ISPSW Strategy Series: Focus on Defense and International Security

Open Source Information – The Missing Dimension of Intelligence

Dr. Peter Roell

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Abstract

In his presentation the author focuses e.g., on the importance of Open Source Information (OSINT) for the Institute for Strategic, Political, Security and Economic Consultancy (ISPSW) Berlin, the Centre for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) Washington DC, the European Union's Intelligence Centre (INTCEN) and, finally, cites three examples underscoring the value of OSINT for the Intelligence Services.

About ISPSW

The Institute for Strategic, Political, Security and Economic Consultancy (ISPSW) is a private institute for research and consultancy. The ISPSW is objective and task oriented, and impartial to party politics.

In an ever more complex international environment of globalized economic processes and worldwide political, ecological, social and cultural change, that bring major opportunities but also risks, decision makers in enterprises and politics depend more than ever before on the advice of highly qualified experts.

ISPSW offers a range of services, including strategic analyses, security consultancy, executive coaching and intercultural competency. ISPSW publications examine a wide range of topics relating to politics, economy, international relations, and security/defence. ISPSW network experts have operated in executive positions, in some cases for decades, and command wide-ranging experience in their respective areas of specialization.

Analysis

Mr. Chairman, Excellencies,
Distinguished Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure and honour to attend – for the first time – this high-ranking Cyber Defence and Network Security UAE (CDANS) Summit in Abu Dhabi. I thus extend my thanks and appreciation to Phelim Rowe and the International Quality and Productivity Center (IQPC) for inviting me to this event.

In view of time constraints, the focus of my presentation is on ISPSW and Open Source Information, CSIS and Open Source Information, the introduction of the European Union's Intelligence Centre and, finally, on three examples that underline the value of OSINT for the Intelligence Services.

ISPSW and Open Source Information

While preparing my presentation, an interview with former NATO Secretary General, Lord Robertson, came to mind; he was asked by the press what NATO would require to meet the challenges of the 21st century regarding security policy. He replied: "Capabilities, capabilities, capabilities", to which I could add: "Intelligence, intelligence, intelligence", including Open Source Information (OSINT).

Allow me to begin with two definitions and by taking a brief glance at our Institute for Strategic, Political, Security and Economic Consultancy (ISPSW) and Open Source Information.

Open Source Information (OSINT) is defined by the U.S. Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) as a broad array of generally available information and sources, including information obtained from the media (newspapers, radio, television etc.), professional and academic records (papers, conferences, professional associations, etc.), and public data (government reports, demographics, hearings, speeches, etc.).

The U.S. Department of Homeland Security defines Intelligence as a product resulting from the collection, processing, integration, analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of available information on foreign countries or areas: Information and knowledge concerning an adversary obtained through observation, investigation, analysis, or understanding.

When founding the ISPSW in January 2006 my objective was to erect a bridge – together with a team of scientists, diplomats, generals/admirals, corporate managers etc. – that would span the academic and the business worlds by offering the kinds of strategic analyses and advice, indispensable to future-oriented decision-makers at the interface of the corporate world and politics. Drawing considerably on Open Source Information we offer lectures, symposia and seminars, executive coaching and intercultural competence.

Our high-calibre team has been supporting the Konrad Adenauer Foundation and its regional partners with the organization of conferences in South Korea, Japan, China, Mongolia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, but also in Brazil and Peru since 2011. In this connection, I am very glad that we have with us today the Chairman of the Political-Military Society (PMG), Colonel (retd.) Ralph Thiele. I also had the pleasure of holding lectures in Ethiopia and in other African States, and have attended numerous international conferences in the United States and, of course, in Europe.

Working in a globalized world necessitates collaboration between capable partners. I thus signed an agreement with the International Relations and Security Network (ISN) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology,

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ETH Zurich, and its, one of the world's leading open access information services for both professionals and students whose work focuses on international relations (IR) and security studies.

Established in 1994, its mission is to facilitate security-related dialogue and cooperation within a trusted network of international relations organisations, professionals and experts, and to provide open-source international relations and security-related tools and materials in accessible forms.

By working with the world's leading think tanks, universities, research institutes, NGOs and international organisations, the ISN at ETH Zurich is able to offer the ISPSW and all other users a truly global selection of views and opinions on the major issues of our day.

Since its founding, the ISPSW has published over 300 analyses via this excellent network and has greatly profited from its digital library which includes in excess of 67,000 documents all of which have been available on the ISN website as of mid-November 2014. Over the foregoing eight years I have also had the great pleasure to cooperate with an editorial team in Zurich, characterised, no less, by its competence, efficiency, and civility.

Last month the ISN at ETH Zurich informed me that between November 3rd to 7th two ISPSW analyses ranked *Most Popular Publications*. The first, written by Maxim Worcester, General Director of German Business Protection (GBP) Berlin, entitled *Putin's Proxy Warfare Strategy*, discusses Russia's increasing use of proxy forces, including private military companies (PMCs) and 'local patriots' to advance its interests abroad. The strategy worked well in the expropriation of Crimea and is seemingly paying dividends in the pro-Russian separatist conflict in Eastern Ukraine. Over 1,300 readers viewed his article.

The second analysis, written by Yossef Bodansky, former Director of the Congressional Task Force on Terrorism and Unconventional Warfare at the U.S. House of Representatives, entitled *The Boko Haram and Nigerian Jihadism*, provides an overview of the territorial group Boko Haram, including its historic background, doctrine, links to other terrorist groups and organizational framework. The paper analyzes some of the more recent activities of Boko Haram both in Nigeria and neighbouring countries, and contemplates the possibility of the group spreading its operations into Western Europe. Over 1,200 readers viewed this article.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I believe that these two analyses constitute valuable examples underscoring the importance of Open Source Information, and encouraging Intelligence Services to dig deeper.

My membership to the following institutions has opened doors to very valuable Open Source Information for ISPSW:

- the Advisory Board of the German Asian-Business Circle (DAW) in Frankfurt;
- the Advisory Board of STRATECON Strategic Consultants International in Munich;
- the Board of the Association of the Friends of the Federal Academy for Security Policy (BAKS) in Berlin;
- the Political-Military Society (PMG) in Berlin;
- the German Association for Asian Studies in Hamburg;
- the International Institute for Strategic Studies in London;
- the Association of European Journalists (VEJ) in Berlin.

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ISPSW will also continue its support of German industry and German companies. Recently, Dr. Yorck Otto, a personal friend, has been appointed President of UMU, the Union of Medium-Sized Companies in Germany, representing app. 70,000 companies in my country. We will be ready to provide our experience in many fields within Germany, Europe and in various other locations throughout the world.

CSIS and Open Source Information

In spring 2006, the Center for Strategic & International Studies (CSIS) in Washington DC invited me to attend a roundtable discussion on the release of its new report *Open Source Information – The Missing Dimension of Intelligence.* Over the past year, the CSIS has been collaborating with a talented advisory group tasked with examining how to successfully include "external" expertise and information in the wider counterterrorism campaign. Project leaders interviewed over 170 non-governmental specialists from numerous disciplines, as well as current and former intelligence, law enforcement and other government officials in Europe, the Middle East, North Africa and North America.

Following two international conferences, during which a wide range of experienced individuals "tested" a model for sharing terrorism-relevant information, the project concluded that new and aggressive approaches were necessary to better exploit open source information and engage worldwide expertise.

The findings of this report were:

1. Government counterterrorism and intelligence collection methods cannot be properly applied without the understanding and calibration that open source information and nongovernmental expertise can provide;

2. That there is an ongoing failure to recognize the new forces of international terrorism that have been unleashed, and that particular focus should be placed on the collection of open source information to complement the collection of intelligence;

3. U.S. military, intelligence and law enforcement remain seriously challenged by terrorism, and in the last four and one-half years since 9/11, they have been operating with only a partial understanding of the problem;

4. The effort to engage open source nongovernmental expertise across borders is not meant to supply actionable intelligence, but to provide contextual information about the terrorist;

5. While the intelligence communities are aware of the value of open source information, there is no comprehensive program to exploit OSINT. For the most part, external experts are engaged and consulted on a one-off basis, rather than as core central participants in the intelligence process.

6. And, unlike the Cold War, much of the value added information or intelligence on today's threat resides in foreign-language databases and in foreign minds. The United States does not have reliable access to either.

Following the roundtable discussion, the CSIS, in partnership with an international group of non-governmental experts, began operating a Trusted Information Network that collects, shares and analyzes open source information.

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On November 14, Andrew Schwartz, Senior Vice President for External Relations at CSIS, informed me that the Asia Maritime Transparency Initiative (AMTI) has recently launched a comprehensive website featuring regular updates on maritime security-related events, original commentary from top experts, interactive maps, historical information, and has curated research resources including documents, data, and compelling visuals.

AMTI serves as a central source of information, analysis, and policy exchange on maritime security issues in Asia. Its objective is to provide an unbiased view of the evolving maritime security situation within the region, and to promote cooperation and confidence-building.

After viewing their website I can highly recommend it. Before posting any material, the members of the AMTI team scrutinizes all information by way of a multistage vetting process. This process is guided by the following four questions:

1. Is the source of the information credible? Could they reasonably know what they claim to know?

2. Do we have corroborating evidence? Do other reliable sources provide similar accounts of the same event or occurrence?

3. Is there any evidence directly contradicting this account? If so, how credible is the source of such evidence, and can it be corroborated by additional sources?

4. Should contradictory but credible accounts of the same events exist, how do scholars with comprehensive knowledge of the countries in question interpret the events?

This leads me to the EU INTCEN and to Open Source Information because I believe that within the General External Relations Division the office responsible for Open Source Information Analysis uses the same method or very similar methods.

The EU INTCEN and Open Source Information

Let me turn now to the Intelligence Analysis Centre of the European Union, EU INTCEN. The EU INTCEN has been part of the European External Action Service (EEAS) since January 2011, and is under the aegis of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs & Security Policy, Mrs. Federica Mogherini, Italy's former Foreign Minister.

As of 2012, the EU INTCEN comprises two divisions:

- The Analysis Division is responsible for providing strategic analyses based on input from foreign and security intelligence services of the member states. It is composed of various sections that deal with geographical and thematic topics.

- The General and External Relations Division focuses on all legal and administrative questions, and produces open-source analyses. It is composed of three sections dealing with questions relating to IT, internal and external communication respectively, as well as with the open source office responsible for Open Source Analysis.

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The Intelligence Analysis Center (INTCEN) plays a key role in the struggle against international terrorism. At INTCEN around 70 personnel evaluate and observe developments on a 24-hour basis. The present Director of the EU INTCEN is Ilkka Salmi, previously Head of the Finnish Security Intelligence Service. INTCEN's focus is potential crisis regions, terrorism and weapons of mass destruction.

INTCEN is staffed by members from European Security and Foreign Intelligence services. Their task is to evaluate both HUMINT and OSINT sources which they receive largely from national intelligence sources. The resulting analyses are then made available to decision-makers in the EU and its member states.

INTCEN has close contacts to the European Union Satellite Centre (EUSC) in Torrejón near Madrid. EUSC has been an EU agency since January 2010 and provides satellite images which help the EU to analyse developments in conflict regions in order to provide humanitarian aid. Such images are clearly a welcome input to the work conducted by INTCEN.

INTCEN also cooperates with EUROPOL in The Hague. Europol's task is to support of national police forces within the Union to combat transnational crime and to support the exchange of information between the European police forces. Europol also supports the struggle against terrorism, drug trafficking, combating terrorism, illegal trade with weapons, child pornography and money laundering.

A further European organisation, also in The Hague, is EUROJUST. The European Union's Judicial Cooperation Unit is also a partner in combating terrorism by coordinating trans-border prosecution within the Union.

Another agency concerned with protecting the European Union from terrorist cyber attacks on EU institutions and critical infrastructure is ENISA, The European Network and Information Security Agency in Crete. The importance of this agency is growing due to the increase of cyber attacks on EU institutions and companies.

INTCEN also has contacts to the Paris-based Institute for Security Studies (EUISS). EUISS is an independent agency of the EU which provides decision-makers within the EU with strategic analysis and a range of security-related conferences.

INTCEN also maintains close contacts with the foreign ministries of the EU nations and can draw on the expertise of Special Representatives covering a wide range of countries and subjects.

Inquiries by EU INTCEN on topics relating to, e.g., crises developments in given states and regions, and on terrorist threats, etc. are sent via national experts to the foreign intelligence and/or security services, by way of an official request for information (RFI). The services then have the discretionary power to decide whether, and to what extent, they wish or can respond to the EU INTCEN's inquiry. It goes without saying that each service respects the privacy of its sources.

After having merged both civilian and military information, these resulting contributions are then used to produce all-source intelligence assessments. This *modus operandi* has the following advantages:

- Intelligence information from different intelligence and security services, with different capacities, is merged;
- Extension of the overall knowledge basis ;
- The perceived threat is uniformly monitored;
- The common analysis process is fostered and joint political decisions are supported.

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The Value of Open Source Information for Intelligence Services

I would now like to offer some examples how Open Source Information can help enrich the knowledge of intelligence services and decision-makers in government organizations, which also impacts upon the business sector.

In his speech at the 13th IISS Shangri-La Dialogue 2014, the then U.S. Secretary of Defence, Chuck Hagel, stated that the U.S. will continue its aid to nations in building their respective humanitarian and disaster-relief capabilities, and in upgrading their respective armed forces.

For the first time Indonesia is to receive Apache helicopters to conduct counter-piracy operations, and control the free flow of shipping through the Straits of Malacca. What Hagel did not mention, however, was the number of the helicopters and details of the delivery. I gathered from the Internet that Indonesia will receive eight units AH-64 Apache helicopters, delivered between 2014 and 2017 for 600 million US$.

Furthermore, he continued that Washington plans to provide robust assistance to the Philippines' Armed Forces, and to strengthen their maritime and aviation capabilities.

But what are the specific ramifications of this? The following figures were available from OSINT:

142 M113A2 armoured personnel carriers (APCs) from U.S. army stocks will be shipped to the Philippines in 2014, and the U.S. will provide US$ 50 million in military financial aid, plus US$ 40 million for acquiring long-range maritime patrol aircraft. In this connection, the agreement between the governments of the Republic of the Philippines and the United States of America on *Enhanced Defense Cooperation* of April 2014 is of interest.

Hagel added that South Korea is to receive "Global Hawk Drones" in an effort to substantially enhance its intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance capabilities though he did not provide further details. Internet research showed that South Korea plans to acquire 40 Lockheed Martin F-35A Joint Strike Fighter aircraft for US$ 7 billion, scheduled for delivery between 2018 and 2021.

The U.S. Secretary of Defence said that the United States is poised to deploy two additional ballistic missile defence ships to Japan (though did not mention the date, namely, by 2017) and has deployed its most advanced capabilities – including two Global Hawks at Misawa Air Base, F-22 fighter aircraft at Kadena Air Base, and MV-22 Ospreys on Okinawa.

It was also possible to obtain additional information from the Internet, namely, that the first flight of the RQ-4 Global Hawk took place on June 6, 2014 at the Misawa Air Base and, that 12 F-22 "Raptor" Stealth Fighters, plus 300 personnel, will be deployed to Kadena Air Base.

Next year the U.S. Navy will introduce the Joint High Speed Vessel in the Pacific and an additional submarine forward station in Guam. As many as four Littoral Combat Ships will be deployed in the same region by 2017. By 2018, the navy's advanced multi-mission Zumwalt-class destroyer is scheduled to begin operating out of the Pacific. And by 2020, the U.S. plans to achieve its objective of operating 60% of both its navy and air force fleets out of the Pacific, while also flying the Hawkeye early-warning and unmanned Triton ISR aircraft in the region.

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Ladies and Gentlemen, it is my firm believe that such Open Source Information (OSINT) represents an important source for military intelligence analysts, and clearly indicates that the U.S. is and will continue to be a Pacific power.

A further example of valuable OSINT could be seen on August 1, 2014, on the Shaanxi Provincial Environmental Monitoring Center Station website, confirming, albeit perhaps incidentally, that a military facility in the province is currently developing intercontinental missiles, namely, the Dongfeng-41 (DF-41). Similarly, the online edition of the Chinese Government's newspaper *Global Times* referred to the development of the missile system. Both reports were deleted from the website on the same day.

In June 2014, the U.S. Defence Department reported that the DF-41 may be capable of carrying multiple, independently targeted re-entry vehicles, referring to a payload of several nuclear warheads. According to a report by Jane's Strategic Weapon Systems the DF-41 has a range of 12,000 kilometres.

A Chinese analyst incidentally confirmed the development of the DF-41 saying: "As the U.S. continues to strengthen its missile defence system, developing third generation nuclear weapons capable of carrying multiple warheads is the trend".

I presume that besides considerable available OSINT on the DF-41, the collection of further intelligence information by HUMINT would also be necessary.

Space imagery is also an important element in analysing OSINT. In an article dated 29 August 2014 entitled *China expands runway, harbour at Woody Island,* James Hardy of *IHS Jane's Defence Weekly*, mentioned that satellite imagery indicates China having undertaken substantial land reclamation, harbour redevelopment and other infrastructural construction on the island since October 2013.

Similarly, CSIS AMTI reported in late October 2014 that China completed planned upgrades of its military airstrip on Woody Island, the largest of the Paracel Island group in the South China Sea. Recent work introduced extensions from 2,400 meters to 2,700-2,800 meters.

I concur with James Hardy's analysis that the moves to extend the runway and rebuild the harbour on the west side of the island will enhance Woody Island's utility as a military base from which to project power in the South China Sea (SCS). The Paracel's strategic location close to the centre of the SCS also means China can use them as a base for policing operations, whether this means enforcing fishing regulations unilaterally imposed by Beijing, or to potentially interdict shipping traversing the region, where Beijing's move to do this is part of a wider sea control strategy.

I likewise share his opinion that in the short-to-medium term, it is unlikely that China would make any explicit move, since the SLOCs in this part of the SCS serve its ports – such as Hong Kong and Shanghai – and, as such, freedom of passage is in China's interest.

Ladies and Gentlemen, allow me to now draw to a close. As we have seen, there is no doubt that Open Source Information (OSINT) plays an important role in the intelligence domain, and I would like to end by citing Benjamin Franklin: *Investment in knowledge pays the best interest rates*.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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Remarks: Opinions expressed in this presentation are those of the author.

This paper was presented on the occasion of the Cyber Defence & Security UAE Summit organised by the International Quality & Productivity Center (IQPC) in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, on 9 December 2014.

About the Author of this Issue

Dr. Peter Roell has been President of the Institute for Strategic, Political, Security and Economic Consultancy (ISPSW) in Berlin since January 2006. His former post was Senior Advisor for Foreign and Security Policy at the Permanent Representation of the Federal Republic of Germany to the EU in Brussels. While in Germany, Dr. Roell served the German Government as Director of the Asia-Pacific, Latin America and Africa (Sub-Sahara) Department and at German embassies in the Near and Middle East, and in Asia.

Dr. Roell studied sinology and political sciences at the universities of Bonn, Taipei and Heidelberg. He gained his Ph.D. from the Ruprecht-Karls-University in Heidelberg.

Dr. Roell is an Ancien of the NATO Defense College in Rome and the Federal Academy for Security Policy (BAKS) in Berlin.

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