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Motives of espionage against ones own country in the light of idiographic studies

The money is perceived as the common denominator among people who have spied against their own country. This assumption is common sense and appears to be self-evident truth. But do we have any hard evidences to prove the validity of such a statement? What method could be applied to determine it? This article is a review of the motives behind one's resorting to spying activity which is a complex and multifarious process. I decided to present only the phenomenon of spying for another country. The studies on the motives behind taking up spying activity are idiographic in character. One of the basic methodological problems to be faced by the researchers of this problem is an inaccessibility of a control group.

Keywords: motives of espionage, spying behavior, idiographic studies

One of the most frequently asked questions related to espionage is what makes individuals to betray their own country. Apparently simple motives often conceal deeper and more complicated motivation. It can also change over time (Wood, Wiskoff, 1992, 59). The money is perceived as the common denominator among people who have spied against their own country. This assumption is common sense and appears to be self-evident truth. But do we have any hard evidences to prove the validity of such a statement? What method could be applied to determine it? This article is a review of the motives behind one's resorting to spying activity which is a complex and multifarious process. I decided to present only the phenomenon of spying for another country. The aforementioned matter is scarcely discussed on the pages of academic journals. The resources on this topic (Sarbin et al., 1994; Fischer, 2000; Shumate, Borum, 2006) refers mainly to studies conducted in the United States.

Espionage consists in gathering information, storing it and finally handing it over to the foreign intelligence services, and these may harm the state. The person organizing the activity of the foreign intelligence is also guilty of this crime. Spying can be the goal in itself or the best means to achieve another purpose by an individual. Motives by which the spies are driven are highly individualized. The Federal Bureau of Investigation has introduced an acronym MICE (Money, Ideology, Compromise, Ego)

to common use after having come to a conclusion that money, ideology, blackmail or personal ambitions are the main motives for rendering spying services. The above mentioned motives are usually mixed and idiosyncratic. These are the most individual and unpredictable human behavioral causes. Motivations can be hardly attributed to a particular type of personality. It is more likely that individual inclinations, circumstances and opportunity are driving factors of espionage activity. Individuals might agree to spy out of greed or because of financial problems. Greed could be coupled with other motivations such as ideology, disenchantment, disgruntlement, self-esteem problems or divided loyalties (Pertman, 2001). The money is needed not only because it is a purchase force but also as symbol of success, influence and tool for rising self-esteem (Gelles, 2006). Motives alone are in this case not enough to predispose a person to the criminal behavior but having of strong motive is one of the necessary steps toward becoming a spy (Sarbin et al., 1994, 3, 7, 48-49).

Since its establishing in 1986 the Defense Personnel Security Research Center (PERSEREC) was scientifically focused on the phenomenon of trust betrayal. PERSEREC which is under the supervision of the United States Department of Defense published in 1992, 2002 and in 2008 three unclassified reports based on information gathered in center's espionage database. PERSEREC research is based on unclassified official documents, media, investigative and

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trial records, press accounts, scholarly articles, as well as books documenting particular cases. In 1992 the database developed on the purpose of statistical synthesis included information on 117 Americans involved with espionage against the United States who betrayed their country by providing or attempting to provide classified information to foreign powers. New cases has been entered to the database on regular basis. In 2008 it held data on 173 individuals. The records consists information about personal and job characteristics and on the distinctiveness of the espionage act.

The PERSEREC first report covers the period from 1945 to 1990. The purpose of that study was to present an overall picture of the spies and to compare those that were intercepted the first time they attempted espionage vs. those who actually transmitted information; individuals who were militaries vs. civilian spies; whether they volunteered or were recruited by foreign intelligence or by family and friends; what characteristic they exhibited over time. Cross-tabulations were preformed to process those issues. One of the 56 variables included in database were apparent individuals motivations for committing espionage. All variables were coded according to condition at the time when espionage began. Motives were coded as: money, ideology; disgruntlement/revenge, ingratiation, coercion and thrills/self-importance. First frequencies were calculated for each of the three characteristics. Later, each variable was examined in relation to five mentioned above major areas of interest to security and counterintelligence personnel. All analyses were conducted for the total sample of spies (Wood, Wiskoff, 1992, 4–5). That research drew on the assumptions that systematically collected data would make possible to quantitatively code and statistically analyze those issues and that inclusion of a wide range of variables for a large number of cases could make the generalizations more accurate (Fischer, 2000, 3).

The access to governments records is in most cases classified and restricted. Public sources might be sufficient for most of the variables but there are not complete data. All authors of the PERSEREC reports were aware that possibility to describe the motivation of espionage activity from unclassified sources is limited (Wood, Wiskoff, 1992, 3–5) and that their observations should be taken with much cautions mostly because the uncertain sources of collected information (Herbig, Wiskoff, 2002, 39). This correlates also to the attempts which were made to rank multiple reasons for spying in their order of importance to the individual. Those subjective judgments were based on the evidence available from open sources. Determining a motive or motives for spying is often the most accurate when motivation is inferred from evidence available while the offense is being committed. Unfortunately sometimes spies retrospective justifications are the only available evidence of their motives. In many cases the intercepted spies seem

to perceive their own intentions and the pressures that may have affected their behavior in a different light (Herbig, 2008, 32–33). Collecting of data which would involve an extensive interviews and testing of individual spies was beyond the scope of PERSEREC studies. The Community Research Center in Newington supported by several federal agencies conducted such research under the name “Project Slammer”. The 10-year study started in 1985 and was focused on interviewing 30 imprisoned spies (Schwartz, 2007, 67). This research seeks conclusions from qualitative and case study analysis. Researchers interviewed also some of convicted spies’ relatives, friends and co-workers with the purpose of collecting data on personal characteristics of the offenders, perceptions, and emotions leading to espionage. The study meant to increase knowledge about personality factors and situational factors that were common among spies or might have influenced them. Many of interviewees where psychologically tested. Lack of rigorous definitions of terms, procedural inconsistencies during interviews and some design flaws lead to project suspension (Herbig, Wiskoff, 2002, 4). The Project Slammer findings were applied to depict a pathway to espionage, which consisted of the following events: predisposing personal traits, an acute situational stressor, emotional fallout, biased decision making or judgment failures, as well as failure of peers and supervisors to intervene effectively (Shumate, Borum, 2006, 291).

Over the decades, according to PERSEREC 1992 report, motivation has significantly changed from primarily ideological in the 1940s to a money orientation in the 1980s. Regardless of how long the espionage lasted, more than half of the spies were primarily motivated by money, and that motive also appeared frequently in combination with other motives. That motivation might have reflected a person’s need for money to pay off debts or/and greed. In most cases even some longer-term spies changed their motives over the course of espionage in the direction of financial gain. In general many individuals who spied for money were more frequently intercepted before transmitting information or were caught the first time they attempted espionage than those who spied for ideology and ingratiation. Spies caught on their first espionage attempt were relatively younger and single and more likely to be recently enlisted military. They often volunteered and took up espionage simply to obtain money. Individuals who successfully passed information were usually civilians, better educated and married. Among the money motivated spies there was a considerably lower percentage of civilians than the military spies. The second highest motive among civilians was ideology while disgruntlement/revenge dominated among militaries which also differs those two groups. In case of multiple motivations where ideology was also present it appeared to be always primary regardless of other motives (Wood, Wiskoff, 1992, 60). Most of the ideological spies were successful and had

careers lasting more than one year. Generally civilians were more likely to spy for ideological reasons than the militaries. While those spies tended to be more successful it is still worthy to mention that several individuals motivated by money pursued long and extensive espionage careers (Wood, Wiskoff, 1992, 10–14). The largest group of spies were volunteers. Volunteering was the highest in the 1980s. Money played a much larger role among volunteers than among those recruited by foreign intelligence or by family or friends. Volunteers were also much more inclined to spy because of disgruntlement/vengeance and much less concerned with ideology. For those recruited by family or friends the primary espionage motivator was ingratiation (Wood, Wiskoff, 1992, 15–18). The spies recruited by foreign intelligence spied mainly for money, although some spied for ideological and other motives (Wood, Wiskoff, 1992, 61–62).

Since 1992 PERSEREC continued to enter new cases of espionage by American citizens into its database. The updated study with redefined parameters was published in 2002. It covers the period from 1947 to 2001 and relates to 150 American citizens involved in espionage against the United States during the Cold War. The approach was to examine the cases of spying convictions and instances of intended espionage (Herbig, Wiskoff, 2002, 12). The methodology of this research was similar to the preceding one. The first distinction of motivation for espionage was made by determining if an individual appeared to have had a single or multiple motives. In the last case authors tried to examine which motive was primary and how to set others motives according to their importance. The later comparisons were extended on lone spies vs. those with partners or groups, female spies, and individuals who committed espionage from 1990s vs. earlier decades. The new variables which included inter alia information on life-changing personal events were added to the database. This step was taken to document so called “triggers” meant for recruitment. The motive termed “ideology” in the 1992 report was broadened to include a variety of divided loyalties (Herbig, Wiskoff, 2002, 14).

According to the 2002 PERSEREC report women spies differed from men in regard of motives and the proportion of volunteers to recruits. Only one of eleven American woman recorded in the espionage database took the initiative to betray her country on her own. The remaining ten acted as the accomplices of men. Out of 11 women 7 were recruited by those close to them. That is why one may suppose that ingratiation and divided loyalties played a greater role in motivation for espionage than money (Herbig, Wiskoff, 2002, 50–51). More than half of the spies recorded in the database committed espionage alone. Most of lone spies were male and volunteered motivated mostly by money. This motivation was also common for majority of individuals who worked with partners and for most of

the spies in groups of three or more persons. Distinctive among spies in pairs in comparison to lone individuals was a higher proportion of ingratiation than disgruntlement and thrill-seeking (Herbig, Wiskoff, 2002, 48–49).

Another extensive U.S. spy database which was constructed in attempt to build a model that could describe and explain spying behavior was explored to study the behavior differences between single and married spies. The database which held information derived from the non-classified sources on 175 uncovered and caught spies since 1945 to 1994 showed that most of the spies recorded were single and, if married, their spouses were not known to have been aware of nor involved in the espionage. Only in 26 cases married couples were both identified as being spies. The study employed ‘Student’s *t*-test’ to examine the database variables regarding whether unmarried or married spies differed significantly for each of the variables involved, as for example gender, age, and occupation. It was found out that spies married to one another when compared to spies who were single or married to non-spies were more likely to be civilians than military, were more to be inclined to spying because of ideology than greed probably also because they had fewer money problems and were involved in espionage for much longer (Stone, 2002). In earlier attempt of the same researcher two-factor theory or model for motivations that lead to spying behaviors was found in quantitative data-based research. From the relationship between two sets of variables one involved four groups of spying motives and the second one 10 different security clearance adjudication matters which produced some statistically significant canonical factors. The spying motives – money versus ideology and money versus disaffection – were identified as being two opposing extremes (Stone, 2001).

The third PERSEREC report published in 2008 focused on changes in regard to espionage characteristics and patterns across three groups: those who were involved in espionage activity between 1947 through 1979, those who begun spying between 1980 through 1989, and those who committed espionage between 1990 through mid-2007 (Herbig, 2008, 5–6). One of the new findings to emerge from that study was that since 1990 the number of individuals who committed espionage solely for the money had significantly decreased. Profit motive as primary among those with multiple motives is also lower when compared with earlier periods. The key factor in motivating American espionage were now divided loyalties. Among those spies who began espionage activities during two last decades 57% individuals were motivated solely by that motive. The similar increase has been noticed among spies with multiple motives for whom this motive was primary. On the 11 most recent cases of espionage described in the report there were 7 individuals whose motives included divided loyalties. The third most common motive for

spying was disgruntlement, which often appeared to be a result of conflicts in workplace and desire to take revenge (Herbig, 2008, 33–35).

It would be useful to refer to the results of the little-known study published in 1980 for the state security authorities' internal use. The work was declassified in 2002 and remains in custody of the Polish Institute of National Remembrance. The reader must bear in mind that the communist security apparatus formerly operating in Poland was actively combating the political opposition and mass social protests. The civilian counterintelligence, apart from cases of confabulated or factual cooperation with a foreign intelligence, registered any cases of coming in contact with the residents of the foreign countries. The sentences for spying were ordered by military courts served on by the judges who disciplined and loyal to the state authorities. Research conducted in Poland was based on analyses of acts and trial materials of persons convicted for espionage during 1957-1970. The motives – being the result of instigating factors such as needs, and behavior determining factors such as knowledge, attitude, cognitive scheme – were highly variegated and individualized for this group. The repeatedness of the motives among those individuals was 67 %. Apart from that the research has shown that three main factors motivating the subjects to take up spying activity were the need of money, recognition, and living on the territory of the western country. The first of the above mentioned needs was not only the main one, but it was also the means to fulfill other wants. Nearly half of the studied cases were the people in need of acquiring some material benefits who had been informed about the spying information being substantially rewarding. One fourth of the convicted individuals knew that the foreign intelligence can efficiently help with settling abroad. On the one hand statistical data showed that more than a half of the studied cases were people indifferent to states and ideologies. On the other hand the group of persons positively or negatively inclined consisted mostly of those who were negatively disposed toward the socialistic state. The analysis of cognitive schemes shows that had a material impact on subjects' taking up cooperation with the foreign intelligence services. The research has shown they usually justified their activities with the external situation they found themselves in. They often expressed the conviction the intelligence would supply them with affluent life abroad (Białowąs, 1980). Taking into consideration the comprehensiveness of the American studies and fragmentary character of the Polish ones as well as dissimilar contexts they were conducted in one may conclude their comparison groundless. Yet the more interesting in this light becomes a general convergence of the conclusions arrived upon in both the contexts.

The studies on the motives behind taking up spying activity are idiographic in character. One of the basic methodological problems to be faced by the researchers of this problem is an inaccessibility of a control group. The intelligence services protect their methods and sources. The research on seized spies in comparison to those not seized was never possible to conduct for the lack of an access to the later. It would be pointless to compare the detained spies of the enemy with the spies of ones own country who were not captured as that would neither allow to evaluate ideological motivations nor investigate the question of treason. The motives of espionage were regularly changing and moreover the above quoted data prove no recurrence in such motives. All that significantly impedes data interpretation and does not allow to determine any interrelations.

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