Review of The Handbook of European Intelligence Cultures


The growth of intelligence studies in the Western world is a reality, not only in the Anglo-Saxon world, but also in continental Europe where scholars seek a broader understanding of an increasingly important discipline that is still not very well known, mostly being developed as one specific dimension of security studies. One may consider that times are changing and intelligence is fitting not only into the center of some social sciences, but also into public opinion after its mediatization in the political arena with the Snowden scandal, due to its “inefficiency” in preventing terrorist attacks in New York, Washington, Bali, Madrid, London, Bombay, Paris, or Berlin and at the same time by allowing a controversial military intervention in Iraq. If these facts were not enough, we may also consider the increasing importance of intelligence in the business world where competitive intelligence plays a major role in helping a company develop a competitive advantage in an increasingly global marketplace full of competition. Thus, there are many reasons why intelligence studies are developing very fast, opening space to create an autonomous discipline much needed in a complex and uncertain world.

Handbook of European Intelligence Cultures is part of the Security and Professional Intelligence Education Series (SPIES) edited by Jan Goldman since 2008 and looks at intelligence through a security perspective, but goes further because it aims to approach intelligence cultures. One of the book’s main ideas is that national intelligence cultures depend on each country’s history and security environment, though are influenced not only by a broader political culture of the country, but also by other countries’ models. Taking into consideration EU member states (except Cyprus, Hungary, Latvia, and Malta) and eight other European countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland, Montenegro, Norway, Serbia, Switzerland, and Ukraine) this book intends to give readers some insight about almost unknown intelligence communities as well as little-known national intelligence agencies. So, it allows the reader to explore both long seen intelligence systems as in the United Kingdom or France and some latecomers such as Montenegro or Eastern European countries. This volume is edited by Bob de Graaf and James M. Nyce; the former with many insightful publications in intelligence studies since the beginning of the last decade and the latter with a very strong path in military intelligence, with Chelsea Locke. Looking at the title, it gives the reader some hints about what he/she is going to find out in this volume, which is a detailed handbook that all intelligence scholars must have on their bookshelves, especially because it

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not only characterizes very efficiently each country's intelligence system, but also refers to existing differences among intelligence cultures inside Europe instead of a common and shared European intelligence culture.

The book is organized as one chapter for each country (32 chapters arranged alphabetically) with an introduction authored by de Graaf and Nyce where the authors let the readers know the purpose of this book and why it is needed in a moment of growing studies in this relatively new field of study. They present the framework of analysis suggested to every country’s contributor to follow, though it is not always strictly followed. Some authors address many of these common topics while others do not, instead applying their own analysis. Though it does not weaken the volume as whole, it presents challenges to the reader due to different approaches followed by the 38 contributors, whether reinforcing a more historical description or a more analytical view based on law or organizational changes. In addition, the authors go through different time periods of analysis in different chapters, which in the end makes sense since the political history of each country is also quite different. Having said that, there is another good and probably unintended contribution from this volume concerning the references. Every contributor uses secondary sources complementing the information they obtained from the agencies' websites or from national laws, which allows further reading and some main references for each country.

There are two main reasons why this book creates an additional value when compared to previous similar attempts like the 2003 volume "Democracy, Law and Security: Internal Security Services in Contemporary Europe," edited by Jean-Paul Brodeur, Peter Gill, and Dennis Töllborg; the two volumes of the "PSI Handbook of Global Security and Intelligence," published in 2008 and edited by Stuart Farson, Peter Gill, Mark Phythian, and Shlomo Shpiro; and the 2013 "Intelligence Elsewhere," edited by Philip H.J. Davies and Kristian Gustafson. The first reason is the enlargement in case studies since this volume explores 32 different countries and focus on each country's intelligence community instead of just a single agency, allowing the reader to understand the full national intelligence system which includes both civil and military intelligence agencies. Secondly is the effort to make a comprehensive and systematic approach using an outlined framework that focuses both on the impact of environmental factors and internal factors from the community or the organization itself, helping the authors to explore a similar path in each chapter and giving the reader some hints to make meaningful comparisons.

The only main criticism is that there is not any conclusion about common and different paths across time and space and if we may be going through a Europeanization of intelligence cultures inside Europe due to the need to share information (both nationally and internationally). Despite the efforts to sum up some big conclusions in the Introduction, it does not go very deep on how different critical junctures as World War II, democratization, the end of the Cold War or
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terrorism, especially after 9/11, led to both similar and different organizational changes. However, it is understandable that the book does not go this way because one of its goals is to allow others to make those comparisons. Therefore, it is a major contribution to political scientists, historians, sociologists, and other academics as well as to intelligence practitioners around the world because it allows them to understand how intelligence is carried out in European countries.

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