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

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Chapter 9

Chapter 9: Conclusion

Conclusion, Contributions and Reflection

9.1. Conclusion

'If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences.'[1]

9.1.1. Main Conclusion

This study set out to answer how social relations and trust influence cooperation in EU intelligence. Its aim is to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of intelligence cooperation; providing an insight that goes beyond the traditional explanations of cooperative behavior based on calculations and control. To do so, it has unraveled the concept of trust, identified by many scholars as one of the most important conditions for cooperation. A concept that has seldom been operationalized in the context of intelligence. It distinguished ability, integrity and benevolence as conditions for trust and unraveled these in underlying factors. Based on this conceptual framework, the perceptions and beliefs about trust and cooperation of 47 respondents were collected and analyzed. All of these respondents were directly preoccupied with EU intelligence on a senior level, either in national capitals or in the EU intelligence institutions. Together, they shed light on the practice of international intelligence cooperation, opening up the black box a bit further.

From a conceptual point of view, this research concludes that social relations play a far bigger role in international intelligence cooperation than is often assumed. The mechanism of social relations and trust provides a valuable complement to traditional explanations of rational calculations and control. It is both calculations *and* relations that determine preferences in cooperative behavior. In turn, social relations and trust operate in tandem. Although the degree of trust empowers social relations in cooperation, it is also social dynamics that are highly influential for trust to evolve. Together they can form a ratchet for cooperative behavior. Looking at the conditions for trust in more detail provides a nuanced picture of this interplay. The conceptual framework designed for this study successfully complements the well-known conditions for trust established by Mayer et al. with underlying factors coming from publications on interorganizational relations and sociology. It couples these factors to relational dynamics and allows them to be scrutinized in tandem. For all conditions, the factors identified proved valuable windows for a critical examination of social relations and trust in cooperation. At the same time, for all factors their exact meaning

1 Thomas and Swaine Thomas, *The Child in America; Behavioral Problems and Programs*, 572.

and importance proved highly contextual and varied between levels of analysis. In all cases, it meant specifying these factors to be able to address the views expressed by respondents when analyzing the data. Contrary to expectation, it is the affective condition of benevolence rather than the cognitive and normative ones that contributes most to social relations and trust in the setting of the EU intelligence. In addition, for everyday intelligence practice in the EU interpersonal relations are more important than interorganizational and international relations when considering trust. Intelligence work is primarily human work. In this respect, a picture appears of a normal occupational activity in extraordinary circumstances, instead of the other way around. It obliges to somewhat demystify intelligence cooperation as a function of government.

From an empirical point of view, the research concludes that social relations and trust positively influence EU intelligence cooperation through benevolence and on a personal level. They provide reasonable expectations about outcome and vulnerability, compensating for the absence of direct organizational gains and a formal obligation to share. Conditions for trust provide an efficient way to cooperate under the circumstances of uncertainty and bounded rationality so prevalent in intelligence cooperation. In the context of EU intelligence cooperation, it is at least as much relations as it is calculations that keep the arrangement going. Practitioners in the EU intelligence organizations know, recognize and value each other as being part of a trusted community, although their cooperation suffers from low familiarity and cultural subdivides. It enables them to contact, connect and bond with their peers in a way that is unseen in interaction with non-intelligence practitioners or among their peers on the outside of the community.

EU intelligence cooperation is more than meets the eye. It is so in three ways. First, this study clearly shows the value of including intangible beliefs and perceptions in examinations of intelligence cooperation. Cooperative behavior in and towards the EU is driven not only by objective facts, but by subjective perceptions and beliefs as well. Intelligence practitioners are not robots. The valuation of a partner is built on interpretations. In this sense, intelligence cooperation is based not so much on what things are, but on how they appear to those inside the arrangement. Or, as stated in the opening citation of this chapter, 'if men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences'. Second, there is literally more to EU intelligence cooperation than meets the eye. By probing into interaction at the interorganizational and interpersonal levels, a reality surfaces that remains mostly hidden from outside views. Insiders paint a picture that is more nuanced than the geopolitical perspective of state behavior generally put forward by scholars and practitioners. Even more so, the views of people working inside the EU intelligence organizations differ substantially from those working outside the structures. Direct contact highly influences perceptions about the self and others that influence cooperation. This brings forward a third point. EU intelligence cooperation is more than meets the eye in a proverbial sense

as well. On the outside intelligence practitioners deliberately uphold their trusted aura of secrecy and mendacity, while on the inside they favor much more openness and honesty. The mechanism of social relations and trust is an instrument for distinguishing the in-group, in which interaction is valued, from the out-group towards which members show closedness and restraint.

The rational idea that there are no friends in intelligence (just interests), should be complemented with the social notion that if intelligence services are to have any friends, they are other intelligence services. Contrary to expectation, sociability, likeability and fairness are much valued on the inside of the EU intelligence community, albeit in a manner that is specific to the trade and that might differ from other occupations. Recognized professional norms and standards lead to an in-group of intelligence peers who are seen as equals and with whom it is easier to cooperate, while at the same time cooperation with other professions is troublesome. For organizations and persons working in this realm, showing to be part of the community of practice, and continuing to do so, is vital for their acceptance and task performance. Based on a systematic and elaborate examination of the trust conditions on multiple levels, this research shows a nuanced picture of EU intelligence cooperation. The results are summarized Appendix H. They are discussed in detail in subsection 9.1.2 below.

9.1.2. Sub-conclusions

On the relation between social relations, trust and cooperative behavior in EU intelligence cooperation

To answer the main question of this research, several sub-questions were identified. When operationalizing these questions, they were tied to relations in the conceptual framework. The first relation is that between social relations, trust and cooperative behavior. Examining this relation answers how the mechanism of social relations relates to that of rational calculations and shows what the role of trust in this mechanism is. This research concludes that overall social relations contribute positively to cooperative behavior in EU intelligence and that trust between partners empowers this mechanism. In addition, it shows that this mechanism exists next to, and is intermingled with, the mechanism of rational calculations. Trust provides an efficient way to cooperate under circumstances of uncertainty and bounded rationality.

Cooperative behavior differs from altruism. It is based on the expectation that a partner will reciprocate the lenience shown to him, or at least will not overly exploit the vulnerability attached. In intelligence, the traditional perspective on the construction of these expectations is a rational one. Scholars emphasize the weighing of interests by participants, preferences based on deliberate choice and an overview of alternatives. In addition, they

stress the competitive nature of the trade; a feature that seems to forbid an exchange in the absence of a direct or assured gain. The adage of 'Quid pro Quo' is the incarnation of this belief. Likewise, practitioners have a hard time decoupling from this realist presumption. Their starting point is that intelligence serves a specific - selfish - goal and that for this reason cooperative behavior is a direct result of the returns anticipated. Even when confronted with cooperation in the face of lacking returns, and experiencing that the seemingly harsh world of intelligence in practice many times is not that black-and-white, they stick to explaining their behavior in economic terms of cost and benefit. These practitioners acknowledge that trust is an important factor in their dealings, one of the most important even, but they still tend to define it in terms of control. They struggle with the conditions under which cooperation can occur in the absence of information and safeguards.

From a sociological perspective a helpful logic appears. Instead of focusing on the drivers for starting a cooperation in the first place, it offers an insight in the mechanisms behind relational conditions for exchange. Although conceding that intelligence is no hobby, and that cooperation serves a purpose in this activity, it allows to step beyond the transaction and include the interaction in the process. This is especially helpful in the case of an existing frame like the EU, where cooperation is ongoing and the assessment whether or not to cooperate is somewhat outdated or at least not that prominent. There definitely is a relationship between social relations and cooperative behavior in the EU. Relations enable a wide range of cooperative behavior and activity, increasing the breadth and depth of intelligence cooperation there. The extent to which this is the case, is dependent on the amount of trust that is present in the relation. This is not mere personal intuition or a 'gut-feeling'. It is based on cognitive, normative as well as affective conditions related to the group in which the interaction occurs. Despite the prominent role of individuals in all aspects of the study, it is a sociological as much as a psychological concept. Respondents clearly link their judgment of a partner's trustworthiness to group membership.

On the relationship between trust and ability in EU intelligence cooperation

When answering what the conditions for trust are and how these materialize in the context of EU intelligence, ability was the first identified. When looking at the relationship between trust and ability, this research concludes that on aggregate perceptions of ability contribute negatively to social relations and trust in the case of EU intelligence cooperation. Low perceptions of ability in EU intelligence are holding back reasonable expectations about behavior in the European intelligence network, limiting cooperation. Reputations matter enormously in intelligence cooperation and the reputation of the EU in this respect is poor, in part due to a lack of familiarity.

On an international level, EU intelligence only holds a peripheral position in the European intelligence network that is dominated by the intelligence services of the Member States. Although it is widely recognized that intelligence cooperation in Europe increases the ability to cope with security threats, for intelligence practitioners the role and position of the EU in this is unclear and questionable. They perceive the EU intelligence organizations to barely contribute to European security and instead focus on operational clusters of cooperation found in special clubs and forums like the CTG. At the same time, on an interorganizational level the familiarity with EU intelligence is generally low. Many national practitioners do not really know the EU intelligence organizations or the needs coming from them. Contrary to for example NATO, the intelligence routines and procedures connecting the capitals to Brussels are weak. In many respects, the poor reputation of the EU on the outside appears to be based mainly on a general sentiment. This is somewhat different for those intelligence officers working on the inside. On the interpersonal level, they experience first-hand the potential value that EU intelligence can have for European security and appreciate it more. The role of these individual intelligence officers working in the EU, and their trusted personal networks, are perceived invaluable for navigating the sizable and diverse European intelligence network, signaling endorsed reputations, and brokering information. Nevertheless, even among them skepticism about the workings of the EU still reins and their knowledge of the wider EU organization is limited. Lacking, or even distorted, knowledge about partners and the EU in general hampers intelligence cooperation.

On the relationship between trust and integrity in EU intelligence cooperation

When answering what the conditions for trust are and how these materialize in the context of EU intelligence, integrity was the second identified. When looking at the relationship between trust and integrity, this research concludes that on aggregate perceptions of integrity have a moderate effect on social relations and trust in the case of EU intelligence cooperation. Perceptions of integrity in EU intelligence are helping reasonable expectations about behavior in the European intelligence occupation, but this effect is being downplayed by organizational and occupational subdivides. Professional norms and standards are important and intelligence personnel in the EU is regarded as holding largely the same occupational culture as the intelligence officers working with the national services.

On an international level, numerous national differences are identified and there is little idea of a common cultural understanding that can bind European countries together. That is different for the intelligence occupation. Clearly, an occupational culture of intelligence exists that evokes recognition among practitioners, creating trust among them and easing cooperation. Nevertheless, the organizational culture of the EU is seen to be at odds with this occupational culture. Towards the EU in general, intelligence officers display great distrust.

At an organizational level though, the occupational similarities between intelligence services and their personnel are felt to set the frame for shared informal rules about how the intelligence world works, or ought to work. As the majority of intelligence officers working in EUMS INT and INTCEN come from these services, or have a background in them, this frame is extended into the EU intelligence structures. In addition, on an interpersonal level the EU provides an excellent setting for behavioral testing of informal mores and for gaining deep insight in a partners norms and standards. It offers an opportunity for building as well as maintaining trust. Once a member of the in-group there, considerable interaction is possible. Nevertheless, trust is reserved for those being 'real' or 'genuine' intelligence, excluding everyone without a - similar - intelligence service background and distrusting the EU organization as a whole. Especially the latter is thought to inhabit a different world than intelligence does. Limitations in professional recognition between partners representing different subcultures of intelligence, let alone those coming from different occupations all together, still narrow down cooperation.

On the relationship between trust and benevolence in EU intelligence cooperation

When answering what the conditions for trust are and how these materialize in the context of EU intelligence, benevolence was the third identified. When looking at the relationship between trust and benevolence, this research concludes that on aggregate perceptions of benevolence contribute positively to social relations and trust in the case of EU intelligence cooperation. High perceptions of benevolence in EU intelligence are helping favorable expectations of partners' behavior in the European intelligence community, bolstering cooperation. Contrary to expectations from traditional explanations of international intelligence cooperation, this affective antecedent for trust plays a major role in the practice of EU intelligence cooperation at all levels. Goodwill is upholding cooperative behavior in the setting of the EU, based on a common cause and common identity. In the absence of a formal obligation, the moral responsibility to contribute to some extent replaces considerations of relative gain and enables unequal burden sharing. Interestingly, it is a largely neorealist perception that is seen to create increasing leverage for institutionalist and constructivist feelings of commitment and cohesion.

On an international level, perceptions of a common external threat accelerate the already growing prominence of the EU in the realm of defence and security. On an organizational level, perceived rivalry in intelligence support by other EU organizations necessitates intelligence services to take SIAC more seriously. As a result, the EU intelligence community is growing towards each other, redefining the meaning of self-interest and solidarity. A growing sense of common cause and common identity is seen to lead the behavior of intelligence practitioners in the EU, both in national capitals and in EU organizations. The willingness to embrace

the interests of other partners in the EU community as their own greatly helps cooperation there. Inside the EU organizations this is reflected by commitment, cohesion and team spirit. In addition, on an interpersonal level emotional bonding between intelligence officers in the EU helps them in their task accomplishment. It opens the floor to an important role for sociability, likeability and fairness in the relations and interaction there. At the same time, this puts intelligence officers in a difficult position; a mental balancing act. The paradigm of secrecy and restraint, so helpful in shielding the intelligence community from the outside world and maintaining a collective identity, is counternatural to the openness and outreach that is crucial for cooperation on the inside of that same community. By abstracting these conclusions from actual events to patterns of cooperation, concepts and theories, it becomes possible to evaluate their broader meaning. It distinguishes contributions to the bodies of knowledge on actual EU intelligence cooperation, patterns of international intelligence cooperation, the concept of trust in intelligence cooperation, and theories of social relations in intelligence.

9.2. Discussion

9.2.1. Contribution to the Body of Knowledge on EU Intelligence Cooperation

What does this research tell us about actual events the EU intelligence system? It shows that it is a social affair and implies that traditional functionalist arguments explaining the workings of the arrangement need to be complemented by interactionist ones. This study underlines the observations made by Müller-Wille that utility is a pivotal factor in EU intelligence cooperation.[2] Using a purely functionalist argument, Müller-Wille concludes that EU intelligence will only be taken seriously in cooperation when it delivers something that cannot be - easily - obtained elsewhere. Indeed, from this research it stems that goal-orientation is a pervasive force in determining cooperative behavior in intelligence. In the interviews, even when discussing social ties and interaction between individuals, considerations of need and added value are prominent. Nevertheless, this research also shows that these utility considerations offer little guidance to EU intelligence practitioners in their day-to-day cooperation activities.

On an international level, it is unclear how national intelligence can - and may - be best utilized to support EU ambitions. There is a mismatch between political ambition and intelligence practice. The espoused political will to be strategically autonomous in the domain of defence and security has not led to a further transfer of national competencies to the EU. Given the importance of national sovereignty in the intelligence domain, and

2 Müller-Wille, "EU Intelligence Co-Operation. A Critical Analysis"; Müller-Wille, "For Our Eyes Only Shaping an Intelligence Community within the EU."

the political sensitivity that accompanies it, it seems unlikely that integration will exceed incremental buttressing of existing coordination mechanisms, a point well made by Bossong and Seyfried.[3] In addition, on an organizational level, there is a confusing and - in terms of reasonable expectations distorting - unclarity about what utility means in the specific situation of the EU intelligence system. As it is, the added value of intelligence cooperation *for* the EU organization is measured by how much it delivers to intelligence services *in* the EU sphere. Contradictory perceptions of what the arrangement should deliver, and to whom, are a source of distrust and can cripple the process of exchange or reform. Given the existing reputational concerns about security, even when EU intelligence is able to tap into its valuable resource of non-traditional sources of information, it will still not be an equal part of the intelligence community soon.

Personal relations to some extent mitigate the distrust prevalent on the organizational and political level. In the face of international and organizational ambiguity, it is interaction between individuals within the system that shapes EU intelligence cooperation in practice and makes it work. While EU intelligence is the odd one out among European intelligence services, and it has structural flaws that hamper exchange, its multilateral arrangement provides an excellent social setting for intelligence officers in SIAC to cooperate. Based on their interaction they develop a practice of their own to make it work, something also noted by Ben Jaffel in the case of cooperation in counterterrorism.[4] The network enables them to engage in an expanding circle of trust that supports reasonable expectations about behavior even in the absence of direct utility considerations, as identified by Buskens and others.[5] First, the EU arrangement is a meeting place for getting acquainted and building knowledge. The everyday interaction in these structures is a source of direct and indirect reputational information that is unrivalled by many other forms of intelligence cooperation. Moreover, it gives partners an opportunity to test professional norms and standards. Second, the EU arrangement is a place for repeated interaction, casting the shadow of the future upon the current exchange. Even without a powerful guardian present, as is the case in EU intelligence system, knowing a partner, and knowing that he will be there next time again, fosters the reasonable expectation that he will not defect as this will probably be a costly move. In addition, repeated interaction opens the possibility of gradually expanding the level of accepted vulnerability from small tokens of cooperation willingness to more substantial interaction. Third, the EU arrangement adds a long-term commonality to the exchange that supersedes short-term differences. Commitment and cohesion are based

3 Bossong, "Intelligence Support for EU Security Policy"; Seyfried, "Potentials and Limits of Intelligence Cooperation at EU Level."

4 Ben Jaffel, "Britain's European Connection in Counter-Terrorism Intelligence Cooperation"; Ben Jaffel, Anglo-European Intelligence Cooperation : Britain in Europe, Europe in Britain.

5 Buskens, Corten, and Raub, "Social Networks"; Rathbun, *Trust in International Cooperation*; Ferrin, Bligh, and Kohles, "It Takes Two to Tango"; Axelrod, *The Evolution of Cooperation*; Ring and van de Ven, "Developmental Processes of Cooperative Interorganizational Relations."

on a shared narrative in which the interest of the other becomes identical to one's own. In turn, intelligence officers in the EU intelligence organizations are able to act as bridges and boundary spanners to the outside world.

From this perspective, the utility of the EU intelligence arrangement may be misunderstood altogether. Instead of being a lean and mean transaction machine, it rather is a system for sustained interaction. It provides the mindset for a 'somewhat forgiving tit-for-tat strategy' enabling cooperation in the face of remaining competition and asymmetry between partners.[6] When looking at long-standing multilateral and plurilateral arrangements, it is striking how resilient they are in the face of considerable inequality in resources and irrespective of their - sometimes - considerable size. In a broader sense, this also contributes to our understanding of European integration, although not the primary aim of this study which focusses on intelligence. Nevertheless, its conclusions show that neofunctionalism still holds a promising explanation for continued integration in the EU. Regardless of whether or not a form of federal unity will evolve, it appears that increasing interdependence at the policy level pushes in the direction of integration.[7] Even in intelligence and security, the domain least likely to integrate based on considerations of national sovereignty, the notions of collective identity and benevolence have shown to be relevant ones, bolstering cooperative behavior. Indeed, integration in the intelligence community might be further than expected based on structures alone.[8] Working level interaction is driving a process in which the building of formal institutions will be much slower than actual cooperation.[9]

9.2.2. Contribution to the Body of Knowledge on International Intelligence Cooperation

What does this research tell us about the pattern of cooperation in European intelligence? It implies that it is about relations as well as calculations. Yet, it also shows that these relations mainly follow practice. Inter-agency interaction in Europe is enabled by professional practices as much as by structures. When analyzing EU intelligence, it becomes apparent that focusing only on formal institutions and technical connections does not do justice to the pattern of interaction. Tellingly, even Walsh, a proponent of organizational design solutions to the cooperation dilemma and a firm advocate of hierarchy and monitoring, comes to the conclusion that formal institutions are not enough to explain EU intelligence cooperation.[10] This research shows that centralizing these formal structures will have limited effect, as it disregards the informal reality of social institutions in international

6 Axelrod, *The Complexity of Cooperation; Agent-Based Models of Competition and Collaboration*.

7 Hooghe and Marks, "Grand Theories of European Integration in the Twenty-First Century," 1114–15.

8 Davis Cross, "The Limits of Epistemic Communities."

9 Kuhn, "Grand Theories of European Integration Revisited," 1221.

10 Walsh, "Intelligence-Sharing in the European Union."

intelligence cooperation. It can even be counterproductive for cooperation as it opposes the preferred way of working in the intelligence community. This conclusion follows the idea of social embeddedness first introduced by Granovetter (1985).[11] He poses that purposive action like cooperation cannot be understood fully in isolation, but only in the context of the concrete and ongoing systems of social relations in which it occurs. Scholars have set out to determine the nature of social structure surrounding EU intelligence and its consequences for cooperation activities. Given the centrality of knowledge circulation and sensemaking noted by scholars like Hoffmann et al.[12], and the intensity of interaction and relations in specific subsets of the community, there is some justification in depicting the social fabric of the intelligence community as an epistemic one; a knowledge network able to influence policy coordination.[13] Yet, as Davis Cross and Gruszczak rightfully note when analyzing EU intelligence, the epistemic intelligence community there is still 'limited' or 'distorted'.[14] This study agrees that various parts of the intelligence community still stand far apart in terms of their exact policy goals, severely limiting the potential for convergence and isomorphism in international intelligence cooperation noted by scholars like Svendsen.[15] The diversity of intelligence subcommunities means that there is no shared idea on what cooperative behavior and associated concepts of competition and rivalry mean. This is especially felt in arrangements like EU intelligence where these subcommunities meet and are asked to collaborate.

The European intelligence community is above all a community of practice, a concept related to social learning envisioned by Wenger.[16] Its members do not all share the exact same policy goal, but they have similar methods for problem-solving and sense-making. The preferred practices of restraint, pragmatism and informality span the community. Moreover, members of the community are committed to the same domain and they share a professional competence that distinguishes them from others. This research reaffirms what Bigo depicts as a 'transnational guild', a cross-border professional brotherhood of intelligence that is based on expertise and experience.[17] It is in their every-day activity that intelligence practitioners develop and reaffirm their know-how and establish relations. The notable master-apprentice relation in learning and behavioral testing of unknown peers underlines the practicality of individual admittance into the community. On an organizational level, there is an ongoing contestation about the organizations entitled to perform intelligence functions. It is indeed,

11 Granovetter, "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness."

12 Haas, "Introduction: Epistemic Communities and International Policy Coordination"; Biermann, "The Role of International Bureaucracies."

13 Hoffmann, Chalati, and Dogan, "Rethinking Intelligence Practices and Processes"; Hoffmann, "Circulation, Not Cooperation."

14 Davis Cross, "The Limits of Epistemic Communities"; Davis Cross, "A European Transgovernmental Intelligence Network and the Role of IntCen"; Gruszczak, *Intelligence Security in the European Union*.

15 Svendsen, "The Globalization of Intelligence Since 9/11"; Svendsen, *The Professionalization of Intelligence Cooperation*.

16 Wenger, Communities of Practice : Learning, Meaning, and Identity.

17 Bigo, "Sociology of Transnational Guilds."

as Stout and Warner state, that intelligence is what intelligence agencies do.[18] Yet, what the members of the intelligence community actually 'do' varies. Although there are recurring - and recognizable - patterns of behavior, the diversity of intelligence organizations and their functions make that in practice there are many subcommunities to consider. Cooperation between them, most notably between military and civilian intelligence, and between intelligence and security, is apparently a tense activity. This research shows that in so far practitioners experience conflicting loyalties, a concept introduced into the debate on international intelligence cooperation by Boatner[19], in the EU setting these are not so much nationality-driven but based on occupational and organizational divides. In this respect, EU intelligence can even be considered a community of practice in its own right. Its specific activity of fusing intelligence for EU decision makers, the particular (bureaucratic and political) circumstances under which it operates, and the close interaction between different subcommunities make that its actual practice to some extent stands apart from the wider intelligence community.

9.2.3. Contribution to the Body of Knowledge on Trust in Intelligence Cooperation

What does this research tell us about the concept of trust in intelligence cooperation? It implies that trust-based relations enable cooperation by achieving reasonable expectations about a partner's behavior under conditions of uncertainty and risk. Trust in intelligence essentially serves the same purpose as in many other fields of social behavior. It is a tool for the selection of suitable partners. It defines an in-group with which cooperation is preferable from an out-group where this is less the case. Many publications have already mentioned trust as one of the, or most, important discriminatory condition(s) for successful intelligence cooperation. Few however have examined how. Most seem to assume that it is based on careful calculation of expected outcomes only. This study disagrees. It shows by repetition the intimate two-way link between the micro-level of the individual, the meso-level of groups and organizations, and the macro-level of systems. An interplay that is mostly known from the sociologist Coleman, putting subjective interpretation and valuation at the heart of trusting relations.[20]

Trust is not a fully rational or deliberate determinant for intelligence cooperation. Nor is trusting behavior senseless or ignorant of outcomes. In practice, it is something in between resembling the role of trust described by Möllering.[21] This research shows that in the process

18 Stout and Warner, "Intelligence Is as Intelligence Does."

19 Boatner, "Sharing and Using Intelligence in International Organizations: Some Guidelines."

20 Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory*; Coleman, "Microfoundations and Macro Social Behavior."

21 Möllering, "Understanding Trust from the Perspective of Sociological Neoinstitutionalism"; Möllering, "The Nature of Trust: From Georg Simmel to a Theory of Expectation, Interpretation and Suspension."

of in- and exclusion of partners, instead of relying solely on formal rules and performance measurement, individual intelligence practitioners use subjective interpretation and valuation. Evaluating the role of trust clearly shows that intelligence cooperation follows logics of appropriateness and practicality that complement the logic of consequences. Practitioners show certain behavior not only because it is instrumental, but also because they believe they are supposed to, and because they simply believe that this is how things are done based on unarticulated practical knowledge.[22] Maintaining that intelligence practitioners try to be as rational as possible and the exchange needs to deliver them a gain, the interplay between their social institutions and every-day reality is what defines the manifestation of cooperative behavior, as put forward by Buskens and Raub.[23]

The conceptual framework of trustworthiness by Mayer and Schultz[24] has proven a valuable starting point for research into the more intangible dynamics of organizational trust in intelligence cooperation. This study enriched this framework by successfully operationalizing it for use in an empirical research and it did so in a way not previously seen in other studies on trust. With its relational approach, the refined conceptual framework contributes not only to studies into intelligence cooperation, but to wider studies of trust as well where it can well be applied. When looking at the scholarly debate on trust, this specific research adds three general notions. First, the concept of trust only holds explanatory value when applied to specific cases and specific relations. In intelligence, the interpretation and valuation (meaning) of underlying concepts like secrecy varies from other fields. Contrary to other occupations, secrecy does not form the main barrier for trust-based cooperation within the community. This is mostly an outsider's view. Paradoxically, on the inside of the intelligence community considerable openness exists. Second, the research suggests a conceptual distinction between distrust and mistrust. The first can - as Schoorman and others do[25] - be seen as the absence of trust in a specific situation, while the latter refers to a whole different concept. Mistrust refers to a general sense of unease, or awareness of risk. It means that mistrust and trust can co-exist, and even do so independently. Moreover, from the specific practice of intelligence cooperation it becomes clear that the first can even bolster the latter. A degree of mendacity, restraint and caution fosters occupational recognition; it is not only acceptable, it is reasonably expected. Third, conceptually trust should be separated from the seemingly similar term faith. As Simmel already noted in 1906, trust - or as he calls it 'confidence' - is a relational and a gradual concept travelling between knowing and not knowing a partner. In his words, the possession of full knowledge does away with the

22 Schulz, "Logic of Consequences and Logic of Appropriateness"; Adler and Pouliot, "International Practices"; Pouliot, "The Logic of Practicality."

23 Buskens and Raub, "3. Rational Choice Research on Social Dilemmas."

24 Schoorman, Mayer, and Davis, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust"; Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, "An Integrative Model of Organizational Trust."

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

need of trusting, while complete absence of knowledge makes trust impossible.[26] The use of stereotyping and generalized expectations of an individual based on his group or institution - as shown in this research - is not to be confused with a trustor's trait-like propensity to trust and this should be excluded from the conceptual framework. Trust, however shallow, is based on some form of (fore)knowledge and does not exist apart from the social relation at hand.

9.2.4. Contribution to Body the of Knowledge on Social Relations in Intelligence

What does this research tell us about theories of social relations in intelligence? It shows that applying social theories in IS delivers fresh insights in well-known activities and phenomena. It implies that intelligence as a human activity follows the same mechanisms as other forms of social behavior. This study into EU intelligence cooperation answers the call by scholars like Nolan who advocate a more sociological approach to Intelligence Studies.[27] Moreover, it illustrates the shortcomings of positivist approaches that only take into account the observable facts. Not only are facts hard to observe in intelligence - which is a valid practical but poor theoretical argument -, but any linear black-and-white explanation disregards the complexity of its social reality. To more comprehensively explain the dynamics of intelligence, sociological theory offers insightful perspectives. In many respects intelligence services resemble other organizations, and intelligence practitioners act as normal human beings. It is the specific practices that make the difference. Emphasizing the explanatory value of social practices fits in the poststructuralist turn to practice already visible in IR from the start of the millennium, and with more recent momentum beginning to do the same in respectively Security Studies and IS.[28]

In terms of sociological perspective, this research picks up where Fägersten (2010) left off when explaining international intelligence cooperation.[29] Like this study, Fägersten's work is one of the few pieces with a pluralist model that emphasizes the constraining and enabling effects of institutions, rather that the drivers for cooperation. He identifies trust as one of the most important of those conditions. Yet, he shows aware that his rational historical approach to institutionalism prohibits him from stepping very far beyond formal aspects of utility, time and dependence.[30] This study adds another branch of new institutionalism to IS; sociological institutionalism. Using this more constructivist perspective, it shows how

26 Georg Simmel, "The Sociology of Secrecy and of Secret Societies."

27 Nolan, "A Sociological Approach to Intelligence Studies."

28 Græger, "European Security as Practice"; Ben Jaffel, Anglo-European Intelligence Cooperation : Britain in Europe, Europe in Britain.

29 Fägersten, "European Intelligence Cooperation," 2014; Fägersten, *Sharing Secrets*.

30 March and Olsen, "The Institutional Dynamics of International Political Orders"; March and Olsen, *The Logic of Appropriateness*.

social networks, institutions and identities create meaning for intelligence practitioners engaged in cooperation. This is about the deeper layers of social structure; it concerns beliefs, assumptions and values.

Utilizing theories of social relations in intelligence studies gives way to the multidisciplinary dialog as advocated by Marrin.[31] It contributes to a nuanced understanding of intelligence activity. On the one hand, applying insights from established theories in sociology helps theorizing on intelligence. On the other hand, insights from IS contribute to the ongoing debates in other disciplines. When addressing cooperation, this study used concepts from social network theory, social institutionalism and social identity theory to gain insight in the relational dynamics in intelligence. By using these perspectives, it unveils that social capital might be as important for successful intelligence support as economic capital is.[32]

Looking at social capital in the intelligence community from a network perspective shows that relations at the micro-level can provide important weak ties in an otherwise dispersed landscape. This research contributes to the ongoing debate on social networks in cooperation by providing additional evidence for evolving cooperation when combining reputations in a network with partner choice.[33] Looking at social capital in the intelligence community from an institutional perspective shows that despite the many differences, shared occupational norms create legitimacy across organizations. Given the mimetic and normative pressures for isomorphism first noted by DiMaggio and Powell (1983)[34], increased contact between intelligence services will likely lead to more convergence even in the absence of a coercive force. Looking at social capital in the intelligence community from an identity perspective shows there is considerable overlap in what members believe about who they are and what they stand for. This research underlines dynamics known from the similarity-attraction paradigm as put forward by Tajfel and Turner.[35] It also contributes to the ongoing debate on freeriding in public goods by providing additional proof for the claim that valuing membership of a collective increases the tolerance for lower payoffs than achieved when acting alone.[36]

31 Marrin, "Evaluating Intelligence Theories."

32 Nahapiet, "The Role of Social Capital in Inter-organizational Relationships."

33 Corten, Buskens, and Rosenkranz, "Cooperation, Reputation Effects, and Network Dynamics: Experimental Evidence."

34 DiMaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited."

35 Tajfel and Turner, "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict."

36 Abraham, Lorek, and Prosch, "Social Norms and Commitments in Cooperatives – Experimental Evidence."

9.3. Reflection

9.3.1. General Reflection

A systematic literature review resulted in identifying the research gap and advocating new approaches and concepts to reach a better understanding of international intelligence cooperation. Nevertheless, one has to remain critical about the role a sociological perspective can have within such an endeavor and about the risk of focusing on the research gap too much. The systematic way this research was conducted and the sociological perspective it advocates, lead to two related general reflections.

First, the use of 'avenues' to systematically further the debate runs the risk of obscuring the more holistic nature of international intelligence cooperation. Categorizing the debate in levels and phases of analysis is very helpful in visualizing blind spots and inviting fresh approaches and concepts. Nevertheless, in reality, international intelligence cooperation is a complex and dynamic web of relations at different levels, always having some degree of mutual influence and sometimes even flowing counter to each other. One should be aware that explaining international intelligence cooperation in a given context will always involve characteristics on all levels and the findings reached should ultimately be viewed in conjunction. For example, interorganizational intelligence cooperation between NATO and EU task groups during operations in the Gulf of Aden, does not stand isolated from the international relations between the participating Member States and the way the cooperation was formed.

Second, identifying the benefits a sociological perspective can have for studying international intelligence cooperation is not to dismiss other approaches. The multifaceted nature of intelligence cooperation and its changing and complex environment would make it imprudent to presume that studying it from one viewpoint, at one moment in time would reveal universal understanding. In every phase and at every level of cooperation, cooperative behavior is mediated by a context that is both structural and relational. As a consequence, the approaches appropriate to comprehend this context vary as well. One should be weary of falling into the trap of trying to offer a new approach 'capable of answering all questions'. Given the broad structure offered by the trust concept, this study was able to address a wide range of social dynamics and factors influencing trust. In chapters 6 to 8 a variety of lenses was introduced all adhering to the ideas voiced in the broader framework. Using them did not so much alter that framework, but showed that it needs to be tailored to the specific case to produce a meaningful understanding of empirical results. When bringing this framework to future research, as section 9.4 will propose, one has to bear in mind that a rigid application of exactly the same factors as this study might obscure what in those cases might be very relevant manifestations of the mechanism of social relations and trust.

9.3.2. Reflection on Dependability

Dependability of this research is primarily hampered by limitations in data collection. Data collection in contemporary studies on intelligence is difficult. The sensitivity, and in many cases secrecy, of the case limits the availability of essential datasets. Documents are often classified and respondents are reluctant to open up; that is if the researcher is able to identify them at all. For this research, this was no different. Gaining access to senior experts on multilateral cooperation, both in the national capitals and in the EU, proved a hard and lengthy process. Yet, for examining the beliefs and perceptions on trust and cooperation of the intelligence community itself it was imperative to do so. Ultimately it took one and a half years to find and interview the practitioners that participated in this research. Even under the strict caveats of voluntary participation and anonymity described section 4.5, it was not easy to convince both organizations and respondents to open up. For example, on the organizational level one national intelligence service after due time and repeated requests declined any interview or other form of participation, stating that this would go against their policy of non-cooperation in academic research. This despite their pronounced acknowledgment of the relevance of the topic and their explicit interest in the outcomes of the research at hand. On a personal level, off-the-record one respondent talked quite openly on many aspects of trust in EU intelligence cooperation. Yet, when asked to do the actual interview he closed up, keeping his answers to a minimum, again assuring himself of the approval of his superior and demanding the formal safeguard of textual checks of the interview report. However, these were the ones that took the courtesy to respond or participate. In many cases, no answer to the interview request was received at all.

A deliberate choice was made to limit the number of methods in data collection. Ideally, a survey and participant observation would have been included to complement the information retrieved from interviews and desk research. As discussed in section 4.5, participant observation was ultimately rendered impossible by the COVID pandemic. Yet, as a result of preliminary conversations with intelligence practitioners it was already decided that both these methods were unfeasible if the focus was to be on active intelligence officers and not on the peripheral set of policy officers and diplomats working in the domain of defence and security. It was estimated that including a survey or asking for participant observation would not only have a slim chance of being accepted, it would actually diminish willingness to cooperate due to doubt cast on the professional judgment and empathy of the researcher. Moreover, for the subjective perceptions and beliefs that hold center stage in this research, interviews are regarded as the pivotal source of information, one that can be complemented but not substituted by other sources.

This research is based on a sizeable dataset of interviews with active intelligence officers that is unseen in many studies on intelligence. It is sufficiently exhaustive to answer the

research question at hand. Yet, the caveats agreed upon limit accessibility and exclude use in future research. Ultimately, it was a repeated, multi-angel and - most importantly - sponsored approach that eventually paid off when gathering the interviews. Direct requests to intelligence services and organizations were sent, as well as indirect approaches through known network organizations for academic outreach like the Intelligence College Europe. In the end, it was only with the help of key persons within various intelligence organizations that others found themselves confident enough to participate. These individuals, none of whom I can call by name here, were invaluable as gate keepers for the information needed. Their letters of support, the use of their personal networks and their effort to convince their peers of the value of this study opened doors that would otherwise have remained closed. It led to a slowly but steadily growing group of respondents up to the point of informational saturation. When the last interview was conducted no new angles were discovered and little new factual information retrieved. At that point, a broad range of respondents had participated coming from 15 out of 27 EU Member States and roughly divided in half between national practitioners and EU intelligence officers. That being said, two limitations in the data collection remain that deserve consideration.

First, although respondents with a wide variety of nationalities and backgrounds were found willing to participate, a positive bias towards cooperation could still play a role in the results. As all the interviews were on a voluntary basis, the respondents might have an inclination towards openness and outreach. As a result, the evidence found for a relational approach in intelligence cooperation and the importance of a cooperative mindset might be exaggerated. Nevertheless, the data holds more than sufficient ground to conclude that social relations and trust play a complementary role to rational calculations and control. In addition, there is sufficient ground to believe that opponents of (EU) cooperation have been voicing their opinion too. Participants were not all favorable to the EU or the role of social relations and trust. Moreover, skepticism and nonpartisanship were omnipresent.

Second, the focus on the in-group of intelligence officers with expertise on multilateral intelligence cooperation excluded two groups that are important for in-group/out-group dynamics in EU intelligence cooperation. No interviews were conducted with non-intelligence personnel working in or near the EU intelligence organizations. The cultural divide between the EU and intelligence is fully based on the perceptions of intelligence officers. Although this deprives the research of the perception of the out-group, the perception on the inside is so widespread and pervasive that one side suffices to conclude that it exists and has influence. Moreover, the characteristics of the EU organization attributed to it by these respondents are only meant to depict the reality of this in-group, not to serve as an objective and indefinite truth. In addition, although in the research a divide was made between national practitioners and EU practitioners, in practice these two groups overlap. Many of the interviewees that are considered experts on multilateral intelligence cooperation in their national capitals,

in fact have a background of working in or close to the EU and vice versa. To some extent the observations made with regard to the unfamiliarity and unpopularity of the EU with national practitioners are not based on the perceptions of the interviewees themselves, but on their previous experiences with their peers who have never worked in that multilateral format. Nevertheless, as all respondents have been part of that group for a large part of their professional careers, and still interact with them on a regular basis regarding cooperation, they are considered an authoritative source of information.

9.3.3. Reflection on Confirmability

Confirmability of this research is primarily hampered by limitations in data analysis. In many respects, the research process for this study shows similarities with the topic at hand; trust in cooperation. The relation between researcher and respondent was trust-based, selectively opening doors that would otherwise have remained closed, but also limiting the possibility for others to do the same. To obtain access to invaluable data on the inner workings of intelligence cooperation in the EU, the researcher first had to show his trustworthiness. In a way, this provides additional proof to the conclusions reached. The steps taken to interview practitioners on the inside of national and EU intelligence organizations reflect and illustrate that conditions for trust matter greatly when seeking interaction without having too much to offer in return. First, it was needed to show that the researcher was able to interpret the subject matter in a way that the respondents would feel comfortable with, that he was reasonably expected to behave appropriately when confronted with sensitive material. The introduction by a known sponsor, the seeking of common ground and mutual acquaintances to start of a conversation, and the testing of a basic understanding of intelligence norms and standards, were all part of the 'ritual dance' towards an interview. Like in the object of study, this trust enabled considerable leeway under conditions of uncertainty and risk. It was indeed a case of hard on the outside and (a bit) softer on the inside. Illustrative for this dynamic of trust is that out of the 47 interviewees who were offered scrutiny of their input, only one asked to read the interview notes and one other wanted to know which of his direct quotes were to be used. Nevertheless, there is a downside to gaining privileged access to a restricted setting to do academic research. Several restrictive caveats were agreed upon that limit confirmability of this research. The challenges this poses on the data analysis are relevant not only for this research, but for the study of contemporary intelligence as a whole.

The first challenge is posed by the guaranteed full anonymity of the interviewees, a measure meant to protect the identities of the intelligence officers involved. Outsiders will be unable to verify the information provided directly with these people or check their backgrounds when reevaluating the interviews they gave, as they will be unable to identify the sources or gain access to the interview data. No appendix with the names and functions of the

interviewees is included in this thesis. To safeguard academic accountability an abstracted list of participants, including their country of origin and general position has been presented to the supervisors. For the sake of data coverage and analytical comparison the interviewees were categorized according to 7 broad selection criteria; gender, seniority, country size, duration of EU Membership, multilateral experience, civilian or military background, and national or EU posting. This list was available to the supervisors prior to the defence of this dissertation as well. Nevertheless, to avoid attribution of sources only the distinction between military and civilian, a broad indication of experience, and current posting were used in the dissertation itself.

Second, a moratorium on recording the interviews on-the-spot hampers traceability of information. Due to security regulations no recording devices were allowed into the restricted environment where the majority of the interviews were held. Interviews were mainly conducted on the premises of EUMS INT and INTCEN, or inside the buildings of national services. Logging was done manually, on paper and in real-time. It entailed the risk of missing, watering down, or misinterpreting essential data. To narrow down this risk, the processing of data was done as soon as possible after the interview on the basis of the notes taken during the event. Every interview was put into a report, comprising up to more than 70 hours of interview and compiling up to 60.000 words of reporting. The analysis was done on the basis of these interview reports. Although an effort was made to stick as closely to the spoken text as possible, no verbatim transcript of the interview is available. Again, these interview reports, as well as the raw field notes were available to the supervisors.

The third challenge to data analysis was the need to paraphrase some parts of the interview text. Although not being secret or even confidential, the material obtained could still have been sensitive, for example when read in coherence. Being aware that this could easily lead to a situation of self-censorship, the researcher limited his initial interventions in the text to excluding direct country and service names from the interview reports. Afterwards, a further check for remaining sensitivities was left to two outside readers in respectively the EU and in the Netherlands Defence Intelligence and Security Service. They focused on sensitivities that could still be deducted indirectly from the dissertation. These officials had no mandate or responsibility for obscuring or altering the text. This was left with the researcher himself, although ultimately no such alteration was needed. They had few objections to the initial text, although remarking - in a positive manner - that it was one of the richest academic narratives they had seen on intelligence cooperation and that they read the analysis approvingly. As it was, it was possible to use all material needed directly or by confirming it through other sources. Moreover, as depicted in the previous chapters, much of what some interviewees thought sensitive, was in fact described and analyzed in other studies and policy documents concerning EU intelligence.

A last point to address when discussing confirmability is the position of the researcher. As put forward in chapter 4, this study clearly adapts an approach focused on sensemaking and acknowledges the role of subjective interpretation in establishing meaningful dialogue. This almost constructionist approach requires a knowledgeable researcher that is able to challenge espoused perceptions and beliefs, speaks the language and is seen as a legitimate interlocutor. In addition, given the limitations on recording, the expertise and experience of the researcher need to be sufficient to keep the conversation going while at the same time taking notes. For this study, the researcher was well positioned and able to carry out the research both in terms of access and in terms of knowledgeability. Besides the advantages this has, it also brings the risk of being somehow biased because of positionality. To minimize the negative impact this bias could have had on the conclusions, the analysis was conducted in a very systematic manner. First, there is a clear and traceable path linking the conceptual framework, research protocol, and result sections. Second, the analysis was supported by rigorous coding using qualitative data analysis software designed to deliver comprehensive findings and reach robust conclusions. Third, the preliminary results were debated in internal and external focus groups comprising of both academics and practitioners, for example at (European) International Studies Association (ISA/EISA) conferences, a workshop at Kings College London on Trust in European Intelligence Cooperation, and during seminars organized for the Intelligence College Europe (ICE). There was no collective discrepancy between practitioners and academics during these events, bolstering the claim that the effect of positional bias was minimized in the conclusions reached. Yet, positionality remains a theme for every social scientist in every empirical study. The only way to deal with this, besides using rigorous methodology in processing and analyzing the information, is to be aware of this position.

9.3.4. Reflection on Credibility and Transferability

Credibility and transferability of the conclusions in this research are primarily hampered by limitations imposed by the qualitative research strategy at hand. This study did not arrive at a grand theory of intelligence cooperation. Nor was it meant to. Its critical realist foundations acknowledge the existence of generative mechanisms for behavior that are larger than the persons or situations in which they occur. Nevertheless, it follows a post-positivist approach that attaches little value to all-encompassing truths, and instead uses theories to provide multiple angles on the same objects of research. Theory was mainly used as a basis for constructing a conceptual framework with which the practice of intelligence cooperation could be systematically and thoroughly analyzed. It thereby increases comprehensive understanding of a specific phenomenon. Instead of focusing on theory, this study uses theory to focus on understanding the dynamics of the case at hand, that is social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation. The case study into the contemporary EU practice

provides a level of detailed analysis into this mechanism not found in many other research methods. By means of thick analysis it was possible to let the sources speak as directly as possible and using conceptual inference to attach new or unnoticed meaning to their perceptions and beliefs. In doing so, this research addresses a specific research gap. As a result of the case study, it has become possible to gain a sharpened understanding of the specific - and more importantly subjective - meaning of trust in international intelligence cooperation. Nevertheless, the deliberate focus on specific practice comes at a price.

As a consequence of the research strategy chosen, there is an important notion on credibility to bear in mind for the conclusions of this study. Given the emphasis on practices and the focus of trust as a facilitator, this study provides an insight in the *how* and *why* of cooperative behavior in intelligence. The deviant case study into EU intelligence practice provides valuable insights on the mechanism of social relations and trust in the specific setting of EU intelligence. Nevertheless, it says little about the actual and future outcomes of this process. Apart from the fact that these outcomes are often ambiguous in terms of effect on decision-making and mostly secret in terms of products, they are not the aim of this research. The goal of this research is to observe and explain the workings of social relations and trust, not the success of cooperation. It is about understanding, not about predicting. In addition, despite its abductive reasoning there are limitations to the generalized claim this study can make based on its understanding of the role of social relations and trust in EU intelligence cooperation. First, practice-based research cannot be done in isolation from the context in which this practice appears. In a real-life setting the effect of one particular variable cannot be fully separated from others. Second, a practice-based case study lacks the controls and manipulation options available to experimental research. Contrary to experimental research it is unable to artificially change a variable and monitor its effects. Third, this practice-based case study allows for a deep-dive, but simultaneously excludes the quantity of data necessary for statistical analysis. The sample size simply prevents this. In addition, this research is about the quality of data needed interpreting subjective beliefs and perceptions. During one of the focus groups meant to validate and complement the preliminary results of this study, one practitioner wondered 'how to measure these social relations and trust'. The answer is 'you do not'. This means that it is impossible to arrive at definite causal conclusions. Moreover, statistical correlation is beyond its reach. It is therefore that the conclusions reached in this study are framed in terms of relations, not causations or correlations.

As a consequence of the research strategy there is also an important notion on transferability to bear in mind for the conclusions reached. As shown in chapter 4, a deviant case study like the current one into EU intelligence is often the only way to study rare conditions, because it may be impossible to find samples of these conditions elsewhere. From applying the conceptual framework of trust in the setting of EU intelligence, dynamics have appeared that would otherwise probably have been undetected. Nevertheless, the quality of showcasing or

emphasizing the more impalpable elements of intelligence cooperation can also be a source of criticism. Although in their answers respondents very often refer to similar experiences in other formats for intelligence cooperation, the conclusions of this study cannot be transferred to other cases easily. That is, not in a literal or direct way. The specifics of trust in the context and circumstances of present-day EU intelligence cooperation differ from other existing arrangements or even from the future EU arrangement. Therefore, the particular conclusions of this study cannot be applied one-on-one to these other cases. As shown in section 9.2 above, this is not to say that it is impossible to discuss results and infer more general contributions. Following a line of abductive reasoning, the empirical results from this study were used to return to, and reflect on, the conceptual framework at hand. Applying this framework to diverging practices in other cases will further enhance our general understanding of what is essentially a very particular and ongoing phenomenon.

9.4. Recommendations for Future Research

The limitations on transferability of this study's conclusions automatically lead to a first recommendation for future research. It would be beneficial for our conceptual understanding of the role of social relations and trust in intelligence cooperation to add and compare other cases. These could include variations in type of activity and type of arrangement, but also varying circumstances. It would be highly interesting to see how this influences preferences for cooperative behavior and the way reasonable expectations are formed and met. First, the EU case is primarily about analytical fusion and dissemination of finished products. It would be worthwhile to compare this with arrangements who focus on activities in other parts of the intelligence process like collaboration in technical collection, data processing or coordination of direction management. In the course of this research, it was implied that the type of activity matters for how trust issues play out. Some respondents, being analysts themselves, even referred to a 'collection mindset' when indicating an - in their eyes and for their situation - counterproductive emphasis on closedness and secrecy. At the same time, many indicated that within these intimate 'subcommunities' interaction would be as open and fluent as in any other, using examples like the technical SIGINT arrangements known to them. Taking some of these as case studies for the workings of trust would further enhance our understanding.

Second, the EU case is primarily about multilateral cooperation on behalf of a very diverse and very political organization. It would be worthwhile to compare this with other types of arrangements, for example involving less members or having a more homogeneous lay-out. In the course of this research, respondents often referred to these other types of arrangements when underlining their ideas on trust-based cooperation. The examples most used were NATO, CTG and the Five Eyes. This study infers that it is not so much the

size of these arrangements that matter for cooperation, but - in terms of trust - the overlap in networks, institutions and identities on multiple levels. Yet, none of these formats have been examined using the concept of trust in the way this research did with EU intelligence; a multilevel approach into practices. To begin with, it would be highly interesting to examine the role of trust in that other - more prominent - multilateral arrangement for western intelligence cooperation, namely NATO. The structural comparison with EU intelligence is often made, but so far little has been written on differences and similarities in informal institutions and identities in the two arrangements. Moreover, it would be insightful to see how this influences cooperation between the two, something that this study did not go into either. Another option would be a study of the role of social relations and trust in arrangements in non-western countries. It would be very interesting to see how their variations influence intelligence practices in cooperation. The same applies to national contexts, were the conceptual framework of social relations and trust is applicable as well and provides valuable insights.

Next to these attempts to broaden conceptual understanding of trust in intelligence cooperation by including more types of activities and arrangements, it would also be beneficial to further elaborate on some of the most influential building blocks for trust in intelligence identified in this study. It would be especially worthwhile to dig further into benevolence and especially the role of secrecy. In the course of this research, it became apparent that secrecy is more than just one of the institutional norms in intelligence. Although often mentioned in one breath with security standards, secrecy appeals to identity. It is closely associated with the prevailing business model in the trade; delivering added value through exclusiveness. It has even been suggested that intelligence personnel would not even tell a secret when it is known to the rest of the world. Yet, from a sociological perspective keeping secrets is only half the story. Selectively telling secrets is what gives them added value in cooperation. However beneficial secrecy is as an identity trait for group cohesion, it potentially limits cooperation with the outside world. Examining the role of secrecy in 'non-traditional' cooperation by intelligence services in public-private arrangements and in academic outreach will provide further insight in intelligence as a function of government. It could for example center around disclosure issues, the increasingly public role of many western intelligence services, or in a societal approach to the relation between secrecy and accountability. Although already becoming a more prominent topic within IS, it could draw further insights from a range of publications in public administration and sociology.

Last but not least, it would be beneficial to better understand other conditions for cooperative behavior and their relation with the conditions for trust. This research already showed a connection between relations and calculations, but was unable to dig further into their interplay. For this, it could be worthwhile to first examine how control works in intelligence cooperation. Besides hierarchy, the conditions for control have not been

extensively addressed in IS, for example looking at dependency and loyalty. There are likely to be others. Some of these conditions may overlap, like the conditions for trust do, or their underlying factors may coincide with those for other facilitators of cooperative behavior. Already it became apparent that control and trust can be conceptually, though not practically separated. In particular, there is the topic of power. Although often associated with realist connotations of anarchy and self-interest, as a sociological phenomenon power is part of any social relation. In this study it is noted that trust can generate social capital, and that this in turn can wield power. Yet, hierarchy will also wield a - different form of - power. Unraveling the mechanism of social relations and power in intelligence cooperation in a similar way as this study did with trust, could contribute to an even more comprehensive understanding.

9.5. Considerations for Practice

This study aims to increase the understanding *of* intelligence (cooperation) as a function of government. The gap it addresses is a scientific one, complementing the viable but one-dimensional view on cooperation offered by neorealist and transactional perspectives. It is all the more exciting to end this thesis with some considerations for practice nevertheless. Theories of intelligence and theories for intelligence can go hand in hand. The ontology and epistemology of this research rejects the idea of finding a universal truth or all-encompassing theory. For the same reasons, it also is cautious not to be presumptuous about the possibility of generalizing practical considerations. The diversity of the intelligence community makes it unlikely that these considerations will apply (equally) to all. The closedness of the community makes it equally hard to assess where they are most applicable. That being said, four considerations can be formulated based on the conceptual and empirical conclusions from the study and remarks of the interviewees.

A first practical consideration that comes from the study is that social capital is a type of resource in cooperation. One that can provide or make up for other capacities and capabilities. The place a service holds in the network and the access it provides, may be enough to seek and maintain good relations. Similarly, even when an arrangement does not offer traditional returns, it can be a vehicle for acquiring social capital. The effort needed for upholding social capital and the degree of lenience it provides, will have a direct link with the depth and breadth of the arrangement. Whereas for strategic partners the expectations are highest and so are the cost for relational maintenance, the same will be true with the tolerance for errors. For more pragmatic partnerships keeping a rolodex with telephone numbers will probably be sufficient and not that costly, but expectations must be equally humble.

A second consideration is that cooperation between partners with a cultural fit, perhaps even with a similar identity, will be more agreeable and less conflictual than with others.

In terms of cost and benefit, it might sometimes be better to have a good relation with a moderately-resourced partner, than a mediocre relation with a well-resourced partner. This is much about beliefs and perceptions of the participants in the arrangement, but the conditions for effective social relations and trust are more tangible than is often presumed. They can be pinpointed and evaluated, using a frame such as the one used for this research. On an organizational level, but on a personal level as well. This is very much about subjective interpretation, but so are many other aspects of intelligence work like assessing the reliability of sources. Including social relations and trust when (e)valuating partnerships will provide a more comprehensive and thus telling insight in the conditions for success.

A third and related consideration from this research is that individuals play an invaluable role in intelligence cooperation. This research cannot validate the statement that intelligence is perhaps the most human of all government activity, but personal relations are surely a key element. This means that the persons tasked to do cooperation need specific social skillsets that help them in the arrangement at hand. They need to be taken into account when selecting someone for a post in a cooperative arrangement. It also means that to operate effectively these individuals need room to maneuver. Trust in intelligence cooperation begins with trust in people. Given the norms of informality and pragmatism, and because trust is built and transmitted on this level, intelligence officers need some discretion in interpreting what to share, when and with whom. Strict hierarchy, however important for avoiding risk, can be suffocating for trust-based intelligence cooperation. Moreover, the idea that friendly relations and likeability must be considered unprofessional not only puts intelligence officers in a difficult position, it also limits the possibilities of cooperation.

That brings a last and final consideration stemming from this thesis. The notion that cooperation within the intelligence community is much easier than crossing the boundaries and reaching out to non-traditional partners. The first to come to mind is the academic-practitioner divide. As shown when discussing data collection for this research, it has been a struggle to obtain enough cooperation to get an insight in practitioners' trust perceptions. Many researchers face the same struggle, despite the clear relevance of their research topics. Although many intelligence leaders acknowledge the value cooperation with scientific institutions can bring, and the necessity to do so, it is also a balancing act between secrecy and openness. Opening up too much and putting this secrecy at peril could even harm the legitimacy they hold with traditional partners and pose a problem with regard to legality both in terms of mandate and accountability. The cooperation dilemma reappears. Besides signing Memoranda of Understanding with universities implementing all kinds of formal safeguards, breaking this dilemma could involve establishing trust-based relations. People trust each other most when they know, recognize and value each other. Bringing the communities together is a positive first step. Setting up programs for PhDs, opening archives to researchers and organizing thematic seminars or courses could be a second. Based on

this research, it is evident that in doing so a group of trustworthy individuals is needed that traverse the boundaries between the two worlds.