



## **CUT OUT THE MIDDLEMAN: AUSTRALIA-EU INTELLIGENCE SHARING IN A POST-BREXIT WORLD**

Despite a separation of close to 15,000km, Australia and the European Union share a number of key strategic interests; the preservation of the rules-based international order; a stable Middle East free of WMD's, and; peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific. Achieving these goals is no easy task and requires a developed network of strategic partnerships between the two parties. Historically, Australia and the EU have used London as a go-between for the transfer of intelligence and information. However, Britain's exit from the EU has left a glaring gap in intelligence sharing collaboration between Canberra and Brussels.

A strong Australia-EU intelligence sharing agreement is vital to Australia's strategic interests in combatting international organised crime, including; terrorism, human trafficking, drug trafficking, tax evasion and cyberattacks. Australia and Germany strengthened bilateral security relations in 2017 through the implementation of the Australia-Germany Advisory Group, while the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee recently commissioned an inquiry into opportunities for strengthening Australia's relations with France. Yet, these agreements do little to advance Australian-EU intelligence sharing as a whole.

Australia must explore and develop a blueprint for intelligence sharing and national security cooperation with the EU in order to bridge the gap made by the UK's decision to leave the EU. The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade along with the Department of Home Affairs must work to establish a direct link between the Australian Intelligence Community and the EU Intelligence and Situation Centre. Doing so will not only ensure Australia has the capabilities to address the threats to its national security, but go a long way to developing a vital strategic relationship in a time when Australia's confidence in the capabilities and commitment of the United States is perhaps not what it used to be.

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