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The Emergence and Uniqueness of Competitive Intelligence in France

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Abstract

This article reviews French approaches to Competitive Intelligence. After establishing what forms CI take in French industry and language, the unique facets in France are discussed: government initiatives, the unique role of the Chambers of Commerce and Industry, and Regional Intelligence. A timeline is proposed illustrating how CI in France has evolved and who have been the key players. The equally original contribution of CI post-graduate degree programs is discussed together with the role of consultancies, support organizations, and academic research contributions. Three examples are included not only to elicit specific cases in Regional Intelligence, Consultancy, and Education, but also to illustrate how the different actors interact. Concluding remarks reflect on the outlook and restraints for CI in France.

Foreword

To the best of the authors' knowledge no comprehensive English language summary has been published in the academic world regarding Competitive Intelligence in France. This work is the first step towards creating an inventory of French approaches and with such a large topic range omissions are likely to occur. The authors welcome any contributions that should be part of future versions.

The Origins of Competitive Intelligence in France

Competition and competitive analysis have come historically late to the French economy. Up to the free-trade agreement embedded in the Treaty of Rome in 1953, the French economy was relatively free from foreign competition. However, as early as the 17th century, international intelligence networks were constructed to enhance economic performance. Upon the arrival of Jean-Baptiste Colbert, the Minister of Finance under Louis the 14th, French industry was in decline and the country required new skills and experienced master craftsmen. In 1662 Colbert created a network of agents whose brief was to identify and attract talent from Holland, Germany, Sweden and Italy to complement French industrial capabilities. Incentives of land, subsidies and monopoly concessions were proposed. At the same time French craftsmen were subject to the death penalty if they left French soil (Levet, 2001). Whether this was the starting point of a state inspired intelligence network

focused on national economic competitiveness, is debatable. Nevertheless, the hallmarks of CI, or as the French would call it *Intelligence Economique*, in France today, are the omnipresence of government organizations, a focus on Small and Medium Sized Companies, an emphasis on defensive tactics, and its presentation as a national, even patriotic movement.

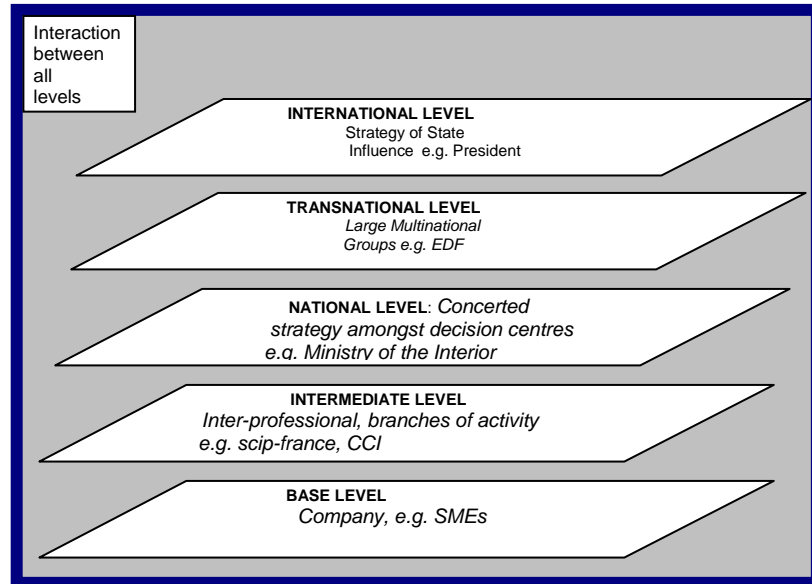
In France, the state is viewed as a dominant participant in economic activities. During the French Revolution both corporations and associations were outlawed (the decrees Allarde and Le Chapelier respectively, 1791), dramatically reshaping commerce and industry. The Chapelier decree was not annulled until 1865. Even after 1945 the political heritage has been one of standardizing the selection of elite decision makers to manage the economy. Today lobbying and think tanks are acknowledged as legitimate actions in democratic processes. This is a recent change of mentality, and one that has come through external pressures and economic realities rather than a political heritage.

From the mid-80s onwards, a few personalities have taken the initiative of developing CI. They came from various backgrounds, including academe, defense, government and business. These individuals are acknowledged for their contribution to the emergence of CI at practical and theoretical levels, providing a doctrinal approach to CI with a focus on its scientific components. They are considered the founding fathers of CI in France, and all but one are listed on the web site of the General Secretariat of National Defense. These founding fathers, either initiators or contributors, are listed in Appendix 1.

However, it is likely that most people call to mind Martre (1994), who defined *Intelligence Economique* (IE) as the combined, coordinated research actions of information treatment and the diffusion of economic actions for strategic and operational exploitation. Interestingly the French SCIP chapter was started in 1992, even if it remains outside of the international American centric SCIP organization. Leading government figures and the academic community generally consider IE as the French language translation of CI. This paper will refer to CI unless *Intelligence Economique* is mentioned in a specific governmental context. Therefore caution is needed, as IE in France is an evolving public policy with multiple dimensions and broader applications than CI in many other countries.

Competitive Intelligence in France is multidimensional in that it involves all levels of government, numerous support organizations from the private and the public sectors as well as public private partnerships and quasi-governmental organizations, like the Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) or the Agency for the Diffusion of Information and Technology (ADIT). Francois Jakobiak (2006), as a former member of the Martre Commission, identifies five levels of IE shown in Figure 1. He notes that the only levels which researchers and companies have the skills and means to address are the last two; the inter-professional level and the company level. The other levels concern political decision-makers.

Figure 1
The Five Levels of IE



Source: Jakobiak, 2006

The uniqueness of Competitive Intelligence in France is that it encompasses all five levels. Competitive Intelligence in the USA, the UK, and Germany for example, is often considered a domain for the private sector and professional associations. The French view the USA as having superior Competitive Intelligence at the country level. The CIA's launch of In-Q-Tel in 1999 is often quoted, as is the advocacy center, which explicitly states its mission to help US business interests. These two visions as to whether the role of government is central or separate to CI is at the heart of the translation and definitional difficulties.

Government Initiatives

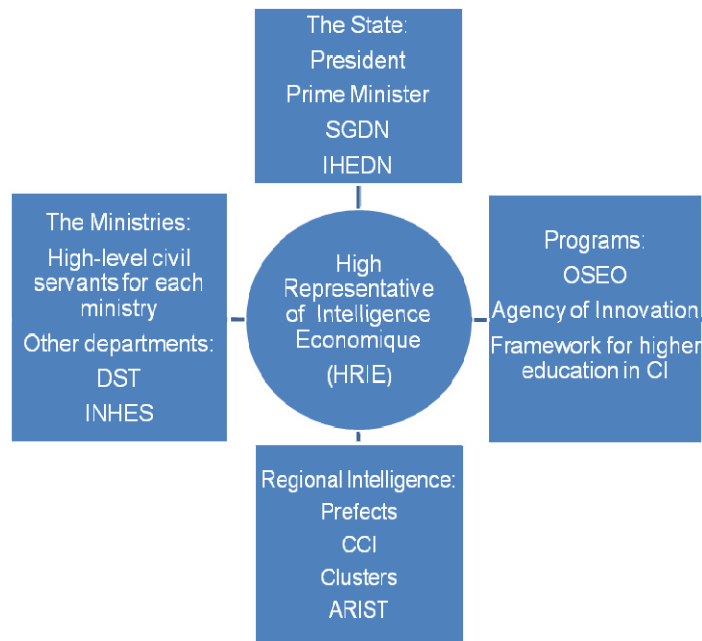
The Martre Report (1994) was undertaken and published within a governmental, national, even secretive framework. Clearly evaluating national competitiveness, it concluded that French large companies were focused on protecting 'knowledge capital' and had only limited technology surveillance. The loss of a large aeronautic contract in the Middle East to The United States at this time exacerbated the sense of falling behind. Worse still the Small and Medium sized Enterprises were failing to recognize the strategic stakes of CI. Notable were the four pillars of CI for France:

1. Encourage the practice of CI at the company level.
2. Optimize the transfer of information between the private and public sectors.
3. Construct data banks in light of the user needs.
4. Mobilize the training and education world.

The Carayon Report (June 2003), ordered by Prime Minister Raffarin, also addressed the national competitiveness of France. It included European level comparisons of how national governments manage *Intelligence Economique*. A notable change in semantics is the use of Bernard Carayon's term *Patriotisme Economique* as a proxy for Intelligence Economique; he has developed this theme in his recent book, *Patriotisme Economique* (2006). His 2003 report provided 38 proposals. François Jakobiak, extended this report into a book (2004, 2006) to make IE more accessible to managers, consultants and students.

Proposition 3 was the establishment of an inter-ministerial High Representative for Intelligence Economique (HRIE), Alain Juillet. The role of the HRIE is summarized in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2
The Role of the HRIE



Alain Juillet is sometimes referred to as "Mister CI". The HRIE is to liaise with ministries, state government, regional intelligence and other programs like OSEO and the Agency of Innovation. These two programs that help finance and support SMEs in critical stages of development were merged in October 2007. The DST (Territorial Surveillance Directory) focuses on counter espionage. The Secretariat General of National Defense (SGDN) is the central body for coordinating the national IE program. The SGDN supports the Prime Minister in terms of national defense and security. Among others, it supervises the Institute of High Studies of National Defense (IHEDN). The SGDN is made up of five sections, plus the permanent secretariat of the inter-ministerial committee of intelligence (Comite Interministeriel du Renseignement), and the HRIE's team.

At present, it seems difficult to assess the impact of the national IE policy, which is currently being implemented. A few personalities tried to shed light on the first initiatives. According to Christian Harbulot (2006), France's IE policy is in its first phase which consists of raising awareness. The implementation of a modern IE apparatus is challenging, but the HRIE Alain Juillet has managed to have some success thanks to his perseverance and despite a relatively uncooperative environment. For instance, defensive CI has improved markedly.

Bernard Carayon published a second report called *A Level Playing Field (A Armes Egales, 2006)* in which he proposed the implementation of a European "Small Business Act" to level the playing field of European SMEs in face of their U.S. counterparts. While acknowledging advances in French CI, such as more collaboration between CI professionals, greater CI awareness and the certifying of degree programs, the report *A Armes Egales* also declared frankly some of the limitations of government initiatives. Chiefly, these concerned the involvement of the SGDN, which gave the impression to some that CI was about defense and security more than value creation. The hierarchical and even secret nature of the SGDN was questioned in terms of the effectiveness of intelligence gathering, integration and dissemination. The report also considered the contributions of the ministries to be very unequal with only the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defense being truly engaged. It should be noted that these observations were made at the end of 2005.

The unique facet of French Competitive Intelligence is this top down, state inspired approach that notably uses the infrastructure of the French Chamber of Commerce and Industry (CCI) to implement regional initiatives. The French CCI is made up of 155 chambers plus 20 regional offices. It is managed by 5150 elected managers and has an overall budget of 3.95 billion Euros. The three main objectives are company support, training, and facility management. Philippe Clerc is the director of CI at ACFCI (The French Assembly of French Chambers of Commerce and Industry).

ADIT (Agency for the Distribution of Information and Technology) was created in 1992 and is seen as a bridge between the public and private sectors in terms of strategic intelligence. There is an ongoing debate as to whether it should be

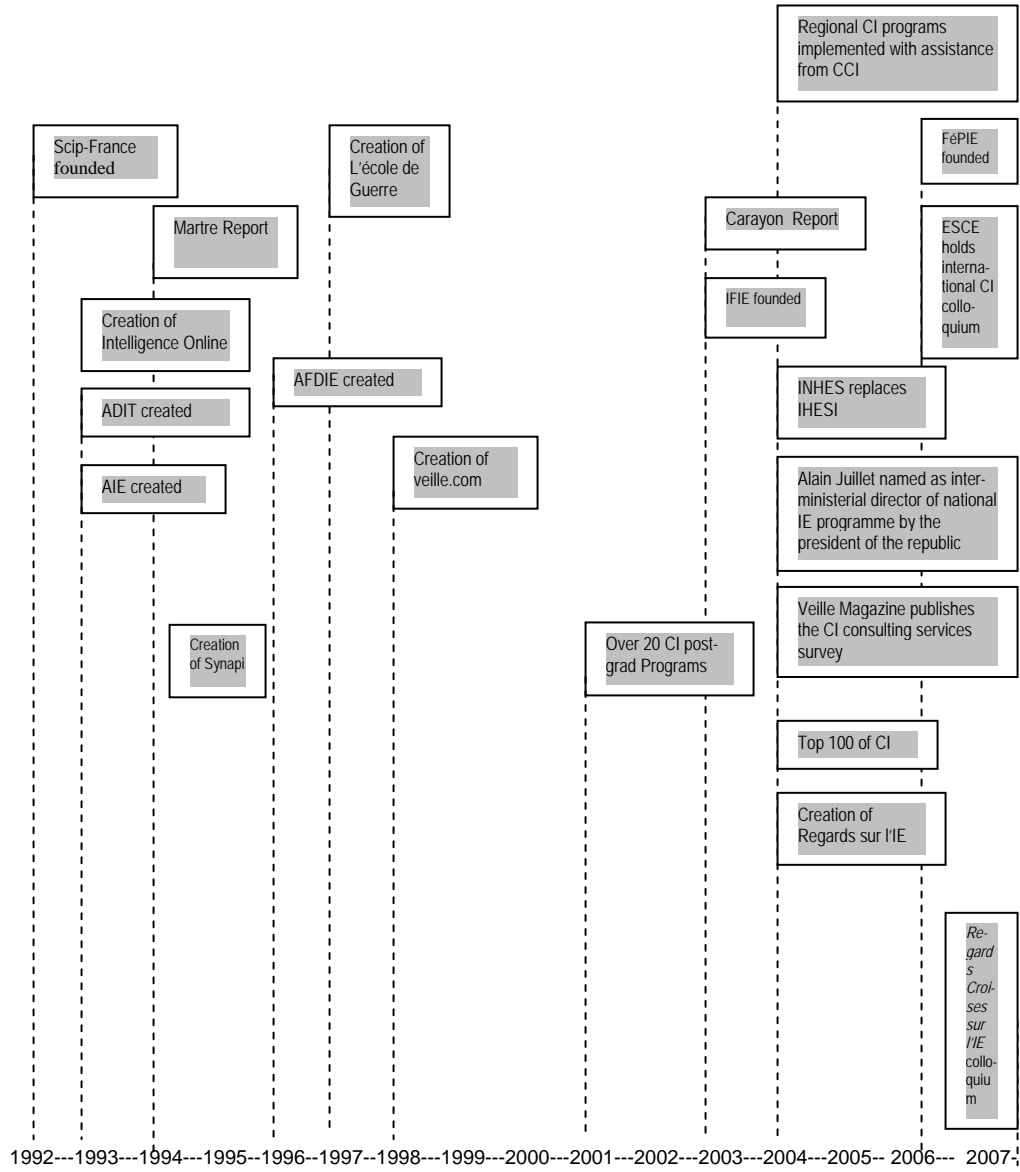
privatized. It has three fundamental objectives: provide competitive intelligence for large companies engaged in international commerce; assist SMEs through Regional Intelligence programs, and finally to provide a technology watch for French economic actors. An international network of experts spans Europe, Asia, North America, the Middle East, Russia and India.

French Regional Intelligence programs are mostly targeting SMEs. While it is state inspired it is not state dictated. Local implementation tailored to regional economic needs is encouraged. This is largely training in CI techniques plus conferences defining what CI is and what are the stakes for SMEs, and consulting on necessary actions, such as defensive CI techniques and accessing pertinent data into decision-making. In the UK this type of activity may be referred to as regional economic development.

In French minds industry clusters are either a complement to or an integral part of Competitive Intelligence. The French government delineated 67 competitiveness clusters in July 2005 which has grown to 71 today. An overall state budget of 1.5 billion Euros was budgeted for a three-year period. A cluster is defined as an association of companies, research centers and educational institutions working together to generate synergies in a given market.

Figure 3 is a timeline that summarizes the key events and the emergence of organizations that have had a significant affect on CI in France. It encompasses the actors and events in government initiatives, professional organizations, regional intelligence programs and education. The Carayon Report in 2003 clearly propelled the field forward.

Figure 3
Timeline of Key Events for CI in France



French Competitive Intelligence Organizations

Table 1 summarizes the main French CI support organizations, their objectives, and date founded. We have listed the organizations that were most often cited by CI actors, and sorted them in alphabetical order. There are two groupings presented in the following order: CI professional associations and national think tanks.

Competitive Intelligence In Action In France

CI in France is often expressed through the interaction of various players from the government, consultancies, education, and companies. Three examples follow which elicit how these key players interact. Example one focuses on Regional Intelligence programs; example two explores the foundation of a leading CI school and the third example discusses the growth of a leading consultancy.

Example 1: CI and Innovation Team Up in Brittany

The Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Rennes created in 2006 a regional project named Novincie. The project involves creating awareness of CI concepts for regional enterprises and training in CI techniques. A unique feature is the combination of CI and innovation (from which the name is constructed). The geographical scope is the region of Brittany. Strategic partners include the CCI, the Rennes Management Institute (*IAE de Rennes*), the enterprise network of Intellectual Property, the regional Association of Auditors for the Institute of High Studies of National Defense (IHEDN) and the Enterprise Union for *Ile-et-Vilaine*. While open to any enterprise irrespective of size, a particular focus is the Small and Medium Sized Enterprises (SMEs) in traditional industries that are considered to need assistance in managing information, competitive analysis, and managing intellectual assets. Concrete actions to date have been the CI training course proposed by the Rennes Management Institute in 2006 and 2007 as well as a conference focusing on the exchanges of experiences by three companies.

In parallel, the CCI in Rennes has launched a pilot project with 13 enterprises to set up Competitive Intelligence units. This is under the auspices of the ACFCI (The French Assembly of French Chambers of Commerce and Industry, whose CI function is directed by Philippe Clerc). The sectors include agriculture and food industries, construction, furniture, telecom, and service providers. The companies must have less than 200 employees. The team includes an employee from CCI, another from DRIRE (*Direction Regional de L'Industrie, de la Recherché et de l'Environnement*) and the involvement of six external consultants. Financing is from the CCI, the Regional Council of Brittany, DRIRE, and the companies themselves (20%). Expansion of the program to the whole region is expected in 2008.

These regional based initiatives co-opt governmental, educational, and industry organizations to facilitate enterprises in their CI needs. This constitutes *Territorial Intelligence* in a French context.

Table 1
CI Support Organizations

French Acronym and English Translation	Organization Objectives	Date Founded
Professional Associations		
ADBS Association of Information and Documentation Professionals www.adbs.fr	With nearly 5000 members, ADBS aims in particular to diffuse and develop the use of new technologies, publish contributions, promote the profession, and develop the skills of its members by offering training sessions.	1963
AIE Academy of Competitive Intelligence www.academie-ie.org	This association with several hundred members promotes CI and tries to understand and adapt CI to companies' needs. Notably, it runs a blog in partnership with Les Echos (a French business newspaper) and also organizes an annual CI literature prize.	1993
FEPIE French Federation of CI Professionals www.fepie.com	Seeks to professionalize the French CI world through a strict adherence policy, a code of ethics, and validating standards for training programs.	2006
IERSE Institute of Studies and Research for Company Security www.ierse.fr	Plays a three-fold role: trains companies in security and risk management, conducts research in this area, and takes part in the public policy of competitive intelligence and security.	1997
IFIE French Institute of Competitive Intelligence www.ife.net	Provides CI training, recruitment services, and related studies. Wishes to accompany enterprises with their CI needs.	2003
SCIP France Society of Competitive Intelligence Professionals France www.scip-france.org	Currently with 200 members, this group provides a network of support and exchange for Competitive Intelligence Professionals. It is not an officially recognized affiliate of SCIP; the working language is almost entirely French.	1992
Synapi National Union of Information Advisers www.synapi.com	Synapi's objectives are to increase visibility and accessibility of Competitive Intelligence. It is considered as a network of experts and encourages initiatives with SCIP France and FePIE.	1994
National Think Tanks		
AFDIE French Association for the Development of Competitive Intelligence www.afdie.net	Acts as a think tank bringing together CI practitioners from the private and public sectors, including firms, schools, universities, and consultancies, and delivering proposals in the form of reports, case studies, notes, and methodologies.	1996
IHEDN Institute of Higher Studies for National Defense www.ihedn.fr	Acts as a portal for CI actors, associations and official reports. Implements its role of 'Economic Defense' through CI. Provides training on CI practices.	1936
INHES Institute of Higher Studies for Security www.inhes.interieur.gouv.fr	Plays a great role in regional intelligence policy by implementing economic security in the clusters of competitiveness, and by making SMEs aware of the necessity of economic security.	Replaced IHESI (1989) in 2004

Example 2: Creating The Ecole de Guerre Economique in France

Whether in English, The School of Economic Warfare, or French language, the chosen name has been an eye catcher since its founding in 1996. The school is notably the brainchild of Christian Harbulot, himself an adviser for the Martre report of 1994, and leading author of CI in France. This key figure in French CI was also the founder of ADITECH, the precursor of ADIT.

The philosophical underpinning of this school and its objectives result from a reflection on oriental strategic thought proclaiming strategy is inseparable from combat. In that sense the school has positioned itself as having a geo-political approach. The intellectual goal was to advance beyond both Marxist and Anglo-Saxon thinking. The invisible hand was seen as US power and not the market; this theme has been picked up more recently with the Carayon report of 2006, *A Armes Egales* (A level Playing Field).

Pedagogically then, the American style Master Degree Programs and Anglo-Saxon analysis methods are not seen as being the definitive model even if elements are to be integrated and followed. There is an emphasis on combining military and civil approaches both from home and abroad with a proactive 'offensive' use of information in economic decision making. Manifested in a postgraduate degree program, executive training modules, and research, the school takes a multi-disciplinary approach including the practical application of Information Technology.

Example 3: Acrienet and Acrieproject, Driving Forces Behind Public Private Partnerships

CI in France is often composed of public and semi-public bodies, which mostly work with SMEs to support them in terms of CI implementation and operation. Private consultants, especially those focusing on SMEs, often share CI projects with regional and local authorities and Chambers of Commerce. This example illustrates how a PPP (Public Private Partnership) can take shape in the French CI arena.

Founded in 1999, Acrie, a network of private CI consultancies, has developed both French and international service networks. Its founder and leader Pascal Frion, based in Nantes, agreed to set up a decentralized national network of independent private CI agencies, upon the proposal of the School of Economic Warfare. Mainly European, Acrie is based in nine French cities, and abroad in Italy, Portugal, Spain, Germany, Canada, and Argentina. All agencies hold the Acrie trade name as consultants operating under the same umbrella.

Acrie has strived to work in harmony with the public and semi-public bodies by acting as complementary consultants within the framework of regional CI programs. The headquarters of the network, Acrie Nantes, initiated a project to design a CI learning tool named AcrieNet. The latter consists of helping users conduct Internet research as efficiently as possible, in other words to provide structure and methodology. Once developed, AcrieNet was instrumental in various areas, notably during the implementation of CI in nine pilot French regional projects. Acrie had the

opportunity to cooperate with ADIT (Agency for the Diffusion of Technological Information) to equip regional prefectures.

Continuous development of AcrieNet was boosted in August 2004 by translating it into five languages: English, German, Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese. With AcrieNet, users not only learn by themselves how to conduct information research on the Internet but also learn about environmental scanning and Competitive Intelligence. In face of the demand for in-depth learning of CI, Acrie decided to extend its product range by designing AcrieProj, which is available only in French for the time being. This tool offers organizations the possibility to learn CI by conducting CI projects by means of methodologies, forms, checklists, case studies, best practices, examples, and resources.

With the aim of reducing the amount of time spent in analyzing information and optimizing the strategic questioning at the beginning of a CI project, AcrieProj has not only been interested in private organizations but also in the public world, as has AcrieNet. With AcrieProj, organizations can work alone on their CI projects without needing an external consultant. This is Frion's concept of "consulting without a consultant".

Acrie accompanies the users one month after the self-training starts, in terms of methodology transfer. Three months later, Acrie supports them by following up the implementation of best practices. The integration of 850 technical reference sheets and of shared databases into AcrieProj enables users to manage self-learning and to gain new experience and expertise in terms of CI. Furthermore, the interactivity of the tool allows users to customize AcrieProj according to their needs. These approaches of encouraging autonomy, customization, and the dissemination of best practices have proven to be effective in both private and public sectors.

Achievements and Challenges in the CI Consulting World

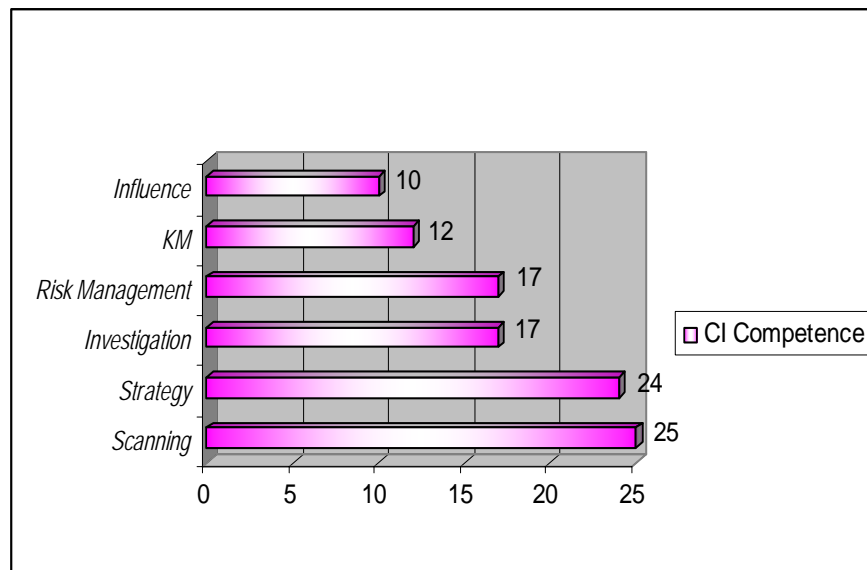
In 2004, *Veille Magazine*, which had surveyed 82 CI consultancies in France, published the results in a study titled *The Strategic Information Consulting Market*. In the same year, *Intelligence Online* published an in-depth study on *France's Top 100 of CI*, which aimed to give more insight into CI actors in France including consultancies. A second edition of *France's Top 100 of CI* in 2006 followed these two major 2004 French publications.

A comparative analysis of the three above-mentioned studies shows that CI has been expanding in France. With an estimated market of 125 million Euros in 2004 (*Le Journal du Management*, 2004), CI consulting firms kept on growing with a 15 to 20% revenue increase in 2005. Nevertheless, this burgeoning market does not represent a large size compared to the Anglo-Saxon market with its CI giants such as Kroll and Control Risk Group (Philibert, 2006). France's relatively small market size reflects a remaining discrepancy between the widespread and catchy *Intelligence Economique* term in the media, and the still limited practice of this modern management concept in the business world. CI is basically in the hands of about a hundred consultancies, which is rather limited.

Furthermore, Veille Magazine found out that only five cabinets generated a turnover higher than 5 million Euros in 2004. This is a better performance than in 2002, where only three consultancies surpassed 5 million Euros: the Geos group, Datops, and the government-owned ADIT. At that time, two other firms nearly reached 5 million Euros in turnover, Atlantic Intelligence and ESL & Network (Tavoillot, 2004). According to Intelligence Online (2006), the situation somewhat improved in 2005, since the top seven consultancies achieved an overall turnover of 56 million Euros, that is 8 million Euros average.

On 25 September 2006, the Prime Minister's general secretariat of national defense (SGDN) released an official list of CI professions and competencies. Veille Magazine's study depicted the key competencies of French consultants as being environmental scanning and strategy. In 2004, 54% of consultants were practicing environmental scanning which was a focus for 25% of the 82 consultancies interviewed. Strategy closely followed scanning, for it was a predominant activity for 24% of consultancies. "Influence" (Figure 4) in French means that an individual or a company can shape a political decision whereas "Lobbying" is for a whole industry or sector. According to Intelligence Online (2006), consulting firms tend to be closer to brain trusts. Not only those consultants specialized in CI but also an increasing number of strategy consultants such as Roland Berger Strategy incorporate CI into their services portfolio. The reason why the CI consultancies' expertise has moved to strategy is the further development of growth and mergers and acquisitions (M&A) strategies and of consulting activities within organizations.

Figure 4
Dominant CI competencies



Source: Veille Magazine, 2004

Despite their relatively young existence of no more than ten years or so, the major French CI consultancies have managed to have an international reach. It was added that CI consultancies intend to find strategic information for their clients, help them acquire new markets and companies, or even face insecurity, especially in those countries where information flows are different from Europe (Fay, 2007). As a matter of fact, Europe-based companies tend to call for CI consultancies only when their attorneys or banking advisors cannot fulfill their needs, notably in view of takeover bids or large-scale financial maneuvers.

Company Practices In CI

Research has explored both large companies and SMEs in terms of company practices in CI. A survey of 1200 French companies in 2000 by IHEDN found that over half of them make an effort in CI and that most major French groups have an organized cell. Nevertheless, France's largest company, Total, only formally nominated a director of CI in 2003, the same year as Danone. While not much information on these developments seeps into the public domain, it is clear that large French companies have been active over the past five years in terms of formalizing their CI practices, nominating CI directors and creating CI cells. It was noted by the Tribune, a leading French business newspaper, that this emergence of CI directors in the hierarchy of the big French groups was more about the increasingly unreadable economic environment and ever-greater competition than the government initiatives. It does however go hand in hand with the Carayon report and the efforts of Alain Juillet. More significantly, this trend affects all industries and the public sector, and not just the traditional industries of CI focus such as aeronautics, aerospace, oil, defense, and health.

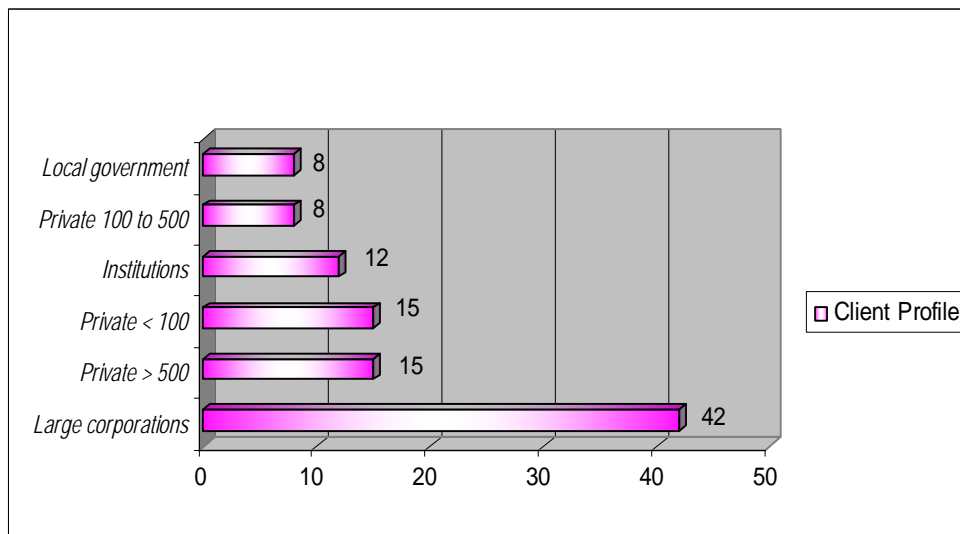
Just as with consultancies, CI has moved up to a strategic level within large companies. It is not limited to the environmental scanning and investigation functions any longer. At Sodexo, Sanofi-Aventis, and Areva, CI is directly put under the CEO's responsibility. Sometimes, corporate directors and heads of subsidiaries (Sanofi Pasteur) are in charge of CI. Companies such as STMicroelectronics, Renault, Saint-Gobain, and Gaz de France placed CI on the next lower level by nominating heads of CI departments (Intelligence Online, 2006). Whereas some companies are proactive and transparent when positioning CI in their organizational chart, others are more defensive by putting security first. This is the case of Areva since 2005, Michelin traditionally, PPR, and EDF (Tavoillot, 2004; Intelligence Online, 2006).

It was stated that many SMEs do not master the concept of Competitive Intelligence (*Rapport du Commissariat General du Plan, 1994; Levet and Paturel, 1996; Hassid et al., 1997*). In 2006, Jerome Bondu, the director of the IES (*Intelligence Economique et Strategique*) club, expressed the difficulty of convincing SMEs about the need for CI practices. Bulinge (2001) spoke of the need to have incremental steps for CI implementation in SMEs and of the importance of convincing decision-makers. Salles (2006) designed a model that enabled her to categorize the information needs of SMEs, notably in terms of the environment. By means of a longitudinal study

undertaken within a trade union, Al Abdulsalam and Paturel (2006) showed how trade unions can foster the practice of Competitive Intelligence within SMEs. Larivet and Brouard (2007) studied SMEs in the Rhone Alp region of France. They found that companies that undertake Competitive Intelligence or Environmental Scanning have an international orientation and privilege the strategies of differentiation, focus and diversification.

Large companies also call for the services of CI consultancies. In its 2004 study, *Veille Magazine* indicated a fairly high share of large corporations in the clientele of CI consultancies with 42%. The remaining 58% were pretty evenly spread among local government entities, institutions, and private organizations with less than 100, 100 to 500, and over 500 employees (Figure 5).

Figure 5
Client Profile



Source: *Veille Magazine*, 2004

Academic Teaching Programs

If there is any area where CI is most active in France, this may well be in education. In 2005, 54 teaching programs in CI were identified (Martinet, 2005). This abundance of programs inevitably led to concerns about standards. In 2004, a commission of 16 experts (professors and researchers) nominated by Alain Juillet proposed a framework of teaching programs in CI (*Referentiel de Formations en Intelligence Economique*). The High Representative for *Intelligence Economique* approved this framework in May 2005. The document was set to clarify the content and methodologies of CI and to give a guideline to education institutions in terms of CI training quality standards. More precisely, the purpose of this framework was to

identify the knowledge and know-how to be acquired by a student within the framework of a post-graduate professional-oriented teaching program in CI. The publication of the framework represents a first large step forward in the line of policy "education" given by Alain Juillet to raise awareness of CI in France.

Further to the framework of teaching programs in CI, several schools and universities reshaped their training programs or stated in their web sites they comply with the quality standard defined by the reference document. Master's Degree Programs in CI are either professional or research-oriented. The latter ones focus on career prospects in the research world with the preparation of a PhD as a next step. However, the boundaries between both masters are fading. Graduates with a professional-oriented master can also apply for a PhD. The offer for CI programs in France has exploded, especially in the early 2000s. Programs in CI can be categorized as follows: university Master's Degree Programs in CI, business school Master's Degree Programs in CI, engineering school masters in CI, private CI education, and Master's Degree Programs with a major in CI. There is a strong propensity to offer double-competency Master's Degree Programs, CI is often taught along with communication, marketing, hard sciences and IT for the graduates to be more competitive on the job market place. Without specialization, it is difficult to work in CI since many employers still fail to recognize the benefit of CI for their companies.

There are many initiatives for CI students. The magazine *Regards sur l'IE* (RIE) publishes learning materials on environmental scanning, Competitive and Regional Intelligence, information management, and lobbying. The visitors of RIE's COURSIE can download these resources free-of-charge. CI professionals from consultancies, companies, and universities can submit their contributions. Additionally, RIE has organized a national CI competition called COGENIE since 2006, in order to foster reflection on CI. This competition is run on the Internet and brings together students in CI from various French universities and business schools.

Research

As a relatively young discipline, CI has not yet imposed itself on the French research world, despite several attempts. The number of CI-focused academic journals do not account for the share of people interested in CI from a research perspective. One can consider ISDM (Information Sciences for Decision Making) as in the field but the *Revue d'Intelligence Economique*, published by AFDIE between 1997 and 2000, does not exist anymore. It is often covered by academic journals focusing on closely related and related disciplines such as risk management (*Risques et Management International*), information systems (*SIM: Information and Management Systems*), marketing (*Revue Internationale des Sciences Sociales Market Management*), defense (IHEDN's journal *Defense*) or on broader disciplines like management (*Revue Francaise de Gestion*).

CI research is a growing and increasingly recognized field in France. More and more students and even professionals decide to pursue a PhD in CI, in the form of a traditional university-based thesis or an industrial thesis. The latter can be

prepared within the framework of a CIFRE (Industrial Agreements on Training by Research) contract. A few awarding initiatives aim to encourage research in CI. In 2007, the National Scientific Research Center (CNRS) introduced a four-year CI research program with a yearly financial aid of 40,000 Euros. Since 1998, the prestigious IHEDN has delivered a yearly academic prize for research-oriented masters and PhD theses in the area of defense and security including CI. As for the AIE (Academy of Competitive Intelligence), it launched a literature prize called IEC (Competitive Intelligence and Competitiveness) in 1995 to award the best books or even PhD theses in CI. More recently, in July 2007, the CIGREF and the ANDESE invited Alain Juillet to award the best PhD thesis in CI at the colloquium *Regards Croises sur l'Intelligence Economique*.

Endeavors have been made, particularly by means of conferences and colloquia, to bring together practitioners and academics so as to mutually enrich practice and research. The *Rencontres de l'Intelligence Economique* (held at CERAM, Sophia Antipolis) illustrates this state of mind very well, since this colloquium, held for the fifth time in 2007, is deliberately a blend of people coming from companies, schools, universities, government and consultancies to share viewpoints and findings on CI. Over the last ten years a new generation of CI researchers has emerged. The dean of CERAM business school, Alice Guilhon, continues to publish in Competitive Intelligence and is vice president of the INHES CI group. Franck Bulinge, another distinguished researcher in CI is also at CERAM, teaching and researching in CI and KM. The colloquium *Regards Croises sur l'Intelligence Economique* consists of the same concept and is organized by the CIGREF (IT Club of Large French Companies) and the ANDESE (National Association of Doctors in Economic and Management Sciences). In November 2006 the business school ESCE held a colloquium 'Competitive Intelligence and International Competition'. This was a multidisciplinary event and attracted some of the leading researchers in France. John Prescott (University of Pittsburgh) was one of the keynote speakers and Alain Juillet formally opened the colloquium. Sophie Larivet, based at ESCE, is an example of a French CI researcher straddling French and North American thinking on CI, co-authoring with Francois Brouard (University of Carleton, Canada). Nicolas Moinet, from the University of Poitiers, publishes findings in CI in relationship with environmental scanning, network management, and economic security. He has often co-authored with his fellow researcher Christian Marcon. Another initiative goes beyond France at European level: ATELIS, a French CI project of the business school ESCM, associates a university research center CRRM, the ACFCI, the CCI of Touraine, a consultancy Intellecto, the CIGREF, plus other partners in France, China, and Indonesia. ATELIS is directed by Pierre Larrat. In March 2008, ATELIS is organizing the second edition of a European CI colloquium, in partnership with the Economics and Management Institute of Lisbon, so as to further deepen the CI-related issues at a European level.

Established researchers in CI include Robert Paturel from the University of Sud who was Larivet's PhD research director. He researches into CI within the

framework of strategic management and entrepreneurship, co-authoring notably with Jean-Louis Levet. Humbert Lesca as Director of Research at CERAG, The University of Grenoble, leads a group of researchers who have significant publication output. This group is notable for focusing on CI at the company level and they have assisted mostly French companies with implementing environmental scanning and CI systems. At the University of Toulouse, Maryse Salles has been a very active author on CI, notably in the area of decision-support information systems and the specific needs of SMEs. Her fellow Gabriel Colletis, a former scientific adviser at the *Commissariat General du Plan*, is interested in CI and the knowledge economy. Henri Dou is the Director of CRRM (Center Retrospective Research of Marseille) at the University of Aix-Marseille 3 and a contributing academic professor at ESCEM since 2005. He is a member of the CI education reflection group set up in 2004.

A distinctive school of CI thought also exists at what might be called the geopolitical level of Competitive Intelligence. As mentioned under the Government Initiatives section of this paper Christian Harbulot would be an author in this mould. Philippe Baumard, Philippe Clerc, and Jean-Louis Levet are all accomplished authors in CI as well as being players in government initiatives. The geopolitical school of thought may have been the one that has gained most national and international attention but research on company practices, notably in SMEs, and the role of information systems have notable French contributions.

The Outlook for CI in France

By 2007 the government, academic, and CI support organizations initiatives were resulting in an ever-greater awareness and practice of CI in France. This appears likely to continue and even to become a reference point for other countries, as is already the case in francophone North Africa. Additionally, the concept of CI has solidified with previous espionage and patriotic connotations having to compete with more analytical and value creation activities. The distinctive regional intelligence shows every sign of increasing with rising investment and expanded regional scope. This unique mix of government, quasi-government and enterprises is the critical experiment in France. The research and academic community look set to follow, contribute to, and measure this national effort. The result is unknown, but it is not too early to claim a unique French paradigm relative to CI. The accomplishments to-date include:

- A greater awareness of intelligence in decision making for SMEs,
- Stricter practices regarding defensive CI,
- Expanding regional initiatives that provide resources and training,
- A solid CI infrastructure in terms of information dissemination notably between private and public sectors,
- A young and focused cadre of CI experts studying and graduating from post graduate degree programs,

- An emerging research community in CI, striving to establish CI as a relevant and promising research discipline,
- Increasing acceptance of lobbying as a legitimate company activity.

Nevertheless, it has to be acknowledged that these activities arguably come from low bases.

Challenges to Growth

Although resources dedicated to CI are increasing there remains resistance from SMEs. Many are reluctant to follow government-sponsored programs and may only participate because it is funded. Their priorities are often elsewhere. Political interest may wane but there is no sign of this at the present. Even so, government involvement can lead to market distortion, excessive controls, and bureaucracy. Concern has also been expressed as to whether there will be jobs for the multitude of CI graduates that complete their CI Master's Degree Programs. The close association of industrial espionage from some quarters, notably, the use of the expression Intelligence Economique by the DST (Direction of Territorial Surveillance) for defensive CI, has not placed the subject favorably for all publics. While France is by no means isolated in terms of CI expertise, there is a linguistic and cultural positioning that is not always conducive to knowledge transfer. SCIP-France's reluctance to join the international network is a case in hand.

Conclusion

CI in France has three distinct features: the omnipresence of the government and its initiatives, the emergence of Regional Intelligence programs, and the impressive growth of postgraduate degree programs. The French consulting world of CI is growing healthily, rapidly and internationally. There is a French paradigm for CI. The philosophical heritage has inspired the French national to work collectively, transcending the public and private sectors to analyze information and integrate intelligence into economic decision-making. The French approach to CI does have an administrative underpinning, which may prove to be an asset in terms of robustness but a weakness in terms of speed and innovation. The CI projects discussed in this paper are largely unique in that they represent extensions of French public and private initiatives. The cultural identity and national patriotic spirit have left their impact on CI in France and its historical development. In that sense it is not a model to be replicated but rather an example for other countries to examine and perhaps in part to follow.

Appendix 1
The Founding Fathers of CI in France
(Source: HRIE website)

Initiators
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Philippe CLERC, Director of CI, Innovation, and ICTs at the ACFCI (Assembly of French Chambers of Commerce and Industry)▶ Bernard ESAMBERT, former CEO of the Financial Company Edmond de Rothschild▶ Bernard GERARD, former Prefect and former Director of DST (Directorate of Territorial Security)▶ Robert GUILLAUMOT, President of Alogic▶ Christian HARBULOT, Director of The Ecole de Guerre Economique (School of Economic Warfare)▶ Jean-Louis LEVET, Associate Professor at the University of Paris XIII▶ Henri MARTRE, former President of Aérospatiale and former General Delegate for Armament▶ Rémy PAUTRAT, former Prefect and former Director of DST (Directorate of Territorial Security)
Contributors
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▶ Claude GUEANT, former Prefect, General Secretary at Elysée▶ Pierre LACOSTE, Admiral, former Director of General Directorate for External Security▶ Pierre MONGIN, former Prefect and Director of the Prime Minister's cabinet, President of RATP▶ André VIAU, former Prefect, Director of the Defense Minister's cabinet▶ Bernard CARAYON, Member of Parliament for the Tarn Region and Mayor of Lavaur

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Key Terms

Competitive Intelligence, France, Regional Intelligence, Competitive Intelligence Education, Government Initiatives



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Competitive intelligence is the systematic and ethical process for gathering, analyzing, and managing information that can impact an organization's operations and plans. Competitive intelligence is a necessary, ethical business discipline for decision-making based on understanding the competitive environment.

