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## Dr Ioanna Iordanou

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# The secret service of Renaissance Venice: intelligence organisation in the sixteenth century

Dr Ioanna Iordanou ○

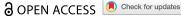Oxford Brookes Business School, Oxford Brookes University, Oxford, UK

**ABSTRACT**

Contrary to more rudimentary espionage networks created by rulers (and their rivals) in various parts of early modern Europe, by the sixteenth century, early modern Venice had created a remarkable, centrally organised state intelligence organisation, the Venetian secret service. This was built on a rigid organisational hierarchy and branched out into distinct communication networks. This article describes, in detail, the structure and function of the Venetian secret service, dwelling on how it was administered and managed by the Council of Ten, Venice's infamous spy chiefs. To explore the early modern organisational and managerial practices on which this service was premised, the article borrows theoretical concepts deriving from the disciplines of Intelligence Studies, Sociology, Organisation Studies, and Management, which it weaves together with archival sources and relevant literature. In doing so, the article explores some of the methodological challenges of studying the phenomenon of early modern intelligence organisation. Ultimately, the article puts forth the argument that systematised intelligence and espionage are not 'modern' phenomena, as conventional wisdom dictates, but date back to the early modern era.

## Introduction

A few months before the fourth Ottoman-Venetian War (1570–1573) erupted, a self-alleged fugitive escaping Ottoman enslavement landed on the shores of Venice to inform the authorities of some alarming news. He had discovered that the Turkish armada was stocking up on munitions and placing large warfare reserves in Anamur, a fortress on the southern coast of Turkey. It was feared that these military preparations were intended for an attack on Cyprus, one of the most prominent Venetian colonies situated on the opposite shore, overlooking Anamur. Rushing to make 'appropriate provisions for the defence of the island', the Council of Ten, which was the governmental committee responsible for the security of Venice and its sprawling dominion across Northern Italy and the Levant, engaged in formal deliberations and, consequently, decreed the following actions: Firstly, with great urgency, they posted the informant's written declaration to the Venetian governor of Cyprus, ordering him to verify the claims by sending out spies to confirm

the presence of a military build-up in Anamur. They also demanded that the governor report back, in secret, through copies of letters sent through different routes, to ensure that at least one epistle would reach the Ten.[1] Secondly, they contacted the Venetian ambassador in Constantinople, known as the *bailo*,[2] asking him to conduct a parallel secret investigation, in order to find out whether their informant could be trusted. To ascertain this, they instructed the *bailo* to identify and interview other slaves in the Ottoman capital about the informant. Moreover, they informed the *bailo* that the Venetian ambassador to the Holy Roman Emperor had also learned, through his own sources, of an imminent Ottoman invasion of Cyprus.[3] As a result of this intricate web of intelligence collection and exchange, the Council of Ten's worst fears were soon corroborated. Shortly after, a letter sent by the *bailo* to the Ten confirmed the ghastly news of an imminent and inevitable Ottoman invasion of Cyprus. Now on a war footing, the Ten urgently contacted their ambassador in Spain to solicit Philip II's support.[4]

This episode is redolent of two significant concepts that are central to early modern Venice's economic, political, and social conduct: intelligence and organisation. In terms of the first concept, that is, intelligence, it is representative of ways in which sensitive information – primarily of military and political value – was communicated secretly between the Venetian authorities and their formal state representatives. In the early modern period, intelligence was a multivalent term. For Venetians, the word *intelligentia* meant 'communication' or 'understanding' between two or more individuals, sometimes in secret. Within the context of state security, it indicated any kind of information of political, economic, social, and even cultural value that was worthy of secrecy, evaluation, and action by the government in the name of state security.[5] In essence, then, there were two aspects to the term *intelligence*. The first denoted the systematic process of secretly collecting, analysing, and disseminating information. The second related to a '"police and security" dimension', which could manifest in both offensive and defensive ways.[6]

The ways in which such information or intelligence was communicated to its intended recipients leads us to the second central concept mentioned above, organisation. As the Anamur episode demonstrates, in early modern Venice, the systematic organisation of the collection, communication, and evaluation of sensitive information was administered by the Council of Ten, the governmental committee responsible for the security of the Venetian state. In fact, the Ten are responsible for the creation of a centrally organised secret service, which supported the Venetian Republic's state security pursuits.

This article argues that the phenomenon of centralised intelligence organisation was conceived and given meaning in the early modern period, which hosted the gradual

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[1]Archivio di Stato, Venice (hereafter ASV), CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Registro (hereafter Reg.) 9, carta (hereafter c.) 33 r (21 October 1569). Please note, all dates have been modified to follow the Gregorian calendar, with the calendar year commencing on 1 January, rather than on 1 March, as it was customary for early modern Venice.

[2]On the Venetian *bailo* in Constantinople, see amongst others, Eric R. Dursteler, 'The Bailo in Constantinople: Crisis and Career in Venice's Early Modern Diplomatic Corps', *Mediterranean Historical Review* 16, no. 2 (2001): 1–30; Stefan Hanß, 'Baili and Ambassadors', in *Il Palazzo di Venezia a Istanbul e i suoi antichi abitanti / İstanbul'daki Venedik Sarayı ve Eski Yaşayanları*, ed. Maria Pia Pedani (Venice: Edizioni Ca' Foscari, 2013), 35–52; Emrah Safa Gürkan, 'Laying Hands on *Arcana Imperii*: Venetian Baili as Spymasters in Sixteenth-Century Istanbul', in *Spy Chiefs II: Intelligence Leaders in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia*, ed. Christopher R. Moran et al. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018), 67–96.

[3]ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Reg. 9, c. 33 r–v (21 October 1569).

[4]ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Reg. 9, c. 37 r–v (26 October 1569).

[5]In his study of the Stuart regime in early modern England, Alan Marshall offers a similar definition. See Alan Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage in the Reign of Charles II, 1660–1685* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 3.

[6]Ibid.

systemisation of diplomatic practices that went hand in hand with the development of state bureaucracies.[7] The Republic of Venice, the early modern state that boasts the creation of one of the world's earliest state intelligence organisations, was at the forefront of this process. The article starts by describing the Venetian secret service, its structure and function. It then goes on to discuss how this service's centralised organisation was administered and managed. To achieve this, the article borrows established theoretical concepts deriving from the disciplines of Intelligence Studies, Sociology, Organisation Studies, and Management, which it combines with archival sources and relevant literature. In doing so, the article details some of the methodological and epistemological challenges of studying the phenomenon of early modern intelligence organisation. Ultimately, the article contests conventional wisdom that sees systematised intelligence and espionage as 'modern' phenomena that span largely from the eve of the Great War to the present, demonstrating that such developments date back to the early modern era.[8]

Before moving on to the following section, a few words on terminology are in order. While terms like 'spy' and, less so, 'intelligence' were used in the early modern period, other ones, such as 'secret service', 'state security', 'counterintelligence', and 'spy chiefs' are modern constructs that were not used by actors at the time. I have taken the liberty of using such modern terminology, following the tradition charted by other eminent scholars of early modern intelligence history.[9] In doing so, I am mindful that I might run the risk of anachronism since, seemingly, using modern terms entails projecting present characteristics on the past. I have taken this decision, however, with the deep conviction, stemming from my research, that these terms, while not used verbatim at the time – and no arbitrary effort has been made here to put contemporary 'notions into the mouths of actors from earlier times'[10] – aptly describe people, events, and situations, as they will be explicated in this article. As such, this methodological decision should not be viewed as a misconstrued attempt to impose the present upon the past but as natural consequence of the complex evolutionary relationship between the past and the present,[11] which I endeavour to problematize by exploring a potential methodology to tackle this problem.

## The venetian secret service

The Venetian secret service was headed by the Council of Ten. Established in 1310, following a failed attempt to overthrow Doge Piero Gradenigo, the Council of Ten was

[7]On the development and systematisation of late medieval and early modern diplomacy, see Isabella Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict: Italian Diplomacy in the Early Renaissance, 1350–1520* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).

[8]The bibliography on intelligence and espionage as "modern" phenomena is vast. For an overview, see Philip Knightley, *The Second Oldest Profession: Spies and Spying in the Twentieth Century* (London: Deutsch, 1987).

[9]See, inter alia, Fernando Cortés Cortés, *Espionagem e Contra-Espionagem numa Guerra Peninsular 1640–1668* (Lisbon: Livros Horizonte, 1989); Lucien Bély, *Espions et ambassadeurs au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Fayard, 1990); Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*; Paolo Preto, *I servizi segreti di Venezia: Spionaggio e controspionaggio ai tempi della Serenissima* (Milan: Il Saggiatore, 1994); Carlos J. Carnicer García and Javier Marcos Rivas, *Espías de Felipe II: Los servicios secretos del Imperio Español* (Madrid: La esfera de los libros, 2005); Emrah Safa Gürkan, "Espionage in the 16th Century Mediterranean: Secrecy, Diplomacy, Mediterranean Go-Betweens and the Ottoman Habsburg Rivalry", (PhD diss., Georgetown University, 2012)'; Idem, "The Efficacy of Ottoman Counter-Intelligence in the 16th Century", Acta Orientalia Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae 65, no 1 (2012), pp. 1–38.

[10]Luca Zan, "Complexity, anachronism and time parochialism: historicising strategy while strategising history", *Business History*, 54, no 8 (2016): 571–596.

[11]On an excellent problematisation of the issue of anachronism in historical research, see ibid, 'Complexity, 573–576.

the exclusive committee responsible for the security of the Venetian state. The Council was made up of seventeen men, including ten ordinary members who served annual tenures, the Doge's six ducal councillors, who did not have any voting rights during the Council's assemblies, and the Doge as the ceremonial figurehead.[12] Every month three ordinary members took turns at heading the Ten's operations. In this leadership capacity, they were called *Capi*, the Heads of the Ten.[13] While initially responsible for protecting the government from overthrow or corruption, over the course of the decades the Council of Ten's political and judicial powers extended to such a degree that, by the mid-fifteenth century, they encompassed diplomatic and military operations, control over secret affairs, public order, domestic and foreign policy.[14]

By the beginning of the sixteenth century, a number of significant state affairs, including continuous wars with the Ottoman Empire, as well as the alarming news of the new Portuguese spice route that threatened to undercut the Venetian domination of the spice and silk trade from the East, rendered the protection of state secrets a matter of urgency. As a result, in 1539, the Council of Ten established the institution of the Inquisitors of the State (*Inquisitori di Stato*).[15] Initially entitled 'Inquisitors against the Disclosures of Secrets', the *Inquisitori* were a special counterintelligence tribunal made up of three men, two Council of Ten members and one ducal counsellor.[16] Holding an annual tenure, they were primarily responsible for counterintelligence and the protection of state secrets but gradually, their activity encompassed all aspects of state security, including dealing with conspiracies, betrayals, and espionage.[17]

Acting as the spy chiefs of Venice's intelligence machinery, the Council of Ten over-saw a vast, interconnected network of informants and public servants, spread across Europe, the Near East, and even Northern Africa, who were tasked with obtaining and supplying them with intelligence vital for the political and, by extension, economic conduct of the Venetian state.[18] The very existence of this network entailed an intricate system of information flow between their informants and those working under their direction. Accordingly, while in most Italian and European states intelligence operations were organised by powerful individuals striving to secure and consolidate political power and control,[19] in an exemplary display of political and organisational maturity, the

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[12]Gaetano Cozzi, "Authority and the Law", in *Renaissance Venice*, ed. John R. Hale (London: Faber and Faber, 1973), 293–345, 308.

[13]Mauro Macchi, *Istoria del Consiglio dei Dieci* (Turin: Fontana, 1848).

[14]Gaetano Cozzi, "La difesa degli imputati nei processi celebrati col rito del Consiglio dei Dieci", in *Crimine, giustizia e società veneta in età moderna*, ed. Luigi Berlinguer and Floriana Colao (Milano: Giuffrè, 1989), 1–87; idem, "Venezia nello scenario europeo", in *La Repubblica di Venezia nell'età moderna: Dal 1517 alla fine della Repubblica*, ed. Gaetano Cozzi, Michael Knapton, and Giovanni Scarabello (Turin: Unione Tipografico-Editrice Torinese, 1992), 3–200.

[15]On the Inquisitors of the State, see Samuele Romanin, *Gli Inquisitori di Stato di Venezia* (Venice: Naratovich, 1858); Romano Canosa, *Alle origini delle polizie politiche: Gli Inquisitori di Stato a Venezia e a Genova* (Milano: Sugarco, 1989), 19–85; Preto, *I servizi segreti*, 55–74; and Simone Lonardi, "L'anima dei governi: Politica, spionaggio e segreto di stato a Venezia nel secondo Seicento (1645–1699)" (PhD diss., University of Padua, 2015). On the relevant founding decrees, see Samuele Romanin, *Storia documentata di Venezia*, 10 vols. (Venice: Naratovich, 1853–61), 6: 122–4.

[16]Romanin, *Gli Inquisitori di Stato*, 16; idem, *Storia documentata*, 6: 78–80 (Deliberation of 20 September 1539).

[17]See Lonardi, "L'anima dei governi".

[18]Ioanna Iordanou, "The Spy Chiefs of Renaissance Venice: Intelligence Leadership in the Early Modern World", in Moran et al., *Spy Chiefs II*, 43–66; See also idem, "'What News on the Rialto?' The Trade of Information and Early Modern Venice's Central Intelligence Organization", *Intelligence and National Security* 31, no. 3 (2016): 301–26.

[19]On the Italian states in general, see the essays in Daniela Frigo, ed., *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy: The Structure of Diplomatic Practice, 1450–1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000). On examples of European states, see, amongst others, Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*; Carnicer García and Marcos Rivas, *Espías de Felipe II*; Jacob Soll, *The Information Master: Jean Baptiste Colbert's State Intelligence System* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2009);

Venetian Council of Ten created and systematised one of the world's earliest centrally organised state intelligence organisations. This resembled a public sector institution that operated with notable complexity and maturity, serving mainstream intelligence functions such as operations, analysis, cryptography and steganography, cryptanalysis, and even the development of lethal substances, such as poison.[20]

## Organising and managing the venetian secret service

At the close of 1604, the Council of Ten were keen to expel from the Venetian dominion the Englishman 'Antonio Sciarles', the infamous 'aristocrat-adventurer' Sir Anthony Sherley,[21] as an important 'public' matter which they did not reveal in their written communication to their delegates.[22] The reason for their silence was the need for secrecy, especially as letters could be intercepted and read by inimical, prying eyes.[23] The urgency of the situation was on account of the Ten's conviction that Sherley was a spy for the Holy Roman Emperor, gathering intelligence reaching the Venetian dominion from the Ottoman Empire and forwarding it to Prague.[24] For this reason, they granted him two days to leave Venice and four days to exit its dominion. Failing to obey, he was to be arrested and confined to the *piombi*, the Ten's chilling cells, located in the Doge's Palace. To that end, instructions were sent to the Venetian representatives in both the Italian mainland (the *Terraferma*) and the Venetian overseas empire (the *Stato da Mar*), including those in Padua, Vicenza, Verona, Brescia, Bergamo, Crema, Treviso, Udine, Crete, Zante, Cephalonia, Corfu, Zadar, and the Venetian governors (known as *Provveditori Generali*) in Dalmatia and in Palmanova, ordering the Englishman's arrest, were he to enter any of those territories. The Venetian ambassadors in Rome, the Holy Roman Empire, France, Spain, and England were also informed about the affair, in case they were asked to offer further explanations to the rulers of the courts they served in.[25] Consequently, a month later an epistle was sent to the Ten by the *Provveditore Generale* in Dalmatia, claiming that the said 'Schiarles' had been spotted in the Dalmatian coast and, having refused to leave within the requested four days, the *Provveditore* was keen to arrest him and ship him over to the Ten.[26] It is probable that the arrest failed, as a few months later Sherley was in Prague, on formal business for Holy Roman Emperor Rudolph II.[27]

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John P. D. Cooper, *The Queen's Agent: Francis Walsingham and the Court of Elizabeth I* (London: Faber and Faber, 2011). On a synthetic analysis of the intelligence operations of other early modern Italian and European states, see Ioanna Iordanou, *Venice's Secret Service: Organizing Intelligence in the Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), esp. ch. 1.

[20]See, for instance, ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Reg. 11, c. 32 v–33 r (6, 10 October 1574).

[21]Maria Fusaro, *Political Economies of Empire in the Early Modern Mediterranean: The Decline of Venice and the Rise of England 1450–1700* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 204. On Anthony Sherley, see Anthony Sherley, *The Three Brothers: Travels and Adventures of Sir Anthony, Sir Robert and Sir Thomas Sherley in Persia, Russia, Turkey and Spain* (London: Hurst, Robinson, and Co., 1825). On Sherley's sojourn in Venice, see D. W. Davies, *Elizabethans Errant: The Strange Fortunes of Sir Thomas Sherley and His Three Sons, As Well in the Dutch Wars as in Muscovy, Morocco, Persia, Spain and the Indies* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 141–65. I am grateful to [removed for purposes of anonymization] for bringing the case of Anthony Sherley to my attention.

[22]ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Reg. 14, c. 113 v (1 December 1604).

[23]Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 74.

[24]ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Reg. 14, c. 113 v (1 December 1604). Davies, *Elizabethans Errants*, 162–4. In fact, during his first two years in Venice, Sherley was acting as a double spy for the Spanish and the Scots. See ibid., 141–2.

[25]ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Reg. 14, c. 113 v (1 December 1604).

[26]ASV, CCX, *Lettere dei Rettori e di Altre Cariche*, busta (hereafter b.) 302 (1 January 1605).

[27]Davies, *Elizabethans Errants*, 164.

This episode demonstrates the ways in which information of a sensitive nature that would nowadays be termed *classified* was handled by the Venetian secret service. This process of channelling information from the Council of Ten to their formal representatives within and beyond the Venetian dominion and back to the Venetian 'intelligence headquarters' in the Doge's Palace comprised the coordination of complex administrative operations. Such operations were conducted by a composite yet meticulous network of intelligence gathering and communication, dispersed beyond the Venetian lagoon, across Europe, Anatolia, and even Northern Africa. Centrally administered by the Council of Ten, this network branched out into three distinct communication channels. The most systematically organised and managed was composed of diplomats and state officials, including Venetian ambassadors, governors in Venice's possessions in the *Terraferma* and the *Stato da Mar* – such as *provveditori, rettori*, and chief magistrates (*podestà*) – as well as Venetian representatives in parts of the Mediterranean where there was a notable Venetian merchant presence but no formal diplomatic representation – such as consuls. The majority of these individuals made part of the Venetian patriciate. The second channel of communication comprised Venetian merchants who plied their trade in strategic commercial centres in the Levant or travelling seamen who were occasionally tasked with transporting correspondence, and individuals entangled in Venice's intelligence operations. On several occasions, for example, ship captains were ordered to transport on board their ships criminals or captured enemy spies, in order to hand them over to the Venetian authorities.[28] Finally, the third communication channel was made up of amateur intelligencers and dilettante spies, who wittingly gathered and disclosed information pertaining to the security of the state, more often than not expecting some kind of compensation for their services.[29]

Aside from those professional informants and amateur intelligencers, the Venetian intelligence organisation was supported by a substantial number of state secretaries who made up part of Venice's composite public administration.[30] Following a decree of the Senate in 1478, these functionaries were recruited from the social class of the *cittadini originarii*, the Venetian citizens, who comprised the second tier of the Venetian hierarchy, after the patricians, the Venetian ruling class.[31] As members of that social order, the Venetian secretaries were a distinct workforce of state functionaries whose appointment was contingent upon both their social class and aptitude to the secretarial vocation

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[28]See, for instance, ASV, CCX, *Lettere dei Rettori e di Altre Cariche*, b. 286 (29 July 1592). This aspect of Venetian merchants' and seamen's duties to the *Serenissima* still awaits exploration and analysis by historians.

[29]On the Council of Ten's communication channels, see Iordanou, 'What News on the Rialto?'.

[30]On Venetian state secretaries, see Giuseppe Trebbi, "Il segretario veneziano", *Archivio Storico Italiano* 144 (1986), 35–73; Mary F. Neff, "Chancery Secretaries in Venetian Politics and Societies, 1480–1533" (PhD diss., University of California, Los Angeles, 1986); Andrea Zannini, *Burocrazia e burocrati a Venezia in età moderna: I cittadini originari* (sec. XVI–XVIII) (Venice: Istituto Veneto di Scienze, Lettere ed Arti, 1993); Massimo Galtarossa, *Mandarini Veneziani: La cancelleria ducale del Settecento* (Rome: Aracne, 2009).

[31]Giuseppe Trebbi, "La cancelleria veneta nei secoli XVI and XVII", *Annali della Fondazione Luigi Einaudi* 14 (1980), 65–125, at 69–70; Andrea Zannini, "Economic and Social Aspects of the Crisis of Venetian Diplomacy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", in Frigo, *Politics and Diplomacy in Early Modern Italy*, 109–46, at 132. On Venetian citizens, see Dennis Romano, *Patricians and Popolani: The Social Foundations of the Venetian Renaissance State* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1987); Zannini, *Burocrazia e Burocrati*, esp. 61–118; James S. Grubb, "Elite Citizens", in *Venice Reconsidered: The History and Civilization of an Italian City-State,1297–1797*, ed. John Martin and Dennis Romano (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2002), 339–64; Anna Bellavitis, *Identitè, marriage, mobilitè sociale: Citoyennes et citoyens à Venise au XVIe siècle* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2001); idem, "Donne, cittadinanza e corporazione tra medioevo ed età moderna: ricerche in corso", in *Corpi e storia: Donne e uomini dal mondo antico all' età contemporanea*, ed. Nadia Maria Filippini, Tiziana Plebani, and Anna Scattigno (Rome: Viella, 2002), 87–104.

and whose socio-economic *raison d'être* was service and commitment to the state. Those billeted in the Doge's Palace were responsible for transcribing, cataloguing, and indexing state records that, for early modern Venice's constantly expanding bureaucracy, were produced on a continuous basis. When appointed to support Venice's diplomatic missions overseas, they rendered similar services to the diplomats they accompanied and they even deputised for outgoing or incoming patricians, performing lower-profile functions of negotiation and representation. Still, those secretaries serving ambassadors overseas did not directly report to them but, already from the mid-fifteenth century, their management and remuneration fell under the responsibilities of prominent governmental committees, such as the Senate and, of course, the Council of Ten.[32]

These 'professionals of politics, of diplomacy, and of written communication' inhabited specific positions in the organisational hierarchy of Venice's intelligence service.[33] The top of the pyramid was occupied by the Council of Ten and other governmental committees that supported the Republic's intelligence operations, including the State Inquisitors, the Senate – the Venetian government's debating committee and primary legislative organ, especially up until the mid-sixteenth century – and the *Collegio* – the Senate's steering committee.[34] As already discussed, the Ten, with the support of the other governmental committees, oversaw the work and conduct of everyone involved in the three distinct communication channels, mentioned above. The second tier of the pyramid was populated by the Venetian ambassadors and governors – the second communication channel – whose work was supported by the occupants of the third layer of the organisational hierarchy, professional secretaries. Finally, at the very bottom lay the plethora of official and unofficial spies and informants, who made up the pre-mentioned third communication channel. These emanated from all echelons of Venetian society but, primarily, from the social class of the *popolani*, the Venetian commoners.[35] Their expenses were covered by a discreet budget reserved by the government for 'secret expenses',[36] which was distinct from the regular ambassadorial emoluments that comprised the envoy's monthly stipend, general expenses 'to set oneself in order' (*per mettersi in ordine*) when appointed to a new post, a special gift (*donativo*), and other extraordinary expenses.[37] All these different outlays are indicative of an emerging 'budgeting logic' that made part of the 'Venetian method' of accountability or 'giving account ... through the widespread use of reports on operations and managing issues.'[38] In consequence, what gradually emerges from these accounts is a systematic organisation of professional

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[32]Zannini, "Economic and Social Aspects", 132.

[33]Lazzarini, *Communication and Conflict*, 101.

[34]On a synthesis of the inner workings of the Venetian political system, especially in the sixteenth century, see Alfredo Viggiano, "Politics and Constitution", in *A Companion to Venetian History, 1400–1797*, ed. Eric R. Dursteler (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 47–84.

[35]On the Venetian *popolani*, see Romano, *Patricians and Popolani*. On a revisionist perspective on the role of the *popolani* in the Venetian society and economy, see Ioanna Iordanou, "Pestilence, Poverty, and Provision: Re-evaluating the Role of the *Popolani* in Early Modern Venice", *The Economic History Review* 69, no. 3 (2016): 801–22.

[36]See, for instance, ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Reg. 14, carte (hereafter cc.) 1 v, 22 r, 25 v (22 March 1596, 5 September, and 16 December 1597).

[37]Zannini, "Economic and Social Aspects", 125.

[38]Luca Zan, "Accounting and Management Discourse in Proto-industrial Settings: The Venice Arsenal in the Turn of the 16th Century", *Accounting and Business Research* 32, no 2 (2004): 145–75, at 146.

duties that depended on certain hierarchical structures, which, in turn, were premised on nascent administrative practices.

The distribution of duties and organisation of work in the Venetian intelligence apparatus was built on a 'clearly established system of super- and subordination'.[39] As Venice's spy chiefs, the Council of Ten were responsible for the success and failure of Venice's intelligence operations by taking all executive decisions. Everyone else positioned below them were under their command, acting as their subordinates or underlings, in contemporary managerial parlance. Accordingly, they were expected to execute the Ten's orders, receiving commendation for a job well done or castigation for poorly executed duties. 'We enthusiastically praise the prudence . . ., caution, and diligence you exercise in the protection of that land', they once wrote to the *podestà* of Crema, an affluent Venetian town situated in Lombardy.[40] On the other hand, the governors of Verona were bitterly reprimanded for their, allegedly, imprudent behaviour. 'In the future,' the Ten scolded them, 'you shall write to us with more prudence and respect, as is expected when writing to this Council and its Heads.' 'If you act otherwise,' they scathingly warned, 'we shall be compelled to act in ways that shall safeguard our dignity as a Council.'[41]

The Council of Ten had pioneered an efficient system of managerial delegation and accounting, whereby they would assign a task or mission to the appropriate authority, expecting both its execution and a detailed report upon its completion. In February 1560, for instance, they dispatched a copy of an epistle they had received to their formal representatives in Cyprus. The epistle indicated that a number of island residents, who were also Venetian subjects, had absconded to Constantinople, scheming to assist the Sultan in his plot to seize Cyprus. Furnishing the governors with the names of the turncoats, the Ten ordered them to evaluate this piece of intelligence, by verifying that the named individuals had, indeed, abandoned the island for the Ottoman capital. In short, treating their mission with absolute secrecy, the governors were required to investigate and corroborate the Ten's intelligence, furnishing them with a written report of the outcome of their investigation, which would enable them to make a calculated decision on the most appropriate action to pursue.[42]

The Venetian system of managerial delegation was more complex than simply issuing an order to a subordinate; it entailed orchestrating the information flow between every authority which ought to be informed of a specific event. For this reason, subordinates were expected to share information between them. In December 1596, for instance, the Venetian envoy in Milan wrote to the Ten on two separate occasions, in order to inform them of a Portuguese man named Fernando Goes Laureiro who had approached him with intelligence on imminent dangers that could compromise the security of the Venetian city of Brescia. In the Ten's reply, which they sent to the envoy via the rectors of Brescia, in order to keep them informed of this situation, they ordered him to corroborate the Portuguese's claims. Non-Venetians' seemingly altruistic attempts to render services to the Venetian Republic were met with suspicions by the Venetian

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[39]Max Weber, *Economy and Society: Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, 2 vols., ed. Guenther Roth and Claus Wittich (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1978), 2: 957.
[40]ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Reg. 6, c. 6 v (22 June 1547).
[41]ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Reg. 8, c. 85 r (23 April 1567).
[42]ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Reg. 7, c. 41 r (12 February 1561).

authorities. For this reason, the Ten dispatched a second letter to their envoy in Milan, instructing him to keep a close watch of Laureiro's moves, in case he made an attempt to leave Milan in order to enter the Venetian dominion. In that event, the envoy was to inform the rector of Brescia, who would promptly arrest the Portuguese man.[43] Another missive was dispatched to the *podestà* of Brescia, beseeching him to be extra vigilant of the city's security and to systematically rotate the guards along the city walls, so that they would have no prior knowledge of their shift's actual location, in case someone tried to bribe them in order to enter the city's territory.[44] Throughout the lengthy investigation, which lasted for nearly six months, the Venetian envoy in Milan was instructed to keep the rectors of Brescia apprised of any relevant developments.[45] Eventually arrested in the Venetian town of Bergamo,[46] Laurerio was ushered to Venice, where he was imprisoned until his release in June 1597, when the authorities were satisfied that there was no proof of any wrongdoing on his part.[47]

The ceaseless flow of written communication between the Ten and their formal representatives, seamlessly orchestrated by the former, is illustrative of their efficient managerial delegation, whereby representatives were asked to supply the government with the information needed for it to decide upon the most appropriate course of action.[48] The Ten's system of delegation spiralled down the hierarchy, enabling their underlings, in turn, to delegate tasks to other individuals who either reported to them or were expected to support their work. In November 1567, for example, the Venetian ambassador in Rome wrote to the Heads of the Ten in order to convey, in secret, a request on behalf of the Pope. According to the epistle, the Pontiff demanded the apprehension of a certain Giacomo da Seravalle from Treviso, who was rumoured to be serving a prison sentence in the Venetian stronghold of Crema. Seravalle was wanted by the Roman Inquisition for multiple heresy offences. Consequently, the Pope ordered his transportation to Venice, where he would be handed over to the papal representative, who would have received instructions as to how to deal with him. Within a few days, written orders were sent to the Venetian representatives in Verona, Vicenza, and Padua, instructing them to coordinate their operations, in order to accompany the prisoner to Venice. The search for the culprit was to be delegated to the towns' constables. As a result of the constables' coordinated efforts, within three weeks, Seravalle was ushered from Crema, to Verona, to Vicenza, to Padua, and from there to Venice, where he was consigned to the care of the papal envoy.[49]

Between gathering and communicating intelligence to the appropriate authorities lay the fundamental process of evaluating information. The above episodes are redolent of how intelligence was processed and evaluated by the Council of Ten and those supporting their intelligence operations. In practice, any piece of vital information was sent to the appropriate individual, who was asked to conduct a preliminary investigation in order to corroborate the intelligence provided. Routinely, multiple copies of the same letter were sent to various relevant officials, either in order to keep everyone informed or for

[43]ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Reg. 14, c. 9 r–v (29 December 1596).
[44]ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Reg. 14, c. 10 r (29 December 1596).
[45]ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Reg. 14, c. 9 r–v (29 December 1596).
[46]ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Reg. 14, c. 10 v (27 January, 5 February 1597).
[47]ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Reg. 14, cc. 20 r (2 June 1597), 20 v (6 June 1597).
[48]ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Reg. 14, cc. 11 r–12 v (7 February 1597), 16 r–v (14 March 1597), 18 v (9 April 1597).
[49]ASV, CCX, *Dispacci Ambasciatori*, b. 25 (1 June 1567).

purposes of corroboration and collaboration. At times, a missive was sent to one authority with the instruction to forward it to another, creating thus a complex yet smoothly managed communication network upon which Venice's intelligence apparatus relied heavily. In the spring of 1601, for example, the Heads of the Ten forwarded to the *Provveditore Generale da Mar in Golfo* – the supreme commander of the Venetian fleet in peacetime and the highest authority of the Ionian islands in the first half of the *Cinquecento*[50] – a copy of a letter that the Venetian ambassador to the Holy Roman Emperor had sent to them, relating the indiscretions of a certain Cavalier Bertucci. The *Capi* instructed the *Provveditore* to communicate the content of the letter to all Venetian governors in Dalmatia and Albania, ordering them to capture Bertucci, dead or alive, if he attempted to enter the Venetian regions in the Balkan Peninsula.[51]

It follows from the above that a combination of formal bureaucratic practices and composite communication networks overseen by the Council of Ten enabled the collection and evaluation of intelligence. Undeniably, disentangling rumours and fabrications from hard facts was a challenging task. Yet, paradoxically, the complex web of these communication channels and networks enabled the process of comparing and contrasting intelligence and, by extension the systematic evaluation of information. Within this organisational framework, the Council of Ten effectively administered Venice's secret service by managing their delegates, including not only their formally appointed ambassadors and governors, but also the secretaries who served them. Some of these individuals were stationed in the Doge's Palace, while several others were geographically dispersed across Europe and Anatolia. Praising or castigating them, ordering or instructing them, trusting or dismissing them, the Ten's managerial practices materialised in a variety of ways that are redolent of contemporary manifestations of management in its various forms: in its technical form, whereby management helped solve functional problems of large-scale organisation; in its elite form that placed emphasis on the interests and prerogatives of the managers; and in the political sense, focusing on the control and even discipline of subordinates.[52] Ultimately, the Ten's corporate-like delegation of duties was an expression of their ongoing accomplishment of power that materialised through their right to coordinate and manage the activities of those reporting to them. In order to achieve this coordination, especially between those geographically dispersed delegates, the medium of correspondence played a fundamental role.

Correspondence played a central role in early modern Venice's central intelligence organisation. For this reason, it was meticulously planned. Letters written by the Council of Ten or the State Inquisitors were transcribed into several copies and dispatched to all stakeholders who were directly or indirectly involved with the facts and events communicated in them. In the summer of 1593, for example, copies of an enciphered letter written by the Ten were sent to the governors of Corfu, Cephalonia, and Zante, the *bailo* in Constantinople, and the *Provveditore contro gli Uscocchi* (the official responsible for patrolling the Adriatic against Uskok pirates).[53] The epistle informed the recipients of

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[50]Benjamin Arbel, "Venice's Maritime Empire in the Early Modern Period", in Dursteler, *Companion to Venetian History*, 125–253, at 152. See also, Biblioteca del Museo Correr, Venice, *Manoscritti Donà dalle Rose*, no 79, c. 11 r–v.

[51]ASV, *Inquisitori di Stato*, b. 399 (16 April 1601).

[52]Christopher Grey, "'We Are All Managers Now'; 'We Always Were': On the Development and Demise of Management", *Journal of Management Studies* 36, no. 5 (1999): 561–85.

[53]On Uskok pirates in the Adriatic, see, Gunther E. Rothenberg, "Venice and the Uskoks of Senj: 1537–1618", *Journal of Modern History* 33, no. 2 (1961): 148–56; Alberto Tenenti, *Piracy and the Decline of Venice, 1580–1615* (Berkeley, CA:

a sexagenarian German merchant on his way to Constantinople from Venice, who was suspected of espionage against the Republic due to his erstwhile service to Charles V and Philip II of Spain. Accordingly, the Venetian representatives were ordered to arrest him when the ship carrying him docked at a port under their territorial jurisdiction, seize his merchandise, and dispatch him to Venice.[54]

As correspondence fuelled the flow of communication between the Ten and their delegates, they took precautions against the multitude of risks involved in the dispatch, transportation, and delivery of letters. To ensure that at least one copy would safely reach its intended recipient, duplicates were routinely sent via several routes. In the German merchant's case, copies of the letters were sent overland, via the Venetian envoy in Naples, and by sea, through the *Capitano del Golfo* (a senior naval commander of the Venetian fleet). The sea-route letter took about four days to reach Corfu, and another five days to be forwarded from the local *Provveditore* to his counterpart in Zante via Cephalonia.[55] Accordingly, the historical value of this episode lies in evidencing how the Ten's multidirectional instructions, which helped coordinate the successful execution of a particular task, were seamlessly communicated via the medium of correspondence. Correspondence, therefore, had a managerial function within Venice's central intelligence organisation, serving not only as a tool for communicating orders and directives, but also as a briefing and accounting instrument utilised by the managers and the managed in order to keep each other apprised.

What becomes apparent from the above is that, contrary to more rudimentary espionage networks created by powerful individuals in power in other Italian and European states,[56] Venice's secret service functioned like an organisation of public administration with managerial structures that determined the working relationships between its members. At the top of the hierarchy the Council of Ten took all executive decisions and stage-managed the operations that were assigned to those acting at their behest, such as Venetian diplomats and governors, military commanders, secretaries, and lay spies and informants. By deputising and delegating tasks to the relevant subordinate authority, the Ten managed to compare and contrast information in order to evaluate it in a systematic manner. But how did the Council of Ten assume the authority needed in order to delegate duties and to oversee the work of their far-flung intelligence network? In other words, how did the Ten manage to create a centrally organised secret service? The answer to this question lies in formal regulations.

In order to take formal decisions, the Council of Ten engaged in official deliberations the outcomes of which were expressed in formal decrees and regulations and registered in the Ten's official secret registers. Throughout the sixteenth century, the Ten introduced a slew of formal regulations on the value and function of official state secrecy; on the use of methods of encryption; on the appointment of formal informers and casually salaried spies; and on several other issues relating to official espionage and intelligence

University of California Press, 1967), 3–15; Catherine W. Bracewell, *The Uskoks of Senj: Piracy, Banditry, and Holy War in the Sixteenth-Century Adriatic* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press: 1992); Edigi Ivetic, "Gli uscocchi fra mito e storiografia", in *"Venezia non è da guerra": L'isontino, la società friulana e la Serenissima nella guerra di Gradisca (1615–1617)*, ed. Mauro Gaddi and Andrea Zannini (Udine: Forum, 2008), 389–97.

[54]ASV, CX, *Deliberazioni Secrete*, Reg. 13, cc. 108 v–111 v (18, 28 June 1593).
[55]Ibid.
[56]See Iordanou, *Venice's Secret Service*, esp. ch. 1.

operations.[57] These regulations had two distinct functions: Firstly, they determined and dictated uniform and interdependent ways of working across all different spheres of activity within Venice's state bureaucracy and intelligence apparatus. Secondly, transcending the purpose of mere administrative orders to their formal representatives and state officials, these regulations assumed a managerial overtone, even an outright managerial function.

Since we are dealing with an emergent, proto-modern state bureaucracy based on managerial practices, it seems prudent to draw on the work of one of the foundational thinkers of the bureaucratic management theory, the German sociologist Max Weber (1864–1920), in order to elaborate further on this contention. Dwelling on Weber's work is not fortuitous. It is a response to a recent call made, primarily, by management historians and organisation studies scholars, to critically use Weber's work to 'reinvestigate the past, to spark radical questioning in the present and to change our field in positive ways for the future'.[58] Indeed, Weber's work offers great insights to the historical development of management theory and practice.[59] According to Weber, in its purest form, management is built on regulations, knowledge of which constitutes 'special technical expertise' that leads to a certain degree of consistency and homogeneity in the way human action is organised.[60] Accordingly, the Ten's regulations on official state secrecy and on ways of conducting intelligence operations constituted what Weber described as 'an administrative order' that communicated 'general rules and regulations which are more or less stable, more or less exhaustive, and which can be learned.'[61] These rules and regulations demarcated the expectations of how administrative staff as well as anyone involved directly with the organisation of work within the Venetian intelligence organisation were expected to act and conduct themselves.[62] By imposing a measure of consistency and uniformity in this manner, the Ten's formal regulations became enablers in the process of central intelligence organisation.[63] Accordingly, they spawned an organisational mentality premised on managerial ideals.

The development of this type of organisational mentality built upon managerial ideals – and even the accounting notions on which the reporting system implemented by the Ten was premised – was not a novelty within the Venetian state administration. In the Arsenal, as Venice's state shipyards were called, managerial and accounting practices that superseded the artisanal type of industrial organisation had already emerged from the fifteenth century, while a distinct managerial discourse had developed by the late sixteenth century.[64] Similar to the Arsenal, the Venetian intelligence organisation was a social structure held together by the legal authority vested in the Ten by formal rules and regulations issued after careful deliberation. This authority departed from more conventional forms of power and control that were imposed primarily by tradition or charisma,[65] as in the case of other Italian and European states. In practice, this meant that

[57]Iordanou, *Venice's Secret Service*.
[58]Stephen Cummings, Todd Bridgman, John Hassard, and Michael Rowlinson, *A New History of Management* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017), 146.
[59]Ibid.
[60]Weber, *Economy and Society*, 2: 958.
[61]Ibid., 2: 958.
[62]Ibid., 1: 52.
[63]Max Weber called this attribute "Verwaltungsordnung". See Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1: 51.
[64]Luca Zan and Keith W. Hoskin, "Il 'discorso del maneggio': Lo sviluppo del discorso manageriale e contabile all'Arsenale di Venezia, 1580–1650", *Ateneo Veneto* 36 (1998): 7–62, at 50; Zan, 'Accounting and Management Discourse'.
[65]Weber, *Economy and Society*, 1: 48.

in Venice 'powers of command' were 'legitimated by that system of rational norms', in the sense that those serving in the Venetian intelligence organisation were expected to obey less the Ten *per se* than the decrees and directives issued by them, which, in turn, legitimised their power of command.[66] Accordingly, it was the implementation of such regulations stemming from the Ten's formal deliberations that rendered Venice's intelligence organisation possible by enabling 'a commitment to order, method and system'.[67] This endorsed their managerial capacity and legitimated their intelligence organisation. Indeed, according to Weber, any social structure built on hierarchical roles between superiors and subordinates and premised on some kind of authority that materialised via commonly accepted rules and regulations can be perceived as an organisation.[68] The Venetian intelligence organisation, composed of geographically dispersed state representatives and their state officials, men of the military and the navy, state secretaries based either in Venice or overseas, as well as casually salaried spies and informants, all headed by the Council of Ten and managed through a formal system of regulations that dictated commonly accepted patterns of work, fits Weber's conceptualisation of organisation. In this respect, the Venetian secret service resembled Weber's definition of organisation (*Verband*) as 'a social relationship which is either closed or limits the admission of outsiders', and that is determined by regulations that 'are enforced by specific individuals: a chief and, possibly, an administrative staff, which normally has administrative powers'.[69]

The regulations that provided the infrastructure for early modern Venice's central intelligence organisation would not have been enforced without a fundamental tool of management – correspondence. As we saw above, within the context of the Venetian intelligence organisation, official correspondence became less a means of information exchange and more a vital tool of management, which involved complex processes of issuing, sending, receiving, executing, and reporting on written instructions. Accordingly, the Venetian intelligence organisation was built on basic managerial and administrative processes that were implemented via a string of formal regulations, becoming, thus, formal bureaucratic practices that authorised the Ten's power of command for the purposes of state security. Consequently, the organisation of Venice's intelligence apparatus is indicative of an emerging form of organisation of work that historian and accounting theorist Keith Hoskin styled 'governmental management',[70] echoing Michel Foucault's notion of governmental management as the multivalent process that 'has population at its main target and apparatuses of security as its essential mechanisms.'[71] Undeniably, this type of managerialism emerged in a society that did not recognise it as such but developed as a response to ad-hoc socio-political challenges faced by elites in their efforts, and eventually failure, to maintain Venice's economic and political hegemony in the

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[66]Ibid., 2: 954.
[67]Zan, "Accounting and Management Discourse", 150.
[68]Weber, *Economy and Society*, 2: 957 and 1: 51.
[69]Ibid., 1: 48.
[70]Keith W. Hoskin, "Getting to the Surface of Things: Foucault as a Theorist and Historian of Management and Accounting", in *Foucault and Managerial Governmentality: Rethinking the Management of Populations, Organizations and Individuals*, ed. Alan McKinlay and Eric Pezet (New York: Routledge, 2017), 33–53.
[71]Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France (1977–1978)*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), 107.

international arena.[72] Nevertheless, the accomplishment of authority through legal-rational administration is notable here, as it enabled the Ten, as the organisational elites, to allocate human resources efficiently for the implementation of complex intelligence missions. Consequently, their organisational and managerial practices created a form of governing that bears a resemblance to a hybrid form of what has been termed 'modern managerialism'.[73]

Ultimately, the Venetian intelligence service functioned as a complex organisation of public administration with managerial structures that determined uniform and inter-laced ways of working between its members. This organisation was not seeking profit maximisation; instead, it was premised upon 'a logic of common good, or public interest in military and economic terms.'[74] Accordingly, even though the Venetians developed a remarkable administrative apparatus, the development of such an apparatus is as significant as the novel principles of organising and the new mentality of management that they created.

## Methodological issues enmeshed in the study of early modern intelligence organisations

One of the primary issues with regard to the study of early modern intelligence and espionage practices is the challenge of locating relevant archival material. The case of early modern Venice is somewhat different, primarily because, as part of the centralisa-tion of the Venetian intelligence organisation, a 'secret' archive – the *Cancelleria Secreta* – had been created for the safe storage of documents that would nowadays be termed *classified*.[75] The existence and preservation of the *Secreta*, in combination with the overreliance of the Venetian secret service on written communication for both manage-ment and accounting purposes, has resulted in the survival of countless archival records. Dating from the early sixteenth century, these records stood the test of time and, existing in abundance, offer scholars a wealth of information on Venice's intelligence apparatus. This is in contrast to other early modern states' intelligence pursuits, which, perhaps due to lack of surviving records, have not benefitted from the level of scholarly exploration and analysis that early modern Venice been subjected to and which might confer to the latter a misguided sense of precocity, even exceptionalism.

Still, in the process of consulting these extant records, it is important to consider any methodological and epistemological deficiencies enmeshed in the historical study of state secrecy and intelligence operations. These deficiencies include the disproportionate survival of 'secret' records, especially those involving the higher echelons of the Venetian society who also held the reins of the Venetian intelligence

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[72]On the history of managerialism, see Matthias Kipping and Behlül Usdiken, "History in Organization and Management Theory: More Than Meets the Eye", *The Academy of Management Annals* 8, no. 1 (2014): 535–88.

[73]On the provenance of managerialism, see Keith W. Hoskin and Richard H. Macve, "The Genesis of Accountability: The West Point Connections", *Accounting, Organizations and Society* 13, no. 1 (1988): 37–73; idem, "Reappraising the Genesis of Managerialism: A Re-examination of the Role of Accounting at the Springfield Armory, 1815–1845", *Accounting, Auditing and Accountability Journal* 7, no 2 (1994): 4–29.

[74]Zan, "Accounting and Management Discourse", 165–6.

[75]On a detailed analysis of the *Cancelleria Secreta*, see Fabio Antonini, "Historical Uses of the Secret Chancery in Early Modern Venice: Archiving, Researching and Presenting the Records of State", (PhD diss., Birkbeck College, University of London, 2016). On the role of the *Cancelleria Secreta* within Venice's intelligence organisation, see Iordanou, *Venice's Secret Service*, esp. ch. 3.

organisation, as opposed to those referring to more humble actors, such as volunteer or casually salaried employees and women. These deficiencies also involve the pervasive aura of myth, which has traditionally engulfed historical works on intelligence.[76] In consequence, historians have to rely heavily on the reconstruction and narration of facts, which, as philosophers of history have argued, imposes upon historiography a distorted sense of structure.[77]

More pronounced methodological and epistemological limitations emerge when, as in the case of the present article, historians wish to explore organisational entities of the early modern era. The first type of limitations is linguistic. To be more specific, in order to explore the social processes that led to the systematic organisation of intelligence practices in the early modern period, historians need to borrow concepts and terms from the disciplines of Intelligence Studies, Sociology, Organisation, and Management Studies. Several of these terms, more often than not, had neither been conceived of, nor were used by actors in the distant past. Accordingly, such terms not only entail the risk of anachronism, as discussed at the introduction of this article; they are, also, either unknown or irrelevant to historians.[78] This leads to the main epistemological hindrance in the historical examination of primordial organisations: an abiding disagreement between historians and social scientists in relation to the value of archival records. While historians cherish archival records as their primary data and the cornerstone of historiography, for organisation theorists archival sources alone cannot confer a genuine contribution on our historical understanding of organisations in the early modern era.[79] This is because the archive is seen as an arsenal of 'anecdote and chronology' that can only provide 'background information' on the history of organisations.[80]

In order to rectify these issues, historians might consider combining the use of established theoretical concepts deriving from the above-mentioned disciplines – such as 'intelligence', 'counterintelligence', 'management', 'accounting', and 'organisation' – with the critical analysis of pertinent archival material and relevant literature. This interdisciplinary approach enables both factual richness and a methodological plurality, which allows for more holistic historical explorations and analyses. It also provides the groundwork for more theoretically informed historical analysis. Accordingly, as this article has shown, combining the study of archival records – some freshly discovered, others freshly interpreted – with concepts and theories stemming from relevant or adjacent disciplines can produce new

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[76]Marshall, *Intelligence and Espionage*.

[77]This position is known as "impositionalism". See, for example, David Carr, "Narrative and the Real World: An Argument for Continuity", *History and Theory 25*, no. 2 (1986): 117–31; Andrew P. Norman, "Telling it Like it Was: Historical Narratives on their Own Terms", *History and Theory 30*, no. 20 (1991): 119–35; Alex Callinicos, *Theories and Narratives: Reflections on the Philosophy of History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[78]Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 1; Antonio Strati, *Theory and Method in Organization Studies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2000), 158.

[79]Michael Rowlinson, John Hassard, and Stephanie Decker, "Research Strategies for Organizational History: A Dialogue between Historical Theory and Organization Theory", *Academy of Management Review 39*, no. 3 (2014): 250–74, at 251.

[80]Fabio Rojas, "Power through Institutional Work: Acquiring Academic Authority in the 1968 Third World Strike", *Academy of Management Journal 53*, no. 6 (2010): 1263–80; Rowlinson et al., "Research Strategies"; Paul C. Godfrey et al., "What is Organizational History? Toward a Creative Synthesis of History and Organization Studies", *Academy of Management Review 4*, no. 4 (2016): 590–608, at 593.

questions that can, in turn, generate fresh, yet plausible accounts and interpretations of the social processes that brought about intelligence organisation and management in the early modern era.

## Conclusion

The normative depiction of organisation as the by-product of the Industrial Revolution inevitably excludes early modern administrative bodies from systematic historical analyses of organisational entities.[81] Early modern organisations such as the Venetian secret service, however, were premised on a form of governance that is not widely dissimilar to contemporary managerial structures. As this article has endeavoured to show, even in the early modern era, the organisation of intelligence and espionage operations entailed social processes and interactions that, while premised on secrecy, were also built on the systematic and progressive process of coordinating a network of people who shared interwoven and interdependent ways of working and even common professional values, knowledge, and technology, more often than not across large distances.[82] Uncovering and analysing these organisational processes requires moving beyond simplistic narrative accounts of secret agents, their secrets, and their operations, casting the focus, not on the revelatory value of clandestine missions but on the social processes that generated them. This is significant for the study of early modern secrecy and intelligence. Indeed, historical analyses of the social processes on which early modern espionage and secrecy practices were premised are still lacking, primarily because they require a certain degree of interdisciplinarity, aside from the methodological challenges involved in the paper chase for surviving records.[83]

Ultimately, the intelligence apparatus headed by the Venetian Council of Ten is emblematic of a centrally organised secret service that bears some salient similarities with contemporary intelligence organisations, despite the overwhelming lack of technology in that period. Involving a variety of agents, from those of patrician stock to those of humble bearing, early modern intelligence emerges as a flexible and multifaceted activity that involves the collection, evaluation, communication, and action upon information of diplomatic, political, military, and even economic value that had to be concealed and protected. The notion, therefore, that central political systems responsible for the surveillance of internal and external threats are characteristic of the 'modern' state does no longer stand on firm ground.[84] Instead, the challenge for the historian is to recognise the contemporary in the past and the past in the contemporary, acknowledging the inherent[85] challenges of this task. Yet, it is only by doing so that we will be able to

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[81]Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*, 2nd ed. (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1970), 1; Strati, *Theory and Method*, 158.

[82]On organisation as the post-industrial corporation, see, amongst others, Alfred D. Chandler, Jr., *Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of the American Industrial Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1962); idem, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1977); Louis Galambos, "The Emerging Organizational Synthesis in Modern American History", *Business History Review* 44, no. 3 (1970): 279–90; idem, "Technology, Political Economy and Professionalization: Central Themes of the Organizational Synthesis", *Business History Review* 57, no. 4 (1983): 471–93; idem, 'Recasting the Organizational Synthesis: Structure and Process in the Twentieth and Twenty-First Centuries', *Business History Review* 79, no. 1 (2005): 1–38.

[83]Iordanou, *Venice's Secret Service*.

[84]For exceptions, see Daniel Jütte, *The Age of Secrecy: Jews, Christians, and the Economy of Secrets, 1400–1800*, trans. Jeremiah Riemer (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015); Iordanou, *Venice's Secret Service*.

[85]See, Bernard Porter, *Plots and Paranoia: A History of Political Espionage in Britain, 1790–1988* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Richard C. Thurlow, *The Secret State: British Internal Security in the Twentieth Century* (London: Wiley, 1994).

understand the fascinating ways in which organised intelligence and espionage evolved through the centuries.

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## Notes on contributor

*Dr Ioanna Iordanou* is a Reader in Human Resource Management at Oxford Brookes University and an Honorary Research Fellow at the Centre for the Study of the Renaissance (Warwick University). She is the author of Venice's Secret Service: Organizing Intelligence in the Renaissance (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) and co-editor of Spy Chiefs I: Intelligence Leaders in the United States and United Kingdom (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018), and Spy Chiefs II: Intelligence Leaders in Europe, the Middle East, and Asia (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018).

## ORCID

Dr Ioanna Iordanou http://orcid.org/0000-0003-1849-1824