures such as the EU External Action Service (EEAS) is in many cases mainly about their internal procedures and only marginally about cooperation between intelligence organizations from different countries. It will be included in later chapters though, when addressing its influence on trust in EU intelligence cooperation. Third, this review is limited to cooperation aimed at acquiring intelligence for national security (state interest). It thus considers strategic (or foreign) intelligence, military intelligence and counterterrorism for being seen as supporting the purpose of national security. It excludes cooperation for individual or corporate security, like in criminal intelligence and business intelligence. Security intelligence on a supranational level such as the EU or NATO is considered to serve issues delegated from or similar to state interest and is included.

The research methods used in this literature review further delineate what is considered a publication on international intelligence cooperation. Cooperation activities, for potentially being part of every step of the intelligence process, can be found in a wide variety of publications on intelligence. For this research, only publications were included that have international intelligence cooperation in the title and/or as one of the key topics. It covers the related topics of alignment, coordination, collaboration and integration and their subsequent activities. Furthermore, although intelligence is at present a topic frequently seen in the popular press and in policy documents, this research focusses on the academic debate. The systematic literature review was conducted by identifying on-topic articles in the journal of 'Intelligence and National Security' (INS) and the 'International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence'(IJIC), as these are the foremost (openly available)

10 See for example: Rudner, 'Hunters and Gatherers'; Labasque, 'The Merits of Informality in Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation'; Van Buuren, 'Analysing International Intelligence Cooperation: Institutions or Intelligence Assemblages?'

subject matter, reviewed journals.[11] Next, using the method of 'snowballing', publications from other sources were detected that also cover the topic of international intelligence cooperation. This chapter reviews the academic literature on international intelligence cooperation for the period 1991 up to and including 2019, both in sheer quantity as well as in a more qualitative manner. By systematically categorizing the publications identified, it became possible to critically examine their focus, perspectives and concepts albeit many of the publications do not name them specifically. It provides a clear insight in the development of the debate as well as its current state. The next section will first address the size and scope of the debate, essentially establishing whether or not we can still speak of a neglected topic.

### 2.2.2. A Neglected Topic?

International intelligence cooperation has long been considered the forgotten dimension within an already peripheral academic discipline of IS.[12] Nowadays, one can hardly uphold that claim. Despite the challenges facing academics in terms of data collection, especially the last two decades were fruitful in terms of journal articles, monographs and other publications. In the period 1991 up to and including 2019, 82 articles were published in INS and IJIC that have international intelligence cooperation in their title and/or as one of their key topics. When compared with the total number of original articles in these journals during that period (1842), international intelligence cooperation could indeed qualify as 'neglected', accounting for no more than 4.4% of the total. Yet, at the same time an almost uninterrupted growth in scholarly attention for international intelligence cooperation is present in the three decades examined. The average number of publications in INS and IJIC combined steadily rose from one per year in the period 1990-1999, to almost four per year in the period 2000-2019. Moreover, this picture of growing interest is bolstered when taking other sources into consideration.

In the last three decades an increasing number of publications on international intelligence cooperation has been published outside the two main intelligence journals mentioned. Using the method of snowballing down the sources of on-topic-articles in INS and IJIC, this research found 20 monographs exclusively covering the topic of international intelligence cooperation, as well as 63 book chapters in edited volumes. Furthermore, an additional 84 articles on international intelligence cooperation were published in other academic journals. Some of these journals specifically cover 'intelligence', like the 'Journal of Intelligence History' and the more recent 'International Journal of Intelligence and Public Affairs'. Yet,

11 In this the research concurs with Damien Van Puyvelde & Sean Curtis (2016) 'Standing on the shoulders of giants': diversity and scholarship in Intelligence Studies, Intelligence and National Security, 31:7, 1040-1041.

12 Fägersten, *Sharing Secrets*, 38–39; Westerfield, 'America and the World of Intelligence Liaison', 523; Lefebvre, 'The Difficulties and Dilemmas of International Intelligence Cooperation', 536; Munton, 'Intelligence Cooperation Meets International Studies Theory', 121.

interestingly, most of the journal articles on international intelligence cooperation outside INS and IJIC in the period 1990 up to and including 2019 were published in a variety of more off-topic journals like the 'Journal of Common Market Studies' and the 'Journal of Strategic Studies'. Especially from 2001 onwards, an increasing number of articles appear outside what can be considered the main intelligence debate.

On average, a continuous growth of academic publications on intelligence cooperation in the last three decades exists. All in all a total of 274 unique publications on international intelligence cooperation were included in this review, although these publications vary with regard to the depth and width of the analysis, as well as in sheer volume. Figure 2 presents the growing number of publications on international intelligence cooperation, per year and on average. While it is clear that substantial growth has been occurring especially from 2004 onwards, the number of publications still varies significantly per year.

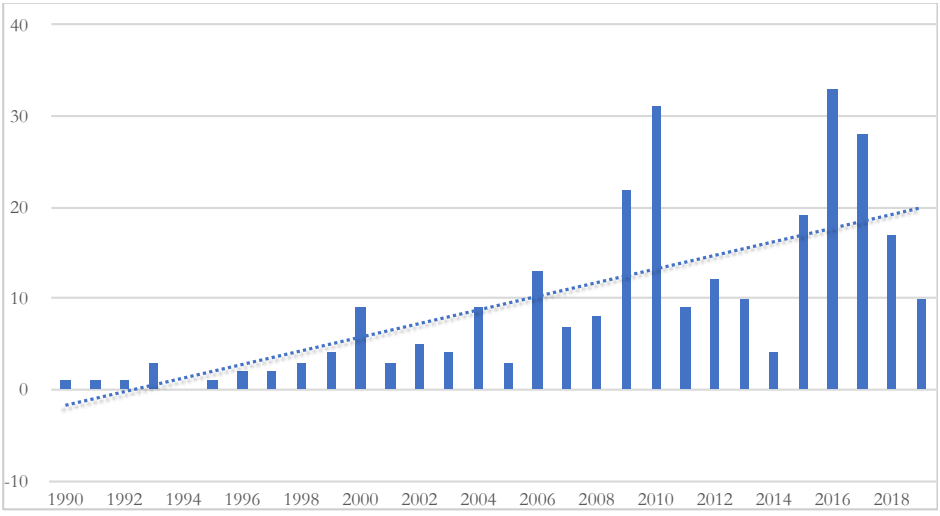


*Figure 2; Number of academic publications on international cooperation*

Three event-related topics leave their mark on the growing debate. First, in the period from 2004 onwards several contributions were made on intelligence cooperation in response to jihadist terrorism. For example, publications on the effectiveness of transatlantic intelligence cooperation follow the events of 9/11 and the adjoining 'War on terror', and

later the Madrid and London bombings.[13] Second, in the period from 2006 onwards the maturing of the European Union's (EU) Common Foreign and Security Policy led to an academic response on the feasibility of intelligence cooperation within this supranational organization.[14] Third, from 2009 onwards a growing body of literature addresses issues of ethics, accountability and oversight in international intelligence cooperation. Publications, for example, follow on exposures in the United States of extraordinary rendition methods by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and the existence of the PRISM program of the National Security Agency (NSA). Yet, not only exposures or incidents drive this topical interest. Also, the perceived difficulties for current national oversight mechanisms to monitor increasingly complex cooperation arrangements, and the introduction of new legislation concerning intelligence cooperation in several countries drives the academic debate.[15]

However important events are, it would be overly simplistic to depict them as the sole reason for the growth of the debate on international intelligence cooperation. A variety of topics exists in the 'underbrush' of the debate, indicating that the debate is developing a dynamic of its own. Noteworthy examples include Munton's attempt to explain Canadian intelligence collaboration against Castro's Cuba using both realist and liberal-constructivist theory in 2009[16], Thomson's elaborate Ph.D. thesis using microeconomic analysis to explain the success or failure in intelligence cooperation in 2015[17] and Maras' article on the role of organizational culture in overcoming the intelligence-sharing paradox in 2017.[18] These examples, only some out of many, also show that there is more to the growth of the debate on intelligence cooperation than sheer numbers. Its academic diversity, the multiformity regarding features of the academic debate, is increasing as well.

13 See for example: Bensahel, 'A Coalition of Coalitions'; Rudner, 'Hunters and Gatherers'; Reveron, 'Old Allies, New Friends'; Wetzling, 'European Counterterrorism Intelligence Liaisons'; Aldrich, 'US-European Intelligence Co-Operation on Counter-Terrorism'; Svendsen, Intelligence Cooperation and the War on Terror; Bures, 'Intelligence Sharing and the Fight against Terrorism in the EU'; Walsh, 'Intelligence-Sharing and United States Counter-Terrorism Policy'.

14 See for example: Müller-Wille, 'For Our Eyes Only Shaping an Intelligence Community within the EU'; Walsh, 'Intelligence-Sharing in the European Union'; Dorn, 'European Strategic Intelligence'; Müller-Wille, 'The Effect of International Terrorism on EU Intelligence Co-Operation'; Fägersten, 'Bureaucratic Resistance to International Intelligence Cooperation – The Case of Europol'; Davis Cross, 'EU Intelligence Sharing and Joint Situation Centre: A Glass Half-Full'; Nomikos, 'European Union Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN): Next Stop to an Agency?'

15 See for example: Born et al., *Making International Intelligence Cooperation Accountable*; Manjikian, "But My Hands Are Clean"; McGruddy, "Multilateral Intelligence Collaboration and International Oversight"; Puyvelde, "Intelligence Accountability and the Role of Public Interest Groups in the United States"; Hillebrand, "The Role of News Media in Intelligence Oversight"; Borelli, "Rendition, Torture and Intelligence Cooperation"; Sepper, "Democracy, Human Rights, and Intelligence Sharing."

16 Munton, 'Intelligence Cooperation Meets International Studies Theory'.

17 Thomson, 'Prolegomenon to a Political Economy of Intelligence and Security: Can Microeconomic Analysis Explain Success or Failure in Intelligence Cooperation?'

18 Maras, 'Overcoming the Intelligence-Sharing Paradox'.

### 2.2.3. Author Diversity

The debate on international intelligence cooperation is not only increasing in terms of number of publications or the variety of topics covered. Alongside this trend, the type of debate is changing as well. It is cautiously broadening, both in author and in content diversity. Diversity strengthens explanatory power in the debate. A more diverse group of scholars and a wider range in content enlarges the chance of competing approaches, thus furthering the debate in terms of generating new insights.[19] A trend of growing author diversity exists in the gender and nationality of the authors, two characteristics that enable a comparison with the broader scholarly diversity in IS. It is clear that the debate on international intelligence cooperation is still mainly a male affair. Only 21% of the publications on international intelligence cooperation in the period 1991 up to and including 2019 has a female first author. Nevertheless, when one divides this period in blocks of ten years each, an interesting trend appears. After having no female authors at all in the first decade, their share grows to 13% in the second and 27% in the last period. In addition, almost forty percent of all second authors is female. This is clearly a more favorable picture than for IS in general, as examined by Van Puyvelde and Curtis. They find that in the period 1986-2015, 9,1% of all publications in INS and IJIC have a female author.[20]

Notwithstanding the positive trend in gender diversity, when considering explanatory power for international intelligence cooperation, 'national background' is even more telling as an attribute of growing author diversity. There are systematic differences in the way people from different national cultures observe the world, let alone interpret it.[21] Their differing frames of reference can counter blind spots, each attending to useful information and complementing each other.[22] The field of IS is very clearly dominated by authors based in Anglo-Saxon countries, with the United Kingdom, United States and Canada accounting for 85.4% of all publications in IJIC and INS.[23] Again, the debate on international intelligence cooperation stands out favorably, with only 51.9% of the publications in these journals made by an author based in one of these three countries. Moreover, a national frame of reference stems from more than the country a researcher is based in. At the least, it involves the country of origin as well.

In the last three decades there has been increased scholarly diversity in the intelligence cooperation debate in terms of nationality. Authors originating from the UK and US still dominate the debate. On average 44% of all publications stems from these authors.

19 Puyvelde and Curtis, '"Standing on the Shoulders of Giants"', 1041.

20 Ibid., 1044.

21 Masuda et al., 'Culture and Aesthetic Preference'.

22 Syed, Rebel Ideas. The Power of Diverse Thinking., 15, 20; van Knippenberg and Mell, 'Past, Present, and Potential Future of Team Diversity Research', 139; McChrystal, Team of Teams, 118–24.

23 Puyvelde and Curtis, '"Standing on the Shoulders of Giants"', 1045.

Interestingly, as with gender, a shift appears to be occurring. Whereas, in the early days of the debate (1991-2000) authors from the UK and US accounted for almost all (83%) of the publications, the following decade their share shrunk to 48%. In the 2010-2019 the UK-US share fell further to 39%. This is still a significant percentage for only two countries on a topic as 'international' as international intelligence cooperation, but the variety of nationalities is clearly rising. Although the academic debate over international intelligence cooperation is still predominantly an endeavor by western scholars, figure 3 presents the steady trend of internationalization. Not only did the number of contributing authors from differing countries per year rise, the cumulative total of unique nationalities involved in the debate has increased significantly as well in the last decades. In the three decades leading up to 2019, authors from 31 different countries have contributed to the academic debate with publications on the topic of international intelligence cooperation. As the next subsection will show, this increasing scholarly diversity in gender and nationality is dovetailed by a growing diversity in content.

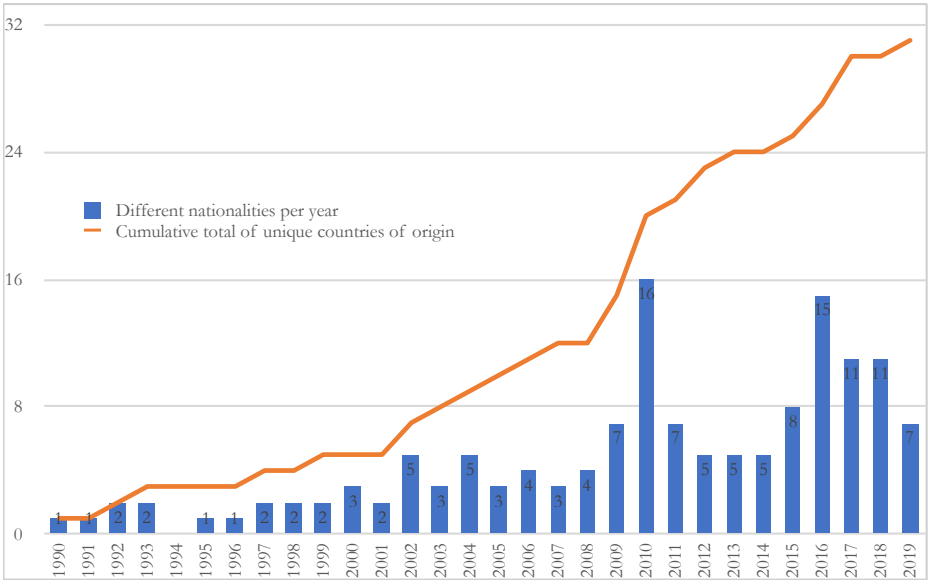


*Figure 3; Country of origin of first authors addressing international intelligence cooperation*

### 2.2.4. Content Diversity

The last aspect of the debate on international intelligence cooperation reviewed is its content. Again, there is a trend of cautiously growing diversity. Apart from the widening of

topics, as found at the beginning of this section, two additional shifts in content are present. First, a shift is occurring from a largely historical to a more current body of literature. In 2003 Lefebvre still claimed that 'the literature on international intelligence cooperation is still [...] largely historical'.[24] Indeed, in the period from 1990 to 2003, 21 publications, accounting for 62% of all publications in that period, dealt with the Cold War or before. Moreover, 16 out of these 21 publications covered topics from the early Cold War (1970 or before). Notable examples are the examination of the Axis SIGINT collaboration in the Second World War by Alvarez[25] and the Syrian-Egyptian intelligence cooperation in the period 1954-1967 by Rathmell.[26] From 2003 onwards, around the same year the number of publications began a significant ascent, the number of publications dealing with current (post-Cold War) issues rises to 92% in the period 2010 up to and including 2019. Although, as the years pass, there naturally is more and more 'history' positioned after the Cold War, the observed shift away from Cold War topics is so abrupt that it appears to account for more than just a gradual move away from a past era over time.

Second, the shift to a more current body of literature coincides with a change in the knowledge level pursued. In the period from 1990 to 2000 many of the publications on intelligence cooperation were descriptive or explanatory accounts, often based on sources declassified over time. Yet, more and more publications appear that not merely aim to describe or explain events, but try to extract general lessons about international intelligence cooperation and forecast its development accordingly. Others are more normative, its authors commenting on what they think international intelligence cooperation should look like. Especially the latter typify a move away from historical lessons to directly addressing current-day challenges, even offering advice. This trend can be illustrated by publications on the long-lasting UK-US agreement. Whereas publications by Smith[27] and Budiansky[28] uncover its beginnings based on at that time recently declassified sources, later writings by for example Herman[29] and Dittmer[30] try to extract general explanations. Others, like Manjikian[31], now make recommendations on accountability and oversight based on ethical considerations and notions of complicity.[32]

24 Lefebvre, 'The Difficulties and Dilemmas of International Intelligence Cooperation', 536.

25 Alvarez, 'Axis Sigint Collaboration'.

26 Rathmell, 'Brotherly Enemies'.

27 Smith, The Ultra-Magic Deals and the Most Secret Special Relationship, 1940-1946.

28 Budiansky, 'The Difficult Beginnings of US-British Codebreaking Cooperation'.

29 Herman, 'Understanding the UK-US Intelligence Partnership'.

30 Dittmer, 'Everyday Diplomacy'.

31 Manjikian, 'But My Hands Are Clean'.

32 See for example: Boer, 'Counter-Terrorism, Security and Intelligence in the EU'; Boer, Hillebrand, and Nölke, 'Legitimacy under Pressure'; McGruddy, 'Multilateral Intelligence Collaboration and International Oversight'; Wetzling, 'The Democratic Control of Intergovernmental Intelligence Cooperation'; Hillebrand, The CIA's Extraordinary Rendition and Secret Detention Programme.

A potential third shift in content diversity, a broadening of research strategies, appears harder to achieve. In 2013 Walsh suggests that intelligence cooperation could be analyzed more fruitfully by using 'the description of patterns of behavior, the development of hypothesized causes of this behavior and a clearly articulated and methodical research design that allows for the rigorous collection of evidence'.[33] Yet, obtaining this 'evidence' remains a challenge. Tuzuner, one of the few authors applying a quantitative approach to intelligence cooperation, admits that one should be cautious with regard to the validity of data for studying intelligence behavior, 'many of it being extremely secretive and therefore possibly remaining undetected'.[34] As a consequence many scholars use deductive reasoning to test hypotheses -mainly stemming from international relations theories - with a limited set of observations. The lack of empirical evidence makes it very hard to turn findings around to induce a revision of the dominant neorealist approach and its concepts.

## 2.3. The Existing Research Gap

### 2.3.1. Cooperation in International Relations

IR theory provides a valuable benchmark for the debate on international intelligence cooperation. Cooperation, and its rivals competition and conflict, are at the heart of this field.[35] Since the end of the 1970's, two main theories and their offspring dominate the debate, neorealism and neoliberalism. Both start from the concepts of rationality and self-interest in state-behavior. Even more so, based on their commonalities the two theories are even seen moving towards each other in what Wæver calls a 'neo-neo synthesis'.[36] The hard debates of the early years seem to be waning. Nevertheless, especially (offensive) structural realism and neoliberal institutionalism still disagree heavily on many topics as they are based on a very pessimistic and ideational view of the international system respectively. Whereas the first asserts that this system is inherently anarchistic and based on power politics, the latter focusses on interdependence and institutions. It leads to an entirely different view on international cooperation and international organizations. Neorealists focus on conflict and minimize the prospect for international cooperation. International organizations are merely forms by which states exercise hierarchical power and try to maximize their relative gain. States join alliances either to balance a threat coming at them, or to bandwagon with

33 Walsh, 'Intelligence Sharing', 295.

34 Aydinli and Tuzuner, 'Quantifying Intelligence Cooperation', 677.

35 See for example: Hurd, "The Case against International Cooperation," 263–72; Long, "Cooperation and Conflict in International Relations," 7–8; Müller, "Security Cooperation"; Sato, "International Cooperation," 42–44, 48–49.

36 Wæver, "Still a Discipline After All These Debates?," 310–15; Wohlforth, "Realism," 145–46; Onuf, "Worlds of Our Making (2002)," 31; Jervis, "Realism, Neoliberalism, and Cooperation," 42–43; Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It," 391–92.

the powerful and avert risk.[37] Liberal institutionalists acknowledge cooperation as a means to promote self-interest, but they see it as part of a quest for absolute gain. In their view, states craft institutions to solve the cooperation dilemma sketched in the previous chapter and further elaborated on in the next. Institutional solutions limit the problems in collective action by limiting the range of acceptable behavior and offering information. Moreover, in this system, international organizations are thought to hold a power (actorness) of their own.[38]

Since the end of the Cold War, a third theory gained prominence in the debate. Constructivism has become an increasingly important and accepted approach to international relations.[39] It is distinct from both the materialism found in realist approaches (focusing on relative gain) and the instrumentalism in neoliberalist approaches (focusing on absolute gain). By contrast, constructivism emphasizes the social and relational construction of state preferences and behavior.[40] Moreover, constructivist theory steps beyond the notion of rationality. It focusses on the intersubjective role of norms and ideas in deriving meaning from events and objects. In cooperation, constructivism helps explain why actors converge around specific norms and frames of understanding. They offer some sort of social arrangement with (informal) rules for behavior, limit the anarchy in the international system and shape the meaning of state interests.[41] As Wendt puts it: 'an anarchy of friends differs from one of enemies'.[42] Similarly, the English school in International Relations adheres to notions of norm-based convergence. It is a line of theory that claims that world society restrains the practice of states; their behavior is structured by international norms, regulated by international institutions and guided by moral purposes. Like constructivism it includes the power of shared values and collective identities in creating cooperative solidarity. In doing so, both constructivism and the English School do not deny the importance of states and the influence of power relations, but they add organizations and individuals as agents in a broader collective.[43] They not only open the way for transnational role-based bureaucracies

37 Mearsheimer, *The Tragedy of Great Power Politics*, 30–36; Jervis, "Realism, Neoliberalism, and Cooperation," 44–50, 62–63; Mearsheimer, "The False Promise of International Institutions," 12–14; Grieco, *Cooperation among Nations*, 3–11; Grieco, "Anarchy and the Limits of Cooperation: A Realist Critique of the Newest Liberal Institutionalism," 487–90; Waltz, *Theory of International Politics*.

38 Keohane and Martin, "The Promise of Institutionalist Theory"; Axelrod and Keohane, "Achieving Cooperation under Anarchy," 247–48; Keohane, After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy; Majeski and Fricks, "Conflict and Cooperation in International Relations," 622–25.

39 Adler, "Constructivism in International Relations: Sources, Contributions, and Debates," 118; Hurd, "Constructivism," 301; Sterling-Folker, "Competing Paradigms or Birds of a Feather? Constructivism and Neoliberal Institutionalism Compared," 113–16.

40 Wendt, "Constructing International Politics," 73; Onuf, "Constructivism: A User's Manual (1998)," 3–4.

41 Legro, Rethinking the World; Adler, "Constructivism in International Relations: Sources, Contributions, and Debates," 123, 126–28; Hurd, "Constructivism," 299–300; Onuf, "Constructivism: A User's Manual (1998)," 8–20; Katzenstein, The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics; Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It," 393, 396–99.

42 Wendt, "Constructing International Politics," 78.

43 Dunne, "The English School," 267–74; Buzan, From International to World Society?: English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation, 228–32; Onuf, "Constructivism: A User's Manual (1998)," 17.

to play their role in cooperation, but also introduce a broad conception of institutions as regimes governing appropriate behavior and a basis for identity formation.

European integration has been a hallmark event for theories of IR. The project has by repetition offered a litmus test. Elements of these theories have been used to explain cooperation in the EU or the lack thereof. The cradle of the modern state system and the scene of numerous wars and great-power rivalry, Europe also became the place where states began to combine aspects of governance. In times of positive expectations, it was mainly neoliberal theories that took the stand, while in times of crises and setback neorealist explanations resurfaced.[44] Recently, this has been especially the case with the development of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the EU's strive for 'strategic autonomy', two topics covered in more detail in chapter 5. These events have spurred academic responses from all sides of the theoretical spectrum in IR.[45] In addition to the theories mentioned above, two[46] schools of thought have emerged; intergovernmentalism (and its foil federalism) and neofunctionalism. They are closely related to the study of cooperation in international relations, but have their origins in explaining the European experience.[47] Like neorealist and neoliberal theories, intergovernmentalism explains integration as the outcome of cooperation and competition among national governments.[48] On a more realist footing, intergovernmental cooperation in regional organizations is a response to shifts in the balance of power in the international system. On a more liberal footing, intergovernmental cooperation in regional organizations is the result of growing interdependence. Although the outcome is still the result of state bargaining, many cooperation decisions are made by 'a small groups of relatively well socialized officials in key committees'.[49] Nevertheless, in both types of intergovernmentalism national sovereignty will always prevail over regional cooperation and integration and is thus limited. This is different in neofunctionalism, where institutional dynamics are seen to drive change and transformation.

44 See for example: Fiott, "In Every Crisis an Opportunity?"; Genschel, Leek, and Weyns, "War and Integration. The Russian Attack on Ukraine and the Institutional Development of the EU"; Orenstein, "The European Union's Transformation after Russia's Attack on Ukraine"; Nicoli, "Neofunctionalism Revisited"; Schmidt, "Theorizing Institutional Change and Governance in European Responses to the Covid-19 Pandemic"; Wallaschek, "Contested Solidarity in the Euro Crisis and Europe's Migration Crisis"; Hooghe and Marks, "Grand Theories of European Integration in the Twenty-First Century"; Schimmelfennig, "European Integration in the Euro Crisis."

45 Mengelberg, *Permanent Change?*, 39–40; Reus-Smit and Snidal, "Between Utopia and Reality," 24.

46 Generally, postfunctionalism is identified as a third 'school'. It emphasizes the disruptive potential of a clash between ongoing integration and exclusive identities in civil society leading to polarization and conflict. Although very insightful in scrutinizing for example the origins, course and effect of the BREXIT referendum, it has little to say directly on cooperation within the EU institutions. Therefore, in this study it will not be explicated separately. See for example: Hooghe and Marks, "Grand Theories of European Integration in the Twenty-First Century," 1116–17, 1122–24.

47 Börzel and Risse, "Litmus Tests for European Intergation Theories," 238; Wiener, "Taking Stock of Integration Theory," 262, 268–70.

48 Hooghe and Marks, "Grand Theories of European Integration in the Twenty-First Century," 1115–16.

49 Howorth, "Decision-Making in Security and Defense Policy," 448–49.

### 2.3.2. Neofunctionalism and New Institutionalism

Neofunctionalism takes the institutional approach to integration and cooperation a step further. It specifically focusses on dynamics of institutional change and transformation. As its name already suggests, neofunctionalism starts from a functional approach. Functionalism is based on the general assumption that the only reason for states to cooperate - or integrate - is when it suits a function that they cannot efficiently or effectively perform alone. It sees a formal transfer of state functions to specialized agencies in international organizations as the only feasible way to bypass problems of sovereignty. In contrast, neofunctionalism focusses on the autonomous role of non-state actors, especially on regional organizations like the EU and their secretariats. Once established, these regional institutions and their employees develop an actorness that moves collective identity-formation to the supranational level and drives cooperation and integration further. This development tends to be incremental. In time, the functional transfer of tasks in one domain will lead to integration in other areas as it opens windows for new cooperation or evokes unanticipated problems. Neo-functionalists term this process 'spill-over'.[50] Although starting from the functionalist idea of added value, they are less concerned with the formal outcome of this process.[51] Whether or not the EU - or any other regional cooperation for that matter - ultimately evolves into federal unity is of less importance than the explanatory value of the institutional dynamics underlying this process. It offers an insight into the pathways for changing beliefs and perceptions about the benefits of cooperation once established. However, being a theory of change and transformation, neofunctionalism has endured considerable criticism for not being able to explain recent setbacks or even reverse dynamics in EU integration.

Revised versions of neofunctionalism are still at the heart of explaining dynamics of cooperation and integration in international organizations. They offer valuable building blocks for explanations of international cooperation.[52] First, revised neofunctionalism has a focus on social construction that is unseen in either intergovernmentalism or federalism. In this respect, it can be considered 'a forerunner as well as a part' of constructivism.[53] Agents are seen as 'softly rational' actors who pursue goals, but are confronted with new situations and unintended consequences along the way. As a result, they develop new ideas and norms that gradually adjust their shared networks, institutions and identities. From this point of view, the true purpose of EU institutions can be identity building rather than delivering effective policy per se. In this process of change, national representatives 'increasingly understand their roles in terms of collective responsibility'.[54] Second, revised

50 Niemann, Lefkofridi, and Schmitter, "Neofunctionalism," 46–50; Haas, The Uniting of Europe, 283–318; Haas, Beyond the Nation-State: Functionalism and International Organization; Mengelberg, Permanent Change?, 81–31.

51 Niemann, Lefkofridi, and Schmitter, "Neofunctionalism," 45.

52 Niemann, Lefkofridi, and Schmitter, 50–53.

53 Haas, *The Uniting of Europe*, xiii; Haas, "Does Constructivism Subsume Neo-Functionalism?," 22–29.

54 Bickerton, "Functionality in EU Foreign Policy," 214–16.

neofunctionalism takes a broader view on this change process than neofunctionalism did, stepping beyond the automaticity of integration. Institutional dynamics of cooperation can take several forms, like the proliferation of specialized institutions in an intergovernmental framework ('spill around'), the accumulation of authority by regional institutions without expanding the scope of the mandate ('build-up'), or the modification of institutions to maintain the cooperation effort ('muddle-about').[55]

By now, most approaches in IR and European integration theory acknowledge that international institutions and organizations matter in the cooperative behavior of states.[56] Yet, they differ on how they matter exactly. In explaining dynamics of integration and cooperation, at least three strands of 'new institutionalism' can be discerned.[57] The first is rational institutionalism. It explores how rational actors design functional institutions to maximize their utility. This strand of institutionalism relates closely to early versions of functionalism. The second is historical institutionalism. In addition to the utility base in rational institutionalism, this strand emphasizes the conservative effect of path-dependency in the development of institutions. It sees the structural organization as the principal factor in structuring behavior. Third, there is sociological institutionalism. It marries insights of constructivism and revised neofunctionalism. Contrary to the other strands, sociological institutionalism steps beyond narrow utilitarian concerns and the appearance of organizational designs. In this view, 'material conditions always matter, but they never matter all by themselves'.[58] Institutions are not so much adopted because they are the most efficient instrument for the task at hand, but are the result of culturally specific practices and social relations of transnational elites.[59] Consisting of members of national and international bureaucracies or secretaries as well as outside experts in a certain policy domain, these communities are seen to develop a collective identity and have a profound influence on the way state interests are defined.[60] Under certain conditions and circumstances, they are even seen to shape policies 'in ways unintended or undesired by member-states'.[61] Davis Cross uses this concept of 'a vibrant transnational society of individuals' to explain international

55 Schmitter and Lefkofridi, "Neo-Functionalism as a Theory of Disintegration," 3–6; Haas, *The Uniting of Europe*, xxv–xxix, xxxix–xliv, *I-*Ii.

56 Martin and Simmons, "International Organizations and Institutions," 326; Stein, "Neoliberal Institutionalism," 210, 203.

57 March, "The New Institutionalism: Organizational Factors in Political Life"; Pollack, "Rational Choice and Historical Institutionalism," 109; Hall and Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," 936.

58 Onuf, "Worlds of Our Making (2002)," 35; Wendt, "Constructing International Politics," 73.

59 McCourt, "Practice Theory and Relationalism as the New Constructivism," 475–76; Onuf, "Worlds of Our Making (2002)," 31–32; Hall and Taylor, "Political Science and the Three New Institutionalisms," 947–50; Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It," 424; Wiener, "Constructivism and Sociological Institutionalism," 35–47, 54.

60 Barnett and Finnemore, *Rules for the World*; Onuf, "Worlds of Our Making (2002)," 25; Barnett and Finnemore, "The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations."

61 Barnett and Finnemore, *Rules for the World*, 10; Barnett and Finnemore, "The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations."

cooperation in the context of European integration, arguing that the social relations and identity formation have the potential to change the meaning of sovereignty.[62]

The interplay between practices and identity formation takes center stage in sociological institutionalism. In sociological terms, structure and agency interact; 'it is not only who we are that drives what we do, it also what we do that determines who we are.'[63] In this respect, two types of communities need to be mentioned that relate to transnational elites in international cooperation. Both are normative and professional communities that focus on inarticulate knowledge and shared practice as a binding factor. First, there are communities of practice; groups of people in a shared domain that engage in a process of collective learning. They help each other, share information and develop a collective identity. Most importantly, they are practitioners in the same trade sharing a common repertoire and expertise, even when these are not recognized by the outside world.[64] Second, there are epistemic communities. Like communities of practice, they are bound by a common expertise and a shared frame of understanding. In addition, epistemic communities have an authoritative claim to knowledge in a specific domain and a common policy goal.[65] In these communities members develop a collective identity based on their common practice. Interestingly, people can be part of multiple communities without finding the need to choose a primary identity.[66] Role-based identities can overlap and exist next to one another or next to national identities. In terms of international cooperation, this means that overlapping identities can be a vehicle to traverse zero-sum reasoning and negotiate differing interests. This idea of collective identity formation and the solidarity it might bring will be covered more elaborately in chapters 3 and 8.

### 2.3.3. A Neorealist Presumption in Intelligence Studies

IR theory as well as the mosaic of approaches to European integration offer a diversity of insights into international cooperation. Especially the middle ground theories of constructivism, sociological institutionalism and revised versions of neofunctionalism offer nuanced insights in cooperation practices at multiple levels and include the intangible

62 Davis Cross, *International Cooperation Against All Odds.*, 1–7, 125–26.

63 Pouliot, *International Security in Practice*, 5; Onuf, "Worlds of Our Making (2002)," 21–23; Wendt, "Anarchy Is What States Make of It," 399.

64 Wenger and Wenger-Trayner, "Introduction to Communities of Practice, a Brief Overview of the Concept and Its Uses."; Li et al., "Evolution of Wenger's Concept of Community of Practice"; Wenger, Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity.

65 Davis Cross, "The Limits of Epistemic Communities," 90–93; Cross, "Rethinking Epistemic Communities Twenty Years Later"; Howorth, "Discourse, Ideas, and Epistemic Communities in European Security and Defence Policy"; Adler, "The Emergence of Cooperation"; Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination," 3, 7, 14–20.

66 Risse, "Social Constructivism and European Integration," 131–32, 137.

role of ideas and identities. Unfortunately, this constructive turn to practice so far has largely gone unnoticed or at least unused in the study of international intelligence cooperation. The study of intelligence has begun to engage mainstream social science, in particular IR[67] and international intelligence cooperation is no exception. Nevertheless, a large share of the publications on cooperation scrutinized in this research has a neorealist foundation, albeit not always referring to this approach explicitly. They are neorealist in approach, in the sense that they combine the concepts of state competition, direct self-interest and the rational weighing of cost-benefit. As mentioned in subsection 2.3.1, neorealists assert that the international political system is one of anarchy, lacking central authority, where states behave according to a rational logic of egoistic self-interest. Because states can never be certain of other states' intentions, there is a lack of trust between them. Instead, they rely only on the (relative) strength of their own capabilities. Intelligence in this setting is supposed to deliver competitive advantage for states who seek relative gains among each other.[68]

The pre-eminence of neorealism is not surprising, as it is the approach to international relations most centrally concerned with security and threat, what is called 'high politics'. As such, neorealism already provides a theoretical explanation for certain key questions in IS, for example why intelligence is necessary.[69] One of the most well-known advocates of neorealism in addressing intelligence cooperation is Sims. She asserts that the international system is 'essentially one of self-help and anarchy' in which information is a component of power.[70] By conceptualizing information and information sharing this way, this scholar deserves credit for introducing one of the first frameworks for analyzing and comparing cost and benefits of intelligence cooperation, introducing the concepts of 'simple' (intelligence only) and 'complex' (asymmetric) liaison. Framing intelligence within neorealism has brought IS much needed structure for debate, supporting further understanding of the topic.

A typical neorealist would argue that states are reluctant to share intelligence and that cooperation will only occur when the self-indulgent gains clearly outweigh the perceived cost, for example in terms of manpower and risk.[71] This occurs in the rare occasions that the perceived self-interest of both parties to a great extent overlap, like in the case of a common threat.[72] The shared perception of military threat coming from the Soviet Union during the Cold War is an example of common threat as a powerful incentive for cooperation. More

67 Gill and Phythian, 'Developing Intelligence Theory', 469.

68 Gill, Marrin, and Phythian, Intelligence Theory, 2, 5.

69 Phythian, 'Intelligence Theory and Theories of International Relations: Shared World or Separate Worlds?', 57.

70 Sims, 'Foreign Intelligence Liaison', 196.

71 See for example: Wirtz, 'Constraints on Intelligence Collaboration'; Westerfield, 'America and the World of Intelligence Liaison'; Bensahel, 'A Coalition of Coalitions'.

72 See for example: Clough, 'Quid Pro Quo'; Lefebvre, 'The Difficulties and Dilemmas of International Intelligence Cooperation'; Svendsen, 'Connecting Intelligence and Theory'.

often, two states can help each other achieve differing, but not conflicting, goals. In these cases, a rational weighing of cost and benefit is required to decide whether a cooperation is fruitful.[73] Cooperation only occurs when there is some sort of acceptable reciprocity in the exchange.[74] This is typically achieved in a tit-for-tat manner, better known as the old intelligence adage of 'Quid pro Quo' (QPQ). In the absence of trust, cooperation is achieved under conditions of hierarchy and bargaining, afterwards sustained by monitoring and punishing defection.[75] This rational calculative mechanism for cooperative behavior and the control it needs, will be further elaborated on in chapter 3 when discussing the cooperation dilemma in intelligence.

Following a neorealist presumption, scholars and practitioners alike often portray international cooperation between intelligence services as a 'contradictio in terminis'. These services have a national tasking, an accompanying national mandate and are firmly embedded in national structures.[76] Intelligence services are thus said to have no friends, just adversaries or at best rivals. They 'instinctively hate pooling and sharing'.[77] Cooperation resembles a zero-sum game in which the gains of one state occur at the expense of the other. Intelligence cooperation thus 'drives up distrust and defensive positioning, even among relatively close allies'.[78] Nevertheless, even neorealist scholars like Hulnick were among the first to acknowledge that cooperation is becoming less about relative gain and more about collective security. Notwithstanding the element of competition, the changing threat environment is driving cooperation to higher levels.[79] Moreover, relations can be important in intelligence, even in cases where the arrangement clearly started out from a rational weighing of cost-benefit and self-interest. This is apparent in the intense cooperation of the MAXIMATOR alliance recently reported on by Jacobs. In the course of this long-term SIGINT cooperation the number of 'cognoscenti' grew and the restriction to only discuss cryptanalytical issues in bilateral meetings eased.[80] A neorealist approach alone is insufficient to explain this evolution and the dynamics of international intelligence cooperation in a long-standing multilateral setting.

73 See for example: Wetzling, 'European Counterterrorism Intelligence Liaisons'; Bock, 'Bilateral Intelligence Cooperation'; Thomson, 'Prolegomenon to a Political Economy of Intelligence and Security: Can Microeconomic Analysis Explain Success or Failure in Intelligence Cooperation?'

74 See for example: Richelson, 'The Calculus of Intelligence Cooperation'; Doron, 'The Vagaries of Intelligence Sharing'; O'Halpin, 'Small States and Big Secrets'; Walsh, The International Politics of Intelligence Sharing; Munton and Fredj, 'Sharing Secrets'; Schaefer, 'Intelligence Cooperation and New Trends in Space Technology'.

75 See for example: Walsh, 'Defection and Hierarchy in International Intelligence Sharing'; Walsh, The International Politics of Intelligence Sharing; Odinga, '"We Recommend Compliance"'.

76 Rathmell, 'Towards Postmodern Intelligence', 102.

77 Aldrich, '"A Profoundly Disruptive Force"', 153.

78 Crawford, 'Intelligence Cooperation', 2.

79 Hulnick, "Intelligence Cooperation in the Post-cold War Era," 462–63.

80 Jacobs, 'Maximator: European Signals Intelligence Cooperation, from a Dutch Perspective', 1–4, 8.

### 2.3.4. Difficulties in Explaining Increasing Multilateral Intelligence Cooperation

The traditionally dominant neorealist approach is overtaken by the reality of rapidly expanding international intelligence cooperation.[81] International intelligence cooperation is not the hesitant affair neorealists make it out to be, only beneficial under strict considerations of self-interest and reciprocity. The form of intelligence cooperation most likely to be achieved is bilateral cooperation. The smaller the number of participants in a cooperation, the smaller the risk of willingly or unwillingly giving away secrets beyond the scope of the deal, and the easier the cost and benefit equation can be managed. Yet, contrary to neorealist expectation, it does not stop there. Systematic intelligence cooperation in multilateral and plurilateral arrangements is 'overlaying the received picture of it as [only] a secretive, exclusively 'national' entity'.[82] International cooperation now frequently occurs in arrangements like the EU and NATO, or in ad hoc coalitions and informal clubs.[83] Moreover, the age-old adage of QPQ no longer seems to regulate intelligence cooperation the way it did in the past.[84]

There appear to be clear limits to the extent to which neorealism can form the basis for a comprehensive understanding of current-day intelligence. Basing an explanation of intelligence cooperation 'solely on realist ground [...] risks ending up with an overly simplistic explanation at best'.[85] This approach is perfectly capable of explaining what is not happening in international intelligence cooperation and why this is the case. However, it is inadequate to understand what does happen in international intelligence cooperation. The new security environment brings along 'new issues about what to share, as well as with whom, especially in international security organizations'.[86] It has become questionable whether international intelligence cooperation is (still) constituted of states operating in a zero-sum situation of total anarchy, in a rational way and only driven by power politics and narrow self-interest. For this reason, already in 2002, Aldrich was one of the first to suggest that 'clandestine agencies and their intelligence alliances [perhaps] should be viewed less as exponents of realism and more as the smooth and experience exemplars of neoliberalism'.[87]

81 Crawford, 'Intelligence Cooperation', 3.

82 Bigo, 'Shared Secrecy in a Digital Age and a Transnational World', 380; Herman, *Intelligence Power in Peace and War*.

83 Shiraz and Aldrich, 'Globalisation and Borders', 267; Aldrich, '"A Profoundly Disruptive Force"', 142; Svendsen, 'Connecting Intelligence and Theory', 701–2; Wetzling, 'European Counterterrorism Intelligence Liaisons'.

84 Fägersten, *European Intelligence Cooperation*; Fägersten, *Sharing Secrets*; Scott and Hughes, 'Intelligence in the Twenty-First Century', 9; Van Buuren, 'Analysing International Intelligence Cooperation: Institutions or Intelligence Assemblages?', 81.

85 Fägersten, *Sharing Secrets*, 17; Omand, *Securing the State*, 136–37.

86 Boatner, 'Sharing and Using Intelligence in International Organizations: Some Guidelines'.

87 Aldrich, 'Dangerous Liaisons', 54.

As shown in the previous sections, despite the significant growth in intelligence theories[88] and the similar broadening of the debate on international intelligence cooperation, a research gap still exists. The question remains what, despite all skepticism, explains the current depth and breadth of international intelligence cooperation, especially in multilateral settings. The leading concepts of neorealism, being state centrality, cost-benefit considerations and rational choices continue to hold prominence in the debate. Applying these concepts, it is puzzling why international intelligence cooperation does occur, and is even rising, in multilateral settings such as the EU.[89] Finding concepts better suited to address intelligence cooperation in these arrangements, which neorealism has the most difficulties in explaining, will lead to a better understanding. They qualify as long-standing interaction mechanisms instead of short-lived exchanges, organizational constructs instead of mere stately affairs and, as a result, perhaps based on social relations as much as on rational calculations. Addressing the research gap, striving for a more comprehensive understanding of international intelligence cooperation, would imply taking these characteristics as avenues for advancement.

## 2.4. Addressing the Gap

### 2.4.1. Approaching Cooperation as a Process: Adding Interaction and Outcome

A first avenue to advance the debate is to approach international intelligence cooperation as a process, rather than a product. In chapter 1 cooperation was defined as 'the practice of people or entities working together with commonly agreed-upon goals and possibly methods'. As mentioned there, this definition incorporates two features of cooperation commonly seen in the social sciences. First, cooperation is a shared activity, in essence something that for its meaning is dependent on concrete actions by two or more participants. Their interactions, or cooperative behavior, shape the arrangement.[90] Second, cooperation serves a common goal. This means that it is goal-orientated and that all participants in the arrangement add value and benefit from it, albeit maybe not in the same manner or degree. In any case, there is a reciprocity involved in the activity.[91] In sum, cooperation qualifies as a process, that is a series of actions directed to an end.

Addressing cooperation as a process will help a more comprehensive understanding of intelligence cooperation in two ways. First, it will move the debate beyond predominantly

88 Marrin, 'Evaluating Intelligence Theories', 479.

89 For an overview of the debate on EU Intelligence cooperation, for example see: Gruszczak, Intelligence Security in the European Union, 9–12.

90 Axelrod, The Evolution of Cooperation, 11–12, 54, 85.

91 Bowles and Gintis, A Cooperative Species: Human Reciprocity and Its Evolution; Axelrod, The Evolution of Cooperation, 17, 42, 173; Tomasello et al., Why We Cooperate, 41, 57–58.

scrutinizing the reasons for forming a cooperation arrangement. At present, because of the neorealist emphasis on relative gain, rational choice and direct returns, many publications scrutinize the initial cost-benefit decision whether or not to cooperate.[92] Moreover, even publications on a more neoliberal footing often focus on initial drivers for cooperation like countering increased transnational threats.[93] Yet, the activities in international intelligence cooperation comprise of more than just the formation of an arrangement. Second, approaching international intelligence cooperation as a process accommodates that it is often not a simple and isolated act, but a recurrent event. It has a history and a future that influence the behavior of the participants. Understanding international intelligence cooperation as an activity is hard using a photo, one should watch the movie instead. Cooperation should thus be seen as a process, being the initial decision to cooperate as much as the activities shaping it afterwards and the outcome they bring. That outcome in turn influences future decisions to cooperate (or not). Figure 4 visualizes international intelligence cooperation as a simple process flow including the different phases of activity and the feedback loop.

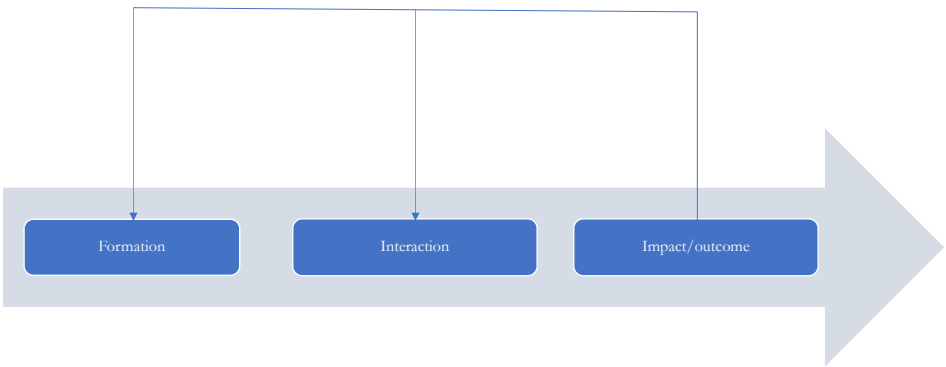


*Figure 4; International intelligence cooperation as a process flow over time*

Differentiating between the formation and interaction phases, allows international intelligence cooperation to be studied as more than just an all-or-nothing game. The depth and breadth of intelligence cooperation are determined in the activities following the decision to participate, as most of the cooperative behavior, conflictual or otherwise, lies after the initial formation.[94] This is most applicable to established multilateral arrangements, like the 'Five Eyes community' and the NATO Intelligence Fusion Centre (NIFC). Although

92 Tuzuner, 'The State-Level Determinants of the United States' International Intelligence Cooperation'; Herman, Intelligence Power in Peace and War, 209, 218.

93 See for example: Aldrich, 'Global Intelligence Co-Operation versus Accountability'; Svendsen, 'The Globalization of Intelligence since 9/11'; Fägersten, Sharing Secrets; Daghie, 'Intelligence Cooperation - Sharing Secrets in a Multipolar World'.

94 Koops, 'Theorising Inter-Organisational Relations', 192.

formed decades ago and generally perceived as successful arrangements, their workings and effect still very much depend on the quality of interaction in a given period.[95] Nevertheless, the interaction phase is important for more ad-hoc, bilateral relations as well. As shown by Odinga in his article on Ethiopian-US intelligence cooperation, compliance bargaining in the interaction phase can lead to a varying depth and breadth of cooperation over time. Regardless of the hierarchy imposed in the formation, states continue to bargain over compliance to the terms and obligations of an already established agreement.[96]

Taking the outcome of the cooperation process into account, allows international intelligence cooperation to be studied as more than just a one-time game. In many cases cooperation is not an entirely new decision made on a blank sheet, as the participants are no strangers towards each other. For example, it stands to reason that directors and analysts of Western defence intelligence services encounter frequently in overlapping settings like NATO's Military Intelligence Committee, it's working groups, intelligence courses provided by the NATO school in Oberammergau or in support of joint missions lead by this alliance. Familiarity with a partner is important, as is the reputation a partner holds within the community. Cooperation experience will influence future formation and interaction with a partner or adjustment of cooperative behavior in the current arrangement.[97] This is not only about operational results, but about the implicit and explicit valuation of the process as well in terms of quality (norms) and gratification (values). Adding the factor of cooperation experience is especially relevant for longstanding cooperation arrangements where relations and structures had time to evolve. Shpiro finds that the development of mutual institutional confidence and personal relationships through regular meetings make a significant contribution to the effectiveness of future cooperation.[98]

### 2.4.2. Adopting a Multilevel Approach: Adding the Interorganizational and Interpersonal Levels

A second avenue to advance the debate is to scrutinize international intelligence cooperation on multiple levels, rather than on the state-level alone. Differentiating between levels of analysis allowed IR as an academic discipline to 'gradually move away from a dominant focus on the international system and the role of the state in that system, to deal more with the transnational role and perspective of groups and individuals'.[99] In similar fashion, several authors have proposed to capture the complexities of intelligence cooperation in different levels of analysis, ranging all the way down to the 'individual' (as 'professional') and

95 O'Neil, 'Australia and the "Five Eyes" Intelligence Network'; Gordon, 'Intelligence Sharing in NATO'.

96 Odinga, '"We Recommend Compliance"'.

97 Munton and Fredj, 'Sharing Secrets'; Fägersten, For EU Eyes Only?

98 Shpiro, 'The Communication of Mutual Security: Frameworks for European-Mediterranean Intelligence Sharing', 35.

99 Gebhard, 'One World, Many Actors', 39–44.

'personal' levels'.[100] In this respect, Bures and Aldrich note the importance of 'low politics' in intelligence organizations. The first states that political elites have trouble imposing their decisions on cooperation on national services 'over which [they] usually exercise less than perfect control'.[101] The latter contends that the realm of 'grand strategy remains unfamiliar territory for the [...] workaday intelligence professional, whose particular interests [...] tend to insulate him from wider political arguments'.[102] Marrin even states that 'IR theories at the individual level [...] have the most to contribute to intelligence studies'.[103] Figure 5 depicts a possible cascade of levels for the analysis of international intelligence cooperation. Although the exact (sub)categorizations differ in both IR and Interorganizational Relations (IOR), based on these disciplines this study discerns three aggregate levels of analysis being international, interorganizational and interpersonal.[104] The international level refers to the wider global dynamics of the international system and the behavior of states in it. The interorganizational level, or group level in IR, refers to the institutional structures stemming from the cooperation itself, such as steering committees and secretariats. Within these structures, bureaucracies and (in)formal groups interact. The interpersonal level refers in basis to the actions of individuals responding to their personal and professional attitudes or feelings towards a partner or situation.

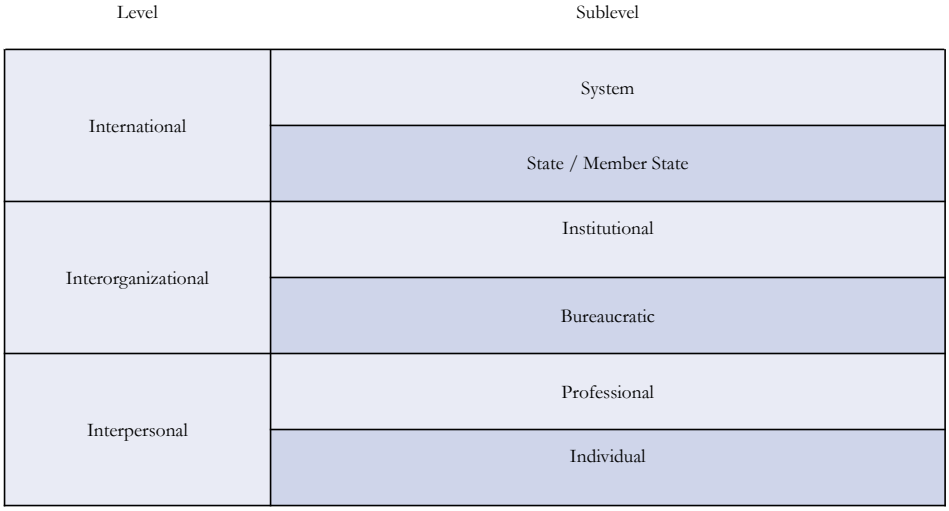


*Figure 5; International intelligence cooperation on multiple levels of analysis*

100 Svendsen, 'Connecting Intelligence and Theory', 714.

101 Bures, "Informal Counterterrorism Arrangements in Europe," 506.

102 Aldrich, "US-European Intelligence Co-Operation on Counter-Terrorism," 124.

103 Marrin, 'Enhancing Political Science Contributions to American Intelligence Studies', 104.

104 Temby, 'What Are Levels of Analysis and What Do They Contribute to International Relations Theory?'; Gebhard, 'One World, Many Actors'; Koops, 'Inter-Organizationalism in International Relations: A Multilevel Framework of Analysis'.

Addressing cooperation at the organizational and personal levels will help a more comprehensive understanding of intelligence cooperation. Outside the field of IS, scholars have tried to understand why humans cooperate for decades, ultimately extending behavioral patterns bottom-up from individuals to social institutions and organizations.[105] Adversely, within IS cooperation so far has been examined mainly as a state affair. Several scholars mention factors important to intelligence cooperation that appear to be on the organizational and personal levels, but most of them only do so in the context of relations between states and without exploring the interorganizational and interpersonal factors in depth. For example, in his much-cited article 'Quid Pro Quo' from 2004 Clough already goes well beyond state considerations and addresses factors such as bureaucracy, perceptions of information ownership and personal relationships, but does not empirically study them.[106]

Organizational approaches to international intelligence cooperation are evolving, but so far mainly focus on structures and formal institutions, often scrutinizing intelligence cooperation in the EU and incidentally NATO.[107] Two scholars examining European institutions stand out as illustrative. Müller-Wille is one of the scholars to note that in the face of current crises and given the establishment of a European Common Defence and Security Policy (CSDP), the organizational design of EU intelligence is inadequate.[108] Yet, instead of advocating the creation of new structures to improve this, as many scholars do[109], Müller-Wille follows the traditional functionalist approach mentioned above. He argues that increasing the utility of existing structures offers the most convincing way ahead for clearing obstacles in cross-agency intelligence cooperation.[110] Fägersten subsumes to this functionalist approach and tries to explain how European intelligence cooperation can occur within the organizational design given.[111] Combining rational and historical institutionalist approaches, he examines how formal rules and constraints shape and affect cooperative behavior. Fägersten finds that if changes in organizations or their routines and rules are necessary for cooperation to take place, then institutional resilience can constitute a barrier. Mandates, formal rules and procedures, as well as bureaucratic politics, will hamper, abolish or adjust the cooperative arrangement at hand.[112]

105 Tomasello et al., Why We Cooperate.

106 Clough, 'Quid Pro Quo'.

107 See for example: Ballast, "Merging Pillars, Changing Cultures"; Gruszczak, "Intelligence Cooperation in the European Union: Big Challenges for Hard Times"; Bures, "Intelligence Sharing and the Fight against Terrorism in the EU"; Pleschinger, "Allied Against Terror: Transatlantic Intelligence Cooperation"; Walsh, "Intelligence-Sharing in the European Union."

108 Müller-Wille, 'EU Intelligence Co-Operation. A Critical Analysis'.

109 See for example: Nomikos, 'European Union Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN): Next Stop to an Agency?'; Bilgi, 'Intelligence Cooperation in the European Union'; Bures, 'Intelligence Sharing and the Fight against Terrorism in the EU'; Davis Cross, 'EU Intelligence Sharing and Joint Situation Centre: A Glass Half-Full'.

110 Müller-Wille, 'The Effect of International Terrorism on EU Intelligence Co-Operation'; Müller-Wille, 'For Our Eyes Only Shaping an Intelligence Community within the EU'.

111 Fägersten, *Sharing Secrets*, 60–61, 80–82.

112 Ibid., 98–99.

Whereas Müller-Wille and Fägersten focus very much on formal positions within organizations, like the European Police organization (EUROPOL) and the EU Situation Centre (SITCEN, since 2012 INTCEN), other authors take a network approach. They point at the importance of the rising number of transgovernmental networks in the European intelligence domain constituting a multi-layered patchwork of formal and informal arrangements.[113] These scholars differ on its exact meaning though. For example, Herman argues that the patchwork is unusual in its secrecy, but otherwise not unlike the intergovernmental arrangements that have developed in other specialized areas.[114] Svendsen discerns more than that, referring to the existence of 'epistemic communities' in intelligence cooperation.[115] Although being skeptical about the latter, Davis Cross sums up their mutual understanding when stating that 'the most important developments in European intelligence cooperation actually have more to do with institutional and personal dynamics in distributed networks than with state preference or formal positions'.[116] She clearly - although perhaps not explicitly - advocates a sociological institutionalist approach to international intelligence cooperation in a way she has also done in IR (see subsection 2.3.2). In the next chapter a further differentiation to collectives in cooperation will be made when discussing trust issues; it will cover networks, institutions and identities as part of what might be called a 'trusted community'.

### 2.4.3. Taking a Sociological Perspective: Cooperative Behavior

A third avenue to advance the debate on international intelligence cooperation is to take a sociological perspective, rather than a structural one. Sociology is the systematic study of society, social structures, institutions and relationships. Nolan shows that IS is currently missing a sociological perspective, hampering its understanding of 'how intelligence organizations are constructed and reproduced through social interaction every day'.[117] Several authors agree that intelligence cooperation to a large degree consists of organizational and personal relationships.[118] Cooperation in their view is not only about an organizational structure or the formal rules and cost-benefit considerations governing these. It is about the interconnections or relations between the actors as well. These relations intermediate cooperative behavior. For example, Soeters and Goldberg note that the assumption of a

113 Herman, *Intelligence Power in Peace and War*, 203–4; Van Buuren, 'Analysing International Intelligence Cooperation: Institutions or Intelligence Assemblages?'; Clough, 'Quid Pro Quo'.

114 Herman, *Intelligence Power in Peace and War*.

115 Svendsen, 'Contemporary Intelligence Innovation in Practice'.

116 Davis Cross, 'The Limits of Epistemic Communities', 98; Davis Cross, 'A European Transgovernmental Intelligence Network and the Role of IntCen', 288; Alexander, Knowing Your Friends; Aldrich, 'US–European Intelligence Co-Operation on Counter-Terrorism'; Brown and Farrington, 'Democracy and the Depth of Intelligence Sharing'.

117 Nolan, 'A Sociological Approach to Intelligence Studies', 79, 90.

118 Aldrich, 'US–European Intelligence Co-Operation on Counter-Terrorism'; Pleschinger, 'Allied Against Terror: Transatlantic Intelligence Cooperation'.

single valence in relationships (either cooperative or conflictual) is one of the remaining blind spots in research on information sharing in multinational security arrangements.[119]

Addressing cooperation from a sociological perspective will help a more comprehensive understanding of intelligence cooperation for two reasons. First, it helps the debate evolve beyond the concepts of 'calculating' and 'negotiating', adding concepts regarding 'believing', 'perceiving' and 'valuing'. Lander underlines the importance of these relational concepts when stating that the 'value of multilateral [European] institutional arrangements lies, not critically in the information exchanged at meetings, but in the mutual confidence and understanding and the personal friendships that they bring'.[120] Second, addressing international intelligence cooperation from a sociological perspective will support studying its change. Svendsen describes this as international intelligence cooperation 'developing incrementally, substantially following what can be characterized as the familiar evolutionary path of being driven largely by cautious necessity from its bilateral onset to its later more multi-orientated basis'.[121] For example, it is questionable whether operational cooperation between European domestic security services in the CTG would have been conceivable without the relational bonds stemming from the earlier 'Club de Berne'.[122]

From a sociological perspective, cooperation is a social construct that can change over time. This seems especially relevant to the less studied interorganizational and interpersonal levels where interaction is influenced directly by the beliefs, perceptions and attitudes of the participants. Moreover, it furthers our understanding of intelligence cooperation in long-standing institutions. In these established settings a stronger relationship can develop over time, including higher levels of trust and acceptable levels of vulnerability, eventually even leading to communities of shared norms and values. Scholars point at the 'homogenization' effect these networks have, 'radiating established norms and conventions'.[123] An illustration of the importance of this sense of community and the role of relations within them, can be found in the recently established 'Intelligence College Europe' (ICE). ICE serves as a platform, not for the exchange of intelligence, but to promote through dialogue the 'emergence of a common strategic [intelligence] culture and to strengthen the ties between the intelligence

119 Soeters and Goldenberg, 'Information Sharing in Multinational Security and Military Operations. Why and Why Not?'

120 Lander, 'International Intelligence Cooperation'.

121 Svendsen, 'Developing International Intelligence Liaison Against Islamic State'.

122 'PET Annual Report 2018', 40.

123 Aldrich, 'Dangerous Liaisons', 54; Svendsen, 'The Globalization of Intelligence since 9/11'; Svendsen, *Understanding the Globalization of Intelligence*.

communities'.[124] Cooperation in the present-day international intelligence community apparently amounts for more than a simple and rational 'stamp exchange'.[125]

Viewing the institutions for international intelligence cooperation as social constructs, opens the door to interesting social concepts from neighboring disciplines. Applying them to the specific context of intelligence cooperation will put more focus on 'soft institutions', such as ideas, social and cultural norms, rules and routinized practices.[126] Examples can already be found of scholars examining the very real consequences of these soft institutions. Using the 'sociology of practices and habitus' Ben Jaffel convincingly argues that 'Anglo-European ties become alive in way of incorporated dispositions generated in spheres of socialization to liaison craft' supporting the counter-terrorism effort. She concludes that because of this, bilateral Anglo-European cooperation will subsist in a post-Brexit world.[127] Based on a similar sociological notion, Brown and Farrington marry insights from interdisciplinary scholarship on gossip and embedded exchange.[128] Other authors have begun to scrutinize secrecy as a component of social relations and identity. Understood as such, what becomes important to understand about the secret is less the hiding per se, and more the way in which it structures intergroup behavior, regulates communication and distributes power.[129] The fresh insights these examples offer, encourage further use of approaches and concepts from neighboring fields in the in the social sciences.

## 2.5. Conclusion

Systematically reviewing the academic debate reveals a clear research gap. One that makes it difficult to explain the current depth and breadth of international intelligence cooperation, especially in multilateral settings. Sir Andrew Parker, quoted at the beginning of chapter 1, was correct when stating that there is too little public explanation of intelligence cooperation within Europe, in particular in relation to interaction at the interorganizational and interpersonal levels. Moreover, the debate on international intelligence cooperation is haphazardly theorized. As demonstrated, there is a growing gap between the reality of

124 Goldman, 'A Unique Initiative in Content and Format'; Van Puyvelde, 'European Intelligence Agendas and the Way Forward'; Lledo-Ferrer and Dietrich, 'Building a European Intelligence Community' Intelligence College Europe, Letter of intent signed March 1st 2020, https://www.intelligence-college-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/LoI-English.pdf, last accessed May 22nd 2020.

125 Fägersten, For EU Eyes Only?, 3; Lander, 'International Intelligence Cooperation', 487.

126 Gill and Phythian, Intelligence in an Insecure World, 23; Wiener, 'Constructivism and Sociological Institutionalism', 35–36.

127 Ben Jaffel, 'Britain's European Connection in Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Cooperation', 5-6,12-13; Ben Jaffel, Anglo-European Intelligence Cooperation: Britain in Europe, Europe in Britain.

128 Brown, Lupton, and Farrington, "Embedded Deception," 15–16; Brown and Farrington, "Democracy and the Depth of Intelligence Sharing."

129 Goede and Wesseling, 'Secrecy and Security in Transatlantic Terrorism Finance Tracking'; Bigo, 'Shared Secrecy in a Digital Age and a Transnational World', 379–80; Soeters and Goldenberg, 'Information Sharing in Multinational Security and Military Operations. Why and Why Not?'

international intelligence cooperation and the theoretical tools to comprehend it. This chapter argues that the difficulties in explaining international intelligence cooperation stem from a shortage in approaches and concepts. The neorealist approach, still dominant in studies on international intelligence cooperation, lacks appropriate tools for addressing multilateral cooperation that results from transnational security concerns. Concerns that dominate in a globalized international system and that often transcend the realm of international competition between states. In this setting international intelligence cooperation cannot merely be seen as a one-time all-or-nothing game, but appears to be a gradual and more complex relation that can take many types and forms and that evolves over time. This is apparent for different forms of multilateral cooperation, but applies to many bilateral arrangements as well.

The state of the debate on international intelligence cooperation shows great promise though. The debate is growing in quantity as well as in quality. First, this chapter rules out that the lack of explanation is caused by a lack of interest and scholarly attention. This is not the case. This literature review shows that on average there is a continuous growth of academic publications on international intelligence cooperation in the last three decades. It is by no means still a neglected topic. Second, this chapter dismisses the idea that a small scholarly community is only looking at a narrow set of topics. The review of publications shows that there is a cautious, yet unmistaken, growth of diversity in the debate on international intelligence cooperation, both in scholars and in content. This diversity even stands out favorably when compared to IS in general. Noteworthy is the number of articles currently addressing international intelligence cooperation outside the main intelligence journals. Moreover, the increasing content diversity and the increasing scholarly diversity coincide, suggesting that the latter is related to the first. This presumed relation is worth examining further.

This chapter concludes that the debate on international intelligence cooperation provides fertile grounds for further development. A more comprehensive understanding of international intelligence cooperation is within reach. The debate has grown to a point that it invites new approaches and these are readily available in neighboring disciplines like IR, organizational sciences and sociology. Concepts from outside IS are already producing fresh and intriguing insights. Many more are available. This study will contribute to this more comprehensive understanding of international intelligence cooperation by taking the three avenues for advancing the debate proposed in this chapter. First, it will step beyond a state-centric approach and include the organizational and personal levels. Second, this research will take a process approach and focus on the interaction phase of cooperation. Third, it will use a sociological perspective that will complement the debate by offering a way for scrutinizing the mechanism of social relations and trust in cooperative behavior. The mechanism of social relations and trust will prove an insightful window. In addition,

the EU intelligence system will provide a case of multilateral cooperation well fit to explore these avenues in the setting of intelligence. Chapter 4 will elaborate on this case study and the methods for engaging it. Yet before doing so, chapter 3 will first construct a conceptual framework of social relations and trust in intelligence cooperation that provides an analytical lens for this study.

# Chapter 3

# Chapter 3: Conceptual Framework

## Unravelling the Role of Social Relations and Trust in International Intelligence Cooperation[1]

### 3.1. Introduction

> *'Often characterized as sinister, the realm of intelligence is instead perhaps the most human of all aspects of government and consists to a large degree of personal relationships. The universal currency is trust.'*[2]

As seen in chapter 2, scholarly interest in the mechanism of international intelligence cooperation continues to increase. Ever since the start of this increasing interest, in the wake of 9/11, scholars have tended to approach it from a perspective of competition and rivalry. They suggest that cooperation is counterintuitive to intelligence services that only cooperate out of necessity, when they feel unable to counter a threat or when they lack information and resources. When examining the conditions under which international intelligence cooperation takes place, many of these scholars stress the difficulties in this particular field. They focus on Machiavellian constructs such as formal power and hierarchy or highlight functional restraints on cooperative behavior.[3] Nevertheless, from this perspective it is hard to explain the increasing depth and breadth of international intelligence cooperation, especially in established multilateral settings. Recently, a small group of scholars has started to advocate a more sociological perspective to fill this research gap. Their relational approach to intelligence cooperation even led some to suggest that intelligence services come close to an international brotherhood.[4]

Trust is often mentioned as an important social facilitator for international intelligence cooperation. As stated in the opening quote, Aldrich even sees trust as the universal currency in the intelligence domain. In a similar fashion, former director of GCHQ, Sir David Omand, recognizes mutual trustworthiness 'as the most valuable attribute of any successful

1 An earlier version of this chapter has been published as peer-reviewed article: Pepijn Tuinier, Thijs Brocades Zaalberg, and Sebastiaan Rietjens, 'The Social Ties That Bind: Unravelling the Role of Trust in International Intelligence Cooperation', International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence, 2022.

2 Aldrich, "US–European Intelligence Co-Operation on Counter-Terrorism," 124.

3 See for example: Guttmann, "Turning Oil into Blood"; Vestermark, "International Intelligence Liaison in the Afghan Theatre of War"; Walsh, *The International Politics of Intelligence Sharing*; Sims, "Foreign Intelligence Liaison"; Lefebvre, "The Difficulties and Dilemmas of International Intelligence Cooperation"; Müller-Wille, "EU Intelligence Co-Operation. A Critical Analysis."

4 See for example: Hoffmann, Chalati, and Dogan, "Rethinking Intelligence Practices and Processes"; Ben Jaffel, "Britain's European Connection in Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Cooperation"; Nolan, "A Sociological Approach to Intelligence Studies"; Maras, "Overcoming the Intelligence-Sharing Paradox"; Bigo, "Sociology of Transnational Guilds"; Svendsen, *Understanding the Globalization of Intelligence*.

[intelligence] partnership'.[5] Despite its importance, we know little about the underlying conditions shaping trust among intelligence services and personnel. Due to the neorealist presumption also noted in the last chapter, trust has hardly been conceptualized in relation to intelligence studies. This runs the risk of the debate on international intelligence cooperation getting stuck in oversimplified dichotomies like 'friends or foes', 'collaboration or competition' and 'trust or distrust'. This chapter argues that these dichotomies contribute to the mystification of the intelligence profession, but are not very helpful in understanding the nuanced workings of international intelligence cooperation. Without conceptualization, the notion of trust becomes a clincher rather than an analytical tool.

This chapter will provide the conceptual framework that will be used in the empirical section below to study social relations and trust in intelligence cooperation. It clarifies the concept of trust in a relational setting, uncovers the underlying conditions and factors, and systematically unravels their potential in bolstering cooperative behavior. The chapter first answers why international intelligence cooperation is a problem in the first place. Section 3.2 shows that it poses a dilemma. Cooperation is a potentially beneficial, yet uninviting activity. In addition, intelligence organizations often cooperate without being able to rationally calculate the outcome or control the risks involved. Subsequently, the chapter introduces the role of trust in dealing with these problems. Section 3.3 answers how trust is able to foster cooperative behavior, despite the inherent vulnerability attached. Trust supports reasonable expectations where rational ones are inefficient or ineffective. Finally, section 3.4 conceptualizes trust in international intelligence cooperation. Coming from a sociological perspective it acknowledges the interaction between agents and the social structure in which behavioral decisions are embedded. In addition, it emphasizes the relational nature of trust. Trust is nothing in or by itself, it is related to a specific context and to the partners involved.

Taking a relational approach to trust, the conceptual framework constructed in this study starts from the one introduced by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman.[6] They use perceived trustworthiness to conceptualize trust between partners and identify ability, integrity and benevolence as conditions. These three conditions will structure the rest of this research, most notably in discussing the results in chapters 6 to 8. Compared to Mayer et al. this research takes an additional step by operationalizing their conditions for use in a critical examination of trust in international intelligence cooperation. More elaborate handles are needed to engage the empirical data. Taking the elements discussed by Mayer et al. as a starting point, this chapter complements them with relevant insights from sociological literature on interorganizational relations and trust. For each of the three conditions already

5 Omand, *How Spies Think; 10 Lessons in Intelligence*, 168–69.

6 Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," 716–20; Schoorman, Mayer, and Davis, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust."

identified, it ascribes underlying factors. It clarifies the collective structure in which trust is built and within this structure the main entity and process at work. For example, subsection 3.4.3 shows how perceptions of integrity (condition for trust) are formed within institutions (social structure) through principles (entity) and categorization (process). It leads to the construction of the conceptual framework for this study that is depicted in figure 8 at the end of this chapter. A framework that is well-suited to examine social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation.

## 3.2. The Dilemma of International Intelligence Cooperation

### 3.2.1. The Reciprocal Benefits of Cooperation

Cooperation is commonplace between organizations in business, public administration as well as in intelligence. Two or more actors work together to achieve 'promotively interdependent goals'.[7] Goals that, once reached by one of the participants, have beneficial effects for all. International intelligence cooperation is equally common and can take many forms.[8] Its appeal is relatively straightforward; two can simply achieve more than one. Cooperation is rewarding as it increases resources and adds valuable expertise. It is widely suggested that cooperation is an essential capability for intelligence services, helping them to face a highly complex and demanding security environment.[9] On the one hand, the current threats are increasingly transnational and non-state. Instead of being adversaries, national services now often win or lose together. On the other hand, notwithstanding their competitive nature, intelligence services need each other to fulfil their national tasking. Alone, not even the joint effort of all US intelligence services, presumably one of the largest and technically most advanced intelligence communities in the world, will be sufficient to deal with the diverse and interdependent range of security threats facing them. For this reason, when confronted with the need for regional intelligence on the Afghan-Pakistan border in their War on Terror, the CIA cooperated with a variety of partners. It represented 'a cost-effective way of increasing Human Intelligence (HUMINT) capabilities' by trading information from technical collection for 'local expertise and resources, expensive to acquire and difficult to maintain'.[10]

7 Smith, "Human Cooperation," 402; Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species*, 2.

8 See for example: Hoffmann, "Circulation, Not Cooperation"; Cross, "The European Space and Intelligence Networks"; Aldrich, "International Intelligence Cooperation in Practice"; Sims, "Foreign Intelligence Liaison"; Rudner, "Hunters and Gatherers"; Westerfield, "America and the World of Intelligence Liaison."

9 Bigo, "Shared Secrecy in a Digital Age and a Transnational World," 384; Degaut, "Spies and Policymakers," 31; Treverton, "The Future Intelligence: Changing Threats, Evolving Methods," 27–30; Tucker, *The End of Intelligence*, 13; Shiraz and Aldrich, "Globalisation and Borders," 266–67; Aldrich, "Global Intelligence Co-Operation versus Accountability," 162.

10 Clift, "The Evolution of International Collaboration in the Global Intelligence Era," 213; Reveron, "Old Allies, New Friends," 456; Wirtz, "Constraints on Intelligence Collaboration," 248.

Cooperation is distinct from pure altruism. Whereas both concepts encompass a form of helping others, altruistic behavior usually implies doing so regardless, or in spite of, the cost this action befalls on oneself. Cooperation, although it inflicts costs, ultimately refers to the achievement of mutual benefit; there is a reciprocity in the relation.[11] Although there is some evidence that people tend to be altruistic by nature, unconditional altruism is quite rare between organizations or states. This does not mean that altruistic features are absent in international intelligence cooperation. Especially in long-standing arrangements between organizations with a history of interaction, 'feelings of interpersonal attachment, sympathy or relational commitment' may very well influence the establishment or maintenance of cooperative behavior.[12] For example, Ben Jaffel's work on Counter Terrorism and Extremism Liaison Officers (CTELO's) in Anglo-French cooperation mentioned in chapter 2, shows that intelligence liaison officers can be a successful personal bridge between differing systems and uphold trust perceptions.[13] Nevertheless, on closer inspection, many apparently altruistic forms of exchange are in fact based on expected benefits in the future.[14]

Expectations of reciprocity are at the heart of international intelligence cooperation. Intelligence services will behave cooperatively based on the expectation that their partner will do the same in return. This cooperative behavior appears easy when it confers direct benefits on all participants in achieving a common goal. The well-known adage of 'Quid pro Quo (QPQ)' in international intelligence cooperation represents this direct, simple, and mutually beneficial exchange. Yet, when the contributions of both partners differ in quality or quantity, or when a return is not (immediately) guaranteed, this mutualism is asymmetric and imposes relative costs upon one of the partners.[15] Many, if not most, forms of international intelligence cooperation constitute of such postponed and asymmetric arrangements. These arrangements are based not on direct QPQ, but on the more indirect 'Do ut Des' principle; to give with the expectation of receiving a return in the future.[16] Conferring a benefit on another with an expectation of, but not an immediate, return is prominent in cooperation.[17] This can be qualified as a risky business.

11 Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species*, 8, 202; Rathbun, *Trust in International Cooperation*, 35; Lehmann and Keller, "The Evolution of Cooperation and Altruism – a General Framework and a Classification of Models," 1367; Nooteboom, "Introduction," 11–12.

12 van Lange et al., *Social Dilemmas: Understanding Human Cooperation*, 73; Alós-Ferrer and Garagnani, "The Cognitive Foundations of Cooperation," 72.

13 Ben Jaffel, "Britain's European Connection in Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Cooperation," 9, 11.

14 Mathews, "Gift Giving, Reciprocity and the Creation of Trust," 95–96; Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species*, 52; Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, vii, 4, 7, 74, 87, 110–12; Bowles and Gintis, "22 Origins of Human Cooperation," 429–44; Smith, "Human Cooperation," 402–13.

15 de Vos and Wielers, "Calculativeness, Trust and the Reciprocity Complex: Is the Market the Domain of Cynicism?," 84–88.

16 Belgian Standing Intelligence Agencies Review Committee, "Activity Report 2018," 31–32; Omand, *How Spies Think; 10 Lessons in Intelligence*, 174; Sims, "Foreign Intelligence Liaison," 197–200.

17 Walker and Ostrom, *Trust and Reciprocity: Interdisciplinary Lessons for Experimental Reserach*, 4, 9; Nooteboom, *Trust; Forms, Foundations, Functions, Failures and Figures*, 72–74.

### 3.2.2. The Risk of Not Being Rewarded

Competition between intelligence services seems to be at odds with cooperation. Intelligence is often seen as a harsh and goal-driven activity aimed at competitive advantage for national decisionmakers. As a result, intelligence services constantly strive to outsmart their opponents. In many cases intelligence services are even perceived as rivals. Instead of only 'wanting to be first', actions are aimed at damaging the rival itself.[18] This strive was clearly evident in the fierce (counter)intelligence battle fought between opposing Eastern and Western services during the Cold War. Yet, in a weaker form it can be seen elsewhere as well. It is common knowledge that intelligence services of relatively close allies also spy on each other for strategic and economic purposes. For example, French and American intelligence services are known to have been spying on each other's economic activities for years.[19] Seeking competitive advantage, services are inclined to pursue relative gain for themselves rather than absolute gain for all. Information and knowledge are seen as commodities and treated as property; hard to acquire, precious to poses and valuable to trade. As a consequence, secrecy, autonomy, and 'a culture of wanting to be first' are important obstacles to intelligence cooperation.[20] Moreover, given the secrecy in methods, the uncertainty of results, and the difficulties in assessing the objective value of information, one can seldomly be sure that a partner will be returning the favor in kind. Defection is hard to detect, especially in the case of information sharing, and might be committed totally unwilling. For example, the way unreliable single-source intelligence on the alleged Iraqi biological weapons program found its way through German services to uncritical US decision-makers in the period 2000 to 2002, shows the serious vulnerability attached to international intelligence cooperation, even in dealing with reliable partners.[21]

Following the logic of competitive advantage, international intelligence cooperation is a beneficial activity that increases capacity. However, it also seems uninviting as defection by partners is tempting and relatively easy. Intelligence services therefore appear to have no choice other than to discount a partner's deliberations and each pursue their own short-term selfish gain. Some even claim that intelligence services are characterized by a particular organizational culture of distrust, in which 'risks of sharing information [...], by any rational

18 Omand, *How Spies Think; 10 Lessons in Intelligence*, 178; Deutsch, "A Theory of Co-Operation and Competition," 130–32.

19 Matey, "From Cooperation to Competition," 154–57; Clarke and Johnston, "Economic Espionage and Interallied Strategic Cooperation," 415–18.

20 Treverton, CSIS Strategic Technologies Program, and Center for Strategic and International Studies (Washington, "New Tools for Collaboration"; Maras, "Overcoming the Intelligence-Sharing Paradox," 189–91; Bures, "Intelligence Sharing and the Fight against Terrorism in the EU," 57–66; Müller-Wille, "EU Intelligence Co-Operation. A Critical Analysis"; Bossong, "The Eu's Mature Counterterrorism Policy – a Critical Historical and Functional Assessment"; Richelson, "The Calculus of Intelligence Cooperation," 307–23.

21 Reveron, "Old Allies, New Friends," 458; Reveron, "The Impact of Transnational Terrorist Threats on Security Cooperation," 34.

calculation, far outweigh the potential benefits'.[22] The larger the number of partners included in an arrangement, the greater that risk is. As benefits of cooperation are indivisible and non-excludable, sharing with many, by definition, means putting aside ambitions of relative gain.[23] In addition, more participants means that it becomes harder to assess the origin of information and makes it is increasingly difficult to monitor whether or not everyone is contributing. Free-riding, behaving selfishly by parasitizing on the cooperative efforts of others, is a strong temptation in multilateral intelligence cooperation. Moreover, the risk of defection is multiplied in these larger groups. The chances of a group member putting to use the intelligence in a manner not agreed upon, or even leaking it to a third non-participating partner, seem omnipresent.[24]

Intelligence services, trying to minimize risk and maximize their own cost-benefit ratio, tend to shirk from full collaboration, for example by only sharing second-class information.[25] This will prevent them from reaping the full potential benefits of cooperation. Unwillingly, and apparently unavoidably, they reach a suboptimal equilibrium.[26] This cooperation dilemma is by no means exclusive for the field of intelligence.[27] Similar problems have been noted in many fields, between organizations as diverse as American, Japanese and Korean car producers, between Polish tourist firms and among Italian healthcare institutions.[28] Despite their differences, these organizations share a situation of interdependence where a non-cooperative course of action is tempting (as it yields superior, often short-term, outcomes), but if all pursue this non-cooperative course of action, all are worse off than if they had cooperated fully. From these cases it becomes clear that organizations can circumvent these difficulties, managing to cooperate despite a degree of conflicting interest, being competitive and cooperative at the same time.

22 Marenin and Akgul, "Theorizing Transnational Cooperation on the Police and Intelligence Fields of Security," 115–16.

23 Boyd and Richerson, *The Origin and Evolution of Cultures*, 137, 160; Axelrod, *The Complexity of Cooperation; Agent-Based Models of Competition and Collaboration*, 41; Taylor, *The Possibility of Cooperation*, 7–8, 36, 43, 58.

24 Alós-Ferrer and Garagnani, "The Cognitive Foundations of Cooperation," 71; Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species*, 11, 64; Bensahel, "A Coalition of Coalitions"; Lefebvre, "The Difficulties and Dilemmas of International Intelligence Cooperation"; Ostrom, "Toward a Behavioral Theory Linking Trust, Reciprocity, and Reputation," 20.

25 Aldrich, "Transatlantic Intelligence and Security Cooperation," 3.

26 The most famous game-theoretical model describing this situation is probably the Prisoners Dilemma as put forward by Robert Axelrod. It shows how two rational egoists faced with uncertainty will both choose to defect from full cooperation, their (lack of) cooperative behavior balancing them in a sub-optimal outcome. Nevertheless, the dilemma exists for sequential transactions as well. See for example: Buskens, Cortens, and Snijders, "Complementary Studies on Trust and Cooperation in Social Settings: An Introduction," 2.

27 van Lange et al., *Social Dilemmas: Understanding Human Cooperation*, 3–9; Nowak, "Evolving Cooperation," 1; Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, 7–9; Kydd, *Trust and Mistrust in International Relations*, 6–12; Ostrom, "Toward a Behavioral Theory Linking Trust, Reciprocity, and Reputation," 20–21; Diekmann and Lindenberg, "Cooperation," 1–3; Heckathorn, "Sociological Rational Choice," 275–78; Nowak and Sigmund, "Cooperation versus Competition," 13–14; Taylor, *The Possibility of Cooperation*, 2–3, 9.

28 Czernek and Czakon, "Trust-Building Processes in Tourist Coopetition," 380–94; Dyer and Chu, "The Determinants of Trust in Supplier–Automaker Relationships in the US, Japan, and Korea," 10–27; Barretta, "The Functioning of Co-Opetition in the Health-Care Sector," 209–20.

## 3.3. Overcoming the Dilemma

### 3.3.1. Trying to Reduce the Risk: Rational Calculations and Control

Scholars struggle to understand the conditions under which cooperation is chosen as the preferred strategy. After all, it 'entails the risk that others will not reciprocate, leaving the co-operator in the unrewarding position of being exploited'.[29] Two distinct models, or - in critical realist terms - generative mechanisms, can be discerned for achieving cooperative behavior; the mechanism of control and the mechanism of trust.[30] Both mechanisms are ways to deal with uncertainty about a partner's behavior and the resulting risk that comes with it. The first mechanism has a transactional focus and sticks closely to the dominant cost-benefit approach in intelligence. From this perspective, the most obvious way to increase cooperation, is to ensure a partner's returns. That is, to decrease the risk that a partner will defect unexpectedly. In this mechanism, rational calculations can lead to cooperative behavior when they are sufficiently reliable. The degree of control exercised over the exchange empowers this mechanism. Introducing control as an insurance against defection, for example by using contractual safeguards, aims to mitigate risk in order to support rational expectations. This mechanism is depicted in figure 6. Control can be achieved in various ways, for example by introducing formal contracts or by monitoring of the partners.

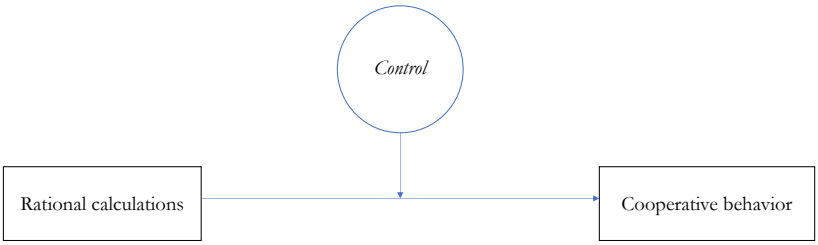


*Figure 6; The mechanism of rational calculations and control in cooperative behavior*

29 Alós-Ferrer and Garagnani, "The Cognitive Foundations of Cooperation," 72; van Lange et al., *Social Dilemmas: Understanding Human Cooperation*, 58–68; Henrich, "Cultural Evolution of Human Cooperation," 251–52; Riolo, Cohen, and Axelrod, "Evolution of Cooperation without Reciprocity," 441; Nowak and Sigmund, "Cooperation versus Competition," 14; Axelrod, *The Complexity of Cooperation; Agent-Based Models of Competition and Collaboration*, 15.

30 Vlaar, Van den Bosch, and Volberda, "On the Evolution of Trust, Distrust, and Formal Coordination and Control in Interorganizational Relationships"; Möllering, "The Trust/Control Duality"; Bachmann, "Trust, Power and Control in Trans-Organizational Relations"; Nooteboom, "Introduction," 11; Das, Teng, and College, "Between Trust and Control: Developing Confidence in Partner Cooperation in Alliances," 493–97.

Control as a condition for cooperative behavior under circumstances of distrust is a well-known concept in publications on international intelligence cooperation. Especially the concept of hierarchy, introduced by Walsh, often figures as a condition for cooperative behavior between intelligence services. A strong hierarchy between partners can ensure partner compliance as one service has extensive power over the other. It allows the dominant partner to directly manage and oversee the other's intelligence process.[31] As these minor partners are forced into obedience to the wishes of the principal, the chances of them violating expectations are minimized. These expectations can concern the expected outcomes, or include the way these outcomes are reached. The deferential position of the STASI in relation to the KGB during the Cold War is an example of such a strong hierarchy, part of an 'imperial intelligence system centered on the KGB Centre in Moscow'. At some point, the first was seen to serve the interests of the latter completely, even keeping a check on their own government for them.[32] Nevertheless, in international intelligence cooperation, these absolute one-sided relations are rare. The junior partner in many cases is able to hold on, or gain, a degree of self-determination, lessening the control of the principal partner.[33] For example, whereas the former Dutch internal security service BVD was seen to accept considerable financial backing from the CIA during the early years of the Cold War, the first was never a 'timid partner' in that relationship, sometimes even flatly turning down requests or proposals by the latter.[34]

Inviting as the mechanism of rational calculations and control might be for the competitive world of intelligence, it has practical flaws with regard to cooperation. First, the presumption of rationality implies that intelligence services are able to fully grasp the indirect and asymmetric cost and benefits of cooperation, and adjust their behavior accordingly. Yet, in practice, this rationality is limited. Social interaction is seen to be affected by incomplete information, cognitive biases, imperfect memory and an inability to fully analyze the complexities of the environment.[35] As noted in section 3.2, uncertainty stands at the heart of intelligence and intelligence cooperation. Second, seeking control always comes at a cost for the intelligence services involved. To control an exchange relation, it is necessary to dedicate valuable resources in obtaining information not only on targets, but on partners as well.

31 Walsh, "Defection and Hierarchy in International Intelligence Sharing," 161.

32 Popplewell, "The KGB and the Control of the Soviet Bloc: The Case of East Germany," 255–57.

33 See for example: Bolsinger, "Not at Any Price: LBJ, Pakistan, and Bargaining in an Asymmetric Intelligence Relationship"; Kadıoğlu and Bezci, "Small State Intelligence," 5–28; Odinga, Markovitz, and City University of New York. Political Science, "Looking For Leverage: Strategic Resources, Contentious Bargaining, and US-African Security Cooperation."

34 Graaff and Wiebes, "Intelligence and the Cold War behind the Dikes," 44–47.

35 van Lange et al., *Social Dilemmas: Understanding Human Cooperation*, 60–61; Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species*, 68–70, 76; Bachmann and Zaheer, "Trust in Inter-Organizational Relations," 537; Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, 11–12, 17–18, 140; McCabe, "A Cognitive Theory of Reciprocal Exchange," 149, 160; Ostrom, "Toward a Behavioral Theory Linking Trust, Reciprocity, and Reputation," 9–10, 23; Nooteboom, *Trust; Forms, Foundations, Functions, Failures and Figures*, 20–22; Nowak and Sigmund, "Cooperation versus Competition," 15–16; Simon, "Bounded Rationality in Social Science," 25–29; Axelrod, *The Complexity of Cooperation; Agent-Based Models of Competition and Collaboration*, 6–7, 14–15, 47; Williams, "Formal and Social Reality," 4.

Distinguishing among partners and remembering which ones have delivered in the past requires a costly and detailed bookkeeping about one's partners, for example by External Relations branches.[36] Moreover, getting close to a partner in cooperation, requires costly counterintelligence and security measures.[37] These measures have to prevent that a partner exploits his privileged position beyond the scope of the agreement or even provides dubious intelligence. In practice, it is hard to imagine a situation in which an intelligence service can have total control over a partner and the environment in which the cooperation takes place. It appears that rational calculations and control alone are insufficient as an explanation for efficient or sustained intelligence cooperation. Even more so, a calculative approach to the expected reciprocity can lead to obsessive demands for control with dysfunctional consequences for cooperation.[38] Constantly 'asking how well you are doing compared to others is not a good standard [for behavior] unless your goal is to destroy the other player'.[39] 'Being nice', at least applying a 'somewhat forgiving' tit-for-tat-strategy, greatly helps successful and sustained cooperation.[40]

### 3.3.2. Accepting Vulnerability: Social Relations and Trust

Models of rational calculations do not perform well in situations of greater complexity where their predictions are 'repeatedly shown to be empirically false'.[41] In these situations, uncertainty is a key characteristic for the interaction and exchange. As a consequence, cooperative behavior always involves a degree of vulnerability.[42] Intelligence systems, with their many participants interacting interdependently at different levels and in different settings simultaneously, qualify as situations of greater complexity.[43] Based on rational calculative considerations alone, international intelligence cooperation is thus fragile and can even be seen to 'drive up distrust and defensive positioning, even among relatively close allies'.[44] Rationality is unable to mitigate the risk of being (unpleasantly) surprised.

36 Svendsen, *Understanding the Globalization of Intelligence*, 91.

37 Reveron, "Old Allies, New Friends," 457.

38 Williamson, "Calculativeness, Trust, and Economic Organization," 52.

39 Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, 110–11.

40 Axelrod, 5–44; Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species*, 59; Fehr and Fischbacher, "Social Norms and Human Cooperation," 186; Nowak and Sigmund, "Cooperation versus Competition," 17; Axelrod, *The Complexity of Cooperation; Agent-Based Models of Competition and Collaboration*, 34–35.

41 Ostrom, "Toward a Behavioral Theory Linking Trust, Reciprocity, and Reputation," 23–25; Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species*, 9–10.

42 Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species*, 22–23, 88–89, 92; Boyd and Richerson, "Culture and the Evolution of Human Cooperation," 3283; Boyd and Richerson, *The Origin and Evolution of Cultures*, 135; Ostrom, "Toward a Behavioral Theory Linking Trust, Reciprocity, and Reputation," 38–39; Taylor, *The Possibility of Cooperation*, 62, 85, 105.

43 Svendsen, "Contemporary Intelligence Innovation in Practice," 106–9; Van Buuren, "Analysing International Intelligence Cooperation: Institutions or Intelligence Assemblages?," 84–89; Aldrich, "International Intelligence Cooperation in Practice," 1, 24–25.

44 Crawford, "Intelligence Cooperation," 2; Ballast, "Merging Pillars, Changing Cultures," 735; Müller-Wille, "EU Intelligence Co-Operation. A Critical Analysis," 73–74; Johnson and Freyberg, "Ambivalent Bedfellows," 175.

To explain durable cooperation between intelligence services, a more resilient mechanism is needed. One that enables participants in the cooperation to expect reciprocity and 'rely on each other, despite the presence of uncertainty and risks of partner opportunism and misappropriation'.[45] Social relations provide such a mechanism. It is depicted in figure 7.

Like rational calculations, social relations can invoke cooperative behavior. Yet, they do so on an entirely different basis. Social relations can lead to cooperative behavior when partners accept to be vulnerable in their dealings with a specific counterpart or exchange network. This mechanism thus operates in a far simpler and efficient way than with rational calculations, as it dodges the need for hard-to-achieve rational prediction and costly objective control measures like monitoring and sanctioning. Social relations are embedded in subjective beliefs and perceptions that enable quick interpretation of a situation and guide the appropriate behavior.[46] These beliefs and perceptions help partners achieve reasonable - not necessarily rational - expectations about each other. Being reasonable, they consist of more than mere emotion or intuition. They are an 'active sediment of [the] past that functions within [the] present' and reflect best practices for fulfilling expectations of reciprocity.[47] In many, if not most, cases international intelligence cooperation does not occur in a vacuum, nor is it a one-shot 'all-or-nothing' exchange. Intelligence services interact not once, but frequently, and they do so in in various settings and arrangements. These arrangements open new possibilities for cooperative behavior. Repeated interaction not only increases the number of chances for reciprocity, it enables a relation; taking a partner's character and behavior in account when deciding how to act. Studying the guiding beliefs and perceptions on partners in a community can help explain how cooperation works and develops in these settings.[48]

45 Raza-Ullah and Kostis, "Do Trust and Distrust in Coopetition Matter to Performance?," 2; Todeva and Knoke, "Strategic Alliances And Corporate Social Capital," 23; Yang and Maxwell, "Information-Sharing in Public Organizations," 169; Kollock, "The Emergence of Exchange Structures: An Experimental Study of Uncertainty, Commitment, and Trust," 189–90, 195.

46 Schulz, "Logic of Consequences and Logic of Appropriateness," 1–9; Cohen, "Genuine, Non-Calculative Trust with Calculative Antecedents," 52–53; Malmendier, te Velde, and Weber, "Rethinking Reciprocity," 364; Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species*, 4, 9, 12, 32–35, 89; Dyer and Chu, "The Role of Trustworthiness in Reducing Transaction Costs and Improving Performance: Empirical Evidence from the United States, Japan, and Korea," 207–25; Williamson, "Calculativeness, Trust, and Economic Organization," 65–73; Cook, Hardin, and Levi, *Cooperation without Trust*, 52; Bachmann, "Trust and Power as Means of Coordinating the Internal Relations of the Organization: A Conceptual Framework," 59–62; Möllering, "The Nature of Trust: From Georg Simmel to a Theory of Expectation, Interpretation and Suspension," 403, 409–10; Smith, Carroll, and Ashford, "Intra- And Interorganizational Cooperation: Toward A Research Agenda," 17–18; Todeva and Knoke, "Strategic Alliances And Corporate Social Capital," 21–22.

47 Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 1992, 52–65; Alós-Ferrer and Garagnani, "The Cognitive Foundations of Cooperation," 72; O'Mahoney and Vincent, "Critical Realism as an Empirical Project," 2–3; Bachmann and Zaheer, "Trust in Inter-Organizational Relations," 538, 541–44; Barnes, "Practice as Collective Action," 25–26; Crossley, "The Phenomenological Habitus and Its Construction," 85; Schatzki, "Practice Theory," 12; Archer, "Realism in the Social Sciences," 196; Porpora, "Four Concepts of Social Structure," 339–54.

48 Bengtsson and Raza-Ullah, "A Systematic Review of Research on Coopetition," 28–29; van Lange et al., *Social Dilemmas: Understanding Human Cooperation*, 64–65; Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species*, 22–23, 59; Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, 12, 59, 102–3, 187–88; Cook, Hardin, and Levi, *Cooperation without Trust*, 188; Diekmann and Lindenberg, "Cooperation," 1, 4–5; Molm, "Theories of Social Exchange and Exchange Networks," 269–70; Taylor, *The Possibility of Cooperation*, 31, 62, 85; Smith, Carroll, and Ashford, "Intra- And Interorganizational Cooperation: Toward A Research Agenda," 17, 18, 34.

Trust is generally accepted as a central belief conditioning social relations in cooperation.[49] Cooperation is seen as the most proximal outing of a trusting relation. Interorganizational relations rely heavily on trust, especially in diffuse multilateral settings and among organizations operating in secret.[50] It develops incrementally from small acts to big reliance in an upward spiral of trust. On a micro-level, repeated interaction can lead to the development of particular trust between people. This can serve as a 'ratchet' for cooperative behavior. On a macro-level, repeated patterns of successful behavior can in turn lead to a more generalized form of trust between groups, 'slow to emerge and decay'.[51] The existence or absence of trust is one of the overarching themes in the literature on international intelligence cooperation as well. Numerous articles name trust as one of the most important determinants of cooperative behavior in the competitive world of intelligence.[52] They point at the importance of 'trust in, and respect for, other agencies' as foremost when deciding upon the extent of intelligence sharing arrangements.[53] Gill for example finds mutual trust the premise on which 'the whole structure of intelligence cooperation is built'.[54] Most take a pessimistic stance though, emphasizing the limitations on cooperation caused by a lack of trust between the partners.[55] Moreover, despite its importance, the notion of trust remains a very murky concept within studies on international intelligence cooperation. Notwithstanding some notable exceptions like Martin-Brûlé's recent article on the role of trust in UN intelligence, it has seldomly been defined or conceptualized in the context of intelligence cooperation.[56]

49 Reiersen, "Drivers of Trust and Trustworthiness," 2; van Lange et al., *Social Dilemmas: Understanding Human Cooperation*, 63; Ferrin, Bligh, and Kohles, "It Takes Two to Tango," 161; Hardin, "Gaming Trust," 80; Smith, "Human Cooperation," 10–11; Walker and Ostrom, *Trust and Reciprocity: Interdisciplinary Lessons for Experimental Reserach*, 18.

50 Lewicka and Zakrzewska-Bielawska, "Interorganizational Trust in Business Relations: Cooperation and Coopetition," 155–57; Kostis and Näsholm, "Towards a Research Agenda on How, When and Why Trust and Distrust Matter to Coopetition," 1–15; Parker, "Secret Societies," 109; Rathbun, *Trust in International Cooperation*, 2, 4; Yang and Maxwell, "Information-Sharing in Public Organizations," 169; Macke et al., "The Impact of Inter-Organizational Social Capital in Collaborative Networks Competitiveness," 3–4, 10; Bachmann and Zaheer, "Trust in Inter-Organizational Relations," 536–37; Cook, Hardin, and Levi, *Cooperation without Trust*, 51; Möllering, "The Nature of Trust: From Georg Simmel to a Theory of Expectation, Interpretation and Suspension," 404, 407–10.

51 Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, 177; Reiersen, "Drivers of Trust and Trustworthiness," 4; Bachmann and Zaheer, "Trust in Inter-Organizational Relations," 538; Ferrin, Bligh, and Kohles, "It Takes Two to Tango," 171–75; McKnight, Cummings, and Chervany, "Initial Trust Formation in New Organizational Relationships," 128–34; Todeva and Knoke, "Strategic Alliances And Corporate Social Capital," 25; Nooteboom, *Trust; Forms, Foundations, Functions, Failures and Figures*, 63–65; Nedelmann, "The Continuing Relevance of Georg Simmel: Staking Out Anew the Field of Sociology," 67–72; MacFhionnlaoich, "Interorganizational Cooperation : Towards a Synthesis of Theoretical Perspectives," 4–5; Ring and van de Ven, "Developmental Processes of Cooperative Interorganizational Relations," 101–5.

52 See for example: Ballast, "Merging Pillars, Changing Cultures"; Fägersten, *For EU Eyes Only?*; Bures, "Informal Counterterrorism Arrangements in Europe"; Svendsen, *Understanding the Globalization of Intelligence*, 14, 91, 102; Reveron, "Old Allies, New Friends"; Aldrich, "Transatlantic Intelligence and Security Cooperation"; Lander, "International Intelligence Cooperation"; Shpiro, "The Communication of Mutual Security: Frameworks for European-Mediterranean Intelligence Sharing."

53 Lefebvre, 'The Difficulties and Dilemmas of International Intelligence Cooperation', 528–29.

54 Gill, "Rendition in a Transnational Insecurity Environment," 74.

55 See for example: Jasper, "U.S. Cyber Threat Intelligence Sharing Frameworks"; Treverton, CSIS Strategic Technologies Program, and Center for Strategic and International Studies (Washington, "New Tools for Collaboration"; Protopapas, "European Union's Intelligence Cooperation: A Failed Imagination?"; Sims, "Foreign Intelligence Liaison."

56 Martin-Brûlé, "Competing for Trust."

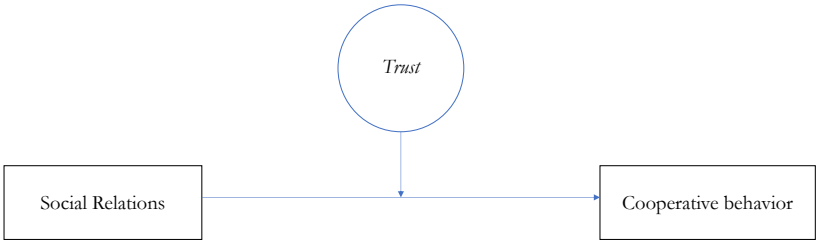


*Figure 7; The mechanism of social relations and trust in cooperative behavior*

## 3.4. Conceptualizing Trust in International Intelligence Cooperation

### 3.4.1. Relational Trust based on Perceptions of Trustworthiness

Trust between intelligence services is a form of interorganizational trust, a much-studied concept in sociology and interorganizational relations. It is commonly defined as the extent to which members of one organization hold a collective trust orientation towards one another.[57] Its workings are similar - or at least connected - to interpersonal trust. Based on various authoritative publications on this topic, this study brings back the definition of trust introduced in chapter 1 to 'the intentional and behavioral suspension of vulnerability by a trustor on the basis of positive expectations of a trustee'.[58] It is seen to hold three dimensions. First, it involves a decision to act in a relational exchange. Without the possibility of action, trust would degrade to mere hope. Second, it involves a degree of vulnerability. Trust enables actors to suspend their vulnerability, not because they are not aware of being vulnerable, but because they believe that their partner will not (overly) exploit this situation. Third, the good reasons underlying these beliefs are based on subjective perceptions of a partner's trustworthiness. Contrary to predictive confidence, trust is not about knowing but about interpreting.[59] It requires a 'leap of faith'.

57 Zaheer and Harris, "Interorganizational Trust," 170.

58 Oomsels and Bouckaert, "Studying Interorganizational Trust in Public Administration," 578–84; Ferrin, Bligh, and Kohles, "It Takes Two to Tango," 174; Vlaar, Van den Bosch, and Volberda, "On the Evolution of Trust, Distrust, and Formal Coordination and Control in Interorganizational Relationships," 5–6; Walker and Ostrom, *Trust and Reciprocity: Interdisciplinary Lessons for Experimental Reserach*, 6; Hardin, *Trust and Trustworthiness*, 1–27; Hoffman, "A Conceptualization of Trust in International Relations," 376–77; Nooteboom, *Trust; Forms, Foundations, Functions, Failures and Figures*, 36–61; Möllering, "The Nature of Trust: From Georg Simmel to a Theory of Expectation, Interpretation and Suspension," 404, 412–13; Rousseau et al., "Not So Different After All," 394–95; Ring and van de Ven, "Developmental Processes of Cooperative Interorganizational Relations," 93; Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," 712–14.

59 This explicitly leaves out 'calculative trust', a form of trust mostly mentioned in economic scholarship. In this concept, trust is ideally based on prediction and objectively decreases vulnerability. It is based on negative expectations about a partner; from a sociological perspective qualified as distrust. It resembles the mechanism presented above depicting rational calculations and control. Although calculative trust is shown to affect cooperative behaviors, it is distinct from the social-

From a sociological perspective, the perception of trustworthiness is fundamental for trust and therefore the key determinant of cooperative behavior.[60] Trust is nothing in or by itself. Whereas many psychological studies at the interpersonal level focus on the individual trust propensity, at the organizational level trust is not considered 'trait-like' or unidirectional.[61] In cooperation, trust is based on the belief that a partner will do the right thing. It involves the trustors' belief that their trustees have a responsibility, or even an obligation, to fulfil the trust placed in them. It is relational and reciprocal, requiring interaction with the partner to evolve. Although trustors can begin trusting relationships by a willingness to be vulnerable, it is 'trustees [who] determine the success of these relationships'.[62] Moreover, trust works two ways. The roles of trustor and trustee rest simultaneously with both partners. Reciprocal trustworthiness creates a complex system of interdependent relations where 'your own behavior is echoed back to you'.[63] For a positive expectation of behavior, partners both look at each other's characteristics and interpret why the other would be worthy of trust. This can be the case in particular relations between people or organizations, but can concern the trustworthiness of the network as a whole as well. It is for this reason that social relations and trust must be approached as parts of a generative mechanism instead of separate concepts with a unidirectional connection. They have an interplay and work in conjunction to facilitate cooperate behavior.

Trustworthiness provides handles for conceptualizing the phenomenon of relational trust. It is spelled out by scholars in a variety of ways. Despite their differences, most include three related conditions for partner trustworthiness that are based on a much-quoted article by Mayer et al. Trustworthiness is based on perceptions of ability, integrity and benevolence.[64] First, partners need to perceive each other as being able of fulfilling the expectations placed upon them. Knowing a partner's reputation is paramount in this, both for achieving operational results and for building and sustaining effective cooperative ties. This is largely cognitive. Second, partners need to perceive each other as integer. Recognizing a

relational concept of trust here. The latter is seen to have its own, separate, effect on cooperative behavior. In intelligence studies both concepts are often used intermingled and without distinction, adding other terms like 'confidence' and 'reliability'. This diffuses the clarity of the mechanisms at work.

60 O'Neill, "Linking Trust to Trustworthiness," 293–95; Reiersen, "Drivers of Trust and Trustworthiness," 3–4, 11; Ashraf, Bohnet, and Piankov, "Decomposing Trust and Trustworthiness," 204; Hardin, *Trust and Trustworthiness*, 29–32.

61 Schoorman, Mayer, and Davis, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," 344–45; Rathbun, *Trust in International Cooperation*, 39; Hardin, "Gaming Trust," 295.

62 Hoffman, "A Conceptualization of Trust in International Relations," 381.

63 Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, 121–22; Hardin, "Gaming Trust," 92–95; Walker and Ostrom, *Trust and Reciprocity: Interdisciplinary Lessons for Experimental Reserach*, 8; Hardin, *Trust and Trustworthiness*, 21–22.

64 Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," 716–20; Schoorman, Mayer, and Davis, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust"; Reiersen, "Drivers of Trust and Trustworthiness," 4–5; Schilke and Cook, "Sources of Alliance Partner Trustworthiness," 277, 283, 289–90; McEvily and Tortoriello, "Measuring Trust in Organisational Research," 4–5; Ferrin, Bligh, and Kohles, "It Takes Two to Tango," 163; Colquitt, Scott, and LePine, "Trust, Trustworthiness, and Trust Propensity," 909–11, 918; Seppänen, Blomqvist, and Sundqvist, "Measuring Inter-Organizational Trust—a Critical Review of the Empirical Research in 1990–2003," 250–56; Hardin, "Gaming Trust," 83–84; Yang and Maxwell, "Information-Sharing in Public Organizations," 169; Nooteboom, *Trust; Forms, Foundations, Functions, Failures and Figures*, 85–89.

partner's principles as acceptable, or even sharing them, is regarded a strong indication that his behavior will not include unpleasant surprises and that his frame of reference will be understandable. This is largely normative. Third, partners need to perceive each other as benevolent. Having a positive attitude produces goodwill towards a partner, caring for his welfare and encapsulating his interests. This is mainly affective. These conditions for trustworthiness are seen to work separately, as well as in conjunction, to determine the intensity of cooperation based on trusted relations.[65] As stated above, interorganizational trust holds a collective orientation towards these conditions. In such a collective view they are 'larger than the participants who are in them', based on perceptions of what a collective must be able to achieve, how this ought to be done and what is stands for.[66] From this point of view, intelligence services work together best when they know, recognize and value each other.

This study takes the conceptualization of trustworthiness and its conditions by Mayer et al. as the basis for constructing a conceptual framework fit for analyzing the role of social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation. Recognizing there is a difference between the two concepts, taking a relational approach meticulously ties trust to trustworthiness; the degree of trust based on beliefs and perceptions between partners. Therefore, for clarity's sake, this research hereafter will speak only about trust as an overarching term for both concepts. Starting from the concepts identified in the model by Mayer et al., the mechanism of social relations and trust needs to be further elaborated to provide handles for researching it in the context of intelligence. In the next subsections each of the conditions for trust is unraveled in underlying factors. For this, the research turns to relevant literature in sociology and interorganizational relations, as well as specific publications on trust. Based on these additional insights, it constructs a complemented conceptual framework for studying social relations and trust that is depicted in figure 8. Each of the conditions for trust is connected to a social structure and the process and entity for trust-building in this structure are clarified. For example, the next subsection shows how perceptions of ability (condition for trust) are formed within networks (structure) through reputations (entity) and familiarization (process).

### 3.4.2. Perceptions of Ability

The first condition for trust identified by Mayer et al. is for partners to have a favorable perception of each other's ability to perform. In their specific discussion of this

65 Schilke and Cook, "Sources of Alliance Partner Trustworthiness," 280–83; Lotia and Hardy, "Critical Perspectives on Cooperation," 369; Colquitt, Scott, and LePine, "Trust, Trustworthiness, and Trust Propensity," 922; Hatch and Schultz, "The Dynamics of Organizational Identity," 989–1015; Hatch and Schultz, "Relations between Organizational Culture, Identity and Image," 356, 360–62; Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," 717–22.

66 Rathbun, *Trust in International Cooperation*, 39, 25–26.

condition, they mostly limit themselves to stating that ability is about the competencies and characteristics that enable a party to have influence in a specific domain. These competencies and characteristics are domain-specific.[67] However, they say little about the way perceptions of ability are built or communicated nor do they differentiate between types of domains. Nevertheless, from the factors for trust-building mentioned in the remainder of their insightful publication and in other sociological publications on interorganizational relations and trust, it is possible to operationalize perceptions of ability further. Perceptions of ability are about reputation; an image of 'an organizations features, actions, achievements and overall standing'. Reputation is seen as one of the hallmarks for trust and cooperation; 'a universal currency for [...] social interaction'. It refers not only to the core business of that organization, but also to 'its niche in its environment and its interrelationships with other organizations'.[68] In intelligence, reputations are seen to influence the level of cooperation. For example, SIGINT cooperation between Axis-partners Germany and Finland flourished up to and during World War 2, as the Germans held Finnish codebreakers at large in high esteem. At the same time cooperation with the Italians was limited as German officers held the Italians in contempt and qualified them as 'temperamentally unfit for serious crypto analysis'.[69] More recently, the United Nation's reputation for poor information security and lacking professional intelligence standards was found to discourage partners from sharing information, like in the case of the UN Mission to Mali (MINUSMA).[70]

A positive reputation is based on previous successful cooperation and helps future cooperation.[71] It attracts new partners or helps to maintain ties with current ones and can help solve the dilemma in (multilateral) public goods games.[72] Organizations with good reputations in a network are seen to be committed to cooperation and unlikely to behave opportunistically, as the latter would destroy their advantageous position. Moreover, as the use of their good reputation is dependent on the network, they tend not only to uphold trust themselves, but also between others.[73] The effect of reputations on continued cooperation, both on an organizational and on a personal level, can be seen in many professional fields

67 Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," 717–18.

68 Gioia, Hamilton, and Patvardhan, "Image Is Everything," 133–34; Schoorman, Mayer, and Davis, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," 345–46, 350; Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," 717–18; Hatch and Schultz, "The Dynamics of Organizational Identity," 990, 994–95.

69 Alvarez, "Axis Sigint Collaboration," 4–9.

70 Martin-Brûlé, "Competing for Trust," 506–7; Rietjens and Baudet, "Stovepiping Within Multinational Military Operations: The Case of Mali"; Norheim-Martinsen and Ravndal, "Towards Intelligence-Driven Peace Operations?," 457–61; Dorn, "The Cloak and the Blue Beret," 416–17.

71 Számadó et al., "The Language of Cooperation," 2.

72 Milinski, "Reputation, a Universal Currency for Human Social Interactions," 4.

73 Rand and Nowak, "Human Cooperation," 417–19; Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species*, 31–32; Ostrom, "Toward a Behavioral Theory Linking Trust, Reciprocity, and Reputation," 43; Todeva and Knoke, "Strategic Alliances And Corporate Social Capital," 5–6; Hoffman, "A Conceptualization of Trust in International Relations," 390; Nowak and Sigmund, "Cooperation versus Competition," 20; Dasgupta, "Trust as a Commodity," 53; Good, "Individuals, Interpersonal Relationships and Trust," 38.

where uncertainty and complexity are common, and where there is some competition, like in the case of expertise-sharing networks between firms.[74] It is also present in secretive groups where (law) enforcement is absent among a variety of anonymous actors with doubtful intentions, like in the dubious example of the crypto market for illegal drugs.[75] Reputations are the result of a familiarization process that evolves over time. Valuations of numerous individual encounters, on different levels and in varying circumstances, lead to more generalized views about the partner organization as a whole and are transmitted to others.

Knowing a partner's reputation requires a basic familiarity with their 'professional skills, competencies, and characteristics'.[76] It is seen as the 'first prerequisite of having anything to do with each other'.[77] Direct feedback, either from own experience or in a tight network, can foster trust perceptions between professionals as they provide a proof of ability that is otherwise difficult to observe'.[78] For example, in the case of multilateral intelligence cooperation like in NATO, 'some good-natured naming and shaming' can counter free-riding behavior.[79] Likewise, intelligence services can achieve or maintain a good reputation by directly communicating themselves about their ability to cooperate successfully. A possible case of such direct signaling, could be seen in 2018, when the Dutch MIVD openly communicated about a successful counterintelligence operation against Russian spies allegedly trying to breach into the systems of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW).[80] This rare public statement of operational results by an intelligence service was made alongside British and American partners, making it clear that international cooperation had been crucial for the result achieved. Put this way, it signaled not only their competence in counterintelligence to a broad audience, but made visible their normally unobservable traits as a trustworthy ally as well. Yet, these direct forms of communicating ability are rare and can be part of deliberate branding. Often direct experience is simply lacking. In these cases, a judgment of ability needs to be based on reputational information

74 Svare, Gausdal, and Möllering, "The Function of Ability, Benevolence, and Integrity-Based Trust in Innovation Networks," 598; Chen, Dai, and Li, "A Delicate Balance for Innovation," 145–76; Luo, "A Coopetition Perspective of Global Competition," 129–44; Tiwana and Bush, "Continuance in Expertise-Sharing Networks," 85–101.

75 Przepiorka, Norbutas, and Corten, "Order without Law," 752–64.

76 Schilke and Cook, "Sources of Alliance Partner Trustworthiness," 280, 290–91; Hardin, "Gaming Trust," 92–93; Nooteboom, *Trust; Forms, Foundations, Functions, Failures and Figures*, 12–15; Todeva and Knoke, "Strategic Alliances And Corporate Social Capital," 24; Volk, "The Evolution of Trust and Cooperation in Diverse Groups. A Game Experimental Approach," 79.

77 Hardin, "Gaming Trust," 92; Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies," 441.

78 Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species*, 71–72; Yang and Maxwell, "Information-Sharing in Public Organizations," 165; Gulati, "Does Familiarity Breed Trust? The Implications of Repeated Ties for Contractual Choice in Alliances," 167–69, 185; Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, 150–51; Smith, "Human Cooperation," 414; Gulati, "Does Familiarity Breed Trust? The Implications of Repeated Ties for Contractual Choice in Alliances," 105.

79 Omand, *How Spies Think; 10 Lessons in Intelligence*, 170.

80 Bijleveld, "Russian Cyber Operation, Remarks Minister of Defence, 4 October in The Hague."

that is transmitted indirectly.[81] Trusted partners are used to acquire reputational information amongst themselves to assess the trustworthiness of unknown others. In international intelligence cooperation gossip reinforces relational bonds.[82]

The intelligence field seems to provide ample opportunity for partners to get familiarized and exchange reputational information. Its patchwork of connections holds numerous interactions in which members of intelligence services come together, in various settings and at various levels. Interagency personal contacts are fostered in collective education, regular meetings and standardized communications. Together, they create a diverse network of personal relations between key officials that can be an underpinning for trust. Often this seems to be about leadership. For example, the periodical meetings of European Heads of Domestic Services in the Club de Berne are thought to have been an invaluable fundament for later operational counter-terrorism cooperation in Europe.[83] Likewise, the regular encounters between numerous Heads of Services in NATO's military intelligence committee can provide fertile ground for operational cooperation. Although perhaps too large a setting to offer direct operational opportunities, they can be of service in 'the mutual confidence and understanding and the personal friendships they bring'.[84] The importance of personal ties between senior executives of partnering firms for cooperation is well-known in the field of business cooperation. For example, in the Taiwanese travel industry personal ties are often the start of horizontal strategic alliances.[85]

Networks provide useful leads for scrutinizing perceived ability in EU intelligence cooperation. They are social structures for familiarization and they hold information on reputation.[86] For example, network properties like density and centrality are strongly linked to reputations. The way a partner is embedded in a network of linkages both determines how much he will know about the others and gives strong indication about how well-perceived he is himself. Concerning familiarity, overlapping network ties 'typically generate a lot of

81 Przepiorka and Berger, "Signaling Theory Evolving," 13–18; Wu, Balliet, and Van Lange, "Reputation, Gossip, and Human Cooperation," 352–54.

82 Brown and Farrington, "Democracy and the Depth of Intelligence Sharing," 68–84; Számadó et al., "The Language of Cooperation," 2–5; Wu, Balliet, and Van Lange, "Reputation, Gossip, and Human Cooperation," 354; Malmendier, te Velde, and Weber, "Rethinking Reciprocity," 365; Rand and Nowak, "Human Cooperation," 414–15; Kramer, "Trust and Distrust in Organizations," 576–77.

83 Omand, *How Spies Think; 10 Lessons in Intelligence*, 169–71; Guttmann, "Combatting Terror in Europe," 159; Pleschinger, "Allied Against Terror: Transatlantic Intelligence Cooperation," 55–67; Shpiro, "The Communication of Mutual Security: Frameworks for European-Mediterranean Intelligence Sharing," 21, 35.

84 Lander, "International Intelligence Cooperation," 489; Ballast, "Merging Pillars, Changing Cultures," 724; Gruszczak, *Intelligence Security in the European Union*, 105; Aldrich, "Transatlantic Intelligence and Security Cooperation," 18–19.

85 Tsaur and Wang, "Personal Ties, Reciprocity, Competitive Intensity, and Performance of the Strategic Alliances in Taiwan's Travel Industry," 911–28; Hu and Korneliussen, "The Effects of Personal Ties and Reciprocity on the Performance of Small Firms in Horizontal Strategic Alliances," 159–73; Schlump and Brenner, "Firm's Cooperation Activities: The Relevance of Public Research, Proximity and Personal Ties - A Study of Technology-Oriented Firms in East Germany."

86 Giardini et al., "Four Puzzles of Reputation-Based Cooperation," 52; Borgatti and Lopez-Kidwell, "Network Theory," 40; Yang and Maxwell, "Information-Sharing in Public Organizations," 167; Diekmann and Lindenberg, "Cooperation," 6–7.

knowledge relevant to trusting any particular partner within this network'.[87] In social networks, information - for example functional gossip - can flow from node to node along paths of consisting ties interlocked through shared endpoints.[88] In chapter 6 the entity of reputation and the process of familiarization will be examined within the network structure present in EU intelligence cooperation. It will include the complexity of the network as a whole, the position of the relevant actors within it, and the connectivity between them. The tighter the network, the more trust is able to influence cooperative behavior. The other way around, a sizeable and diverse network can make familiarization difficult and hamper favorable reputations. For example, in intelligence the functional divides between services can be the cause of insufficient familiarity, conflicting principles and incompatible traits; setting the stage for lacking mutual understanding, hampering interoperability, controversy, conflict and sometimes even rivalries.[89]

### 3.4.3. Perceptions of Integrity

The second condition for trust identified by Mayer et al. is for partners to perceive each other as having integrity. They do not focus on how this perception of integrity is formed nor do they dwell on the underlying entity that drives this process. Yet, from the elements that are being mentioned in their article and from other sociological publications on interorganizational relations and trust, it is again possible to elaborate further. Perceptions of integrity are about the idea that a partner will behave properly; abiding to a code of conduct that sets the rules of the game.[90] Similar, or at least acceptable, principles provide a clear and recognizable frame of norms and standards. These principles influence 'all aspects of how an organization deals with its primary purpose, its various environments, and its internal operations'.[91] They limit uncertainty by enabling partners to categorize each other in terms of expected behavior and compare this with what they think is appropriate in a given domain or situation. What the principles for appropriate behavior are, and which of them carry the most weight, depends on the specific (sub)community of practice, the circumstances at hand and the backgrounds of the organizations involved. For example, although mendacity is considered a faux pas in the relation between intelligence services and their political masters or oversight bodies, it can to some extent be acceptable behavior

87 Hardin, *Trust and Trustworthiness*, 21–23; Raub, Buskens, and Corten, "Social Networks," 670–71.

88 Buskens, "Social Networks and the Effect of Reputation on Cooperation," 2; Borgatti and Lopez-Kidwell, "Network Theory," 43.

89 Aldrich, "Dangerous Liaisons," 51; Wirtz, "Constraints on Intelligence Collaboration."

90 Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," 719–20.

91 Schein and Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 6, 9–11; Schilke and Cook, "Sources of Alliance Partner Trustworthiness," 279; Yang and Maxwell, "Information-Sharing in Public Organizations," 166; Boyd and Richerson, *The Origin and Evolution of Cultures*, 206; Drake, Steckler, and Koch, "Information Sharing in and Across Government Agencies," 69, 81; Ostrom, "Toward a Behavioral Theory Linking Trust, Reciprocity, and Reputation," 40–41; Hatch and Schultz, "The Dynamics of Organizational Identity," 996–97.

in the intelligence community itself. In 2013 it became evident that the British GCHQ had breached the infrastructure of the Belgian telecommunications provider Belgacom to use it for their own advantage. The Belgian services were reported not to be involved or notified. The Belgian oversight committee concluded that clear norms were breached and that at the international level trust had taken a blow. They considered it '[no longer clear] who can be considered to be friendly services'. Yet, at the organizational level, the Belgian General Intelligence and Security Service (ADIV) pointed out that 'reverting to isolationism would not be the right response' and that cooperation had to be maintained.[92] Apparently, a degree of mendacity was considered the norm in the secretive world of intelligence, even in the relation between cooperating intelligence services, and could be forgiven.

In cooperation, clear and acceptable principles are helpful in preserving some order and expectation of reciprocity between partners, even in the face of deep faultlines. This set of principles is often tied to 'culture'.[93] Culture is even considered 'one of the most significant relational properties of security networks' and drives in-group/out-group dynamics.[94] A degree of 'value congruence' or 'cultural fit' is needed to limit uncertainty to a predictable and acceptable range of behaviors.[95] Partners will be 'most comfortable with others who share the same set of assumptions and very uncomfortable in situations where different assumptions operate because [they] will either not understand what is going on, or, worse, [...] will misperceive and misinterpreted the actions of others.'[96] Cultural differences are seen to be the cause of significant communications problems and conflict, for example in alliances between US pharmaceutical and biotechnology firms. Fundamental differences between their engineering and science cultures on how knowledge is understood and used, leading to diverging normative ideas on research centralization, negatively hampered alliance performance. When partners are being seen to reject or violate some of the culture-

92 Belgian Standing Intelligence Agencies Review Committee, "Activity Report 2014-2015," 32–39.

93 Almandoz, Marquis, and Cheely, "Drivers of Community Strength: An Institutional Logics Perspective on Geographical and Affiliation-Based Communities," 192–97; Chudek, Zhao, and Henrich, "Culture-Gene Coeveolution, Large-Scale Cooperation, and the Shaping of Human Social Psychology," 438, 424–44; Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species*, 90; Hofstede, "Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context," 20; Barretta, "The Functioning of Co-Opetition in the Health-Care Sector," 217–19; Hartmann and Gerteis, "Dealing with Diversity," 223; Henrich, "Cultural Evolution of Human Cooperation," 253; Nooteboom, *Trust; Forms, Foundations, Functions, Failures and Figures*, 64–65; Möllering, "The Nature of Trust: From Georg Simmel to a Theory of Expectation, Interpretation and Suspension," 406; Taylor, *The Possibility of Cooperation*, 23; Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies," 445–46, 462.

94 Whelan, "Security Networks and Occupational Culture," 114, 117–18; Lindenberg, Wittek, and Giardini, "Reputation Effects, Embeddedness, and Granovetter's Error," 118–20; Schein and Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 18; Williamson, "Calculativeness, Trust, and Economic Organization," 66.

95 Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," 719–20; Kramer, "Trust and Distrust in Organizations," 579–81; Axelrod, *The Complexity of Cooperation; Agent-Based Models of Competition and Collaboration*, 145, 151–52; Cameron and Freeman, "Cultural Congruence, Strength, and Type: Relationships to Effectiveness," 24–25, 52; Douma, "Strategic Alliances," 581.

96 Schein and Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 21–22; Good, 'Individuals, Interpersonal Relationships and Trust', 44–45.

based principles in a community, this will damage their perceived trustworthiness.[97] For example, Cartmell shows that in intelligence disclosure of classified information by one of the partners - or their political masters - to third parties in the general public or to oversight committees can have detrimental effects on cooperation.[98]

Recognizing a partner's principles requires a process of categorization and comparison of their cultures; their frames for understanding and sensemaking. Social categorization divides the outside world in several groups according to their perceived similarity, reducing the complexity of information and comparing it to the self. The resulting categories are believed to hold information on what can reasonably be expected from a partner in that group. A process in which 'intra-group similarities and inter-group differences are accentuated'.[99] This cultural comparison is based on the more articulate elements of culture, mainly on championed norms and standards. Norms are a behavioral reflection of the guiding values and assumptions in a given community. Professional standards reflect this norm on 'what is right or wrong, what will work or what will not work'. They are often explicitly and repeatedly being articulated to guide members in their behavior, especially when confronted with uncertainty. Although sometimes reflected in formal rules, these standards are often informal. They are part of an intangible frame; a durable and recognized pattern of shared practices.[100] Many professional communities have occupational cultures that span the different organizations within it. For example, although cooperating competitors in the very formalized and controlled industry of Polish Aviation seldomly identified culture as a leading factor in their cooperation, many implicitly mentioned dissimilarities in norms, standards and ethics as barriers for sustained relationships.[101]

The intelligence community seems to have common principles that reflect the norms and standards in this occupation and enable recognition of a partner's integrity. They can provide a basis for trust-based cooperation.[102] Regarding shared principles, Simmel notes that organizations culturally defined by their ordination to be secret, display social restraint and

97 McGill and Gray, "Challenges to International Counterterrorism Intelligence Sharing," 77–81, 84; Hertzberger, "Counterterrorism Intelligence Cooperation in the EU," 62–63; Sirmon and Lane, "A Model of Cultural Differences and International Alliance Performance," 306–19.

98 Cartmell, "Long Term Intelligence Sharing," 426–27.

99 Schruijer, "The Social Psychology of Inter-Organizational Relations," 422–23.

100 Schein and Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 4, 19; Reiersen, "Drivers of Trust and Trustworthiness," 6; Buzan, *From International to World Society?: English School Theory and the Social Structure of Globalisation*, 166, 181; Herepath, "In the Loop," 859–60; MacFhionnlaoich, "Interorganizational Cooperation: Towards a Synthesis of Theoretical Perspectives," 12–13.

101 Klimas, "Organizational Culture and Coopetition," 91–102.

102 Guttmann, "Combatting Terror in Europe," 159; Svendsen, "Developing International Intelligence Liaison Against Islamic State," 260–61, 268; Svendsen, *Understanding the Globalization of Intelligence*, 91; Aldrich, "US–European Intelligence Co-Operation on Counter-Terrorism," 126.

formality to the outside world, mirrored by informality and lack of control on the inside.[103] Common norms and standards can become manifest in shared professional language and modus operandi, like a compatible view of the intelligence cycle, shared technical expertise, a standardized lexicon of qualifying words or agreeable definitions of intelligence topics.[104] The intelligence community is seen to 'harbor deeply embedded institutional and cultural legacies, preferences and biases that favor time-tested tradecraft and practices that they perceive to be the global gold standard'.[105] For example, adhering to established principles, like 'need-to-know', 'third-party-rule' or 'originator-control' can be powerful binding principles.[106]

Institutions provide valuable pointers for scrutinizing the role of perceived integrity in EU intelligence cooperation. They are highly important social structures for principles, categorization, cultural comparison and identity formation.[107] Institutions are - often informal - frames of reference and understanding for making sense of the world.[108] As such, they harbor the more readily observable part of culture. The underlying assumptions in cultures are seldomly articulated and 'so taken for granted' that group members will simply find any other premise inconceivable. They stay hidden. Institutions are based on cultural beliefs and assumptions, but they become visible through organizations; constellations for socially restricted behavior based on 'performance scripts'. These constellations can be more structural like a corporation, or more intangible like an occupation. What they have in common is an emphasis on membership.[109] Membership does not need to be formal to exert authority and in practice people are members of multiple communities adhering to multiple institutional frames and principles. The place where these communities meet is an interesting one. The resulting confrontation, contestation and conformation are likely to give valuable insights into the role of integrity perceptions in cooperation in a specific domain. In chapter 7 the entity of principles and the process of cultural categorization and comparison will be examined in the setting of the EU intelligence system. It looks at the preferred behavior of the intelligence community there, and the way its institutional membership is defined and understood. Again, this will be done in a qualitative in-depth

103 Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies," 470–73, 482; Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination," 20; Soeters, *Sociology and Military Studies*, 58.

104 Salmi, "Why Europe Needs Intelligence and Why Intelligence Needs Europe," 3; Omand, *How Spies Think; 10 Lessons in Intelligence*, 163–67; Nomikos and Symeonides, "Coalition Building, Cooperation, and Intelligence," 684.

105 CSIS Technology and Intelligence Task Force, "Maintaining the Intelligence Edge," 6.

106 Omand, *How Spies Think; 10 Lessons in Intelligence*, 173; Balzacq and Puybareau, "The Economy of Secrecy," 897–99; Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies," 445–46, 462; Hofstede, "Dimensionalizing Cultures: The Hofstede Model in Context," 20.

107 von Billerbeck, "Sociological Institutionalism," 1–6.

108 These social institutions entail a broader concept than the institutions often used in liberal institutionalist theory. The latter is mostly about the consciously designed, formal organizations for dealing with various problems in international affairs. For this research, these organizations are merely one manifestation of informal social institutions.

109 Jepperson and Meyer, *Institutional Theory*, 39, 46; Franke, "Inter-Organizational Relations: Five Theoretical Approaches," 3–7; Franke and Koch, "Sociological Approaches," 174–77.

analysis. It will unveil more refined institutional dynamics and tendencies of the mechanism of social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation.

### 3.4.4. Perceptions of Benevolence

The third and final condition for trust identified by Mayer et al. is for partners to perceive each other as benevolent. Benevolence is the 'extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor, aside from an egocentric profit motive."[110] On a group and individual level benevolence is known to be commonplace. It implies a caring attitude, or in the words of Mayer et al. 'a positive orientation of the trustee towards the trustor'.[111] They use the example of attachment in the paternalistic relationship between a mentor (trustee) and a protege (trustor). The mentor wants to help the protege, even though he is not required to do so and there is no extrinsic reward in it for him. Mainstream theories of international relations so far make little use of the concept of benevolence and realism is seen to discard it as 'nonsense' or at best a 'useful mask'.[112] Yet, there is increasing recognition that even in international relations benevolence plays a significant role. Even from a very transactional point of view, it is admitted that people sometimes 'act in accordance with a principle of sympathy. That is, they are able and willing to take into account the roles of their interaction partners and identify with their respective interests'.[113] Benevolence can alleviate fear of a partner's potentially opportunistic behavior and bolster a reasonable expectation of helping behavior. In international intelligence cooperation, it can preclude defection and stimulate burden sharing. Yet, to operationalize what a caring attitude means as an entity in cooperative behavior and to clarify the process of attachment that underlies it, it is necessary to elaborate further.

In cooperation, positive attitudes among partners create favorable expectations about the degree of solidarity in a particular relation or group. It means that partners see each other as the 'object of belonging and commitment, [sufficient] to [...] create meaningful relationships'.[114] They are thought to care for each other's well-being and interests are considered to be encapsulated. This encapsulating of interests does not omit the reciprocity on which cooperation is built or dismiss vulnerability, as it still recognizes 'the autonomy of

110 Hatch and Schultz, "The Dynamics of Organizational Identity," 996–1001; Kohtamäki, Thorgren, and Wincent, "Organizational Identity and Behaviors in Strategic Networks," 36–43; Schultz, Hatch, and Larsen, "Scaling the Tower of Babel: Relational Differences between Identity, Image, and Culture in Organizations.," 9–35.

111 Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," 719.

112 Ramel, "Overcoming Misrecognition," 4–5, 16–17.

113 Voss, "Institutional Design and Human Motivation: The Role of Homo Economicus Assumptions," 15.

114 Turner and Reynolds, "Self-Categorization Theory," 3–6; Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species*, 35; Rathbun, *Trust in International Cooperation*, 38–39; Schruijer, "The Social Psychology of Inter-Organizational Relations," 419; Cook, Hardin, and Levi, *Cooperation without Trust*, 4–5, 85; Hardin, "Gaming Trust," 82–83; Kramer, "Trust and Distrust in Organizations," 577–78; Taylor, *The Possibility of Cooperation*, 153; Ashforth and Mael, "Social Identity Theory and The Organization," 21–23.

the other and its capacity to act'.[115] Yet, it implies a degree of sociological merging, a sense of 'we' instead of 'you and I', ascribing 'group-defining characteristics to the self, and to take the collective's interest to heart'.[116] It creates cohesion and commitment in a community and allows for cooperation even in the face of competition. This process is seen in many upcoming industries as well as in more established and enduring alliances.[117] For example, in the case of the American artisanal beer craft industry, identification with traditional production first served as a way to contrast (and compete) with large-scale companies like Budweiser, but later became more of a 'special way of life' and gradually evolved into a collective trait of character. In the end, cooperation, even between competing firms, had become a core value of what was perceived as a tight-knit community with a collective identity and common sense of purpose.[118] For international cooperation and public administration, similar processes in international bureaucracies have received considerable scholarly attention.[119]

Encapsulating a partner's interests requires a process of attachment and bonding. It distinguishes likeable in-groups, where partners care for each other's welfare, from out-groups where this is less the case. Affective ties create solidarity to a specific group that can be witnessed in high degrees of cohesion and commitment.[120] They form a powerful basis for trusting behavior in cooperation, going beyond mere cognition and normative concerns.[121] Actors with identical dispositions are seen to form increasingly frequent relationships, compared with those who do not perceive to share characteristics. Experiences in homogenous groups tend to be perceived as less demanding, more agreeable and more efficient (although not necessarily more effective). This tendency of similarity-attraction is also known as the notion of 'homophily' in social networks. In interorganizational relations, patterns of homophily, comfortably sticking to what is known, are remarkably robust.[122] Soeters and Goldenberg note that in information sharing, people 'have a tendency to connect

115 Ramel, "Overcoming Misrecognition," 6.

116 van Knippenberg and Sleebos, "Organizational Identification versus Organizational Commitment," 572; Yang and Maxwell, "Information-Sharing in Public Organizations," 167; Tomasello et al., *Why We Cooperate*, 57–58; Colquitt, Scott, and LePine, "Trust, Trustworthiness, and Trust Propensity," 911; Cook, Hardin, and Levi, *Cooperation without Trust*, 42–43; Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," 718–19; Deutsch, "A Theory of Co-Operation and Competition," 149–50.

117 Fine and Holyfield, "Secrecy, Trust, and Dangerous Leisure: Generating Group Cohesion in Voluntary Organizations," 391–92, 399, 405.

118 Mathias et al., "An Identity Perspective on Coopetition in the Craft Beer Industry," 3086–3115.

119 Biermann, "The Role of International Bureaucracies," 248–53.

120 Fine and Holyfield, "Secrecy, Trust, and Dangerous Leisure: Generating Group Cohesion in Voluntary Organizations," 387.

121 Volk, "The Evolution of Trust and Cooperation in Diverse Groups. A Game Experimental Approach," 16–17; Hatch and Schultz, "The Dynamics of Organizational Identity," 1006–10; Ashforth and Mael, "Social Identity Theory and The Organization," 31–33.

122 Soeters, *Sociology and Military Studies*, 52; Aksoy, "Effects of Heterogeneity and Homophily on Cooperation," 339–441; Lozares et al., "Homophily and Heterophily in Personal Networks. From Mutual Acquaintance to Relationship Intensity," 2658; Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species*, 3, 24; Schruijer, "The Social Psychology of Inter-Organizational Relations," 427–28; Bowles and Gintis, "22 Origins of Human Cooperation," 437–38; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, "Birds of a Feather," 416–17, 428–29; Riolo, Cohen, and Axelrod, "Evolution of Cooperation without Reciprocity," 441, 443.

to others who are like them'.[123] Yet, it can be the other way around as well. In intelligence, Byman names conflicting sense of purpose as an important barrier for cooperation between services that are primarily focused on regime survival and those that derive their raison d'être from supporting decision making in foreign affairs or defence.[124] Moreover, in the secretive and closed world of intelligence in-group dynamics can have positive effects on cooperation, but can also reinforce cognitive biases and hamper cooperation with the outside of the community.[125]

Caring attitudes and attachment seem concepts far away from international intelligence cooperation. Affective ties and solidarity relate poorly to the traditional view of national organizations striving for national gains. A much-quoted adage on international intelligence cooperation is that intelligence services have no friends.[126] Yet, longstanding arrangements for intelligence cooperation can provide platforms for attachment and bonding, ultimately creating a shared sense of purpose and collective identity. Moreover, caring attitudes and feelings of attachment are not beholden to formal structures. In fact, they may grow within any 'system of cooperative effort and coordinated activities', such as a work group, profession or 'other ensemble of individuals in more frequent social interaction than with others'.[127] Informal communities of practice, based on 'daily, routinised, or patterned production and the extent of shared value, interest and habit', are seen to develop a sense of belonging, shared identity and goodwill towards other members that enables them to cooperate and derive resources on the basis of a generalized expectation of reciprocity for that group.[128] The informality and decentralized character of these communities are often practical reflections of an evolved trust-based relation that enables a high level of risk-acceptance and in-depth cooperation. For example, the CTG provides an intimate and closed locus for cooperation between organizations, centered around a certain shared purpose and common understanding. They operate through a notion of 'shared secrecy', where information is exchanged easily between this small group of participants, while being selectively shared

123 Soeters and Goldenberg, "Information Sharing in Multinational Security and Military Operations. Why and Why Not?," 40.

124 Byman, "US Counterterrorism Intelligence Cooperation with the Developing World and Its Limits," 145–60.

125 CSIS Technology and Intelligence Task Force, "Maintaining the Intelligence Edge," 6; Soeters, *Sociology and Military Studies*, 57–58; Costas and Grey, "Bringing Secrecy into the Open," 1436–38; Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies," 486, 489.

126 Lowenthal, *Intelligence*, 163–78; Aldrich, "Dangerous Liaisons."

127 Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species*, 48; Smith, Carroll, and Ashford, "Intra- And Interorganizational Cooperation: Toward A Research Agenda," 8; Powell and Oberg, "Networks and Institutions," 346–47.

128 Almandoz, Marquis, and Cheely, "Drivers of Community Strength: An Institutional Logics Perspective on Geographical and Affiliation-Based Communities," 192; Koops, "Theorising Inter-Organisational Relations," 329–31; Powell and Oberg, "Networks and Institutions," 447–48; Græger, "European Security as Practice," 481; Bowles and Gintis, *A Cooperative Species*, 169–70; Greenwood et al., "Institutional Complexity and Organizational Responses," 346–47; Wenger, Trayner, and de Laat, "Promoting and Assessing Value Creation in Communities and Networks: A Conceptual Framework," 63; Wenger, *Communities of Practice : Learning, Meaning, and Identity.*; Taylor, *The Possibility of Cooperation*, 23; Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination," 3, 26; DiMaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited," 148–54.

with others like EUROPOL and EU INTCEN.[129] Davis Cross argues that, when it comes to explaining the potential Europeanization of intelligence, these informal relationships among intelligence professionals tend to be neglected.[130]

Identities provide valuable leads for scrutinizing perceived benevolence in EU intelligence cooperation. These identities form the social structure for caring attitudes in a community and the basis for attachment and bonding. A collective identity is the result of the repeated activities of a diverse set of organizations, the emergence of clear patterns of interaction, mutual awareness of participants that they are in a common enterprise and, eventually, a degree of acculturation. It refers to a homogenization of how partners perceive and understand who they are and what they stand for as an organization. In extremis, caring attitudes and attachment within a collective identity lead to a situation in which continuing the relationship becomes as important as its outcome. However, in practice, cooperative arrangements are seen to preserve a dynamic set of multiple sub identities that together form the collective identity and shape cooperative behavior.[131] The prime example of benevolence in international intelligence cooperation is the UK-US relationship, the backbone of the Five Eyes intelligence community. It provides a clear example of encapsulated interest and collective identity. In this community, the enduring belief 'in defending the freedom of democracies' is considered a powerful foundational value. A shared sense of purpose and 'a culture of cooperation' that is 'handed on from generation to generation' sustains cooperation.[132] In its 70-year existence, despite occasional strategic and operational differences, the partnership proved remarkably resilient.[133] In chapter 8 the entity of attitudes and the process of attachment and bonding will be examined in the setting of the EU intelligence system. It looks at affective ties and the commitment, cohesion and solidarity they cause. Although perhaps not as strong as in the case of the Five Eyes community, that chapter will unveil identity dynamics that provide a fresh insight in the mechanism of social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation.

129 Bigo, "Shared Secrecy in a Digital Age and a Transnational World," 379–80; Labasque, "The Merits of Informality in Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation," 493, 495; Bakker, "The Importance of Networks and Relationships," 32; Schaefer, "Intelligence Cooperation and New Trends in Space Technology"; Fägersten, *For EU Eyes Only?*, 2; Lozares et al., "Homophily and Heterophily in Personal Networks. From Mutual Acquaintance to Relationship Intensity," 2658; Crawford, "Intelligence Cooperation," 20; Volk, "The Evolution of Trust and Cooperation in Diverse Groups. A Game Experimental Approach," 15; Müller Wille, "The Effect of International Terrorism on EU Intelligence Co-Operation"; Lau and Murnighan, "Demographic Diversity and Faultlines: The Compositional Dynamics of Organizational Groups," 17; Abrams et al., "Knowing What to Think by Knowing Who You Are," 97–119; Ashforth and Mael, "Social Identity Theory and The Organization," 20, 22, 26.

130 Davis Cross, "The Limits of Epistemic Communities," 391.

131 Ungureanu et al., "Collaboration and Identity Formation in Strategic Interorganizational Partnerships," 17–19; Volk, "The Evolution of Trust and Cooperation in Diverse Groups. A Game Experimental Approach," 37, 68; Swann et al., "Finding Value in Diversity: Verification of Personal and Social Self-Views in Diverse Groups," 16–22; Ashforth and Mael, "Social Identity Theory and The Organization," 22.

132 Omand, *How Spies Think; 10 Lessons in Intelligence*, 163, 168.

133 Wells, *Between Five Eyes; 50 Years of Intelligence Sharing*, 135, 202–3.

### 3.5. Conclusion

This chapter explored the conditions for cooperative behavior in intelligence and introduces a sociological approach. It demonstrates that unravelling trust provides a valuable, complementary perspective that nuances our understanding. The mechanism of rational calculations and control may be important in collaboration, but it insufficiently explains efficient and sustained international intelligence cooperation over time. The mechanism of social relations and trust seems to provide a valuable complement. It enables actors to cooperate, despite the uncertainty and vulnerability inherently present in the process. The conditions for trust that are known from sociological publications on interorganizational relations are found applicable to the 'special', secretive world of intelligence as well. The practical art of intelligence might differ from other domains, and therefore the exact setting and valuation of trust, but conceptually their relations appear to resemble those between organizations and professionals in other fields.

At first sight, cooperation on the basis of social relations and trust seems rare in the international intelligence arena. Trust may be considered important, but intelligence services are seldomly thought of as holding one, shared identity or to encapsulate each other's interests. Many institutional divides exist between them, both national, functional and structural. However, on closer inspection the intelligence community offers a potential basis for trust that can overcome conflicting faultlines. Known reputations, recognized principles and caring attitudes can socially bind intelligence professionals together, allowing them to bridge divides like nationality and even conflicting interests. Moreover, social relations include sources of non-material-reciprocity that can be just as important for competitive advantage as material gain. In practice, services and their professionals often cooperate in long-standing arrangements without being able to rationally calculate the outcome or control the risks involved. Arrangements that seem to favor social relations and trust-building.

By departing from a purely material approach, a more nuanced understanding of arrangements for intelligence cooperation comes within reach. Intangible social relations enable partners to cooperate despite vulnerabilities attached, even allowing to be simultaneously competitive and cooperative. Trust is a key mediator in this. By conceptually unravelling the conditions for trust, it becomes possible to study this phenomenon in depth and examine the role it plays in achieving reasonable expectations in cooperation. From this perspective, particular traits of the intelligence community that are often mentioned as obstacles for cooperation, like pragmatism, secrecy and informality, can very well be the ties that bind in this diverse community of practice, bolstering cooperative behavior through connected networks, shared institutions and collective identities.

This chapter constructs a viable conceptual framework for examining the mechanism of social relations and trust in international intelligence cooperation. It is depicted in figure 8 below. Starting from the model by Mayer et al., it identifies perceptions of ability, integrity and benevolence as conditions for trust. Subsequently, it complements these conditions with insights from sociological approaches to interorganizational relations and trust. Based on a wide range of publications, it adds the entities, processes and structures at work. This theoretically informed framework on social relations and trust will be used to critically examine the case of the EU intelligence system in chapters 5 to 8. Not to measure the degree of cooperative behavior there or predict future outcomes. This would not suit the post-positivist stance and critical realist approach of this research. Moreover, part of the mechanism 'may exist unexercised or be exercised unrealized'.[134] The aim is to better understand the working of social relations and trust in shaping preferences for cooperative behavior in intelligence. Before stepping into the empirics, the next chapter will first clarify the design and methods to achieve this aim and answer the research question.

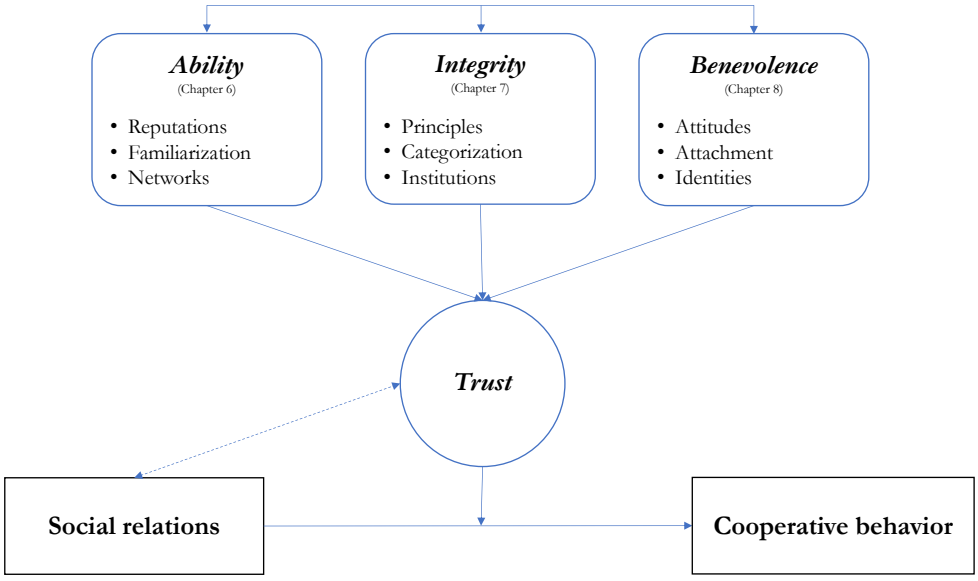


*Figure 8; The conceptual framework for examining social relations and trust in cooperative behavior*

134 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 113, 136–39, 142–43; Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 10; Archer, "Realism in the Social Sciences," 190.

# Chapter 4

# Chapter 4: Research Design and Methods

## Getting an Insider's Perspective

### 4.1. Introduction

> *'It would be nice if all of the data which sociologists require could be enumerated because then we could run them through IBM machines and draw charts as the economists do. However, not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted.'*[1]

This chapter introduces the research design and methods for this study. Whereas chapter 1 introduced the 'why' and 'whereto' of the study, this chapter will focus on the 'what' and 'how'. It will provide a roadmap for conducting the research, building its scientific argument and answering its research question; 'how social relations and trust influence EU intelligence cooperation'. Chapter 2 showed a research gap in the existing body of knowledge on international intelligence cooperation that is partly due to a neorealist presumption. It advocated filling this gap by approaching cooperation as a process on multiple levels and by introducing a sociological perspective. Chapter 3 provided such a perspective. It argued that social relations can lead to cooperation if there is enough trust present. Subsequently, it unraveled the conditions for trust and spelled them out in underlying entities, processes and structures based on sociological publications on interorganizational relations and trust. In turn, this chapter will conclude the theoretical part of this study and forms the linking pin for the empirical chapters to follow. It further operationalizes the conceptual framework for use in an in-depth case study.

The post-positivist stance and critical realist approach introduced in chapter 1 permeate all aspects of this study, from its research design to the methods employed for data collection and data analysis. They imply two important premises that guide this research. First, it means that the role of theory is limited. This research accepts that theories can hold no absolute truth and that the best a social researcher can aspire is to increase understanding of behavior within specific practices.[2] Nevertheless, based on previous research some theories can be identified that are less fallible than others and their concepts can provide helpful entry points for studying a particular mechanism in a specific context.[3] The conceptual framework on social relations and trust constructed in chapter 3 serves this purpose. It provides a viable lens for the case study of EU intelligence cooperation. Second, it means that - as the opening quote states - not everything that counts can be counted. This research focusses on

1 Cameron, *Informal Sociology*, 13.

2 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 183–84.

3 Merton, *Social Theory and Social Structure*, 39; Glaser and Strauss, "Discovery of Substantive Theory," 5.

practices; the interplay between actors and social structures. In doing so, it acknowledges the importance of subjective interpretation for sensemaking and behavioral preferences. The critical appraisal of people's espoused beliefs and perceptions uncovers a portion of reality that otherwise remains unknown or unrecognized.[4] The thick analysis used in chapters 6 to 8 serves this purpose. It provides an insider's perspective on the meaning of social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation.

After this introduction, this chapter consists of four sections that will explicate the design and methodology of this research. In section 4.2 the research design will be explicated. This research constitutes of a single case study. It is well equipped for the qualitative aim of interpretive understanding.[5] The subject of this study is the EU intelligence system. It is interesting as it is a deviant case of international intelligence cooperation. Through this case it becomes possible to scrutinize the mechanism of social relations and trust in international intelligence cooperation; the object of this study.[6] Section 4.3 deals with the methods for data collection. This research uses a combination of desk research and interviews to collect data. It relies on the proposed relations from its conceptual framework on social relations and trust to guide it. Whereas the desk research provides mainly contextual information, the interviews deliver information about perceptions and beliefs. The latter are semi-structured. Rather than being an exact blueprint for questioning a respondent, they are an open-ended list of relevant issues that opens the floor to meaningful conversation. Examining the proposed relations from the conceptual framework in the case of the EU will make the conditions for international intelligence cooperation more clearly visible. Section 4.4 covers the methods for data analysis. This research will interpret its data by means of abduction and engage theory and analysis in tandem. After a process of indexing and coding the data, interpretative inquiry seeks to extract themes, regularities and relations from the categories identified. Notwithstanding the structured techniques used to improve credibility, studying patterns in intangible (and often unconscious) belief systems requires conceptual imagination. It sheds light on the actual logic behind it.[7] This type of qualitative research poses specific challenges to its ethics and to scientific rigor. These challenges will be addressed in section 4.5.

4 Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 29, 394; Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures: Selected Essays*, 5–9.

5 Thomas, *How to Do Your Case Study*, 46.

6 Thomas, 14–18.

7 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 113, 136–39, 142–43.

## 4.2. Research Design: a Qualitative Case Study

### 4.2.1. A Qualitative Strategy

This study adopts a qualitative strategy. Rather than measuring objective facts, it emphasizes subjective interpretation of meaning. It seeks to see through the eyes of the people studied, and even more so, through them, probe into the deeper levels of their stratified social reality. Its critical realist approach acknowledges the existence of some objective reality, but because of its embeddedness in historical, cultural and social perspectives, these 'facts' are never observed in isolation and therefore not free of values or labels.[8] They exist in a belief system that forms a generative mechanism for preferred behavior. The unobservable processes of social construction can only be understood by interpreting motives, reasons and meanings, ideas, rules, norms and discourses, and the way these are influenced by the social context.[9] Only by showcasing their dynamic interplay with actual events in a specific field like intelligence, it is possible to attach meaning to them.[10]

Beliefs and perceptions on trust among EU intelligence practitioners will be analyzed using a semantic explanatory program to infer their meaning. An explanatory program is 'a general style of thinking about questions of explanation'.[11] A semantic explanation is one that provides a:

> *'Contextually rich and detailed account of a phenomenon. In such an account, the specific details that are provided and their contextual grounding do most of the explanatory work in that the way they are (convincingly) described and coherently ordered provide an explanation of how things hang together."*[12]

Semantics will tell the story through thick description and interpretation. It will provide a great deal of descriptive detail, as it recognizes the importance of a contextual understanding of cooperative behavior in the intelligence community. Context plays an extensive role in shaping trust perceptions.[13] The reporting style will be a kind of 'montage', crafting the argument on trust in EU intelligence from the ideas voiced by the respondents. As is common in semantic explanatory programs, it will use text and metaphors to present an intelligible picture and make a persuasive case. Staying as close as possible to the perceptions of practitioners and their daily setting will help uncover and explore a portion of intelligence

8 O'Mahoney and Vincent, "Critical Realism as an Empirical Project," 2–4; Gill and Phythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 28.

9 de Werd, "Critical Intelligence: Analysis by Contrasting Narratives: Identifying and Analyzing the Most Relevant Truths," 62.

10 Schatzki, "Practice Theory," 12; Crossley, "The Phenomenological Habitus and Its Construction," 85; Archer, "Realism in the Social Sciences," 196.

11 Abbott, *Methods of Discovery: Heuristics for the Social Sciences*, 27.

12 Cornelissen, "Preserving Theoretical Divergence in Management Research," 371.

13 Lewicki and Brinsfield, "Trust Research: Measuring Trust Beliefs and Behaviours," 57–59.

practices so far unknown or largely unrecognized. Only in a second instance, this research will seek to translate the rich narratives of the case at hand into more general patterns. And even then, it will make use of semantics and interpretation to reach its aim. Scientific inference is 'not only about applying formal logic; it also involves reasoning, creativity, the ability to abstract, and theoretical language in order to see meanings and structures in the seemingly unambiguous and flat empirical reality'.[14] Using this type of explanation enables this study to explain particulars by absorbing them into more and more general patterns. Moreover, it allows the articulation and modification of conceptual and theoretical models behind these mechanisms.

This research keeps preconceived structure at a minimum and puts practices and practitioners at center stage, but combines this with a second-order interpretation that is more abstract and researcher-oriented.[15] The emphasis on non-linearity and interpretivism leads to a relatively loose and essayist line of reasoning, whereas the conceptual framework provides a systematic guide for accumulating knowledge. This dual approach comes back in the 'Gioia methodology', one of the building blocks of this research's data analysis. It will be discussed in detail in section 4.4. Although reluctant to present absolute truths and generally hesitant in their wording, critical realist studies of social construction such as this one are necessarily deeply conceptual as 'it is difficult to imagine how the world that is perceived can be understood without the help of ideas to clarify and simplify what is observed'.[16] They are a vehicle for examining the conditions under which cooperative behavior comes about, based on the 'prior conceptualization of historical practice'.[17] As Bhaskar puts it:

> *'Typically, then, the construction of an explanation for, that is, the production of the knowledge of the mechanism of [...] some identified phenomenon will involve the building of a model, utilizing such [prior] cognitive materials and operating under the control of something like a logic [...], of a mechanism that if it were to exist and act in the postulated way would account for the phenomenon in question."*[18]

Thus, the conceptual framework presented in chapter 3 provides an articulate guidance for studying the mechanism of social relations and trust in cooperative behavior, based on prior knowledge from interorganizational relations and sociology. Conceptually breaking up trust in underlying conditions and their constituent parts provides the tools to examine this phenomenon in EU intelligence cooperation.[19] Applying this lens to practices

14 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 113.

15 Cornelissen, "Preserving Theoretical Divergence in Management Research," 377; Van Maanen, "Style as Theory," 135–37.

16 O'Mahoney and Vincent, "Critical Realism as an Empirical Project," 13; Schatzki, "Practice Theory," 13.

17 Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 5, 8; Archer, "Morphogenesis versus Structuration; on Combining Structure and Action," 113.

18 Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 12.

19 Gill and Phythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 28.

in a semantic explanatory program will lead to seeing different aspects of international intelligence cooperation or seeing known aspects differently.[20] Subsequently, the particular empirical findings in the case of the EU are projected on the substantive theory the research began with. This line of abductive reasoning enables more general inferences about the mechanism of social relations and trust in international intelligence cooperation, by itself and in conjunction with other mechanisms. In addition, it enables to refine the substantive theory itself.[21]

### 4.2.2. The Deviant Case of EU Intelligence

The research design of this study follows a simple model, composing of six steps, that aligns with the thesis structure presented in chapter 1.[22] First, an event was identified worth examining further. It was noted that, despite skepticism, international cooperation is an important and growing activity in in the field of intelligence. This paradox seemed surprising. Second, the scientific problem was explicated. It showed that the standard or normal mechanism used to explain this phenomenon cannot sufficiently account for actual events. Then a third step was taken. Using concepts from sociology and interorganizational relations, an additional mechanism was identified that could explain cooperative behavior. The main proposition it produces is that social relations and trust together form a generative mechanism, or general explanation, for cooperative behavior in intelligence. In addition, the conditions for trust were introduced to provide a backbone for further conceptualization. These conditions - ability, integrity and benevolence - are seen to empower the mechanism and bolster a preference for cooperation. In the remaining chapters of this study, there will be three additional steps still. The explanatory power of trust will be analyzed in a specific case, an abstraction is sought to the level of the intelligence field of practices, and these abstractions are used to refine the conceptual framework. The methodology behind the latter two steps is discussed in sections 4.3 and 4.4. Yet, first the specific case needs to be established.

This research will use a single case study to achieve its aim, producing a better understanding of international intelligence cooperation. Contrary to the comparative multiple case studies that are more common in especially quantitative studies, a qualitative case study is often considered 'the study of the particularity and complexity of a single case, coming to understand its activity within important circumstances'.[23] It is not about comparison

20 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 29.

21 Gijselinckx, *Kritisch Realisme En Sociologisch Onderzoek*, 128–33; O'Mahoney and Vincent, "Critical Realism as an Empirical Project," 10.

22 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 131–32, 193–94.

23 Stake, *The Art of Case Study Research*, xi.

of the cases, but about validating or refining a concept. A single case study provides the opportunity to explore and explain a contemporary social phenomenon like trust in-depth and within its real-world context. It is a common design for examining practices in critical realist research.[24] First, the design is well suited to deal with explanatory questions of 'why' and 'how' operational processes work as they do. Second, a case study requires no control over behavioral events; an impossibility in the open system of intelligence practice. Third, a case study is able to include specific context and subjective interpretations of its participants, and research sequences of interaction and relation between them. Moreover, it offers a situation in which these sequences may, to some extent, be conceptually isolated for further study.[25] Nevertheless, from a critical realist perspective the way the mechanism of trust surfaces - if at all - is highly dependent on the context. Trust will increase actual cooperative behavior between actors, but will only be visible when there are no, or weak, countervailing mechanisms at work or their effect is minimized. To be able to examine trust in international intelligence cooperation a suitable case is needed.

The EU intelligence system will provide a so-called deviant case for studying international intelligence cooperation, also known as an 'exceptional' or 'outlier' case. A deviant case is somewhat anomalous to the traditional context of a phenomenon and displays characteristics that by reference to the general understanding are surprising. The deviance is specifically sought. Its purpose is to probe for new explanations and to disconfirm the deterministic dogmas of traditional ones.[26] The EU intelligence system is chosen as a case for its deviant qualities as a research subject. It is thought to show the existence and workings of the mechanism of social relations and trust more readily than many other cases of international intelligence cooperation. As will be explicated in depth in the following chapters, this arrangement provides a context similar to many other types of cooperation between intelligence services. Yet, it also has marked differences, especially when compared with rather simple pragmatic partnerships between two services.[27] It is a multilateral and multifaceted system. It comprises of 27 countries, that work together in a vast and increasing array of policy domains for the benefit of collective action. Moreover, it is very much an open system. The diversity of topics and the multitude of actors create a complex pattern of interaction of which intelligence is only a part. It puts intelligence right in the middle of an increasingly open and interconnected world. As a consequence, there is a repeated - even continuous - interaction between a large set of intelligence organizations and personnel. At the same time, when compared to NATO, the EU intelligence system is relatively young

24 Thomas, *How to Do Your Case Study*, 5–12, 175; Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 15–16; Rietjens, "Qualitative Data Analysis," 132.

25 Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 5, 9–10, 12; Vincent and Wapshott, "Critical Realism and the Organizational Case Study," 2014, 148–49; Ackroyd and Karlsson, "Critical Realism, Research Techniques, and Research Designs," 2014, 24–25.

26 Seawright and Gerring, "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research," 302–3.

27 Røseth, "How to Classify Intelligence Relations," 47–49, 56–57.

and still developing. The context in which the system operates is very much in motion. At the same time, repeated interaction between individuals is commonplace and adversarial and competitive notions presumably hold lesser meaning. For these qualities, the case of EU intelligence is perfectly suited to serve the aim of this research. It will provide a context in which the mechanism of trust can 'to some extent be isolated and then studied'.[28] The - for intelligence - somewhat deviant system provides a fitting subject for studying the somewhat deviant research object at hand; the mechanism of social relations and trust in international intelligence cooperation. A schematic representation of this design is given in figure 9 below.

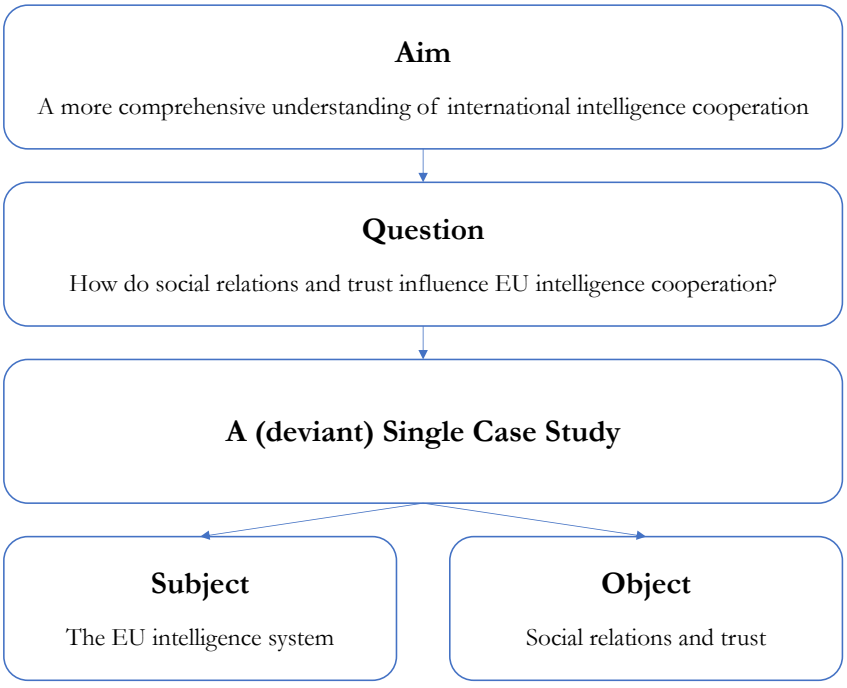


*Figure 9; Research design*

28 Vincent and Wapshott, "Critical Realism and the Organizational Case Study," 2014, 157; Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 50; Ackroyd and Karlsson, "Critical Realism, Research Techniques, and Research Designs," 2014, 29.

## 4.3. Data Collection: 'Looking through the Eyes…'

### 4.3.1. Information Sought

The subject of this case study is the EU intelligence system and its organizations. When looking at this subject, it is tempting to focus on the physical appearance of the latter. Organizations are made of structures, objects and people. For example, a bank building, its desks and its clerks are parts of what we call 'a bank'. Yet, there is more to the system than that. From a sociological perspective, it includes intangible parts as well, like the reputations and principles mentioned in chapter 3. Moreover, the presence of these entities alone is not sufficient for organizations to 'come into being'. It requires a process. It is the relational interaction between parts that creates behavioral dynamics and socially define organizations.[29] For example, a bank acquires meaning through the activities of clerks in relation to customers, and within the monetary system as a whole. When evaluating generative mechanisms, it is important to note that it is the whole of entities in a structure, and the patterns or tendencies they together create, that give them causal power or impact.[30] For the mechanism of social relations and trust these entities, processes and structures were identified in chapter 3 as part of the conditions for trust.

The conceptual framework of trust structures the data collection and analysis in this research. It is undertaken 'with at least some idea of the potential mechanisms active in the empirical domain'.[31] For this reason, it appears to be more structured than other forms of interpretative research. The analytical implications of this structuring will be discussed in section 4.4. For data collection, the conceptual framework provides an outline for answering the research question; how social relations and trust influence EU intelligence cooperation. Based on this framework a set of issues is identified on which information is needed. It forms a protocol to engage with the object of the case.[32] This protocol evolves around five proposed relations. Four of these cover the mechanism of social relations and trust. They include the general relation between trust and cooperative behavior, essentially verifying whether this mechanism is actually at work and what other mechanisms can be identified working at the same time. In addition, the respective conditions for trust form the basis for three more relations. These depict how ability, integrity and benevolence materialize in EU intelligence practice. The fifth relation covers the mechanism of rational calculations and control. Not only will it provide a rival explanation, it will also shed light on the way the mechanisms potentially coincide. Based on these relations it is possible to compile a list of questions

29 Vincent and Wapshott, "Critical Realism and the Organizational Case Study," 2014, 150; Barnes, "Practice as Collective Action," 32; Coulter, "Human Practices and the Observability of the 'Macro-Social,'" 44.

30 Coulter, "Human Practices and the Observability of the 'Macro-Social,'" 41.

31 O'Mahoney and Vincent, "Critical Realism as an Empirical Project," 15; Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 397.

32 Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 93–105.

on the subject and object of study that need to be covered in data collection. The research protocol used in this research, including the relations and derived questions, is elaborated in appendix A. At the same time, the protocol will in itself not be sufficient to fully direct the effort and focus. Therefore, a researcher must keep an eye open for 'anything that [he] has good reason to think makes a difference'[33] In a critical realist approach, there are few specific rules for data collection. It holds a broad orientation towards types of information and values flexibility in methods.

For a critical examination of social relations and trust in the setting of the EU intelligence system, this research combines contextual and normative information. Together they give an insight in the practices at work; the interplay between the mechanism and the circumstances at hand.[34] This information can be found in many places, for example in tangible events, objects and symbols. Evidence for the practical workings of social relations and trust can be visible in the number of open doors in a building and the amount of private chat in the corridors. Nevertheless, the focus in this research will be on intangible information. It seeks to look through the eyes of the practitioners working in the field of EU intelligence cooperation. Objects and events contain evidence about practices, but they 'are what they are, by virtue of what they mean to the members [of a community]'.[35] In addition, it is subjective perceptions that form the link between beliefs and preferences. Where the underlying belief system often remains inarticulate and preferences are often blurred by real-world limitations, it is perceptions that can offer a promising window into expectations and interpretations of social relations and trust. They connect the inner world of ideas to the outer world of the observable events 'as seamlessly as possible'.[36]

The methods for data collection employed in this research reflect the need for obtaining contextual and normative information. This research applies multiple ways of obtaining data. Up front it was identified that data collection would preferably include interviews, desk research and (participant) observation. Each of these methods has its own specific virtues for the case study.[37] Desk research and observation are well placed to give contextual information, while interviews in addition provide an inside in expectations and interpretations of participants. In addition, triangulation of data collection methods is preferable as it limits the effect of respondent bias, self-motivation or a deceitful memory.[38] Yet, full triangulation

33 O'Mahoney and Vincent, "Critical Realism as an Empirical Project," 14–15.

34 Ackroyd and Karlsson, "Critical Realism, Research Techniques, and Research Designs," 2014, 30; Schatzki, "Practice Theory," 15.

35 Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 15.

36 O'Mahoney and Vincent, "Critical Realism as an Empirical Project," 4, 6–7; Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 33; Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 50; Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, "Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research," 16; Crossley, "The Phenomenological Habitus and Its Construction," 109.

37 Vincent and Wapshott, "Critical Realism and the Organizational Case Study," 2014, 150, 159–61.

38 Van Puyvelde, "The Why, Who, and How of Using Qualitative Interviews to Research Intelligence Practices," 49.

of methods in this study was difficult. Especially, the method of observation proved largely elusive. Up front, it was already assessed the most uncertain method in this research in terms of accessibility and ethics.[39] It is the most sensitive form of data collection (witnessing all from the inside), its availability is heavily depended on the approval of a limited number of individual managers and this approval can only be effectively sought in the course of the data collection. In addition, participating in real-time intelligence events risks obfuscating the divide between confidential and open information with both researcher and respondents. A divide carefully observed in all aspects of this study. As it was, the COVID pandemic superseded this dilemma. In the period of data collection physical contact was brought to a minimum and the attendance of outsiders was - for understandable reasons - not appreciated at all. Getting interviews was difficult enough, as will be explicated below. Fortunately, observation would have been only an 'extra'. It would have delivered mainly contextual information.[40] As it was, this information was obtained through interviews and desk research, as well as numerous informal conversations with intelligence practitioners.

This research uses data from in-depth interviews, combined with a range of documentary sources to examine the how and why of EU intelligence cooperation. Both methods are conducted up to the point of saturation, the moment where no new relevant information was discerned on the case at hand.[41] Desk research is primarily used to compose the context of the EU intelligence system.[42] Many policy documents on EU intelligence and operations are classified and thus not readily accessible as primary sources. Yet, there are many studies on EU intelligence, as well as administrative reports and evaluations on foreign and security policy in the EU that take intelligence into account. These secondary documents are used to explore how the EU has evolved with regard to Defence and Security, the organizational system this produced and the specific role national intelligence has within this system. They form the basis of chapter 5. Its main goal is to describe the size, shape, and general pattern of activities of organizations associated with intelligence in the EU. Although these arrangements will inevitably reveal normative expectations associated with particular roles, or with how the system is supposed or expected to work, this is not the focus of the desk research. For this, the interviews are better suited.

39 Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 123–24.

40 Moelker, "Being One of the Guys or the Fly on the Wall?," 109–11; Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 436.

41 Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 114–15.

42 Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 396; Ackroyd and Karlsson, "Critical Realism, Research Techniques, and Research Designs," 2014, 32.

### 4.3.2. Semi-structured Interviews

Contrary to most research on intelligence, interviews form the bulk of the data collection in this research. They are primarily used to discover normative expectations and interpretations. From a critical realist perspective, actors' accounts form the indispensable starting point for social inquiry as they give a way into the deeper layers of social reality.[43] Interviews are well-suited to do this. They provide a:

> *'Route for gaining access not only to the attitudes and emotions of informants but crucially to richly textured accounts of events, experiences, and underlying conditions or processes, which represent different facets of a complex and multi-layered social reality.'*[44]

For these qualities, interviews are a common instrument in social research. For example, interviews are considered the first choice in studying actors' perceptions of relationships in qualitative network analysis.[45] Yet, this is less the case in intelligence studies. Whereas it is suggested that 90 percent of all social science research uses interview data, a review of the journal of Intelligence and National Security shows that in the period 1986 to 2016 only 15 percent of the articles conducted and referred to interviews.[46] Despite the clear value this method of data collection has in obtaining first-hand accounts, there are limitations in its use. Interviewing in intelligence is a laborious endeavor. It is difficult to identify whom to interview, acquiring (formal) approval - let alone cooperation - is challenging, and there are constraints to transparency.

Interviews provide a data set that allows source triangulation. Using multiple sources facilitates a comprehensive understanding by accommodating multiple and possibly conflicting (subjective) perspectives and dispositions.[47] Ultimately, a total of 47 respondents agreed to do an interview for this study. Although this might seem a small sample compared to large-scale sociological studies using data surveys, it is more than sufficient for an in-depth examination of the EU case study (see also the remarks on transferability in subsection 4.5.2). The data set holds more than 65 hours of interviewing, on average one and a half hours of conversation for each occasion. Respondents come from 15 nationalities. Their countries of origin include both larger and smaller EU Member States, vary in date of accession, and are situated in various regions of the Union. More important than the size and diversity of these countries, is the sources of the data. They are all elite interviews conducted with respondents who are subject-matter experts on the practice of multilateral intelligence cooperation in the

43 Moore, "In-Depth Interviewing," 124; Van Puyvelde, "The Why, Who, and How of Using Qualitative Interviews to Research Intelligence Practices," 50.

44 Smith and Elger, "Critical Realism and Interviewing Subjects," 119.

45 Hollstein, "Qualitative Approaches," 411.

46 Van Puyvelde, "The Why, Who, and How of Using Qualitative Interviews to Research Intelligence Practices," 48.

47 Vincent and Wapshott, "Critical Realism and the Organizational Case Study," 2014, 148–49.

EU. Moreover, they are genuine insiders. Almost without exception they have worked or are working within intelligence structures on a mid-level position either in policy, production or management. When looking at the practices of EU intelligence cooperation from the inside, they are the only ones who can rightfully do so.

Although the aim of this case study does not favor a comparative approach with multiple subcases, the sets of interviewees represent what can be considered 'nested subunits' in the case. Interviews are roughly divided in two between practitioners working in national services and those who work in the EU intelligence organizations themselves. In practice this divide is not as black-and-white as it may seem. Many EU intelligence officers[48] come from national services and many national intelligence officers working on multilateral cooperation have served in either NATO or the EU (or both) at one point in their careers. In this set, respondents come from both the military and civilian intelligence organizations. For example, within the EU bureaucracy itself, interviews have been conducted with intelligence officers from both the EU military staff and the civilian intelligence center. All in all, the perspectives of the various officials interviewed hold the possibility to differ substantially in views held, as their positions involve different practical experiences and their differing roles might entail a different interpretation and articulation of their experiences.[49] A list of all participants in the interviews and interview reports are held by the researcher and are accessible to the supervisors.

The process of obtaining the interview data for this research was a lengthy one. This was not only due to the COVID pandemic that raged during the time. As will be reflected upon in the conclusion (subsection 9.3.1), only polite yet persistent efforts ultimately paid off to induce people to cooperate. First, identifying the potential interviewees and getting approval to do the interviews was hard. Although it was quickly decided to focus on those practitioners most expert in the interaction phase of EU cooperation, this does little to pinpoint them. Unlike in many other professions, in intelligence the identity of personnel is mostly regarded confidential and not shown to outsiders. This study showcases the assertion made by Van Puyvelde that it is one thing to identify potential interviewees and quite another 'getting them to reply to requests for interviews [...], especially if they are contacted out of the blue'.[50] Nevertheless, in the end a combination of direct and indirect formal requests to the home organizations paid off, in some cases without ever knowing the full names of the participants. Once formal approval was given and a trusted entry point facilitated the process, things went smoother and participants even suggested other respondees or reached out to them. Second, doing the interviews and processing them came with restrictions. The caveats

48 In this research, the term 'intelligence officer' refers to both civilian and military personnel working in intelligence organizations.

49 Smith and Elger, "Critical Realism and Interviewing Subjects," 120–22.

50 Van Puyvelde, "The Why, Who, and How of Using Qualitative Interviews to Research Intelligence Practices," 52.

needed to being able to do the interviews, of course have an effect on collection and analysis. Many of the interviews were done in person in the secure premises of the respondees. In addition, it was decided up-front to abstain from using a recording device. Regardless of the restricted area in which the interviews were held, using such a device would not have been helpful in putting the participants at ease. Being intelligence professionals, they are used to not disclose confidential or secret information, but most are not very accustomed with doing open interviews. Instead, the findings from interviews and observations were transcribed and commented on directly after the conversation or event, based on the preliminary notes made right away. As the research aims at sensing what might be 'actually' going on, these field notes include the researcher's own interpretations, for example valuing the exact words or terminology used, capturing the mood and describing the context.[51] All reports and the initial notes are stored in a case study database and are available to the supervisors of this study.

This research uses semi-structured interviews. In a critical realist approach, in-depth interviews will resemble guided conversations rather than tightly knit structured queries.[52] Nevertheless, contrary to purely inductive research, that conversation is 'theory-driven'; it involves addressing and discussing the relations of the conceptual framework on the basis of the experiences, attitudes and perceptions of the interviewees. It would be:

> *'Absurd to invest all of the time and money in conducting an interview study without knowing whether it had already been done, what were the main findings, and what remaining gaps [...] need to be addressed. [...] The questions are open ended to be sure, but they generally follow a logical order designed to create conversation, put respondents at ease, build trust, and importantly – focus the discussion on the researcher's questions, not just what the respondent feels like talking about.'*[53]

Although, as a consequence, the conceptual framework is part of the interview, semi-structured interviews explicitly leave room for unanticipated insights and additional topics that arise during the conversation.[54] In this research, respondents were specifically invited to reflect on how they frame their own situation. The initial questions merely opened the floor to the mechanism that the research was to address and were often sent up-front to reassure respondents and trigger their thought process. In practice, they were seldomly done in this order entirely, nor were they covered equally in all interviews. The open-ended questions allowed respondents to speak relatively freely about their interpretations and expectations. One respondent especially valued this method of data collection:

51 Moore, "In-Depth Interviewing," 126–27; Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 481–83.

52 Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 84, 118–21.

53 Deterding and Waters, "Flexible Coding of In-Depth Interviews," 714.

54 Thomas, *How to Do Your Case Study*, 206; Moore, "In-Depth Interviewing," 118, 120–21; Smith and Elger, "Critical Realism and Interviewing Subjects," 116–19, 127; Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 468.

> *'I appreciate not going through the interview questions [rigidly] and having a proper conversation. That will probably make it harder for you to deduct the data required. Yet, for me it has been a very nice way of going through that part of my career and reflect upon it'.*[55]

Indeed, the relatively free format made data analysis harder. In addition, it required flexibility from the researcher. To respond adequately to data presented and to exploit new insights right away, the researcher needed to prepare his questions thoroughly, leave room for adjustment and have a firm grasp of the issues being studied. Within the limits of anonymity, the respondents were also confronted with their peers' perceptions and beliefs and asked to react. It produced insight in contrasting accounts and enabled to ask more focused and meaningful questions along the way. This way the analysis already started in the collection phase, creating a 'rich dialogue with the evidence'.[56] The initial interview format used is presented in Appendix B.

## 4.4. Data Analysis: Iterative Reflection

### 4.4.1. Abductive Reasoning

Empirical data can provide important pieces of evidence on the practices of international intelligence cooperation. Especially when investigating the belief system that is part of these practices, collecting the interpretations, perceptions and experiences of the participants is essential. Yet, collecting data is not enough to gain a meaningful insight. Even when knowledge of reality is considered to be only provisional and partial, as is the case with critical realism, investigating it will require more than just asking participants their views. Analytical work is needed to connect 'what we experience, what actually happens, and the underlying mechanisms that shape the world'.[57] Like in a police investigation, important pieces of evidence might remain hidden to the separate witnesses. Moreover, it is how those pieces add up and relate that make up reality. In isolation they will tell only part of the story. No matter how fitting the case and no matter the expertise of the respondents - and they were selected exactly for these reasons -, they are unable to tell the whole story on their own. It is up to the researcher to connect the dots. Each data point found should be 'contextualized in relation to other sources of data, assessed in terms of their comparative adequacy and completeness, and on this basis used to test and develop explanatory theories'.[58] It enables

55 Interview 44

56 Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 82–83.

57 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 20–22, 181; Bhaskar, *A Realist Theory of Science*, 5–6, 20–28.

58 Smith and Elger, "Critical Realism and Interviewing Subjects," 120.

this research to surpass everyday experiences and events to attain a more general level of knowledge.[59]

In this research, abductive reasoning provides a path between empirical observations and theoretical logic. It combines the two most common ways of scientific inference in qualitative research, deduction and induction.[60] A deductive line of reasoning takes an existing theory and then tests the hypotheses that emerge from that theory. An inductive one works the other way around. It seeks to derive general theory from empirical observations. Abduction hangs in the middle, fitting theory and data together.[61] This logic uses empirical data 'from observations and interviews in tandem with theory identified, to produce the most plausible explanation of the mechanisms that caused the events'.[62] It fits critical realism well. In critical realism, what people see or experience of social reality is considered to be the outcome of a complex interplay between abstract generative mechanisms, subjective beliefs, human actions and context. [63] It is the researcher's task to reconstruct this interplay as a whole and uncover these hidden mechanisms. Abduction acknowledges this and encounters conceptual entities, processes and structures together with context. At the same time, it keeps them analytically separated. This facilitates redescribing the practices in a new and abstracted manner, one that explains the sequence of causation behind observed regularities.[64]

Abduction starts with a preconceived idea of the conceptual framework at work, and then - in the light of observations - begins an iterative process of theory matching that continues all along the research process. The tentative theory guides systematic data collection and data analysis, while its theoretical pluralism makes it more nuanced and capable of adjusting to variances.[65] In this manner, this research starts from the premises of social relations and trust as conceptual frame to better explain international intelligence cooperation. The ideas stemming from this frame are then examined within the practices of EU intelligence. By benchmarking the conditions for trust in the deviant case of the EU, an evaluation is conducted of their explanatory powers. Nevertheless, as the complexity of the case defies

59 Archer, "Realism in the Social Sciences," 198–99; Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 36–37, 149.

60 Thomas, *How to Do Your Case Study*, 75.

61 Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 38.

62 O'Mahoney and Vincent, "Critical Realism as an Empirical Project," 17; Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 111–12, 115.

63 Vincent and Wapshott, "Critical Realism and the Organizational Case Study," 2014, 152–55.

64 Marks and O'Mahoney, "Researching Identity: A Critical Realist Approach," 81; Vincent and Wapshott, "Critical Realism and the Organizational Case Study," 2014, 162, 164; Archer, "Addressing the Cultural System," 523, 529–30.

65 Kennedy, "The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Data Collection"; Thomas, *How to Do Your Case Study*, 77, 271; Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 36–37, 149; Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 197–181; Le Gall and Langley, "An Abductive Approach to Investigating Trust Development in Strategic Alliances," 37–38; O'Mahoney and Vincent, "Critical Realism as an Empirical Project," 19; Timmermans and Tavory, "Theory Construction in Qualitative Research," 169; Archer, "Realism in the Social Sciences," 198–99.

the linearity of decisive test situations, this does not elicit justified conclusions right away.[66] First, it requires an iterative process that goes up and forth between theory and empirical data to refine the concept of trust in light of intelligence practice. The various subjective interpretations and explanations for trust in EU intelligence will be compared, evaluated and possibly integrated. Second, it is needed to abstract and interrelate concepts further, going beyond more superficial and accidental circumstances. Abstracting the entities and processes found in EU intelligence to 'a higher level of integration, summing up the essential and decisive traits in the phenomena explored' and inferring their logic, sheds light on the more universal conditions for international intelligence cooperation.[67] These conceptual abstractions are used to recompose the conceptual framework, combining the explanatory power of the different mechanisms at work.[68]

Abductive reasoning can offer new and often unanticipated ways of seeing things; 'what was hitherto unobserved becomes the basis of new understanding'.[69] Its purpose is 'not to make truth statements about reality, but to elicit fresh understandings about patterned relationships.[70] Abduction not only uses formal logic, but more informal argumentation as well, inferring from practices in what world a phenomenon, like cooperative behavior, would thrive. It requires intuition, imagination, and creativity in order to see meanings and structures in the seemingly unambiguous and flat empirical reality'.[71] This research proceeds on the basis of interpretative inquiry, putting emphasis on the way ideas emerge from immersion into the situation. To properly understand the specific meaning of trust from the case of EU intelligence, it is essential to let the people involved speak themselves.[72] It serves:

> *'The analytical purpose of working through the combination of forces that provide a more adequate account of why this case does not do what we might expect, allowing abductive logic to be brought fully to bear'.*[73]

It involves a form of theorizing that carves out practices and arranges these along a storyline with a clear set of correlations between them.[74] However, there are few methodological rules

66 Bhaskar, *The Possibility of Naturalism*, 10.

67 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 37, 99–101, 117–19.

68 Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 394.

69 O'Mahoney and Vincent, "Critical Realism as an Empirical Project," 19; Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 115.

70 Suddaby, "From the Editors," 636.

71 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 113; Timmermans and Tavory, "Theory Construction in Qualitative Research," 170.

72 Thomas, *How to Do Your Case Study*, 232–34, 264–264.

73 Ackroyd and Karlsson, "Critical Realism, Research Techniques, and Research Designs," 2014, 25; Vincent and Wapshott, "Critical Realism and the Organizational Case Study," 2014, 157.

74 Cornelissen, "Preserving Theoretical Divergence in Management Research," 378–79.

for doing so.[75] For example, the work of Bourdieu on the logic of practice, offers 'relatively little in the way of an analytical toolbox for opening up and exploring [the] subjective side of the social world'.[76] In addition, critical realists 'may be fairly described as having a 'beg, borrow and steal' approach to research techniques'. Much depends on the researcher's own style of rigorous empirical thinking, along with the sufficient presentation of evidence and careful consideration of alternative interpretations. Nevertheless, there are some recurrent methods for data analysis.[77] This study borrows part of the systematic procedures applied in grounded theory.[78] It uses structured coding and conceptualizing to knowingly move away from only interpreting a specific case and produce more durable constructs.

### 4.4.2. Flexible Coding

Interpreting the voiced perceptions and beliefs from practitioners validates and refines the concept of trust in international intelligence cooperation. Yet, the interview reports coming from the open-ended semi-structured interviews produce a seemingly amorph body of data. As in all qualitative research, the 'trick is to find points of congruence and similarity' to guide the analysis.[79] Separating the data in identifiable parts enables a close examination of the relations between entities, processes and structures, 'excluding those which are believed to have no significant effect, in order to focus on those which do, and identify [differences between them]'.[80] This is usually done by some sort of constant comparison or grounded theory that helps elicit themes that capture the essence of the data. They become the building blocks of the report.

Identifying and interpreting important themes generally involves three subsequent phases of coding.[81] Corbin and Strauss use a methodology of 'open', 'axial' and 'selective' coding for progressing from tentative to more definite categories that make up the analytical narrative.[82] They approach the data in an inductive way; one that is 'grassroot-up'. Others like Gioia et al. similarly aggregate from 1st order (informant-centric) concepts, to 2nd order (researcher-centric) themes and aggregated dimensions. After step one they transition from an inductive to a more abductive form of research by engaging data and existing theory in

75 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 96, 101.

76 Crossley, "The Phenomenological Habitus and Its Construction," 98; Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice*, 2019.

77 Ackroyd and Karlsson, "Critical Realism, Research Techniques, and Research Designs," 2014, 21–23; Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 165.

78 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 148–49; Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 168–70.

79 Thomas, *How to Do Your Case Study*, 161, 224–30.

80 Herepath, "In the Loop," 872, 874; Archer, *Realist Social Theory: The Morphogenetic Approach*, 175–77.

81 Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis, "Grounded Theory Research," 2–5; Biaggi and Wa-Mbaleka, "Grounded Theory," 17–20.

82 Glaser and Strauss, "Discovery of Substantive Theory."

tandem. Yet, up to that moment they 'make a point of not knowing the literature in great detail'.[83] Miles and Huberman take a fully abductive approach. They use a 'provisional start list of codes [that] comes from the conceptual framework, [the] list of research questions, hypotheses, problem area, and or key variables that the researcher brings into the study'.[84] This research takes a similar abductive approach to coding.

The analysis in this research is based on flexible coding; a way to systematically index and categorize the data, while maintaining flexibility in analysis. It offers a three-step process to practically go about analyzing interview data.[85] The first step reduced the data obtained to more eligible pieces of information. All the interview reports were indexed, anchoring their content to the research protocol that is based on the conceptual framework. It earmarked the text into chunks that followed the five relations mentioned earlier, including rivalling explanations. In addition, in this phase already a division was made in levels of analysis. These index codes played an important role in already identifying some of the main themes that were focused upon later. The inverse of line-by-line coding, they:

> *'Represent large chunks of text, enabling data reduction and retrieval as the analyst proceeds through constructing and documenting their argument. Setting the data up this way allows subsequent rounds of reading to be more focused and analytic coding to be more reliable.'*[86]

Because the interviews were semi-structured and a natural conversation was pursued, the index codes were spread all over the interview reports. Labelling them enabled the researcher to systematically analyze them from there. The Computer Assisted Data Analysis Software NVIVO supported this and subsequent steps. It not only helped perform systematic analysis, but also entails the records of interview reports and data structures. As such it keeps an 'audit trail' that supports the credibility of this research.[87]

The second step involved analytical coding. Within the broad chunks identified in step one, all transcribed data from interviews and observations was examined sentence by sentence for frequently used words and phrases, asking what kind of factor they indicated (entity, process or structure). These were then grouped into categories; groups of codes that have some sort of commonality. As categories got generated, new data points were labelled into one of the existing categories or new categories were constituted. For example, phrases containing information on 'image' and 'standing' were eventually combined under the tag 'reputation'. Iterating between theory and data, preliminary categories and subcategories were then

83 Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, "Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research," 17–21.

84 Miles and Huberman A. Michael, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 58.

85 Deterding and Waters, "Flexible Coding of In-Depth Interviews," 710.

86 Deterding and Waters, 726.

87 Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 86; Crossley, "The Phenomenological Habitus and Its Construction," 94.

benchmarked with known concepts. Using multiple theories generated shades of grey, better suited for 'critical examination of the [complex] interconnections and distinctions between systemic forces and individual judgement and decision making'.[88] Data structures were altered many times until an order emerged that was able to capture the narrative of the respondents. During this process, theoretical memos kept track of categories, hypotheses, and emerging questions; providing a solid base for reporting.[89] The number of evaluative side notes and schematic visualizations were numerous.

In the third step, interpretive inquiry provided the backbone for the narrative. However appealing for engaging the research results and bolstering the quality of a study, ultimately indexing and coding the data are only a means 'to unpack the configurational, normative, and broader contextual conditions to which they relate'. Subsequently, the important themes must be teased out, all being 'neither manifest nor readily observable'.[90] This was a flexible process. It sought to discern patterns across categories and concepts, aiming to integrate them in a storyline. Quotes were noted on themes where respondents were particularly curt, pronounced or emotional. 'Playing' with the data obtained supported new insights. It involved 'putting information into different arrays', 'making data matrices of contrasting categories' and again 'varying the sequence in which the information is ordered'.[91] Every (sub)category was connected to other categories to discover significant relations and data matrices were used to evaluate these relations. For example, the new category of 'socialization' was combined with the preliminary category of 'categorization' to explain the differences in perceived coherence between respondents. A more detailed example of a data matrix is presented in Appendix C. It shows how, within the broad chunk of 'ability' at the macro-level, concepts of social network analysis are used to cluster codes into categories and explain the data obtained from respondents on familiarization. The result of this particular matrix is section 6.2 of this study. It was only during this third step of interpretive inquiry that attributes of the respondents were introduced to examine patterns of qualitative difference. It kept the final argument as close to the text as possible.[92] For example, again with regard to socialization and homogenization, the background of the respondents (military or civilian) was introduced to explain differences within themes. Flexible analysis again continued up to saturation; the point where further coding or enrichment of categories no longer seemed to offer new knowledge.[93]

88 Bean, "Organizational Culture and US Intelligence Affairs," 492; Gill and Phythian, *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, 31; Svendsen, "Contemporary Intelligence Innovation in Practice," 108; Vincent and Wapshott, "Critical Realism and the Organizational Case Study," 2014, 159.

89 Biaggi and Wa-Mbaleka, "Grounded Theory," 7–8; Glaser, *Theoretical Sensitivity: Advances in the Methodology of Grounded Theory*, 123.

90 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 143–44, 152–55, 159–60; Thomas, *How to Do Your Case Study*, 79; O'Mahoney and Vincent, "Critical Realism as an Empirical Project," 10.

91 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 140–41.

92 Deterding and Waters, "Flexible Coding of In-Depth Interviews," 729.

93 Rietjens, "Qualitative Data Analysis," 134–35; Moore, "In-Depth Interviewing," 122; Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 581–87; Biaggi and Wa-Mbaleka, "Grounded Theory," 17–19; Chun Tie, Birks, and Francis, "Grounded Theory Research," 4–6.

Interpretive inquiry enhances understanding by construing a familiar practice in a new way, making it 'difficult to revert to the old way of seeing'.[94] It rests for a large part on the scope and sophistication of the practical and theoretical background a researcher brings to the table.[95] Nevertheless, as there can be several 'believable' accounts of any aspect of social reality, an important test of credibility lies on the outside. This research tested its preliminary findings in two ways. First, among practitioners. The degree of recognition and acceptance of new insights there, was an indication of the quality of the interpretation.[96] It addressed the connection made between the inner world of ideas and the outer world of the observable events. It was discussed in the conversation-like interviews. Ideally, this conversation delivered a mutual element of discovery, bringing to light previously unseen aspects of the behavioral setting for researcher as well respondent.[97] This proved to be the case. An excellent example was one of the respondents in this study, who at the end of his interview remarked that he had:

> *'Enjoyed the interview. It had me look at well-known subject-matter in an entirely different way. I had never before considered it in this light. Highly interesting.'*[98]

In addition, the results of the research were held against five focus groups of practitioners not previously interviewed. For example, a seminar organized by the Intelligence College Europe on the topic of 'International Intelligence Cooperation' in June 2022 provided a platform to present the preliminary results to a broad audience of intelligence officers from 21 European countries. These events were generally held under Chatham House rules[99], but they provided positive feedback on the revised (and thus abstracted) conceptual frame. Nevertheless, the most important test of credibility lies in the scientific community itself. The feasibility of concepts in this research was tested in three conference presentations and published in the two leading intelligence journals. In addition, master students were asked to reflect on it during multiple lectures on international intelligence cooperation. More importantly, the narrative in the final report not only describes the outcome of the research, but tells the story behind it as well.[100] Being explicit in terms of perspectives, approaches and concepts used, the research results can be compared and discussed. It allows the debate to accumulate. Studying a complex phenomenon like international intelligence cooperation in

94 Ackroyd and Karlsson, "Critical Realism, Research Techniques, and Research Designs," 2014, 30.

95 Timmermans and Tavory, "Theory Construction in Qualitative Research," 173.

96 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 24–25; Armstrong, "Naturalistic Inquiry," 883; Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 43–44.

97 Smith and Elger, "Critical Realism and Interviewing Subjects," 117.

98 Interview 16

99 When a meeting is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed.

100 Marks and O'Mahoney, "Researching Identity: A Critical Realist Approach," 69–71, 75; Moore, "In-Depth Interviewing," 125; Armstrong, "Naturalistic Inquiry," 882; Birks et al., "A Thousand Words Paint a Picture: The Use of Storyline in Grounded Theory Research," 406–7.

such a structured manner will support what can increasingly be seen as a 'multidisciplinary dialog'.[101]

## 4.5. Quality Indicators

### 4.5.1. Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations hold a prominent place in this research. The study of a contemporary phenomenon within a real-world context entails a vulnerability for the organizations and people involved. It critically engages the meaning and significance they attach to entities in their direct surroundings. Opening up can have direct consequences for the respondents involved, it can impair their personal integrity or jeopardize their effectiveness. This bestows a special responsibility on the researcher.[102] In intelligence this responsibility is exacerbated by the fact that it is about preserving national security. Intelligence is a secretive business, and cooperation probably among the most sensitive activities within it. For example, articulating perceptions about partners could seriously jeopardize the social relations and trust that are the very subject of this study. It could be detrimental to cooperation. In this research, as desk research was mainly conducted on secondary sources and used for obtaining contextual information, it was especially the interviews and respondents that required careful consideration of ethical concerns. The open interviews sought normative information on beliefs and perceptions. In addition, they were conducted with respondents that in some cases were not very used to doing them.

This research uses informed consent and confidentiality to safeguard the positions of the participants and their relations.[103] Informed consent was ensured from all respondents in the study. Interviews were done on a voluntary basis and special care was taken to alert participants to the open nature of the study both in the initial request and at the start of the interview itself. Confidentiality was maintained throughout the process. It was agreed that the interview data could be used indiscriminately, but that the respondents had the right to consult their interview report or subsequent quotes if they wished to. In addition, it is ensured that they remain anonymous. Empirical evidence in this thesis cannot be related to persons, countries of origin or national intelligence services. When quoting specific respondents, the study only refers to their function and place in the system like 'an EU intelligence officer working in EUMS INT' or 'a national intelligence officer'. No classified data was incorporated in the study. To avoid sensitive information from reaching the thesis and to guard anonymity, quotes were occasionally 'paraphrased'. For example, instead of noting

101 Marrin, 'Evaluating Intelligence Theories', 486.

102 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 38.

103 Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 88; Moelker, "Being One of the Guys or the Fly on the Wall?," 113.

the nationality of the interviewee or his subject, a marking like [Country X] was inserted. In addition, the final drafts of chapters 5 to 8 were presented to two senior intelligence officers for a member check on sensitivities. They were not allowed to alter the analysis or text, but able to alert the researcher on remaining issues of confidentiality. They agreed that no such issues existed. Based on their recommendations, one quote was altered to further safeguard the identity of the respondent. Of course, the confidentiality and anonymity put extra strain on the way quality in this study was ensured.

Qualitative research designs, especially when applied to single cases, are subject to a number of common critiques. Among these are concerns abouts their subjectivity, the fact that they are difficult to replicate, problems of generalization and an apparent lack of transparency. These are 'perennial concerns among qualitative researchers'.[104] They stem from emphasizing intangible meaning, doing research in open systems, highlighting context and employing reflexivity. These concerns apply to this research as well. Although choices of design and methods are well thought over and serve the purpose of this study, it is important to also consider the negative implications they might have and possibly limit their effect. In many studies, these quality indicators are referred to as reliability, replication and validity. This research will use similar but different terms to discuss research quality. It approaches research quality in the way done by Lincoln and Guba.[105] Their approach of 'naturalistic inquiry' differs from critical realism and the study of practices in various ways, but offers a fitting perspective on research quality indicators. Natural inquiry seeks to 'understand the social world in which the researcher observes, describes, and interprets the experiences and actions of specific people and groups in societal and cultural context'. It involves the study of a single case, usually aimed at a self-identified group or community. In terms of quality indicators, it uses, amongst others, transferability, dependability and confirmability, and credibility.[106]

### 4.5.2. Scientific Rigor

A first indicator for scientific quality is transferability. Transferability, which parallels external validity, addresses to what extent the findings are applicable to other contexts. A common concern on qualitative research, and in particular on single deviant case studies like this one, is their apparent inability to generalize their findings.[107] As section 4.2 stated, single cases provide a solid base for the in-depth examination of a specific social phenomenon in

104 Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, "Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research," 15; Rietjens, "Qualitative Data Analysis," 130–31, 139–40; Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 398–99.

105 Lincoln and Guba, *Naturalistic Inquiry*; Whittemore, Chase, and Mandle, "Validity in Qualitative Research," 528–34.

106 Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 43–44; Armstrong, "Naturalistic Inquiry," 880–83.

107 Thomas, *How to Do Your Case Study*, 73–74.

a particular context. In addition, deviant cases are selected because their characteristics are thought to showcase the workings of this phenomenon more readily. Yet, by definition the empirical generalization of a single deviant case is indeed problematic since it is - by design - small and atypical. In the case of the EU intelligence system, it can - as one respondent remarked - lead to the idea that the 'EU does not qualify as intelligence proper, and therefore does not represent the dynamics of other arrangements'.[108] Yet, this misses the point. First, the point of a critical realist case study is 'is *not* to find a portion that shows the quality of the [empirical] whole'.[109] The EU intelligence system is not intended to be a perfect sample of the entire population; it is a deliberate selection aimed at providing insight in a specific object – in this case social relations and trust in international intelligence cooperation. When this object is identified in its full in this specifically selected case of intelligence cooperation, 'there is every reason to suppose that the same mechanism is operative in many places' albeit perhaps not with same manifestations or with the same outcome. Moreover, identifying it would disconfirm the deterministic proposition of rational calculations and control as being too narrow or one-sided.[110] Second, as noted in chapter 1, critical realism is skeptical about finding 'real' or universal laws. The generalizations sought in this study are about inferring the actual from the empirical. These generalizations about the object of study are more enduring - hold a higher transferability - than the subject of study. They do not focus on the mere empirical appearances of a mechanism, but rather on questions about 'why, to what extent and in which circumstances'.[111] The specificity of the case generates a detailed insight that helps validate and refine the conceptual framework behind the mechanism. It forms the basis of the abductive reasoning that was explicated in subsection 4.4.1. Ultimately, including new variables will de facto create a new benchmark model, making the deviant case now more typical.[112]

Next to transferability, dependability and conformability are important quality indicators as well. Dependability, which parallels reliability, asks whether the operations of a study can be repeated, and with the same results. Conformability questions if the researcher has allowed his or her values to intrude to a high degree. Both concerns are closely linked to the topic of positionality. This research assumes, as critical realists usually do, that complete detachment from the research subject is impossible.[113] Lacking the possibility of a laboratory setting and the use of experiments, understanding a phenomenon like intelligence cooperation is

108 National intelligence officer, conversation with author, July 2022.

109 Thomas, *How to Do Your Case Study*, 67.

110 Ackroyd and Karlsson, "Critical Realism, Research Techniques, and Research Designs," 2014, 24.

111 O'Mahoney and Vincent, "Critical Realism as an Empirical Project," 5, 18–19; Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 99, 160, 182. 187-189; Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 20; Moore, "In-Depth Interviewing," 126; Vincent and Wapshott, "Critical Realism and the Organizational Case Study," 2014, 149–50, 167; Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 384.

112 Seawright and Gerring, "Case Selection Techniques in Case Study Research," 302–3.

113 Ackroyd and Karlsson, "Critical Realism, Research Techniques, and Research Designs," 2014, 27.

always carried out in open systems where 'change is constant and, crucially, may take place in specific response to the actions of researchers'.[114] Even more so, this research follows the common notion that 'a committed position is appropriate for realists'.[115] Although its aim is not to change or influence the research subject, 'the ability to make value judgments is [...] not beyond [the researcher's] rightful scope'.[116] In addition, prior knowledge is extremely helpful when doing flexible, open ended data collection in a particular field like intelligence and when interpreting meaning.[117]

Given the role of positionality and subjectivity in critical realist case studies, dependability and confirmability are challenging. It is unlikely that another researcher will (be able to) replicate the research in the same way, even with the same data set, and there is always the risk of personal bias. Although in this study subjectivity is considered unavoidable, and to some degree even necessary to evaluate systems of beliefs and meaning, it must be apparent that personal values and dispositions, or theoretical inclinations, have not blatantly swayed the conduct of the research and its findings. A first way of doing this is to be transparent about the positionality of the researcher and the potential effect of biases. This study is conducted by a researcher with a background in the security domain, part of the Netherlands Defence Academy and a former army officer. A second way is to be transparent about scientific rigor. Although in a PhD-project supervisors have already audited all steps of the research trail, it will also allow readers to validate the proceedings and assess the degree to which theoretical inferences can be justified.[118]

Credibility, which parallels with construct and internal validity, involves assessing how believable the findings of a study are. It asks whether correct operational measures were identified for the concepts being studied and how relationships were determined. Credibility is a point of concern for any critical (case)study, as there are no fixed criteria from which it is possible to assess, in a definite way, the credibility of the interpretations and inferences so inherently linked to this type of research.[119] Gioia et al. are among those that were confronted with suspicion when trying to get a highly informative - but interpretive - ethnographic article into publication. They were challenged by reviewers:

114 Gill, "Toward a Theory of Intelligence. Workshop Report," 6; Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 32, 35; Vincent and Wapshott, "Critical Realism and the Organizational Case Study," 2014, 150.

115 Ackroyd and Karlsson, "Critical Realism, Research Techniques, and Research Designs," 2014, 27; Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 36.

116 O'Mahoney and Vincent, "Critical Realism as an Empirical Project," 12; Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 196–97; Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 82.

117 Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 86, 199–200; Armstrong, "Naturalistic Inquiry," 882.

118 Thomas, *How to Do Your Case Study*, 73; Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 18, 20, 43–44, 46; Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 383–85.

119 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 104.

*'Great story! Good writing! Incisive thinking! But how do we know you haven't just made up an interesting interpretation'* [120]

This research follows their lead when addressing these concerns. It uses a systematic approach to data collection and data analysis that enables to trace the line of reasoning and logic behind them.[121] One that exceeds most interpretative and reflexivist research. In data collection plausible (rival) explanations were included in a structured research protocol that formed the basis for subsequent interviews.[122] Interviews that were open-ended anyway, leaving sufficient room for alternative views and interpretations by the respondents. In data analysis, conclusions were not to be rushed, but based on a variety of sources, concepts and methods.[123] Coding schemes and data matrices were used to systematically process all relevant information. In addition, analysis encompassed triangulation to strengthen the argument. Although it proved difficult to apply method triangulation, focus groups were sought to complement the interviews that form the centerpiece of this study. In addition, multiple concepts from other disciplines are used to inform the iterative cycle of analysis and respondents from different national and organizational backgrounds are included. In reporting, the semantic explanation introduced in chapter 1 provides a chain of evidence that can easily be traced. Taken together these measures ensure scientific rigor and transparency.

120 Gioia, Corley, and Hamilton, "Seeking Qualitative Rigor in Inductive Research," 18.

121 Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 44–45.

122 Danermark et al., *Explaining Society: An Introduction to Critical Realism in the Social Sciences*, 122, 125–26; Yin, *Case Study Research and Applications; Design and Methods*, 168–74.

123 Bryman, *Social Research Methods*, 384, 386.

# Chapter 5

# Chapter 5: The EU Intelligence System

## Setting the Scene

### 5.1. Introduction

> *'There is no such thing as an EU intelligence system. I do not agree with the term. [...] They do not have the authority, the means or the procedures to do intelligence."*[1]

So far, the European Union and intelligence have not formed a particularly happy marriage. As the opening quote indicates, even speaking about an EU intelligence system sometimes creates controversy with national intelligence officers.[2] Although intelligence most certainly holds a place in the EU system and many national services have liaisons there, it can still be considered one of the least integrated functions of government in the EU-security domain. Even in response to the terrorist attacks on European soil from 2004 and 2006 onwards, EU policymakers found it hard to deliver on their promises of improved intelligence coordination, let alone sharing.[3] In the EU, national security remains a national competence and so does intelligence. It leaves the organization in the unrewarding position of having state-like institutions and tasks in the field of external action without possessing all the functions of government to support them. EU intelligence officers are asked to be 'the oil in the mechanism without having the resources to do so'.[4] For years, this was hardly a topic of debate, not even within the EU itself. Until 2002 the word 'intelligence' barely surfaced in EU policy documents and afterwards it was mostly limited to the field of police cooperation. The last 10 to 15 years this has changed.[5] Since 2009, a discussion has been evolving on the need for, and form of, the EU intelligence system.

Before examining the role of social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation in detail, from a perspective of practices it is imperative to address the system first.[6] It provides the context for trust perceptions in EU intelligence cooperation in two ways. First, the EU intelligence system and its evolution form (part of) the participants' socio-historical frame. The way intelligence officers think about conditions for successful EU intelligence

1 National intelligence officers, conversation with author, October 2021.

2 When this study uses 'intelligence officer', it refers to a government official working specifically in intelligence. It can both refer to a military and civilian respondent.

3 Bures, "Intelligence Sharing and the Fight against Terrorism in the EU"; Argomaniz, Bures, and Kaunert, "A Decade of EU Counter-Terrorism and Intelligence"; Bossong, "The Eu's Mature Counterterrorism Policy – a Critical Historical and Functional Assessment," 1–9, 18–20.

4 Interview 5

5 Gruszczak, *Intelligence Security in the European Union*, 4–12; Gruszczak and Rakowski, "The External Dimension of EU Intelligence Cooperation," 13.

6 Vincent and Wapshott, "Critical Realism and the Organizational Case Study," 2014, 159–60.

cooperation, cannot be separated from the events that have led to the EU intelligence system itself. Second, the system forms a functional frame for their decisions and actions. Actual events and choices are often a trade-off between behavioral preferences and real-life demands. The extent to which perceptions and beliefs materialize, even the degree to which they are consciously felt and articulated, is dependent on the circumstances at hand. The socio-historical and functional frames of the EU intelligence system form the stage for cooperative behavior among its participants, or the lack thereof. Without understanding these frames, it is impossible to properly position and understand voiced ideas and opinions.

The EU intelligence system and the difficulties surrounding it have become mainstream topics in the academic literature on international intelligence cooperation, as well as in policy documents and advisory reports on EU security. As shown in chapter 2, the evolution of this system has even been one of the incentives behind growing scholarly interest in international intelligence cooperation in the last two decades. Most of these publications focus on the increasing role of the EU as a geopolitical actor in the domain of defence and security and offer - mostly problematic – structuralist views on how this ambition is, or should be, supported by intelligence. Many of the arguments on this topic have been used, and used again, in a repetitive circle of advocates and opponents of EU intelligence integration.[7] However insightful, a general view on geopolitics, structures, and national resources offers little guidance to the practitioners working in the EU intelligence system or to an examination of their practices. To explain their beliefs and perceptions, it is necessary to be more specific about the system's challenges and the often-heard call for a strengthening of EU-intelligence. To observers outside the intelligence community, some of these specifics might seem like hanging flesh on the same skeleton. Yet, not mentioning them would risk obfuscating intelligence practices in the EU. As a liaison officer in Brussels remarked regarding the ongoing EU intelligence reform:

> *'These specifics [on EU intelligence] might only be of interest for the experts, the people I often call 'intelligence-connoisseurs'. Yet specifics matter. To not be getting them is to not properly understand what is taking place here.'*[8]

This chapter explores the EU intelligence system as a context for social relations and cooperative behavior. It sets the stage for discussing the trust perceptions of EU intelligence officers in chapters 6 to 8. For this purpose, it will scrutinize the functions, agencies, as well as capabilities of the system. Together they can provide a 'diagnostic insight and a better understanding of [the - in this case - entire EU] intelligence enterprise, as well as the of the

7 See for example: Nomikos, "European Intelligence Cooperation," 79–80; Nomikos, "European Union Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN): Next Stop to an Agency?"; Walsh, "Intelligence-Sharing in the European Union," 638–41.

8 National intelligence officer, conversation with author, June 2021.

individual agencies that comprise [it]'.[9] It will go beyond the EU organization and approach the EU intelligence system as an open system. One in which the EU intelligence organizations are connected with - and shaped by - 'flows of personnel, resources and information from outside'.[10] Section 5.2 first answers where the EU's growing need for intelligence products comes from. It depicts the intelligence function in the EU. What kind of intelligence does this concern and why does the EU need it in the first place? Second, section 5.3 answers what organizations and processes are built within the EU to fill these needs. It addresses the intelligence 'agencies' in place to perform this function. How have they developed over time? And what weaknesses do they have that apparently require strengthening? Finally, section 5.4 answers how ongoing intelligence reforms are transforming the EU intelligence system. It zooms in on the ongoing process of capability building. What is the role of integration in this process and how can this play out in practice? Answering these questions will not merely sketch the history, present and possible future of the EU intelligence system. It will show the tension between rising ambitions, evolving institutions, and limited competences in the field of external action. A tension that, given the ambitions of the EU in this domain, will only continue to grow in the decade to come. And one that forms the everyday reality of intelligence practitioners in the EU.

## 5.2. A Growing Need

### 5.2.1. The Drive for 'Strategic Autonomy' in External Action

> *'The European Union has always prided itself on its soft power – and it will keep doing so, because we are the best in this field. However, the idea that Europe is an exclusively "civilian power" does not do justice to an evolving reality. For Europe, soft and hard power go hand in hand.'*[11]

Next to countering terrorism, growing ambition in the fields of foreign policy and defence is one of the main drivers for the EU's increasing need for intelligence.[12] It is in this area of 'external action' that many believe the EU should become more strategically autonomous, being able to determine its own geopolitical course and reducing external dependencies vis a vis global and regional partners.[13] This ambition is nothing new. One could argue that it has been present ever since the first attempt for a European Defence Community (EDC), which

9 Warner, "Building a Theory of Intelligence Systems," 12.

10 Scott and Davis, *Organizations and Organizing: Rational, Natural and Open Systems Perspectives*, 87.

11 Council of the European Union, 10715/16 A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy Foreword by (then) High Representative Federica Mogherini.

12 Fägersten, "European Intelligence Cooperation," 2014, 103; Duke, "Intelligence, Security and Information Flows in CFSP," 604–12.

13 Council of the European Union, "14392/16 Implementation Plan on Security and Defence," 4; Council of the European Union, "14149/16 Council Conclusions on Implementing the EU Global Strategy in the Area of Security and Defence," 2; European Parliament. Directorate General for Parliamentary Research Services, "On the Path to 'strategic Autonomy'," 3.

was voted down in the French parliament in 1954, or from the inception of the European Political Cooperation (EPC) in 1973, which institutionalized the principle of consultation on all major questions of foreign policy. At the least, the ambition to bolster the EU's foreign and defence posture has been there since the Balkans crisis of the 1990's, when the EU was judged incapable of influencing events.[14] In any case, in recent years it again came to prominence due to a perceived demise of the liberal world order, increased instability at the EU's borders, and the apparent shift of US security priorities to Asia and elsewhere.[15]

The 2016 EU Global Strategy and the 2019 Strategic Agenda nurture the ambition of strategic autonomy and note its importance 'for Europe's ability to promote peace and security within and beyond its borders'.[16] These documents emphasize the importance of a powerful geopolitical stance in promoting the common cultural values of the EU, being liberal democracy, rule of law and human rights. In 2020 the President of the European Council even called it 'the aim of our generation'.[17] At the same time, it must be noted that strategic autonomy is not an uncontested concept in the EU. Member States differ on its exact meaning for national sovereignty, for capability building and for relations with important partner organizations like NATO.[18] This contestation has not halted development. The EU's drive for strategic autonomy in external action was cemented in the gradual growth of practical institutions and activity. The Russian invasion of the Ukraine on the 22nd of February 2022 and the subsequent outbreak of war at the EU's borders reinvigorated the discussion on the meaning of its strategic autonomy. Some scholars identify these events as the type of crisis that has accelerated the CFSP many times before, others even think it to be a watershed for true integration. Nevertheless, such a watershed has been announced more than once already and to little avail.[19]

On the political level, CFSP was already part of the political union right from its creation in 1993. Yet, it was only from 1999 onwards that institutions for this purpose were developed in earnest.[20] In that year Javier Solana was appointed to be the first High Representative (HR) in

14 Fiott, "Strategic Autonomy: Towards 'European Sovereignty' in Defence?," 1; Allen, "The Common Foreign and Security Policy," 643–47; Bindi, "European Union Foreign Policy: A Historical Overview," 18–19; Duke, "Intelligence, Security and Information Flows in CFSP," 604.

15 Molthof, Zandee, and Cretti, "Unpacking Open Strategic Autonomy"; Järvenpää, Major, and Sakkov, "European Strategic Autonomy"; Lippert et al., "European Strategic Autonomy"; Fiott, "Strategic Autonomy: Towards 'European Sovereignty' in Defence?"; Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken, "Europese veiligheid: tijd voor nieuwe stappen."

16 Council of the European Union, 10715/16 A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, 4, 9; European Council, "A New Strategic Agenda 2019-2024."

17 Strategic autonomy for Europe - the aim of our generation' - speech by President Charles Michel to the Bruegel think tank, 28 September 2020

18 Fiott, "Strategy and Interdependence," 4–5; Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken, "Europese veiligheid: tijd voor nieuwe stappen"; Borrell, "Why European Strategic Autonomy Matters."

19 Biscop, "European Defence," 5; Helwig, "EU Strategic Autonomy after the Russian Invasion of Ukraine," 8–9.

20 92/C 191 Treaty on the European Union; 97/C 340/01 Treaty of Amsterdam Amedning the Treaty on European Union, the Treaties establishing the European Communities and Certain Related Acts; Mengelberg, *Permanent Change?*, 128–29, 229.

this policy domain. He was immediately tasked with assisting the Council in implementing a common strategy on Russia, the first time for such an endeavor.[21] In the ten years that Solana held office CFSP matured, creating ever more institutions along the way. The adapted Treaty on the Europe Union (TEU), signed in Lisbon in 2007 and still in effect, laid the basis for the current EEAS. It approximates a combined Department for Foreign Affairs and Defence. It assists the HR in his tasks in foreign- and security policy, among which the 'political dialogue with third parties' and 'voicing the positions of the Union'.[22] Not surprisingly, since 2007 the HR has appeared in public more and more as a mouthpiece for the Member States, taking the stand on topics as diverse as stability in the Horn of Africa, Venezuelan local elections and the war in Ukraine.[23] In addition, within EEAS six regional (and one global) directorates pursue EU policy objectives around the world, supported by 144 EU delegations and offices positioned all over the world. Given the strong ambition as put forward in the Strategic Compass, the EU's recently adopted action plan for reinforcing its foreign and defence policy towards 2030, this picture is not likely to change in the coming years.

On the operational level of a common security and defence policy, a main component of CFSP, a similar ambition and evolution can be seen.[24] Already in 1950, the ill-fated Pleven plan proposed the creation 'of a European army tied to the political institutions of a united Europe', directed by a European Minister for Defence and endowed with a common budget.[25] Yet, it failed to be ratified and was replaced by the Western European Union (WEU), a military alliance that was subdued to NATO and remained largely dormant for much of the Cold War. It was not until 1998 that the desire resurfaced for a 'capacity for autonomous action, backed up by credible military forces, the means to decide to use them, and a readiness to do so'.[26] The gradual transfer of WEU organizations provided the EU with the latter, including a Military Committee, a Military Staff and even its own mutual defence clause.[27] That being said, in terms of the 'hard power' quoted at the beginning of this subsection, this has meant

21 Council of the European Union, "150/99 REV1 Presidency Conclusions - Cologne European Council 3 and 4 June 1999," 2, 26.

22 2016/C 202 Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 38 Title V, art. 27, 32, 42.

23 See for example the following blogs: Borrell, "Why the EU Has a Stake in the Stability of the Horn of Africa"; Borrell, "Share Venezuela Municipal and Regional Elections and the EU Electoral Observation Mission"; Borrell, "The War in Ukraine and Its Implications for the EU."

24 2016/C 202 Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union Title V, art. 28; Adviesraad Internationale Vraagstukken, "Europese veiligheid: tijd voor nieuwe stappen," 15.

25 Statement by René Pleven on the establishment of a European army (24 October 1950), accessed on https://www.cvce.eu/en/obj/statement_by_rene_pleven_on_the_establishment_of_a_european_army_24_october_1950-en-4a3f4499-daf1-44c1-b313-212b31cad878.html

26 "Joint Declaration on European Defence. Joint Declaration Issued at the British-French Summit, Saint-Malo, 3-4 December 1998."; Rohan, "The Western European Union: Institutional Politics between Alliance and Integration," 126.

27 2016/C 202 Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 39 Title V, art. 42(7). Although assessed of lesser practical value, its wording can be considered stronger than that of NATO's article 5 as it contains 'an obligation of aid and assistance' in the event of armed aggression against one of the Member States. See for example: Deen, Zandee, Stoetman, Uncharted and uncomfortable in European defence The EU's mutual assistance clause of Article 42(7), January 2022.

little so far. The EU Battlegroups that were conceived of in 1999 and became operational in 2007, so far have never been deployed due to 'issues relating to political will, usability, and financial solidarity'.[28] In terms of external military action the EU is still subordinate to, and largely dependent on its grand cousin NATO.[29] Moreover, the operational responsibility of the EU's command-and-control structure, euphemistically named not headquarters but 'military planning and conduct capability' (MPCC), long remained limited to 'non-executive' missions.[30] Nevertheless, since 2003 the EU has staged over 40 civil and military operations and missions on three continents, 13 of which are ongoing.[31] Perhaps more important for current-day intelligence officers in the EU, the recent Strategic Compass displays far greater operational ambition. It extends the authority of MPCC to 'executive' operations and it proposes developing an EU Rapid Deployment Capacity, consisting of up to 5,000 troops. In addition, it stipulates concrete actions countering threats in non-traditional areas like cyber and hybrid conflict. It is all part of what the current HR, Josep Borrell, depicts as 'Europe's geopolitical awakening'.[32] The EU has clearly set out to become the geopolitical force forementioned in the treaties, capable of using a combination of hard and soft power to achieve its aims.[33] Yet, all this ambition is inconceivable without proper intelligence support.

### 5.2.2. A Need for All-round and All-source Intelligence

> *'We will invest more in shared analysis to increase our situational awareness and strategic foresight, building on our Early Warning System and horizon scanning mechanism. We will strengthen our intelligence-based situational awareness...'*[34]

For the EU, autonomous action in external affairs requires (fore)knowledge to avoid acting 'blindfolded'. The general logic is clear; it is far easier to hit or push around someone when you are able to see him, or even better when you understand and anticipate his next move. It was probably this logic that convinced Solana to quickly muster some diplomats who were to provide him with basic information on foreign powers, after he assumed his position as

28 European External Action Service, "EU Battlegroups."

29 Menon, "Defense Policy," 588–89.

30 European External Action Service, "The Military Planning and Conduct Capability (MPCC)." A non-executive mission is an operation conducted to support a host nation with an advisory role only. It is often associated with 'soft power', contrasting 'hard power' in 'executive' missions that involves enforcement and the application of (military) force.

31 Situation May 2023; European External Action Service, "EU Missions and Operations Factsheet."

32 Borrell, "A Strategic Compass to Make Europe a Security Provider"; European External Action Service, "Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence," 9; Council of the European Union, "7371/22 A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence - For a European Union That Protects Its Citizens, Values and Interests and Contributes to International Peace and Security," 19.

33 2016/C 202 Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 38 Title V, art, 42.1.

34 Council of the European Union, "7371/22 A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence - For a European Union That Protects Its Citizens, Values and Interests and Contributes to International Peace and Security," 21.

HR in 1999.[35] Yet, this does not mean that intelligence is now a well-known concept in the EU. The quote above, stemming from the Strategic Compass, illustrates existing difficulties. In two sentences the terms 'situational awareness', 'strategic foresight', 'Early Warning System', 'horizon scanning', 'intelligence' and 'analysis' are all mentioned without clarifying their apparent (troublesome) causal relation, overlap or exact meaning. Elsewhere, the Strategic Compass couples the strategic intelligence function to operational 'Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance' (ISR) capabilities, seemingly missing the point that these are two different levels of (military) intelligence.[36] In other policy documents, intelligence functions are being discussed apparently without being recognized as such, like in the case of the ongoing debate on the role and design of the EU conflict Early Warning System (EWS) since 2014. Although EU intelligence organizations are identified as key stakeholders in the preparatory phase only, arguably all elements of EWS overlap with parts of the intelligence process.[37] The two communities seem profoundly separated and to have little knowledge of each other's workings.[38] To evaluate the design and functioning of the EU intelligence system, it is worthwhile to break away from this general policy speak and instead zoom in at the resulting intelligence needs of the EU. When looking at the products that are most likely needed, two distinctions are worth mentioning here, as they hold special relevance to the design of the EU intelligence system. It concerns distinction by purpose and source.

The EU organization appears to have developed an appetite when it comes to the purpose of intelligence. Based on its wide ambition, it requires all-round intelligence of all levels and types. Traditionally, strategic intelligence is needed to help EU-decisionmakers in Brussels in directing their policies. This is mainly about foreign intelligence for strategic foresight and strategic warning, which attaches meaning to the long-term developments in the surroundings of the EU and the threats and opportunities that these developments might hold. Yet, the recent ambition also necessitates more operational intelligence for taking practical decisions in hands-on activities that safeguard the physical and digital integrity of the EU. The planning and execution of missions requires military intelligence on foreign armed forces, hostile groups and (potential) theatres of operation. Although the formal intelligence requirements of the EU are not known to the public, they will probably include acquiring and assessing tactical information on economic, social and infrastructural aspects of a wide area of countries. In addition, the operational 'toolboxes' that are being developed for 'hybrid', 'cyber' and 'foreign information manipulation and interference' will probably increase the need for a (continuous) identification, analysis, and attribution of threats in

35 Secretary General /HR Council of the European Union, "SN 4546/1/01 Report By The Secretary General/High Representative To The Council On Intelligence Cooperation"; Rüter, *European External Intelligence Co-Operation*, 17.

36 Council of the European Union, "7371/22 A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence - For a European Union That Protects Its Citizens, Values and Interests and Contributes to International Peace and Security," 14, 31, 37.

37 European External Action Service, "Factsheet Early Warning System"; European Commission, Joint Staff Working Document Early Warning System: Objectives, Process and Guidance for Implementation - 2020; EEAS, "Factsheet EU Conflict Early Warning System."

38 Conversation with EU and national Early Warning Early Action policy officers, April 2021.

these areas.[39] Besides that this concerns very detailed intelligence, there is a strong technical element there as well. Features that for the EU were previously seen in counterterrorism and police cooperation only. In addition, from the recently delivered Strategic Compass it becomes clear that the EU desires to take an even broader view on the world; there is a wide breadth of perceived security threats that are thought of as relevant. Next to more traditional threats like military aggression, terrorism, and (digital) interference, there is an interest in analyzing and monitoring the security implications of increasing water- and food scarcity, climate change, (uneven) distribution of new energy resources, and migration.[40]

The EU organization will probably also need intelligence from a variety of sources. The detailed tasks described in the ambition documents require intelligence of all origins. In recent years, the digitalization of society has brought 'open-source intelligence' (OSINT), derived from publicly available information, to prominence.[41] The idea that every individual can be an intelligence officer triggers the imagination.[42] Never ever has it been so easy to collect, process and distribute information. Moreover, OSINT is often seen as least intrusive to the rights of national citizens and does not seem to involve extensive special legal authorization or mandate. It is often stated that 80 to 96 percent of all intelligence products can be based on OSINT, although it remains blurry where this estimation is based on.[43] It has even been suggested that the EU can provide in its own intelligence requirements by only bolstering its OSINT capabilities.[44] Yet, notwithstanding its importance, OSINT alone will not do for adequate strategic and operational intelligence support. Intelligence services still derive much of their added value from producing 'all-source intelligence', including information from closed or shielded sources and the same will be true for EU intelligence organizations.[45] This will be especially true when engaging in action that requires detailed and technical intelligence, often provided by 'signals intelligence' (SIGINT) and 'human intelligence' (HUMINT). In any case, a combination of sources is best suited in enabling the 'strategic understanding' that the EU wishes for. In the first years after the establishment of EEAS, an increasing number of intelligence customers and an increasing demand for intelligence led to a 40% annual grow in support in 'the whole range of all-source intelligence products'.[46] As

39 Council of the European Union, "7371/22 A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence - For a European Union That Protects Its Citizens, Values and Interests and Contributes to International Peace and Security," 27–28.

40 EEAS Press Team, "Memo; Questions and Answers - Threat Analysis," 2–3.

41 This is not the same as 'not-secret'. It would be misleading to assume that only intelligence from closed sources is secret intelligence. Besides the source of the information, there could be other reasons to keep the resulting intelligence secret. One of them is to shield its purpose. See for example:

42 Willasey-Wilsey, "We Are Bellingcat," 1461–62; Graaff, "Intelligence Services and the Power of the Individual."

43 The reappearance of these two exact numbers time and time again without reference gives room to think that they are simply circularly reproduced. Moreover, it is not clear whether this percentage refers to quantity or quality of products.

44 Cross, "The European Space and Intelligence Networks," 224, 227; Davis Cross, "The Merits of Informality: The European Transgovernmental Intelligence Network," 242–43.

45 Miller, "Open Source Intelligence (OSINT)," 703–4, 717; Hribar, Podbregar, and Ivanuša, "OSINT," 532–33.

46 Kozlowski and Palacios, "Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC) - A Part of the EU Comprehensive Approach," 11.

the EU has little (collection) capabilities and mandates of its own, the increasing need for all-round and all-source intelligence will automatically increase the pressure on Member State services and on the EU intelligence organizations.

## 5.3. The Vulnerable Organization(s) of EU Intelligence

### 5.3.1. Weak Structures

The nucleus of the EU intelligence system is formed by the military intelligence directorate within the military staff (EUMS INT) and the civilian intelligence and situation center (INTCEN).[47] These organizations are jointly situated in Brussels, some distance away from the main building of EEAS of which they are an integral part. Behind the closed doors and security checks that underline their role as the EU's single-entry points for classified intelligence from the Member States, the two directorates hold office. They perform the exclusive intelligence function for the EU and are part of an Intelligence Support Architecture (ISA) that was designed simultaneously with EEAS. By origin INTCEN and EUMS INT only did strategic intelligence, but both have evolved over time to include more and more operational intelligence as well. The civilian INTCEN is probably the most well-known of the two, reporting directly to the HR. It is fed mainly by civilian intelligence organizations from the Member States. INTCEN delivers a wide set of intelligence products ranging from long-term strategic intelligence assessments and thematic reports, to specific threat assessments for EU personnel in civilian missions and delegations. It provides operational support to the Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability (CPCC) and (once again) includes a situation room or 'watch' that monitors current events mainly by OSINT. EUMS INT is less frequently mentioned in publications and reports, often forgotten even. Its foremost task is to support the operational functions of the Military Staff, including the MPCC. Although, like INTCEN, EUMS INT is a directorate of EEAS, it is also part of the Military Staff headed by a Director-General in the rank of Lieutenant General. As a consequence, organizationally it stands at greater distance to the HR and the commission than INTCEN does. Nevertheless, for these strategic levels EUMS INT is the source of the EU's military expertise in the field of intelligence. Its primary sources of intelligence are the defence intelligence organizations from the Member States.

47 Aldrich, "Intelligence and the European Union," 630–31.

A visualization of the EU intelligence system and a list of its main abbreviations is depicted below in figures 10 and 11.

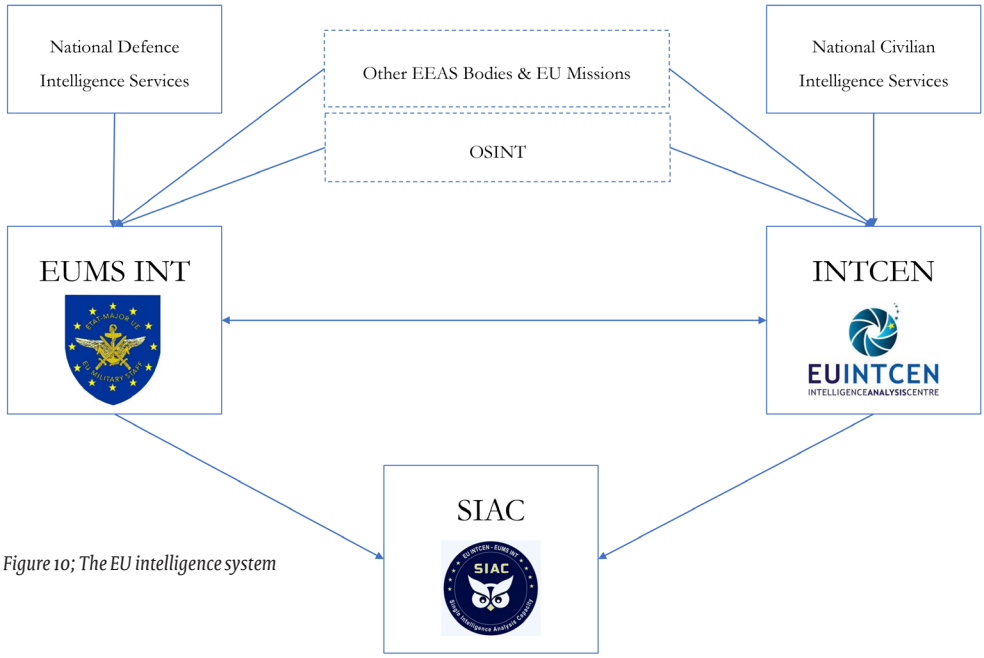


*Figure 10; The EU intelligence system*

| | |
|---|---|
| CFSP | Common Foreign and Security Policy |
| CPCC | Civilian Planning and Conduct Capability |
| CSDP | Common Security and Defence Policy |
| EEAS | European External Action Service |
| EUMS INT | European Union Military Staff - Intelligence Directorate |
| EUROPOL | European Police Office (since 2017 officially the 'EU Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation') |
| EU SATCEN | European Union Satellite Centre |
| HR | High Representative |
| INTCEN | Intelligence Centre |
| MPCC | Military Planning and Conduct Capability |
| SIAC | Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity |
| SNE | Seconded National Expert |
| TEU | Treaty on European Union (Treaty of Lisbon) |
| WEU | Western European Union |

*Figure 11; Main abbreviations relating to the EU intelligence system*

The structures of INTCEN and EUMS INT are of modest size.[48] Despite a steady increase in personnel since 2001, their combined strength is still only a fraction of whatever national service in Europe. Exact numbers are currently unknown (to the public), but based on earlier official figures and secondary sources INTCEN is estimated to employ somewhere around 150 people. By comparison, the German Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND) has approximately 6500 employees.[49] INTCEN has two divisions; one for Support and Open Sources Research, and another for Intelligence Analysis and Reporting. The latter has a regional and a thematical analysis desk. EUMS INT is even smaller. It is around half INTCEN's manpower, mostly military officers and all seconded from the Member States.[50] They are divided over a Policy, a Production and a Support Branch. So, in both organizations a number of people are working outside intelligence analysis. Moreover, numbers do not tell the whole story. First, not all Member States contribute with personnel and not all are points of contact for their national intelligence services, limiting the personal and technical connections to civilian and defence intelligence organizations. Second, not all the personnel sent are intelligence officers and not all of them are analysts by trade. For example, the workforce of INTCEN compiles of three types; Seconded National Experts (SNEs) coming from the national intelligence services, temporary agents from the Member States in general and permanent EU officials. The last form the majority of the INTCEN staff.[51]

INTCEN and EUMS INT are sometimes seen to form an intelligence community together with two other EU structures; the European Police Office (EUROPOL; since 2017 officially the 'EU Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation') and the EU Satellite Centre (EU SATCEN).[52] Yet, EUROPOL is primarily a police organization that supports the Member States in their fight against serious and organized crime. Although intelligence analysis is at the core of its activities, including cyber and terrorism, EUROPOL has little role in external action.[53] As stated in chapter one, criminal intelligence will not be part of this study. EU SATCEN on the other hand is a prime example of 'what strategic autonomy means in Europe', providing 'credibility about the role of the EU as a strong actor in international relations'.[54] This former WEU organization has access to military satellite capabilities of France, Italy and Germany, but is now also a key player in Copernicus, the European Union's civilian controlled Earth Observation program.[55] EU SATCEN embodies one of the rare collection capabilities in the

48 Seyfried, "Ein Europäischer Nachrichtendienst? Möglichkeiten Und Grenzen Nachrichten- Dienstlicher Kooperation Auf EU-Ebene," 2.

49 Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND), "Unsere Organisation Sechs Bereiche – Ein Auftrag."

50 Impetus 28, 30.

51 In 2009 their share of the total INTCEN workforce was 70%. Source: E-5998/09.

52 See for example: Gruszczak, *Intelligence Security in the European Union*, 11, 52–54.

53 Hertzberger, "Counterterrorism Intelligence Cooperation in the EU," 73–74.

54 H.E. Arancha González Laya, Spanish Minister for Foreign Affairs, 7 July 2021, visit to SATCEN; in annual report 2021.

55 Molard, "How the WEU Satellite Centre Could Help in the Development of a European Intelligence Policy"; European Commission, "Copernicus Service to EU External Action; Product Portfolio."

Union. Yet its role in supporting CFSP goes beyond the mere provision of satellite imagery; its credo being 'analysis for decision-making'. Its imagery analysts and geospatial specialists 'describe, assess, and visually depict physical features and geographically referenced activities around the globe'.[56] In the period 2014 to 2019 it delivered almost nine thousand products to its users, doubling or even tripling annual production rates. Using maps and imagery, its integrated approach compounds a form of all-round and all-source intelligence. Nevertheless, although INTCEN and EUMS INT are still considered main users, EU SATCEN seems to move away from this intelligence core. It increasingly supports EU policy making in non-security domains like emergency response, public health and transportation joining a vast array of EU agencies preoccupied with information support.[57]

There are a great many other EU structures that build knowledge on issues relevant for EU external action. These institutions are seldomly mentioned as being part of a 'wider' EU intelligence system and most of them would not define themselves in that manner either. First there are the diplomatic desks and special representatives in EEAS itself, working on diverse regional and thematic topics such as space, counterterrorism, migration, and Russia. In addition, outside EEAS there are various decentralized agencies that analyze security information for decision-making support. One example is the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (FRONTEX) that collects and analyses a wide range of data from Member States, EU bodies, partner countries and organizations, as well as from open sources on the situation at and beyond Europe's borders. It aims to create a strategic and operational understanding of the key factors influencing and driving that situation. Another example is the European Union Institute for Security Studies (EUISS), a dedicated think-tank that analyses foreign, security and defence policy issues. Its core mission is to assist in the implementation of CFSP, including the CSDP as well as other external action of the Union. For this it uses a variety of analytical tools including horizon scanning, foresight and trend analysis, like the 'Global Trends to 2030' report. There are many more examples. Their multitude must not be considered a strength *a priori*. Ikani and Meyer studied two cases of strategic surprise in the EU; the Arab uprisings in Tunisia, as well as its early spread to Egypt in January 2011, and the Ukraine crisis that ultimately led to the Russian annexation of the Crimea in 2014. Their research shows that:

> *'In the EU system, intelligence originates from many different quarters, comes in different formats, perspectives and conclusions without a single authoritative body available to aggregate, compare and analyze and communicate it to the senior leadership.'*[58]

56 European Union Satellite Centre, "SatCen Leaflet"; European Union Satellite Centre., "SatCen."

57 European External Action Service, "HR(2019) 96 Report of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy to the Council on the Functioning of the EU Satellite Centre (2014-2019)," 2.

58 Ikani and Meyer, "The Underlying Causes of Strategic Surprise in EU Foreign Policy," 282.

Neither of the EU intelligence organizations is in a position to coordinate or streamline production and achieve synergy. It feeds the idea that the EU suffers from fragmented organizational structures.

### 5.3.2. A Case of Voluntary Multilateral Cooperation

The EU has a compelling case for intelligence support in external action. As a function of government, intelligence is meant to support decisionmakers in their tasks, and the tasks in EU external action are clear and ambitious. In a national setting this would imply a strong 'producer-consumer relation' with one or more intelligence services to fulfill the priority intelligence requirements. Yet, the EU is not a state. Although over the years the organization has become involved in ever more policy areas, in some cases almost having supranational powers, formally the EU is not even a (con)federation of states. Like any intergovernmental organization its authority is based on what the sovereign Member States have transferred to her by treaties. These formal competences are not equally binding for all policy areas.[59] In the domain of foreign affairs and security they are actually very limited. Contrary to, for example, the communitarian policy for the internal market, 'national security remains the sole responsibility of each Member State'.[60] For external action this leaves the EU in the unrewarding position of having state-like institutions and tasks, without possessing all functions of government to support them.

The lack of supranational powers in the field of national security makes intelligence support to the EU a form of multilateral cooperation by definition. It is based on solidarity, voluntary contributions of Member States and perhaps their wish to cooperate more in depth for a specific purpose or for a limited period of time. By the same multilateralism, the EU becomes susceptible to the inherent weaknesses of such an arrangement as discussed in chapter 3.[61] First, the cost is relatively high, at least for information sharing. Even when national services only contribute with existing products, they still have to dedicate valuable resources to translate, sanitize, and communicate these products to the wider EU community. Products that, when broken to pieces or shared selectively instead, could have been a bargaining chip in a multitude of bilateral relations. Cooperation in the EU is burdensome. Second, in this 'burden sharing' there is little way of knowing whether all partners are contributing equally. This information is not shared broadly. In the setting of the EU, it is extremely easy to use the contributions of others while not delivering yourself, so called 'freeriding'. One respondent

59 S. Weatherill, 'The Constitutional Context of (Ever-Wider) Policy-Making', in: E. Jones (red.), The Oxford Handbook of the European Union (Oxford, 2013) 570–74.

60 2016/C 202 Consolidated versions of the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 18 Title I, art. 4(2).

61 Gruszczak, *Intelligence Security in the European Union*, 137, 157; Rüter, *European External Intelligence Co-Operation*, 25–29; Politi, "Why Is European Intelligence Policy Necessary?"

even argues that 'the system encourages to behave opportunistically as all can benefit and put in RFI's [...], while not providing any intelligence themselves'.[62] In any case, the voluntary nature of national contributions gives room for restraint and can easily lead to non-commitment. Third, intelligence sharing within the EU is risky. With so many Member States and organizations involved, there seems to be a substantial chance that through one of them the intelligence provided ends up in the wrong place or is used differently than agreed. In this matter there is also concern among national services about issues within the EU regarding secure means of communication and processes, such as how the required security clearances for recipients of intelligence within the organization are determined and checked.[63] All in all, intelligence cooperation within the EU appears to be predominantly costly and makes national services vulnerable in the process. The formal system of sharing everything with all creates difficulties for intelligence services, who are reluctant to 'participate in such a supermarket of cooperation'.[64]

The EU intelligence organizations have little to put in the balance. They seem too weakly institutionalized to meet the inherent difficulties of multilateral intelligence cooperation.[65] This weakness is hardly surprising. As an EU intelligence officer illustrates:

> *'You see an organization that can take years for deciding how bended a cucumber is allowed to be. Let alone the big issues. [...] Intelligence is years behind on the cucumber case."*[66]

Intelligence is still a relatively young concept within the EU. The EU only acquired its own intelligence capability in the field of security and defence with the gradual integration of the military WEU from 1999 onward, and the civilian Policy Planning and Early Warning Unit and Situation Centre established in the General Secretariat in the same period.[67] The functions and legal basis of the current EUMS INT and INTCEN[68] still bear a strong resemblance to the structures of that time.[69] Like in the early days of EU intelligence, both organizations still combine only a limited analytical capacity, supported by national services, with situational awareness from open sources and proprietary information. None of them possess special

62 Interview 2

63 Gruszczak, *Intelligence Security in the European Union*, 137.

64 Interview 5

65 Cross, "A European Transgovernmental Intelligence Network and the Role of IntCen," 391; Aldrich, "Intelligence and the European Union," 629.

66 Interview 32

67 Oberson, "Intelligence Cooperation in Europe: The WEU Intelligence Section and Situation Centre."

68 As if to illustrate the weak institutionalization of intelligence in the EU, in official documents there is no consensus of what the name INTCEN stands for. The acronym is being translated into Intelligence and Analysis Centre, Intelligence and Situation Centre, or simply Intelligence Centre. For this thesis the latter was chosen as it is the most unambiguous.

69 Salmi, "Multilateral Intelligence Cooperation in the EU"; Minister van Veiligheid en Justitie, Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken, and Minister van Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties, BLG639751 Bijlage Kamerbrief CT bevoegdheids-, taak en rolverdeling Europese Unie - Lidstaat, 2.

powers for the collection of data and information.[70] In comparison to their national equivalents, EU intelligence organizations:

> *'Have 'clipped wings'. [...] In principle, EU intelligence agencies are pure 'desk-agencies' that work with 'pen and paper'. The popular image of shady spies that operate under cover abroad, and agents with special license to protect the state with unorthodox means, makes the staff of EU intelligence agencies appear as ordinary bureaucrats.'*[71]

As bureaucrats, their position can even be seen to have weakened; moving away from the European Council to being a subordinate directorate of EEAS.

The fact that INTCEN and EUMS INT are mere bureaucratic subcontractors of EEAS limits their leeway among other EU organizations dealing in policy-relevant knowledge; and their visibility remains rather low.[72] By the same merits, their inability to claim a central role on the inside of the EU weakens their position on the outside *vis-a-vis* the national intelligence services. As will be seen in the next chapters, it lowers their standing within the European intelligence community and limits their role within it. Somewhat cynically, the very community that is most resentful of the EU intelligence organizations trying to become more like intelligence services, reproaches them for not being able to deliver the added value that only an intelligence service can provide. However, two caveats are in order with regard to this meek image. First, both institutions have made great strides in both size and expertise in recent years.[73] In doing so, military and civilian intelligence support for EU decision-makers has been increasingly integrated and the distinction between domestic and foreign security has been abandoned. Second, although INTCEN nor EUMS INT are comparable to national intelligence services, neither was meant to. They are intelligence hubs that enable the EU to benefit from the existing patchwork of formal and informal partnerships and intelligence flows surrounding the organization.[74] Already in 2009 various high-level EU representatives involved in intelligence cooperation claimed that the organization had been making 'remarkable progress' there, both with regard to Member State participation and between the EU organizations themselves.[75] And the project of strengthening EU intelligence system is ongoing.

70 Wills and Vermeulen, "Parliamentary Oversight of Security and Intelligence Agencies in The European Union," 54–57.

71 Müller-Wille, "Improving the Democratic Accountability of EU Intelligence," 110.

72 Palacios, "On the Road to a European Intelligence Agency?," 489.

73 Fägersten, *For EU Eyes Only?*, 1–2; Rüter, *European External Intelligence Co-Operation*, 1; Wetzling, "The Democratic Control of Intergovernmental Intelligence Cooperation," 39.

74 Labasque, "The Merits of Informality in Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation."

75 Todd and Remouchamps, "Could Europe Do Better on Pooling Intelligence?," 5–9.

## 5.4. Strengthening the EU Intelligence system

### 5.4.1. Building on a European Intelligence Patchwork

> *We will strengthen our intelligence-based situational awareness and relevant EU capacities [...]. This will also bring us closer to a common strategic culture and contribute to the EU's credibility as a strategic actor.*"[76]

Integration is a core characteristic of the EU. Bringing states, their organizations and activities together offers economy of scale and synergy. This is no different in EU intelligence. However, it is unrealistic to assume that integration in the field of EU intelligence will proceed faster than that in the domain of (national) security it is intended to support. In response to the first version of the Strategic Compass, many Member States, including the Netherlands, felt that 'it had struck a good balance between ambition and realism'.[77] It is unclear what was meant exactly by 'realism', but it is likely that this refers to the limits posed by national sovereignty and the unwillingness to transfer more powers to European institutions in the short term. One respondent argues that it is in this realm that Member States:

> *'Are the least willing to give away their national sovereignty. Not only is national security at the heart of the national government function, no one wants to be vulnerable and dependent when it comes to matters of life and death. [...] When a [national soldier] gets killed in action during an EU mission, there is no politician who can state that he is not responsible for the decisions for, and support to, this mission. You cannot simply say that you were against it in the European Council, that you were overruled, and that the EU is the one to blame for any flaws in their security.*"[78]

Caution is certainly in order with regard to the possibilities of developing the EU intelligence system.

Intelligence is perhaps the most sensitive, and therefore the most difficult area of EU security cooperation. This is especially the case with threats that are strongly intertwined with internal security. Here, the paradox exists that in order to protect the fundamental rights of citizens, the rights of those same citizens are sometimes infringed upon. Although the EU has a big and increasing say in the fundamental rights of EU citizens and their protection, like on privacy issues, intelligence intrusions into these rights are still an exclusively national affair. For this reason alone, it is unlikely that anything like a 'European intelligence service' will

76 Council of the European Union, "7371/22 A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence - For a European Union That Protects Its Citizens, Values and Interests and Contributes to International Peace and Security," 33.

77 Minister van Buitenlandse Zaken H.P.M. Knapen, Verslag van de Raad van Buitenlandse Zaken 15 November 2021.

78 Interview 13

emerge in the short term, a recurring theme in the discussion on EU intelligence.[79] It is also questionable which problem this 'European CIA'[80] would solve (and which it would create). Apart from practical and legal challenges, the creation of a central European intelligence service offers above all an additional imperfect player in an already fragmented landscape. It could even reinforce the existing perception of competition and rivalry between Member State intelligence services, and thus hinder rather than help intelligence cooperation in and for the EU.[81] In the past, 'unlike politicians and scholars, EU intelligence practitioners have been almost unanimous in their opposition to the creation of any kind of European intelligence agency'.[82] In similar fashion, from the moment a proposed Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat within the United Nations 'was referred to as a 'CIA for the UN' it was dead'.[83]

The strength - and weakness - of the EU intelligence system lies not so much in its own capacity, but in the broad and diverse transnational network it can benefit from. INTCEN and EUMS INT receive the bulk of their intelligence from the Member State intelligence services. These services come in many shapes and sizes, exceeding the simple divide between defence and civilian intelligence organizations used in the EU. Most of the 27 EU Member States have multiple services, and not two of those countries have organized them in similar fashion in terms of governance, mandate, workforce and tasking. The diversity of the services in this network will be elaborated on in chapter 6. These services together have spun a complex web of operational connections. They cooperate bilaterally, in tailor-made plurilateral clubs for certain areas of interest or for specific collection activities, or in the multilateral NATO alliance. The link these arrangements have with the EU varies as much as their format and composition. However, together they create a patchwork of formal and informal connections through which intelligence can reach the EU. For example, CTG is closely related to the EU, but definitely not part of it. Some of its members (Norway, Switzerland and the UK) even come from outside and the EU is kept at a distance.[84] Nevertheless, it shares relevant intelligence with the EU. Moreover, the EU has an observer status. Although the EU cannot command its needs upon this transnational network, it is seen to contribute heavily to collective security in Europe. Practitioners have therefore argued that strengthening the (formal) EU intelligence system should take place without jeopardizing its flexibility and effectiveness.[85]

79 Palacios, "On the Road to a European Intelligence Agency?," 483, 489–90; Bossong, "Intelligence Support for EU Security Policy," 1, 7.

80 Some authors also refer to a 'European FBI' when proposing a European intelligence service for external action, apparently not realizing that the FBI is primarily a law enforcement agency, more like the already existing EUROPOL.

81 Fägersten, *For EU Eyes Only?*, 3–4.

82 Palacios, "On the Road to a European Intelligence Agency?," 485–86.

83 Chesterman, *Shared Secrets*, 16.

84 Bossong, "The EU's Mature Counterterrorism Policy – a Critical Historical and Functional Assessment," 19; Minister Plasterk (Binnenlandse Zaken en Koninkrijksrelaties), Vragen gesteld door de leden der Kamer, met de daarop door de regering gegeven antwoorden.

85 Aldrich, "Intelligence and the European Union," 632.

As Politi already noted in 1998, strengthening European intelligence 'need not be a highly formalized and institutionalized affair'.[86] It is - as chapter 7 will show - a highly informal affair. Some scholars even suggest that functional integration into a transgovernmental EU intelligence network is already underway, even despite Member States' resistance against formal cooperation in the EU.[87]

As seen in the quote at the beginning of this section, the recent Strategic Compass names the strengthening of intelligence as a critical enabler for EU credibility in the international arena. Yet, so did the Global Strategy that was presented five years earlier and the first European Security Strategy in 2003.[88] It is doubtful that any attempt for increased formal control by the EU over the national intelligence services' activities and priorities will now be more successful than it was before. Likewise, there is little chance for the hierarchical merging of capacity into a central European intelligence service. It is inconsistent with Member States' exclusive competence over their own security and clashes with the prevailing intelligence culture. Forms of vertical integration are highly unlikely, at least in the short term.[89] Yet, organizational integration can take another form as well. The Strategic Compass hints on a functional strengthening of the EU intelligence system by measures that can be labelled as horizontal integration. Horizontal integration brings people and units within an organization closer together by promoting direct (mutual) interaction.[90] In this way it is possible to take full advantage of a diversified network without limiting the autonomy of the relevant partners too much. Horizontal integration of the EU intelligence system combines the best of both worlds.[91] It respects the limits of national sovereignty and relates well to the successful informal and pragmatic way of cooperation by intelligence services in Europe. It allows the EU to better connect with existing intelligence flows without taking over or copying them. It prevents fragmentation and delivers unique all-source products from a wide variety of sources. It thus serves the intelligence function of the EU. It also strengthens its position vis-à-vis its network partners. The emphasis on added value and complementarity offers the opportunity to build on what works, and to supplement what is lacking.[92]

86 Politi, "Why Is European Intelligence Policy Necessary?," 8.

87 Cross, "The European Space and Intelligence Networks," 224, 228; Cross, "A European Transgovernmental Intelligence Network and the Role of IntCen," 391; Chopin, "European Intelligence," 29–31.

88 Council of the European Union, "7371/22 A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence - For a European Union That Protects Its Citizens, Values and Interests and Contributes to International Peace and Security," 3, 14, 21–22; Council of the European Union, 10715/16 A Global Strategy for the European Union's Foreign and Security Policy, 17, 40, 44; Council of the European Union, "15895/03 A Secure Europe In A Better World - European Security Strategy," 14.

89 Estevens, "Building Intelligence Cooperation in the European Union," 102; Bilgi, "Intelligence Cooperation in the European Union," 66.

90 Child, *Organization*, 9, 14.

91 Chopin, "European Intelligence," 46.

92 Svendsen, "Developing International Intelligence Liaison Against Islamic State," 261, interview 44.

### 5.4.2. A Functional Boost: Enhancing Coordination through SIAC

From a functional perspective, a more successful EU intelligence system should provide added value to all parties involved.[93] The various EU decision-makers and institutions have an interest in timely and high-quality intelligence tailored to their specific needs. They need a system that can guarantee this intelligence support when and where it is most needed. The European intelligence services at least have an interest in performing their tasks as efficiently as possible, even when EU cooperation is only considered a normal producer-consumer relation. Although in that case no direct interest is served on the organizational level, and no return is to be expected, it is paramount for them that all contribute to the best of their ability. The more the system connects to and complements existing partnerships, the further it alleviates this 'burden sharing'. However, ideally cooperation would lead to greater effectiveness for national services as well. And potentially, strengthening the EU intelligence system can indeed offer them something that they cannot (easily) get elsewhere.

The EU is in a unique position among a diverse set of organizations that can complement each other's awareness and understanding. First, it can smoothen the exchange between national services. The diversity of the network can be a great advantage, but also means that participants do not find each other naturally and effortlessly.[94] Second, it can facilitate the admittance of more non-traditional partners to this network. The EU is an attractive partner for knowledge centers and think-tanks. In addition, the broad and hybrid set of threats means that dozens of EU organizations are de facto active in the security domain and have access to relevant information. For example, the expertise of the European Environment Agency could contribute to a threat assessment arising from an unequal global distribution of food and increasing scarcity. In terms of diversity of knowledge, the EU surpasses each of the Member States individually and also more one-sided multilateral organizations such as NATO. There is a rewarding role in bringing all these organizations functionally together and combining their insights into an integrated intelligence picture. Theoretically the position of the EU intelligence organizations within EEAS facilitates the use of the EU commission's 144 delegations and offices around the world.[95] In practice, though, as will be evident from chapter 6, in many cases this is still elusive.

For a functional strengthening of the EU intelligence system, horizontal integration needs a place to take shape. There must be a spot where all relevant information flows and secret intelligence come together and are viewed together. The President of the European Commission expressed this need when stating:

93 Müller-Wille, "EU Intelligence Co-Operation. A Critical Analysis," 78–79.

94 Müller-Wille, *For Our Eyes Only?*, 17–19.

95 Cross, "A European Transgovernmental Intelligence Network and the Role of IntCen," 398; Walsh, "Intelligence-Sharing in the European Union," 636.

> *'It is vital that we improve intelligence cooperation. But this is not just about intelligence in the narrow sense. [...] This is why the EU could consider its own Joint Situational Awareness Centre to fuse all the different pieces of information.'*[96]

She suggested setting up a new 'joint environment awareness center', as there have been several attempts from European Commission decisionmakers since 2013 to create some sort of intelligence organization of their own to enhance their integrated 'situational awareness'.[97] In practice such an entity exists already, although strongly under the influence of the Member States. The Strategic Compass points at the Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC) as the place most suitable for further integration. SIAC is a working arrangement between INTCEN and EUMS INT for joint production and policy in EU intelligence.[98] In this arrangement they are increasingly integrating intelligence from various national intelligence services, and combining it with their own information from OSINT, ongoing EU missions and the EU SATCEN.[99] It is claimed that more than 90% of INTCEN and EUMS INT products is now made in this joint format.[100] SIAC includes the necessary knowledge and skills for integrated analysis. In addition, it provides the secure environment necessary for merging intelligence and information. As a functional arrangement, it can easily change form and adapt to changing needs. Drawing on the concept of horizontal integration, the next - and therefore the most obvious - step for the EU in cooperation is coordination. Coordination can achieve a better connection between the network partners. Even more so, a mix of coordination and collaboration is feasible in the same system. It is possible to combine a coordination of national intelligence services effort with those of EU intelligence organizations, while at the same time go a step further and have collaboration between representatives of the first in the latter.[101]

It is currently unclear how the EU intelligence reform announced in the Strategic Compass will take shape and what steps have been taken already. There are several mechanisms to promote coordination within and between organizations.[102] At least three of them are already present in SIAC and are thus likely to be part of further strengthening the EU intelligence system. First, bringing relevant partners together. Reducing the distance between them promotes direct information exchange and anticipation. SIAC already

96 Von der Leyen, "2021 State of the Union Address."

97 Interview 36

98 Although strictly speaking not an organizational entity, this study will use SIAC as an umbrella term for the combination of INTCEN and EUMS INT. SIAC+ is mentioned in policy documents as well. Although this is sometimes meant to depict the organizational inclusion of SATCEN, SIAC+ is officially the term for adding the functions of intelligence policy and support to production in 2018.

99 Morgado and Jezewski, "The Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC)," 76.

100 Delcroix, "Single Intelligence Analysis Capacity (SIAC) and Its Role in Supporting EU Decision Making," 11; EEAS, "EU Intelligence Analysis Centre (INTCEN) Factsheet," 1.

101 Keast, Brown, and Mandell, "Getting The Right Mix," 10–13, 27.

102 Okhuysen and Bechky, "10 Coordination in Organizations," 128–30.

uses the concept of intelligence fusion on themes such as hybrid threat to bring together knowledge and expertise (Hybrid Fusion Cell).[103] The concept of fusion centers gained renewed prominence in the United States after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Their principal role is 'collecting, blending, analyzing, and evaluating relevant information from a broad array of sources' and thus break down the walls between various relevant (intelligence) services. In these centers representatives of organizations selectively share intelligence and work in smaller groups on joint products that are of interest to them.[104] SIAC can be a fusion center for (changing) groups of able and willing intelligence services and EU institutions that make various integrated products on specific topics.[105] Second, increasing direct liaison. Only through regular and intensive (informal) consultations with the national intelligence services it is possible to gain insight into their (usually secret) priorities, identify gaps in the collective picture and persuade the most suitable partner(s) to include the EU's needs in their production. In the absence of formal power (tasking and control), this must be based on consultation and persuasion. The current intelligence architecture already includes provisions for coordination and liaison with the national services, until recently including an Intelligence Steering Board, an Intelligence Working Group for priority intelligence requirements, and two-yearly Heads of Service and Heads of Production meetings.[106] But these are high-level meetings only. The architecture lacks routines for direct daily interaction with intelligence services and integration with non-traditional partners. The diversity of the network and the wide scope of EU intelligence needs justify SIAC taking on a more active role as a coordinator within the EU. Third, the anchoring of confidence-building routines and standards. Ingrained patterns help collaboration by creating clear expectations and increasing interoperability. Standardization can take place in many areas, such as through a common conceptual framework. It encourages contributions from Member States and prevents misunderstandings between partners. A repetitive intelligence production cycle coupled with direct policy making, such as now introduced for the threat analysis of the Strategic Compass, has a disciplining effect and forces intelligence services to seriously embed EU intelligence support.[107] SIAC can be the driving force behind standardization. None of these steps is new or revolutionary, not even in the context of the EU.[108] As they draw on existing initiatives, they can probably count on wide support and offer the greatest chance of success. But they do need a push to be successful. Despite the intentions presented

103 "Report on the Implementation of the 2016 Joint Framework on Countering Hybrid Threats and the 2018 Joint Communication on Increasing Resilience and Bolstering Capabilities to Address Hybrid Threats," 2–3.

104 US Bureau of Justice Assistance, "Fusion Center Guidelines Developing and Sharing Information and Intelligence in a New Era," 11, 13; Gardner, *Intelligence Fusion Centers for Homeland Security*, 9–12; Catano and Gauger, "Information Fusion: Intelligence Centers and Intelligence Analysis," 17–19, 22, 28.

105 Fägersten, *European Intelligence Cooperation*, 2008, 106–7.

106 Salmi, "Multilateral Intelligence Cooperation in the EU." For CIO's. For DIO's named CFAIS-meeting after the arrangement of which it is part, the Cooperation Framework Agreement for Intelligence Support to the European Union.

107 Müller-Wille, *For Our Eyes Only?*, 40–44.

108 See for example: Seyfried, "Ein Europäischer Nachrichtendienst? Möglichkeiten Und Grenzen Nachrichten- Dienstlicher Kooperation Auf EU-Ebene," 4; Walsh, "Intelligence-Sharing in the European Union," 638–41; Müller-Wille, *For Our Eyes Only?*, 33–44.

in the Strategic Compass of march 2022, a proposal for the strengthening SIAC had yet to be presented a year later.[109]

## 5.5. Conclusion

> *'If changes in organizations or their routines and rules necessary for cooperation to take place, then [...] the existing structures will hamper, abolish, or adjust the cooperative arrangement at hand. This is especially the case when the structures of the organizations are legally incompatible, when there are many actors with veto-rights or when adjustments are perceived too costly.'*[110]

The EU intelligence system seems to be caught between two conflicting logics. On the one hand, external security is increasingly becoming an EU matter. While many Eurosceptics will find it difficult to deal with the growing activity of EU institutions in the field of foreign policy and defence, Member States have explicitly supported the ambition in this area. The resulting intelligence demand might not be legally binding, but is still compelling by its practical legitimacy. Recent developments in Ukraine have only increased this ambition and have probably put more pressure on ongoing EU intelligence reform. On the other hand, the current system has difficulties providing adequate intelligence support. National sovereignty is still a guiding principle in external security and certainly in the intelligence domain. Intelligence can be considered the most sensitive, and therefore the most difficult, area of security cooperation. The EU intelligence system is based on voluntary cooperation and the EU does not seem to be a very attractive place to do business for intelligence services. At least not for those who already enjoy considerable resources. In many cases these national services will prefer small-scale, informal arrangements where the risk is lower and the direct reciprocity is higher. It means that the intelligence requirements of EU decision-makers and institutions may remain unchecked. Yet, it also leads to the - for this study more relevant - conclusion that the EU's ongoing desire to strengthen the role of SIAC positions any official working with or within EU intelligence in a context of not only transition, but tension and ambiguity as well. Uncertainty exists about what strengthening EU intelligence means, to whom, and for what purpose.

The place of EU intelligence, and SIAC in particular, in the wider European intelligence network remains disputed. The importance of international intelligence cooperation for European security goes uncontested. The challenges ahead are simply too complex in nature and too large in scale for national services to be facing alone. Cooperation among these services therefore is commonplace. Nevertheless, for the EU the devil is in the details. It is

109 European External Action Service, "Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the Strategic Compass for Security and Defence," 10.

110 Fägersten, *Sharing Secrets*, 98–99.

multilateral cooperation by definition, but expectations differ on who should benefit (most) from this arrangement. Although arguably EU intelligence cooperation is about services from different countries working together to support EU decisionmakers for mutual benefit, the intergovernmental setting provokes the idea that a direct return may be expected for intelligence services. Few national services would ask what intelligence products they will get in return from their Foreign Affairs Department or from fellow services in the same country. Yet that is exactly what seems to happen in the EU. Although intelligence is frequently mentioned as one of the strategic enablers, policy documents give little guidance on how to cope with this discrepancy on the organizational level. Multilateral intelligence cooperation within the EU proves difficult in practice and enhancing SIAC might be easier said than done. Integration processes often prove to be difficult.[111] Progress in EU intelligence will probably resemble the well-known - pragmatic but cumbersome - process of differentiated integration, going at different speeds for different areas or between different members.[112]

It is in this tense environment that perceptions about cooperative behavior are formed and preferences are built and it is unlikely that this context is going to change any time soon. Strengthening the EU intelligence system will probably be a matter for the long haul. The basic idea is simple enough. Strengthening cohesion and synergy between the autonomous partners in the network will offer them all a unique added value. It would make the EU a more attractive place for cooperation while at the same time serving EU decision-makers. Yet, despite the advantages SIAC has as a functional arrangement, its volatility also contains weaknesses. First, the intangible format is as good as the common will of its participants. As soon as one of them lacks resolve, it risks becoming ineffective.[113] For example, bureaucratic resistance or conflicting personalities can be the cause this. In addition, there is considerable room to stall the process of intelligence reform. Second, it is doubtful whether SIAC can offer a one-size-fits-all solution that will do equally well for both strategic and operational intelligence. Each type of intelligence has different dynamics and peculiarities, such as for circulation speed, level of detail and accuracy, classifications of secrecy and security measures. Doing both at the same time will put a qualitative and quantitative strain on the organizations and processes involved. A brief comparison with NATO's recent intelligence reforms underlines how long the road ahead for SIAC is likely to be. Despite systemic flaws probably still being present there as well, many intelligence officers in this study regard NATO a valuable benchmark for EU intelligence reform.[114] Contrary to SIAC, for their reforms the Joint Intelligence and Security Division (JISD) was able to rely on a military alliance with nearly 75 years of collective intelligence experience in their reforms. Yet achieving greater

111 Child, *Organization*, 111.

112 Schimmelfennig, Leuffen, and De Vries, "Differentiated Integration in the European Union: Institutional Effects, Public Opinion, and Alternative Flexibility Arrangements," 5–7.

113 Interview 14

114 Interview 2, 7, 27, 43

cohesion and synergy was no easy task to NATO either.[115] It took a decade and is still an ongoing process. Starting from this context, this research will now proceed to studying the conditions for trust. It will take ability, integrity and benevolence to the setting of the EU to explain the mechanism of social relations and trust in this tense environment.

115 Ballast, "Merging Pillars, Changing Cultures," 728–31, 736.

# Chapter 6

# Chapter 6: Ability in EU Intelligence Cooperation

## Crippled Connections

### 6.1. Introduction

> *'The mechanism for European intelligence cooperation is already there. It has been there all along. The EU institutions only were [never] really part of it. [...] A customer that [now] wants to take a stronger role, but is not capable of establishing stronger links between the national services and the EU decision makers."*[1]

The first condition for trust is for partners to have a favorable perception of each other's ability to perform. In their original framework, Mayer et al. simply define ability as a 'group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to have influence in a specific domain'.[2] Yet, they say little about how these perceptions are built between people or groups. The conceptual framework in chapter 3 filled this void by turning to interorganizational relations and trust literature. It identified that perceptions of ability are built within networks through the entity of reputations and a process of familiarization. Networks are collective structures for building and maintaining (favorable) perceptions of ability. They also have an informative function. In a network, the reputation of a partner depicts its standing, its niche in the functional environment, and its interrelationships with other organizations. Familiarization is the process of directly or indirectly communicating these reputations. This research uses concepts from qualitative social network analysis to evaluate the role of reputations and familiarization in EU intelligence cooperation.[3] The smaller and the more tight-knit a network is, the better suited for building strong social relations and trust.

Networks, familiarization and reputations are expected to play a role in EU intelligence cooperation. The ability of EU intelligence organizations is based not so much on their own material assets, but on mobilizing the assets of others. They are necessarily part of a wider European intelligence network. This network provides the SIAC[4] with muscle, enabling them to support EU decision making in external action. Strong positions and connections in this network are associated with high quality, high support in cooperation and social influence. They can provide a form of (social) capital that indirectly grants access to more traditional

1 Interview 5

2 Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," 717.

3 Schepis, "Social Network Analysis from a Qualitative Perspective."

4 As noted in the previous chapter, this study will use the term 'SIAC' alternately with 'EU intelligence organizations' when pointing at the combination of INTCEN and EUMS INT.

resources in cooperation like information, manpower and money.[5] In addition, the European intelligence network can be the scene of repeated interaction and a place where people can learn about others. In turn, knowing each other will bolster reasonable expectations and possibly trust. In the European network intelligence organizations are thought to generally connect for functional reasons, but these connections would enable social relations and trust to develop. The European intelligence network and the place the EU organizations are seen to hold within it, determine the limits of trust-based cooperation there.

This chapter examines perceptions of ability in the EU intelligence system based on the empirical data obtained from interviews and desk research. Starting from the substantive theory provided by the conceptual framework, it scrutinizes how these perceptions shape cooperation in practice. The chapter provides a thick analysis that combines a rich narrative of practitioners' views on this topic with insights from social network analysis. First, it addresses the network as a whole. Section 6.2 looks at the macro- or system level; the role and position of the EU in the broader European Intelligence network. Who are the key players? And how does its size and diversity influence cooperation? Second, section 6.3 examines the meso- or group level by addressing the intelligence organizations in the EU. What is the perceived place of SIAC in the system and how do familiarity and reputations influence cooperation there? Third, section 6.4 scrutinizes the micro- or individual level; zooming in on the every-day practice of intelligence officers in the EU intelligence organizations. What roles do they have? And how do their (inter)actions influence cooperation? Section 6.5 concludes this chapter and evaluates how aggregate perceptions of ability, and the way these are formed and transmitted in networks, influence cooperative behavior in the European intelligence system. Conceptually, it shows that perceptions of ability are well suited for scrutinizing the role of social relations and trust in cooperative behavior. It explicates the framework introduced in chapter 3 by adding the underlying concepts of network complexity and actor centrality. In addition, it shows the interplay between reputations and familiarization at different levels. Empirically, it highlights the negative effect of poor reputations and low familiarity in the context of EU intelligence cooperation, somewhat softened by the boundary spanning role of individuals. To clarify these conclusions, it uses textual explanation, schematic visualization and a metaphor.

5 Pierre Bourdieu, 'The Forms of Capital', in *Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education*, ed. J. Richardson (Greenwood, 1986), 21.

## 6.2. The Macro-Level: A Small World?

### 6.2.1. The Complexity of the European Intelligence Network

When evaluating perceptions of ability in EU intelligence cooperation, beginning at a system level is helpful. Scrutinizing ideas about the role and position of the EU in the European intelligence network will tell a great deal about the role of social relations and trust there. Following the general frame of social network theory, a first element in this examination is the complexity of the network. The smaller the size and the higher the density of a network, the larger the chances for reputations to travel along its ties, allowing perceptions of ability to build reasonable expectations about partner behavior. Starting with size, a social network can be considered a small world 'if, roughly speaking, any two [actors] in the network are likely to be connected through a short sequence of intermediate acquaintances'.[6] Chapter 3 observed that the intelligence network holds many possibilities to get to know each other and build realistic expectations about ability, but that size and diversity can hamper this process. The case of EU intelligence clearly underlines this difficulty and explicates its origins.

At first sight, the composition of the European intelligence network appears rather manageable. In essence, most participants sketch just two relevant types of organizations; the national intelligence services and the intelligence structures of NATO and the EU. It seems to provide a clear and measured board for social relations to play out. Yet, this does not mean that all actors are well - or equally well - known. Several EU intelligence officers describe their EU colleagues as passers-by, estimating the chances of ever seeing them again after their joint posting in Brussels as slim. They consider it a 'matter of probabilities', as the sheer size of the European intelligence network can make their peers disappear.[7] Apparently, repeated interaction between the same (set of) organizations and people is not a given rule. No matter what mechanism is at work, absence of repeated contact would be detrimental for cooperative behavior. Chapter 3 has shown that - for different reasons - high chances of seeing a partner again help both the mechanism of social relations and rational calculations. Without it, cooperative behavior based on trust is difficult for sure.

The question is whether the European intelligence network is indeed as large as presumed by these intelligence officers, or at least sizable enough to hinder repeated interaction. A quick calculation confirms that it is. Although there are no official reports on the total number of people working for intelligence services in Europe, a (very) rough estimate can be made. Based on the numbers mentioned in interviews and the official numbers known from some national services, there are at least 50.000 people working for intelligence services in the

6 Kleinberg, "The Small-World Phenomenon," 163; Hanneman and Riddle, "Concepts and Measures for Basic Network Analysis," 2011, 341–42.

7 Interview 22, 6, 8, 10, 44

EU.[8] Although modest by comparison to the US intelligence community (reported to number almost 100.000 personnel in 2011[9]), the European intelligence workforce is by no means negligible. In addition, it must be noted that the European network consists of countries' services that are not part of the EU altogether. Considering the size of this community, the chances of meeting indeed seem slim. The chances of meeting the same persons twice seem even slimmer. Let alone getting acquainted with them. Yet, this is not only about the size of the workforce. It is about organizational diversity as well.

The European intelligence network holds many services. One very experienced intelligence officer illustrates this by describing the Intelligence College Europe (ICE), a pan-European initiative to bring together and strengthen the various intelligence communities in Europe. At its conception in march 2019 ICE brought together 66 intelligence services from 30 European countries. That number has grown since.[10] He compares that with SIAC, which is linked to even more services (approximately 86 in total).[11] In both cases it does not involve all European intelligence services. Given their respective (general) aims, ICE and SIAC will both be predominately linked to those services that exploit all-source intelligence. For example, out of the six official French services, normally only three (DGSE, DGSI and DRM) are counted as prime stakeholders in EU and NATO. When taking into account specialized services on - amongst others - HUMINT and SIGINT, the European community is larger and more diversified.[12] That is certainly the case when including security services and counterintelligence services as well, raising not only the total number significantly, but also adding to the variety of operational dynamics. A future broadening of intelligence tasks, like in countering disinformation or addressing environmental threats to security, would readily increase the number and types of organizations involved. Whereas the general classification of 'intelligence service' might be relatively simple and clear-cut, there are many types of these services. Classifying them into strict categories is not simple at all. Although the smaller brother in absolute numbers, the European intelligence community might already exceed its American equivalent in terms of diversity.

The diversity of the European intelligence network is overwhelming. Services differ in task, focus, governance structure, legal basis and workforce composition. To name only a few divides. As indicated in chapter 5, services seldomly match a partner entirely. For example, the largest German intelligence service incorporates many functional divides that

8 Based on the presumption that few Member State intelligence communities have 10.000 people, some have 4.000 and most have up to 500. The ambiguity of the intelligence network obliges a caveat, e.g., on the question what can be considered 'intelligence' or a 'service'. This estimate is only meant to illustrate the challenge to connectivity and familiarity posed by the sheer size and scale of the community.

9 National Research Council, Intelligence Analysis for Tomorrow: Advances from the Behavioral and Social Sciences. Washington, DC, The National Academies Press, 2011

10 Intelligence College Europe, "The College."

11 Interview 36

12 Interview 11

are separated in almost all other European countries apart from Austria and Sweden. BND combines civilian and military intelligence and is the most prominent German partner in external intelligence cooperation in Europe. Nevertheless, for historical and functional reasons they have a strongly fragmented domestic intelligence architecture, including one service at the federal level (BfV), 16 at regional (state) level, and a separate one for military counterintelligence (BAMAD). Like BND, the national services all cooperate with other European services and participate in NATO and EU. Other countries like Belgium and the Netherlands have divided civilian and military intelligence functions between two services, but each incorporates counterintelligence. Italy's main service for external intelligence (AISE) is positioned within their Ministry of Defence. Spain has a central intelligence service (CNI), but combines this with a military service positioned at the level of army headquarters (CIFAS). These are only a few of the many constellations for intelligence services used in the European network.[13] All of these services have their own history, background and mix of operational and technical skillsets. On the one hand, this is considered the strong point of the European network, delivering different perspectives and approaches. One intelligence officer even thinks that 'sameness would destroy [its] strength'.[14] Correct as this view might be when looking at potential outcomes, it does not seem to help trust.

The huge diversity of partners in the broader European intelligence network hampers network connectivity and makes communications difficult. Compatibility becomes an issue as national particularities make it harder to connect internationally.[15] As a national intelligence officer observes:

> *'Blurry distinctions mean that you seldom know who is the, in that case, correct counterpart to address. [In addition] the parameters in which they operate are different, holding back exchange and interaction.'*[16]

Especially on a multilateral level, relations are complicated. Participating countries bring a multitude of legal and functional caveats - as well as many (bureaucratic) interests - to the table. On a bilateral level, especially between smaller countries, it is a bit easier. There are fewer services involved and their ties are closer and often less formalized. There is always 'some entrance to be found for cooperation'.[17] Still, discovering appropriate partners for specific topics and maintaining relations with them is often challenging. As most of the potential partners are very closed to the outside, it is hard to find a match with the right partner. This costly and difficult task generally lies with the external relations branches of

13 For a more extensive insight in these constellations, see for example: Graaff and Nyce, *Handbook of European Intelligence Cultures*.

14 Interview 18

15 Interview 3, 4, 9, 18, 22, 35, 38, 44

16 Interview 1

17 Interview 12, 33

the services. One external relations officer remarks that few other practitioners have 'the insight in what to expect' in the network.[18] External relation branches and liaisons uphold a collective memory for past interactions, mainly by monitoring and recording the cost and benefit. But they are also seen to have an important role in building and maintaining trusted relations. Yet, in practice cooperation does not always need this support. Interestingly, in more established operational exchange relations the role of external relations branches seems less prominent. Social ties in these - often plurilateral - arrangements prove strong. Participants generally sit together structurally, or at least more frequently than is the case in bilateral relations and build trust. Moreover, in these successful arrangements cooperation is upheld by specialists, meeting 'time and time again, allowing them to bypass cultural bull-shit relatively quickly, coming to business'.[19] The most famous of these arrangements is probably the Five Eyes intelligence community, but operational clusters of cooperation play an important role in the European intelligence network as well.

### 6.2.2. Clusters of Cooperation

The size and diversity of the European intelligence network do not facilitate interaction. The positions of the actors are too far apart to reach out and connect easily. Nevertheless, several intelligence officers, from different operational backgrounds, characterize European intelligence as a small world. They recall being reunited with former counterparts from other services when assuming a position in the EU and refer to informal networks of alumni that are still functional years after an international assignment.[20] Among these practitioners there is a strong perception that the limited size of the network invokes repeated interaction, bolstering cooperative behavior. One of them tries picturing this:

> *'The intelligence world is only a small environment. It is like a box with let's say 100 figures inside. No matter how hard you shake, eventually you will end up meeting the same people and organizations.'*[21]

Another adds [smiling] that it is unescapable to encounter the same people as:

> *'There are a lot of dinosaurs in this field. National services tend to hold on to their personnel. [...] It resembles the dynamics in other small professional communities.'*[22]

18 Interview 20
19 Interview 19, 27
20 Interview 8, 16, 17, 36, 44
21 Interview 18
22 Interview 31

This seems like a paradox. The European intelligence community might be large and diverse on paper, but in some cases appears relatively small in terms of cooperation practice nevertheless. Apparently, a simple count or categorization of organizations in the network does not fully capture its complexity. The contrasting perceptions on this topic and their relevance for cooperative behavior make it worthwhile to scrutinize this 'smallness' of the European network a bit further.

The European intelligence network is a 'sparse network'. Sparse networks have a low density of actors with nonredundant contacts. The structural holes in such a network provide a separation between actors that form a buffer for familiarization.[23] Instead of an evenly distributed network with many strong ties, the European intelligence network contains operational clusters of cooperation who vary in size, composition and connections.[24] Not all intelligence services in the network cooperate with all others, on all topics, or with the same intensity. Instead, they tailor cooperative arrangements to their specific needs. For example, when looking for a specific expertise it is well feasible that services prefer relations with a small (set of) knowledgeable partner(s) above that with one partner that is far larger. In practice, there are many differing needs and therefore many differing arrangements that bring together the able and willing services on a certain topic. It creates operational clusters of cooperation based on 'bilateral connections, special clubs and [...] multilateral arrangements'.[25]

These clusters have different origins and aims. Some are geographically oriented, based on a common nearby security threat, shared national culture, or simply for speaking the same language. These regional cliques exist for example between services from countries in Central-Europe, Southern-Europe and between the Nordics. Other clusters are based on operational or technical commonalities. A well-known example is the CTG for services working in counterterrorism, but a less well-known club exists for external services as well. Also, there are clubs for expert cooperation between technical intelligence specialties. An example of such a cluster is the MAXIMATOR[26] arrangement on SIGINT mentioned in chapter 3, but again there are many others. Multilateral organizations like the EU can be seen as clusters in their own right. When people refer to intelligence being a small world, they mainly do so in their own cluster, to a point that it almost becomes 'something of a reunion'.[27]

The operational clusters in the European intelligence network differ substantially in their internal dynamics, as well as in their connections with other clusters. Yet, what they all

23 Burt, *Structural Holes*, 18.

24 Interview 1, 4, 8, 12, 17, 25, 29, 36, 44

25 Interview 12

26 Jacobs, "Maximator: European Signals Intelligence Cooperation, from a Dutch Perspective."

27 Interview 35

have in common is that they offer an environment for cooperation that is more exclusive than the network as a whole. They serve to include some, while excluding others.[28] This a notorious dynamic in sparse networks. Networks with these clusters generally have strong local cohesion, but lack cohesion as a whole.[29] As a result, the chances for familiarization and reputation building are significantly higher in the operational clusters than in the network as a whole. This is not only because they are small, as that is not always the case. For example, the CTG mentioned above comprises of 30 European intelligence services. It is because they are perceived highly functional. For this reason, the intensity of cooperation is high. It is these intense and established patterns of interaction that are the most important for trust-based cooperation in secretive networks. Personal familiarity among analysts in operational clusters is much more common and connections are much more tight-knit. For example, one military intelligence officer emphasizes the extraordinary context of NATO. He depicts the intelligence officers in this cluster as 'overworked', knowing 'each other from different missions, repeatedly meeting [...] and working together. This forges an extra bond'.[30] They are policy networks in themselves; based on a common context and formed for actively pursuing a specific goal. Therefore, a higher level of trust would be expected within them.[31] They typically consist of formal organizations.[32] It must be noted that many of the operational clusters are informal, but fairly established nevertheless.[33] They are based on a Memorandum of Understanding or at least on some Terms of Reference and have permanent working groups.

Inevitably, operational clusters bring in additional sensitivities and complicate trust relations in the broader European intelligence network.[34] By definition, the exclusivity of clusters means that some services are members of the one arrangement, but not the other. It is not well accepted for a service from outside a cluster to bluntly intrude into another. Doing so:

> *'Would be perceived as an insult to [that] community and harm your national service that is in [that] community. [...] It would diminish your professional image and the respect you possess.'*[35]

Yet, it is not always clear which service is the appropriate (national) partner in or for a cluster, because of the diversity noted. For example, whereas in one country it would be the military service that is tasked for foreign intelligence, in another it could well be the civilian service.

28 Interview 1, 6, 26, 33, 38

29 Granovetter, *The Strength of Weak Ties*, 1981, 1378.

30 Interview 16

31 Knoke, "Policy Networks," 212; Hanneman and Riddle, "Concepts and Measures for Basic Network Analysis," 2011, 346–49.

32 Knoke, "Policy Networks," 210–11.

33 Interview 18, 35, 36

34 Interview 15, 18, 44

35 Interview 7

This can fuel tension between services, even those from the same country, as it matters very much who is in a specific 'club' and who is not.[36] To complicate things further, there is a significant degree of overlap between the clusters. For example, some but not all of the NATO members are part of the EU, while CTG includes members of both as well as an external partner to both organizations. Of course, there are many other clusters and bilateral connections as well. As one official illustrates:

> *'It is like playing a game of chess, but worse. [...] it is not only about who is at the table, but about which players are in the entire tournament and how they relate to one another.'*[37]

This means that an exclusive partner in one operational cluster, could well be talking to a member of another cluster in a different setting or on a different topic. The same intelligence officer quoted above acknowledges that 'where [the] circles meet, where they overlap, that is the place where the tension comes in'.[38] The EU is exactly such a place.

Perceptions differ on what the exclusive dynamics of clustered cooperation mean for an inclusive (multilateral) organization like the EU. Some perceive the existence of clubs and cliques detrimental for multilateral intelligence cooperation. One intelligence officer even considers them to be 'the poison for multilateral formats as they bolster mistrust in the wider community'.[39] Yet, most of them take a more pragmatic stance. They acknowledge that the existence of clusters makes it hard for cooperation to be 'genuinely multilateral', but add that this is 'something that in intelligence is hard to begin with'.[40] They prefer to focus on the practicality of it. First, these intelligence officers, national as well as EU-based, see the clusters as an effective way of simplifying the diverse network. One of them even states that he[41] 'cannot imagine that cooperation [...] would be as successful as it is, without these formats'.[42] Second, they point at the habit for intelligence of evolving slowly from small to larger clubs. From this perspective, clusters can be considered building blocks towards inclusion and multilateral arrangements. Third, some respondents think that the European intelligence network is still a dense one, despite the clusters being present. They describe the European intelligence network as a set of 'interlocking' or 'confluencing circles, [...] holistic, [...] a dynamic enterprise'.[43] For them, the clusters do not seem to stand very far

36 Interview 38

37 Interview 18

38 Ibidem

39 Interview 3

40 Interview 17, 3, 5, 8, 9, 31, 42

41 In the whole of this study, where a quote is attributed to a male respondent (he/him) it could have also been a female respondent (she/her). As there are relatively few female respondents in this research, revealing gender would possibly jeopardize anonymity.

42 Interview 19

43 Interview 17, 26, 36, 38

apart. Moreover, their composition can overlap and change over time. In this situation it is highly unlikely that the EU is not connected to the broader network in one way or another. Yet, these connections are not self-evident. From the dynamics in the European intelligence network, it becomes clear that it is not one small world; it is many small worlds. And the EU is just one of these worlds. A cluster among many other clusters. Evaluating its position, role and connections in the broader network will show how much it is trusted as a partner based on its perceived ability.

### 6.2.3. The EU's Lack of Centrality

EU intelligence holds little centrality in the European intelligence network. It is connected to most other actors, but does not hold a central position between them, and stands at quite a distance from them. Centrality is the degree to which an actor is connected to others in the network. It is often equated with prominence; being influential in the network.[44] Attempts of the EU organization to gain prominence in intelligence are generally greeted with wariness and resistance by the European intelligence community. Some national intelligence officers even depict the EU organization as a potential spoiler, interfering with what they perceive is essentially their job.[45] Most intelligence officers interviewed feel that European intelligence cooperation is first and foremost an activity for and by national intelligence services. Cooperation is all about task accomplishment and the task they feel closest at heart is safeguarding national and European security. Although some would claim that supporting EU decision makers serves exactly that purpose, especially for national practitioners it is at best a valuable by-product of their main effort. For them, the EU is not on top of mind. To some extent it is fair to say that it is not on their mind at all. When thinking about their own task performance, they expect little of the EU organizations. These organizations are, as one intelligence officer puts it mildly, 'not the operational glue in the European intelligence community'.[46] Another is more explicit when asked what the European intelligence community means to him:

> *'It is easier to say what it is not. It has little to do with the EU.'*[47]

Perceptions of ability in this research contradict the existence and growing centrality of EU intelligence that Davis-Cross observed, one that would 'encourage both formal and informal intelligence sharing between Member States'.[48]

44 Schulze and Ries, "Social Network Analysis," 115–19.

45 Interview 1, 5, 6, 7, 19, 31, 32

46 Interview 3

47 Interview 31

48 Davis Cross, "The Merits of Informality: The European Transgovernmental Intelligence Network," 240.

In the perception of the intelligence officers interviewed, intelligence for the EU is mainly being done outside the EU. Services appear to 'have their own reality, their own world. They perceive that they do not need EU cooperation'.[49] As a result, the EU to a large extent appears to be excluded from European intelligence practice. Respondents indicate that the EU organizations are only part of European intelligence by the grace of the national services. They see SIAC as 'in-between' for intelligence reaching the EU policy level and not even an indispensable one.[50] Notwithstanding the articulated role of EU intelligence organizations as a 'single gateway' for intelligence reaching the EU decision makers, some respondents point out that national intelligence services have, and should have, other more direct ways to inform them as well. This leads to an inequal relation. Whereas national intelligence services are perfectly capable of working without EU intelligence organizations, the opposite is impossible. The EU intelligence organizations are highly dependent on their connections with the national services and their willingness to contribute Yet, there is some confusion about the goal at hand.

The aim of intelligence cooperation in the European Union is ambiguous and accordingly so is the role of SIAC itself. Respondents state that 'there is no such thing as supranational intelligence', to have 'never experienced a real EU intelligence cooperation'. They dismiss participation in it as mainly 'political'.[51] From this perspective it is hard to see the relevance of EU intelligence cooperation. One policy officer even asserts that some services 'are not that willing to seek cooperation in the setting of the European Union, but are pushed in that direction [by their political masters].'[52] For them it feels as being a goal in itself regardless of its output or outcome. This perception does not change by virtue of a political statement or an outspoken EU ambition. A respondent illustrates the problem:

> *'The fact that at the political level they say that EU intelligence [cooperation] is important, does not mean that the next day it actually works. The framework is missing.'*[53]

Yet, when evaluating this frame more closely, intelligence practitioners struggle to define where their dislike comes from. In this matter, respondents are seen to make little distinction between the intelligence function *in* the EU cluster, and the one *for* the EU organization. Although this seems merely an issue of definition, trivial even, it matters greatly for the dynamics of cooperation and the role of the EU intelligence organizations. In the first frame the interests of the national services are dominant. In this context, the EU is seen to be dysfunctional or redundant, as it competes for resources with other European clusters

49 Interview 24, 4, 30, 43
50 Interview 34
51 Interview 34, 12, 44
52 Interview 13
53 Interview 12

for intelligence cooperation. In the second frame the interests of EU decision makers are dominant. The EU is seen as burdensome or even intrusive, as its intelligence organizations and their needs are sometimes perceived to compete with the national services themselves.

National intelligence services expect little from EU intelligence cooperation. It holds little centrality that could provide standing; a favorable status compared to other arrangements for cooperation.[54] As a cluster for cooperation the EU is seen as troublesome. Clusters are marketplaces for intelligence exchange and the EU simply is not a very attractive marketplace to do business. Or rather, intelligence officers indicate they feel that there are more attractive marketplaces to be found when supporting European security through cooperation.[55] This mainly comes down to the EU being too multilateral for their liking. The difficulties of multilateral cooperation were already addressed in chapters 3 and 5. An intelligence officer notes the effect:

> *'It just does not produce the same effect as cooperation in a bilateral setting. The breadth of EU cooperation is more limited and accordingly, so is the effort.'*[56]

Even when choosing multilateral cooperation as the format of choice, for most services NATO comes first. It makes EU intelligence cooperation feel redundant.[57] An intelligence officer underlines this by saying that 'for the EU, we rely on NATO'.[58] As an organization for cooperation the EU is seen as burdensome. Services are seen to be 'torn between their national duties, which always come first and cooperating in the multilateral setting of the EU'.[59] Yet, from the interviews it appears this view is losing some of its explanatory worth. The underlying reasons for this unexpected change will be discussed in more detail in chapter 8. Some national intelligence officers feel it as their task to provide the EU organization with intelligence and they wonder whether 'EU decision makers are happy as customers of intelligence'.[60] In addition, some are less troubled by the lack of intelligence returns from the EU than by its ambition to transform its intelligence organizations into service-like organizations. An experienced intelligence officer reflects that for him it is no problem that there is no intelligence return coming from the EU, but that he is:

54 Rindova and Martins, "Show Me the Money: A Multidimensional Perspective on Reputation as an Intangible Asset," 24; Barron and Rolfe, "It Ain't What You Do, It's Who You Do It With: Distinguishing Reputation and Status," 175–76.

55 Interview 34, 36

56 Interview 25

57 Interview 2, 11, 22, 24, 28, 40, 43

58 Interview 28

59 Interview 16

60 Interview 24

*'Somewhat allergic to all kinds of initiatives by various institutions [there], who start doing intelligence by themselves all of a sudden. [...] That is something you should avoid at any cost'.*[61]

## 6.3. The Meso-Level: From Low Centrality to Low Reputation

### 6.3.1. SIAC not the Central Actor

The EU is dependent on the network surrounding it for its ability to provide intelligence support. It derives most, if not all, of its resources from the community. Yet, it is not all that clear what organizations are part of it. The European intelligence network has no clearly demarcated limits. Objectively determining them is a challenge. When asked about the 'European intelligence community', many respondents fell silent for a moment and then qualified it 'difficult' to depict[62], the question itself 'philosophical' even.[63] For them, it seems hard to pinpoint what they understand exactly as 'intelligence' and what 'European' means to them. Nevertheless, after a small pause, they sketched a remarkably clear and largely congruent picture of the organizations that they perceive as part of the network. This allows to follow a more subjective route in depicting the European intelligence network, simply putting the limits where the participants themselves consciously experience them. It is a practice-based method for interpretation not uncommon to other qualitative network analysis in the policy domain. Moreover, it is a fitting method for a qualitative strategy that seeks to scrutinize beliefs and perceptions.[64] Like commonplace in many of these qualitative studies, respondents portray the European intelligence network as made up of concentric circles of organizations; an 'onion with multiple layers'.[65] In the core of the 'onion', the innermost circle, are the organizations considered most important. In the context of supporting EU policy, it was expected that this would be INTCEN and EUMS INT. After all, they are the only organizations whose resources are directly and fully dedicated to EU intelligence support. Yet, they are not considered the most important, although many respondents mention them first, especially those working in the EU.

The core of the intelligence network serving the EU consists of the Member States' intelligence services. Although mostly not involved directly in EU decision-making support and operating independently from the EU organization, in practice most interviewees place them at the inner circle. They were unanimous in this perception, regardless of their position in Brussels or in the national capitals. This is because formal positions do not matter most to

61 Interview 35

62 Interview 16, 17, 22, 24, 30, 31, 36

63 Interview 37

64 Knoke and Yang, *Social Network Analysis*, 21; Heath, Fuller, and Johnston, "Chasing Shadows," 650.

65 Interview 2, 6, 42

them. Formal positions are neither necessary nor sufficient ground for a central place in the network. The reasoning is resource-based; the national intelligence services are simply the most critical part of EU intelligence support. Without them there would be none of it, as they effectively provide the bulk of the intelligence used. As already seen in chapter 5, for legal and functional reasons SIAC institutions lack sufficient analytical capacity and collection capabilities. In the opinion of most interviewees, the EU intelligence organizations cannot - and may not - do the full spectrum of intelligence support. EU intelligence organizations are even seen to derive their legitimacy as intelligence actors from the link to the national services. As one EU intelligence officer remarked: 'INTCEN is intelligence by virtue of the national services'.[66]

The second layer is made up of those organizations that have an important, yet derivative role. The first part consists of the EU intelligence organizations themselves, first and foremost INTCEN and EUMS INT. They are the only ones in the EU considered to be doing analysis on security matters with specific decision maker support in mind, and based on information that is unavailable in the open domain. Moreover, their position in SIAC is anchored in the Intelligence Support Architecture (ISA), although few interviewees use this term. Remarkably, the EU Satellite Centre is relatively absent from the responses despite being the third organization in SIAC, and despite being effectively the only exclusive collection capability in the EU. Few people mention this organization without being asked directly, or do so only briefly. Although it is an integral part of the ISA and has a long history within EU intelligence, SATCEN is not immediately perceived part of the intelligence network. One respondee underlines this by saying 'SATCEN is not really part of the family, it is a bit outside'.[67] Others indicate that the broadening of its services and customers, most notably through the Copernicus program for Earth observation, is increasing the organizational distance to its intelligence peers. From this perception the graduality of the network becomes apparent. Likewise, they depict the geospatial branch within EUMSINT as 'not exactly in either'.[68] The second part of this layer consists of NATO. There exists little doubt that it has a prominent place in European security in general, and in the European intelligence network in particular. For many, the alliance's intelligence organizations serve as a benchmark for doing multilateral cooperation, especially after the intelligence reforms of the last decade. In addition, many associate it with the United States' prominent role in building a common European understanding of how intelligence and intelligence cooperation works, a point further elaborated on in the next chapter. Nevertheless, for NATO's broader membership respondents struggle with ascribing its organizations to the 'European' intelligence network proper.[69]

66 Interview 37

67 Interview 24

68 Interview 14, 22, 25, 36

69 Interview 36

At the outer 'layer' of the network are those organizations that respondents depict as potentially 'valuable', but that are literally and figuratively perceived of as peripheral. Partners being 'very much on the functional outside'.[70] Many respondents do not even mention these organizations to begin with. They elaborate only when asked about them directly. Moreover, respondents differ on their importance. The first type of organizations mentioned here is the EU institutions that are not part of SIAC. This mainly concerns the regional directorates within EEAS itself, but also headquarters staff, representatives, missions and embassies. For example, the Early Warning Early Action unit was only mentioned once. This despite the fact that this institutions' conflict prediction models are very close to, or even overlapping the intelligence function, and that it holds a prominent place in the Strategic Compass when addressing the strengthening of intelligence. Although these institutions are thought to hold valuable expertise and information, and use this to support EU policy makers, they do not enrich this information by analysis or cannot directly incorporate secret information. A deficiency that most intelligence practitioners consider enough reason to push them to the margins of the network. Many reject the idea of them being part of intelligence at all.[71] As one official states:

> *'The other EU institutions are definitely not part of the first two cycles. [...] merely including information in your products does not make you intelligence. And by saying that, I do not disregard their importance.'*[72]

A similar but alternative logic for exclusion applies to perceptions of the second type of organizations in the outer layer; the think-tanks and academia in the EU and Member States. They are considered even further off than the EU institutions. Although these knowledge centers do analysis and go beyond mere information gathering, they mostly do so without the specific purpose of (EU) policy support. From the interviews it appears that although their products are valued, they are not part of the social network and kept at a distance. Interestingly, this also seems to apply to actors closer to home, being more government related and presumably more aligned with the goals of policy support. For example, the EUISS is seldomly mentioned by EU intelligence practitioners, not even as part of 'layer three'. This despite it being an autonomous agency under the operational direction of the HR designed to do policy-oriented analysis in support of the CFSP and CSDP.[73] One experienced EU intelligence officer was quite surprised when he encountered an insightful report from EUISS on his topic of interest, after having been working in the EU for two years already. He admitted to have never met people from outside the intelligence organizations [in the EU]'

70 Interview 27

71 Interview 23, 15, 16, 25, 30, 37

72 Interview 42

73 Council of the European Union, "2014/75/CFSP Council Decision on the European Union Institute for Security Studies," 13–14.

and underlined this ignorance by apparently not knowing the name of EUISS and broadly depicting it as 'a kind of open-source division'.[74] It appears that these knowledge partners - including their purpose and products - are not commonly known. In this respect, some point out at that in the EU there is little tradition in tying these organizations into the intelligence community. Respondents that do include academia and think tanks in the network think of themselves as forward leaning and progressive.

### 6.3.2. Weak Connectivity causes Low Familiarity

In the European intelligence network familiarity with the EU is low. This goes for the EU as a whole, but for its intelligence organizations as well.[75] Although the latter number only two (or three when SATCEN is included), many national practitioners cannot name them or are not known with their function. Part of this has to do with the lack of centrality the EU holds in the network and that was discussed above. One experienced EU intelligence officer acknowledges that until his current posting the organization meant little to him, as 'the EU was never really part of my life. I was not in the community, nor did I do business with them.'[76] The same applies to other national intelligence officers, including those close to the EU. As one national policy officer on multilateral cooperation remarks:

> *'Only few people [in the services] know INTCEN and EUMS INT, but most do not. Let alone the Intelligence Steering Board and the Intelligence Support Architecture. I have not even heard of those.' [After mentioning the latter by the researcher]*[77]

Another experienced intelligence officer in a similar position admits 'a bit ashamed' that 'I still have no clue as to how it functions.'[78] Contacts are generally sparse and infrequent. Few conferences or workshops are being organized; little institutionalized exchange of ideas exists. When referring to known examples of such exchange, respondents fall back on what they know from NATO. The EU to them seems far away. Although - even from the most far-away capitals in the EU - Brussels can be reached within days by car, and within hours by plane, most analysts have never been there, not even for a visit. And if they have, it is 'not as part of a routine, [but] always driven by incidents. And not as part of an [EU] effort.'[79] In practice, the intensity of contacts between national intelligence officers and EU institutions is too low to make a difference for social relations and trust-building.

74 Interview 29
75 Interview 6, 36, 39, 43, 44
76 Interview 27
77 Interview 17
78 Interview 27
79 Interview 31, 34

Unfamiliarity extends into the EU itself. From the interviews it emerges that many of the people working in EU intelligence organizations know relatively little about the EU institutions they serve, nor about those institutions that can be of service.[80] As one EU intelligence officer describes:

> *'I sometimes encounter people from other institutions by coincidence [...] and they appear to be [...] working on related topics. I didn't know them and they didn't know me beforehand. That is a weakness.'*[81]

A lack of physical proximity is hardly an argument here, although some EU intelligence officers note that already the smallest amount of distance can create the feeling of being far apart. They describe cooperation within their own branch and team as powerful, while it is perceived already more difficult to relate with their counterparts in other branches, or with members of the organization on another floor of the same building. In this, there is a cultural element as well that will be discussed in the next chapter. Outside the walls of the EU intelligence organizations, the unfamiliarity is mainly due to the bureaucratic complexity of the EU organization as a whole. Even to the intelligence officers working in SIAC, the EU is considered something of a black box despite courses given on the system. Knowing the many others that are preoccupied with security issues and policy maker support in the organization remains troublesome. Two experienced EU intelligence officers estimate the number of possible clients of SIAC at more than 500, a 'chaotic conglomerate' they regrouped in some 50 'families of clients' for reasons of comprehension.[82] Many respondents refer to the complexity and the challenges this brings. One EU intelligence officer depicts the structure and its institutions as 'confusing'.[83] Another jokes:

> *'Are you aware of how many civil servants are working for the EU in almost as many buildings? It is huge. Every analyst is being confronted each week with an extra [previously unknown] person who is occupied with his topic. And who is legitimately so.'*[84]

On a more serious note, he adds the difficulties this complexity brings for social relations and trust:

> *'It is already hard to identify which relations are necessary or helpful, let alone maintain them.'*[85]

80 Interview 18, 22, 23
81 Interview 15
82 Interview 15, 36
83 Interview 23
84 Interview 40
85 Ibidem

Weak connectivity is an issue for EU intelligence organizations, both on the inside and with the outside. Connections between SIAC, national services, and EU institutions surely exist, but their strength is limited.[86] From the interviews two themes emerge; lacking technical connections and inadequate procedures and routines for exchange. First, many note a lack of secure and adequate communication systems between national services and the EU, but especially in the EU itself when communicating 'outside the inner-circle of intelligence.'[87] One EU intelligence officer gives an insight:

> *'When we look at the EU, to start with there is a clear lack in compatible communication systems. I find this shocking. Even if you would want to share information, actually doing so is an effort. Here, within our own organization, it is already hard to share between different buildings or floors. In the case of sharing with the [wider] EU, you encounter more hurdles like the need to register these products separately and finding the right technical means to send them.'*[88]

It is a known issue that is also addressed in the Strategic Compass and mentioned in chapter 5.[89] Yet, weak connectivity is about more than technical connections alone.

A second concern voiced by respondents is that of inadequate procedures and routines. These are perceived of as being non-committal and therefore not very fruitful.[90] As one EU intelligence officer observes:

> *'... it is all relatively volatile. Sometimes it happens, sometimes it doesn't. And it can always end suddenly.'*[91]

As for procedures, information coming to either EUMS INT or INTCEN is not automatically shared with the other, despite SIAC being in place.[92] In addition, SIAC primarily relies on a system where they send all their requests for Information (RFI's) to all connected services indiscriminately. It does not take into account which service might have information concerning the topic and little feedback is given on the value of contributions. An EU intelligence officer estimates that SIAC sends out 300 RFI's per year that are 'often vague'.[93] As for routines, some respondents note a lack of outreach by SIAC. They stress that SIAC does not have repeating cycles of agreed-intelligence making like NATO and neither does

86 Interview 6, 9, 29, 36, 43

87 Interview 23

88 Interview 27

89 Council of the European Union, "7371/22 A Strategic Compass for Security and Defence - For a European Union That Protects Its Citizens, Values and Interests and Contributes to International Peace and Security," 21.

90 Interview 12, 14, 15, 28, 42

91 Interview 40

92 See also: Davis Cross, "The Merits of Informality: The European Transgovernmental Intelligence Network," 240.

93 Interview 40

it organize joint conferences for fusing the contributions of the services together. An EU intelligence officer assesses the routines of his own organization as too internally focused; a situation in which:

> *'The action officers are more EU employees than that they are links to the outside world [and] as a result, their needs find little response.'*[94]

Weak connections jeopardize SIAC's function as a bridge between the national services and the EU institutions.[95] In a practical sense, because through their connections with the outer world the EU organizations communicate their needs, receive the contributions required, and channel the intelligence produced. In a relational sense, because these links build the familiarity that is vital for trust. A respondent strikingly observes that 'building trust by carrier pigeon is hard.'[96] When a partner is tied to a network in a multitude of strong and weak ties, this makes it an appealing partner to connect and rely on, but the EU simply is not.[97] Yet, when evaluating this lack of connectivity in relation to trust, it is not enough to only address SIAC. For successful interaction, it takes two to tango. Notwithstanding the perceived flaws on the part of SIAC, there seems little appetite with the national services for a stronger relation either. When there had been a mutual will to connect, a way would probably have been found regardless of technical difficulties. This can best be illustrated by again looking at the routines. Indeed, there are no big conferences for co-production in EU intelligence, but there are working groups and coordination meetings. Yet, many national services see them as too much of an effort and (the level of) attendance is low.[98] One national intelligence officer even doubts whether:

> *'[His] director has ever been to these [EU Heads of Services] meetings; or one of his unit heads for that matter. And I consider us being obedient or dutiful in this respect when compared to other nations.'*[99]

Interestingly, it appears that this 'is not about Brussels'.[100] Some services do attend similar meetings organized by NATO. Apparently, the reputation of the EU does not help cooperation either.

94 Interview 27

95 Interview 5, 6, 19, 39

96 Interview 16

97 Soeters, *Sociology and Military Studies*, 51, 56; Hanneman and Riddle, "Concepts and Measures for Basic Network Analysis," 2011, 363; Macke et al., "The Impact of Inter-Organizational Social Capital in Collaborative Networks Competitiveness," 558; Lotia and Hardy, "Critical Perspectives on Cooperation," 369; Granovetter, "The Strength of Weak Ties," 2003; Todeva and Knoke, "Strategic Alliances And Corporate Social Capital," 39–40.

98 Interview 5, 17

99 Interview 31

100 Interview 17

### 6.3.3. Reputations: Mixed Feelings

Reputation is important for the EU. The organization is largely dependent on its good name to invoke national services to contribute to its intelligence support. Contributions that are - after all - purely voluntary. Respondents point out at that, contrary to the Americans in NATO, the EU has no explicit guardian to encourage participants to jump on the wagon, and more importantly to stay on and contribute. There are some forerunners on which the EU floats in terms of capacity, but at this point none seems able or willing to dictate its will in production or intelligence reform.[101] Also, again contrary to NATO, in the EU personal leadership so far had little lasting effect:

> *'It should not be a punishment to be a director of EU intelligence, military or civilian. It should be the other way around. [...] the cherry on the cake for an intelligence leader [...] after a long and brilliant career in national intelligence. A director of a national service should be flattered when they invite him for such a job. [...] Yet this is not the case now."*[102]

In recent years some strong figures with extensive intelligence background were appointed that improved the role of intelligence in the EU, but they have been unable to counter the flawed organizational reputation of the EU in the intelligence community. EU intelligence still holds a poor reputation with national intelligence officers. Respondents state that the leading perception in the community is a very negative one, and refer to it as untrustworthy. One names this reputational deficit directly when stating that 'their [EU] reputation is just substandard'.[103]

This is remarkable. Reputation is the extent to which an actor is believed to be able to live up to the expectations placed upon him. As described above, the expectations placed on the EU by national practitioners are fairly low. In terms of products, it would be hard not to meet them. Even more so, some national practitioners state that the EU does live up to their (modest) expectations in terms of output. One respondent voices this opinion when saying that 'the EU is a trustworthy partner, for the job they have to perform'.[104] An alternative explanation would be that the flawed reputation of the EU is not so much based on deliverables, but on its poor performance in the process. There is some evidence that this is indeed the case. Adding to the remarks quoted earlier, a national intelligence officer evaluates that:

101 Interview 27
102 Interview 30
103 Interview 27, 32, 33
104 Interview 19

*'When in coordinating meetings nothing is really coordinated, and only shallow or off-topic presentations are being done, and it still takes a whole day, attendance will decrease rapidly. Or rather a replacement of a replacement is being sent to Brussels."*[105]

Yet, this is still somewhat surprising. As noted above, there is low familiarity with EU organizations and processes among national practitioners. The poor processual reputation can hardly be based on a clear first-hand image of current action. That image is lacking. In addition to the assertion that familiarity can breed trust[106], the case of the EU shows that that unfamiliarity can equally lead to distrust.

The distrust and poor reputation of the EU on the outside appears to be based more on a general sentiment and cultivated image than on actual knowledge. It is a superficial glimpse rather than a clear image of the organization. National practitioners are seen to 'not know the organization and therefore [...] dislike it, or think they do'.[107] This is an interesting observation. On the one hand, it underlines the idea presented in chapter 3 that reputation is important for cooperation in secretive and somewhat competitive settings with considerable complexity and uncertainty.[108] Yet, it combines this idea with the notion that in such a setting reputation is likely to take a generalized yet lasting form that is decoupled from specific actions.[109] This can have a distorting effect on cooperation. This is well illustrated by the EU's lacking reputation in security and security awareness. Respondents indicate that they are reluctant to share intelligence products with the EU, because of the way they feel their intelligence is treated there. Many of them state that they perceive the EU to be too 'insecure' to do business, 'a notorious unsafe place' even. Intelligence going into SIAC is perceived to be 'ending up on the street time and time again'.[110] Nevertheless, in practice most of the respondents voicing these concerns cannot think of an actual example in which security was breached. One national officer, when asked for an example when mentioning the security problem of the EU, admits:

*'When I think of it, I cannot really recollect any concrete examples of such incidents. It is more of a general feeling of unease."*[111]

105 Interview 17

106 Gulati, "Does Familiarity Breed Trust? The Implications of Repeated Ties for Contractual Choice in Alliances."

107 Interview 18, 29, 30

108 Svare, Gausdal, and Möllering, "The Function of Ability, Benevolence, and Integrity-Based Trust in Innovation Networks," 598; Chen, Dai, and Li, "A Delicate Balance for Innovation," 145–76; Przepiorka, Norbutas, and Corten, "Order without Law," 752–64; Luo, "A Coopetition Perspective of Global Competition," 129–44; Tiwana and Bush, "Continuance in Expertise-Sharing Networks," 85–101.

109 Rindova and Martins, "Show Me the Money: A Multidimensional Perspective on Reputation as an Intangible Asset," 20–22.

110 Interview 17, 31

111 Interview 27

Another indication for the shallow image is the easy reference to infrastructures as examples of low standing:

> *'Looking at their building, their hallway, it is all not very impressive. It does not radiate that for intelligence the EU is the place to be."*[112]

This offers a meagre image and one that is sometimes emphasized by comparison with NATO. Another intelligence officer adds that:

> *'[NATO is] perhaps seen as more hardline, cutting edge or sexy. [...] It is huge and impressive. The building has cost billions. By comparison, the EU and EUMS INT are the lowest in the food chain."*[113]

The reputation EU intelligence holds with practitioners on the inside of the organization is more favorable than that on the outside. That is not to say that it is all positive there. In the contrary, when looking at the actual output or rather the outcome, EU intelligence officers are at least as skeptical as their national counterparts. One EU intelligence officer shrugs when saying:

> *'If you constantly bring reports that are qualified merely as 'RESTRICTED' [the lowest level of intelligence classification], then your added value for the countries is exactly that; limited."*[114]

They are critical about the process as well, questioning its timeliness and relevance.[115] Nevertheless, when looking at the potential value of the EU intelligence products for the national services, insiders are far more positive than outsiders. And these practitioners are in a far better position to be the judge of that than outsiders are. They see first-hand the quality of the process and its organizations. Based on this knowledge many insiders challenge the idea of faulty intelligence and praise the 'diversity in experience, expertise and perceptions, [...] all integrated in this one arrangement."[116] An experienced liaison officer explicates:

> *'My credo is 'be here'. You have to be present to be able to judge how it was made. See for yourself. It is like being in a restaurant. A plate can look terrific when presented at the table, but you would want to know what is in it. And you have to be in the kitchen to judge. Is there really this touch of fine Italian basil? Or did they use some cheap substitute."*[117]

112 Interview 27
113 Interview 26
114 Interview 41
115 Interview 44
116 Interview 23, 25, 38, 44
117 Interview 30

Not only are EU intelligence officers more confident about the EU intelligence organizations than their national counterparts. They are also more confident than they were themselves when still being nationally based. This change in perception is well-know from academic publications on international organizations. An EU intelligence officer describes the change:

> *'I actually didn't know how the system works in practice. And I must say, I am surprised in a positive way on how well it works.'*[118]

Another, after admitting that he is still highly skeptical about the organization, finds it:

> *'A fascinating place. [...] When you are actually in, you start to understand why [it works as it does] and why this is necessary. From there on you might even start to appreciate it.'*[119]

The relatively favorable appreciation and expectation of EU intelligence organizations is held not only by those currently working in the EU structures. It extends to those having done so in the past. The divide is so distinct that some term the two groups: 'believers and non-believers'.[120] The potential these 'believers' see differs though. Some point at the possibility of better disclosing the exclusive information present in other EU institutions. They see these institutions to 'provide valuable information on a wide range of topics'.[121] Others focus on educational possibilities or see added value in the circulation of knowledge within the community, for example on intelligence policy or tradecraft. This notion of circulation reflects ideas on cooperation in academic publications by Hoffmann.[122] She brings to the fore the role of transnational knowledge exchange in the constitution of intelligence services and their practices, instead of only looking at international cooperation from a national perspective.

What most of these practitioners have in common is that they think the multilateral arrangement of the EU has exceptional strength as a social platform, literally bringing European intelligence practitioners together. As one EU intelligence officer claims:

> *'I think this unwritten role as a facilitator is more important than what is actually on the agenda. The real agenda is building and developing relations.'*[123]

118 Interview 16
119 Interview 32
120 Interview 7, 24, 43, 44
121 Interview 22
122 Hoffmann, "Circulation, Not Cooperation."
123 Interview 16

Subsequently, they suggest that the organization could assume more the role of a meeting place, instead of a marketplace. A place 'for connecting and getting acquainted many partners who can continue to cooperate elsewhere or build common understanding'.[124] They are convinced that this social platform will grant future access to a network of resources. This resonates the ideas by Lefebvre who suggests that multilateral platforms are not so much useful for their direct operational value, but 'to establish relations based upon trust and confidence with new organizational members or outside partners'.[125] As a meeting place the EU might be able to gain centrality and by doing so 'break [the] lack of attraction and negative expectation'.[126] Some respondents think it will also improve the visibility and familiarity currently hampering its reputation on the outside. It is thought to trigger:

> *'The perception that these institutions are worth something and can actually be of value; [...] that it is not all amateurism and inability there.'*[127]

Some even propose that, instead of trying to be of operational value and having a social effect on the side, the EU could focus on being of social value and have an operational effect on the side. Yet, this will be difficult.

When evaluating perceptions of ability in EU intelligence cooperation at the meso-level, it becomes obvious that trusted relations are very much functional relations. Without an operational need there is little fundament on which to build trust, nothing to start of the relation. The services will not relinquish control.[128] As one national officer explicates:

> *'We cooperate [...] when there is a specific operational need for it, not just because [...] the EU would like to have it all. It is push not pull. You don't meet every month to share it all, go out and come back again. We provide the EU with what we have when it is there.'*[129]

It comprises of a paradox. The EU holds little centrality in the European intelligence network. Therefore, national services do not know the EU intelligence organizations well and they maintain their negative yet superficial image of them. As a result, they keep their distance. Yet, by keeping their distance there is little chance that this shallow picture will alter. There are two ways of changing this. The first is an increasing operational relevance for the EU and its intelligence organizations. Some respondents argue that the increased operational posture of the EU in security matters has started a ratchet of cooperation already. This will be

124 Interview 1, 33

125 Lefebvre, "The Difficulties and Dilemmas of International Intelligence Cooperation," 537.

126 Interview 30, 25

127 Interview 30

128 Interview 5

129 Interview 12

discussed in chapter 8 when dealing with perceptions of benevolence and the role solidarity plays in this. The second option is to somehow increase knowledge of EU intelligence and its organizations. Some respondents suggest that bolstering personal networks enables perceptions of ability to develop from a shallow to a more nuanced image, opening the door for trust and cooperative behavior. This idea is also one of the notions behind ICE, the European platform between intelligence services mentioned in subsection 6.2.1. It seeks to bolster cooperation not through operational exchange, but by 'allowing executives from different services to get together and compare experiences a non-operational level'.[130]

## 6.4. The Micro-Level: Invaluable Boundary Spanners

### 6.4.1. Navigators: Knowing the Actors

In this research, personal and direct contacts are among the most frequently mentioned enablers for trust and cooperation in intelligence. Intelligence officers sometimes are intrigued themselves by how important it is in intelligence to get personally acquainted. In practice, even in tight-knit clusters 'it is essential to know each other, to discover likeability and people you can talk to. To smell each other'. Contrary to the hard image of intelligence work often portrayed in academic publications and the media, practitioners describe it as a 'very soft skill enterprise'.[131] Although short of comparative data in other areas, this seems to support the claim that intelligence is 'perhaps most human of all aspects of government' and fits well into the sociological perspective presented in chapter 3.[132]

The role of individuals in accessing the European intelligence network is invaluable. They are the impersonation of the 'weak ties' from the well-known social network theory by Granovetter. In terms of familiarization and reputations, a network with many overlapping ties offers the strongest connectivity. In intelligence, strong ties are seen within the operational clusters mentioned. Nevertheless, between these clusters (or as Granovetter calls them: 'cliques') it is the few isolated connections that are important. They connect actors that are not naturally linked together.[133] In the sparse network of European intelligence, there are some individuals that can bridge divides between the EU and national intelligence services. This boundary spanning activity encompasses being ambassadors to their respective organizations, signaling (new) possibilities and brokering information between them. In social network theory they go by many other names as well, but their role is always the same. They facilitate 'the flow of information between people or groups separated or hindered by

130 Intelligence College Europe, "The College."

131 Interview 12, 7, 16

132 Aldrich, "US-European Intelligence Co-Operation on Counter-Terrorism," 124.

133 Granovetter, *The Strength of Weak Ties*, 1981, 1369–71, 1373, 1375–76.

some gap or barrier'.[134] These people provide channels for interaction and they build and maintain relations.

Boundary spanning starts with knowing the network. Using the possibilities for trust-based cooperation in the European intelligence network requires skillful navigators who know the actors, ties and relations. They have to guide their organizations through generally unknown territory and unseen sensitivity. As shown above, the size and the diversity of the organizations in the network make it hard to know them all sufficiently, let alone cooperate. There are not many people who can be of assistance. Despite the importance of cooperation, most of the practitioners still work on the inside of their building only, or most of their time. Bilateral meetings are common, but for most intelligence officers not something that occurs every week. Knowledge of the network, its actors and interconnections is rare. To know 'your peers and what they are capable of doing' becomes a vital resource for successful cooperation and a form of capital in its own right. Acquiring this social capital requires investment.[135] It 'is more than doing administration and keeping a scorecard'.[136] It is an active process to keep the relation going and maintain access. You have to make an effort to stay connected. Yet, without it, it is hard to get any dialogue going. When describing his own role in a recent initiative for multilateral cooperation, one seasoned intelligence officer stated that his added value had been mainly to know the network from previous experience, 'so as to know what [was] the appropriate, efficient and effective way to proceed'. He added that in the course of the cooperation it became clear to him that he had previously known only what could be considered the tip of the iceberg. Bringing together these partners had not been an easy task, due to the inherent 'tension between differing expectations and realities' in the network.[137] Besides being helpful in mobilizing resources, social capital can smoothen discrepancies and can even help to resolve conflicts.[138]

Getting or staying in contact does not always need to be very complicated or take much time. In some cases, 'it is as simple as a short meeting or conversation', or a shared experience like 'meeting in a hotel lobby during a nightly fire alarm'.[139] Yet, it is considered of the upmost importance that the encounter is face-to-face to be successful and to meet afterwards on a regular basis. Without the 'small talk' and without keeping a 'flame burning' it will be very hard to use contacts for cooperation.[140] In this respect, it is noticeable that when a country does not have a liaison present in a capital, or at some distance like is sometimes the case

134 Long, Cunningham, and Braithwaite, "Bridges, Brokers and Boundary Spanners in Collaborative Networks," 1–2.

135 Interview 20, 36

136 Interview 41

137 Interview 1

138 Interview 21

139 Interview 20, 31

140 Interview 9

with the EU in Brussels, this negatively influences cooperation.[141] Likewise respondents stress the detrimental effects the COVID pandemic had on their work. One intelligence officer remembers seeing most of his colleagues in person only some two years after having started his job in the EU.[142] The videoconferences in that period were barely enough to maintain relations between already acquainted and like-minded counterparts, but far insufficient to get relations going with new partners or to step into new initiatives.

Social capital in the European intelligence network rests with a nucleus of experienced mid-level intelligence professionals in the services and in the arrangements themselves. As indicated when discussing the diversity of the network, external relations branches usually see it as their task to know the network.[143] As shown, they have a pivotal role in building and sustaining relations, especially with new or relatively unknown partners. They also have an important task with those partners that temporarily are not considered most needed or most valuable; maintaining ties despite low expectations and keeping alive the opportunity for future interaction. Nevertheless, it can be doubted whether without these efforts 'no cooperation would exist', as one external relations officer stated.[144] First, the personal and direct character of building and maintaining relations in intelligence cooperation means that the role of any one branch is necessarily limited. Apart from the expertise required, there are only so many people you can personally know and uphold in-depth relations with. Second, in intelligence it is even harder to bundle network knowledge in one place than in other circumstances. As one intelligence officer argues:

> *'Possessing an up-to-date network map is one of the gold nuggets for intelligence cooperation. [...yet,] by its sensitivity and complexity, it would be strange if it really existed somewhere in its totality."*[145]

In practice, knowledge of the intelligence network and the potential gains it holds, is to a large extent scattered among participants. In addition, it is only a small part of the workforce that is intensely engaged in cooperation. A select group of people have cooperation as their daily business, being liaisons, external relations officers or those posted in an international organization. Sometimes they are even seen to form a secluded club of people rotating through international postings for years in a row, building selective ties.[146]

For EU intelligence, personal networks can create a form of access that its organizations are uncapable of delivering. As shown in the previous sections, EU intelligence holds little

141 Interview 20
142 Interview 24
143 Interview 21, 32, 44
144 Interview 20
145 Interview 17
146 Interview 17, 36

centrality in the European network and as a result EU intelligence organizations have low familiarity and low reputation. Moreover, connectivity with the outside world is low as well. This comes at a price for cooperation. Nevertheless, the lack of centrality and connectivity can to some extent be countered by individual interaction and judgment. Regular contacts on a personal level enable cooperation 'with a partner [EU] that is too large to fully grasp and with a reputation that obliges one to be cautious'.[147] Yet, in European intelligence there are not that many experienced navigators for the EU. Few intelligence officers are - or have been - actively engaged in its organizations. In addition, the EU lacks an external relations branch to proactively reach out and facilitate contacts. A remarkable fact for an organization that is fully dependent on external information. It mainly comes down to those select few working in or close to the EU intelligence institutions to uphold relations. As one respondent explained:

> *'To know what is going on and to use the [EU] network, you need to be there. It won't be for free. That means investing in people within the EU structures in operational jobs as well as in policy."*[148]

This is not an investment all countries are willing to make. There are some indications that within the EU there are long-lived job vacancies for which the countries are not readily providing personnel. In addition, as seen when discussing the role of leadership, there are some analysts who prefer not be posted with the EU at all.[149] Yet, it is not staffing alone. Many respondents indicate that the frequent rotation of personnel poses a problem to relation-building as well. They think turn-over to be exceptionally high within the EU, one officer recalling that 'every month or so you get a mail announcing a departure and introducing a replacement."[150] When taking this statement at face-value, it seems somewhat exaggerated. On an international workforce of approximately 200 people, one or two rotations per month is not excessive. Yet, in the context of knowledge building it can be detrimental indeed. One EU intelligence officer clarifies that 'because of high-turn-over, we cannot build stable links, or even know where to start. [...] Each time you start over again."[151] The noted complexity of the EU organization does not help either. For this reason, some respondents advocate extending the period that people work in the EU to five years or so.[152] An EU intelligence officer criticizes that action officers and Seconded National Experts (SNEs) only stay around for three to four years, as 'coming from the outside, it takes up to two years to really come to grips with the intelligence process in the EU'.[153] Another feels the same, although he estimates it takes only a year for them to:

147 Interview 19
148 Interview 18
149 Interview 22, 26
150 Interview 16, 6, 43
151 Interview 15
152 Interview 22, 24
153 Interview 30

*'Feel like a fish in the [EU] pond, with the EU acronyms, vocabulary, non-written rules, understanding who is doing what, who counts in a meeting, and who is just pretending...'*[154]

No matter the math, for getting to know the EU being there is very important. This is perhaps true for many organizations and surely for many intelligence organizations. However, as one seasoned EU intelligence officer sighs 'it is true in here especially. The scale of the organization is immense, bigger than I have experienced so far anywhere else, and a lot more complex. The amount of mail alone, holy shit'.[155] Being there, and knowing the network, is the basis for two other important individual roles in the EU; being information-brokers and ambassadors.

### 6.4.2. Information Brokers: Knowing the Way

Individuals are pivotal in bridging the considerable distance between services and the EU, as well as in the EU itself. In general, the already mentioned nucleus of people directly and personally engaged in cooperation plays an important role in advocating the value of cooperative arrangements. They feel it is their task to convince key personnel in their respective national services that these arrangements are 'worthwhile'. If they fail to do so for specific clusters, these are likely to be terminated or will not live up to their full potential.[156] In the case of the EU, termination of the arrangement is not a real option. Yet, the chances of not living up to its full potential are ever the more. Given the organizational weaknesses in EU centrality, discussed above, the flow of information to the EU is far from guaranteed both in quantity and in quality. Its standing, connectivity and reputation are not very helpful in convincing national services to contribute. Yet, without their information EU intelligence is lost. The organization loses its practical value and is doomed as a meeting place as well; without information there is little incentive for coming in and exchanging views. For this reason, information brokerage is an - perhaps the - essential part of social relations in EU intelligence cooperation. And it is up to individuals to keep the flow of information going.

As depicted in chapter 3, the first to come to mind when discussing information brokerage in intelligence cooperation, is the leadership. Directors of national intelligence services are often the most prominent and most visible individuals on the outside. Of course, with respect to cooperation, they are also the formal and ultimate gatekeepers of their organizations. Without their general approval and support, connections among subordinates would mean

154 Interview 36
155 Interview 40
156 Interview 9

little. Moreover, their personal relations can make or break an arrangement. This seems especially true in the formal setting of the EU. As one EU intelligence officer states:

> *'If the leadership is willing and able to talk, and are on the same track, then a lot is possible based on personal relations on the lower levels. They have the final say. If they do not approve, it will not be signed. [...] If it is not on paper, it will not happen.'*[157]

Multiple EU intelligence officers note a distinct difference in SIAC effectiveness between various sets of directors. Their closeness is seen to be of the upmost importance, a point further elaborated on in chapter 8. Like their EU counterparts, national directors are 'in a position to formally prolong or stop cooperation arrangements'. And their open support for the arrangement is a powerful signal for their subordinates. It 'helps when people feel a blessing from above'.[158] In addition, directors can loosen up grinded relations or sanction cooperation on new and sensitive topics.

Yet, when compared to what Guttmann for example observes in the Club de Berne, the boundary spanning by formal leadership in EU intelligence cooperation seems limited.[159] However, Guttman mainly addresses the fundamental role of leadership in subsequent counterterrorism initiatives, mainly being change management. The EU might provide a more static setting of ongoing exchange. However crucial their approval and support on major issues, the directors of the intelligence services and EU intelligence organizations are not the most influential individuals when it comes to giving substance to practical EU intelligence cooperation. The chances of significantly altering the arrangement or putting it to an end are slim. The opportunities to play an active role in bolstering it are rare, confined to those moments that a reform of the arrangement is at hand, or that the scope of cooperation is drastically expanded.[160] Within an existing frame like the EU, the most important question is what will be shared exactly on a daily basis. And when it comes to deciding on the amount or type of intelligence shared, this is seldomly done at director's level. One EU intelligence officer shrugged when considering the role of leadership directives in ongoing cooperation, stating that:

157 Interview 39

158 Interview 20, 25, 43

159 Aviva Guttmann, 'Combatting Terror in Europe: Euro-Israeli Counterterrorism Intelligence Cooperation in the Club de Berne (1971–1972)', *Intelligence and National Security* 33, no. 2 (23 February 2018): 159; Shpiro, 'The Communication of Mutual Security: Frameworks for European-Mediterranean Intelligence Sharing', 21.

160 In this respect, the current momentum that appears to be developing in strengthening SIAC could prove to be one of the rare occasions in which national directors can play an active and influential role. This process will come back in chapter 8.

*'Of course, we listen when we are told to work together more. But in the end the real output is about every-day interactions and interpretation. They cannot do that for you. You can work together, and you can work [emphasis] together."*[161]

As will be shown in the next chapter, the practice of intelligence and intelligence cooperation is a very bottom-up and informal affair. Besides the fact that directors probably have far more important things at their tables than micro-managing RFI's, their personal networks are considered too weak and too short-lived to be much of an influence in this informal setting. The formal leadership is hardly in a position to do more than provide leverage to the informal networks of experienced practitioners working in the various branches and teams.[162] Despite their international travels, they are not part of the nucleus of internationally active intelligence practitioners. They have little opportunity to establish and maintain a strong network built on repeated interaction. Moreover, some intelligence officers point at the frequent turn-over of key officials and their lack of intelligence background as further limiting their role in building and maintaining worthwhile arrangements. They are seen to 'come from many backgrounds', to 'maybe have only been in intelligence for a short period of time', or even to just to 'do their tour and leave'.[163]

In the EU, cooperation is perceived very much a working-level affair. The role of information-brokers again befalls on the experienced practitioners that interact on a day-to-day basis. Contacts among them are 'much more intense' than those of the leadership.[164] One EU intelligence officer even poses that 'the further you go down the scale, the better [cooperation] gets'.[165] At working level, the bureaucratic interests noted by Fägersten[166] are seen to be less of an issue. Even more so, one respondent notes that at working level partners will be seen 'playing with their own national and services' limits' without their leadership ever being involved.[167] EU intelligence officers mostly do not consider themselves as analysts only. They also see themselves as representatives and entry points for their national organizations, even when officially they are not. As one describes: 'I am the connecting link between the Member States collecting the information needed and EUMS."[168] By being in touch with their countrymen both in the EU and at home, these officers together with the liaisons are able to lower the threshold for cooperation both between services and with the EU. Position can dictate instrumental behavior here. An EU intelligence officer reflects with interest on his own (change of) behavior:

161 Interview 38
162 Interview 10
163 Interview 16, 17, 43
164 Interview 7
165 Interview 16
166 Fägersten, *Sharing Secrets*.
167 Interview 36
168 Interview 14

> *'We here can be a bridge, push them [...] I have seen the change up-close. Saw it in my own person. Formerly I was a [national] staff officer. But now, in need of input, I called a friend of old times. And I pushed him to work harder. Almost against his better interest, making his life somewhat miserable. Now all of a sudden, I had become a European staff officer."*[169]

As information-brokers, EU intelligence officers act as negotiators between national and EU interests and use 'their power to persuade'.[170] Not only are they in a perfect position for passing important and exclusive information, they are legitimate members of both SIAC and their national service as well. By closing the gap between the two they facilitate cooperation.[171] They have at their disposal relevant national systems for secure communication, know their national counterpart, and can talk to them directly. Moreover, they are in the exclusive position to know not only what information is potentially available at home, but also to judge the usability in the EU. Contrary to the formal system, they are able to be very specific in their requests even pointing at certain valuable paragraphs that could be extracted from otherwise non-releasable products. Being in between worlds, EU intelligence officers use their personal relations to bridge divides. As in the voluntary EU system it is not enough to just impose sharing from the top, they informally 'walk-the-walks to create support in the hallways of the workforce'.[172] The extent to which they succeed in this role of course very much depends on the person at hand. Some will be more pro-active than others. Moreover, a good link to proficient intelligence services at home is crucial and not all possess those links. Nevertheless, there is none who challenges the idea that bridging is an essential part of his job. One officer, after mentioning the hurdles he came across in trying to be a bridge, adds:

> *'Still, being here I take professional pride in trying to establish that connection. I add value by doing so."*[173]

The personal bridge between EU intelligence officers and their home organizations provides the system with credibility. Personal networks can create a form of leverage that the EU's organizational network cannot. In practice, intelligence cooperation is 'tailor-made; there is no such thing as sharing on auto-pilot."[174] For the EU, interpersonal relations are seen as indispensable. As one respondent describes:

169 Interview 24

170 Interview 2, 44

171 Giardini et al., "Four Puzzles of Reputation-Based Cooperation," 52; Giardini and Wittek, "Gossip, Reputation, and Sustainable Cooperation: Sociological Foundations," 31–32; Long, Cunningham, and Braithwaite, "Bridges, Brokers and Boundary Spanners in Collaborative Networks," 9.

172 Interview 19

173 Interview 26

174 Interview 18

*'What is unachievable by adhering to the formal rules and structures, can be done by using networks of relations."*[175]

This EU officer spoke of a recent crisis in which the EU lacked a good information position for planning potential extraction operations. By utilizing informal personal contacts with a partner, it became possible to bypass bureaucratic procedures and sensitivities up front. These would have made timely support impossible. In cases where deep cooperation between the EU and (clusters of) partners is hard, personal relationships can soften the edges of a seemingly impossible exchange. In the case above the exchange was formalized later, but many times none of it is ever done in writing. Similar informal dynamics are noted within SIAC itself.[176] This necessarily limits the utility of the information exchanged. However insightful, it can never be formally incorporated in EU products nor can it be processed in EU systems. Moreover, it obeys the red lines of intelligence cooperation; no information on sources is given, no products are shared that are classified as not releasable to the EU. This seems a problematic grey zone, yet in many instances it concerns merely circumstantial information intended for interpretation and explanation. To facilitate discussions. This is not uncommon in other intelligence exchanges either. A national officer explicates that exchange mostly requires social interaction:

*'The reality of intelligence cooperation is not black-and-white. [...] Intelligence sharing [...] is nothing like exchanging Pokémon cards. This reality does not exist. It is one of the erroneous assumptions with the outside world. [...] Our reality has become so complex and so layered that without interpretation no understanding will occur. So, exchanging intelligence can hardly be as simple as a transactional process."*[177]

Experience is mentioned as a prerequisite for daring to seek and use the individual room for maneuver. Whereas junior analysts are thought of as being hesitant to wheel and deal informally, seasoned officers see it as a second nature. They feel confident to act without explicit approval. An experienced analyst says:

*'I am able to handle the limits [...] with more ease than they [unexperienced analysts] do. To do the business of giving and taking information. These limits are not always that clear, not prescribed. There is room for interpretation in what is open and what is not."*[178]

175 Interview 14
176 Interview 15, 23, 29
177 Interview 34
178 Interview 37

### 6.4.3. Ambassadors: Knowing the Reputations

Direct contact offers the first step of relation building and a precondition for testing a partner's ability first hand. It is also an instrument for signaling quality. In the context of the EU, the role of signaling and communicating quality lies primarily with the intelligence officers working in the structures themselves. The roles of navigators and information-brokers can to some extent be also fulfilled by external relations personnel and liaisons, and they certainly are adept in discerning the potential of partners. Nevertheless, signaling the quality of the EU products and process for them is more difficult. The action officers and SNEs in SIAC are the only ones able to judge the quality of contributions and the proficiency of seconded personnel on a day-to-basis.[179] This information is not officially disclosed to others. Products going out contain no information on the number of contributions used and where they came from. In addition, the national services have no information on the way EU products were constituted, and what perspectives were taken into account. As far as they are concerned, it could be an 'old Beetle dressed up like a Cadillac'. As shown above when considering reputations, in many cases they do not even think it looks like a Cadillac to begin with. This is different from the people working in the EU structures themselves. Based on their exclusive insight in 'what is under the hood', they can attest of the quality involved. Even for those products that look 'shallow from the outside'. In doing so, they use their personal reputations to make up for the reputational deficiency on the side of the EU. They act as ambassadors of the latter and enable the future flow of information. Yet, their personal reputations serve not only the EU.

The EU provides national services with an excellent setting for testing the waters of old and new European partners. Being part of a multilateral arrangement like the EU intelligence structures, is seen as 'a kind of missionary work that bolsters [...] reputation'.[180] It is a way of becoming visible and known to a wide range of potential partners. Moreover, it provides a signal of commitment and ability. The way services cooperate in the EU arrangement and the quality they deliver - both in contributions and manpower - provide insight in their ability, and in what can be expected of them in terms of cooperative behavior. It can lead to new bilateral arrangements or the inclusion in existing plurilateral formats. Given the importance of partner experience in 'climbing the ladder of trust', old allies are expected to be the most prominent in this process of expansion. Yet, this is not always the case. Sometimes they are not seen as the most attractive. First, reputation works two ways. A long-time partner in EU cooperation can have established a track record for not participating, mostly being passive and holding back. Although formal naming and shaming is not common in EU intelligence,

179 Interview 37, 43, 44

180 Interview 18, 4, 36, 43, 44

insiders do notice cases of such 'free-riding'. And this obviously does not help future cooperation.[181] In the long run:

> *'Being part of the old guard is not sufficient to maintain a positive reputation. You have to show that you are in, and be there when there is work to do. [...] And this participation is not only operational [...], it is about being willing to take part in [EU intelligence] reform as well."*[182]

Second, a multilateral platform like the EU introduces partners that in many cases are 'less likely to come to mind' when considering intensifying or starting operational cooperation in a bilateral setting'.[183] Although some EU intelligence officers doubt whether this is formally allowed, many indicate that they use their multilateral posting to bolster bilateral cooperation as well. They are on the look-out for new partners or explore which partner might hold valuable information and on what topic. One EU intelligence officer depicts SIAC as:

> *'A scouting ground for cooperation. Based on the personal contacts in the EU setting it becomes possible to have a broad view."*[184]

The effect of reputations in multilateral cooperation is wider than for one partner alone. Reputational information travels through personal networks among analysts and onwards. One national intelligence officer illustrates this when speaking about a close bilateral partner:

> *'[They are] quite open about their cooperative arrangements, even about the partners they work with well and on what topics or areas of interest. But I guess that is because our [organizational] relationship with them is quite good. And because on a personal level we have good relation [as well]."*[185]

This functional gossip among trusted partners occurs in plurilateral clubs as well:

> *'The sharing of reputational information among sworn brothers is commonplace. In some informal clubs it is the business of the day even. [...] About good qualities, but certainly about their doubts."*[186]

People talk, especially when they know each other well. From this interaction information is derived about 'which partners are interesting and which are not'; the community will get

181 Interview 36
182 Interview 30
183 Interview 17, 25, 27, 33
184 Interview 25
185 Interview 20
186 Interview 30

to know 'who are co-operators' and who are not.[187] One respondent even finds that 'the true function of liaison is assessing partners on the level of trust they have accumulated, either directly or with other trusted partners'.[188] When it becomes clear that one of the participants in a cooperation is not really committed, or not committed at all, this will turn against him. As one national intelligence officer remarks:

> *'At one point you will notice that you no longer are being approached for separate deals, or ad-hoc groups or arrangements."*[189]

Between the intelligence officers exchanging reputational information, there is an opposite effect. Exchanging gossip creates or strengthens social bonding between participants and increases benevolence.[190] When looking at EU intelligence cooperation, it is exactly between these information-brokers and ambassadors - the action officers and SNEs - that social bonding occurs. This will be discussed in chapter 8.

The national services show themselves through the people they sent to the EU. Action officers and SNEs can be powerful ambassadors for their services. Their individual reputations provide their national services with reliability and put a face on them. As 'to trust all is virtually impossible, [it] is commuted on connections below that'.[191] One national intelligence officer even remarks that 'building successful cooperation is about that one analyst everybody knows to be able and willing to contribute'.[192] An EU intelligence officer reflects on this role:

> *'We [also] look at their service and the persons involved. Are they able to deliver or do they just talk nonsense. When I behave like a moron, then this will jeopardize my services' reputation."*[193]

Another is equally aware of this responsibility when stating that 'there is a great deal of trust by the national services in the [people] sent here. [...] If you screw up, there is nobody to contain the damage."[194] In an international organization, a malfunctioning intelligence officer will be able to ruin the relation not only for himself, but for his colleagues as well. When there are 'bad experiences with other members of an organization, you tend to generalize these feelings'.[195] On the other hand, they are equally aware that good individual reputations 'are

187 Interview 15
188 Interview 9
189 Interview 17
190 Giardini and Wittek, "Gossip, Reputation, and Sustainable Cooperation: Sociological Foundations," 29–30.
191 Interview 42
192 Interview 27
193 Interview 37
194 Interview 38, 40
195 Interview 26, 18, 24

being reflected on [their] country and organization' as well.[196] And once established, these organizational reputations are seen to stick; they are not only slow to build, but slow to decay as well.

The personal reputations of EU intelligence officers and their relations can bolster trust and help broaden the scope of cooperation between home organizations, as well as with the EU.[197] Although practitioners can meet in many settings, the systematic arrangement of EU intelligence adds the benefit of bringing together practitioners, repeatedly and for longer periods of time. When reflecting on this process, many respondents picture it being like a 'ratchet'.[198] They experience that on the basis of good personal reputation and repeated interaction between individuals, 'partners are open for increasing cooperation on current topics, or expanding it to other areas'.[199] Without being aware of this, they adhere to the idea of a repetitive and reinforcing circle of trust, introduced in chapter 3. At one point, reputations are even seen by respondents to supersede the individual. Based on previous experiences with people from the same organizations or backgrounds, an image is constructed of what generally can be expected of people from that origin. This relates to well-known theories on the effect of social networks on individual behavior and vice versa. It specifically underlines the link between individual and organizational reputations discerned by Zinko and Rubin. They note that the two levels of reputation rub off on each other. It allows individuals to make a head start based on the reputation of their home organization, a point that will return in the next chapter.[200]

## 6.5. Conclusion

This chapter set out to answer how perceptions of ability influence social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation. It started from the entity, process and structure identified in chapter 3. The conceptual framework introduced reputation, familiarization and network as constituent parts of perceived ability. From a conceptual point of view, these proved valuable entry points for obtaining practitioner's beliefs and perceptions about the role of social relations and trust in cooperative behavior. The relation between perceptions of ability, trust and preferences for cooperative behavior was clearly underlined by respondents. Moreover, they proved receptive to the words 'network' and 'familiarity' when describing how they felt about the EU's ability in intelligence. In many cases, they automatically coupled these to the role of 'reputations', although using a variety of related terms there like 'standing'

196 Interview 24

197 Interview 16, 19, 22

198 Interview 9

199 Interview 20

200 Zinko and Rubin, "Personal Reputation and the Organization," 17–18; Raub, Buskens, and Corten, "Social Networks," 665.

and 'image'. Nevertheless, an additional step proved necessary to critically examine how perceptions of ability influence cooperation practice. Iteratively benchmarking the empirical results with sociological concepts from interorganizational relations and especially network theory provided a more in-depth insight. It frames respondents' ideas in terms of network complexity, acknowledging the importance of size, diversity and density of the network. Moreover, it puts emphasis on the roles and positions of actors within this network. Their degree of centrality and connectivity plays a major role in the way they are known and how their reputation is construed. Lastly, it draws attention to the roles of individuals as boundary spanners. Interpersonal ties appear to play a much more important role in international intelligence cooperation than often thought or admitted by scholars and practitioners.

From an empirical point of view, this chapter concludes that in the case of the EU intelligence system perceptions of ability have a negative effect on cooperative behavior. It scrutinized this relation on three levels; the macro (international), the meso (organizational) and the micro (personal). The aggregate conclusion as well as the layered sub-conclusions on which it is built are depicted in Appendix E. They are building blocks for the main conclusion in chapter 9. On all levels, perceptions of ability definitely play a role in preferences for cooperative behavior. The image people hold of the partners in a network influences the amount of trust in the relation. Yet, in the case of the EU it is mainly a blurred image that governs the mechanism of social relations and trust. Except for the interpersonal level, participants in the EU intelligence system do not know each other well. As a result, they have a distorted perception of each other's ability and it is mainly a lack of trust that is noted. Practitioners often refer to calculative notions and show a preference for control measures in EU intelligence cooperation.

On a macro-level, EU intelligence holds only a peripheral position in a complex European intelligence network. The network is sizeable which makes it already hard to connect. However, it is mainly a lack of density that causes the problem. It is not a small world; it is several separated small worlds. The European intelligence network is a sparse policy network where functional divides pose an obstacle to familiarization. EU intelligence can be considered a cluster of the wider European intelligence network. Yet, it is a cluster with low prominence. It holds little centrality in this network and not much is expected from it. National intelligence services prefer cooperation in clusters that are based on their operational activity. As the EU's appeal as an operational cluster is low, so is it's perceived ability among intelligence practitioners. They do not know the EU well and as a result its ability to invoke cooperative behavior suffers further. Multilateral cooperation outside the well-known operational clusters is avoided and mainly reserved for the more familiar NATO alliance.

On a meso-level, EU intelligence organizations suffer from poor reputations due to this low familiarity. SIAC is not perceived to be the central actor in the EU intelligence network. Even when considering intelligence support to the EU, in the perception of most practitioners the EU organizations hold only second place. Intelligence services are seen to form the core of the EU cluster despite an apparent lack of interest from their part. This is not as surprising as it may seem, as it simply follows the service-centric architecture of the EU intelligence system described in chapter 5. SIAC mainly has an intermediate function in intelligence support to EU decision makers. In this respect, it is significant for cooperation that EU intelligence organizations are limited in their ability to perform the task of linking EU policy makers to national services. Weak connectivity in terms of lacking technical connections, insufficient procedures for exchange and inadequate routines hamper cooperation. Added to the EU's lack of centrality noted above, it leads to a general unfamiliarity with EU organizations among intelligence practitioners and a low reputation. The EU can be a good place to do business, but most European intelligence practitioners are not aware of this. They tend to base their image of EU intelligence on a flawed idea of what it is and how it works. As a result, especially intelligence practitioners working outside the EU do not value the organization highly and tend to keep their distance.

On a micro-level, the individuals working in SIAC can somewhat downplay the effect of lacking interorganizational trust. For them, keeping their distance is not a viable option. SNEs have a much more developed idea of the benefits that cooperation in this arrangement can bring, although they still display great skepticism towards the EU organization. In practice, these intelligence officers use their personal reputations to make up for the EU's lack of reputation. They perform several roles that facilitate cooperation with(in) the EU intelligence organizations. First, they are able to navigate the network. A quality that is not as widely spread as presumed due to the diversity noted. Second, they can act as information brokers. They are trusted travelers between intelligence services and EU intelligence organizations, able to negotiate interests between the two. Third, they are ambassadors to both the EU and the services, signaling reputational information. Their everyday interactions enable them to judge and communicate the quality of products, the proficiency of their colleagues and the possibilities of cooperation. In sum, these EU intelligence officers are essential boundary spanners between the national services and SIAC. They are the weak ties in a sparse European intelligence network.

When evaluating how perceptions of ability influence social relations in EU intelligence cooperation, a metaphor is helpful.[201] It presents a situation in which a general view of the network shows mainly hurdles and a lack of strong ties, while a more in-depth or nuanced

201 For an elaborate study on the advantages and limitations in the use of metaphors in organizational studies, see for example: Örtenblad, Trehan, and Putnam, *Exploring Morgan's Metaphors : Theory, Research, and Practice in Organizational Studies*; Morgan, *Images of Organization*.

evaluation shows the possibilities and the strength of weak ties present. The relation between the EU organizations and national services to some extent resembles those in a school yard. An analogy that was actually used by one of the respondents in the research. In this image, there is a large group of children playing soccer in a corner of the yard (the services). This has been their favorite game for quite some time, and some have become quite skillful. Being a team sport, in the course of time small teams have formed of like-minded kids (clusters). In a distant corner of the school ground another kid is sitting (EU organization). Recently he has started to develop an interest for soccer, yet he has a hard time hooking on with the other group. He lacks a prominent status as a soccer player (centrality), does not talk to them much (connectivity), and suffers from a bad reputation that is based on a general image. He remains excluded from the game. He has one big advantage. Several of his friends have been soccer players in one of the teams (SNEs and action officers). Through them he is not as disconnected as it might seem from just looking at the school yard from a distance. First, these friends know many of the other players, their relations and sensitivities, and they can help circumvent tensions (navigate). Second, they can introduce him to one of the teams (broker). Third, they can attest to his specific qualities that are not seen by the rest (signal). Through them he might someday gain the trust of the soccer players and join the game proper. Until that day he is far less isolated than he would be without them.

# Chapter 7

# Chapter 7: Integrity in EU Intelligence Cooperation

## Conflicting Cultures

### 7.1. Introduction

> *'Intelligence needs to talk to intelligence. Among themselves they will be able to understand their particular relationship. And value the traits of the craft [...]. Intelligence professionals behave by particular standards that differ from other professions, that others would not understand.'*[1]

The second condition for trust is for partners to perceive each other to have integrity, playing the game by clear rules. Mayer et al. argue that the relationship between integrity and trust 'involves the perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles that the trustor finds acceptable'.[2] In doing so, they clearly distinguish principles as the leading entity at work. Principles show a partner's behavioral code of conduct and guide his activities. They show what partners think is appropriate or at least acceptable behavior. However, Mayer et al. do not elaborate much on the social structure and processes that empower these principles as a condition for trust, besides observing that they are related to the congruence of cultural values. The conceptual framework in chapter 3 filled this gap and identified that perceptions of integrity are built within institutions through the entity of principles and are part of a process of categorization.[3] Institutions are cultural frames of reference and understanding that provide formal and informal principles for guiding behavior. These principles form the basis for categorization and comparison between groups. In addition, this chapter uses concepts from the literature on professionalization and organizational culture to evaluate the role of principles and categorization in EU intelligence cooperation. It looks at the (professional) norms and standards present in the institutions and their influence on trust and cooperative behavior. The more compatible partners' institutional frames of reference and understanding are, the more trusting they will be and the more willing to cooperate on that basis.[4]

Institutions, categorization and principles are expected to play an important role in EU intelligence cooperation. They are seen to be part of the 'cultural fit', a common approach for research into alliance formation and effectiveness. It draws on the idea that cultural compatibility - not necessarily equality - is an essential element of alliance performance.

1 Interview 35

2 Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," 719.

3 Dunn, "Integrity Matters."

4 Ravasi, "Organizational Identity, Culture, and Image," 67; Schein and Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 159.

Lack of cultural fit is regularly mentioned as the cause of an alliance's failure.[5] However, what the principles for appropriate behavior are, and which of them carry the most weight, depends on the specific community, the circumstances at hand and the backgrounds of the organizations involved. For example, whereas transparency and openness to the public are highly valued in public administration, they might be less appropriate in certain aspects of political bargaining. Where different worlds meet, there will probably be tension, contestation or conformation. The EU is such a place. It brings together people from a variety of national and professional backgrounds. It is thought that cultural differences will hamper cooperation in this arrangement, although repeated interaction could be the cause of alignment of principles as well. In any case, the degree of cultural fit between intelligence institutions and EU organizations determines the limits of trust-based cooperation there.

This chapter examines perceptions of integrity in the EU intelligence system. Starting from the substantive theory provided by the conceptual framework, it scrutinizes how these perceptions shape cooperation in practice. The chapter offers an analysis of practitioners' views about the frames, overlap and compatibility in EU intelligence institutions. In doing so, it focusses on the intangible yet articulated part of culture; the espoused norms and standards that come from underlying assumptions about how the world works or ought to work.[6] Its central question is how perceptions of integrity influence trust and cooperative behavior in EU intelligence. Like the previous chapter, it answers this question at three levels. First, by addressing the overarching institutions at a macro- or system level. Section 7.2 looks at the the broader European intelligence institutions and how the EU relates to them. To what extent is there a common frame of reference and understanding for European intelligence? What norms and standards are considered the most important? What do they mean to the community, and how do they influence trust with regard to the EU organization? Second, section 7.3 zooms in on the meso- or organizational level, addressing the intelligence organizations in the EU. What is the basis for professional recognition there and how does this relate to the principles identified at the macro level? What does this mean for trust between and within EU intelligence organizations? Third, it considers the micro- or individual level. Section 7.4 focusses on individual intelligence officers in the EU intelligence organizations. What are the norms and standards they hold dearest? How do these relate to their organizational setting and what does it say about the type of community they are in? And how are these principles tested and transmitted among them? Section 7.5 concludes this chapter by evaluating how the aggregate perceptions of integrity, and the way these are formed and used, influence cooperative behavior in the European intelligence system. Conceptually, it shows that perceptions of integrity are well suited for scrutinizing the role of social relations and trust in cooperative behavior. It expands the framework introduced in chapter 3 by highlighting the role of subcultures in both organizations and occupations.

5 Douma, "Strategic Alliances," 153–54.

6 Schultz, *On Studying Organizational Culture*, 25–28.

In addition, it shows the importance of rites of passage into the group based on shared practices. Empirically, it shows the moderate effect of shared principles and categorization in the context of EU intelligence cooperation, being balanced between a powerful occupational culture of intelligence and strongly perceived and cultivated subcultures.

## 7.2. The Macro-Level: No Shared Understanding

### 7.2.1. National Differences

National cultures influence the cooperation practices between European intelligence services. They are considered important drivers for differences in the way intelligence is perceived and conducted.[7] International cooperation is by definition an assembly of nationalities, each bringing its own cultural background. Accordingly, they all have their own preferred way of working to some extent that influences cooperation.[8] This is no different in European intelligence cooperation. Intelligence practitioners note marked cultural differences between European countries that influence cooperation practices, and some countries and their services are judged more compatible than others.[9] Respondents refer to typical national ways of doing things and often name their partners by country name only, for example 'the Dutch', although they are aware that these are general categorizations only. These categorizations create in-groups where it is perceived easier to cooperate, and out-groups with which this is more difficult. Past research identified a wide variety of national characteristics that influence intelligence culture, for example a nation's attitude towards peace, war and violence, and the degree of centralization of state institutions.[10] From the interviews three of these national characteristics emerge as dominant in influencing national intelligence culture and compatibility in EU intelligence cooperation: country size, the political and legal regime, and proximity.

A first aspect of national culture influencing intelligence cooperation is country size.[11] It changes the nature of the services involved, in focus as well as well as in their relations with others. First, the size of a country influences the size of its intelligence capabilities. Only the larger countries can afford the full range of assets including technically advanced means for collection. For example, not all European countries possess sophisticated satellite capabilities and the same goes for advanced cyber tooling. Second, the size of the country is closely related to the level of geopolitical ambition. Larger countries seem to perceive themselves

7 Interview 4, 20, 22, 30, 36, 37, 42, 44

8 See for example: Gächter, Herrmann, and Thöni, "Culture and Cooperation."

9 Interview 1, 15, 18, 20, 22, 35

10 Graaff and Nyce, *Handbook of European Intelligence Cultures*, xxx.

11 Interview 19

more of geopolitical actors than the smaller ones and in constant competition with other large states. The inequality of their relations with smaller states causes some respondents to think that services of larger countries behave more competitive, more solitary, more selective in their dealings with others and less focused on broad analytical cooperation than those of smaller countries.[12] Some even depict them as self-centric, 'only in the receiving mode', haughty even.[13] Yet, this might be a somewhat one-sided view. The interviews show that some larger countries seem profoundly engaged in multilateral EU cooperation, exactly because they have the resources and perceive themselves as more of geopolitical actors. This point is further elaborated in chapter 8, when dealing with 'benevolence'.

A second aspect of national culture influencing intelligence cooperation is a country's political and legal regime. It directly influences the way the services operating in these regimes behave, including their cooperation with others. Although differences in the European theatre seem minimal, it appears that nuances in these regimes still matter. First, the political preferences of a country are sometimes seen to be 'imported into the intelligence communities', causing a form of politicization of intelligence practices. In these cases, the 'bigger [political] picture influences the little cooperation moments."[14] Especially, partners that 'are on a tight political leash' and those who are subject to political appointments are perceived different from those who are not.[15] Second, differing legal frameworks can be the cause of friction.[16] Intelligence is still an exclusively national affair. As a result, many variations exist that complicate exchange and cooperation. It requires services to interpret differences between their own standards and those of their partner. A national intelligence officer brings in an example:

> *'There are countries that value privacy in a different manner [than we do]. [...] This discrepancy makes cooperation for us harder to do. [...] To simply demand that your [own] framework will be used, will not help cooperation. [...] We will have to ask ourselves which demands we can make without damaging the relation and which ones are the most important."*[17]

A third aspect of national culture influencing intelligence cooperation is a country's proximity to others. Services operating in the same geographical space are seen to have more in common than those that stand further apart. As a consequence, cooperation between nearby-neighbors is perceived easier.[18] The first reason for this is very factual. Neighboring countries share their borders and as a consequence face much of the same threats. As a

12 Interview 1, 7, 30, 32, 36
13 Interview 10, 18
14 Interview 36, 9
15 Interview 12
16 Interview 3, 32, 35
17 Interview 19
18 Interview 26

result, they tend to meet more, are thus more likely to accustom to each other's habits and subsequently develop common best practices. A military intelligence officer remarks in this respect that:

> *'Next-door neighbors often have the same interests. And [when] you physically share a border [...] it practically obliges you to cooperate against transnational targets. [...] So, you build a history. Proximity matters in several respects.'*[19]

Interdependency requires interaction, eventually leading to trust that the other service will adhere to the expectations placed upon him. Military intelligence officers in this respect refer to the countries that worked closely together during the Cold War and established common norms and standards. Norms and standards to which they live up to this very day and still associate much with NATO.[20] Nevertheless, a common enterprise is not limited to the Cold War. Other more current examples in the EU are a nearby foreign aggressor or a disrupting refugee crisis at the borders. These outside pressures can also lead to partners growing towards each other and developing a common frame of reference. Besides bolstering perceptions of integrity, it also leads to increased benevolence between partners, a point further elaborated on in the next chapter. The second reason why geographical proximity influences cooperation practices, is that it often goes hand-in-hand with socio-cultural proximity. Besides sharing borders, nearby countries often share their history and cultural frame of understanding. People speak the same language, sometimes literally. This helps cooperation 'enormously'.[21] One respondent describes such a regional bond:

> *'It would be very easy for me to cooperate with someone from [a neighboring country]. We speak a similar language, have a common history, and a [common] way of doing things.'*[22]

He adds that in these regional partnerships 'they use the same language' even 'when not using the same words'.[23]

In the context of intelligence practice, from this study it appears that the idea of a common European culture is of limited eloquence. Most doubt that EU intelligence holds norms and standards that are exclusively European.[24] Even more so, respondents claim that differences in national cultures cause a divide in perceived integrity between EU members. Some note an East-West divide between the countries 'that were in from the start', and those who

19 Interview 32
20 Interview 9, 12, 18, 19, 27, 28
21 Interview 21, 32, 35
22 Interview 15
23 Ibidem
24 Interview 3, 9, 36

joined later.[25] This seems to confirm the detrimental influence of differing cultures on trust between former adversaries in the EU as noted by Björn Fägersten.[26] Others notice a divide between northern and southern Member States.[27] From these regional divides it seems that recognition exists by the virtue of having marked 'outsiders' as well. It is comparative. This aligns with chapter 3 where it was noted that perceptions of integrity are part of a process of categorization in which in-groups are separated from out-groups. Until recently, such an out-group seemed to be absent in the European context. One practitioner fears that some European partners would give unpleasantly surprising answers on the question 'what they are willing to do to obtain information or gain effect, what are [their] red lines, and what would never be acceptable [for them].'[28] Nevertheless, national differences can often be circumvented and 'in most cases [intelligence officers] are able to work something out, to find some sort of compromise.'[29] To a certain extent, it appears that intelligence practice is decoupled from national and regional differences and similarities. It holds a reality of its own, a cultural reflection of the disconnect between the political 'high politics' and specialist 'low politics' in intelligence cooperation underlined by Aldrich.[30] An intelligence officer illustrates this disconnect:

> *'Close political ties between [EU] members do not necessarily produce close intelligence ties. [Even more so] My home country is not necessarily the closest of partners with one other European country in international relations, they have very different cultures and various political differences. Yet, on the professional level there is a connection.'*[31]

However important differences in national culture are for EU intelligence cooperation, the respondents do not see them as a major problem. In European intelligence cooperation - sometimes diverging - national cultures are not the dominant force. In practice, occupational convergence is at least as powerful.

### 7.2.2. Occupational Similarities

Contrary to other domains in Security Studies like the military and the police, publications on intelligence culture have been mostly limited to the effect of national and organizational cultures. Yet, occupations can transcend these and 'tend to be cultures in and of

25 Interview 18, 8, 31, 36, 38
26 Fägersten, *For EU Eyes Only?*, 3.
27 Interview 12, 28
28 Interview 8, 35
29 Interview 19, 10, 11, 28
30 Aldrich, "US-European Intelligence Co-Operation on Counter-Terrorism."
31 Interview 12

themselves'.[32] Some scholars have already hinted on a common occupational culture for the intelligence profession.[33] This research confirms this view. Its principles influence activities among its members, like the way they cooperate. Insiders as well as outsiders refer to intelligence personnel as having their own cultural institutions. These frames of reference and understanding are seen to exist independent of their nationality. Some even claim that for their occupational similarity, intelligence practitioners:

> *'Sooner reach out to a foreign partner than to [their] own foreign affairs department. It's about craftmanship. They understand and value [each other]. They are concerned with the same things. Things that are irrelevant details to others.'*[34]

Intelligence comprises of a general set of principles that translate into common norms and standards. On the basis of these principles, intelligence practitioners recognize each other as occupational peers sharing the same institutional beliefs. They can be seen with intelligence practitioners across the board, reflect the ideas of its members about the occupation as a whole and sets it apart from other occupations. Three overarching principles stand out that depict the intelligence occupation as a whole and that influence the dynamics of intelligence cooperation in general; its secrecy, its goal orientation, and its autonomy.

The first, and probably the most well-known, principle of the intelligence occupation is undoubtedly its closed character. As one national officer describes:

> *'Intelligence services [are] very closed, never to show their full intentions or knowledge. The general reflex is to keep the shutters closed. And not only to other intelligence organizations, to other governmental and political institutions as well. It is a general trait, never to show the back of your tongue.'*[35]

Secrecy is a very strong force in intelligence.[36] When addressing the role of trust in intelligence, many intelligence officers simply equal integrity with not disclosing secret information. It leads to a discrete way of working. Each service has its own considerations in cooperation and asking around about them is not well accepted. Not being an open book

32 Trice, *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*; Paoline and Gau, "Police Occupational Culture"; Soeters, "Organizational Cultures in the Military"; Maras, "Overcoming the Intelligence-Sharing Paradox"; Whelan, "Security Networks and Occupational Culture"; Dumitru, "Building an Intelligence Culture From Within"; Bean, "Organizational Culture and US Intelligence Affairs."

33 See for example: Yelamos, Goodman, and Stout, "Intelligence and Culture: An Introduction"; Braat, "Self-Reinforcing Secrecy"; Willmetts, "The Cultural Turn in Intelligence Studies"; Oling et al., "Towards a Cultural Perspective on the Absorption of Emerging Technologies in Military Organizations."

34 Interview 30, 32, 34

35 Interview 13

36 Interview 3, 26

is very much valued.[37] It leads to professional norms and standards like the 'third-party rule' and 'need-to-know'. Some even claim that without secrecy the intelligence occupation as a whole is at jeopardy. They perceive an unbreakable link between secrecy and the added value of intelligence. In their opinion, without it the occupation would lose meaning. This puts secrecy beyond the functional realm of security norms and standards. Some respondents were very hesitant to name specific cooperation arrangements, even after being made aware that these formats were well known publicly.[38]

The intelligence community is often depicted as distrustful of outsiders. Although there appears to be a trend of opening up, intelligence services operate in the shadows.[39] One national practitioner depicts the intelligence world as:

> *'A vague, shady world that exists in parallel to the real world. It has its own rules and customs that you have to adhere to. And that helps create and sustain very interesting international relations among partners. Outsiders do not have a clue about these dynamics.'*[40]

Apparently, secrecy defines and shields the in-group. From this perspective, it is well conceivable that based on occupational culture a trusted community evolves from a European transgovernmental network in intelligence.[41] A community that exerts authority over the behavior of its members. Interestingly, many of the respondents note that seemingly contradicting norms like openness and honesty are of equal importance as secrecy and exist alongside it. Yet, for this they make a sharp distinction between the inside and the outside of the community. This will be further elaborated on in subsection 7.3.2 and in the next chapter.

The second principle of the intelligence occupation is that it is very goal oriented, and less focused on processes. Intelligence practitioners emphasize the value they place on task accomplishment.[42] A national practitioner frames this in terms of being passionate about the work. He observes that people in the intelligence profession are:

> *'All about their task and getting it done. [...] They have a goal to accomplish, and not just any goal, but one that matters. This support of national security is crucial to them.'*[43]

37 Interview 14, 20
38 Interview 14, 23
39 Interview 8, 21, 38
40 Interview 20
41 Cross, "A European Transgovernmental Intelligence Network and the Role of IntCen," 389, 395–96.
42 Interview 9, 31, National Intelligence officer, statement at conference, May 2022
43 Interview 21

Another adds that for him an attractive partner is 'dedicated to the mission we have to perform'.[44] In the end, intelligence services focus on a competitive advantage for their customers. And they are willing to go to lengths to achieve this advantage. One respondent admits that services 'often like and need to play at the borderline what can [be done] or is allowed to be done'. It leads to a pragmatic way of working.[45] Focusing on the task at hand allows them to discuss sensitive matters without getting caught in endless procedural or normative debates. A respondent bluntly states that '[intelligence officers] are not diplomats, that is actually one of their advantages'.[46] Intelligence services are able to disagree on some matters while cooperating on others without problems, or - in the words of another practitioner - they have a 'no-nonsense mentality'.[47] It enables them to cooperate despite the inherent vulnerability that comes in situations of conflicting interests or opinions. Intelligence services first look for partners that can help them out, and only then search for a way to responsibly work together. Moreover, this not always needs to be the most obvious or politically preferred partner.[48]

The third principle of the intelligence occupation, and one closely linked to the previous two, is its fondness for autonomy.[49] It is coupled with informality. In the words of one practitioner, the 'field is characterized by our decentralized way of working and for being headstrong'.[50] In international intelligence cooperation, autonomy and informality in cooperation ensure that:

> *'National agenda's do not take center stage; are not brought forward too often or too directly. Political pressure is not done."*[51]

This resembles what Davis Cross calls 'avoiding partisanship'.[52] It allows intelligence services room to maneuver and enlarge their chance of success. An intelligence officers shrugs that 'you will not have guidelines and directives for everything [and sometimes need to adapt quickly]."[53] Unlike in many other areas of international cooperation by governments, intelligence services are seen to 'generally shirk from formalized and standardized arrangements'.[54] Installing formal dependencies and control-measures are seen as the

44 Interview 23
45 Interview 17, 26
46 Interview 1
47 Interview 1, 42
48 Interview 9, 12, 19, 35
49 Interview 4, 8, 17, 3, 44
50 Interview 19
51 Interview 17
52 Davis Cross, "The Merits of Informality: The European Transgovernmental Intelligence Network," 245.
53 Interview 36, 23
54 Interview 12

endpoint of a trust-building process, not the beginning of it.[55] As one intelligence practitioner sighs; 'we will not be moving around MOU's to make this [cooperation] happen."[56] There are some representatives who reconnect more regularly to their capitals to check on a proper response, but they are seen as an exception to the rule:

> *'In our line of work, you have to keep things informal to keep going. You normally operate in a grey zone, where effects are not always clear and the boundaries of official documents give little guidance. I have seldom seen anyone phoning back to his capital for instructions. There is little to gain there."*[57]

### 7.2.3. EU Incompatibility

The organizational culture of the EU and the occupational culture of intelligence seem at odds.[58] Contrary to intelligence services, where the organization is for the most part built upon the intelligence occupation, the EU has its own distinct organizational culture. It is a showcase for a situation where the organizational culture has little appeal to professionals who have a relatively high commitment to their occupation.[59] As the organization has little to do with the way they are socialized, their tradecraft and their working relations, they will keep it at bay as much as possible. Concurring with their skeptical stance towards the EU's ability depicted in the previous chapter, intelligence practitioners think little of the EU organization in terms of integrity. Most respondents do not recognize the way the organization works and see it conflict with their own professional norms and standards. They perceive to be working from an entirely different book of rules than EU civil servants do, or are at least reading from a different page:

> *'The 28-year-old [EU] civil servant, from some foreign relations type of agency, knows intelligence only from the movies. And that picture tends to conflict with the ideals they bring in."*[60]

Most of the intelligence officers interviewed, in and outside the EU, assert that EU staff lacks a clear understanding of what intelligence is, how it works, and how it can be used. The EU officers among them often feel misunderstood and misplaced.[61] Some respondents even

55 Interview 7, 11, 15, 16, 18, 23, 31

56 Interview 32

57 Interview 30

58 Interview 1, 4, 11, 12, 23, 25, 28, 38, 42, 43, 44

59 Anteby, Chan, and DiBenigno, "Three Lenses on Occupations and Professions in Organizations: Becoming, Doing, and Relating," 184–85, 189–90, 200–201, 212–13, 222.

60 Interview 16

61 Interview 7, 14, 23, 26, 27, 29, 31, 36, 37, 39

perceive themselves a 'stranger in their [EU] midst'; and the 'odd one out in this setting'.[62] One respondent illustrates the feeling of unease felt by many when stating that:

> *'It is a different way of problem solving. Whereas the EU solves its problems by institutionalizing, bureaucratization and inclusivity, intelligence solves its problems by informality, pragmatism and exclusivity.'*[63]

As reflected upon by a national intelligence officer explaining his distrust for the EU, this is about the EU 'not [being] capable to act in an appropriate manner' with regard to intelligence.[64] The EU organizational culture is seen to defy the exclusivity, informality and pragmatism that intelligence officers regard their occupational recipe for success.

First, the organizational culture of the EU is perceived to challenge the closedness and secrecy so valued in intelligence. Intelligence officers, both in national capitals and in the EU organization itself, think of the EU as being more about transparency and inclusion than about security and restraint.[65] One EU intelligence officer recalls being named 'intelligence' in an open setting and being asked to do classified briefings in non-secure meeting rooms. Occurrences that might look insignificant from the outside, but make these intelligence professionals feel uncomfortable.[66] Another EU intelligence officer is even more outspoken, qualifying the EU organization, outside the doors of SIAC as a 'highly unclassified environment'. He challenges to:

> *'Find a briefing room without the customary accredited [non-EU] diplomats. You never know who is in the audience, let alone what security clearance they hold. In here, you have SIAC. [...] That is clear. But out there, you never know. They could have the appropriate security clearance, but even then. Need to know is a term unknown to them.'*[67]

In practice, even more than the lack of security measures, it is this perceived lack of security awareness in the EU that is seen to hamper intelligence cooperation the most. There is little trust among intelligence practitioners that an 'overambitious' EU decisionmaker would not:

> *'Use [an] exact phrase [from an intelligence report] in a public speech, [putting] yourself in jeopardy. So, in the heads of people, despite this not happening often, a sense of reluctance to share remains.'*[68]

62 Interview 29, 40, 23
63 Interview 1
64 Interview 27, 7
65 Interview 31, 30, 42, 43
66 Interview 38
67 Interview 40
68 Interview 37

Second, the organizational culture of the EU is perceived to challenge the goal-orientation and pragmatism so valued in intelligence. Intelligence officers, both in national capitals and in the organization itself, view the EU as being more about processes than results.[69] An EU intelligence officer sighs that 'you could have the people that have some expertise or sympathy with the topic. [...] Or you could have the trainee who happened to be available that day.'[70] Another respondent couples this to the occupational principle of being goal-oriented:

> *'The EU [...] connects poorly with the way intelligence likes to operate, which is very pragmatic and target-oriented. Once we have a goal in sight, we just start pounding towards it. And that is not the way it works in the EU.'*[71]

EU intelligence officers note a perceived lack of boldness. They think the EU process is 'just not hands on enough' and 'talking for the sake of talking'.[72] A national intelligence officer illustrates this by stating that 'jumping through layers of bureaucratic procedures' is killing for national support to the EU.'[73] An EU intelligence officer complements this picture from the inside:

> *'Every word needs to be perfect; it is part of the political hair-splitting. Every word is being weighed on a scale and words are sought that are agreed by all or do not offend, but do not tell much either. That is not us.'*[74]

When comparing to this image, they see themselves as 'relatively direct' and 'outspoken' in their messaging.[75] Although many, if not most, are coming from very bureaucratic organizations themselves, this perceived mismatch in norms hampers cooperation nevertheless. Even military intelligence officers, perceived by their civilian colleagues as the most receptive to following procedures, 'are sometimes a bit disoriented with this bureaucratic [EU] system of problem solving. [...]'.[76] Intelligence officers both in- and outside the EU mistrust the organization's effectiveness in intelligence. They doubt that their contributions will reach EU decisionmakers or will make a difference.[77]

Third, the organizational culture of the EU is perceived to challenge the autonomy and informality so valued in intelligence. In the perception of intelligence officers, both in

69 Interview 27, 30, 31, 32, 41
70 Interview 40
71 Interview 32
72 Interview 18, 29, 31, 37
73 Interview 18, 25, 30
74 Interview 38
75 Interview 14, 22
76 Interview 23
77 Interview 17, 25, 34, 36, 37, 38, 41, 42

national capitals and in the organization itself, the EU's tendency to regulate and control diminishes the room for maneuver needed for successful intelligence cooperation.[78] The bureaucratic resistance by intelligence services against further institutionalizing EU intelligence organizations, or adding new ones, is put by some respondents in this light. In their eyes, it almost 'touches on identities'.[79] For them, stressing autonomy has nothing to do with:

> *'Objecting for objecting's sake. [...] When national services get the feeling that they are being surpassed on all sides by EU institutions or pressured into an arrangement that has too much control, this will jeopardize cooperation. It is disastrous. But they [policy makers] do not understand.'*[80]

Strong perceptions on the EU's lack of integrity in the face of intelligence practice put SIAC in a difficult position. It is caught in the middle. Of course, some reservations can be made against the voiced cultural incompatibility between the EU organization and the intelligence occupation. Part of the particularly strong wording and tone may be a deliberate or undeliberate attempt to bolster a self-image by contrast. Nevertheless, contrary to the negative perception of the EU's ability in the previous chapter, many of the respondents quoted in this section are in a position to know the practices in the EU and there is a remarkable concurrence among them. Even more importantly, like with ability, perceptions in themselves matter in this context. Repeated use of words like 'they' and 'them' versus 'we' and 'us' are clear indications of categorization and (negative) comparison. They clearly display distrust and suspicion about the integrity of the EU bureaucracy.

In practice, it is hard for SIAC to be a cultural in-between in cooperation. Some respondents even describe it as a 'catch-22'.[81] To disseminate intelligence effectively to the EU, they need to be part of the bureaucracy. Yet at the same time, fully conforming to EU culture would jeopardize their professional recognition in the intelligence community. Coming from that intelligence community, most respondents criticize SIAC for standing culturally too close to the EU and not 'being genuine intelligence'.[82] One EU intelligence officer even remarks that by moving intelligence away from the Council to EEAS it has come to the end of its potential, becoming 'a container full of professional diplomats'[83] Some are more positive though. Resonating the role of individuals noted in the previous chapter, they value the SNEs from the national services as a clear and needed 'baseline for professionalism'.[84] As seen in other fields when examining the intersection between occupational culture and organization,

78 Interview 2, 3, 41, 43
79 Interview 1, 13
80 Interview 31
81 Interview 16, 2, 3, 7, 10, 34
82 Interview 1, 4, 18, 33, 39, 40, 44
83 Interview 38
84 Interview 3, 26, 29, 31

remaining at a too abstract level might preclude a deeper analysis of what is actually going on in practice.[85]

## 7.3. The Meso-Level: Various Codes of Conduct

### 7.3.1. Stressing Professionalism

The intelligence profession holds itself to be a special category. Whereas occupations refer to trades with similar tasks and skill requirements, professions in addition convince their surroundings that they hold a special position by actively demarcating their expert status and derive authority from that.[86] The unusual demands of intelligence work cultivate a sense of being special among members of the intelligence community.[87] These demands offer a pronounced basis for categorization and comparison, setting intelligence officers apart from others. Intelligence services specifically refer to the uniqueness of their craft and their personnel. For example, the Dutch MIVD emphasizes the huge responsibility that comes with serving national security and contend that speaking truth to power requires 'courage'.[88] This sense of exclusivity is mimicked in other countries. For example, the Czech Úřad pro Zahraniční Styky a Informace (UZSI) considers an intelligence service an 'elite organization of a special type', while the French Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure (DGSE) stresses that they are 'a unique service' as they 'act in the utmost secrecy to defend the vital interests of [their] nation.'[89] Intelligence practitioners believe that they are in the possession of a kind of specialized knowledge that is essential for the execution of their specialized task. Other occupations might:

> *'Have a lot of expertise and are able to put it together in a very fashionable, shiny manner. But they do not have that key element coming from special sources that can confirm or deny what is really going on. To really make a difference, you need this piece of information that puts things into perspective and delivers just the right nuance.'*[90]

Bigo labels this cross-border community of practice a 'transnational guild'. Their shared world view, vested in practical outings like lifestyle, (body) language and symbols and shored

85 Guzman, Stam, and Stanton, "The Occupational Culture of IS/IT Personnel within Organizations," 46; O'Neill and Singh, "Introduction," 9.

86 Muzio, Aulakh, and Kirkpatrick, *Professional Occupations and Organizations*, 3; Anteby, Chan, and DiBenigno, "Three Lenses on Occupations and Professions in Organizations: Becoming, Doing, and Relating," 187–88.

87 Interview 34

88 Militaire Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, "Strategische Agenda MIVD; Kernwaarden", 17.

89 Úřad pro Zahraniční Styky a Informace, "Ethical Code of UZSI Officers," point 2; Direction Générale de la Sécurité Extérieure, "Who Are We."

90 Interview 30

by similar background and socialization, is what distinguishes them from others and binds them together.[91]

In the European intelligence community, feelings of shared professionalism grant a collectivity to EU intelligence practitioners that the EU organization cannot.[92] Intelligence professionals are convinced that they 'have a job to do, and that they are the only ones who know how it has to be done'.[93] Almost without exception, respondents demarcate their craft on the basis of specific norms and standards of professional quality and use it to define an in-group. When considering the factors important for successful multilateral cooperation, they name a partners' professionalism as one of the most important. The profession serves as an institutional agent for guidance in assessing integrity.[94] One respondent underlines this point:

> *'We share our basic knowledge, our processes and our procedures. Not as a formal regulation, but it serves as a common frame that guides us. We all had more or less the same training. That frame is supported by informal rules. Conventions on how to behave.'*[95]

The general principles of the intelligence occupation provide the basis for similar, although - as will become clear in the next sections - not identical professional norms and standards that serve as a behavioral code and provide markers for trustworthiness. They are 'just something [...] indoctrinated from the beginning'.[96] One respondent illustrates:

> *'People working in intelligence only need half a word to properly understand each other. They are tuned in at the same frequency. They have a professional code of conduct that is specific to their tradecraft. Share a sense of integrity.'*[97]

Professional recognition among intelligence officers bolsters cooperation in EU intelligence. It is about feeling safe among the like-minded and 'about partners being able to box you into [the] appropriate category'.[98] As one intelligence officer explains:

> *'Discovering the professional in-group is important. [...] This is the purpose of articulating professional standards that the group respects. [...] To show that we have the same understanding in the community*

91 Bigo, 'Sociology of Transnational Guilds', 399–400, 405, 410; Bigo, 'Shared Secrecy in a Digital Age and a Transnational World'.

92 Labasque, "The Merits of Informality in Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation," 493., Interview 1, 7, 21, 23

93 Interview 21, 7

94 Muzio, Aulakh, and Kirkpatrick, *Professional Occupations and Organizations*, 8–9, 16.

95 Interview 40

96 Interview 31, 7, 9

97 Interview 32

98 Interview 30, 2, 3, 4, 10, 20

> *and that the methods we use are very similar. Once you find that out, you experience that you are closer to the others than you had thought, and you have more willingness to listen to them and cooperate."*[99]

As could be expected of any occupation that values informality and pragmatism as much as intelligence does, the norms and standards for discovering this in-group are largely unwritten, not too complex and are maintained without formal sanctions. This informality is not to say that anything goes; 'informal does not mean do as you please'.[100] Partners must be seen to adhere to the 'unwritten rules of the game' to be acceptable.[101] As noted above when discussing secrecy, these informal principles seem to fluidly intermingle with identity-traits. At this higher level of abstraction, the unique raison d'être or 'métier' underlying occupational culture defines intelligence practitioners.[102] Respondents use a variety of colorful metaphors to illustrate the professional bonds between intelligence practitioners. They describe their community as 'birds of a feather', 'soccer players among each other', 'a flock of sheep' or even as a 'family'.[103] One of them compares the intelligence profession with similar dynamics in the Special Operation Forces (SOF). He notes that 'especially between badged SOF operators from different countries there is an instant brotherhood for sharing the same background, facing the same difficulties and qualifications."[104] Another EU intelligence officer recognizes the warm professional feelings for fellow-practitioners from other countries, as 'you know how they work. It means you will entrust them with more than you would do with others."[105] This can even lead to what one experienced EU intelligence officer calls the 'peer syndrome'. The - for intelligence 'remarkable even counterintuitive' situation - that:

> *'On some subject or for some domain, you trust more and feel more comfortable with some of your foreign partners, especially when you have the same type of expertise, than with some of your own [fellow countrymen]."*[106]

Professional recognition is not only a source of inclusion, although intelligence officers themselves mainly note its positive effect on cooperation. Wherever there is an in-group, there is an out-group as well and this can lead to exclusion. This research underlines that

99 Interview 11

100 Interview 31, Labasque, "The Merits of Informality in Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation," 493, 496.

101 Interview 1, 38

102 Clot, "The Resilience of Occupational Culture in Contemporary Workplaces," 136–38; Anteby, Chan, and DiBenigno, "Three Lenses on Occupations and Professions in Organizations: Becoming, Doing, and Relating," 185, 192, 200–201, 205–6; Trice, *Occupational Subcultures in the Workplace*, 28–29.

103 Interview 17, 30, 28, 24

104 Interview 16

105 Interview 34

106 Interview 36

discovering and preserving the intelligence in-group goes with contestation and conflict.[107] Norms and standards not only assure proper behavioral conduct among members of the intelligence community; they also safeguard its exclusiveness versus other (work)groups. One respondent admittingly observes that intelligence professionals are 'keen to keep their standards up, [because they are] aware of their surroundings."[108] It is a dynamic that is actually at the very heart of professionalism. For example, it can be seen in medicine and law where professionals like surgeons and lawyers shield their craft from laymen, albeit there in a more formal and codified manner. The lack of formality might explain the vehemence with which the borders of the intelligence trade are defended. Categorization and comparison safeguard the viability of the professional community. The norms and standards are:

> *'Something the community relies and insists upon, [something] that is not under discussion. [...] Stepping beyond them will have severe consequences."*[109]

When services fail to live up to them, they to some extent place themselves outside of the community of practice. They risk losing the privileged position of being an acceptable partner. Equally, people that are not recognized as 'peers' in the first place are excluded from cooperation, even when they are in the same organization.[110] One respondent in this respect even refers to 'a wall around those doing secret collection and processing' and those who do not, directly resonating the term used by Simmel when depicting the way secret societies shield themselves from the outside.[111]

### 7.3.2. Organizational Subcultures in SIAC

In general, SIAC has a higher cultural compatibility with intelligence than the wider EU. Despite the balancing act described above, it is seen by many to abide to a baseline of professional intelligence principles. Although within the EU there is no formal program of socialization or education to install these common norms and standards, it is thought that the people coming into the EU intelligence organizations bring them from their home organizations.[112] As one participant states on the people working in SIAC:

> *'[Here] We all know the standards of the game and we speak the same language within intelligence."*[113]

107 Stout and Warner, "Intelligence Is as Intelligence Does," 521.

108 Interview 26

109 Interview 11

110 Interview 3, 34

111 Interview 27, Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies," 486–87.

112 Interview 16, 23, 42

113 Interview 29

In addition, within SIAC there is a strong feeling of being a distinct in-group within the intelligence community. A feeling that is bolstered by perceived pressure from the outside world. Respondents from the EU witness that in SIAC they have developed their own manner of doing things. They have the advantage of analysts 'sitting together structurally or at least more frequently [...] and develop a common code of behavior."[114] In this, they have the additional advantage that the EU intelligence organizations are rather homogeneous in terms of organizational subcultures.

When examining the role of organizational subculture in the realm of governance, management, and organizational learning, much emphasis is placed upon the formal roles members of organizations hold.[115] The divides between functional roles can be the cause of friction between employees. This does not seem the case within SIAC. Its workforce mainly consists of people having very fairly similar tasks in very similar circumstances. An 'operator culture' prevails that is mainly focused on production.[116] Respondents note that SIAC is in effect a 'very flat organization, with a great emphasis on output in terms of actionable intelligence'.[117] A military intelligence officer in the EU mockingly remarks that:

> *'Everyone [here] is called an 'action officer'. [...] In any job they see fit. A kind of slave laborer so to say [laughing].'*[118]

Only few indications exist that role-based distinctions cause tension, for example with a respondent working on intelligence policy who challenges the prevailing intelligence culture:

> *'When we encounter something that is not working properly, it is not enough to go around it and continue. [...] Pragmatism is great, especially nice for you. [...] But in one year, another person will encounter the same problem as nothing has changed structurally. I hate that.'*[119]

Yet, there are not that many people working in support roles. Only EUMS INT has a policy and support branch, and this is substantially smaller than the production branch. In addition, most of these positions are filled by intelligence personnel as well. They are very much sympathetic to the peculiarities of the craft. The same goes for SIAC leadership. Their roles are perceived to be necessarily more politically or bureaucratically motivated than those of their subordinates. Yet, formal leadership positions in SIAC are also generally filled by people

114 Interview 19, 26

115 Schein and Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*; Schein, "Three Cultures of Management: The Key to Organizational Learning."

116 Schein, "Three Cultures of Management: The Key to Organizational Learning," 13.

117 Interview 25, 2, 19, 21, 29, 44

118 Interview 14

119 Interview 23

with an intelligence background, softening role-based differences. Moreover, the informal leadership by senior analysts plays an important role as well.[120]
Within SIAC most intelligence officers in the EU are not just operators, they are analysts. Besides their topic of interest, there seems little distinction between them. This greatly helps professional recognition and acceptance. As one practitioner explains:

> *'You have to take into account that we have only one type here. What we do is fusion, so we [mostly] have general analysts that perform that task. Recognition would have been more difficult when other specialisms would have been present."*[121]

This means that besides the general norms and standards of intelligence work, there is a shared analytical culture present. Respondents underline the importance of standards like knowledgeability, reliability, objectivity, analytical curiosity and even imagination.[122] Due to the analytical nature of their jobs, EU intelligence officers also name a standard for cooperation success that seems to be at odds with intelligence culture in general. Many mention the need for interaction and exchange. Even more so, some state that open discussion and critical thinking are at the very heart of SIAC culture.[123] One EU intelligence officer indicates that he considers:

> *'The discussions in our hallway a success to certain extent. It is not a classified exchange. [...] Sometimes people there are people who have better information, but that does not mean they have better understanding as well. We need to analytically break up information. That is the process we are in, our daily business."*[124]

Openness is not an indiscriminate trait between all analysts in SIAC. In practice, many respondents make a clear distinction between analysts and *intelligence* analysts working in SIAC. Whereas the latter come from intelligence services, the first do not. They perform the same tasks, have the same job titles and possess analytical integrity, but they are not fully accepted by people from the intelligence community. Limited trust exists between them. Although it is acknowledged that these non-intelligence analysts obey rules of their own, they are thought to behave in a way that conflicts with 'several iron rules for intelligence' like 'need-to-know' and the non-disclosure of sources.[125] An EU intelligence officer explains his concern:

120 Interview 25, 43, 44
121 Interview 24
122 Interview 15, 16, 21, 23, 25, 29, 31, 34, 40
123 Interview 16, 28, 29, 36
124 Interview 25
125 Interview 24, 3, 23, 40, 41, 44

> *'Real intelligence is about analysis. [But] not just any analysis. [Those that] are not aware of the intelligence cycle; [...] do not know how to process intelligence, [...] do not operate in a covert way [...] are not intelligence. [...] Their tradecraft is different."*[126]

Again, the term professionalism surfaces:

> *'From an intelligence point of view, they are not doing it professionally. [...] They go by different standards. [...] They have a whole different mindset."*[127]

The distrust caused by the cultural difference between the organizational culture of the EU and occupational culture of intelligence is catapulted into SIAC, hampering cooperation. The most obvious divide in this respect is between the civil servants coming from other EU institutions and SNEs from intelligence services, both working in INTCEN. Respondents make a sharp distinction between these 'career diplomats' and themselves.[128]As one states:

> *'Part of the INTCEN staff, fortunately a slightly decreasing part lately, are EU civil servants. [...] They do have a clearance, but they are not intelligence. National services do not want this. It is something that comes out of EEAS and I find this a bad idea. Again, a matter of culture."*[129]

On the inside, there is little appreciation for non-intelligence personnel in SIAC and their presence is a cause for tension.[130] It closely resembles conflict between subcultures in the police organization, where 'civilians' are distinguished from more specialized and prestigious 'sworn officers'.[131] One respondent strikingly sums up this process of categorization and comparison and its effect on perceived integrity:

> *'You do not need the diplomats there. They do not understand intelligence. So, speaking about trust; there is no trust in SIAC. We intelligence people often speak in confidence. We know the rules of the game. [...] Not only what is officially allowed, but [what is] possible and feasible."*[132]

On the outside, the presence of non-intelligence personnel in SIAC is perceived by intelligence practitioners to jeopardize cooperation with national services. They acknowledge that EU civil servants have an advantage in providing the cultural bridge needed between SIAC and other EU institutions, but in their view the fact that these 'very bright and very ambitious

126 Interview 14
127 Interview 25
128 Interview 25, 29, 43
129 Interview 38
130 Interview 25, 32, 38, 40
131 Manning, "A Dialectic of Organisational and Occupational Culture," 50, 57.
132 Interview 41

young people from foreign relations offices or other institutions [...] have no clue on the peculiarities [of intelligence] weakens the recognition [...] by national services."[133]

In EUMS INT a more hidden, yet similar dynamic exists. Its action officers are alle seconded from their nations, but the degree of intelligence experience varies. Some even have little to no previous experience in the intelligence craft. Many respondents readily admit that '[sometimes] you get people who are not the best suited for the job, but who are the next in line [for a variety of reasons]."[134] Few do not have an intelligence background at all:

> *'There is person X, who is seconded by his nation, but who might not have any intelligence background at all. He might be just a regular army officer on a temporary posting. He will be there for only a couple of years. [...] They have little link to the intelligence community."*[135]

The divide between intelligence and non-intelligence personnel in EUMS INT does not seem as wide as the one in INTCEN, because of the common military background.[136] Nevertheless, like in INTCEN non-intelligence personnel is seen to go by different standards. One military intelligence officer finds his non-intelligence colleagues particularly unknowledgeable, putting job titles in open mailings and not seeing the harm of using EU intelligence in a non-EU environment. In his opinion 'it is a bit of a joke to them."[137] The effect of these perceptions is serious enough though. It limits cooperation as it causes extra caution and restraint with intelligence officers. As the same respondent continues on the relation:

> *'Troublesome. [...] Sorry. You know intelligence is not an academic analysis, nor is it a doctrine endeavor. But there are rules. [These are] difficult to apprehend for those here without intelligence experience, even the good ones. It really is troublesome."*[138]

### 7.3.3. Occupational Subcultures of Intelligence

Professional recognition between like-minded intelligence analysts facilitates cooperation in SIAC. In these cases, the occupational culture of intelligence and the subculture of the analyst reinforce each other. It confirms the existence of a culture of intelligence analysis that is part of the wider occupational culture of intelligence and that binds these specific professionals together.[139] Contrary to their interaction with non-intelligence colleagues,

133 Interview 3, 14, 25, 32, 44
134 Interview 40, 9, 36, 38, 43, 44
135 Interview 27
136 Interview 17
137 Interview 41
138 Ibidem
139 Arcos and Palacios, "EU INTCEN: A Transnational European Culture of Intelligence Analysis?," 75–76.

respondents indicate that, intelligence peers find each other instinctively.[140] As one intelligence officer states on SIAC:

> *'In order to work together effectively it is paramount to be on the same page regarding workable practices. This is actually easier than it seems. Despite its diversity, when you look at the EU partners with some detachment, you will see that all have more or less similar values and norms. The differences are a matter of taste and emphasis.'*[141]

Yet, indeed differences remain and it is not obvious that they are a matter of taste only. Even within the strong occupational culture of intelligence subdivides exist that can hamper trust. Despite their similarity in organizational subculture and occupational culture, all being operators and virtually all being analysts, intelligence officers in SIAC still experience various 'subfamilies' within the intelligence craft that they recognize 'instantly' as being different.[142] These subcommunities of practice matter for cooperation as they bring different norms and standards, or emphasize different aspects. One respondent reflects on them when saying that:

> *'I do not know if you can genuinely speak of something like a European intelligence community. Perhaps there are several.'*[143]

Within SIAC a variety of intelligence subfamilies come together, causing some tension. The arrangement is presumed to deliver intelligence on a wide range of intelligence topics. The expertise needed is equally broad. The intelligence analysts present in the EU, as national secondments or temporary agents, import their occupational subcultures in the intelligence organizations there. To some extent it mimics the diversity of the intelligence network as a whole, presented in the previous chapter. Many practitioners remain selective about the type of intelligence they cooperate with. As one of them remarks on his workplace; 'I would have thought that trust was far higher than it is, [but] we are all [still] so different.'[144] Although adhering to the same common occupational principles, the resulting norms and standards are considered 'only basic rules and their impact differs on the setting in which they are applied. So, they are not always as clear-cut as one would think'.[145] A respondent coming from a specialized subtrade of intelligence grumbles when considering his place in the EU intelligence community:

140 Interview 16, 22, 24, 28, 30, 36, 38, 40, 44

141 Interview 19

142 Interview 14, 1, 3, 8, 17, 24, 36, 42, 44

143 Interview 29

144 Interview 31, 36, 37, 42

145 Interview 3, 40, 42

*'For the intelligence community this [trust] works like an onion. [And here] I consider myself somewhere at the brownish outer layer. We do not fit in nicely."*[146]

Like him, many respondents note remaining divides in the community that represent differences in approach. Nevertheless, respondents vary on which divide they perceive the most influential on their cooperation practices.

The first divide noted in SIAC is between military and civilian subcultures of intelligence.[147] Two perceptions stand out that both relate to the comparative degree to which these two groups adhere to existing intelligence norms and standards. Military intelligence officers are perceived more formal and less flexible than their civilian peers. As one INTCEN officer explains:

*'EUMSINT and INTCEN sometimes work in very different worlds. It is much about the difference between the military and civilians. [...] They [military] are very obedient to procedures [and] tend just to execute those directives. And when they are in doubt, they will reach back to their superiors first. Soldiers tend to think in terms of hierarchy and categories, procedures and rules. But here in the INTCEN, it does not work that way. In here it is a very flat structure and a place for open debate. Very pragmatic as well. It is well accepted to have a discussion."*[148]

Some military officers concur on the formality, although framing it as a positive attribute. For them it is about goal-orientation. One states on EUMS INT that 'in here it all about plans and roadmaps. For everything there is a time and a date. Civilians do not like that."[149] Yet, they do not agree on the lack of flexibility. Actually, military intelligence officers perceive of themselves as pragmatic team players, while they see their civilian counterparts as more closed and less open to cooperation. In any case, the divide between military and civilian intelligence is perhaps the most tangible one between the organizational entities EUMS INT and INTCEN. Yet, it is not perceived as the most important divide hampering cooperation in SIAC.

The second divide noted in SIAC is between domestic and external subcultures of intelligence.[150] Respondents experience this divide as more fundamental than the civilian-military one. Many military respondents identify the INTCEN with a subculture attributed to domestic security services. Again this is framed in valuations of secrecy, pragmatism and informality. In sum, INTCEN would be less open to cooperation than EUMS INT:

146 Interview 14
147 Interview 3, 6, 29, 36, 38, 42, 43, 44
148 Interview 38
149 Interview 39, 40
150 Interview 1, 19, 40, 42, 43, 44

*'Their [INTCEN] way of thinking is very much focused on security, being defensive and constantly aiming at mitigating threats. They are even more closed up than normally is the case in intelligence.'*[151]

Yet, regardless of how much truth there is in these value claims - and again it is the perception that matters -, the concern appears not to be really about INTCEN. Apart from the fact that many SNEs in INTCEN do not come from (purely) domestic security services, the argumentation shows an external rather than an internal dynamic. It is about the domestic services that are seen to have a strong influence in INTCEN and cooperate with the brakes on.[152] Indeed, some of their intelligence officers in INTCEN appear to see themselves more as representatives of CTG than EU intelligence officers. It is not so much that they are excluded from a category, it is more that they choose to stay out of it.

The third divide noted, more in general than in SIAC, is between operational and strategic subcultures of intelligence. Respondents indicate that these types of intelligence 'come with different beliefs [...], different redlines and generally the idea with the participants that they are of a different category'.[153] Operational intelligence is seen as direct support for 'keeping the troops in the field safe' or supporting counterterrorism operations.[154] Strategic intelligence stands closer to political decision-making and is therefore considered by respondents more 'political' and focused on national agendas. Especially military intelligence officers voice their dislike about strategic intelligence officers who are only seen to serve their own interest and are perceived less of cooperators. The following colorful description by one of them mainly serves to illustrate that professional recognition can also backfire when it concerns not-acceptable behavior:

*'When I step into a large international conference room, I can smell the different subcommunities. [...] I immediately identify these [foreign intelligence people], including the ones from my own country. They are constantly collecting, apparent from the way they jump into conversations and the way they introduce themselves. [...] Differences are visible in haircut, outfit, behavior, and language. [They] come to conferences with large high-level delegations in fancy suits and ties.'*[155]

Another thinks them to 'dress over the top. Too slick. [...] I used to recognize them by their shiny tie clips and cufflinks.'[156] This negative image of strategic intelligence officers is quite different from how these operational intelligence officers like to see themselves; pragmatic and informal. They perceive themselves as being more of a specialist, having cooperation

151 Interview 18, 30
152 Interview 20, 30, 31, 19
153 Interview 19, 1, 12, 18, 30, 34, 36
154 Interview 42
155 Interview 12
156 Interview 18

'in their DNA' and used to getting the job done 'outside the comfortable home office'.[157] It is probably a cultivated image, but one that probably causes low perceptions of integrity between the two groups.[158]

The subcultural divides mentioned above hamper cooperation in SIAC. Respondents state that 'EUMS INT is a small community in itself, as is INTCEN', both being ignorant or nonreceptive of the peculiarities and the specific habits of the other.[159] For the respondents, it seems that many of the subcultural differences mentioned align with the organizational divide between these two organizations. This organizational divide thus becomes a simple instrument for demarcating the cultural in-group and out-group. Moreover, perceptions about the other subcultural group also create their own reality for cooperative behavior between the organizations. As one of the EU intelligence officers with both a military and civilian background remarks:

> *'[It] is very hard to overcome for others, even for me. To be introducing other colleagues from here. And the other way around is not that attractive either, I must admit. Not even for me. Interaction, and crossing divides, is much easier on this floor than it is with the people from the other. There, interaction is harder."*[160]

The subcultural divides reported on are based on strong perceptions of a multitude of respondents from various backgrounds. There is little doubt that they exist and influence the degree of trust and cooperation, especially when they coincide with organizational divides between INTCEN and EUMS INT. Nevertheless, they seem as cultivated as they are cultural. Several indications exist to support this. First, in many instances respondents on both sides of a perceived subcultural divide use the same arguments on each other. For example, a lack of pragmatism is mentioned by respondents in both EUMS INT and INTCEN when addressing the other. Apparently, both equally value this principle, but choose not to see it in the other or admit it.[161] Second, the consistency in the arguments sometimes seems lacking. For example, INTCEN is associated with civilian intelligence officers. In reality, EU civilian and military intelligence are more intermingled than often assumed. As they are throughout the European intelligence community for that matter. When confronted with the fact that a mere 20 percent of 'civilian' INTCEN officers come from a military background or from a 'dual-hatted' intelligence service, a respondent quickly adds that these people are still 'far more INTCEN than military'.[162] This seems like projection. Apparently, the cultural

157 Interview 40
158 Interview 10, 11, 18
159 Interview 29, 36, 39, 43
160 Interview 38
161 Interview 19, 36
162 Interview 36, 42

subfamilies in in the intelligence family are not as black-and-white as respondents make it appear. As is typically the case when accentuating frames of reference and understanding, this serves a purpose. The perceptions of integrity emphasize the distinctiveness of (in) groups creating a simplified reality for cooperation.[163] It supports the narrative about 'who we are' in comparison to others, a point further elaborated on in chapter 8. Nevertheless, on the personal level degrees of compatibility are likely to exist and the edges of perceived differences can be softened.[164]

## 7.4. The Micro-Level: Possibilities for Entering the In-group

### 7.4.1. Hard on the Outside, Soft on the Inside

Respondents sketch the intelligence profession to be 'hard on the outside and soft on the inside'.[165] Due to the closed nature of their work, intelligence officers are not expected to be the talkative type. As explicated above, closedness is one of the core principles in intelligence culture, accompanied by norms of secrecy and restraint. This seems to make a difficult combination with developing personal relations. Yet, respondents describe much more openness when talking about the inside of their community. One of them sketches what happens among intelligence peers after an international policy meeting with a variety of attendees:

> *'Later, behind the scenes they check out how the others feel about issues. And there, opinions are shared and proper discussions take place."*[166]

Especially in operational situations of coproduction, intelligence officers are perceived to be 'as transparent as possible, as [they] have to share' to achieve success.[167] Here, outreach is more accepted and expected. With the counterparts they know well, intelligence officers are seen to be 'frank' and discussion is seen to be vital in achieving results. For them, trust is being as closed as an oyster to the outside world, but opening up to recognized intelligence counterparts.

Interaction and openness in the EU intelligence organizations is very much linked to proven expertise. All respondents agree that intelligence is 'the work of specialists' and this idea is

163 Kenny, Whittle, and Willmot, "Organizational Identity: The Significance of Power and Politics," 142.

164 Interview 42

165 Interview 15, 11, 21, 30

166 Interview 16

167 Interview 30

reflected in cooperation practices.[168] Whereas it is deemed appropriate for a specialist to open up on his topic, a generalist is expected to display more restraint. Moreover, among these specialists it is accepted that they 'grow towards each other through their deep technical exchange [...] Contacts will become increasingly simple'.[169] A respondent once witnessed:

> *'How two collection guys, usually the most closed up part of our organizations, participated in a bilateral meeting. Within no time they were chatting as if they had never done otherwise. 'I once had a case like this, and then I did this' etcetera. To my surprise it worked! They had a clear professional recognition. [...] It is apples and apples instead of apples and pears."*[170]

The type of expertise required for this interaction is specific. A respondent remarks that among themselves even the most technocratic intelligence specialists can cooperate well based on professional recognition. Their 'conversations take place on a different, more subject-matter level. They find each other in their [technical] expertise'. Even more so, for 'an outsider it is hard to capture the dynamics between them as it takes years to master the expertise and understanding prevalent in a certain field of action."[171]

In SIAC, this is mainly about analytical expertise. Yet, little about it is formally codified. The informality so clearly present in the profession, is visible among analysts in INTCEN and EUMS INT as well. Even in the latter organization, for its military character typified by respondents as the most hierarchical and procedural of the two, 'procedures and taskings do not exist in writing, there are no battle orders and so on. Things happen in speech'.[172] For example, during the interviews it became apparent that there is a SIAC handbook for the proper conduct of EU intelligence, but many respondents are unfamiliar with it or did not find it relevant enough to mention. A joint analytical training existed, but not anymore.[173] One intelligence practitioner explicates this when saying:

> *'We lack [written standards] now. Not that we miss them that much from an operational point of view. I think that in the EU setting, it would not be very effective in enhancing our workflow because of the informal way we work."*[174]

There are some respondents who advocate codifying analytical practices in EU intelligence, despite this being contrary to intelligence nature. Yet, rather than anchoring professionality on the inside, it seems that for them this would serve setting the boundaries to the outside

168 Interview 9, 11, 18, 21, 30, 32, 36, 42, 43, 44
169 Interview 20
170 Interview 35
171 Interview 20, 18
172 Interview 14
173 Interview 25, 28, 44
174 Interview 16

and impose recognition from other EU organizations and employees. They do so from a lack of trust that norms of appropriate behavior among intelligence analysts are sufficiently known and recognized on the outside.[175] One explicates this point by stating that the urge to codify standards is 'more about the EU [...]. The point is that outsiders to the intelligence community are not abiding to the same values."[176]

Within the EU intelligence organizations, individual experience is often used as a gauge for expertise.[177] On the basis of it, integrity is assessed and the limits of cooperative behavior are determined. Respondents indicate that for them practical experience is a cornerstone of appropriate behavior in SIAC. Only time on the job will allow an intelligence officer to know the unwritten book of rules. An EU intelligence officer sees that 'every conversation I have in this multilateral setting starts off with probing on who I am, and what I have done in this particular line of work."[178] And only genuine experience will do, as another EU intelligence officer explicates:

> *'It is not enough - as some colleague here - to have been in a service for a year only. That is only legitimizing your posting on paper. In practice it does not really make a difference.' And you can see that in the everyday work. They think they understand. But they do not."*[179]

In addition, respondents expect the 'old hands' to guide the younger and unexperienced ones on intelligence cooperation practices.[180] Some even refer to a 'master-apprentice' relation, where learning originates from socialization and imitation in the workplace.[181] This is typical for practice-based professions.[182] One military officer from EUMS INT underlines the importance of experience when comparing his organization to INTCEN. Surprisingly, he asserts that INTCEN is perhaps the 'real' intelligence in the SIAC setting, because: 'there are the people with 20 years of experience in intelligence, or even on a specific topic."[183] Another fiercely counters this unfavorable comparison, but agrees that:

> *'In the end, you have to be a firefighter to be able to knowledgably talk about fire. By extension it could be allowed for an arsonist or a chemist to join the conversation, but they do not enjoy the same level of*

175 Interview 2, 11, 33
176 Interview 25
177 Interview 9, 30, 36, 38, 40, 43
178 Interview 30
179 Interview 41
180 Interview 20, 44
181 Interview 18
182 Muzio, Aulakh, and Kirkpatrick, *Professional Occupations and Organizations*, 57.
183 Interview 24

*trust. This is very instinctive. We might not know each other, but the fact that I know that this or that guy has worked his whole live in intelligence makes a big difference to me."*[184]

Cooperation within the branches and working groups of SIAC is largely built upon an individual dynamic among specialists, based on expertise and experience. Professional recognition among analysts working in SIAC creates the personal leverage not only for exchange, but 'to talk about the process off-record [and] even to express doubts' in the assurance that the counterpart understands how to interpret and value these outpourings.[185] One EU intelligence officer claims that on the basis of professional relations 'between the analysts [...] there is a working level trust'.[186] Respondents acknowledge that in this mechanism they differ little from any other profession, but they do differ in the way recognition is obtained. Secrecy and informality play their part there. The credibility of intelligence professionals is mostly a black box; their current performance barely visible and without a clear previous track record. As a consequence, intelligence officers in SIAC have a hard time capitalizing on their expertise and experience. Respondents name two methods for assessing integrity that help them establish reasonable expectations about their counterparts nevertheless: the organization of origin and personal contact. Whereas the latter involves direct recognition by testing the waters face-to-face, the first provides a head start by indirect recognition. It is largely based on stereotypes.

### 7.4.2. Stereotyping

The principles, norms and standards of organizational and occupational (sub)cultures permeate down to the individual level, but the dynamics change down the line. Categorization and comparison become less abstract when applied to the individual. Especially on the inside of the EU intelligence organizations, in the branches and working groups, professional recognition gets a face. Nevertheless, affiliation to an already recognized and acceptable organization or person can provide a head start when coming in fresh. Moreover, it offers stability to cooperation, for example in the face of high turn-over of personnel.[187] Their 'earlier behavior reflects on the 'new guy'; [it] is taken into account.'[188] It is thought to tell something about the integrity of the new-comer, bolstering trust and kickstarting cooperation. First, new partners can be put on advantage by being introduced directly by a trusted person. An introduction 'transfers a bit of trustworthiness' from the known to the

184 Interview 40
185 Interview 10, 11
186 Interview 34, 23
187 Interview 2, 6, 9, 16, 18, 22, 23, 28, 36, 37
188 Interview 9

unknown partner.[189] Second, they can be helped indirectly by showing acquaintance to a trusted person. As one respondent remarks:

> *'Even the faintest acquaintance to a trusted person rubs off. It can help you start new cooperative relationships. For example, when it became apparent that I had worked together intensively with a certain person in the same home office as this [EU] colleague, that immediately broke the ice."*[190]

Third, coming from a valued organization acts as a 'door-opener' even when individuals were complete strangers when entering. An EU intelligence officer recalls getting a request from an unknown peer:

> *'Although I had no personal experience with him whatsoever, there was no question about if I should answer. He belonged to that trusted organization and was introduced. For me, that meant that I agreed to a meeting and even provided 'those answers that do not go into paper'. [...] His background was a quality brand by which I could assess him upfront."*[191]

This quality is mainly based on the intelligence principles, norms and standards mentioned above. Again, the subcultural divides come into play. For being boxed in a favorable category, not any organization will do equally.

Indirect trust is primarily granted to intelligence officers coming from dedicated intelligence organizations, preferably intelligence services.[192] The latter are depicted as 'real' intelligence by their peers, although of course mainly by others coming from a national service as well. Some include operational and tactical intelligence officers coming from J2 intelligence staffs, and the professionalized intelligence branches of the army, air force or navy. Yet, most do not agree. They perceive these 'binocular' intelligence officers as a different breed than intelligence officers coming from a service.[193] As one illustrates with an example:

> *'You have to be one of the guys. And that comes very tight. It has to be a service-to-service affair. Just having some related posting will not do. Not even when some appropriate background is there. I recently made the mistake of wanting to take along a military colleague to a meeting. The first question was whether he was working for the service. When that momentarily appeared not to be the case, I was kindly but firmly told that his presence there would not be appreciated."*[194]

189 Interview 14
190 Interview 15
191 Interview 10
192 Interview 23, 34, 38,
193 Interview 41, 36
194 Interview 30

Another, recalling a previous experience, depicts the mechanism as 'almost cartoonish' in its simplicity:

> *'It was not the organization or function that made the difference. The real question was what service I was from. And in the end, it would not have even mattered which service exactly. It mattered that I was from a service.'*[195]

In SIAC, knowing what organization an intelligence officer comes from is 'important and the fault line between the in-group and the out-group is very sharply interpreted'.[196] However, on an individual level the decision to grant initial trust appears to be based on equally shallow grounds.

Assessing integrity is 'all about scanning for common ground.'[197] Respondents agree that on a personal level this begins with the smaller things in life, like sports and hobbies. They often express bewilderment themselves on how important this trivial form of categorization actually is. In this phase of the relation already, and often based on very basic indicators, a label is placed on a counterpart to help reasonable expectations. Yet, although this first step is not about the substance of intelligence, chit-chat even, it is also 'a serious business. It is the beginning of professional probing [and] making a favorable professional impression.'[198] For example, military intelligence officers indicate that shared deployments overseas can greatly help recognition and acceptability. Slightly getting to know a partner's personality adds to his national and organizational background. In a structural setting like the EU this personal information is rapidly available, but at first the judgment is mostly based on stereotypes. Integrity is judged on whatever information is available.[199] Stereotypes make cooperative behavior in this phase vulnerable as sound judgments of character are cut short. Drawing on occupational subcultures of intelligence from the previous section, one intelligence officer criticizes these generalizations:

> *'Analysts are weary of humint; 'be careful of them', and someone is quickly recognized as being 'a somewhat nerdy siginter' [...]. These categories can be [a] source of rejection.'*[200]

Respondents prove aware of the vulnerability stereotypes bring to the relation. Predating his time in the EU, one EU intelligence officer recalls having a bad start with an intelligence counterpart when deployed overseas. Being categorized according to some shallow

195 Interview 40
196 Interview 34
197 Interview 16, 17, 9, 12, 26, 28
198 Interview 18
199 Interview 37, 44
200 Interview 17

stereotype of his country of origin, he was confronted with unreasonable - perhaps even intrusive - prejudices about his expected lack of appropriate professional behavior.[201] He notes that, for obvious reasons, it took months to find proper professional recognition and to establish a productive cooperation between them based on mutual respect and equality. Interestingly, in the end it evolved into a very successful professional relation based on personal friendship, a topic to be addressed in the next chapter. Taking into consideration the potentially negative influence of stereotypes on perceptions of integrity; one EU intelligence officer asserts that:

> *'In here, [...] I actively try to forget what country or agency people represent and what program they might be striving for. Otherwise, I would get intimidated and avoid them based on expectations from the track record of their organization, [...] these experiences frustrating the system.'*[202]

It is questionable how feasible a strategy it is to block your knowledge and interpretation of someone's background. Even more so, while acknowledging the risks, many intelligence officers state that stereotyping helps them set off cooperative relations.[203] From this small but essential fundament for reasonable expectations, it can be attempted to open up further.

### 7.4.3. Behavioral Testing

Entering the trusted intelligence in-group in the EU ultimately requires more than just coming from an intelligence service and possessing some basic recognizability. These are only a start. For some respondents, knowing the originating service of a colleague is sufficient ground for cooperation. To them, all SNEs working in SIAC possess a basic credibility, because they are sent by their national services. In doing so, they approach intelligence 'as a black-and-white thing. [...] Either you are intelligence or you are not.'[204] Yet, this is doubtful.[205] Unlike the surgeons and lawyers mentioned earlier and unlike in many national settings, in European intelligence it is hard to link the largely informal norms and standards of the intelligence profession to membership of one type of organization or to a 'state-sanctioned monopoly'.[206] First, among services there are many shades of grey. As seen in previous chapters, the one intelligence service is not the other and these services are hardly perceived as all the same in quality. Second, membership of these services is not as clear to the outside as it seems. One military intelligence officer, while pointing at a specific badge

201 Interview 15
202 Interview 16
203 Interview 15, 19, 22, 26
204 Interview 16, 23, 34
205 Interview 22, 23, 32, 36, 44
206 Muzio, Aulakh, and Kirkpatrick, *Professional Occupations and Organizations*, 6–7, 43.

on his uniform, attests that membership of the intelligence community is readily visible.[207] Yet, the look and feel of tangible distinctions of membership generally vary by country and organization. In addition, in intelligence they are often totally absent. For obvious reasons of security, few intelligence officers carry around visible signs for professional recognition. Most important though, respondents indicate that for successful cooperation 'perhaps two thirds or more is about personal qualities.'[208] After the initial stereotyping, they feel that it is vital to check first-hand whether the person at hand actually can fulfill the basic expectations presumed from stereotypes and organizations; to judge whether he has what it takes to do the job. In the opinion of one of them:

> *'The big question is who is to determine whether a partner can be trusted. You? The answer is yes. [Objective safeguards] are a poor instrument for trust. It is subjective, an interpretation of a situation in which not all is clear. [...] All categories in the Memorandum of Understanding can be 'on green', and still no cooperation may occur. Just because [partners] are perceived to be a joke'.*[209]

In EU intelligence, actual behavior provides a valuable avenue for professional recognition.

Personal contacts in SIAC offer signals for professionalism that cannot be derived from national and organizational stereotypes. Many respondents agree that normal work-related interaction and social events in SIAC provide fertile grounds for answering 'whether my counterpart, the person on the other side, is a professional as well'.[210] It is not only a meeting ground, but a testing ground as well. One respondent in this respect refers to the expertise and experience mentioned earlier:

> *'But how do you know whether someone is intelligence. This quality becomes apparent in the course of multiple conversations. The way someone behaves in them, is actually a resume in disguise. [...] The way they interact, the questions they ask.'*[211]

The way counterparts behave in SIAC is a rare first-hand marker for testing integrity; an indication of acceptable norms and standards both as analysts and as intelligence practitioners.[212] Ongoing conversations offer an abundance of direct signaling opportunities to participants. As one of them remarks:

207 Interview 14
208 Interview 36, 18, 23, 29
209 Interview 32
210 Interview 3, 6, 9, 10, 12, 16, 18, 21, 23, 28, 29, 30
211 Interview 40
212 Interview 14, 18, 28, 38

> *'The moment it starts to feel odd or uncomfortable, you know there is something to it. Something is wrong. At that moment the interaction apparently moves beyond what is normal, beyond common expectations.'*[213]

Personal interaction allows EU intelligence officers to test the intelligence norms and standards of their SIAC peers first hand.[214] These relate directly to the occupational culture of intelligence depicted above. One respondent explains on appropriate behavior that 'by openly showing that you know how the game is played, you build trust that you will do the same when it comes to the part a counterpart cannot see.'[215] This is in the first place about being discrete and showing restraint.[216] As one respondent explains:

> *'When I know a counterpart to be too talkative about what others did, having no restraint, then I would begin to question him, have professional doubt. Who else is he talking to and how able is he to keep my additional explanation to himself.'*[217]

Yet, it needs to strike a fine balance with showing to be experienced enough to dare opening-up sufficiently for cooperation. In practice, practitioners hover between openness and restraint. Testing this balance is seen as a 'ritual' dance' that generally follows the same pattern of conversation across the intelligence community, one in which 'you open up, but never completely, and never right away'.[218] As one intelligence officer states:

> *'You will develop trust with someone who is not a bigmouth, is experienced and knowledgeable and as transparent to you as possible. If you possess these qualities, then you will be able to build bridges.'*[219]

Personal interaction allows EU intelligence officers to test the analytical norms and standards of their SIAC peers first hand as well.[220] These relate directly to the occupational subculture of intelligence analysts depicted above. Respondents state that in EU intelligence it is important that an intelligence officer shows that he masters the analytical craft. In this they find it important that their peer is knowledgeable on a certain topic, but even more important that he is not a fraud, only pretending to know. In their eyes an analyst can never just 'talk bullocks'. If 'you do not know something, do not guess but admit that you don't

213 Interview 37
214 Interview 16
215 Interview 18, 22
216 Interview 16, 18, 32, 38
217 Interview 25
218 Interview 18, 10, 15, 40
219 Interview 30
220 Interview 6, 12, 16, 40, 42

know and need to check'.[221] EU intelligence officers regard it easy to test these analytical skills in the setting of SIAC. An experienced intelligence officer there even thinks he:

> *'Will recognize [people lacking those skills] with the first intelligence report they write, or even with the first words that come out of their mouth after entering the building for the first time.'*[222]

Interestingly given their apparent contempt of non-intelligence personnel, respondents acknowledge that in SIAC it is not about analytical skills alone, but also about skills required to cooperate effectively in a multilateral setting. They point at much needed knowledge of the EU bureaucracy, networking and language skills. Especially with regard to the latter many respondents agree that without them analysts 'will be professionally handicapped' in an international arrangement. They will appear uninformed or unknowledgeable, risk misunderstandings, will not be able to get the message across, and partners will be more reluctant to reach out.[223] Even more so, it will hamper any relation building to begin with.

## 7.5. Conclusion

This chapter set out to answer the question how perceptions of integrity influence social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation. It started from the entity, process and structure identified in chapter 3. The conceptual framework introduced principles, categorization and institutions as constituent parts of perceived integrity. From a conceptual point of view, these parts proved insightful windows into the views of practitioners working in the EU intelligence system. Indeed, they very much base trust in their counterparts on principles for appropriate behavior and categorize them accordingly. Moreover, as expected, these principles are specific for the field at hand. Nevertheless, two conceptual remarks are in order concerning institutions and categorization. First, the institutions present are governed not by one, but by two logics. Next to the logic of appropriateness, which is largely shared by all, there is also a logic of practice at work. Intelligence officers behave in a way, and value behavior, that simply gets their specific job done. The emphasis placed by respondents on expertise and experience, as well as on informality and autonomy leads to think about intelligence in terms of the communities of practice mentioned in chapter 2. Moreover, it obliges to take into account different types and levels of culture to gain a more nuanced understanding. Second, the process of categorization does not fully explain how perceptions of integrity are being built in this professional community. It needs to be complemented by the concept of socialization and acculturation. There is an interplay between institutions and the individuals that act within these frames. Not only are individuals judged by their

221 Interview 20, 9, 15, 18

222 Interview 40

223 Interview 18, 16, 20, 35, 43

adherence to the prevailing frame of reference and understanding, in the long run their interaction can change this frame as well. Interaction between intelligence officers in a specific setting can create a successful practice that in turn leads to new rules of the game.

From an empirical point of view, this chapter concludes that in the case of the EU intelligence system perceptions of integrity have a moderate effect on cooperative behavior. It analyzed these perceptions on three levels of relations; the macro (international), the meso (organizational) and the micro (personal) and it found an ambiguous picture. As it appears, the divides between clusters noted in the previous chapter are not only structural. They have a cultural effect as well, although to some extent cultural differences seem to be nurtured to fit or amplify the organizational divides. An overarching culture of intelligence is clearly visible, including shared principles. Subsequently, integrity is experienced among intelligence peers based on overlapping norm and standards. Nevertheless, the overarching occupational culture of the intelligence trade does not tell the whole story of EU intelligence cooperation. Its cultural fit is not all-encompassing or all-inclusive. At the intersections of the EU organization and this occupational culture, as well as between underlying subcultures of intelligence, notable differences still hamper cooperation. Trust is reserved for a select in-crowd, excluding others. The aggregate results are visualized in Appendix F.

On the macro-level, an overarching culture is hampered by national differences. It was found that differences in national cultures still exist, based on the respective size, political and legal regimes, and proximity of countries. Yet, the occupational culture of intelligence crosses national and organizational borders and provides the trade with clearly identifiable principles that can serve as a basis for categorization. This strongly perceived culture is seen to play an important role in European intelligence cooperation, but conflicts with the organizational culture of the EU and raises doubt among intelligence practitioners on the integrity of that organization. They perceive to hold conflicting views over the value and necessity of secrecy, pragmatism and informality The different frames of reference and understanding lead to diverging preferences in practices and problem-solving. SIAC is caught in the middle. Yet, overarching cultures do not tell the whole story.

On a meso-level, a shared professionalism facilitates recognition and supports cooperative behavior. Intelligence practitioners working in the EU are bound by a shared sense of being special. They see themselves doing a job that only they can do, but one that in the context of the EU is contested by outsiders. This seems to exacerbate tension between subcultures within SIAC. There are several. Although being relatively homogeneous in terms of job description and activities, a clear line seems to exist between personnel with an intelligence background and that without such a background. All are equal, but not equally so. In addition, there are several perceived cultural differences between various subgroups in intelligence, in many cases perceived to match the organizational divide between INTCEN

and EUMS INT. Nevertheless, at this point perceptions become more contradictive and confusing. Many of the cultural issues raised by respondents do not correspond fully with the organizational lines in the sand and some arguments are even contradictive. It seems that organizational roles and positions dictate or emphasize perceptions of occupational subdivides. Nevertheless, these perceptions are widespread and put colleagues' integrity in doubt. Categorization appears mainly a means for maintaining a small circle of trust. Yet, one that hampers broader cooperation.

On a micro-level, it is again personal relations that can make a difference. The community appears hard on the outside, but soft on the inside. Once in, considerable openness exists, is expected even. It is based on recognition of expertise and experience. The teams, working groups and branches of SIAC in EU intelligence provide a setting for witnessing and testing them first-hand. On the basis of expertise and experience shown, individual practitioners can transcend from the secluded out-group to an included in-group and reap the benefits of the fair amount of openness and exchange there. In the first instance, preliminary entrance into the in-group is facilitated by some sort of stereotyping on the basis of country and home organization or is based on experience with a predecessor. Here, a clear connection exists with the reputational dynamics around perceptions of ability depicted in the previous chapter. Yet, few norms and standards qualifying experience and expertise are codified. In second instance, further admittance to the group is only possible when passing the subjective test of behavioral integrity. In this respect, the SIAC setting provides an excellent opportunity, one largely absent from bilateral cooperation. It offers both the time and interaction needed to test the grounds. Showing a fine professional balance between openness and restraint is key in what is described as a ritual dance of passage.

When evaluating how perceptions of integrity influence social relations in EU intelligence cooperation, a metaphor is again helpful. When looking at the internal dynamics of professional recognition in the EU intelligence organizations, this resembles a soccer team. Soccer (intelligence) is their passion. They live and breathe soccer. And although all players come from different backgrounds, they recognize each other in this passion. Among them, there is no doubt about what the game stands for, when you can consider yourself the winner, and how it is played (secrecy, pragmatism and informality). And they themselves are convinced they know best (being special). Not all of this behavior is instantly understood on the outside, but for them it works and it binds them together as soccer players. Yet, now the team becomes part of a general sports club (EU), of which soccer is only one part and a recent addition too. Moreover, for the first period they have been much of a side-show. Contrary to the dynamics in the team, the club is perceived very formal, bureaucratic, and inclusive. They are actively encouraging players of other sports in the club to join the soccer team to bolster their numbers (EU civil servants). No matter how skillful these additions are, they are perceived to not fully grasp the technicalities of the game and have little feel for

the code of conduct in the team. This creates tension. However, the team already had some conflicts beforehand. The experienced players look alike to some extent, but their mindset, their skills, and their behavior is partly linked to their position on the pitch. For example, the center-forward is very goal-oriented and highly technical, but perceived of as not much of a team player (civil/security/operation), whereas the goalkeeper is thought to be the opposite; very risk-avoidant, a master in buying time, and the architect of the team strategy (military/intelligence/strategic). As a result, although from the outside they look like a team, and overall they agree on many things, on the inside many faultlines exist. These can cloud recognition and hamper cooperation in the game.

# Chapter 8

# Chapter 8: Benevolence in EU Intelligence Cooperation

## Cautious Collectivity

### 8.1. Introduction

> *'Solidarity is based not on generosity but on the Member States' 'enlightened self-interest' (if for no other reason than that they are interdependent) and on the defense of a shared project."*[1]

The third and final condition for trust is that partners perceive each other as benevolent, being in solidarity with each other's needs or even encapsulating their interests. This is largely affective. Mayer et al. suggest that in the case of benevolence, partners feel attached to one another. They introduce several characteristics that they think are relevant for this attachment, but refrain from conceptualizing them further.[2] Based on these characteristics this research turned to the body of knowledge on interorganizational relations and trust to elaborate further. In the conceptual framework in chapter 3, benevolence is shown to be about caring attitudes. Caring attitudes imply that members of a community relate to each other as brothers in a family who almost altruistically follow their common - rather than their individual - interest.[3] Based on a felt collectivity, they have the intention to help each other without the need for a direct return. It is driven by a process of attachment; bonding to such an extent that it becomes reasonable to take the interest of a partner at heart. His well-being has become an interest in its own right. In this frame, the intelligence community cooperates not so much because it needs to, but because it wants to. A sense of togetherness forms a bond that invokes solidarity among its members. Scholars often use the term collective identity to refer to this shared image of the self.[4] The more identical partners perceive themselves, the more caring their attitudes towards each other will be and the more attached they will become.

Attitudes, attachment and identities are expected to play only a minor role in EU intelligence cooperation. Benevolence seems out of place in the harsh world of intelligence cooperation. Intelligence services are said to have no friends and altruism is considered alien to the trade. Even when social relations and trust are a viable mechanism for cooperative behavior in EU intelligence, benevolence appears the least likely of all trust-conditions defined in the conceptual framework to play a role. At the same time, benevolence among partners

1 Jacques Delors, former President of the European Commission (1985-1995), in foreword to: Fernandes and Rubio, "Solidarity within the Eurozone: How Much, What for, for How Long?"

2 Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust," 718–19.

3 Grimmel and Giang, Solidarity in the European Union : A Fundamental Value in Crisis, 9–10.

4 Ravasi, "Organizational Identity, Culture, and Image," 65–66.

appears one of the drivers for the EU project. The adjacent notion of solidarity is one of the cornerstones in the functioning of the EU. It has a prominent place in the Treaty of Lisbon and is mentioned as a guiding principle for support of the Union's external and security policy.[5] Accordingly, it is often used in the context of the debate on European integration, where it depicts the growing situation of encapsulated interest among Member States. Solidarity is driven either by indirect reciprocity or by enlightened self-interest. The first consists of helping partners so that in the future they will return the favor. The second is helping because ultimately this serves the own interests as well. Although the rationales differ, both entail a form of interdependency and equality between separate partners. It is about 'being in it together'.[6] If perceptions of benevolence indeed play a role in EU intelligence cooperation, one will see markers of attachment and caring attitudes on various levels of practice within the community. The extent to which a collective European intelligence identity is felt among practitioners, will determine the limits of trust-based cooperation there.

This chapter examines perceptions of benevolence in the EU intelligence system. Starting from the concepts provided by the conceptual framework, it distinguishes how these perceptions shape cooperation in practice. The chapter offers an analysis of practitioners' views on the individual and collective characteristics that bind them and provide them with a sense of belonging. In doing so, it focusses on the construction of identity as a 'key aspect in the development of international collaborative relationships'.[7] The main question it answers is how perceptions of benevolence influence social relations and cooperative behavior in EU intelligence. Like the previous chapters, the results are presented at three levels. Section 8.2 addresses benevolence on a macro-level, in a transnational sense. What meaning does the concept of EU solidarity hold for European intelligence practitioners? Is there a shared sense of purpose or collective identity in the EU intelligence community? And how does that reflect on their practices? Next, section 8.3 zooms in on the meso-level, addressing the in-groups and out-groups in the EU intelligence community itself. Do the members of these groups consider themselves part of a collective? And how does that influence their commitment, cohesion and mindset? Section 8.4 will then consider the micro-level. It focusses on the aspects of affection and attraction. What is the role of individual characteristics like sociability and likeability? How do these interpersonal feelings influence loyalty and generosity there? Section 8.5 concludes the chapter by evaluating how the aggregate perceptions of benevolence influence cooperative behavior in the European intelligence community. Conceptually, it shows that perceptions of benevolence are well suited for scrutinizing the role of social relations and trust in cooperative behavior. Moreover, the operationalization into caring attitudes, attachment and identities proves

5 Consolidated version of the Treaty on European Union, C 326/17 (Art 2), C 326/30 (Art 24); Raspotnik, Jacob, and Ventura, "The Issue of Solidarity in the European Union," 1.

6 Fernandes and Rubio, "Solidarity within the Eurozone: How Much, What for, for How Long?," 3–6.

7 Zhang and Huxham, "Identity Construction and Trust Building in Developing International Collaborations," 188, 190.

remarkably appropriate to examine trust-building in intelligence cooperation. Empirically, it shows that, contrary to expectation, benevolence is a prominent feature in EU intelligence cooperation and has a positive effect. Although members of the community have differing interests still, a common affiliation binds them together, softening up their interaction and expectations. It allows them to cooperate and compete at the same time.

## 8.2. The Macro-Level: Selfish Solidarity

### 8.2.1. Neorealist Necessity

> *'Roughly speaking, intelligence is not the tidiest business to be in. Friendly intelligence services do not exist. Not even among the closest allies.'*[8]

Transnational solidarity in itself seems to mean little to practitioners in EU intelligence. In chapter 2 it was already stated that altruism is rare between organizations and national intelligence services working in the international realm are no exception, in the contrary. The neorealist presumption of intelligence cooperation, so dominant in academic writing on the topic, is clearly present in the perceptions of intelligence practitioners as well. Chapter 3 showed that reciprocity is at the very heart of cooperation, whereas chapter 2 already demonstrated that intelligence cooperation is generally driven by some sort of self-interest. Many respondents also underline the centrality of these two concepts in the European intelligence community.[9] They see themselves as being part of a transnational bargaining game between services striving for relative gain. They perceive this to be 'a very cynical game', one comparable to playing poker where it is important not to blink and not to let anyone peak into your cards. One practitioner is very vocal about this selfishness, stating that intelligence services:

> *'Have a hard time thinking in a cross-border mindset, to think in terms of a common goal for them is countercultural even. [...] For each international meeting they ask what is in it for them, 'what do we want to get out of this'. They extensively prepare every session and determine the QPQ. I would even say that they act in the same way in the national domain. They will not even share information with one another unconditionally there.'*[10]

The expectation of reciprocity and gain is a persistent topic among all practitioners when talking about benevolence in EU intelligence cooperation. Many think that there is 'no way that partners come to you, only because they have seen that you are in need of some

8 Interview 27

9 Interview 22, 37, 14, 15, 44

10 Interview 13

piece of intelligence'.[11] One respondent, having been enormously vocal during the entire interview, fell silent and requested clarification when asked about the hypothetical idea of non-reciprocal intelligence cooperation. The idea for him was almost inconceivable.[12] On an international level, practitioners' beliefs about benevolence in cooperation mostly do not extend beyond what in the conceptual framework was named a 'somewhat forgiving tit-for-tat strategy'. A relational lenience between partners that is only meant to not let incidental short-term deficiencies in the exchange jeopardize returns in the long run. As one national intelligence officer explicates:

> *'I would call this QPQ, but it is not that black and white. I have never seen a partnership in which one of the partners after let's say six years of giving and not getting much in return completely shut down the arrangement.'*[13]

The strive for relative instead of absolute gain is not thought to be easily overcome. Respondents note that due to a lack of political commitment to the EU project by the Member States, acceptance of interdependency will be a 'hard and lengthy' process.[14] Although wondering what the EU project can still bring as a collective, for the time being they rather perceive it as a narrower community of interest. A community of which no member 'would spend money, or risk valuable resources for [supporting] EU officials alone'.[15] The very generic alignment of strategic interests in the EU gives these practitioners little incentive for strong cohesion.

The predominantly strategic nature of EU intelligence limits benevolence. Collaboration in foreign intelligence is perceived as highly political and therefore highly subject to controversy. Respondents are largely unanimous in the opinion that operational intelligence cooperation runs much smoother than strategic cooperation does.[16] In an operational setting working together has a very functional basis and the common purpose is extremely clear. Moreover, although the intelligence needed generally is more detailed and specific, interests are easier aligned and seen to be less conflictual and sensitive to begin with. In the realm of protecting against threats it is well accepted that 'helping is the standard' and that 'you need friends who are willing to share' without asking what is in it for them.[17] For example, an intelligence officer recalls quickly coming to the aid of a foreign service when nationals of that country were taken hostage in a conflict zone for which his service had valuable local expertise and

11 Interview 31, 38
12 Interview 15
13 Interview 20
14 Interview 27, 7, 30, 36, 42
15 Interview 5, 40
16 Interview 1, 2, 5, 10, 11, 13, 31, 32, 33, 37
17 Interview 10, 11, 2, 7, 9, 18

sources.[18] Even in the less attractive multilateral setting, it is considered as 'running against a sound professional attitude' to withhold cooperation when countering a common threat.[19] Yet, at the strategic level this threat is less clear and often less imminent. It is there that Member States still hold back as the development of strategic intelligence:

> *'Can easily be delayed for a year or so if considered convenient. There will be no security crisis as result of it, and no threat will go undetected because of inaction.'*[20]

An EU intelligence officer reflects that 'far away from strategic requirements, you [will] find your common interest on the ground, in the mud. [But] you never find it on the strategic level.'[21] This is important for perceptions of benevolence in EU intelligence cooperation. Despite the EU's ambition to become more active on the operational level, this is not an intelligence reality yet. SIAC is still almost exclusively focused on providing strategic intelligence for policy purposes. Although respondents note that for cooperation in the domain of defence and security there currently appears to be a sense of urgency that is unheard of in any other EU policy domain, issues of national commitment to EU intelligence support still remain problematic.[22]

National interests still dictate much of the ideas about solidarity in EU intelligence.[23] Benevolence in cooperation is thought only possible when there is some sort of overlap in interests, but in the perception of many respondents these still differ considerably among Member States.[24] Despite public statements of government officials, they feel that the 'the common foreign and defence policy actually is not that common [yet]'.[25] For example, where some countries are concerned with global politics in 'regions far away [...], others are more preoccupied with their own next-door neighbor.' And unified action against foreign influence and manipulation has proven hard as 'some Member States, [...] have established closer political and economic ties [with these countries] than others. It is splitting up the unity in intelligence support.'[26] It is hard for intelligence practitioners to distinguish something of an encapsulating interest beyond very generic positions. One respondent sees the problems this brings for a unified operational effort:

18 Interview 1
19 Interview 11
20 Interview 13
21 Interview 42
22 Interview 2, 7
23 Interview 2, 6, 11, 12, 15, 43
24 Interview 1, 2, 3, 7, 10, 15, 18, 20, 26, 36, 39, 41, 42
25 Interview 7
26 Interview 1, 7, 8, 32

> *'For example, we agree that stability in a certain region is beneficial to the EU. But how to achieve this is a totally different matter. Let alone the details. Where some would say that this would be helped by granting a neighboring country EU membership, others would vehemently object to this solution. And that resonates in every-day intelligence cooperation.'*[27]

Many of intelligence officers are convinced that 'an inclusive security union harbors many potential conflicts [of interest] that cause tension and can hamper cooperation'.[28] Some unmask the process of drafting a joint threat assessment for the Strategic Compass as an example of these tensions. Generally thought of as a success, respondents instead point at the non-agreed nature of the document, in their view meant to circumvent sensitivities and differences of opinion without getting stuck in endless debates.[29] For them, it illustrates the lack of alignment in the EU intelligence community. They have so far missed a common political cause that can bind them closer together as a community and that can invoke solidarity.

At the same time, some see an increasing value of EU intelligence cooperation in the traditional way of direct returns. Many intelligence practitioners, both in national and international postings, bring up the direct benefits of EU intelligence cooperation for the Member States' own intelligence support.[30] More and more reports coming from the EU are seen to serve narrow national interests. This seems to resemble the familiar move from 'cautious necessity' to a more 'multi-oriented basis' for intelligence sharing, as noted by Svendsen in other settings.[31] For the EU such a trend seems surprising. In previous chapters it became evident that the EU intelligence system is not well known, holds a poor reputation and the organization as a whole is thought to operate in 'a different world'. It seems hardly a basis for wanting a return from that same system. Let alone valuing its products. Still, that is exactly what many respondents contend. They point at the added value that comes from additional expertise. Although the intelligence products 'might not be brilliant in themselves, [...] they do provide a perfect [comprehensive] basis' for common understanding and discussion.[32] The reports are claimed to being read in 'ministries of Foreign Affairs, Defence, and some Prime Ministers' offices'.[33] Of course, this applies first and foremost to the smaller European countries. For example, an intelligence officer coming from one of these countries depicts EU intelligence products as an 'essential asset' for his country.[34] Yet, the perception of added value coming from EU intelligence products is not limited to smaller

27 Interview 25
28 Interview 2, 7, 10, 15
29 Interview 26, 44
30 Interview 4, 6, 22, 23, 26, 29, 43
31 Svendsen, "Developing International Intelligence Liaison Against Islamic State," 261.
32 Interview 30
33 Interview 36
34 Interview 17, 25

countries. The larger ones are seen to benefit as well.[35] One experienced EU intelligence officer from a large Member State discovered while working in INTCEN that:

> *'Two relatively small [...] European countries had created, through their military services, exceptional niche capacities in the Middle East and in Africa, [granting them] a very good position in the intelligence trade market.'*[36]

### 8.2.2. Neoliberal Need

A unified goal will create strong bonds, but most intelligence officers have a hard time identifying with EU interests or seeing the common cause in the organization.[37] In their eyes, the 'wish of some countries to let the EU grow into a geopolitical actor' alone 'is not a strong or imminent incentive' for cooperation and the need to unify intelligence efforts is not felt in the same intensity everywhere.[38] As shown in chapter 6, these practitioners feel it as their obligation to serve national security on a European scale, but they do not think the EU should have much of a role in this. For them, the organization is in direct competition with other pluri- or multilateral arrangements like NATO.[39] Moreover, many intelligence officers perceive the EU to suffer from institutional hubris in the security domain; increasing its posture to legitimize its existence rather than for a clear and unique cause. One of them voices this weariness when stating that:

> *'Up to the point of 9/11 there has been no reasonable argument [...], no necessity to bolster EU intelligence. From there, the EU took it upon itself to save our ass.'*[40]

It diminishes the feeling that solidarity will contribute to something valuable. In many respects, intelligence officers experience multilateral cooperation in the EU as an expression of obligation rather than relevance. Contrary to the synergetic economic advantages the Union brings, respondents find that in intelligence and security it is no more than the sum of its parts. The absence of a convincing and exclusive purpose in security and defence policy or operations poses an obstacle to cohesion and commitment in EU intelligence cooperation. Feelings of suspicion and caution are never far away when discussing benevolence issues in EU intelligence cooperation with practitioners.[41] Especially national intelligence officers feel

35 Interview 44
36 Interview 36
37 Interview 40
38 Interview 13, 17
39 Interview 2, 5, 9, 10, 11, 27
40 Interview 5
41 Interview 12, 18, 25, 33, 34, 44

little affection for working in the context of the EU. One EU intelligence officer challenges that:

> *'There is a 'we', that you are in this together. Like 'there is no 'I' in team [...]. The feeling of shared interest [...] is missing.'*[42]

Another remarks that 'the EU is not the place for us. [...] It is a bit of a side show.'[43] It is the general perception that little fondness for intelligence and security is present in the EU either. Yet, respondents also sense that something is changing.

Intelligence is slowly gaining prominence in the context of the EU. Respondents note a slow increase in the importance attached to it by EU decision-makers. For example, the recent Strategic Compass 'was based, for the first time, on a threat analysis by the national services, [...] a significant move.'[44] And one that is not seen to stand alone. There was an active intelligence input for the EU's China strategy and:

> *'Strategic assessments are made very regularly in advance of EU PSC [Political and Security Committee] and Military Committee meetings, [...] or to prepare a Council [...]; it is more than 100 classified reports of importance influencing the EU institutions.'*[45]

In addition, these reports no longer land in thin air as the EU is increasingly active in both defence and foreign policy. This reality necessitates the services to take the EU more seriously.[46] Even when sticking to the traditional creed of relative gain for nation states, the incentive to turn to the EU grows. Intelligence officers acknowledge that the EU's strategic and operational intelligence proposition, currently still 'far-off and maybe unattractive', can rapidly evolve:

> *'Increased cooperation from increased demands can serve as a ratchet. Increased demands lead to increased contacts and relations, lead to increased exchanges, lead to increased trust. [Cooperation itself] can thus induce ever more cooperation at the lower levels.'*[47]

They expect that increased EU prominence in defence and security issues will result in more cohesive, and thus cooperative, EU intelligence support.[48] Moreover, the 'belief in the

42 Interview 10
43 Interview 17, 34
44 Interview 7, 24, 30, 39, 42, 43
45 Interview 36
46 Interview 5, 17, 36, 42
47 Interview 2
48 Interview 10, 25, 28

community itself that there is a difference to be made' by working together in the EU can create additional momentum.[49]

EU solidarity is becoming an alternative way for intelligence practitioners to serve their nations. Respondents note that with its rising relevance, supporting the EU becomes a matter not of direct reciprocity but of enlightened self-interest. As the Union is seen to guide more and more of their nations' foreign and security policy, participating in the intelligence arrangement helps services 'to better serve the interests of their countries."[50] Instead of delivering an intelligence return, directly or through increased reputation, sharing becomes a matter of achieving policy gains.[51] Accordingly, some respondents indicate that their respective services in the last years are increasingly sharing their products with the EU.[52] One, probably overdoing it a bit to make his argument, claims:

> *'There is a lot being decided in the EU these days [...]. If you value effect decision-maker support, then that is the place to be. You could even say that sharing your products with the EU delivers a bigger bang to the buck than doing so with our own prime minister."*[53]

In the multilateral context of the EU, services are becoming somewhat lenient in their dealings with others in order to steer EU policy in a direction favorable to their home country. Benevolence is increasingly seen as beneficial, where 'helping' becomes 'influencing' meant to:

> *'Be at the wheel in directing the course of [the] EU. This is what many [...] countries do, they use their intelligence not only to help, but to influence as well."*[54]

In this changing context, 'it is not at all clear what might come out of it in terms of benefit, at least not right away and not indefinitely'.[55] It resembles the asymmetry in complex bilateral relations noted by Sims, where 'intelligence may flow only one way' in order to gain reward of a different kind.[56] Nevertheless, contrary to what she asserts, the benevolence shown in the multilateral setting EU is more than asymmetric reciprocity alone.

49 Interview 30, 33, 34, 36
50 Interview 15
51 Interview 3, 16, 17, 19, 25, 32, 36, 37, 42, 43, 44
52 Interview 24, 42
53 Interview 30
54 Interview 17
55 Interview 20
56 Sims, "Foreign Intelligence Liaison," 197.

As the EU becomes more of a player in the geopolitical arena, intelligence practitioners also feel it their duty to support it. Even without a return. One of them clarifies the reasons for sharing with the EU:

> *'Why? For me that is simple. We work in the interest of the community. Intelligence held for yourself is useless, fruitless to do so. So, you need to share internally. [...] Multilateral cooperation has a different dynamic; it is more about doing it for the institutions. They are consumers and we contribute to their needs. It is not about reciprocity.'*[57]

Professional pride and a sense of responsibility kick in. As a goal-oriented profession aimed at supporting governmental decision-making, intelligence practitioners feel an urge to team up and meet the increasing activity of EU decisionmakers. For them, it creates a new reality that they cannot deny in the long run, as 'at the end of the day, after years of discussion about reciprocity, [intelligence support] is our job.[58] Mirroring dynamics known from neoliberal institutionalism and constructivism, the EU's increased activity slowly invokes a growing cohesion and commitment in the intelligence community supporting it. It summons 'centrifugal powers [..] that bind this broader community, redefining national interest.'[59] A common sense of cause is slowly building a common identity.

### 8.2.3. Cautious Constructivism

The EU intelligence community is growing towards each other and has been doing so for the last decades already. Among intelligence practitioners in the EU there is a widespread belief that now more than ever 'there is a true sense of 'we' or 'us', that we are in it together.'[60] Some respondents describe this growing cohesion as 'baby steps', others as a 'quantum leap', but it is there nevertheless. Some touch upon the idea of a common identity, based on shared EU values mentioned in chapter 5, like the protection of human rights, rule of law, and liberal democracy. Contrary to persuasive views on a general lack of coherence in European identity[61], these relative abstract values apparently give intelligence practitioners something to rally around. They provide 'an overarching [...] reason for us to be here. Why it is important.'[62] It very much resonates the normative (constructivist) type of partnership identified by Røseth in which partners consider themselves part of a community of values.[63] This cohesion comes with a new 'benevolent' dynamic in EU intelligence, where helping

57 Interview 29

58 Interview 19, 3, 7, 25, 27, 31, 32

59 Interview 2

60 Interview 16, 7, 8, 17, 20, 22, 23, 43

61 Cartmell, "Long Term Intelligence Sharing," 430–31.

62 Interview 2, 37

63 Røseth, "How to Classify Intelligence Relations," 54–56.

another is becoming similar to helping oneself.[64] An illustration is given by a national intelligence officer when discussing the current problems in EU intelligence support. He feels that:

> *'This is not a SIAC problem, it is our problem. [...] In this intelligence function, it is not we or them. It is us. We are in this together. There would be no use in pointing fingers as blaming them would be blaming myself.'*[65]

The articulated sense of togetherness backs the idea that integration in the field of European intelligence might be further than can be derived from structures alone, and can serve as a stepping stone for cooperation.[66]

The growing cohesion in the EU intelligence community is mainly due to feelings of encapsulated interest.[67] Respondents believe that benevolence in EU intelligence will continue to grow gradually as a result. One national intelligence officer sees the inevitability of it:

> *'Trust for me means not having to worry all the time that you are being cheated. Common interest is the [best] foundation for this. If there is a common interest, a cheating partner is actually cheating on himself. They become victims of their own behavior as much as you. This way, you have each other by the balls.'*[68]

Another national intelligence officer already depicts the EU as 'the cornerstone of our security policy.'[69] And a third, while admitting that he gets carried away, marvels that for the 'co-creation of meaning in a complex world, multilateral cooperation in the EU [could] become more interesting than bilateral cooperation'.[70] In the opinion of these intelligence officers, the direct threats to their national security are increasingly intertwined and so is the ability to counter them. They oblige the services to team up. In these circumstances, considerations of relative gain and direct return lose relevance. Common cause is seen to create an instant bond in the community. One that is beyond the influence of conflicting political agendas and ideas.[71]

64 Interview 19, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 39

65 Interview 7

66 Cross, "The European Space and Intelligence Networks," 210. 221-224; Davis Cross, "A European Transgovernmental Intelligence Network and the Role of IntCen," 388, 340; Davis Cross, *Security Integration in Europe*.

67 Interview 3, 4, 7, 13, 15, 17, 28, 30, 31, 36, 39

68 Interview 27, 35

69 Interview 17

70 Interview 34

71 Interview 2, 3, 13, 26, 30, 34, 36, 44

Outside pressure, especially coming from a shared threat perception or joint operations, speeds up the process of growing cohesion. One respondent sees in shared operational activities against a common threat:

> *'A strong incentive. It has a clear [...] dynamic for it. Whereas you can be for or against European integration, you cannot really be against security. [When confronted with an unmet security threat] I believe, there is a public outcry for European cooperation.'*[72]

Already in early interviews, respondents pointed at the effect selfish solidarity can have for trust and cooperation. They felt that repeated and intense interaction resulting from countering a common threat could bolster commitment and cohesion in EU intelligence. Calculations and relations for them go hand-in-hand. Some pointed at similar dynamics in existing counterterrorism formats and in the broader NATO alliance, but also at previous EU experience after the Crimea and migration crises.[73] Others assessed that 'a new Cold War' could give a boost to EU intelligence cooperation and (re)vitalize some of the networks already in place. They speculated that 'we might be surprised' what would happen in the EU intelligence community then.[74] In the course of the interviews that surprise to certain extent came true. Respondents unfortunately were provided with a direct example.

Outside threat is giving a further boost to existing dynamics of EU convergence and increasing benevolence. On the 24th of February 2022 Russian troops invaded Ukraine. Despite the country not being a member of the EU, this created a sense of urgency and cohesion that was reflected in the interviews afterwards. Respondents see the crisis as a catalyst for the already ongoing increase in EU intelligence cooperation, a 'wake-up call' even. For them it puts operational merit to the more abstract (geo)political aim of becoming more strategically autonomous as 'there is no denying the added value [of EU intelligence cooperation] there'.[75] Some even depict it as a 'a real game-changer', asserting that in a threat environment like the current one:

> *'The more you will need to, and can, trust your partner. In that sense, your research comes at a seemingly ideal moment. The current war in the Ukraine and the security implications it holds for all of us, shows the full potential of good relations [in EU intelligence].'*[76]

It creates a new reality even for those still firmly rejecting multilateral cooperation. There is an increased feeling of being in the same boat together, intensifying existing relations

72 Interview 13
73 Interview 3, 5
74 Interview 10
75 Interview 39, 20, 23, 24, 25, 30, 33, 36, 40, 42, 43
76 Interview 19

and catapulting new ones. In the context of EU intelligence cooperation, solidarity is slowly but steadily becoming the norm, an alternative to tit-for-tat bargaining.[77] One intelligence officer reflects on this by stating that:

> *'Surely, quid-pro-quo is still a powerful mantra. But its importance has decreased hugely over the past 15 years. It is not an adage that is up to the current security environment, consisting of complex threats that cross national divides. In countering these threats, QPQ is not the way to go.'*[78]

When the pressure is high enough, even rock-solid things start to become more fluid. 'Nobody wants to be seen not cooperating when this could have averted for example a terrorist attack. Taking the safe side [...] suddenly becomes less attractive as an argument.'[79]

Feelings of encapsulated interest give way to a sense of mutual belonging and benevolent burden-sharing. The practice in EU intelligence cooperation still stands far from the idea of 'sharing is caring', advocated by one national intelligence officer when discussing benevolence in this realm.[80] To a large extent 'services are simply going about their business, using the same cart tracks [of national self-interest] they have been using for years.'[81] Nevertheless, some respondents are convinced that among services:

> *'There is an increasing willingness to cooperate [in order] to achieve a common EU goal [...]; on the basis that our competitive advantage is linked and that we share a responsibility.'*[82]

Contrary to expectation when starting this research, encapsulated interest and identity formation lead to a burden-sharing in which unequal resources do not necessarily commute to unequal relations. Inequal burden sharing is often suggested to be antonymous to benevolence in cooperation as it can cause discontent among the larger countries who carry most of the burden. In absolute terms, smaller countries are indeed seen to profit more from the EU than larger ones.[83] Nevertheless, practitioners do not perceive this as free-riding, because some countries in the community:

> *'Do not have much resources at home, like [country X, one of the smallest EU members]. They are mainly taking. But that is fair. You cannot blame them. [Country X] has the size of [Country X].'*[84]

77 Interview 27, 3, 30, 31, 36
78 Interview 19
79 Interview 13
80 Interview 27
81 Interview 30
82 Interview 7, 33, 36
83 Interview 1, 2, 11, 14, 29, 32
84 Interview 39, 4, 24

Moreover, the few contributions these countries do provide, can be equally valuable for the common cause. In relative terms, these smaller countries fulfill the reasonable expectations for benevolence placed upon them.[85] When feeling to be in it together, to have encapsulated interest, it is no longer about how much a nation is able to contribute, but whether they are contributing to the best of their ability. In the words of one intelligence officer:

> *'I just do not care what I get in direct return. I do not mind how much you contribute, as long as I can trust you to do so when you have something. It is a general perspective not only for small states, but for big contributors [...] as well.'*[86]

Larger countries are seen to take a more benevolent stance towards these smaller countries in the EU - or perceive that they should - based on a combination of growing necessity, a common cause, and a growing sense of common identity. This is not altruism. It serves the interests of these states, for example by bolstering their self-image of a powerful state and reinforcing the reputations mentioned in chapter 6.[87] It supports the idea that positive identification at the international level can overcome problems of collective action. Not because collective identities and interests are replacing egoistic ones entirely, but because they can exist next to each other and create new meaning for concepts like reciprocity and gain.[88]

## 8.3. The Meso-Level: Teaming Up

### 8.3.1. Commitment

Feelings of interdependency create commitment to the EU intelligence organizations.[89] Some respondents perceive services' participation in SIAC as an unambiguous expression of their willingness to contribute, while others see it as merely fulfilling a formal obligation.[90] The first view might be overly optimistic, but from the interviews it becomes clear that the latter is definitely too pessimistic. Among most respondents there is a shared consciousness that in the EU system winning can only be done together. There is a wide-spread consensus that the complexity of the current threat environment necessitates smaller as well as larger services to join forces with the like-minded in settings like the EU intelligence organizations. A national intelligence officer from a larger EU Member State is very clear about the

85 Interview 22, 7, 17, 19, 20, 43

86 Interview 19

87 Ramel, "Overcoming Misrecognition," 3.

88 Wendt, "Collective Identity Formation and the International State," 386–87.

89 Interview 2, 3, 6, 17, 19, 29, 30, 32 38, 39, 42, 44

90 Interview 27, 37, 42

importance of these interdependencies when stating that 'on a global scale, and on all topics, [national] autonomy has its limits'.[91] Although undoubtedly bringing more resources to the table, larger services do not necessarily have sufficient expertise on all topics required by their governments. Even smaller EU partners are judged to:

> *'Have some nice niche expertise you could benefit from, [and] even the worst services could be helpful to give you a 3D-vision of a problem, to break group thinking or to ask the good little questions while [at the same time] not contributing too much...'*[92]

Although respondents are fully aware that interests in the EU do not completely coincide, they feel that they have a high chance of finding like-minded services within SIAC. At least, the interdependence of EU Member States leads respondents to the belief that in the EU structures they are in it together. On the organizational level, the idea of a common enterprise creates commitment to participate benevolently.[93]

The EU structures are considered hardly the place for competition and rivalry between intelligence services or personnel.[94] As the goals of the participants are largely the same and they need each other in achieving them, actions to damage other participants become ludicrous. Moreover, reaching these shared goals will not occur at the expense of either of the participants. In SIAC, the gains are to a large extent divisible among all without losing their value. So, the rationale for competition is limited too. An adage like QPQ appears to lose meaning in this context. Although it is unlikely that services share all their 'killer-punch' intelligence with the EU unconditionally, or even first, the setting of EU intelligence on the inside is one of collaboration. There, supporting the EU holds central stage as a motive for cooperation and participants closely work together on many topics and on many levels. As a consequence, some benevolence is expected by default. One respondent even doubts whether cooperation is the right word for working together in SIAC. He thinks it might evoke 'the wrong dynamics':

> *'It instantly puts QPQ on the forefront, and mistakenly so. The EU should be on top of mind [...] even if we operationally get nothing in return. In these cases, what our [national] consumers get out of it is only of a secondary concern. Or rather, it is answering [our] existential question in a different manner. The EU is [emphasis] our primary consumer and supporting them should thus be our aim.'*[95]

91 Interview 19, 31, 39

92 Interview 36

93 Interview 7, 15, 26, 29

94 Interview 24, 26, 29, 34, 37, 40, 43

95 Interview 19

Interestingly, perceived competition between SIAC and other EU institutions appears to be a vehicle for growing commitment in the EU intelligence system. EU intelligence reform is seen to encourage the intelligence community to bury the hatchet. [96] It requires services to formulate a negotiated stance; they have to interact and coordinate their positions. Moreover, respondents fear that if services do not increase their commitment to SIAC, the EU will continue to 'create [its] own intelligence institutions [something] that would most certainly jeopardize [their] national interests'.[97] Traditionally, intelligence practitioners joined ranks to counter the perceived risk of SIAC evolving into a European intelligence service. As seen in chapters 5 and 6, any move in this direction was greeted with suspicion, contempt and outright resistance. Now intelligence practitioners are beginning to understand that:

> *'We - as a community - will have to deliver far more [...] either willingly or under stress and blackmail. If we are not doing the 'leap forward' [...], we will no more be seen as relevant by the Commission's political core group in quite a short term.'*[98]

SIAC might still not be seen as 'real intelligence' by the services, but at least it comes close and they have a say in it. As civilian and military services feel obliged to increase their commitment to SIAC and bureaucratic rivalry ceases, the organizations within it can grow closer.

Bureaucratic politics still hamper commitment in EU intelligence to some extent nevertheless. It is most noticeable in the competition between the civilian INTCEN and the military EUMS INT. Working with some overlap in the same organization, INTCEN and EUMS INT are seen to internally compete for relevance and resources.[99] A member of SIAC even observes that:

> *'It becomes complicated to get into conversation. I adhere to the theory of 'team of teams' for intelligence work. But here internally, it is more of a 'we versus them'.'*[100]

Others sometimes feel victim of conflicting agendas of their leadership as well, but do not perceive the working relations between the analysts in EUMS INT and INTCEN as not too problematic.[101] Despite an inequality in their power, INTCEN being larger, holding a broader portfolio, and connecting to more services, there is a commitment to make the relation work. An intelligence officer working in EUMS INT feels that 'we cannot do without INTCEN, but they are not complete without us'.[102] In their view, the animosity between the two

96 Interview 2, 3, 25
97 Interview 32
98 Interview 36
99 Interview 37, 39, 40, 43
100 Interview 29
101 Interview 6, 16, 40, 42
102 Interview 25

organizations is mainly an extension of the external competition between the respective civilian and military services supporting them. Bureaucratic rivalry between civilian and military intelligence services is seen to hamper the strengthening of EU intelligence and to limit perceptions of benevolence within SIAC. These services sometimes barely speak to each other at home. An EU intelligence officer speaks of:

> *'Examples where intelligence services of different types from the same country could have been as far apart as from here to China.'*[103]

Other respondents confirm this attitude. Two of them, without willing to go into detail, hint that 'some [civilian] services are exchanging more with INTCEN than with their own national [military] partners'.[104] For that, they are using the 'special handling' markings, safeguarding that their papers will not go to military counterparts directly. Others wonder how it will ever be possible to reach a comprehensive picture at EU level, when 'there are some countries in which civilian and military services do not even share among themselves'.[105] An EU intelligence officer observes:

> *'I have been around for some time, and even I sometimes get surprised by the determination with which [some services] oppose integration between civil and military intelligence here.'*[106]

### 8.3.2. Cohesion

At present, cohesion between civilian INTCEN and military EUMS INT is still limited. In the opinion of many respondents, little love is lost on the relation.[107] It is functional, but not much benevolence is expected. There is a relational inequality felt that influences relations and trust between the two. Using the frame of an intelligence 'family', respondents see the two as brothers, but the latter definitely as the little brother. Others rather depict the relation between as that between a nephew and a far-away aunt. And some see in INTCEN more of a parent, but not a very affectionate one.[108] An intelligence officer in EUMS INT even experiences that INTCEN:

> *'Approaches us in a step-motherly way. They know we are part of their world, but do not see and care about us as being their own.'*[109]

103 Interview 16
104 Interview 36, 42
105 Interview 41, 3
106 Interview 30
107 Interview 14, 25, 29, 30, 41
108 Interview 14, 25, 30
109 Interview 41

It 'is not working badly', but it is nothing like what respondents experience in other established settings like NATO or CTG.[110] It is when comparing the workings of EU intelligence with these arrangements that it becomes evident where they think cohesion is hampered. One respondent touches upon the logic behind it when questioning the - as he describes it - ridiculously unconditional nature of the Five Eyes community. Something that he thinks cannot possibly be based solely on the idea of 'sharing with native speakers for the sake of it'.[111] When answering his own question, he acknowledges that it is not so much language in a narrow sense that binds them, but at a shared narrative and common identity. A degree of identification that is still lacking in EU intelligence.

The EU intelligence family in SIAC does possess a common identity that binds it together and avoids what some call 'trust issues'.[112] Respondents combine a - relatively abstract - notion of a common EU identity, with a more specific understanding of what it means to do intelligence in this setting. This common identity is based on a common sense of purpose and a shared narrative; one that:

> *'They [EU intelligence officers] believe in. In here yes, all who are stationed here to some extent share the same mindset. One that is different from the outside."*[113]

Nevertheless, two sub-identities are at work that somewhat hamper this cohesion, a military and a civilian one. It coincides with one of the divides mentioned in chapter 7. Unsurprisingly, respondents mainly distinguish between them in terms of cooperation willingness. Military intelligence officers in the EU identify themselves as staunch cooperators, whereas civilian intelligence officers are thought to be less focused on cooperation.[114] Nevertheless, depicting one or the other type of intelligence officer as less cooperation-minded is too simplistic. It is rather a lack of affection between the two groups that seems to stand between them. Within their respective communities cooperation is perceived as 'super easy, [as] you are alike', while cooperation across their borders is 'a whole different ballgame'.[115] Like with the subcultures described in the previous chapter, from a relational perspective, the pronounced differences between these subidentities are a vehicle for selection meant to simplify and ease cooperation. Whereas institutions are used to fend off the out-group, identities are used to ascribe favorable traits to the in-group. Their perceived existence, rather than their substance, holds relevance for cooperation. Emphasizing them appears mainly part of the process to separate the trusted in-group from the out-group.

110 Interview 29
111 Interview 10
112 Interview 2, 3, 7, 10, 11, 17, 20, 24, 26, 28, 30, 36
113 Interview 26
114 Interview 2, 15, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 36, 42
115 Interview 12, 15

Exclusivity, working benevolently with some while excluding others, stands at the very heart of intelligence cooperation. In the EU as much as elsewhere.[116] First, the system already depends on the 'few participants that care enough about certain topics to step in'.[117] Second, even when 'identifying with one bigger thing, you cannot trust everyone equally. Trust is selective and gradual'.[118] Some partners are seen to be more of a cooperator than others. One respondent by experience makes a clear distinction between those partners 'who will never respond or join, or only come because they feel they have to; some who want to come but forget to respond [...] and those partners [who] respond right away and join in'.[119] In addition, the EU arrangement, any arrangement actually, has practical limits for interaction and sharing. So, as much as inclusivity is the goal, in EU practice:

> *'You will be very pragmatic about this. [...] Are you going to include all? Are you going to look for agreed positions only? No. [...] cooperate with the able and the willing. This has clear advantages for effectivity and it is still possible for other to benefit."*[120]

Some respondents think that if only for these reasons, it would not only be helpful for EU intelligence to make increased use of the cohesive clubs for cooperation already existent around the EU, but also to create small groups of forerunners itself that can lead the way on specific topics. They argue that it is both effective and efficient to task those services most preoccupied with a certain topic or theme on behalf of the EU. One thinks the advantage of this to be:

> *'Quite visible now with what is happening in eastern Europe. The countries bordering Ukraine or Russia are very knowledgeable on what is happening there and why. And they are very concerned, so they have the means and the incentive to share."*[121]

In the multilateral context of EU intelligence, the idea of forerunners has limited support among EU intelligence officers. They fear that emphasizing the cohesion among subsets of members will cause tension and jeopardize the collectivity felt in the arrangement. Moreover, no matter the topic or occasion, there is a general reluctance in the EU intelligence community to let some 'speak on behalf of the entire community' indiscriminately.[122] Many respondents feel that it would make the system extremely vulnerable to manipulation and influencing.[123] This sentiment is duly noted by one advocate of lead-groups, who admits that

116 Interview 10, 12, 27, 29, 37
117 Interview 12
118 Interview 27
119 Interview 12
120 Interview 37
121 Interview 29
122 Interview 30
123 Interview 3, 15, 17, 18, 26, 31, 36, 39

'the perception of obscure backrooms needs to be avoided [as these lead groups] are by no means meant as a way to exclude or sidestep other participants in the arrangement'.[124] Yet, many perceive exclusive formats as precisely that. At the organizational level, plurilateral lead-groups seem to cast doubt on the willingness to cooperate multilaterally, and stir up existing fear of exclusion. In other words, they directly threaten the sense of unity and benevolence growing out of encapsulated interests at the international level, and increased commitment from interdependency at the organizational level. Ultimately, many respondents even assess them to be a divisive element in EU intelligence.[125] It would reinstate a sense of competition in to the arrangement. As one national intelligence officers explicates:

> *'The European system consists of many small clubs, but that [...] would not lead to any solution for multilateral cooperation in the field of [EU] Foreign and Security policy. These clubs are closed shops for the services that are not part of them. [...] Having some countries in special clubs while others are not, introduces a form of competition. It will invoke a counterforce of other countries doing the same to balance it.'*[126]

### 8.3.3. Team Spirit

On a working level, within EUMS INT and INTCEN a team spirit exists that bolsters benevolence in EU intelligence. Respondents note a 'cooperative mindset'; a willingness to collaborate for the benefit of all and sort out differences.[127] Although not all countries equally share the narrative of building a strong Europe, and organizational divides continue to hamper cooperation, EU intelligence officers indicate that among themselves, they experience a sense of belonging and that they feel safe among the like-minded. Based on the perception of 'an overriding commonality', a shared story that binds them as intelligence officers working in the EU, they are able to set aside feelings of unease about vulnerability.[128] Although it is unlikely that someone in SIAC 'is playing a double game', people still have to decide what they share and what they don't.[129] Moreover, in these structures there are still differences of opinion and interest that need to be settled, in order to bring the collective forward. Incidents do happen, but many EU intelligence officers feel that it is team spirit that makes them successful in coping with these.[130] One of them remarks that:

124 Interview 17
125 Interview 7, 10, 14, 24, 36
126 Interview 8
127 Interview 7, 12, 15, 24, 21, 27, 37, 38, 40, 42, 43, 44
128 Interview 15, 3, 5, 6, 10, 24, 30, 31, 34, 38
129 Interview 22, 10, 12, 13, 28, 29, 30, 34, 36, 40
130 Interview 14, 22, 32, 34

*'The people working here are part of a European community with their mind as well as with [their] heart. [...] Limiting it to this working level, everything could be easy in cooperation. It makes you acknowledge that the EU will survive its struggles."*[131]

The production teams are the focal points of team spirit in EU intelligence. The collegiality felt within 'the micro-cosmos of the team' helps EU intelligence officers set aside differences and cooperate by default.[132] One even claims that when he is working there, he forgets what country he is from.[133] Although that might be somewhat exaggerated, another expresses similar thoughts when stating that 'we have sufficient team spirit to think as colleagues. I work with my colleague, not with his service'.[134] Many feel the same, agreeing that in the setting of the EU they are 'foremost a member of the production team'.[135] Getting the job done together becomes their primary concern. One EU intelligence officer, working on a topic presumably of no direct interest to his country, remarks:

*'I do not expect an operational gain from it nor do I need it. Yet, here I am, doing my best to achieve something. [...] In here there are social relations that get the machine working on a daily basis. [...] It is part of a team effort."*[136]

And another states that:

*'In here, what drives me is the ethos of the team. Working together on a project, bolstered by shared experiences and personal contacts. And that includes having a pint on Friday and chatting about an upcoming holiday."*[137]

It is even seen to create an affiliation in which 'you trust more and feel more comfortable with some of your foreign partners, than [with] some of your own colleagues."[138] This emotional bonding much resembles the dynamic in international organizations unsympathetically described by Boatner in terms of 'shifting allegiance', and framed more positively by Volk as 'essential for cooperation in small and diverse groups'.[139] In the setting of EU intelligence practitioners seem to combine multiple allegiances or identities, allowing them to be competitors on the outside while at the same time cooperating on the inside. Established

131 Interview 24

132 Interview 11, 16, 22, 23, 24, 26, 29, 34, 37, 40, 43

133 Interview 29

134 Interview 40, 28

135 Interview 37, 22

136 Interview 16

137 Interview 26

138 Interview 36

139 Boatner, "Sharing and Using Intelligence in International Organizations: Some Guidelines," 89; Volk, "The Evolution of Trust and Cooperation in Diverse Groups. A Game Experimental Approach," 37, 127.

relations at working level give the EU arrangement a significant lenience in overcoming obstacles for cooperation.

The setting of day-to-day EU intelligence cooperation in small teams supports a team spirit that is unseen in bilateral exchanges and cannot be easily transferred to it.[140] In there, it is easier to 'interact and to become friends […] than in other places. Normally you would meet only sporadic, and have to keep in contact through e-mail, telephone etcetera. In here, it is more intense'. All of a sudden, 'these foreign partners are right across the hall, there are parties and families meet at BBQ's'.[141] For EU intelligence officers, keeping their distance is hardly a viable option. Starting from a common purpose, the intensity and length of (repeated) interaction is seen to create an incentive of its own for cooperation. In time it can generate an atmosphere of belonging that allows them to step beyond considerations of national competition and reciprocity. In this setting:

> *'Where there are structured exchanges for more than one year with the same group of services, and often the same group of representatives, being open, frank and friendly in your attitude is the more efficient manner to play. Although already up front it has largely been decided what can be given, the way this is executed in the arrangement matters greatly for upholding the arrangement. If you continue to reciprocate, your counterpart will [also] go to the extreme limit of what he could give, playing with the grey zone."*[142]

Returning favors evolves from small tokens of reliability at the beginning of the relation, to more substantive donations later on.

The research clearly shows the upward spiral of trust mentioned in chapter 3, where goodwill in later stages of the relation is substantially better than in initial ones because of sustained interpersonal contacts.[143] Respondents describe how trust is built 'layer by layer' to a point where a significant vulnerability is acceptable.[144] In EU intelligence cooperation, although in terms of organizational commitment and cohesion there is still much to be gained, the duration of cooperative interpersonal relations already leads to relational resilience. It is often said that trust comes on foot and goes at horseback. In intelligence cooperation, a sudden change in affability or an incident can indeed be the cause of halting or even reversing a relation.[145] Yet, this seems especially true for the early stages of a friendly

140 Interview 3, 15, 17, 18, 22, 26, 28, 33, 34, 36, 37, 40, 42, 43

141 Interview 28, 3

142 Interview 36

143 See amongst others: Ferrin, Bligh, and Kohles, "It Takes Two to Tango," 171–75; McKnight, Cummings, and Chervany, "Initial Trust Formation in New Organizational Relationships," 128–34; Ring and van de Ven, "Developmental Processes of Cooperative Interorganizational Relations," 101–5.

144 Interview 9, 14, 19, 26, 42

145 Interview 9, 15, 35

relation. Here, a parallel exists with bilateral relations where established ties are known to bolster forgiveness for misconduct. With these partners 'you can compare it with an, perhaps somewhat unhappy, marriage. In many cases a one-time cheat will not instantly blow the entire relation. This would be different in a very young relation'.[146] This means that a select number of partners is not so much above suspicion of cheating, but easier forgiven when stepping somewhat over the line.[147] A national intelligence officer gives an example:

> *'Of course, he [established partner] sometimes did something candid that I would not have approved of. But he did so in a pleasant way, being likeable. [...] When they really crossed a border once, I counteracted resolutely. That's the way it works. It did not jeopardize our personal trust and relation a bit. You know these things happen, but it needs not be nasty. [...] Trust enables you to keep a good relation even at times of peril. You know. You remember. But you do not hold it against them indefinitely."*[148]

Benevolence shows in the appetite for conflict resolution within the SIAC teams.[149] As seen above, genuine deceit is not commonplace in the EU intelligence organizations. Nevertheless, team spirit can still play a role in resolving tension, for example when it shows that one of the partners has pushed influencing policy too far or has been too restrictive in sharing. Then, good relations and trust among colleagues in the SIAC teams can make up for a seemingly malign error in judgment. Discussion and compromise are an important part of cooperation in that setting. Some even call the willingness to sort out differences, or agreeing to disagree, the real European ethos or DNA in intelligence cooperation; 'the habit to try to find a consensus, [...], never hurt a partner which could help you [...], and less brutal, less about direct national interest...'.[150] In the trusted setting of the team, intelligence officers might not fully embrace each other's interest, but they embrace discussion about them. Respondents see discussion and compromising as an illustration of their cooperative mindset, greatly helping cooperation in EU intelligence. For one, it is definitive proof of trust when 'you will feel free to challenge someone [...] without getting into conflict'.[151]

146 Interview 27
147 Interview 20, 21, 27, 32, 35, 36
148 Interview 35
149 Interview 15, 17, 19, 24, 25, 26, 28, 29, 39, 40, 42, 43, 44
150 Interview 36
151 Interview 37

## 8.4. The Micro-Level: Up Close and Personal

### 8.4.1. Sociability

Affective relations in intelligence cooperation are very much personal relations.[152] They are seen to ease cooperation practices considerably:

> *'We had a change in persons in both EUMS INT and INTCEN, and now cooperation is more intense. [...] It takes personal relations to understand the commonalities we have in our work.'*[153]

Like with judging ability and testing integrity, described in the previous chapters, communicating willingness thrives on personal interaction. One respondent suggests that in intelligence 'interpersonal contacts might even be more important than in other domains of government', echoing a highly similar assertion by Aldrich.[154] It means that even in an established setting like the EU 'sending someone with a shopping list, or offering expensive lunches, won't do you the trick'.[155] To establish an emotional bond with counterparts on the personal level, a bit more than a network connection and professional recognition is needed. It also requires 'socializing':

> *'When you trust each other more on a personal level, talking more about your feelings on daily basis, for example 'the fact that your branch head is a dick', also means that you exchange thoughts more easily on formal exchange matters.'*[156]

In international intelligence cooperation, socializing is a first step for nurturing caring attitudes. It helps finding commonalities on a personal level to start a relation off.[157] The initial source of this commonality can vary, and is often quite trivial. Respondents name many things, like similar age and life phase, holidays, hobbies, or common experiences. Nevertheless, small-talk is not just chit-chat. It provides a means for innocently breaking open a conversation that can eventually evolve into more serious talk, keeping participants comfortable in the process. Despite the triviality of it all, one respondent recalls an example of how simple commonalities can have serious consequences. In that particular case, opening up was:

152 Interview 20, 23, 28, 32, 42, 43

153 Interview 22

154 Interview 2, Aldrich, "US-European Intelligence Co-Operation on Counter-Terrorism," 124.

155 Interview 18

156 Interview 37

157 Interview 9, 18, 20, 28, 39, 43

*'About smoking. [...] In a meeting we tried to obtain some information. We played every game in the book to do so. To no avail. Up to the point that one of the incoming delegation members went for a smoke outside. And one of my colleagues went along. This undeliberately created an exclusive access to this person, a relaxed moment and offered something similar. No formalities and everyone is equal in this moment. They bonded and were able to talk about all sorts of things. Not only did this ease the formal conversation, from that point on the partner only addressed his fellow-in-smoking directly, even when in the presence of others."*[158]

It can be the other way around as well. An intelligence officer from EUMS INT describes how despite 'regular contacts and a fine [professional] relationship', the interaction with his counterpart from INTCEN remains limited as 'he is 20 years older and we do not have much in common in the personal sphere'.[159]

Personal relations can be a ratchet for intelligence cooperation when intelligence officers have 'some time [together] to bond and appreciate each other', to discover humanness.[160] Respondents indicate that they - sometimes to their own surprise - are mostly able to find some sort of commonality to start off with, once in contact. One recalls a multilateral meeting where most of the time was spent by coffee breaks and socializing, but that he still found worthwhile. He perceives these conferences to be 'a place to meet old friends or discover new ones' rather than a place for actual work:

*'They might be interesting for the briefings, but it is the socializing that takes place around them that makes later cooperation fruitful. Sometimes it is necessary to have a hard time drinking to discover this connection."*[161]

However enjoyable, social events are instrumental in intelligence cooperation. One respondent vividly recalls a telling example of a social event directly aiding a difficult bilateral exchange:

*'[It] became the cliffhanger. We discussed all day, [but] every time returning to the [sensitive] topic. We turned circles without ever coming closer. The next day we had organized a social program for them. [...] Later we received a telephone call that they agreed to deliver the information. I was even called 'friend' for what it is worth. But the [problem] was never mentioned again."*[162]

158 Interview 35
159 Interview 39
160 Interview 15, 4, 11, 12, 13
161 Interview 10
162 Interview 35

Intelligence officers also value the usefulness of social events in a more indirect way, as an investment in times of ease to be utilized in times of crisis. This 'keeping up of appearances is all part of the game, but it serves the purpose of trust'.[163]

When it comes to social events and socializing, the multilateral format of the EU is seen as an advantage.[164] Social interaction there gives more opportunity to assess a partner than other forms of interaction do, and on a wider scale. The arrangement provides excellent opportunity to meet up close and the intensity of the setting allows for 'trust to develop more easily'. Especially when 'you take your family [as] in these instances, you are not the only one interacting anymore. The families do so as well, intensifying connections'.[165] One explains why to him EU intelligence on the inside has a remarkably benevolent atmosphere. He notes that:

> *'We live with each other on a daily basis; we drink coffee and eat together. We are real colleagues. That is quite different from bilateral meetings, which are just that; meetings. [...] We bring ourselves in a range of situations where many forms of behavior can be witnessed, like barbeques. [...] For example, I would be able to witness how you treat women or if you can resist the temptations of alcohol."*[166]

EU intelligence officers stress the importance of organized social events for building and maintaining a sense of community among them. They would like their leadership to organize more of them again 'now COVID is no longer an issue', and they criticize the limited facilities in their work space to host events 'exclusively for intelligence personnel'.[167] Yet, emotional bonding is not limited to organized social events. EU intelligence officers acknowledge that a lot of their social interaction takes place in their building, during day-to-day routines.[168] In that respect the EU intelligence structures do little to structurally facilitate socialization. Little public meeting places exist and, even after COVID, the policy of closed doors continues as behind many of these doors are national systems that do not allow free, unguided entry. People 'meet at the printer and in the toilet. That is it"[169]. This hampers interaction and relation building especially beyond the borders of the branch or production team.

Social skills are perceived essential to coin affective relations in multilateral intelligence cooperation. Surprisingly, given the harsh professional judgment displayed in the previous chapter, respondents state that in overseas postings an intelligence officer would benefit from the skills of a diplomat. In a cooperative arrangement like the EU, it is indispensable to be

163 Interview 41, 19, 28
164 Interview 37, 11, 15, 17, 18, 22, 26, 38, 39, 44
165 Interview 17, 39
166 Interview 15
167 Interview 22, 29, 39, 41
168 Interview 23, 25, 28
169 Interview 28, 40

'constantly trying to bring things together. To bridge differences'.[170] Apparently, respondents make a distinction between getting into the community, for which professional norms are the key, and being successful in it, for which sociability is one of the main determinants. Whereas it is often intelligence expertise that opens up the way for social relations and trust, it is social skills that make them work for cooperation. One respondent still remembers the director of a relatively small service working his way into a plurilateral arrangement between technically advanced services. Not because his organization brought in hard capabilities, but mainly:

> *'On the basis of his social skills. He had a unique set of those. Some people can just get away with more than others, or achieve more with less, based on how they operate in groups. That is something to take into account when you send people to international postings. It is essential to be very serious about the question who you are going to send where and for what reasons, with what skill set.'*[171]

Respondents name some of the social skills for a successful intelligence officer in a multilateral setting. They speak of being a team player that has 'a relational approach, being able [...] to have a conversation in good spirits. Being comfortable, amicable and cheerful'. And besides that, having negotiating skills as well, to handle the inherent oppositions present in such formats. Any attempt to 'win brutally will quickly be detected and brand you as a bad cooperator. It will cause you to be isolated or even rejected'.[172]

Contrary to expectation, not all people sent to the EU to work in a multilateral team are seen to have this cooperative mindset, nor are they equally well equipped to make such a mindset work for them. Some are even seen to 'lack social intelligence'.[173] Building on its importance described in previous chapters, one respondent thinks that for utilizing sociability in a professional intelligence setting it is also experience that makes the clock tick.[174] Yet, others disagree that it is something that can be learned. They state that it very much depends on the person at hand. In their opinion, traits of character and personality matter most in connecting with others. Besides skills, being 'somewhat outgoing, socially competent and able to reach out', will 'provide much more than some lubricating oil that makes things run smoother. It can actually make a difference'.[175] Some people are simply more inclined to reach out than others, and some will by nature 'feel perfectly comfortable in a larger setting, [...] networking, shaking hands and establishing contacts as they move along'.[176] Respondents find this personal aspect of sociability so important for cooperation

170 Interview 31, 35, 36
171 Interview 35
172 Interview 20, 36
173 Interview 22, 34, 36, 38, 39
174 Interview 25
175 Interview 30, 31, 38
176 Interview 35, 18, 22, 37

success, that in the interviews some criticize their services for not taking it into account enough when deciding whom to send to an international posting:

> *'Some subject matter experts [...] could actually be very procedural and focus on factual knowledge [alone]. While for being effective in a multilateral arrangement, it is important to be able to make human connection. [...] So, you have to carefully consider who you are sending to these postings."*[177]

In the eyes of respondents, in a multilateral setting personal attraction is very much part of the equation. In their view, services 'instead of countering it, [...] should cultivate it. Use sociability as an instrument, or at least acknowledge that personal attraction can make or break a relation'.[178]

### 8.4.2. Likeability

On a personal level, likeability is seen as the vehicle for relational development and benevolence. Finding some common ground to start a relation off, is vital for cooperation. The simple fact that intelligence officers are sent to the EU for a posting can be this common ground. Nevertheless, this is just the beginning. Respondents acknowledge that for bringing a relation further, some personal chemistry is needed as well. It is 'about genuinely connecting to the other. Who are you and how do you stand in life'.[179] One respondent clearly observes that 'given the importance of personal contacts [with colleagues]', also noted in chapters 6 and 7, it is imperative that he does not find 'him or her 'an asshole' on the personal level'.[180] Notwithstanding the unease it causes with intelligence officers, a point further elaborated on below, likeability is unmistakably part of their relations. Like other human beings it would be hard for intelligence officers to cooperate with people they do not like at all. The other way around, cooperation with likeable counterparts will be more agreeable and easier than when this is not the case. Unsurprising as this may sound, respondents indicate that this personal aspect of cooperation is often undervalued in their organizations. It leads some of them to advocate that it would be helpful to demystify the behavior of intelligence officers in cooperation and take affection and attraction more seriously.[181]

Personal attraction determines the success of relations and with it part of cooperation. Although many respondents stress that they can - and will - work together with anyone if needed, likeability serves as an instrument for the selection of partners and the intensity

177 Interview 33
178 Interview 35, 30, 18
179 Interview 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 35, 36, 39, 41
180 Interview 10
181 Interview 28, 36, 38

of interaction.[182] Many respondents illustrate the importance of likeability for cooperation success by referring to their leadership. Multiple respondents fondly refer to 'the early days of SIAC, [when] there was a very close personal connection between the Heads of INTCEN, EUMS INT and SATCEN. You could not get a straw between them.' This mutual liking allowed SIAC to be synergetic in a way that has proven impossible on the basis of the formal agreement alone.[183] However, likeability is not only relevant for leadership. Respondents agree that on a working level it is what gets the machine working on a daily basis, one even calling compatible personalities as the most important factor in multilateral cooperation. If individual intelligence officers 'do not like each other, it will not work. No matter what directives or orders are being sent out, [...] in practice it will just not really happen'.[184]

Interestingly, many respondents who agree that affective relations can and do exist in intelligence cooperation, are needed even, at the same time feel these relations are necessarily limited.[185] They experience an intrinsic tension between connection and restraint. One respondent even perceives this tension be so pervasive that it poses a natural barrier for cooperation and outreach.[186] First, for some it is the instrumentality of the relation that causes problems. In an intelligence environment, a relation is never unconditional:

> *'Goodwill is a hard concept in our profession. [...] It has a role, but still leaves you with a relative vulnerability. It is not something you can count on; the business calculation remains. I have experienced that goodwill was absent despite having a good relationship. A partner that was consciously not sharing with us. Someone I knew well.'*[187]

Second, close interaction means an increased vulnerability. In exchanges, intelligence officers are constantly aware of counterintelligence and HUMINT risks. Reservations remain, as 'you can definitely get burnt'.[188] Although some respondents judge this to be mainly the older generation, many people are still very anxious about opening up. They are careful not to mention their full names or home address, and certainly hold back when talking to outsiders.[189]

Likeability and personal attraction are fraught concepts in intelligence. Regardless of their perceived importance, many respondents struggle with them when determining what they

182 Interview 6, 9, 18, 37, 38, 40, 42, 44
183 Interview 14, 25, 36, 39
184 Interview 16, 39, 42
185 Interview 22, 30
186 Interview 34
187 Interview 37
188 Interview 26
189 Interview 20

mean, and how far they may go.[190] One national intelligence officer voices this struggle when wondering that:

> *'Part of what you do is a secret. When withholding information is part of your identity, then it is hard to establish a proper expectation in a relation. That is my difficulty here. [...] I need to be somewhat of an open-minded and wide-eyed child, facing the world. But how does this relate to this environment, where that is not allowed. Where they close people away and close up.'*[191]

Another national intelligence officer, when observing his own difficulties in combining attitudes of professional distance and personal openness, calls himself 'somewhat of a schizophrenic'.[192] Yet, this is not so much schizophrenia, it is part of the inherent 'controversy [in benevolence] between interest and sympathy'.[193] In addition, it can be partly explained by tension between the projected general identity of the intelligence community, one that seems to be embraced by the general public, and the locally experienced identity of its members in cooperation. Whereas the first mainly serves the purpose of presenting and demarcating the community to the outside, the latter refers to the workings on the inside in specific circumstances.[194]

Intelligence services are said to have no friends, and generally they talk only about 'partners'.[195] Yet, in a multilateral setting like the EU personal attraction and affect can easily evolve into friendship. One exclaims that:

> *'Those people who claim there is no place for personal friendship in intelligence are 'old school' to say the least. I can imagine that this is the case in operations, special collection, but in intelligence analysis and production? If you say friendship does not exist there, then you have some serious issues.'*[196]

Many respondents indicate that they have (former) colleagues that they consider personal, sometimes even 'intimate' or 'close' friends. They experience friendship to bolster their cooperation as it is a powerful basis for benevolence; an inclination to 'be of help first, and wonder how to do that later'.[197] The setting of EU intelligence provides a special environment for developing professional relations into friendships. One respondent in this respect compares it to the mission settings he knows from military deployment overseas.[198] The

190 Interview 15, 18, 24, 25, 26, 30, 32, 35, 36, 37, 39, 41, 44

191 Interview 14

192 Interview 18

193 Ramel, "Overcoming Misrecognition," 6.

194 Soenen and Moingeon, "The Five Facets of Collective Identities," 17–21.

195 Interview 41, 9

196 Interview 30

197 Interview 11, 8, 14, 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, 30, 36, 38, 43, 44

198 Interview 9

absence of totally conflicting interests creates a safe space where people are perceived to be more or less on the same page, and it is possible to 'have drinks with your foreign colleagues without being on guard all the time."[199] In addition, being posted in a foreign country creates a bond as well. Colleagues are seen to offer each other some mental support that helps emotional bonding.[200] One EU intelligence officer sighs in contempt when discussing the troublesome nature of friendship in intelligence.

> *'I find the quote that there are no friendly services a bit simplistic. [...] It sounds great and clear, but it is not true literally. It is not institutions that make friends, it is people. And although I know that from an organizational perspective intelligence officers are not supposed to be friends, on a personal level that is bullshit.'*[201]

The EU functions as a social club for emotional bonding among EU intelligence officers. Notwithstanding their reservations at the international and organizational levels, at working level the EU intelligence structures are an excellent place to discover mutual bonds or create them. In this process, favorable traits are attributed to the own community, striving for positive distinctiveness and comparison.[202] EU intelligence officers contend that it is easier to befriend a colleague than other policy officers. The extraordinary demands of intelligence work enforce bonding. First, as an identity trait, secrecy provides a space in which intelligence officers feel safe to open up. One recalls organizing a barbeque at his home for which:

> *'It was intelligence [colleagues] in particular that were invited, to be amongst ourselves. So that the chances of someone stepping out of line and disclosing something inappropriate are slim. They know how to behave. [...] Then a personal relation outside work becomes easier. [...] You are not going to talk about operational working methods. Because he is not going to ask you about it. So, you can have enjoyable social events without risk. You dare to be vulnerable. To some extent...'*[203]

Second, the need for secrecy limits intelligence officers in their relations outside the community. Intelligence practitioners cannot claim their success, cannot explain their failures, and cannot in general talk about their work experiences with outsiders including their own families and friends.[204] The secretiveness that comes with the job is seen to place an extra burden as well as creating a bond; 'the fact we can only be cooperators on the inside, and cannot share with the outside, brings us even closer together'.[205] Respondents believe

199 Interview 29, 30

200 Interview 11

201 Interview 16

202 Tajfel and Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," 56, 59–60.

203 Interview 38

204 See for example: Veiligheid van de Staat; Sûreté de l'État, "We Are the VSSE, Come and Join Us!" (blog), accessed 7 July 2023, https://www.vsse.be/nl/jobs.

205 Interview 37, 22

that they share a distinctive and more or less enduring character that goes beyond mere alignment of interests. On the basis of this collective identity, they experience a sense of unity that helps cooperation.[206]

In a multilateral setting like the EU, intelligence officers need to constantly strike a fine balance between attachment and reticence.[207] Some services forbid befriending intelligence officers from foreign services and many oblige their people to report these relations. In short, they want their intelligence officers to keep their distance.[208] Of course, this is not tenable in the setting of the EU. Although the professional norms and standards stay the same, the social dynamics are different:

> *'In the case of [working in a multilateral organization], borders will be shifting on what you can and cannot do in practice. When you are in an overseas posting things get more personal and friendly. How can it be different? Your kids will probably be on the same school. [...] There is no problem, but you mustn't be naive.'*[209]

There, in the absence of formal guidelines, the willingness to open up is very much a matter of personal preference. It is up to the individual intelligence officers to find a balance that both suits him and his work. Closing up completely, preferable or not, is impossible. Contrary to intelligence work in general, or more shallow forms of cooperation, multilateral postings deprive intelligence officers of 'the luxury to only tell people what you want them to know. They will find out a lot more that they could use'.[210] Many EU intelligence officers do not really see the problem of that. In the setting of the EU, they see little reason to be 'paranoid', and they see little use for it either.[211] As one says:

> *'You are not James Bond on a special mission. It is about cooperation. You have to be discrete, for sure. But your job is to get into conversation. Hiding would not help much in this. Closing up is very safe, but very ineffective in cooperation.'*[212]

It adds practical substance to Axelrod's theoretical claim in chapter 3 that for cooperation it is not very helpful to constantly 'assume that the other [...] is out to get you'.[213] Holding back and being suspicious will diminish likeability and deteriorate benevolence.

206 Kenny, Whittle, and Willmot, "Organizational Identity: The Significance of Power and Politics," 142.

207 Interview 3, 8, 10, 11, 15, 16, 18, 30, 32, 35, 39, 43

208 Interview 44

209 Interview 32

210 Interview 18

211 Interview 11, 26, 40

212 Interview 30

213 Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*, 14–15.

### 8.4.3. Fairness

In EU intelligence practice, sociability and likeability go hand-in-hand with job performance and actual exchange.[214] However important, cooperation is never solely about social considerations. Intelligence is no hobby and the 'soft factors are not a substitute for benefits'.[215] Even in the setting of the EU 'there is no such thing as a free lunch'.[216] In such a long-lasting and intense relation there is ultimately still something to gain, but 'you do not need it right away and you can wait for it'.[217] Nevertheless, for most respondents in the EU the reciprocity of the relation is no obstacle to sociability and likability. Even more so, not showing the desire for a return would create distrust in a professional intelligence relation. In the particular setting of intelligence cooperation, surprising traits like mendacity and secrecy are seen to foster close relations not hamper them. One respondent observes on the combination of these ostensibly dubious characteristics and friendship:

> *'[It] is not hampering those [affective] relations. In the contrary, it is what is expected. You can still be on a very close personal note, but you will always ensure that you do not bring your partner in a position where personal and national loyalty conflict. No matter how personal and trust-based the relation, or better: the more it is so, the less partners will try to take unwanted advantage from these close ties. Only be doing so, you can become and stay friend enough to cooperate.'*[218]

Mendacity has the potential to ruin affective relations, but in the setting of EU intelligence it is seen to barely hamper a cooperative mindset. Respondents agree that in intelligence cooperation, EU or otherwise, a degree of mendacity is always expected.[219] Benevolence is never taken for granted and the question of what is behind a shown willingness to cooperate remains prominent. Respondents admit that they would find suspicious any intelligence officer who gave altruistically or did not appear to want anything in return. Receiving 'a unique piece of information' would instantly raise suspicion and invoke questions like 'why it is being delivered' and 'how are you influencing me'.[220] Regardless of how close a relation with their partners has grown, intelligence officers will stay on guard to some extent and keep a professional eye open. They indicate that they always act on the premise of 'trust, but verify' as they constantly work under circumstances of risk and uncertainty. As a very experienced intelligence officer underlines:

214 Interview 10, 15, 21, 32, 33, 34, 40, 43
215 Interview 11, 24, 26, 27, 36, 37, 43
216 Interview 32
217 Interview 10, 15, 13, 18, 23, 25, 30, 33, 35, 37
218 Interview 11
219 Interview 7, 9, 15, 13, 19, 27, 31, 35, 39, 41
220 Interview 18, 19, 26

*'No intelligence service will take information received or collected, by cooperation or otherwise, at face value. Or only a very stupid one.'*[221]

Intelligence officers perceive mistrust to be a direct result of their tradecraft as it obliges them to doubt the reliability of all information and all encounters they have. They consider it an institutionalized - and accepted - trait that sets intelligence firmly apart from other communities of practice:

*'Intelligence services exist for the deliberate purpose to gain access to information without consent of its owner. This means that it is in their normal ways to [...] take on untruthful or deceptive roles and appearances. [...] I reckon this to be true always. Even with their closest allies. [...] Intelligence services seem comfortable with it. It seems not to really hamper cooperation.'*[222]

The same goes for secrecy. It is a trait that seems at odds with affective relations, but surprisingly the opposite seems the case in EU intelligence. When addressing trust in intelligence cooperation, many respondents name the need for secrecy as one of the defining traits for success.[223] A national intelligence officer, after stating the growing importance of openness for intelligence cooperation, also observes that:

*'Interestingly enough, large parts of our types of organizations have nothing to gain from opening up. They derive their value from being exclusive. Even the ones designed for outreach, like the external relation branches, have a clear role in this exclusive and closed-up business model. They may judge who will be allowed in or out.'*[224]

As shown in the previous chapter, not only do intelligence practitioners perceive an unbreakable link between secrecy and the added value of intelligence, in their opinion the occupation would lose meaning without it. They go to lengths to uphold secrecy and expect others to do the same. The absence of secrecy in any professional intelligence relation would produce distrust. It underlines the claim by Braat that in intelligence 'secrecy and informal organization produce, sustain and reinforce feelings of loyalty [...] crucial to the level of cooperation'.[225] It also supports the argument by Labasque that secrecy is not a moratorium for cooperation, but a condition for selectively sharing and opening up in deep cooperation formats.[226]

221 Derived under Chatham House Rules from discussions at Workshop on Trust and Distrust in European Intelligence, Kings College London, 16-06-2023, Interview 19

222 Interview 13

223 Interview 3, 11, 14, 20, 26, 28

224 Interview 34

225 Braat, "Loyalty and Secret Intelligence," 159–60.

226 Labasque, "The Merits of Informality in Bilateral and Multilateral Cooperation," 493.

Paradoxically, fairness plays an important role in EU intelligence cooperation. Although respondents are aware that from the outside their community looks obscure and devious, and a degree of secrecy and mendacity is thought necessary, on the inside genuine deceit is not well accepted. Not all forms of deceit are considered equally problematic though.[227] Contrary to the broad definition of defection used in the work of Walsh[228], respondents show to be perfectly fine with some restraint and limitations in the exchange.[229] This is different when partners 'deliberately set off someone on the wrong foot, intentionally putting him at disadvantage or in jeopardy. This is not acceptable'.[230] It would be:

> *'A bit disappointing' when a partner says not to have the information needed, and later it turns out that he did. It would surely be an event to memorize. Not because of the reciprocity missed, but because it is indicative for how that partner values the relation. Nevertheless, it would not be a reason for pay-back or grudge.'*[231]

EU intelligence officers in their relations make a firm distinction between the occupational risk of misinformation on the one hand, and the malicious use of disinformation on the other.[232] One respondent explicates that 'of course, you can be wrong in your assessment, or give an answer that is not that relevant, but it cannot be deliberately false or refined for your purposes'.[233] An EU intelligence officer firmly states that for this:

> *'There is no excuse. It cannot be. That is not EU. You will not jeopardize relations by doing this. Bilaterally this is accepted yes, but not in here.'*[234]

Relations can also be jeopardized by not answering to a direct question or by keeping deliberately silent on relevant threats.[235] That is considered a malicious act as well, as it increases vulnerability. Respondents give the recent example of a suspected breach of the EU systems. They note that it is not really the potential hack or leak itself that causes trust to decrease, although it might influence perceptions of EU ability and integrity. Incidents happen, and it is considered part of the intelligence game. But 'what really breaches our trust relation, is when they do not tell us', '*that* [emphasis] is killing'.[236]

227 Interview 13, 18, 24, 35, 38, 41
228 Walsh, "Defection and Hierarchy in International Intelligence Sharing," 152.
229 Interview 7, 13, 19, 27, 40
230 Interview 9
231 Interview 20
232 Interview 6, 12, 19, 33
233 Interview 12
234 Interview 28
235 Interview 10
236 Interview 20, 7

As part of the expected fairness in a relation, a degree of openness is considered a key component of successful cooperation in the EU.[237] Interestingly, in the secretive and restrictive setting of EU intelligence organizations it is considered more worthwhile to tell a partner something off-record or ask him not to use a piece of information immediately or directly, than to pretend to know nothing at all.[238] In a narrow sense, openness is simply needed for intelligence fusion. Rather than the exchange of products, it is the exchange of ideas that forms the core of cooperation within SIAC. Without being open about viewpoints little discussion can take place and the added value of EU intelligence quickly diminishes.[239] In a broader sense, openness is about fostering reasonable expectations about benevolence in an arrangement. By providing as much direct information as possible, the credibility of indirect information is substantiated and remaining uncertainty is made acceptable. It shows the boundaries of alignment:

> *'It is not naïve, it is giving to the other partners, without declaring all your objectives [...], a reading key; the access to your real red lines; the ones on which you and your service will not compromise. In a very complex environment [it reduces] a big source of clashes or misunderstanding.'*[240]

Respondents indicate that for them fairness in cooperation is being closed about content, if necessary, while being open about these limitations and the considerations that lead to them. That is seen to build trust. It is not so much about equality in the transaction as it is about equality in the relation.[241] It signals the extent to which a partner is willing to be part of the team:

> *'It is clear that in our line of work there are many things you do not know or cannot say. But don't go spinning and try to find lame excuses. I appreciate it more when you just say so and admit that you cannot comment on a specific issue or cannot provide answers. Because of national instructions, or because you for some (other) reason are not willing to do so. We all know the limits of our job. The way interests can deviate or make limitless sharing impossible. But trying to cover this up, is not to take me seriously.'*[242]

In a tight-knit team it becomes possible 'to speak off the record; 'In my personal opinion...', state something like 'I say this because it is part of the job, it is not me [first name] speaking...' or simply admit 'I know, but I cannot say'.[243] One respondent explicates that:

237 Interview 6, 25, 26, 29, 36, 38
238 Interview 24.
239 Interview 40
240 Interview 36
241 Interview 4, 7, 9, 10, 19, 24, 28
242 Interview 15
243 Interview 28, 44

*'When you cannot share, just say so. We are all in the same business. We will not feel offended. In the contrary, it will be valuable to our relation."*[244]

## 8.5. Conclusion

This chapter set out to answer the question how perceptions of benevolence influence social relations and cooperative behavior in EU intelligence. It started from the entity, process and structure defined in chapter 3. The conceptual framework introduced attitudes, attachment and identities as constituents parts of perceived benevolence. From a conceptual point of view, these parts proved remarkably insightful when evaluating practitioners' views on social relations and trust in cooperation. In advance, questions about identity and attachment were thought to be too abstract to evoke a response. In addition, when referring to interests and burden sharing it was thought this would trigger mainly calculative responses. As it appeared, the opposite was true. Of all trust conditions, respondents were most vocal and outspoken about their perceptions of benevolence and how these are formed. Moreover, without this entity being explicitly mentioned in the initial interview questions, they coupled benevolence to caring attitudes and positive orientation towards individual partners. Annex D indicates that roughly half of all interview references in this research relate to perceptions of benevolence. In addition, like with perceptions of integrity the responses clearly show the intimate connection between the individual, interorganizational and international levels. It highlights that perceptions of benevolence can function as a ratchet in which small tokens of favorability lead to larger feelings of solidarity and eventually a collective sense of common identity This is not only a two-way street, but a circle of trust.

From an empirical point of view, this chapter concludes that in the case of the EU intelligence system perceptions of benevolence have a positive effect on cooperative behavior. This research again scrutinized these perceptions at three levels of relations; the macro (international), the meso (organizational) and the micro (personal). Contrary to expectation, caring attitudes, attachment and collective identity were found to bolster trust in EU intelligence cooperation. A pervasive sense of togetherness binds EU intelligence practitioners into their community, enabling them to set aside feelings of unease about uncertainty and vulnerability. An overwhelming part of the respondents indicate that they see each other as 'family', increasingly working towards a common goal and possessing a common identity. It debunks the argument that - contrary to for example the Five Eyes community - common identity still has little to say for in the context of the EU intelligence. In the established setting of EU intelligence cooperation, intelligence practitioners are crafting a new narrative about the conditions for successful intelligence cooperation. Old adages of reciprocity, mendacity and secrecy change meaning as practitioners are increasingly able

244 Interview 37, 26

to pair their allegiances to the EU and their national capitals. The aggregate results are visualized in Appendix G.

On the macro-level it was found that growing collective identity supports a degree of transnational solidarity, although intelligence officers struggle with the concept. The expectation of direct reciprocity is still a persistent topic among them when considering international relations and differing national interests still dictate much of their ideas about (limited) benevolence in EU intelligence. Most intelligence officers have a hard time identifying with EU interests or seeing the common cause in the organization. Nevertheless, this picture is slowly but steadily changing. Intelligence is gaining prominence in the context of the EU and with it the necessity to take EU intelligence support seriously and contribute regardless of returns. Outside threat is stirring up this process. As a consequence, the EU intelligence community seems to be slowly growing towards each other. Feelings of encapsulated interest increasingly foster a sense of mutual belonging and benevolent burden-sharing.

On a meso-level, feelings of organizational interdependence create commitment and cohesion in the setting of EU intelligence cooperation. The EU is considered hardly the place for competition and rivalry between intelligence services or personnel. Yet, bureaucratic politics still hamper a benevolent stance. Especially the relation between military EUMS INT and civilian INTCEN is perceived as troublesome. Little love is lost there. Although the EU intelligence community to some extent possesses a shared identity that binds it together, fear of organizational exclusion causes tension and suspicion, putting perceptions about cooperation willingness in the balance. This is different on the lowest working level though. The setting of day-to-day EU intelligence cooperation in small teams supports a team spirit that is unseen in bilateral exchanges and cannot be easily transferred to it. It mitigates the rivalry and competition normally so commonplace among practitioners. In addition, the duration and intensity of cooperative relations lead to a relational resilience of which conflict resolution is an important part.

On a micro-level, like in both the previous chapters, it is again personal interaction that can make a real difference. Affective relations in intelligence cooperation are very much personal relations. They are seen to ease cooperation practices in the EU considerably. When it comes to social events and socializing, the multilateral format of the EU is seen as an advantage, although not all people sent there are equally well equipped to make this social setting work for them. Moreover, some shirk away from all too personal contacts. Friendship is commonplace, but likeability and attraction are still fraught concepts in intelligence and continue to cause tension with individual EU intelligence officers. They need to constantly balance between attachment and reticence. Interestingly, on the personal level, upholding secrecy barely hampers team spirit. In the contrary, the opposite seems the case. It enables a

degree of fairness and openness between them. Within the safe and secluded in-group, way more vulnerability and uncertainty are accepted, expected even, than on the outside.

When evaluating how perceptions of benevolence influence social relations in EU intelligence cooperation, a last metaphor is helpful. In previous chapters, the social dynamics in EU intelligence were already compared with that of a school yard and a soccer team. For benevolence on the inside of the EU intelligence system, the metaphor of a family seems helpful. Not only is altruism often associated with kinship, multiple respondents also used the picture of a family to clarify their positions on solidarity. When looking at the dynamics of identification, the EU intelligence community resembles a family. All members in this family live under one roof and adhere to the same broad family values. On the basis of their emotional bond and their common interest in keeping the family going, they always come to each other's aid. With each day that passes, shared experiences add pages to their shared story. A narrative about who they are and what they find important (from necessity to cautious constructivism). Without question they feel a sense of belonging. Together they successfully keep the household going. They split the many duties among them, and without much argument the strongest sister is the one who puts out the heavy garbage while the others perform lighter tasks like emptying the dishwasher. All these contributions are equally valued and commute to the greater good. At the kitchen table disputes can be settled in open discussion, and as long as the perceived misconduct is not running against family values, forgiveness is never far away. (commitment, cohesion and team spirit). Of course, not all family members have the same relation. They have their personal preferences. These matter much for every-day for interaction and exchange. The twins are inseparable, while at the same time their interaction with their older and more introvert sister is more tense. Nevertheless, between all of them fairness is expected. Only genuine deceit and malice can come between them (sociability, likeability and fairness).

# Chapter 9

# Chapter 9: Conclusion

## Conclusion, Contributions and Reflection

### 9.1. Conclusion

*'If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.'*[1]

#### 9.1.1. Main Conclusion

This study set out to answer how social relations and trust influence cooperation in EU intelligence. Its aim is to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of intelligence cooperation; providing an insight that goes beyond the traditional explanations of cooperative behavior based on calculations and control. To do so, it has unraveled the concept of trust, identified by many scholars as one of the most important conditions for cooperation. A concept that has seldom been operationalized in the context of intelligence. It distinguished ability, integrity and benevolence as conditions for trust and unraveled these in underlying factors. Based on this conceptual framework, the perceptions and beliefs about trust and cooperation of 47 respondents were collected and analyzed. All of these respondents were directly preoccupied with EU intelligence on a senior level, either in national capitals or in the EU intelligence institutions. Together, they shed light on the practice of international intelligence cooperation, opening up the black box a bit further.

From a conceptual point of view, this research concludes that social relations play a far bigger role in international intelligence cooperation than is often assumed. The mechanism of social relations and trust provides a valuable complement to traditional explanations of rational calculations and control. It is both calculations *and* relations that determine preferences in cooperative behavior. In turn, social relations and trust operate in tandem. Although the degree of trust empowers social relations in cooperation, it is also social dynamics that are highly influential for trust to evolve. Together they can form a ratchet for cooperative behavior. Looking at the conditions for trust in more detail provides a nuanced picture of this interplay. The conceptual framework designed for this study successfully complements the well-known conditions for trust established by Mayer et al. with underlying factors coming from publications on interorganizational relations and sociology. It couples these factors to relational dynamics and allows them to be scrutinized in tandem. For all conditions, the factors identified proved valuable windows for a critical examination of social relations and trust in cooperation. At the same time, for all factors their exact meaning

1 Thomas and Swaine Thomas, *The Child in America; Behavioral Problems and Programs*, 572.

and importance proved highly contextual and varied between levels of analysis. In all cases, it meant specifying these factors to be able to address the views expressed by respondents when analyzing the data. Contrary to expectation, it is the affective condition of benevolence rather than the cognitive and normative ones that contributes most to social relations and trust in the setting of the EU intelligence. In addition, for everyday intelligence practice in the EU interpersonal relations are more important than interorganizational and international relations when considering trust. Intelligence work is primarily human work. In this respect, a picture appears of a normal occupational activity in extraordinary circumstances, instead of the other way around. It obliges to somewhat demystify intelligence cooperation as a function of government.

From an empirical point of view, the research concludes that social relations and trust positively influence EU intelligence cooperation through benevolence and on a personal level. They provide reasonable expectations about outcome and vulnerability, compensating for the absence of direct organizational gains and a formal obligation to share. Conditions for trust provide an efficient way to cooperate under the circumstances of uncertainty and bounded rationality so prevalent in intelligence cooperation. In the context of EU intelligence cooperation, it is at least as much relations as it is calculations that keep the arrangement going. Practitioners in the EU intelligence organizations know, recognize and value each other as being part of a trusted community, although their cooperation suffers from low familiarity and cultural subdivides. It enables them to contact, connect and bond with their peers in a way that is unseen in interaction with non-intelligence practitioners or among their peers on the outside of the community.

EU intelligence cooperation is more than meets the eye. It is so in three ways. First, this study clearly shows the value of including intangible beliefs and perceptions in examinations of intelligence cooperation. Cooperative behavior in and towards the EU is driven not only by objective facts, but by subjective perceptions and beliefs as well. Intelligence practitioners are not robots. The valuation of a partner is built on interpretations. In this sense, intelligence cooperation is based not so much on what things are, but on how they appear to those inside the arrangement. Or, as stated in the opening citation of this chapter, 'if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences'. Second, there is literally more to EU intelligence cooperation than meets the eye. By probing into interaction at the interorganizational and interpersonal levels, a reality surfaces that remains mostly hidden from outside views. Insiders paint a picture that is more nuanced than the geopolitical perspective of state behavior generally put forward by scholars and practitioners. Even more so, the views of people working inside the EU intelligence organizations differ substantially from those working outside the structures. Direct contact highly influences perceptions about the self and others that influence cooperation. This brings forward a third point. EU intelligence cooperation is more than meets the eye in a proverbial sense

as well. On the outside intelligence practitioners deliberately uphold their trusted aura of secrecy and mendacity, while on the inside they favor much more openness and honesty. The mechanism of social relations and trust is an instrument for distinguishing the in-group, in which interaction is valued, from the out-group towards which members show closedness and restraint.

The rational idea that there are no friends in intelligence (just interests), should be complemented with the social notion that if intelligence services are to have any friends, they are other intelligence services. Contrary to expectation, sociability, likeability and fairness are much valued on the inside of the EU intelligence community, albeit in a manner that is specific to the trade and that might differ from other occupations. Recognized professional norms and standards lead to an in-group of intelligence peers who are seen as equals and with whom it is easier to cooperate, while at the same time cooperation with other professions is troublesome. For organizations and persons working in this realm, showing to be part of the community of practice, and continuing to do so, is vital for their acceptance and task performance. Based on a systematic and elaborate examination of the trust conditions on multiple levels, this research shows a nuanced picture of EU intelligence cooperation. The results are summarized Appendix H. They are discussed in detail in subsection 9.1.2 below.

### 9.1.2. Sub-conclusions

*On the relation between social relations, trust and cooperative behavior in EU intelligence cooperation*

To answer the main question of this research, several sub-questions were identified. When operationalizing these questions, they were tied to relations in the conceptual framework. The first relation is that between social relations, trust and cooperative behavior. Examining this relation answers how the mechanism of social relations relates to that of rational calculations and shows what the role of trust in this mechanism is. This research concludes that overall social relations contribute positively to cooperative behavior in EU intelligence and that trust between partners empowers this mechanism. In addition, it shows that this mechanism exists next to, and is intermingled with, the mechanism of rational calculations. Trust provides an efficient way to cooperate under circumstances of uncertainty and bounded rationality.

Cooperative behavior differs from altruism. It is based on the expectation that a partner will reciprocate the lenience shown to him, or at least will not overly exploit the vulnerability attached. In intelligence, the traditional perspective on the construction of these expectations is a rational one. Scholars emphasize the weighing of interests by participants, preferences based on deliberate choice and an overview of alternatives. In addition, they

stress the competitive nature of the trade; a feature that seems to forbid an exchange in the absence of a direct or assured gain. The adage of 'Quid pro Quo' is the incarnation of this belief. Likewise, practitioners have a hard time decoupling from this realist presumption. Their starting point is that intelligence serves a specific - selfish - goal and that for this reason cooperative behavior is a direct result of the returns anticipated. Even when confronted with cooperation in the face of lacking returns, and experiencing that the seemingly harsh world of intelligence in practice many times is not that black-and-white, they stick to explaining their behavior in economic terms of cost and benefit. These practitioners acknowledge that trust is an important factor in their dealings, one of the most important even, but they still tend to define it in terms of control. They struggle with the conditions under which cooperation can occur in the absence of information and safeguards.

From a sociological perspective a helpful logic appears. Instead of focusing on the drivers for starting a cooperation in the first place, it offers an insight in the mechanisms behind relational conditions for exchange. Although conceding that intelligence is no hobby, and that cooperation serves a purpose in this activity, it allows to step beyond the transaction and include the interaction in the process. This is especially helpful in the case of an existing frame like the EU, where cooperation is ongoing and the assessment whether or not to cooperate is somewhat outdated or at least not that prominent. There definitely is a relationship between social relations and cooperative behavior in the EU. Relations enable a wide range of cooperative behavior and activity, increasing the breadth and depth of intelligence cooperation there. The extent to which this is the case, is dependent on the amount of trust that is present in the relation. This is not mere personal intuition or a 'gut-feeling'. It is based on cognitive, normative as well as affective conditions related to the group in which the interaction occurs. Despite the prominent role of individuals in all aspects of the study, it is a sociological as much as a psychological concept. Respondents clearly link their judgment of a partner's trustworthiness to group membership.

*On the relationship between trust and ability in EU intelligence cooperation*

When answering what the conditions for trust are and how these materialize in the context of EU intelligence, ability was the first identified. When looking at the relationship between trust and ability, this research concludes that on aggregate perceptions of ability contribute negatively to social relations and trust in the case of EU intelligence cooperation. Low perceptions of ability in EU intelligence are holding back reasonable expectations about behavior in the European intelligence network, limiting cooperation. Reputations matter enormously in intelligence cooperation and the reputation of the EU in this respect is poor, in part due to a lack of familiarity.

On an international level, EU intelligence only holds a peripheral position in the European intelligence network that is dominated by the intelligence services of the Member States. Although it is widely recognized that intelligence cooperation in Europe increases the ability to cope with security threats, for intelligence practitioners the role and position of the EU in this is unclear and questionable. They perceive the EU intelligence organizations to barely contribute to European security and instead focus on operational clusters of cooperation found in special clubs and forums like the CTG. At the same time, on an interorganizational level the familiarity with EU intelligence is generally low. Many national practitioners do not really know the EU intelligence organizations or the needs coming from them. Contrary to for example NATO, the intelligence routines and procedures connecting the capitals to Brussels are weak. In many respects, the poor reputation of the EU on the outside appears to be based mainly on a general sentiment. This is somewhat different for those intelligence officers working on the inside. On the interpersonal level, they experience first-hand the potential value that EU intelligence can have for European security and appreciate it more. The role of these individual intelligence officers working in the EU, and their trusted personal networks, are perceived invaluable for navigating the sizable and diverse European intelligence network, signaling endorsed reputations, and brokering information. Nevertheless, even among them skepticism about the workings of the EU still reins and their knowledge of the wider EU organization is limited. Lacking, or even distorted, knowledge about partners and the EU in general hampers intelligence cooperation.

*On the relationship between trust and integrity in EU intelligence cooperation*

When answering what the conditions for trust are and how these materialize in the context of EU intelligence, integrity was the second identified. When looking at the relationship between trust and integrity, this research concludes that on aggregate perceptions of integrity have a moderate effect on social relations and trust in the case of EU intelligence cooperation. Perceptions of integrity in EU intelligence are helping reasonable expectations about behavior in the European intelligence occupation, but this effect is being downplayed by organizational and occupational subdivides. Professional norms and standards are important and intelligence personnel in the EU is regarded as holding largely the same occupational culture as the intelligence officers working with the national services.

On an international level, numerous national differences are identified and there is little idea of a common cultural understanding that can bind European countries together. That is different for the intelligence occupation. Clearly, an occupational culture of intelligence exists that evokes recognition among practitioners, creating trust among them and easing cooperation. Nevertheless, the organizational culture of the EU is seen to be at odds with this occupational culture. Towards the EU in general, intelligence officers display great distrust.

At an organizational level though, the occupational similarities between intelligence services and their personnel are felt to set the frame for shared informal rules about how the intelligence world works, or ought to work. As the majority of intelligence officers working in EUMS INT and INTCEN come from these services, or have a background in them, this frame is extended into the EU intelligence structures. In addition, on an interpersonal level the EU provides an excellent setting for behavioral testing of informal mores and for gaining deep insight in a partners norms and standards. It offers an opportunity for building as well as maintaining trust. Once a member of the in-group there, considerable interaction is possible. Nevertheless, trust is reserved for those being 'real' or 'genuine' intelligence, excluding everyone without a - similar - intelligence service background and distrusting the EU organization as a whole. Especially the latter is thought to inhabit a different world than intelligence does. Limitations in professional recognition between partners representing different subcultures of intelligence, let alone those coming from different occupations all together, still narrow down cooperation.

*On the relationship between trust and benevolence in EU intelligence cooperation*

When answering what the conditions for trust are and how these materialize in the context of EU intelligence, benevolence was the third identified. When looking at the relationship between trust and benevolence, this research concludes that on aggregate perceptions of benevolence contribute positively to social relations and trust in the case of EU intelligence cooperation. High perceptions of benevolence in EU intelligence are helping favorable expectations of partners' behavior in the European intelligence community, bolstering cooperation. Contrary to expectations from traditional explanations of international intelligence cooperation, this affective antecedent for trust plays a major role in the practice of EU intelligence cooperation at all levels. Goodwill is upholding cooperative behavior in the setting of the EU, based on a common cause and common identity. In the absence of a formal obligation, the moral responsibility to contribute to some extent replaces considerations of relative gain and enables unequal burden sharing. Interestingly, it is a largely neorealist perception that is seen to create increasing leverage for institutionalist and constructivist feelings of commitment and cohesion.

On an international level, perceptions of a common external threat accelerate the already growing prominence of the EU in the realm of defence and security. On an organizational level, perceived rivalry in intelligence support by other EU organizations necessitates intelligence services to take SIAC more seriously. As a result, the EU intelligence community is growing towards each other, redefining the meaning of self-interest and solidarity. A growing sense of common cause and common identity is seen to lead the behavior of intelligence practitioners in the EU, both in national capitals and in EU organizations. The willingness to embrace

the interests of other partners in the EU community as their own greatly helps cooperation there. Inside the EU organizations this is reflected by commitment, cohesion and team spirit. In addition, on an interpersonal level emotional bonding between intelligence officers in the EU helps them in their task accomplishment. It opens the floor to an important role for sociability, likeability and fairness in the relations and interaction there. At the same time, this puts intelligence officers in a difficult position; a mental balancing act. The paradigm of secrecy and restraint, so helpful in shielding the intelligence community from the outside world and maintaining a collective identity, is counternatural to the openness and outreach that is crucial for cooperation on the inside of that same community. By abstracting these conclusions from actual events to patterns of cooperation, concepts and theories, it becomes possible to evaluate their broader meaning. It distinguishes contributions to the bodies of knowledge on actual EU intelligence cooperation, patterns of international intelligence cooperation, the concept of trust in intelligence cooperation, and theories of social relations in intelligence.

## 9.2. Discussion

### 9.2.1. Contribution to the Body of Knowledge on EU Intelligence Cooperation

What does this research tell us about actual events the EU intelligence system? It shows that it is a social affair and implies that traditional functionalist arguments explaining the workings of the arrangement need to be complemented by interactionist ones. This study underlines the observations made by Müller-Wille that utility is a pivotal factor in EU intelligence cooperation.[2] Using a purely functionalist argument, Müller-Wille concludes that EU intelligence will only be taken seriously in cooperation when it delivers something that cannot be - easily - obtained elsewhere. Indeed, from this research it stems that goal-orientation is a pervasive force in determining cooperative behavior in intelligence. In the interviews, even when discussing social ties and interaction between individuals, considerations of need and added value are prominent. Nevertheless, this research also shows that these utility considerations offer little guidance to EU intelligence practitioners in their day-to-day cooperation activities.

On an international level, it is unclear how national intelligence can - and may - be best utilized to support EU ambitions. There is a mismatch between political ambition and intelligence practice. The espoused political will to be strategically autonomous in the domain of defence and security has not led to a further transfer of national competencies to the EU. Given the importance of national sovereignty in the intelligence domain, and

2 Müller-Wille, "EU Intelligence Co-Operation. A Critical Analysis"; Müller-Wille, "For Our Eyes Only Shaping an Intelligence Community within the EU."

the political sensitivity that accompanies it, it seems unlikely that integration will exceed incremental buttressing of existing coordination mechanisms, a point well made by Bossong and Seyfried.[3] In addition, on an organizational level, there is a confusing and - in terms of reasonable expectations distorting - unclarity about what utility means in the specific situation of the EU intelligence system. As it is, the added value of intelligence cooperation *for* the EU organization is measured by how much it delivers to intelligence services *in* the EU sphere. Contradictory perceptions of what the arrangement should deliver, and to whom, are a source of distrust and can cripple the process of exchange or reform. Given the existing reputational concerns about security, even when EU intelligence is able to tap into its valuable resource of non-traditional sources of information, it will still not be an equal part of the intelligence community soon.

Personal relations to some extent mitigate the distrust prevalent on the organizational and political level. In the face of international and organizational ambiguity, it is interaction between individuals within the system that shapes EU intelligence cooperation in practice and makes it work. While EU intelligence is the odd one out among European intelligence services, and it has structural flaws that hamper exchange, its multilateral arrangement provides an excellent social setting for intelligence officers in SIAC to cooperate. Based on their interaction they develop a practice of their own to make it work, something also noted by Ben Jaffel in the case of cooperation in counterterrorism.[4] The network enables them to engage in an expanding circle of trust that supports reasonable expectations about behavior even in the absence of direct utility considerations, as identified by Buskens and others.[5] First, the EU arrangement is a meeting place for getting acquainted and building knowledge. The everyday interaction in these structures is a source of direct and indirect reputational information that is unrivalled by many other forms of intelligence cooperation. Moreover, it gives partners an opportunity to test professional norms and standards. Second, the EU arrangement is a place for repeated interaction, casting the shadow of the future upon the current exchange. Even without a powerful guardian present, as is the case in EU intelligence system, knowing a partner, and knowing that he will be there next time again, fosters the reasonable expectation that he will not defect as this will probably be a costly move. In addition, repeated interaction opens the possibility of gradually expanding the level of accepted vulnerability from small tokens of cooperation willingness to more substantial interaction. Third, the EU arrangement adds a long-term commonality to the exchange that supersedes short-term differences. Commitment and cohesion are based

3 Bossong, "Intelligence Support for EU Security Policy"; Seyfried, "Potentials and Limits of Intelligence Cooperation at EU Level."

4 Ben Jaffel, "Britain's European Connection in Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Cooperation"; Ben Jaffel, Anglo-European Intelligence Cooperation : Britain in Europe, Europe in Britain.

5 Buskens, Corten, and Raub, "Social Networks"; Rathbun, *Trust in International Cooperation*; Ferrin, Bligh, and Kohles, "It Takes Two to Tango"; Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*; Ring and van de Ven, "Developmental Processes of Cooperative Interorganizational Relations."

on a shared narrative in which the interest of the other becomes identical to one's own. In turn, intelligence officers in the EU intelligence organizations are able to act as bridges and boundary spanners to the outside world.

From this perspective, the utility of the EU intelligence arrangement may be misunderstood altogether. Instead of being a lean and mean transaction machine, it rather is a system for sustained interaction. It provides the mindset for a 'somewhat forgiving tit-for-tat strategy' enabling cooperation in the face of remaining competition and asymmetry between partners.[6] When looking at long-standing multilateral and plurilateral arrangements, it is striking how resilient they are in the face of considerable inequality in resources and irrespective of their - sometimes - considerable size. In a broader sense, this also contributes to our understanding of European integration, although not the primary aim of this study which focusses on intelligence. Nevertheless, its conclusions show that neofunctionalism still holds a promising explanation for continued integration in the EU. Regardless of whether or not a form of federal unity will evolve, it appears that increasing interdependence at the policy level pushes in the direction of integration.[7] Even in intelligence and security, the domain least likely to integrate based on considerations of national sovereignty, the notions of collective identity and benevolence have shown to be relevant ones, bolstering cooperative behavior. Indeed, integration in the intelligence community might be further than expected based on structures alone.[8] Working level interaction is driving a process in which the building of formal institutions will be much slower than actual cooperation.[9]

### 9.2.2. Contribution to the Body of Knowledge on International Intelligence Cooperation

What does this research tell us about the pattern of cooperation in European intelligence? It implies that it is about relations as well as calculations. Yet, it also shows that these relations mainly follow practice. Inter-agency interaction in Europe is enabled by professional practices as much as by structures. When analyzing EU intelligence, it becomes apparent that focusing only on formal institutions and technical connections does not do justice to the pattern of interaction. Tellingly, even Walsh, a proponent of organizational design solutions to the cooperation dilemma and a firm advocate of hierarchy and monitoring, comes to the conclusion that formal institutions are not enough to explain EU intelligence cooperation.[10] This research shows that centralizing these formal structures will have limited effect, as it disregards the informal reality of social institutions in international

6 Axelrod, *The Complexity of Cooperation; Agent-Based Models of Competition and Collaboration*.

7 Hooghe and Marks, "Grand Theories of European Integration in the Twenty-First Century," 1114–15.

8 Davis Cross, "The Limits of Epistemic Communities."

9 Kuhn, "Grand Theories of European Integration Revisited," 1221.

10 Walsh, "Intelligence-Sharing in the European Union."

intelligence cooperation. It can even be counterproductive for cooperation as it opposes the preferred way of working in the intelligence community. This conclusion follows the idea of social embeddedness first introduced by Granovetter (1985).[11] He poses that purposive action like cooperation cannot be understood fully in isolation, but only in the context of the concrete and ongoing systems of social relations in which it occurs. Scholars have set out to determine the nature of social structure surrounding EU intelligence and its consequences for cooperation activities. Given the centrality of knowledge circulation and sensemaking noted by scholars like Hoffmann et al.[12], and the intensity of interaction and relations in specific subsets of the community, there is some justification in depicting the social fabric of the intelligence community as an epistemic one; a knowledge network able to influence policy coordination.[13] Yet, as Davis Cross and Gruszczak rightfully note when analyzing EU intelligence, the epistemic intelligence community there is still 'limited' or 'distorted'.[14] This study agrees that various parts of the intelligence community still stand far apart in terms of their exact policy goals, severely limiting the potential for convergence and isomorphism in international intelligence cooperation noted by scholars like Svendsen.[15] The diversity of intelligence subcommunities means that there is no shared idea on what cooperative behavior and associated concepts of competition and rivalry mean. This is especially felt in arrangements like EU intelligence where these subcommunities meet and are asked to collaborate.

The European intelligence community is above all a community of practice, a concept related to social learning envisioned by Wenger.[16] Its members do not all share the exact same policy goal, but they have similar methods for problem-solving and sense-making. The preferred practices of restraint, pragmatism and informality span the community. Moreover, members of the community are committed to the same domain and they share a professional competence that distinguishes them from others. This research reaffirms what Bigo depicts as a 'transnational guild', a cross-border professional brotherhood of intelligence that is based on expertise and experience.[17] It is in their every-day activity that intelligence practitioners develop and reaffirm their know-how and establish relations. The notable master-apprentice relation in learning and behavioral testing of unknown peers underlines the practicality of individual admittance into the community. On an organizational level, there is an ongoing contestation about the organizations entitled to perform intelligence functions. It is indeed,

11 Granovetter, "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness."

12 Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination"; Biermann, "The Role of International Bureaucracies."

13 Hoffmann, Chalati, and Dogan, "Rethinking Intelligence Practices and Processes"; Hoffmann, "Circulation, Not Cooperation."

14 Davis Cross, "The Limits of Epistemic Communities"; Davis Cross, "A European Transgovernmental Intelligence Network and the Role of IntCen"; Gruszczak, *Intelligence Security in the European Union*.

15 Svendsen, "The Globalization of Intelligence Since 9/11"; Svendsen, *The Professionalization of Intelligence Cooperation*.

16 Wenger, Communities of Practice : Learning, Meaning, and Identity.

17 Bigo, "Sociology of Transnational Guilds."

as Stout and Warner state, that intelligence is what intelligence agencies do.[18] Yet, what the members of the intelligence community actually 'do' varies. Although there are recurring - and recognizable - patterns of behavior, the diversity of intelligence organizations and their functions make that in practice there are many subcommunities to consider. Cooperation between them, most notably between military and civilian intelligence, and between intelligence and security, is apparently a tense activity. This research shows that in so far practitioners experience conflicting loyalties, a concept introduced into the debate on international intelligence cooperation by Boatner[19], in the EU setting these are not so much nationality-driven but based on occupational and organizational divides. In this respect, EU intelligence can even be considered a community of practice in its own right. Its specific activity of fusing intelligence for EU decision makers, the particular (bureaucratic and political) circumstances under which it operates, and the close interaction between different subcommunities make that its actual practice to some extent stands apart from the wider intelligence community.

### 9.2.3. Contribution to the Body of Knowledge on Trust in Intelligence Cooperation

What does this research tell us about the concept of trust in intelligence cooperation? It implies that trust-based relations enable cooperation by achieving reasonable expectations about a partner's behavior under conditions of uncertainty and risk. Trust in intelligence essentially serves the same purpose as in many other fields of social behavior. It is a tool for the selection of suitable partners. It defines an in-group with which cooperation is preferable from an out-group where this is less the case. Many publications have already mentioned trust as one of the, or most, important discriminatory condition(s) for successful intelligence cooperation. Few however have examined how. Most seem to assume that it is based on careful calculation of expected outcomes only. This study disagrees. It shows by repetition the intimate two-way link between the micro-level of the individual, the meso-level of groups and organizations, and the macro-level of systems. An interplay that is mostly known from the sociologist Coleman, putting subjective interpretation and valuation at the heart of trusting relations.[20]

Trust is not a fully rational or deliberate determinant for intelligence cooperation. Nor is trusting behavior senseless or ignorant of outcomes. In practice, it is something in between resembling the role of trust described by Möllering.[21] This research shows that in the process

18 Stout and Warner, "Intelligence Is as Intelligence Does."

19 Boatner, "Sharing and Using Intelligence in International Organizations: Some Guidelines."

20 Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*; Coleman, "Microfoundations and Macro Social Behavior."

21 Möllering, "Understanding Trust from the Perspective of Sociological Neoinstitutionalism"; Möllering, "The Nature of Trust: From Georg Simmel to a Theory of Expectation, Interpretation and Suspension."

of in- and exclusion of partners, instead of relying solely on formal rules and performance measurement, individual intelligence practitioners use subjective interpretation and valuation. Evaluating the role of trust clearly shows that intelligence cooperation follows logics of appropriateness and practicality that complement the logic of consequences. Practitioners show certain behavior not only because it is instrumental, but also because they believe they are supposed to, and because they simply believe that this is how things are done based on unarticulated practical knowledge.[22] Maintaining that intelligence practitioners try to be as rational as possible and the exchange needs to deliver them a gain, the interplay between their social institutions and every-day reality is what defines the manifestation of cooperative behavior, as put forward by Buskens and Raub.[23]

The conceptual framework of trustworthiness by Mayer and Schultz[24] has proven a valuable starting point for research into the more intangible dynamics of organizational trust in intelligence cooperation. This study enriched this framework by successfully operationalizing it for use in an empirical research and it did so in a way not previously seen in other studies on trust. With its relational approach, the refined conceptual framework contributes not only to studies into intelligence cooperation, but to wider studies of trust as well where it can well be applied. When looking at the scholarly debate on trust, this specific research adds three general notions. First, the concept of trust only holds explanatory value when applied to specific cases and specific relations. In intelligence, the interpretation and valuation (meaning) of underlying concepts like secrecy varies from other fields. Contrary to other occupations, secrecy does not form the main barrier for trust-based cooperation within the community. This is mostly an outsider's view. Paradoxically, on the inside of the intelligence community considerable openness exists. Second, the research suggests a conceptual distinction between distrust and mistrust. The first can - as Schoorman and others do[25] - be seen as the absence of trust in a specific situation, while the latter refers to a whole different concept. Mistrust refers to a general sense of unease, or awareness of risk. It means that mistrust and trust can co-exist, and even do so independently. Moreover, from the specific practice of intelligence cooperation it becomes clear that the first can even bolster the latter. A degree of mendacity, restraint and caution fosters occupational recognition; it is not only acceptable, it is reasonably expected. Third, conceptually trust should be separated from the seemingly similar term faith. As Simmel already noted in 1906, trust - or as he calls it 'confidence' - is a relational and a gradual concept travelling between knowing and not knowing a partner. In his words, the possession of full knowledge does away with the

22 Schulz, "Logic of Consequences and Logic of Appropriateness"; Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices"; Pouliot, "The Logic of Practicality."

23 Buskens and Raub, "3. Rational Choice Research on Social Dilemmas."

24 Schoorman, Mayer, and Davis, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust"; Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust."

25 Schoorman, Mayer, and Davis, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust."

need of trusting, while complete absence of knowledge makes trust impossible.[26] The use of stereotyping and generalized expectations of an individual based on his group or institution - as shown in this research - is not to be confused with a trustor's trait-like propensity to trust and this should be excluded from the conceptual framework. Trust, however shallow, is based on some form of (fore)knowledge and does not exist apart from the social relation at hand.

### 9.2.4. Contribution to Body the of Knowledge on Social Relations in Intelligence

What does this research tell us about theories of social relations in intelligence? It shows that applying social theories in IS delivers fresh insights in well-known activities and phenomena. It implies that intelligence as a human activity follows the same mechanisms as other forms of social behavior. This study into EU intelligence cooperation answers the call by scholars like Nolan who advocate a more sociological approach to Intelligence Studies.[27] Moreover, it illustrates the shortcomings of positivist approaches that only take into account the observable facts. Not only are facts hard to observe in intelligence - which is a valid practical but poor theoretical argument -, but any linear black-and-white explanation disregards the complexity of its social reality. To more comprehensively explain the dynamics of intelligence, sociological theory offers insightful perspectives. In many respects intelligence services resemble other organizations, and intelligence practitioners act as normal human beings. It is the specific practices that make the difference. Emphasizing the explanatory value of social practices fits in the poststructuralist turn to practice already visible in IR from the start of the millennium, and with more recent momentum beginning to do the same in respectively Security Studies and IS.[28]

In terms of sociological perspective, this research picks up where Fägersten (2010) left off when explaining international intelligence cooperation.[29] Like this study, Fägersten's work is one of the few pieces with a pluralist model that emphasizes the constraining and enabling effects of institutions, rather that the drivers for cooperation. He identifies trust as one of the most important of those conditions. Yet, he shows aware that his rational historical approach to institutionalism prohibits him from stepping very far beyond formal aspects of utility, time and dependence.[30] This study adds another branch of new institutionalism to IS; sociological institutionalism. Using this more constructivist perspective, it shows how

26 Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies."

27 Nolan, "A Sociological Approach to Intelligence Studies."

28 Græger, "European Security as Practice"; Ben Jaffel, Anglo-European Intelligence Cooperation : Britain in Europe, Europe in Britain.

29 Fägersten, "European Intelligence Cooperation," 2014; Fägersten, *Sharing Secrets*.

30 March and Olsen, "The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders"; March and Olsen, *The Logic of Appropriateness*.

social networks, institutions and identities create meaning for intelligence practitioners engaged in cooperation. This is about the deeper layers of social structure; it concerns beliefs, assumptions and values.

Utilizing theories of social relations in intelligence studies gives way to the multidisciplinary dialog as advocated by Marrin.[31] It contributes to a nuanced understanding of intelligence activity. On the one hand, applying insights from established theories in sociology helps theorizing on intelligence. On the other hand, insights from IS contribute to the ongoing debates in other disciplines. When addressing cooperation, this study used concepts from social network theory, social institutionalism and social identity theory to gain insight in the relational dynamics in intelligence. By using these perspectives, it unveils that social capital might be as important for successful intelligence support as economic capital is.[32]

Looking at social capital in the intelligence community from a network perspective shows that relations at the micro-level can provide important weak ties in an otherwise dispersed landscape. This research contributes to the ongoing debate on social networks in cooperation by providing additional evidence for evolving cooperation when combining reputations in a network with partner choice.[33] Looking at social capital in the intelligence community from an institutional perspective shows that despite the many differences, shared occupational norms create legitimacy across organizations. Given the mimetic and normative pressures for isomorphism first noted by DiMaggio and Powell (1983)[34], increased contact between intelligence services will likely lead to more convergence even in the absence of a coercive force. Looking at social capital in the intelligence community from an identity perspective shows there is considerable overlap in what members believe about who they are and what they stand for. This research underlines dynamics known from the similarity-attraction paradigm as put forward by Tajfel and Turner.[35] It also contributes to the ongoing debate on freeriding in public goods by providing additional proof for the claim that valuing membership of a collective increases the tolerance for lower payoffs than achieved when acting alone.[36]

31 Marrin, "Evaluating Intelligence Theories."

32 Nahapiet, "The Role of Social Capital in Inter-organizational Relationships."

33 Corten, Buskens, and Rosenkranz, "Cooperation, Reputation Effects, and Network Dynamics: Experimental Evidence."

34 DiMaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited."

35 Tajfel and Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict."

36 Abraham, Lorek, and Prosch, "Social Norms and Commitments in Cooperatives – Experimental Evidence."

## 9.3. Reflection

### 9.3.1. General Reflection

A systematic literature review resulted in identifying the research gap and advocating new approaches and concepts to reach a better understanding of international intelligence cooperation. Nevertheless, one has to remain critical about the role a sociological perspective can have within such an endeavor and about the risk of focusing on the research gap too much. The systematic way this research was conducted and the sociological perspective it advocates, lead to two related general reflections.

First, the use of 'avenues' to systematically further the debate runs the risk of obscuring the more holistic nature of international intelligence cooperation. Categorizing the debate in levels and phases of analysis is very helpful in visualizing blind spots and inviting fresh approaches and concepts. Nevertheless, in reality, international intelligence cooperation is a complex and dynamic web of relations at different levels, always having some degree of mutual influence and sometimes even flowing counter to each other. One should be aware that explaining international intelligence cooperation in a given context will always involve characteristics on all levels and the findings reached should ultimately be viewed in conjunction. For example, interorganizational intelligence cooperation between NATO and EU task groups during operations in the Gulf of Aden, does not stand isolated from the international relations between the participating Member States and the way the cooperation was formed.

Second, identifying the benefits a sociological perspective can have for studying international intelligence cooperation is not to dismiss other approaches. The multifaceted nature of intelligence cooperation and its changing and complex environment would make it imprudent to presume that studying it from one viewpoint, at one moment in time would reveal universal understanding. In every phase and at every level of cooperation, cooperative behavior is mediated by a context that is both structural and relational. As a consequence, the approaches appropriate to comprehend this context vary as well. One should be weary of falling into the trap of trying to offer a new approach 'capable of answering all questions'. Given the broad structure offered by the trust concept, this study was able to address a wide range of social dynamics and factors influencing trust. In chapters 6 to 8 a variety of lenses was introduced all adhering to the ideas voiced in the broader framework. Using them did not so much alter that framework, but showed that it needs to be tailored to the specific case to produce a meaningful understanding of empirical results. When bringing this framework to future research, as section 9.4 will propose, one has to bear in mind that a rigid application of exactly the same factors as this study might obscure what in those cases might be very relevant manifestations of the mechanism of social relations and trust.

### 9.3.2. Reflection on Dependability

Dependability of this research is primarily hampered by limitations in data collection. Data collection in contemporary studies on intelligence is difficult. The sensitivity, and in many cases secrecy, of the case limits the availability of essential datasets. Documents are often classified and respondents are reluctant to open up; that is if the researcher is able to identify them at all. For this research, this was no different. Gaining access to senior experts on multilateral cooperation, both in the national capitals and in the EU, proved a hard and lengthy process. Yet, for examining the beliefs and perceptions on trust and cooperation of the intelligence community itself it was imperative to do so. Ultimately it took one and a half years to find and interview the practitioners that participated in this research. Even under the strict caveats of voluntary participation and anonymity described section 4.5, it was not easy to convince both organizations and respondents to open up. For example, on the organizational level one national intelligence service after due time and repeated requests declined any interview or other form of participation, stating that this would go against their policy of non-cooperation in academic research. This despite their pronounced acknowledgment of the relevance of the topic and their explicit interest in the outcomes of the research at hand. On a personal level, off-the-record one respondent talked quite openly on many aspects of trust in EU intelligence cooperation. Yet, when asked to do the actual interview he closed up, keeping his answers to a minimum, again assuring himself of the approval of his superior and demanding the formal safeguard of textual checks of the interview report. However, these were the ones that took the courtesy to respond or participate. In many cases, no answer to the interview request was received at all.

A deliberate choice was made to limit the number of methods in data collection. Ideally, a survey and participant observation would have been included to complement the information retrieved from interviews and desk research. As discussed in section 4.5, participant observation was ultimately rendered impossible by the COVID pandemic. Yet, as a result of preliminary conversations with intelligence practitioners it was already decided that both these methods were unfeasible if the focus was to be on active intelligence officers and not on the peripheral set of policy officers and diplomats working in the domain of defence and security. It was estimated that including a survey or asking for participant observation would not only have a slim chance of being accepted, it would actually diminish willingness to cooperate due to doubt cast on the professional judgment and empathy of the researcher. Moreover, for the subjective perceptions and beliefs that hold center stage in this research, interviews are regarded as the pivotal source of information, one that can be complemented but not substituted by other sources.

This research is based on a sizeable dataset of interviews with active intelligence officers that is unseen in many studies on intelligence. It is sufficiently exhaustive to answer the

research question at hand. Yet, the caveats agreed upon limit accessibility and exclude use in future research. Ultimately, it was a repeated, multi-angel and - most importantly - sponsored approach that eventually paid off when gathering the interviews. Direct requests to intelligence services and organizations were sent, as well as indirect approaches through known network organizations for academic outreach like the Intelligence College Europe. In the end, it was only with the help of key persons within various intelligence organizations that others found themselves confident enough to participate. These individuals, none of whom I can call by name here, were invaluable as gate keepers for the information needed. Their letters of support, the use of their personal networks and their effort to convince their peers of the value of this study opened doors that would otherwise have remained closed. It led to a slowly but steadily growing group of respondents up to the point of informational saturation. When the last interview was conducted no new angles were discovered and little new factual information retrieved. At that point, a broad range of respondents had participated coming from 15 out of 27 EU Member States and roughly divided in half between national practitioners and EU intelligence officers. That being said, two limitations in the data collection remain that deserve consideration.

First, although respondents with a wide variety of nationalities and backgrounds were found willing to participate, a positive bias towards cooperation could still play a role in the results. As all the interviews were on a voluntary basis, the respondents might have an inclination towards openness and outreach. As a result, the evidence found for a relational approach in intelligence cooperation and the importance of a cooperative mindset might be exaggerated. Nevertheless, the data holds more than sufficient ground to conclude that social relations and trust play a complementary role to rational calculations and control. In addition, there is sufficient ground to believe that opponents of (EU) cooperation have been voicing their opinion too. Participants were not all favorable to the EU or the role of social relations and trust. Moreover, skepticism and nonpartisanship were omnipresent.

Second, the focus on the in-group of intelligence officers with expertise on multilateral intelligence cooperation excluded two groups that are important for in-group/out-group dynamics in EU intelligence cooperation. No interviews were conducted with non-intelligence personnel working in or near the EU intelligence organizations. The cultural divide between the EU and intelligence is fully based on the perceptions of intelligence officers. Although this deprives the research of the perception of the out-group, the perception on the inside is so widespread and pervasive that one side suffices to conclude that it exists and has influence. Moreover, the characteristics of the EU organization attributed to it by these respondents are only meant to depict the reality of this in-group, not to serve as an objective and indefinite truth. In addition, although in the research a divide was made between national practitioners and EU practitioners, in practice these two groups overlap. Many of the interviewees that are considered experts on multilateral intelligence cooperation in their national capitals,

in fact have a background of working in or close to the EU and vice versa. To some extent the observations made with regard to the unfamiliarity and unpopularity of the EU with national practitioners are not based on the perceptions of the interviewees themselves, but on their previous experiences with their peers who have never worked in that multilateral format. Nevertheless, as all respondents have been part of that group for a large part of their professional careers, and still interact with them on a regular basis regarding cooperation, they are considered an authoritative source of information.

### 9.3.3. Reflection on Confirmability

Confirmability of this research is primarily hampered by limitations in data analysis. In many respects, the research process for this study shows similarities with the topic at hand; trust in cooperation. The relation between researcher and respondent was trust-based, selectively opening doors that would otherwise have remained closed, but also limiting the possibility for others to do the same. To obtain access to invaluable data on the inner workings of intelligence cooperation in the EU, the researcher first had to show his trustworthiness. In a way, this provides additional proof to the conclusions reached. The steps taken to interview practitioners on the inside of national and EU intelligence organizations reflect and illustrate that conditions for trust matter greatly when seeking interaction without having too much to offer in return. First, it was needed to show that the researcher was able to interpret the subject matter in a way that the respondents would feel comfortable with, that he was reasonably expected to behave appropriately when confronted with sensitive material. The introduction by a known sponsor, the seeking of common ground and mutual acquaintances to start of a conversation, and the testing of a basic understanding of intelligence norms and standards, were all part of the 'ritual dance' towards an interview. Like in the object of study, this trust enabled considerable leeway under conditions of uncertainty and risk. It was indeed a case of hard on the outside and (a bit) softer on the inside. Illustrative for this dynamic of trust is that out of the 47 interviewees who were offered scrutiny of their input, only one asked to read the interview notes and one other wanted to know which of his direct quotes were to be used. Nevertheless, there is a downside to gaining privileged access to a restricted setting to do academic research. Several restrictive caveats were agreed upon that limit confirmability of this research. The challenges this poses on the data analysis are relevant not only for this research, but for the study of contemporary intelligence as a whole.

The first challenge is posed by the guaranteed full anonymity of the interviewees, a measure meant to protect the identities of the intelligence officers involved. Outsiders will be unable to verify the information provided directly with these people or check their backgrounds when reevaluating the interviews they gave, as they will be unable to identify the sources or gain access to the interview data. No appendix with the names and functions of the

interviewees is included in this thesis. To safeguard academic accountability an abstracted list of participants, including their country of origin and general position has been presented to the supervisors. For the sake of data coverage and analytical comparison the interviewees were categorized according to 7 broad selection criteria; gender, seniority, country size, duration of EU Membership, multilateral experience, civilian or military background, and national or EU posting. This list was available to the supervisors prior to the defence of this dissertation as well. Nevertheless, to avoid attribution of sources only the distinction between military and civilian, a broad indication of experience, and current posting were used in the dissertation itself.

Second, a moratorium on recording the interviews on-the-spot hampers traceability of information. Due to security regulations no recording devices were allowed into the restricted environment where the majority of the interviews were held. Interviews were mainly conducted on the premises of EUMS INT and INTCEN, or inside the buildings of national services. Logging was done manually, on paper and in real-time. It entailed the risk of missing, watering down, or misinterpreting essential data. To narrow down this risk, the processing of data was done as soon as possible after the interview on the basis of the notes taken during the event. Every interview was put into a report, comprising up to more than 70 hours of interview and compiling up to 60.000 words of reporting. The analysis was done on the basis of these interview reports. Although an effort was made to stick as closely to the spoken text as possible, no verbatim transcript of the interview is available. Again, these interview reports, as well as the raw field notes were available to the supervisors.

The third challenge to data analysis was the need to paraphrase some parts of the interview text. Although not being secret or even confidential, the material obtained could still have been sensitive, for example when read in coherence. Being aware that this could easily lead to a situation of self-censorship, the researcher limited his initial interventions in the text to excluding direct country and service names from the interview reports. Afterwards, a further check for remaining sensitivities was left to two outside readers in respectively the EU and in the Netherlands Defence Intelligence and Security Service. They focused on sensitivities that could still be deducted indirectly from the dissertation. These officials had no mandate or responsibility for obscuring or altering the text. This was left with the researcher himself, although ultimately no such alteration was needed. They had few objections to the initial text, although remarking - in a positive manner - that it was one of the richest academic narratives they had seen on intelligence cooperation and that they read the analysis approvingly. As it was, it was possible to use all material needed directly or by confirming it through other sources. Moreover, as depicted in the previous chapters, much of what some interviewees thought sensitive, was in fact described and analyzed in other studies and policy documents concerning EU intelligence.

A last point to address when discussing confirmability is the position of the researcher. As put forward in chapter 4, this study clearly adapts an approach focused on sensemaking and acknowledges the role of subjective interpretation in establishing meaningful dialogue. This almost constructionist approach requires a knowledgeable researcher that is able to challenge espoused perceptions and beliefs, speaks the language and is seen as a legitimate interlocutor. In addition, given the limitations on recording, the expertise and experience of the researcher need to be sufficient to keep the conversation going while at the same time taking notes. For this study, the researcher was well positioned and able to carry out the research both in terms of access and in terms of knowledgeability. Besides the advantages this has, it also brings the risk of being somehow biased because of positionality. To minimize the negative impact this bias could have had on the conclusions, the analysis was conducted in a very systematic manner. First, there is a clear and traceable path linking the conceptual framework, research protocol, and result sections. Second, the analysis was supported by rigorous coding using qualitative data analysis software designed to deliver comprehensive findings and reach robust conclusions. Third, the preliminary results were debated in internal and external focus groups comprising of both academics and practitioners, for example at (European) International Studies Association (ISA/EISA) conferences, a workshop at Kings College London on Trust in European Intelligence Cooperation, and during seminars organized for the Intelligence College Europe (ICE). There was no collective discrepancy between practitioners and academics during these events, bolstering the claim that the effect of positional bias was minimized in the conclusions reached. Yet, positionality remains a theme for every social scientist in every empirical study. The only way to deal with this, besides using rigorous methodology in processing and analyzing the information, is to be aware of this position.

### 9.3.4. Reflection on Credibility and Transferability

Credibility and transferability of the conclusions in this research are primarily hampered by limitations imposed by the qualitative research strategy at hand. This study did not arrive at a grand theory of intelligence cooperation. Nor was it meant to. Its critical realist foundations acknowledge the existence of generative mechanisms for behavior that are larger than the persons or situations in which they occur. Nevertheless, it follows a post-positivist approach that attaches little value to all-encompassing truths, and instead uses theories to provide multiple angles on the same objects of research. Theory was mainly used as a basis for constructing a conceptual framework with which the practice of intelligence cooperation could be systematically and thoroughly analyzed. It thereby increases comprehensive understanding of a specific phenomenon. Instead of focusing on theory, this study uses theory to focus on understanding the dynamics of the case at hand, that is social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation. The case study into the contemporary EU practice

provides a level of detailed analysis into this mechanism not found in many other research methods. By means of thick analysis it was possible to let the sources speak as directly as possible and using conceptual inference to attach new or unnoticed meaning to their perceptions and beliefs. In doing so, this research addresses a specific research gap. As a result of the case study, it has become possible to gain a sharpened understanding of the specific - and more importantly subjective - meaning of trust in international intelligence cooperation. Nevertheless, the deliberate focus on specific practice comes at a price.

As a consequence of the research strategy chosen, there is an important notion on credibility to bear in mind for the conclusions of this study. Given the emphasis on practices and the focus of trust as a facilitator, this study provides an insight in the *how* and *why* of cooperative behavior in intelligence. The deviant case study into EU intelligence practice provides valuable insights on the mechanism of social relations and trust in the specific setting of EU intelligence. Nevertheless, it says little about the actual and future outcomes of this process. Apart from the fact that these outcomes are often ambiguous in terms of effect on decision-making and mostly secret in terms of products, they are not the aim of this research. The goal of this research is to observe and explain the workings of social relations and trust, not the success of cooperation. It is about understanding, not about predicting. In addition, despite its abductive reasoning there are limitations to the generalized claim this study can make based on its understanding of the role of social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation. First, practice-based research cannot be done in isolation from the context in which this practice appears. In a real-life setting the effect of one particular variable cannot be fully separated from others. Second, a practice-based case study lacks the controls and manipulation options available to experimental research. Contrary to experimental research it is unable to artificially change a variable and monitor its effects. Third, this practice-based case study allows for a deep-dive, but simultaneously excludes the quantity of data necessary for statistical analysis. The sample size simply prevents this. In addition, this research is about the quality of data needed interpreting subjective beliefs and perceptions. During one of the focus groups meant to validate and complement the preliminary results of this study, one practitioner wondered 'how to measure these social relations and trust'. The answer is 'you do not'. This means that it is impossible to arrive at definite causal conclusions. Moreover, statistical correlation is beyond its reach. It is therefore that the conclusions reached in this study are framed in terms of relations, not causations or correlations.

As a consequence of the research strategy there is also an important notion on transferability to bear in mind for the conclusions reached. As shown in chapter 4, a deviant case study like the current one into EU intelligence is often the only way to study rare conditions, because it may be impossible to find samples of these conditions elsewhere. From applying the conceptual framework of trust in the setting of EU intelligence, dynamics have appeared that would otherwise probably have been undetected. Nevertheless, the quality of showcasing or

emphasizing the more impalpable elements of intelligence cooperation can also be a source of criticism. Although in their answers respondents very often refer to similar experiences in other formats for intelligence cooperation, the conclusions of this study cannot be transferred to other cases easily. That is, not in a literal or direct way. The specifics of trust in the context and circumstances of present-day EU intelligence cooperation differ from other existing arrangements or even from the future EU arrangement. Therefore, the particular conclusions of this study cannot be applied one-on-one to these other cases. As shown in section 9.2 above, this is not to say that it is impossible to discuss results and infer more general contributions. Following a line of abductive reasoning, the empirical results from this study were used to return to, and reflect on, the conceptual framework at hand. Applying this framework to diverging practices in other cases will further enhance our general understanding of what is essentially a very particular and ongoing phenomenon.

### 9.4. Recommendations for Future Research

The limitations on transferability of this study's conclusions automatically lead to a first recommendation for future research. It would be beneficial for our conceptual understanding of the role of social relations and trust in intelligence cooperation to add and compare other cases. These could include variations in type of activity and type of arrangement, but also varying circumstances. It would be highly interesting to see how this influences preferences for cooperative behavior and the way reasonable expectations are formed and met. First, the EU case is primarily about analytical fusion and dissemination of finished products. It would be worthwhile to compare this with arrangements who focus on activities in other parts of the intelligence process like collaboration in technical collection, data processing or coordination of direction management. In the course of this research, it was implied that the type of activity matters for how trust issues play out. Some respondents, being analysts themselves, even referred to a 'collection mindset' when indicating an - in their eyes and for their situation - counterproductive emphasis on closedness and secrecy. At the same time, many indicated that within these intimate 'subcommunities' interaction would be as open and fluent as in any other, using examples like the technical SIGINT arrangements known to them. Taking some of these as case studies for the workings of trust would further enhance our understanding.

Second, the EU case is primarily about multilateral cooperation on behalf of a very diverse and very political organization. It would be worthwhile to compare this with other types of arrangements, for example involving less members or having a more homogeneous lay-out. In the course of this research, respondents often referred to these other types of arrangements when underlining their ideas on trust-based cooperation. The examples most used were NATO, CTG and the Five Eyes. This study infers that it is not so much the

size of these arrangements that matter for cooperation, but - in terms of trust - the overlap in networks, institutions and identities on multiple levels. Yet, none of these formats have been examined using the concept of trust in the way this research did with EU intelligence; a multilevel approach into practices. To begin with, it would be highly interesting to examine the role of trust in that other - more prominent - multilateral arrangement for western intelligence cooperation, namely NATO. The structural comparison with EU intelligence is often made, but so far little has been written on differences and similarities in informal institutions and identities in the two arrangements. Moreover, it would be insightful to see how this influences cooperation between the two, something that this study did not go into either. Another option would be a study of the role of social relations and trust in arrangements in non-western countries. It would be very interesting to see how their variations influence intelligence practices in cooperation. The same applies to national contexts, were the conceptual framework of social relations and trust is applicable as well and provides valuable insights.

Next to these attempts to broaden conceptual understanding of trust in intelligence cooperation by including more types of activities and arrangements, it would also be beneficial to further elaborate on some of the most influential building blocks for trust in intelligence identified in this study. It would be especially worthwhile to dig further into benevolence and especially the role of secrecy. In the course of this research, it became apparent that secrecy is more than just one of the institutional norms in intelligence. Although often mentioned in one breath with security standards, secrecy appeals to identity. It is closely associated with the prevailing business model in the trade; delivering added value through exclusiveness. It has even been suggested that intelligence personnel would not even tell a secret when it is known to the rest of the world. Yet, from a sociological perspective keeping secrets is only half the story. Selectively telling secrets is what gives them added value in cooperation. However beneficial secrecy is as an identity trait for group cohesion, it potentially limits cooperation with the outside world. Examining the role of secrecy in 'non-traditional' cooperation by intelligence services in public-private arrangements and in academic outreach will provide further insight in intelligence as a function of government. It could for example center around disclosure issues, the increasingly public role of many western intelligence services, or in a societal approach to the relation between secrecy and accountability. Although already becoming a more prominent topic within IS, it could draw further insights from a range of publications in public administration and sociology.

Last but not least, it would be beneficial to better understand other conditions for cooperative behavior and their relation with the conditions for trust. This research already showed a connection between relations and calculations, but was unable to dig further into their interplay. For this, it could be worthwhile to first examine how control works in intelligence cooperation. Besides hierarchy, the conditions for control have not been

extensively addressed in IS, for example looking at dependency and loyalty. There are likely to be others. Some of these conditions may overlap, like the conditions for trust do, or their underlying factors may coincide with those for other facilitators of cooperative behavior. Already it became apparent that control and trust can be conceptually, though not practically separated. In particular, there is the topic of power. Although often associated with realist connotations of anarchy and self-interest, as a sociological phenomenon power is part of any social relation. In this study it is noted that trust can generate social capital, and that this in turn can wield power. Yet, hierarchy will also wield a - different form of - power. Unraveling the mechanism of social relations and power in intelligence cooperation in a similar way as this study did with trust, could contribute to an even more comprehensive understanding.

### 9.5. Considerations for Practice

This study aims to increase the understanding *of* intelligence (cooperation) as a function of government. The gap it addresses is a scientific one, complementing the viable but one-dimensional view on cooperation offered by neorealist and transactional perspectives. It is all the more exciting to end this thesis with some considerations for practice nevertheless. Theories of intelligence and theories for intelligence can go hand in hand. The ontology and epistemology of this research rejects the idea of finding a universal truth or all-encompassing theory. For the same reasons, it also is cautious not to be presumptuous about the possibility of generalizing practical considerations. The diversity of the intelligence community makes it unlikely that these considerations will apply (equally) to all. The closedness of the community makes it equally hard to assess where they are most applicable. That being said, four considerations can be formulated based on the conceptual and empirical conclusions from the study and remarks of the interviewees.

A first practical consideration that comes from the study is that social capital is a type of resource in cooperation. One that can provide or make up for other capacities and capabilities. The place a service holds in the network and the access it provides, may be enough to seek and maintain good relations. Similarly, even when an arrangement does not offer traditional returns, it can be a vehicle for acquiring social capital. The effort needed for upholding social capital and the degree of lenience it provides, will have a direct link with the depth and breadth of the arrangement. Whereas for strategic partners the expectations are highest and so are the cost for relational maintenance, the same will be true with the tolerance for errors. For more pragmatic partnerships keeping a rolodex with telephone numbers will probably be sufficient and not that costly, but expectations must be equally humble.

A second consideration is that cooperation between partners with a cultural fit, perhaps even with a similar identity, will be more agreeable and less conflictual than with others.

In terms of cost and benefit, it might sometimes be better to have a good relation with a moderately-resourced partner, than a mediocre relation with a well-resourced partner. This is much about beliefs and perceptions of the participants in the arrangement, but the conditions for effective social relations and trust are more tangible than is often presumed. They can be pinpointed and evaluated, using a frame such as the one used for this research. On an organizational level, but on a personal level as well. This is very much about subjective interpretation, but so are many other aspects of intelligence work like assessing the reliability of sources. Including social relations and trust when (e)valuating partnerships will provide a more comprehensive and thus telling insight in the conditions for success.

A third and related consideration from this research is that individuals play an invaluable role in intelligence cooperation. This research cannot validate the statement that intelligence is perhaps the most human of all government activity, but personal relations are surely a key element. This means that the persons tasked to do cooperation need specific social skillsets that help them in the arrangement at hand. They need to be taken into account when selecting someone for a post in a cooperative arrangement. It also means that to operate effectively these individuals need room to maneuver. Trust in intelligence cooperation begins with trust in people. Given the norms of informality and pragmatism, and because trust is built and transmitted on this level, intelligence officers need some discretion in interpreting what to share, when and with whom. Strict hierarchy, however important for avoiding risk, can be suffocating for trust-based intelligence cooperation. Moreover, the idea that friendly relations and likeability must be considered unprofessional not only puts intelligence officers in a difficult position, it also limits the possibilities of cooperation.

That brings a last and final consideration stemming from this thesis. The notion that cooperation within the intelligence community is much easier than crossing the boundaries and reaching out to non-traditional partners. The first to come to mind is the academic-practitioner divide. As shown when discussing data collection for this research, it has been a struggle to obtain enough cooperation to get an insight in practitioners' trust perceptions. Many researchers face the same struggle, despite the clear relevance of their research topics. Although many intelligence leaders acknowledge the value cooperation with scientific institutions can bring, and the necessity to do so, it is also a balancing act between secrecy and openness. Opening up too much and putting this secrecy at peril could even harm the legitimacy they hold with traditional partners and pose a problem with regard to legality both in terms of mandate and accountability. The cooperation dilemma reappears. Besides signing Memoranda of Understanding with universities implementing all kinds of formal safeguards, breaking this dilemma could involve establishing trust-based relations. People trust each other most when they know, recognize and value each other. Bringing the communities together is a positive first step. Setting up programs for PhDs, opening archives to researchers and organizing thematic seminars or courses could be a second. Based on

this research, it is evident that in doing so a group of trustworthy individuals is needed that traverse the boundaries between the two worlds.

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# Appendix

# Appendix A: Research Protocol

This appendix entails the protocol for researching the object of the case study; social relations and trust in international intelligence cooperation. It offers a logic that forms the basis for the data collection in interviews and desk research, for the data analysis in coding and conceptualizing, and for the line of reasoning throughout this thesis. It keeps the research targeted on the aim at hand; to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of international intelligence cooperation.

**Research question(s)**

Research question:

How do social relations and trust influence EU intelligence cooperation?

Sub-questions:

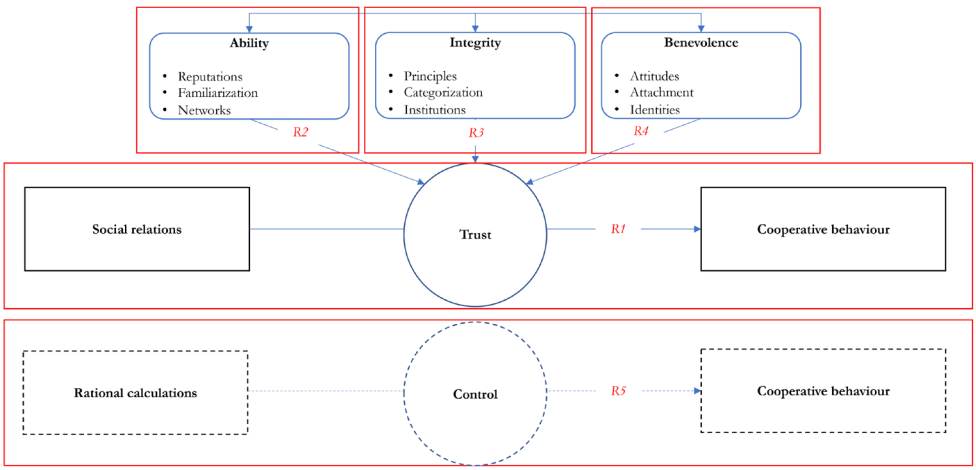
- How does the mechanism of social relations relate to that of rational calculations in achieving cooperative behavior?
- What is the role of trust in this mechanism?
- What are the conditions for trust and on what levels do they exert influence?
- How do these conditions materialize in the specific context of EU intelligence?
- What does this say about the workings of social relations and trust in international intelligence cooperation in general?

**Conceptualization**

Based on substantive theory, this research constructed a conceptual framework to answer the research question. Its mechanism, conditions and factors offer a window for examining the beliefs and perceptions of practitioners in the case of EU intelligence. The framework comprises of 4 relations concerning social relations and trust. In addition, it entails a fifth relation that is based on the traditional and presumably rivalling explanation of rational calculations and control. They form the building blocks for data collection and data analysis. Each proposed relation will be critically examined in the research:

- Relation 1 (R1): Social relations lead to cooperative behavior through trust between partners
- Relation 2 (R2): Perceptions of ability lead to trust between partners
- Relation 3 (R3): Perceptions of integrity lead to trust between partners
- Relation 4 (R4): Perceptions of benevolence lead to trust between partners
- Rival Relation 5 (R5): Rational calculations lead to cooperative behavior through control over partners

## Schematic outline




## Operationalization

Each relation leads to a range of questions concerning the case at hand. The first set concerns an empirical explanation of the subject of study (EU intelligence system) in the light of the conceptual framework. The second set concerns the eloquence of this framework as the object of study in terms of mechanisms, conditions and factors identified.

*On the subject of study (EU Intelligence System)*

- R1: To what extent is trust believed to be a dominant condition for cooperative behavior in the EU intelligence system?
- R2: To what extent do actors in the EU intelligence system have a favorable perception of each other's ability to perform. Why? What factors (entities, processes and structures) is this perception built on?
- R3: To what extent do actors in the EU intelligence system perceive that partners in that system play the game by clear and acceptable rules. Why? What factors (entities, processes and structures) drive this perception?
- R4: To what extent do actors in the EU intelligence system perceive partners as being in solidarity with each other's needs or even encapsulating interests? Why? What factors (entities, processes and structures) lie at the heart of this perception?
- R5: To what extent do actors in the EU intelligence system foster beliefs and perceptions concerning rational calculations and control relating to their preferences in cooperative behavior?
- R1-5: Can a dominant condition be distinguished that constrains or enables social relations in EU intelligence cooperation? If any, which one(s)?
- R1-5: Which of the factors identified holds a significant relation in the context of intelligence? What other factors can be distinguished?

*On the object of study (mechanisms, conditions and factors)*

- R1: What is the role of trust in cooperative behavior in international intelligence cooperation?
- R2: What is the (potential) effect of perceived ability on trust in international intelligence cooperation?
- R3: What is the (potential) effect of perceived integrity on trust in international intelligence cooperation?
- R4: What is the (potential) effect of perceived benevolence on trust in international intelligence cooperation?
- R5: How does the rival mechanism of rational calculations relate to that of social relations and what does this mean for explanations of international intelligence cooperation?

Both sets cannot be answered conclusively by any of the respondents individually. Their views need to be aggregated and critically examined. Nevertheless, the conceptual relations and operationalized questions do form the basis for the interviews. The interview questions are grouped according to the proposed relations mentioned above. To facilitate an open conversation, only general reference is made to the conditions and factors constituting trust. The latter were used as inserts during the conversation. The interview questions are depicted in Annex B.

# Appendix B: Interview Questions

**Introduction**

The interview will be used for my PhD research at Leiden University and the Netherlands Defence Academy. The result will be a publicly available thesis, the interview will be anonymous. Your name will not be published nor will your answers be related to your specific (home)organization.

This research is aimed at a better understanding of multilateral intelligence cooperation by examining the role of social relations in this activity. The questions I ask today, are meant to aggregate your ideas and perceptions on the European intelligence community and the way it works.

The interview will take approximately one hour and consists of 5 related issues: social relations, conditions for cooperation, organizational image, organizational culture, and organizational identity. It will be an open conversation, as I am especially interested in your views and perceptions on this topic.

**Questions**

General questions

[Q1] When discussing EU intelligence, many people refer to the European intelligence community. What does this community in your view consist of?

[Q2] How would you qualify multilateral cooperation in the European Intelligence community, in terms of difficulty and size, and why?

[Q3] In your experience, what factor or factors are the most decisive when deciding to cooperate or not in a multilateral setting?

Questions relating to Relation 1 (R1)

[Q4] Multilateral cooperation in the European intelligence community occurs in permanent, or at least long-lasting settings that allow for extensive social relations between services and institutions. What in your experience is the role of social relations in that cooperation? Can you give any examples?

[Q5] In your opinion, how important is trust in the multilateral setting of the European intelligence community?

[Q6] What factors contribute to the building and maintenance of trust in the multilateral setting of the European intelligence community?

Questions relating to Relation 2 (R2)

[Q7] How do you get familiar with other organizations in the European intelligence community and how do you sustain that relationship. What is the role of the EU institutions and meetings in this process?

[Q8] To what extent do you perceive the EU intelligence community to be a network of strong connections that supports the intelligence needs of the EU? What main obstacles and enablers do you distinguish?

Questions relating to Relation 3 (R3)

[Q9] To what extent do you perceive the European intelligence community to operate within acceptable or shared professional standards? What role do EU institutions and meetings have in determining and upholding this common understanding?

[Q10] How important are these in your decision whether or not to cooperate in a multilateral setting and which do you consider the most important?

Questions relating to Relation 4 (R4)

[Q11] What defines the European intelligence community in terms of its sense of purpose and values (who they are and what they stand for). What does this mean for cooperation with (EU) institutions that do not possess this in-group identity?

[Q12] To what extent do you perceive that there is a process of homogenization in the European intelligence community? Do you feel partners in the European intelligence community value each other's interests as being their own, driving out competition?

Questions relating to Relation 5 (R5)

[Q13] Do you perceive multilateral cooperation in the EU intelligence system as burden-sharing or does it deliver mutual gain? Why is this the case?

[Q14] Do you feel sufficient safeguards are in place in the EU intelligence system to assure that partners contribute? What main obstacles and enablers do you distinguish?

Closing question

[Q15] With regard to the European intelligence community, its relation with the EU, and its ability for cross agency cooperation, are there things we didn't speak of yet and that, in your experience, have an important influence on the breadth and depth of multilateral cooperation?

# Appendix C: Example of Data Matrix using Flexible Coding

The empirical data from the interviews was divided into broad chunks based on the conditions of trust distinguished in the conceptual framework and divided in levels of relations (the international or macro-level, the interorganizational or meso-level and the interpersonal or micro-level). These chunks were then systematically coded into various categories and themes. For this, every interview report was reviewed sentence by sentence, looking for factors of influence at work (entities, processes and structures). The categories and themes were refined and interpreted by benchmarking them with the body of knowledge in the conceptual framework and - if needed - additional studies. The result of this iterative benchmark between empirical results and theory led to a semantic explanation on how social relations and trust influence EU intelligence cooperation, based on the narratives used by the practitioners themselves. The data matrix below is an example of this process. It depicts the codes, themes and dimensions that followed from a structured analysis of the answers to the research questions on perceptions of ability (Annex A and B). It also shows the semantic explanation that came from it and the interviews used. This data matrix resulted in chapter 6, section 2.

**Perceptions of ability lead to trust between partners**
**Relation 2 (R2)**

**Question 7:** *How do you get familiar with other organizations in the European intelligence community and how do you sustain that relationship. What is the role of the EU institutions and meetings in this process?*

**Question 8:** *To what extent do you perceive the EU intelligence community to be a network of strong connections that supports the intelligence needs of the EU? What main obstacles and enablers do you distinguish?*

| | 1st Order Codes | 2nd Order Themes | Aggregated Dimensions | Semantic explanation | Interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Macro Level | Workforce composition | Size of the network | Network Complexity | • The size of the European intelligence network is considerable. It holds many services ad officers.<br>• The diversity of the European intelligence network is overwhelming. It hampers network connectivity and makes communications difficult.<br>• On a multilateral level, relations are complicated. Participating countries bring a multitude of legal and functional caveats - as well as many (bureaucratic) interests - to the table. | 6, 8, 10, 11, 22, 36, 44 |
| | Number of services | | | | |
| | Repeated interaction | | | | 1, 3, 4, 9, 18, 22, 35, 38, 44 |
| | Compatibility | Diversity of the network | | | |
| | Differing backgrounds | | | | |
| | Keeping track | | | | 6, 12, 19, 20, 27 |
| | | | | | |
| | Clubs | Operational focus | Clusters of Cooperation | • European intelligence is a small world, despite its size and diversity.<br>• The European intelligence network contains operational clusters of cooperation that vary in size, composition and connections. | 8, 16, 17, 18, 31, 36, 44 |
| | Exclusivity | | | | 1, 4, 8, 12, 17, 25, 29, 35, 36, 44 |
| | Intensity | | | | |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Distance between actors | Density of the network | | • These differ substantially in their internal dynamics, as well as in their connections with other clusters.<br>• Operational clusters bring in additional sensitivities and complicate trust relations in the broader European intelligence network.<br>• Perceptions differ on what the exclusive dynamics of clustered cooperation mean exactly for an inclusive (multilateral) organization like the EU. | 1, 6, 16, 18, 26, 33, 35, 36, 38<br><br>7, 15, 18, 38, 44<br><br>3, 5, 8, 9, 17, 19, 26, 31, 36, 38, 42 |
| | Selective connections | | | | |
| | Sensitivities | | | | |
| | Dependency | Role and position | EU Centrality | • Intelligence for the EU is mainly being done outside the EU.<br>• Safeguarding European security through intelligence support is first and foremost an activity by national intelligence services; the aim of intelligence cooperation in the European Union is ambiguous and accordingly so is the role of SIAC.<br>• National intelligence services expect little from EU intelligence cooperation. | 1, 3, 5, 6, 7, 19, 31, 37<br><br>4, 12, 13, 24, 30, 34, 44<br><br>2, 11, 16, 22, 24, 25, 28, 34, 35, 36, 40, 43 |
| | Capabilities | | | | |
| | Legitimacy | | | | |
| | Maturity | | | | |
| | Political project | | | | |
| | Mandate | | | | |
| | Sovereignty | Added value | | | |
| | NATO | | | | |
| | Returns | | | | |

# Appendix D: Density of Interview References

In this research, respondents are cited when they specifically address the topic in the section at hand. Displayed quotations are used on themes where respondents were particularly curt, pronounced or emotional. In addition, they serve the purpose to illustrate or underline the argument made in the section. The table below shows a systematic overview of all these references. This is not a full representation of all the data provided by respondents, as it does not include indirect references and contextual data. It does provide an insight in the parts considered most important by respondents themselves, as these references are the result of a semi-structured interview and an open conversation. Respondents were left in the lead as much as possible. In addition, it is a case in point for the spread of attention between these topics. It provides an additional internal check on the credibility of this study.

The divergence in references appears a normal effect of the open method of data collection. Apart from some outliers, few references per respondent deviate more than 50 percent from the average number of references. Most travel within a 25 percent range. Excluding the outliers does little to change the average. The density of referencing does not show a personal bias on the part of the researcher. For example, some respondents will be more predisposed to firm statements than others, making it tempting to have used more of their input. Moreover, it could have been the case that interviews done in Dutch were the dominant one in the thesis. Yet, no such patterns were noted. It appears that later interviews produced slightly more direct references than early ones. This might be caused by the researcher getting more into doing the interviews and the increasing availability of reference material and potential follow-up questions.

Overall, the references show an even spread of responsiveness on the topics addressed in the various chapters and sections of this study. Within each of the issues addressed there is a wide coverage by respondents. The conversational style grants room for a respondent to touch some topics and ignore others. Therefore, the references are an indicator for the relative importance respondents attach to certain topics; an insight in what is on their minds. Of course, their backgrounds and current roles and positions play an important role in the issues they stress. Nevertheless, at the same time they are the subject-matter experts on those same topics. This makes it all the more interesting to note the increasing response on ability, integrity and benevolence respectively.

| | 6.2 | 6.3 | 6.4 | 7.2 | 7.3 | 7.4 | 8.2 | 8.3 | 8.4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interview 1 | 5 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 25 |
| Interview 2 | 2 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 2 | 12 | 5 | 1 | 28 |
| Interview 3 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 7 | 8 | 2 | 35 |
| Interview 4 | 3 | 0 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 1 | 15 |
| Interview 5 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 1 | 0 | 13 |
| Interview 6 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 18 |
| Interview 7 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 0 | 14 | 4 | 4 | 34 |
| Interview 8 | 5 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 17 |
| Interview 9 | 2 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 7 | 29 |
| Interview 10 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 6 | 9 | 34 |
| Interview 11 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 6 | 2 | 11 | 31 |
| Interview 12 | 6 | 2 | 1 | 7 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 6 | 3 | 31 |
| Interview 13 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 8 | 1 | 7 | 19 |
| Interview 14 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 2 | 6 | 5 | 31 |
| Interview 15 | 1 | 4 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 7 | 8 | 12 | 46 |
| Interview 16 | 3 | 5 | 5 | 3 | 5 | 11 | 1 | 5 | 4 | 42 |
| Interview 17 | 4 | 6 | 5 | 4 | 3 | 2 | 10 | 5 | 3 | 42 |
| Interview 18 | 6 | 2 | 4 | 8 | 4 | 12 | 4 | 3 | 15 | 57 |
| Interview 19 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 41 |
| Interview 20 | 1 | 0 | 6 | 5 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 2 | 8 | 35 |
| Interview 21 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 | 0 | 1 | 3 | 16 |
| Interview 22 | 3 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 8 | 37 |
| Interview 23 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 34 |
| Interview 24 | 3 | 3 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 1 | 5 | 8 | 7 | 37 |
| Interview 25 | 2 | 4 | 3 | 3 | 8 | 3 | 8 | 5 | 8 | 44 |
| Interview 26 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 2 | 5 | 10 | 10 | 40 |
| Interview 27 | 1 | 9 | 2 | 3 | 2 | 0 | 7 | 4 | 5 | 33 |
| Interview 28 | 2 | 1 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 5 | 2 | 6 | 10 | 32 |
| Interview 29 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 4 | 8 | 2 | 3 | 12 | 3 | 37 |
| Interview 30 | 1 | 2 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 10 | 8 | 11 | 58 |
| Interview 31 | 4 | 4 | 1 | 10 | 5 | 0 | 5 | 3 | 3 | 35 |
| Interview 32 | 1 | 2 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 3 | 8 | 34 |
| Interview 33 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 6 | 1 | 6 | 22 |
| Interview 34 | 3 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 5 | 33 |
| Interview 35 | 4 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 13 | 27 |

| | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Interview 36 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 11 | 6 | 13 | 17 | 12 | 81 |
| Interview 37 | 0 | 3 | 3 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 10 | 12 | 40 |
| Interview 38 | 4 | 1 | 2 | 7 | 8 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 9 | 38 |
| Interview 39 | 0 | 2 | 1 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 6 | 5 | 11 | 29 |
| Interview 40 | 1 | 4 | 1 | 3 | 10 | 7 | 3 | 9 | 7 | 45 |
| Interview 41 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 3 | 4 | 2 | 1 | 3 | 7 | 22 |
| Interview 42 | 1 | 3 | 0 | 5 | 9 | 2 | 8 | 9 | 3 | 40 |
| Interview 43 | 3 | 3 | 3 | 2 | 8 | 2 | 6 | 6 | 6 | 39 |
| Interview 44 | 6 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 10 | 4 | 5 | 5 | 4 | 46 |
| *Total per Section* | 107 | 100 | 90 | 179 | 176 | 140 | 233 | 219 | 279 | |
| *Total per Chapter* | 297 | | | 504 | | | 730 | | | |
| *Total* | 1531 | | | | | | | | | |

# Appendix E: Aggregated Perceptions of Ability in EU Intelligence Cooperation

| | |
|---|---|
| **International** | On the macro level, perceptions of ability contribute *negatively* (-) to social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system.<br><br>The European intelligence network is a sparse policy network where functional divides pose an obstacle to familiarization and reputation building:<br><br>• The complexity of the network is considerable in terms of size and diversity;<br>• It consists of multiple, dispersed clusters for operational cooperation;<br>• The EU is only one of these clusters and not the most important one. |
| **Interorganizational** | On the meso level, perceptions of ability contribute *negatively* (-) to social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system.<br><br>EU intelligence organizations suffer from low familiarity and poor reputations that are partly caused by operational ignorance:<br><br>• SIAC is not a central actor in a network dominated by intelligence services;<br>• Inadequate connections and procedures lead to weak connectivity with these services;<br>• The EU intelligence organizations' reputation is generally low, although somewhat better among those with experience inside. |
| **Interpersonal** | On the micro level, perceptions of ability contribute *positively* (+) to social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system.<br><br>Individuals play an invaluable role as boundary-spanners between intelligence services and EU intelligence organizations:<br><br>• SNEs know the network and are able to navigate the complexity within it;<br>• They are the every-day connect and use their dual position to broker information;<br>• They use their personal reputations to make up for organizational deficits. |
| | In sum, perceptions of ability contribute **negatively** (-) to social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation. |

# Appendix F: Aggregated Perceptions of Integrity in EU Intelligence Cooperation

| | |
|---|---|
| **International** | On the macro level, perceptions of integrity contribute *negatively* (-) to social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system.<br><br>There is no universal frame for cultural recognition within the entire system. An overarching occupational culture of intelligence exists that bolsters trust, but one that seems at odds with the organizational culture of the EU. In addition, respondents still perceive many national differences between them that hamper cooperation:<br><br>• It appears that the idea of a common European culture is of limited eloquence. Differences in national culture hamper cooperation;<br>• The intelligence profession holds a recognizable and acceptable culture in its own right that helps cooperation among its practitioners;<br>• The organizational culture of the EU and the occupational culture of intelligence seem at odds in terms of principles. It causes distrust. |
| **Inter-organizational** | On the meso level, perceptions of integrity have a *moderate* (+/-) effect on social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system.<br><br>There is no common code of conduct within SIAC that all know or abide to. Although there is some professional recognition among intelligence analysts, this is mitigated by a fragmented organization divided by subcultures:<br><br>• Feelings of shared professionalism grant a collectivity to EU intelligence practitioners that the EU organization cannot. SIAC has a higher cultural compatibility with intelligence than the wider EU;<br>• SNEs in SIAC are seen to abide to a baseline of professional intelligence principles, but there is a cultural rift with EU civil servants working there;<br>• Within SIAC a variety of intelligence subfamilies come together, causing tension. |
| **Interpersonal** | On the micro level, perceptions of integrity contribute *positively* (+) to social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system.<br><br>The setting of EU intelligence organizations provides an excellent opportunity for a subjective test of behavioral integrity, allowing individuals entrance into the in-group based on personal qualities:<br><br>• The setting of EU intelligence provides a closed locus for opening up in which SNEs can show their experience and expertise;<br>• Individual integrity can be proven beyond the first step of stereotyping. Trust can be developed from small tokens to larger gestures;<br>• Opportunities for (informal) behavioral testing can provide reasonable expectations on the spot. |
| | In sum, perceptions of integrity have a **moderate** (+/-) effect on social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation. |

# Appendix G: Aggregated Perceptions of Benevolence in EU Intelligence Cooperation

| | |
|---|---|
| **International** | On the macro level, perceptions of benevolence have a *moderate* (+/-) effect on social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system.<br><br>A selfish solidarity exists in the EU intelligence system. Member State interests still dominate. Yet, growing prominence of the EU as a security actor, as well as outside threat, stir lenience towards partners. In addition, there is a growing sense of a collective identity that helps cooperation:<br><br>• Transnational solidarity in itself seems to mean little to practitioners in EU intelligence. National interests still dictate much of the ideas about (lack of) benevolence;<br>• Nevertheless, more and more EU solidarity is becoming a matter of enlightened self-interest for members; a necessity in the face of growing institutions and outside threat;<br>• The EU intelligence community is growing towards each other and has been doing so for the last decades already. Feelings of encapsulated interest give way to a sense of mutual belonging and benevolent burden-sharing. |
| **Inter-organizational** | On the meso level, perceptions of benevolence contribute *positively* (+) to social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system<br><br>On a working level, especially on the inside of the organization, intelligence practitioners are teaming up to get a job done that in their eyes only they can do:<br><br>• Feelings of interdependency create increasing commitment to EU intelligence. Practitioners consider the EU structures hardly the place for competition and rivalry;<br>• Cohesion between civilian INTCEN and military EUMS INT is still limited, but respondents combine a - relatively abstract - notion of a common EU identity, with a shared narrative of what it means to do intelligence in this setting;<br>• A team spirit exists that bolsters benevolence, especially within the production teams. |
| **Interpersonal** | On the micro level, perceptions of benevolence contribute *positively* (+) to social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system.<br><br>In the EU intelligence system, affective relations are very much personal relations. Emotional bonding between intelligence officers in the EU helps them in their task accomplishment. It opens the floor to sociability, likeability and fairness in interaction.<br><br>• Affective relations on the individual level are seen to ease cooperation practices considerably. When it comes to social events and socializing, the multilateral format is seen as an advantage;<br>• Personal attraction determines the success of relations, and with it part of EU intelligence cooperation. Likeability serves as an instrument for the selection of partners and the intensity of interaction;<br>• A degree of secrecy barely hampers the cooperative mindset between SNEs. Paradoxically, practitioners consider openness and the expectation of fairness key components of successful cooperation in the EU. |
| | In sum, perceptions of integrity have a **positive** (+) effect on social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation. |

# Appendix H: Multilevel Trust Perceptions in the EU Intelligence System

*Level*

| | **Ability** (Normative) | **Integrity** (Normative) | **Benevolence** (Affective) | **Aggregate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **International** | On the macro level, perceptions of ability contribute *negatively* (-) to social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system.<br><br>The European intelligence network is a sparse policy network where functional divides pose an obstacle to familiarization and reputation building. | On the macro level, perceptions of integrity contribute *negatively* (-) to social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system.<br><br>An overarching occupational culture of intelligence exists that bolsters trust, but one that is at odds with the organizational culture of the EU. In addition, respondents still perceive many national differences between them that hamper cooperation. | On the macro level, perceptions of benevolence have a *moderate* (+/-) effect on social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system.<br><br>A selfish solidarity exists in the EU intelligence system. Member State interests still dominate. Yet, growing prominence of the EU as a security actor, as well as outside threat, stir lenience towards partners. In addition, there is a growing sense of a collective identity that helps cooperation. | **Negative** (-) influence of trust on cooperation at the international level. |
| **Inter-organizational** | On the meso level, perceptions of ability contribute *negatively* (-) to social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system.<br><br>EU intelligence organizations suffer from low familiarity and poor reputations that are partly caused by operational ignorance. | On the meso level, perceptions of integrity have a *moderate* (+/-) effect on social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system.<br><br>There is no common code of conduct within SIAC that all know or abide to, although there is some professional recognition among intelligence analysts. | On the meso level, perceptions of benevolence contribute *positively* (+) to social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system.<br><br>On a working level, especially on the inside of the organization, intelligence practitioners are teaming up to get a job done that in their eyes only they can do. | **Moderate** (+/-) influence of trust on cooperation at the interorganizational level. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Interpersonal** | On the micro level, perceptions of ability contribute *positively* (+) to social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system.<br><br>Individuals play an invaluable role as boundary-spanners between intelligence services and EU intelligence organizations. | On the micro level, perceptions of integrity contribute *positively* (+) to social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system.<br><br>The setting of EU intelligence organizations provides an excellent opportunity for a subjective test of behavioral integrity, allowing individuals entrance into the in-group based on personal qualities. | On the micro level, perceptions of benevolence contribute *positively* (+) to social relations and trust in the EU intelligence system.<br><br>In the EU intelligence organizations, emotional bonding between intelligence officers in the EU helps them in their task accomplishment. It opens the floor to sociability, likeability and fairness in interaction. | **Positive** (+) influence of trust on cooperation at the interpersonal level. |

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Aggregate | In sum, perceptions of ability contribute *negatively* (-) to social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation.<br><br>• Reputations matter enormously in intelligence cooperation and the reputation of the EU in this respect is poor, in part due to a lack of familiarity.<br>• Lacking, or even distorted, knowledge about partners and the EU in general hampers intelligence cooperation. | In sum, perceptions of integrity have a *moderate* (+/-) effect on social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation.<br><br>• Professional norms and standards are important and intelligence personnel in the EU is regarded as holding largely the same occupational culture.<br>• Limitations in professional recognition of partners from different subcultures still narrow down cooperation. | In sum, perceptions of benevolence have a *positive* (+) effect on social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation.<br><br>• Goodwill is upholding cooperative behavior in the setting of the EU, based on a common cause and common identity. In the absence of a formal obligation, the moral obligation to contribute to some extent replaces considerations of relative gain and enable unequal burden sharing.<br>• The increasing willingness to embrace the interests of other partners in the EU community as their own greatly helps cooperation there. | |

# Summary

# Summary

It is often said that there are no friends in intelligence. Operating in the shadows, intelligence services are designed to deliver decision advantage in a setting of international competition. This perception of rivalry is where the well-known adage of 'Quid pro Quo' in intelligence cooperation comes from. To only give information when there is an assured return, always striving for relative gain versus a 'partner'. To rationally calculate cost and benefit and try to control the exchange as much as possible. This approach severely limits their cooperation. It presents a prisoner's dilemma where there might be some gain, but never absolute or optimal. Services behave like players in a game of poker. Not showing their cards, not blinking an eye, and operating with caution and distrust. In this game, the wins of one automatically lead to the loss of all others.

This thesis shows that this cynical view on present-day international intelligence cooperation is too one-sided, especially in a long-standing multilateral arrangement like the EU. It is largely fed by cliches surrounding intelligence as a practice. Although the mechanism of rational calculations and control definitely plays an important role, it needs to be complemented by another that is based on social relations. An in-depth multi-level analysis of EU intelligence cooperation reveals that these play a far bigger role in international intelligence cooperation than is often assumed. They provide an efficient way to cooperate under circumstances of risk and uncertainty. Professionals are able to cooperate when they know, recognize and value each other, even in the face of competing interests.

In the setting of EU intelligence, the social construct of trust positively influences cooperation, especially through benevolence and on a personal level. More often than expected, it is interaction rather than transaction that determines cooperative behavior. Moreover, contrary to the common view that there are no friends in intelligence, in the setting of EU intelligence cooperation likeability and personal relations downplay feelings of competition and rivalry. Despite low familiarity and poor reputation of the EU in the intelligence network, shared institutions and collective identities in the intelligence community bolster cooperation. From this perspective, if intelligence services were to have any friends, they would be other intelligence services.

International cooperation between intelligence services poses a dilemma. It is an important tool in countering today's complex transnational threats, but cooperation is also a risky business. Intelligence services can never be sure that a partner will reciprocate in kind. Intelligence scholars have been struggling to find the conditions under which international cooperation occurs nevertheless. They often identify trust as one of the foremost conditions to overcome the dilemma. Yet, the notion of trust is seldom conceptualized - let alone

operationalized - in the context of intelligence. This thesis fills this gap. It takes a sociological approach, focusing on the interaction between institutions and individuals, and the way their trust relations construct preferences in (cooperative) behavior. From this perspective, trust is the 'intentional and behavioral suspension of vulnerability by a trustor on the basis of positive expectations of a trustee'. These expectations are built on perceptions of ability, integrity and benevolence. Together they determine the degree of trust between partners.

This study critically examines how social relations and trust influence cooperation within the EU intelligence system. Its practice-approach offers an insider's perspective that has been largely absent in the debate on intelligence cooperation so far. It scrutinizes practitioner's beliefs and perceptions about trust-based cooperation. The thick analysis is based on extensive desk research as well as 47 in-depth interviews with senior intelligence professionals from national services and EU intelligence organizations. It shows that intelligence might be a 'special' field for its extraordinary tasks and mandates, but not for the way known reputations, recognized professional standards and shared traits socially bind intelligence professionals to their community of practice. In this social sense, intelligence services resemble many other organizations in the public and private domains. We may therefore need to somewhat de-exceptionalize their cooperation practices.

The case of the EU intelligence system has proven well-suited to showcase the role of social relations and trust in international intelligence cooperation. On the one hand, it provides a context similar to many other types of cooperation between intelligence services. Despite the absence of special collection capabilities, fusion within the EU's Single Intelligence Analysis Capability (SIAC) resembles intelligence services' tradecraft. In addition, despite the aim of collective action, caution and restraint still dominate the multilateral exchange. On the other hand, there are also marked differences that make it likely for the mechanism of social relations and trust to surface. The arrangement consists of a repeated - even continuous - interaction between a large set of intelligence organizations and personnel. In addition, intelligence in the EU is a rather young concept that is still developing. The prominence of the EU intelligence system is thought to be increasing. In sum, the EU intelligence system provides a setting in which trust is both fostered and put to the test.

Perceptions of ability contribute negatively to social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation. The European intelligence network is a sparse policy network where functional divides pose an obstacle to familiarization and reputation building. For intelligence services, the EU is simply one of many potential clusters for cooperation and by far not the most important one. Reputations matter enormously in intelligence cooperation and the reputation of the EU in this respect is poor, partly due to operational ignorance. Nevertheless, intelligence practitioners working in the EU play an invaluable role as boundary-spanners between national services and EU intelligence organizations.

A more positive picture emerges when looking at perceptions of integrity. These have a moderate effect on social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation. An overarching occupational culture of intelligence exists that bolsters trust, but one that is at odds with the organizational culture of the EU and has conflicting subcultures that limit trust. However, again on the individual level, the setting of EU intelligence organizations provides an excellent opportunity for a subjective test of behavioral norms between intelligence professionals, allowing recognized individuals entrance into the in-group based on personal qualities.

Contrary to expectations based on the cynical view on cooperation that is dominant in the debate, it is perceptions of benevolence that have the most positive effect on social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation. Member State interests still dominate formal exchange. Yet, growing relevance of the EU as a security actor stirs goodwill and lenience among partners. Moreover, there is a growing sense of collective identity that helps cooperation. On a working level, especially inside the organization, intelligence practitioners are teaming up to get a job done that in their eyes only they can do. Emotional bonding helps them to accomplish their task. It opens the floor to sociability, likeability and fairness in interaction.

This research contributes in various ways to the scientific debate in and outside Intelligence Studies. First, it contributes to the body of knowledge on EU intelligence cooperation. It acknowledges the pivotal role of utility in developing EU intelligence, but extends its meaning beyond realist terms. Even more so, it argues that the added value of the EU intelligence arrangement may be misunderstood altogether. Instead of being a lean and mean transaction machine, it rather serves as a meeting place for sustained interaction, social relations and trust-building. Trust facilitates an ongoing process in which actual cooperation precedes formal structures. This conclusion might have implications for the broader debate on European integration as well. When even in intelligence cooperation, the domain least likely to integrate based on considerations of national sovereignty, notions of collective identity and benevolence show to be relevant, then neofunctionalism still holds a promising explanation for EU integration.

Second, it contributes to the body of knowledge on international intelligence cooperation in general by showing that the European intelligence community is above all a community of practice. Its members do not all share the exact same policy goal, but they have similar methods for problem-solving and sense-making. However, in practice, this one community consists of several subcommunities. Indeed, 'intelligence is what intelligence does' and what the members of the intelligence community actually do, varies. This notion urges not to focus only on national differences when addressing intelligence cooperation, but to look at occupational and organizational divides as well. The diversity of intelligence

subcommunities leads to substantial differences that severely limit the potential for convergence and isomorphism noted by other scholars. Differences that, perceived or factual, limit cooperation.

Third, it contributes to the body of knowledge on trust and cooperation. The research goes beyond an objective understanding and underlines that in practice trust is also a relational and gradual concept that travels between knowing and not knowing a partner. In effect, trust in intelligence cooperation serves the same purpose as in many other fields of social behavior. It enables cooperation by achieving reasonable expectations about a partner under conditions of uncertainty and risk. In doing so, trust is not a fully rational or deliberate determinant for intelligence cooperation. Instead of relying solely on formal rules and performance measurement, individual intelligence practitioners use interpretation and inference. They are based on clear conditions that are in turn shaped by the valuation of field-specific factors, like professional norms and standards. Trust thus becomes a subjective tool for the selection of suitable partners. It defines an in-group with which cooperation is preferable from an out-group where this is less the case.

Fourth, it contributes to the body of knowledge on social relations in intelligence by answering the call for a more sociological approach to Intelligence Studies. The research implies that intelligence as a human activity follows the same mechanisms as other forms of social behavior and shows that applying social theories delivers fresh insights in well-known intelligence activities and phenomena. Moreover, emphasizing the explanatory value of social concepts adds to the poststructuralist 'turn to practice' that has already been visible in IR since the start of the millennium, and is more recently beginning to show its worth in respectively Security Studies and Intelligence Studies. It gives way to a multidisciplinary dialog and contributes to a nuanced understanding of intelligence activity.

Finally, this study challenges the split between studies *of* intelligence and studies *for* intelligences. Practical, conceptual and theoretical knowledge are intimately connected. A better understanding of intelligence can also help practitioners. Therefore, some practical considerations on intelligence work are distilled from its conclusions. First, social capital is a type of resource in cooperation. A resource that has a direct link with the depth and breadth of the arrangement and can provide or make up for other capacities and capabilities like information. Second, cooperation between partners with a cultural fit, perhaps even with a similar identity, will be more agreeable, less conflictual, and probably less costly than with others. Including subjective social relations and trust when (e)valuating partnerships will provide a more comprehensive and thus telling insight in the conditions for success. Third, individuals play an invaluable role in intelligence cooperation. They need specific social skillsets that help them in the arrangement at hand. In addition, they need room to maneuver and operate effectively. Strict hierarchy, while important for avoiding risk, can

be suffocating for trust-based intelligence cooperation. Fourth, cooperation within the intelligence community is much easier than crossing its boundaries and reaching out to non-traditional partners. Although many intelligence leaders acknowledge the value of cooperation with scientific institutions and the private sector, a normative divide remains between them, for example regarding secrecy and openness. Trusted travelers are needed to - sometimes literally - cross this divide, connect the two worlds, and navigate obstacles.

# Samenvatting

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Er wordt vaak gezegd dat inlichtingendiensten geen vrienden hebben. Ze opereren in de schaduw en zijn bedoeld om een informatievoorsprong te verkrijgen in een context van internationale concurrentie. Deze perceptie van rivaliteit is waar het bekende adagium 'Quid pro Quo' in inlichtingensamenwerking vandaan komt. Informatie wordt alleen gedeeld wanneer er een gegarandeerde tegenprestatie is en relatief voordeel ten opzichte van een 'partner' blijft altijd het onderliggend doel. Kosten en baten worden rationeel berekend en men probeert de uitwisseling zoveel mogelijk te beheersen. Deze benadering beperkt de samenwerking. Het creëert een prisoners-dilemma waarbij er misschien wat winst is, maar nooit absoluut of optimaal. Diensten gedragen zich als spelers in een pokerspel. Ze laten hun kaarten niet zien, knipperen niet met hun ogen en opereren met voorzichtigheid en wantrouwen. In dit spel leidt de winst van de één automatisch tot het verlies van alle anderen.

Deze thesis toont aan dat zo'n cynische kijk op hedendaagse internationale inlichtingensamenwerking te eenzijdig is, vooral in een langdurige multilaterale setting zoals de EU. Het wordt grotendeels gevoed door clichés rondom de inlichtingenpraktijk. Hoewel het mechanisme van rationele berekening en controle zeker een belangrijke rol speelt, moet dit worden aangevuld met een ander mechanisme dat gebaseerd is op sociale relaties. Een diepgaande analyse op meerdere niveaus van de EU-inlichtingensamenwerking laat zien dat deze relaties een veel grotere rol spelen in internationale inlichtingensamenwerking dan vaak wordt aangenomen. Ze bieden een efficiënte manier om samen te werken onder omstandigheden van risico en onzekerheid. Professionals kunnen samenwerken wanneer ze elkaar kennen, herkennen en waarderen, zelfs in het licht van deels tegenstrijdige belangen.

Binnen de context van EU-inlichtingen heeft het sociale construct van vertrouwen een positieve invloed op samenwerking, vooral door welwillendheid tussen partners en op persoonlijk niveau. Vaker dan verwacht is het interactie, en niet transactie, dat het samenwerkingsgedrag bepaalt. In tegenstelling tot de gangbare opvatting dat er geen vrienden zijn in de inlichtingenwereld, spelen sympathie en persoonlijke relaties in de EU-inlichtingensamenwerking een grote rol bij het verminderen van gevoelens van concurrentie en rivaliteit. Ondanks de lage bekendheid met, en het slechte imago van de EU binnen het inlichtingennetwerk, versterken gedeelde instituties en collectieve identiteiten binnen de inlichtingengemeenschap de samenwerking. Vanuit dit perspectief zouden de vrienden van inlichtingendiensten, als ze die al hebben, andere inlichtingendiensten zijn.

Internationale samenwerking tussen inlichtingendiensten vormt een dilemma. Het is een belangrijk instrument om de complexe transnationale bedreigingen van vandaag de dag tegen te gaan, maar samenwerking brengt ook risico's met zich mee.

Inlichtingendiensten kunnen nooit zeker weten of een partner op de gehoopte wijze zal terugbetalen. Inlichtingenwetenschappers hebben moeite de voorwaarden te vinden waaronder internationale samenwerking toch plaatsvindt. Ze wijzen vaak op vertrouwen als een van de belangrijkste voorwaarden om het dilemma te overwinnen. Toch wordt het begrip vertrouwen zelden geconcretiseerd - laat staan geoperationaliseerd - in de context van inlichtingen. Deze thesis vult die leemte. Het heeft een sociologische benadering die focust op de interactie tussen instituties en individuen, en op hoe relaties voorkeuren in (samenwerkings)gedrag construeren. Vanuit dit perspectief is vertrouwen de 'opzettelijke en gedragsmatige opschorting van kwetsbaarheid door een vertrouwende persoon op basis van positieve verwachtingen van de andere partij'. Deze verwachtingen zijn gebaseerd op percepties van bekwaamheid, integriteit en welwillendheid. Samen bepalen ze de mate van vertrouwen tussen partners.

Deze studie onderzoekt kritisch hoe sociale relaties en vertrouwen samenwerking binnen het EU-inlichtingensysteem beïnvloeden. De praktijkgerichte benadering biedt een insiderperspectief dat tot op heden grotendeels ontbrak in het debat over inlichtingensamenwerking. Het analyseert de overtuigingen en percepties van mensen uit de inlichtingenpraktijk over op vertrouwen gebaseerde samenwerking. De analyse is gebaseerd op uitgebreid literatuuronderzoek en 47 diepgaande interviews met senior inlichtingenprofessionals van nationale diensten en EU-inlichtingenorganisaties. Het toont aan dat inlichtingen misschien een 'bijzonder' veld is vanwege de uitzonderlijke taken en mandaten, maar niet vanwege de manier waarop bekende reputaties, erkende professionele normen, en gedeelde eigenschappen professionals sociaal binden aan hun praktijkgemeenschap. In deze sociale zin lijken inlichtingendiensten op veel andere organisaties in zowel de publieke als de private sector. We moeten hun samenwerkingspraktijken daarom misschien minder uitzonderlijk wegzetten.

De casus van het EU-inlichtingensysteem is goed geschikt om de rol van sociale relaties en vertrouwen in internationale inlichtingensamenwerking te belichten. Enerzijds biedt het een context die vergelijkbaar is met vele andere vormen van samenwerking tussen inlichtingendiensten. Ondanks het ontbreken van speciale verzamelcapaciteiten, lijkt de fusie binnen de Single Intelligence Analysis Capability (SIAC) van de EU op de werkwijze van inlichtingendiensten. Bovendien blijven voorzichtigheid en terughoudendheid de multilaterale uitwisseling domineren, ondanks het doel van collectieve actie. Anderzijds zijn er ook duidelijke verschillen die het waarschijnlijk maken dat het mechanisme van sociale relaties en vertrouwen naar voren komt. Het systeem behelst herhaalde - zelfs continue - interactie tussen een groot aantal inlichtingenorganisaties en personeel. Bovendien is inlichtingen binnen de EU een relatief jong begrip dat nog in ontwikkeling is. De rol en positie van EU-inlichtingen lijkt daarbij sterker te worden. Kortom, het EU-inlichtingensysteem biedt een omgeving waarin vertrouwen zowel wordt bevorderd als op de proef gesteld.

Percepties van bekwaamheid dragen negatief bij aan sociale relaties en vertrouwen binnen de EU-inlichtingensamenwerking. Het Europese inlichtingennetwerk is een verspreid netwerk, waar functionele verdeeldheid een obstakel vormt voor bekendheid en reputatieopbouw. Voor inlichtingendiensten is de EU slechts een van de vele potentiële samenwerkingsclusters, en verre van de belangrijkste. Reputaties zijn van groot belang in inlichtingensamenwerking, en de reputatie van de EU in dit opzicht is slecht, deels door operationele afwezigheid. Desondanks spelen inlichtingenprofessionals die in de EU werken een onschatbare rol als brug tussen nationale diensten en EU-inlichtingenorganisaties.

Een positiever beeld doemt op wanneer wordt gekeken naar percepties van integriteit. Deze hebben een matig effect op sociale relaties en vertrouwen binnen de EU-inlichtingensamenwerking. Er bestaat een overkoepelende beroepscultuur binnen de inlichtingendiensten die vertrouwen versterkt, maar die in strijd is met de organisatiecultuur van de EU. Er bestaan bovendien conflicterende subculturen die het vertrouwen beperken. Echter, op individueel niveau biedt de setting van EU-inlichtingenorganisaties een uitstekende mogelijkheid voor subjectieve toetsing van gedragsnormen tussen inlichtingenprofessionals, waardoor erkende individuen op basis van persoonlijke kwaliteiten toegang krijgen tot de 'in-group'.

In tegenstelling tot verwachtingen die zijn gebaseerd op de cynische kijk op samenwerking die het debat domineert, hebben percepties van welwillendheid de meest positieve invloed op sociale relaties en vertrouwen binnen de EU-inlichtingensamenwerking. De belangen van de lidstaten domineren nog steeds de formele uitwisseling, maar de toenemende relevantie van de EU als veiligheidsactor stimuleert de bereidwilligheid en flexibiliteit onder partners. Bovendien groeit het gevoel van collectieve identiteit, wat de samenwerking bevordert. Op werkvloer-niveau, vooral binnen de organisatie, bundelen inlichtingenprofessionals hun krachten om een taak te volbrengen waarvan zij vinden dat alleen zij die kunnen doen. Emotionele binding helpt hen deze taak te volbrengen. Dit opent de deur voor sociale gevoelens, sympathie en oprechtheid in de samenwerking.

Dit onderzoek draagt op verschillende manieren bij aan het wetenschappelijke debat binnen en buiten de inlichtingenstudies. Ten eerste draagt het bij aan de kennis over de EU-inlichtingensamenwerking. Het erkent de cruciale rol van gepercipieerd nut in de ontwikkeling van EU-inlichtingen, maar breidt de betekenis ervan uit buiten de gangbare realistische termen. Het betoogt zelfs dat de toegevoegde waarde van de EU-inlichtingensysteem misschien geheel verkeerd wordt begrepen. In plaats van een transactionele marktplaats, functioneert het eerder als een ontmoetingsplaats voor voortdurende interactie, sociale relaties en de ontwikkeling van vertrouwen. Dit vertrouwen faciliteert een continu proces waarin daadwerkelijke samenwerking vooruitloopt op formele structuren. Deze conclusie kan ook gevolgen hebben voor het bredere debat over Europese integratie. Wanneer zelfs

binnen de inlichtingensamenwerking, het domein dat het minst waarschijnlijk integreert op basis van overwegingen van nationale soevereiniteit, noties van collectieve identiteit en welwillendheid relevant blijken te zijn, dan biedt het neofunctionalisme nog steeds een veelbelovende verklaring voor Europese integratie.

Ten tweede draagt het onderzoek bij aan de kennis over internationale inlichtingensamenwerking in het algemeen door aan te tonen dat de Europese inlichtingengemeenschap vooral een *community of practice* is. De leden delen niet allemaal precies hetzelfde beleidsdoel, maar hebben vergelijkbare methoden voor probleemoplossing en betekenisgeving. In praktijk bestaat deze ene gemeenschap wel uit meerdere subgemeenschappen. Inlichtingen is inderdaad wat inlichtingendiensten doen, maar wat de leden van de inlichtingengemeenschap precies doen, varieert. Deze kanttekening dwingt niet alleen te focussen op nationale verschillen bij het bestuderen van inlichtingensamenwerking, maar ook te kijken naar professionele en organisatorische scheidslijnen. De diversiteit van inlichtingen-subgemeenschappen leidt tot aanzienlijke verschillen, gepercipieerd zowel als feitelijk. Verschillen die de mogelijkheid tot de door andere wetenschappers veronderstelde convergentie en isomorfisme ernstig in de weg staan en de samenwerking beperken.

Ten derde draagt het bij aan de kennis over vertrouwen en samenwerking. Het onderzoek gaat verder dan een objectieve benadering en benadrukt dat vertrouwen in de praktijk ook een relationeel en geleidelijk concept is, dat beweegt tussen het kennen en niet kennen van een partner. In feite dient vertrouwen in inlichtingensamenwerking daarbij hetzelfde doel als in vele andere gebieden van sociaal gedrag. Het maakt samenwerking mogelijk door redelijke verwachtingen over een partner te creëren onder omstandigheden van onzekerheid en risico. Vertrouwen is hierbij geen volledig rationele of bewuste factor in de samenwerking. In plaats van uitsluitend te kiezen op basis van formele regels en prestatiemetingen, maken individuele inlichtingenprofessionals gebruik van interpretatie en deductie. Deze zijn gebaseerd op duidelijke condities en vakspecifieke factoren, zoals professionele normen en standaarden. Vertrouwen wordt daarmee een subjectief hulpmiddel voor de selectie van geschikte partners. Het scheidt een 'in-group' waarmee samenwerking de voorkeur geniet, van een 'out-group' waarmee dit minder het geval is.

Ten vierde draagt het onderzoek bij aan de kennis over rol van sociale relaties in inlichtingen. Het geeft invulling aan de oproep tot een meer sociologische benadering van inlichtingenstudies. Het onderzoek suggereert dat inlichtingen, als menselijke activiteit, dezelfde mechanismen volgt als andere vormen van sociaal gedrag en toont aan dat het toepassen van sociale theorieën nieuwe inzichten oplevert in bekende inlichtingenactiviteiten en -fenomenen. Dit onderstreept het belang van de poststructuralistische *'turn to practice'* die sinds het begin van het millennium zichtbaar is in internationale betrekkingen (IB), en meer

recent ook zijn waarde toont in respectievelijk veiligheidsstudies en inlichtingenstudies. Dit opent de deur naar een multidisciplinaire dialoog en draagt bij aan een meer genuanceerd begrip van inlichtingen.

Tot slot weigert deze studie mee te gaan in de vaak gepropageerde scheiding tussen studies *over* inlichtingen en studies *voor* inlichtingen. Praktische, conceptuele en theoretische kennis zijn nauw met elkaar verbonden. Een beter begrip van inlichtingen kan ook professionals helpen. Daarom worden enkele praktische overwegingen over inlichtingenwerk uit de conclusies gedestilleerd. Ten eerste is sociaal kapitaal een hulpbron in samenwerking. Een hulpbron die direct verband houdt met de diepte en reikwijdte van de samenwerking en andere capaciteiten, zoals informatie, kan aanvullen of compenseren. Ten tweede zal samenwerking tussen partners met een culturele overeenkomst, wellicht zelfs met een vergelijkbare identiteit, gemakkelijker, minder conflictueus en waarschijnlijk minder kostbaar zijn dan met andere partners. Het betrekken van subjectieve sociale relaties en vertrouwen bij de evaluatie van partnerschappen zal een volledige en dus betekenisvoller inzicht bieden in de voorwaarden voor succes. Ten derde spelen individuen een onschatbare rol in inlichtingensamenwerking. Ze hebben specifieke sociale vaardigheden nodig die hen helpen in de desbetreffende samenwerking. Daarnaast hebben ze ruimte nodig om te manoeuvreren en effectief te opereren. Strikte hiërarchie, hoewel belangrijk voor het vermijden van risico's, kan verstikkend werken voor op vertrouwen gebaseerde inlichtingensamenwerking. Ten vierde is samenwerking binnen de inlichtingengemeenschap veel gemakkelijker dan het overschrijden van haar grenzen en het bereiken van niet-traditionele partners. Hoewel veel inlichtingenleiders de waarde van samenwerking met wetenschappelijke instellingen en de private sector erkennen, blijft er een normatief verschil bestaan tussen deze partijen, bijvoorbeeld met betrekking tot geheimhouding en openheid. Vertrouwde tussenpersonen zijn nodig om - soms letterlijk - de afstand te overbruggen, de twee werelden met elkaar te verbinden en obstakels weg te nemen.

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# Acknowledgements

Sometimes, things turn out for the best and good things seem to come your way by chance or sheer luck. For me, doing this PhD was one of these things. Having been an army officer for many years and a civil servant afterwards, I was not the most obvious PhD candidate to begin with. As the head of a policy branch within the Netherlands MoD, I - and many others - considered myself a practitioner rather than an academic. The logical next step would have been to attain a more general position of management, not indulge in years of in-depth deliberation on an academic niche topic within the domain of security. Moreover, within this practitioner context doing a PhD was not commonplace. Nor was it equally valued by all around me. I remember vividly a colleague who, after hearing of my plans, displayed a dislike, questioned the relevance of a PhD and thought it mainly a distraction from doing some 'genuine' work. It must be said that this same colleague 'was happy for me nevertheless'.

Happy I certainly was. Although perhaps not the most obvious step, doing a PhD had long been on my wish list. In previous years I had already explored the possibility of doing one alongside my job, only to arrive at the conclusion that at that stage in my career and private life it would have been a bit too much. Nevertheless, the idea never left me. It resonated well with my curiosity on the 'why and how' of things, my taste for reasoning and research, and my fondness of critical thinking. So, when the opportunity arrived, I was mentally well prepared to do a PhD. Or so I thought. In the end, of course, it was a challenge. There are some people I owe a big debt of gratitude. Without them I would not have been able to do this PhD, let alone finish it.

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Besides friends and family, there are numerous others who have displayed (scientific) interest in my project and helped it proceed. I can only mention some of them by name here. On the

academic side, there were my fellow PhDs and colleagues at the Faculty of Military Sciences at the Netherlands Defence Academy (NLDA) as well as at the Institute of Security and Global Affairs (ISGA) at Leiden University. Discussions and conversations with them challenged my thought process and sharpened my analysis. Perhaps equally important, social talks added much joy to what is in many respects a very solitary project. Without them my time at the Faculty would definitely have been less insightful and less fun than it was now. Raïssa, Bram, Tess, David, Paul, Peter and Martijn thank you for helping me enjoy. In this respect, I want to especially mention my fellow PhD Ivor Wiltenburg who deceased in the period we worked together at the NLDA. It has been a pleasure and privilege to do part of our PhD journey together. I will miss his somewhat cynical humor and ability to put things into perspective. On the practitioner side, I want to thank those who enabled me to do a PhD in the first place. I have very much appreciated the luxury of doing it full-time and acknowledge that this is not a chance all get. Although not being able to name them in person, a special thanks goes to those practitioners who helped me acquire the interviews within the EU intelligence organizations and national services. The sponsorship of these insiders was invaluable for my research. In addition, I am grateful to all the intelligence officers who dared step out and help me with their insights. As I describe in my last chapter, doing interviews is still out of the ordinary in the closed world of intelligence. It requires some courage to openly express your professional beliefs and perceptions. Without them, I would definitely not have been able to do the research presented in this volume.

Last, but definitely not least, I want to mention my wife Natasja who has been a source of unwavering support. She has been on my side during this project as she has been for the best part of my life. She downplayed her effort by mockingly remarking that this period has been a blessing rather than a burden, as I was at home more often than I ever was during my previous jobs. We both know that this is only half the story. Home I was, but often working. A PhD never really stops; finishing chapters in the weekends, pondering about your analysis in the shower and stepping out of bed at night to take notes. And let's not forget the times I was frustrated and grumpy for not making progress or hitting the mark. My sons Lars and Koen probably remember the times I was late for dinner despite working at home, as well as the moments I 'politely urged' them to leave the study immediately or face the consequences. Even more than dealing with my moods, Natasja downplayed setbacks and kept faith in my ability to finish the project even more than I did. Only when I arrived at that point myself, acknowledging that it was worth defending, I knew I had come to the end of it. A PhD, like any scientific publication, is never finished, not even when it is done. It has been a remarkable and learning experience. I look forward to taking the next steps in my scientific journey.

# Curriculum Vitae

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Pepijn Tuinier (Utrecht, 08 August 1978) acquired his secondary education at Cals College in Nieuwegein (1990-1996). He then started off his professional career as an army officer. After his initial training as a cadet at the Royal Military Academy (1996-2000), he served as an officer in various positions (2000-2009) including deployments to Bosnia-Hercegovina (SFOR, 2003) and Afghanistan (ISAF, 2008). During the same period and alongside his work in the army he studied political science at Leiden University, acquiring a Master of Arts degree in 2008. His thesis addressed the role of (operational and tactical) military considerations in (strategic) political decision-making on the deployment of Dutch military forces overseas. In 2009 he left the Armed Forces and became a civil servant in the Netherlands Ministry of Defence. He worked as a (senior) policy advisor and manager in the security domain on both the strategic and operational levels. From 2019 to 2024 he was allowed to work on this PhD-thesis while being part to the War Studies Research Centre of the Netherlands Defence Academy. Returning to a policy position afterwards, his latest role is to bolster cooperation between practitioners and academics.

Intelligence scholars have been struggling to find the conditions under which international intelligence cooperation occurs. Most focus on transactional motives and guaranteed returns, the so called 'Quid pro Quo'. At the same time, trust is often mentioned as one of the foremost conditions, yet it has seldom been critically examined in this context. This study fills this gap. Based on a conceptual framework derived from sociology and interorganizational relations, it scrutinizes how social relations and trust influence cooperation practices in the EU intelligence system. The analysis is based on in-depth interviews with senior intelligence professionals from national services and EU intelligence organizations. It concludes that social relations play a far bigger role in international intelligence cooperation than is often assumed by scholars and practitioners. From a sociological perspective, intelligence services resemble many other organizations in the public and private domains, requiring a de-exceptionalization of their cooperation practices. In the setting of EU intelligence, it is not so much transaction, but interaction that fosters cooperative behavior. Contrary to the common view that there are no friends in intelligence, likeability and personal relations downplay feelings of rivalry. Despite low prominence and poor reputation in the European intelligence network, shared institutions and collective identities in the intelligence community provide the EU with a simple and efficient basis for trust-based cooperation. This triggers the question how social relations and trust play out in other arrangements for intelligence cooperation.

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