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

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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

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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

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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:

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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

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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

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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

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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.

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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

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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]

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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]

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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

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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]

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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

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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]

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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.

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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

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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:

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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

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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:

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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

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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

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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

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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.

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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]

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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]

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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:

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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

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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).