RELATIONES INTERNATIONALES

Impact of Ideological Bias on Intelligence Analysis

Mircea Mocanu[1]

Abstract: This paper intends to explore the consequences of considering that Intelligence support is a communication process between the analyst and the decision-maker. This is important when working to identify ways to improve the quality of intelligence analysis. There are multiple studies on communication process and general analysis to build upon, but there are few interdisciplinary approaches between psychology and intelligence theory. Current approach uses a systemic view of the intelligence cycle as open system and applies psychological concepts and security/analytical requirements. Observation of intelligence failures and intelligence analysis experience, as methods employed in systemic logic, lead to relevant conclusions regarding the main factors to be considered for improving intelligence analysis. Main results of this approach point to the importance of understanding the psychological determinants of the key participants in Intelligence support. The implications of controlling the factors able to corrupt intelligence analysis have practical value for the work of researchers and practitioners in intelligence. This approach opens avenues for better understanding analytical errors and for identifying ways to preserve the quality of Intelligence support, at both individual and institutional levels. Conclusions of such research may extend to the quality of public debates in the media.

Keywords: Objective analysis; epistemic value; psychological determinants; ideological intrusion; cognitive function

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[1] Associate professor, School of Communication and International Relations, Danubius International University, Galati, Romania, Address: 3 Galați Blvd., Galați, Romania, Corresponding author: mirceamocanu@univ-danubius.ro.

1. Introduction

A systemic approach to any process offers an important view of the relations between the actors of that process, and Section 1 of this paper builds upon previous work in that respect (Mocanu, 2013). The correct definition of that relationship between actors of Intelligence support is crucial for understanding the roles and consequences of their actions. When the relation between the intelligence subsystem and its superior subsystem is identified as a communication process, the concepts used in psychology offer important tools for describing *Intelligence support*. Section 2 below selects, adapts and adds to previous text (Mocanu, 2012). Among the psychological aspects of this approach, communication functions help define the features of intelligence analysis. A basic function of communication, in psychological terms, is its *cognitive function*, which defines the essential characteristics of valuable analysis. In this context, it is important to identify the vulnerabilities of intelligence analysis to intrusions that may corrupt the quality of analysis, therefore, the quality of intelligence support in risk management / operational planning. Section 4 of this paper builds upon the issue of seeking the optimal distance in Intelligence support (Mocanu, 2012, pp. 15-26). Controlling these vulnerabilities seems to be one of the best ways to improve intelligence analysis.

2. The Gateways of Intelligence Cycle as Open System

Seen as a constant activity within the national security or military organizations, Intelligence support draws attention upon the systemic position of the whole informative structure, as a sub-system of the national / military authorities. This relation points towards its hierarchical superior structures, since above the analysis body there is the decision-making sub-system. These decision structures include the commanding officer, the "sovereign" or "the general" as Sun Tzu called the commander-in-chief, as well as all kinds of planning staffs – in the military; or president / prime-minister, administrative boards, councils, ministries/departments – in a civilian government. Thus, any analysis crew is placed to operate inside another organization operating in the national security or military structures. These larger systems perform functional duties in the scope of risk management, where the upper sub-system covers the decision / management function, and the analysis sub-system deals with preparing the knowledge basis for proper decisions. In this relation, the practical destination of intelligence products provided by analysis is the inclusion of

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actionable intelligence into decisions and even subsequent actions. Such relation clears the specific roles of the two sub-systems operating towards the general objectives of national security / military operation, considering the realities of security / military environment.

The decisional / risk management sub-system and the intelligence sub-system exchange systemic components in form of resources (materiel, energy – in its psychological sense), information and superstructure items (rules, theoretical concepts, norms, directives, tasks). These transfers reflect the open system feature of the intelligence sub-system, underlining functional transfers through so-called "gateways" to outside the intelligence organization (Mocanu, 2013).

The interaction of major interest, i.e. the information exchange, is part of the general "information metabolism" described by the Intelligence cycle, presented in Figure 1 in its most general classical shape.
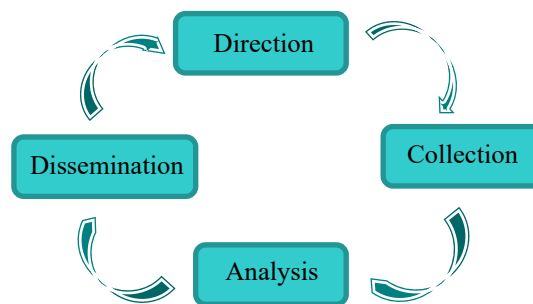

Figure 1. The Classic Model of Intelligence Cycle

The interaction between the intelligence structure (in short J2) and the decisional domain of the security or military system is mainly performed through two gateways of the Intelligence cycle, i.e. tasking and feedback towards J2, respectively Dissemination, which is the practical way of providing intelligence support by J2 for the benefit of decision-makers in the security / military system.

It is significant that an activity involving "planning, decision and action" operates outside of the Intelligence cycle, as a loop between *Dissemination* and *Direction* (that of the Intelligence structure itself). This effort is crossed by the information flow but is not part of the intelligence organization, it reflects a decision-making duty. However, the fate of information processed in that phase remains a J2 core responsibility.

In professional literature, the two moments of intelligence process which show the transfers in and out of the intelligence sub-system, outside the intelligence organization, are described to be the most troublesome. Such a statement has merit since these gateways are the points of contact with the superior sub-system of decision-making, while other activities occur within J2 itself. It appears to be normal for activities inside a consolidated organization to benefit from the smooth routine of a cohesive system, as it is more steadily regulated, with internal fine-tuning procedures, and personnel bonding. Meanwhile, the transfers between systems operating on different philosophies would be expected to bring functional frictions.

3. Intelligence Support as a Communication Process

The *Dissemination phase* of the classical Intelligence cycle reflects just the mechanism of information transfer, in various forms, a simple delivery from the intelligence agency to the consumer / beneficiary. In language proper to security domain, where secret / protected information is the name of the game, this mechanism constitutes, practically, the *Intelligence support* physics. Thus, basically, a structure specialized in a certain field transfers contents, typically informational, to another structure, which uses the professional contents for specific decisions and actions. Obviously, this is a communication process between human entities (individual or collective), although, in the process, communication tools might be technical in nature.

According to dictionary, the verb "to communicate" derives from Latin "communicare" (through French language), and defines the action of "making known, letting know, informing, saying, telling" (DEX, 1984, p. 179). Such definition only identifies the informational substance as object of the transfer, yet other definitions offer a larger scope of the contents transferred to the receiver end: "Communication is a process where persons share information, ideas, and sentiments" (Hybels & Weaver, 1986), or "communication is a process of transmitting a sense from somebody to somebody else" (Mocanu, 2012). Therefore, not only information is transferred during communication, but also ideas, feelings, and sense, which is valid, writ large, for Intelligence support as well (The dilemma about the possibility of transferring sense is off the scope of this paper.).

Psychologists specialized in communication theory consider (Mocanu, 2012) the following *functions of communication*: *cognitive, affective* / emotional / poetic,

actional, and the *socialization function.* All these are relevant for understanding the chemistry of Intelligence support. While these functions are defined for the general communication process, they are valid for solid interpretation in intelligence:

- The *cognitive function* defines the general constant transfer of intelligence products contributing to improving a deep knowledge of the security environment, thus, to achieving intelligence superiority.

- The *affective / poetic function* triggers motivation beyond the logical, deterministic level, and activates emotional mechanisms linked to the common interests served by the intelligence structure and the decision-makers as well. These parties use such energy to shape the pro-active and opportune response to security / operational threats, in a limited time frame.

- The *actional function* provides basic concrete fundaments for decisions through the value of actionable intelligence, and even transfers informational contents directly into action, through measurable parameters used in pragmatic measures taken in international relations or military operations.

- The *socialization function* contributes to building a cohesive community including the intelligence structure and the consumers of intelligence products, for the benefit of the common interest (in military language, "*commander's intent*"). At the same time, the socializing function helps build effective professional relations and strengthen an *esprit-de-corps* within the national security community, and even at alliance / coalition level.

Among the functions mentioned above, the *poetic function* component of Intelligence support operates when intelligence products cross beyond the mechanic / cybernetic transfer of information and generate or feed motivations pertaining to the emotional realm, incentives of nature to enforce or trigger important decisions in view of concrete actions.

The Shannon and Weaver model for communication processes, shown in Figure 2[1], reflects physical communication, the engineering point of view. This vision ignores the human factor, but it provides all components of the technical structure that can affect information transfer. Obviously, this model reflects only the cognitive function of communication and ignores any manifestation of the human factor.
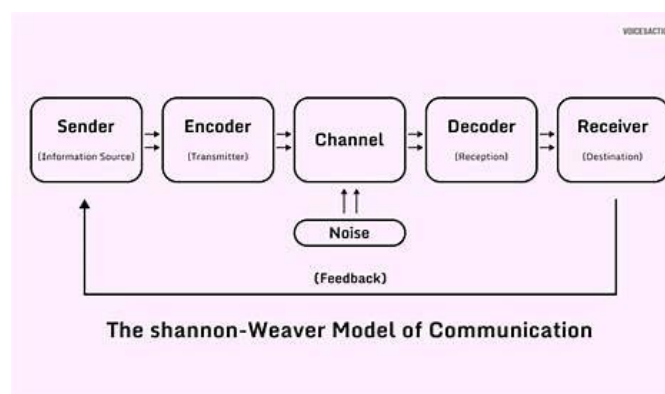
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[1] https://voiceofaction.org/.

Figure 2. The Shannon - Weaver Model of Communication

In contrast, psychological models of communication ignore the technical factor, and reflect the action of the psychological ingredients that impact on the communication process. In this regard, there are several models of communication pointing to various kinds of interpersonal communication, ranging from verbal or non-verbal communication to public speech or mass communication. In any variant, communication as psychological process considers the psychological context and the individual features of both the transmitter and the receiver. These ingredients are called "*psychological determinants*", they bear personal / individual characteristics and reflect both long-term and short-term conditions. The long-term conditions may be life experience, professional expertise, sentiments, beliefs, attitudes, character features, temperament of each individual; meanwhile, the short-term conditions include situations like illness, physical pain, fatigue, stress, even hunger, thirst, or fickle whims.

All humans, as individuals, including all analysts, "construct their own version of reality on the basis of information provided by the senses, but this sensory input is mediated by complex mental processes that determine which information is attended to, how it is organized, and the meaning attributed to it" (Heuer, 1999, p. 4). But what specifically shapes this mental process of the analysts? "What people perceive, how readily they perceive it, and how they process this information after receiving it are all strongly influenced by past experience, education, cultural values, role requirements, and organizational norms, as well as by the specifics of the information received" (Heuer, 1999, p. 4).

4. The Epistemic Character of Intelligence Analysis

In the context of communication theory, intelligence analysis offers the cognitive component of intelligence support as a form of the general activity in the security domain (in broad sense, of national security), or a part of operational planning (in the military domain). From this point of view, the meaning of intelligence, its *raison d'être,* is to offer "truth to power", as Michael Herman, the British founder of intelligence theory, paraphrased an 18th Century saying of the Quakers in the American Colonies (as Wikipedia claims).

Certainly, the epistemic character of intelligence analysis puts this field near scientific research, considering the honest attitude towards all angles of facts and developments, considering curiosity, fervor, and perseverance in seeking the truth, as well as through the instrumentation of intellectual doubt regarding all analytical elements. The analyst's courage lies in entertaining unpopular courses of action, such as "What can the Dragon do to win over Prince Charming?" In other words, "an optimal analytical strategy requires that analysts search for information to disconfirm their favorite theories, not employ a satisficing strategy that permits acceptance of the first hypothesis that seems consistent with the evidence" (Heuer, 1999, p. 48). A condition of such intellectual detachment would be "to pull the available information together impartially, and that person should be someone who does not have an institutional agenda in relation to what might be done" (Omand, 2010, p. 194) as result of his or her judgement.

The honest character of intelligence analysis is crucial for the success of intelligence support, that must fulfill exclusively a cognitive function, of epistemic nature, aiming to understand reality as accurately as possible, considering all possible developments in the security environment. To that end, the contents of intelligence products must be as objective as possible, in order to offer the decision makers "the naked truth" (or the best approximation of the truth). In other words, "for analysts, the mechanism for achieving truth is analytic objectivity" (Marrin, 2019, p. 353), which means emotional distance. James Marchio highlighted that "total objectivity is the hallmark of all intelligence reports and estimates and… the Intelligence Community's role is to provide information and professional judgments on foreign developments, without coloration by policy considerations" (Marrin, 2019, p. 352). This deliverable would later be used according to plans and objectives of a deontic nature, i.e. for decisions and actions. From a deontological perspective, such an attitude should be preserved even knowing the decision-makers" independence from

the conclusions offered through intelligence support. As advised in UK Government's Counter-Terrorism Strategy (CONTEST 2), "Let things be such that if our policy-making master is to disregard our knowledge and wisdom, he will never do so because our work was inaccurate, incomplete, or patently biased. Let him disregard us only when he must pay greater heed to someone else. And let him be uncomfortable—thoroughly uncomfortable—about his decision to heed this other' provider of decision component (Omand, 2010, p. 42).

This requirement is even written in regulations. For example, „according to the analytic standards articulated in Intelligence Community Directive 203, intelligence analysts are required to "perform their functions with objectivity". These standards establish the minimum expectations for professional products and practices... Analytic objectivity in particular is highly valued because it is seen as the most effective way to reduce distortion of the analytic product resulting from subjectivity or bias, which in extreme cases can result in "analytic politicization" or "intelligence to please". (Marrin, 2019, p. 350) However, it needs to be underlined that many dilemmas lark above the issue of truth (Marrin, 2019, pp. 352-359), which can be regarded more as a permanent quest for perfection, for absolute, than a practical activity.

Just for the sake of *audiatur et altera pars*, "intelligence could truly speak truth to power and policy could speak truth to intelligence" (Moore, 2011, p. 66), considering the result oriented deontic view.

From a philosophical prospective, the intelectual construct used by the decision-maker is a scheme oriented towards an *Idea*, „having a diversity and an order of its parts, which need to be crucial, and *a priori* determined by the principle of serving a goal. This construct steered towards an idea, that is ideological, puts the *Idea*, built in advance of empiric developments, and thus establishes an *Architectural unity"* (Kant, p. 598). In contrast, the construct operated by the analyst is "a scheme which is not built to serve an *Idea*, meaning a top objective of the action, yet empirically, reflecting objectives that emerge randomly" (Kant, 2009, p. 598). This construct provides „*Technical unity*", based on facts, in the epistemic domain, not following the deontic *Idea* (Kant, 2009, p. 598).

As an interhuman communication process, Intelligence support cannot avoid the natural action by all components / communication functions. However, only the cognitive function reflects the epistemic character of intelligence analysis (and of any kind of analysis claiming objectivity as much as possible, for that matter).

Meanwhile, the other three functions (affective, actional, and socialization) reflect the phychological determinants specific to each transmitting and to each receiving individual. K.L. Gardiner points out that, "in looking at the dynamics of such interactions between the analytic and policy communities, we should bear in mind that different personality types are likely to be involved" (Omand, 2010, p. 193). In the chemistry of generating psychological determinants, these various types of personalities of the actors perform in view of the *Interest of the system* whom intelligence analyst serves. On the other hand, beside the personality and temperament of each decision-maker, in an institutional context, "as a generality, policy-makers are driven by a sense of public duty and want to change the world for the better, through possessing and using power… Those who reach key positions tend to be confident in their judgments and are not prone to nervous introspection" (Omand, 2010, pp. 193-194). Meanwhile, underlining a difference in psychological determinants, "analysts are recruited more in an academic or professional mould and will tend to distrust formal power structures that they would regard as "playing politics". They are likely to be more comfortable with the concept of debate and criticism — especially giving it — than taking instructions. They are likely to have questioning personalities" (Omand, 2010, 194), which may generate stress in their relation with hierarchic managers, or with the beneficiaries of their products.

Nevertheless, psychological determinants are also subjected to, and even include an influence of ideological nature, to be explored in the following pages. "How intelligence is interpreted and used depends crucially on the world views both of the analyst and of the reader of the assessment, which will not necessarily be the same. Indeed, the same intelligence may bear very different interpretations" (Omand, 2010, 200). The influence of ideological nature reflects individual beliefs of each participant to intelligence activities, as long-term psychological determinant.

5. The Requirement to Diminish Friction in Intelligence Support

In intelligence collection - the "gateway" located in the opposite side of the intelligence sub-system, Clausewitzian friction in intelligence is caused by the contact of the collecting agent with the hostile security environment, since the holder of the necesary information is hostile, and the information is protected; therefore, by the contact of the intelligence actor with danger.

In case of intelligence analysis, friction is caused by the contact of the analyst with the beneficiary / the consumer of intelligence. This relation / contact takes place between sub-systems with divergent features: the epistemic domain of analysis, respectively the deontic domain of decision-making within the extended bureaucratic system of national security. "Decisionmaking is frequently necessarily subjective, driven by concepts, values, and other normative judgments which shape the interpretation of what is or could be. Decisionmakers are frequently faced with multiple versions of the "truth". According to Richard Horowitz, it is the decisionmaker's conceptual framework, or mindset, or theories, which provides the rationale for choosing one explanation over another, and the final analyst of last resort is always on the policy side. Also, Political decision-makers often have concerns beyond the realm of intelligence. The function of the top political leadership is to protect and advance a country's interests, and in its view, deciding against certain "truths" may be a necessary step in so doing" (Marrin, 2019, p. 355). Who said leadership was easy?

In the context of Intelligence support, an element of friction specific to analysis, in comparison with scientific research, is the institutional pressure upon the analyst to provide the product of analytical work in any moment when the decision-maker requires it. "The system requires the intelligence analyst to come up with an almost instant diagnosis before sufficient hard information, and the broader background information that may be needed to gain perspective, become available to make possible a well-grounded judgment" (Heuer, 1999, p. 16). In other words, the scientific researcher benefits the confort of publishing the result of his work, study and experiments, only when he is confident he holds all scientific arguments for his conclusions, or when his prototype actualy works. In contrast, the dynamics of security environment or military operations prompts the decision-maker to demand the analyst contribution in the very moment when a crucial decison is needed. This pressure overrides the analyst's dilema between two possible courses of action supported by two diverging sets of information, leading to two possible estimates. "The intelligence analyst operates in an environment that exerts strong pressures for what psychologists call *premature closure*" (Heuer, 1999, p. 15). In these cases, the "diagnosis can only be based upon the analysts" preconceptions concerning how and why events normally transpire in a given society" (Heuer, 1999, p. 16), i.e. *psychological determinants* would play a prevalent role in shaping the raw, candid intelligence product.

In the context of the difference noted by Immanuel Kant between the above-mentioned concepts of *technical unity* and the *architectural unity,* Friederich Nietzsche pointed, decades later, that "truth shakes comfort". This impact causes stress / discomfort to those decision-makers who invested in conceptual constructs based on ideology, when facing analyses based on facts, which are not adapted to the ideology steering the decision-makers" line of thought. "To bring these two worlds together, intelligence professionals can take advantage of the opportunity to meld their fact-based inductive tendencies with the visionary, deductive model of policymakers through the application of collective rigor to well-conceived questions" (Moore, 2011, p. 133), in a well-structured institutional discipline.

Generally speaking, intelligence voices rarely disturb the decision-makers with good news, they do not enjoy this privilege, since "few relationships are as challenging or produce as much controversy as the interaction between policy makers and intelligence professionals". Numerous such stressing issues outlining the sophisticated relation between the analyst and the intelligence consumer are described by James Wirtz (Johnson, 2007). Intelligence reports also rarely clear up uncertainties, because "possessing greater likelihood of increased accuracy through objectivity, intelligence analysts would provide the information and interpretations that policymakers did not want to hear. In that sense – and contrary to many current formulations – the original purpose of intelligence analysis was to increase uncertainty through this de facto challenge function rather than to decrease it" (Marrin, 2019, p. 353). For harmonizing the relation during Intelligence support by diminishing the friction in the analyst – decision-maker contact, any diverging element of either party needs to be dealt with. As a reason, Robert Jervis argues that policymakers and decisionmakers "need confidence and political support, and honest intelligence unfortunately often diminishes rather than increases these goods by pointing to ambiguities, uncertainties, and the costs and risks of policies" (Moore, 2011, p. 3).

The stress is caused mainly by the *warning* component as a function of intelligence support, and the most important ingredient of intelligence products. This happens because "governments hate surprises. They hate it when they have to perform U-turns and ditch cherished policies in the face of unexpected events." (Omand, 2010, p. 209) On the other hand, for the analyst, this contact is not a cup of tea either, because he "works in a closed environment in which the main readers are members of the intelligence world's most challenging audience - the policy making community" (Heuer, 1999, IX). In these conditions, however, the U.S. Intelligence

Community Directive 203/ 2015 stipulates that "analytic assessments must not be distorted by, nor shaped for, advocacy of a particular audience, agenda, or policy viewpoint. Analytic judgments must not be influenced by the force of preference for a particular policy" (Marrin, 2019, p. 352). This antagonism "is exacerbated when policy is revealed to be flawed and to have ignored intelligence knowledge" (Moore, 2011, p. 3).

While in intelligence collection, the Clausewitzian friction can be diminished by protection measures typical for clandestine operation in hostile environment, friction associated with intelligence support can be diminished by harmonizing the *psychological determinants* of both the analyst and the decision-maker. This means, on one hand, that the decision-maker needs to increase the understanding of analytical / epistemic requirements, possibilities and ethics; the decision-maker should also improve his understanding of the security environment in broad sense (*awareness*), preserving the intellectual openness to entertain courses of action different from the preferred narrative. On the other hand, the analyst should understand the full spectrum of requirements included in the "*commander intent*", naturally aiming to respond effectively to beneficiary's deontic needs and responsibilities. In other words, the analyst must provide accurate actionable substance or credible and solid estimates to be internalized by the decision-makers.

The work ethics require both the analyst and the beneficiary to cooperate in harmony and "the activities to that end are likely to be more mutually reinforcing if their various decisions are guided by understanding of and general sympathy for the 'Grand Strategy' being followed" (Omand, 2010, p. 61) by the whole security organization acting in service of a national interest. As a usual procedure, the British intelligence system practice includes a certain guidance of the analysts down the chain of command, though a list of "points" highlighted when tasking (Omand, 2010, p. 183), i.e. within the Direction phase of the Intelligence cycle. Another practice is to rotate the intelligence analysts in policy positions of the same area of epistemic interest, as they do (or used to do) in certain organizations. Alas, here is the moment when the temptation kicks in, and the analyst thinks that adjusting to the ideological specifics of the beneficiary might be a good idea, as a way of harmonizing the two sets of *psychological determinants*. In other words, the temptation to write in view of pleasing the decision-maker.

In the *Information era* and increasingly complex international security environment, "the close interactions between collector and analyst, and between analyst and user,

have become a feature of the modern intelligence cycle" (Omand, 2010, p. 290). This reality underlines the increasing importance of diminishing the friction among the Actors operating in the intelligence domain, in view of securing the effectiveness of Intelligence support. Considering that cognitive biases in both tribes are inevitable, "we cannot drive this out. We have to learn to accept that they are there and make them explicit" (Omand, 2010, p. 322). "In intelligence analysis, objectivity… is achieved at the level of the individual analyst by the effort to eliminate subjectivity by identifying biases and mitigating their effects" (Marrin, 2019, p. 354). This means bringing those biases forth into the conscientious realm, sharing them and blocking their action, to make sure we diminish the institutional friction. However, as Michael Herman argues, harmonization is necessary also because "Intelligence is part of the government system, and has to have empathy and credibility with the policy-makers it serves. It cannot adopt an Olympian objectivity, or detach itself completely from government's policies and preconceptions. It has to sell its product, and has to be sensitive to its audience to do so" (Marrin, 2019, p. 362), because institutional cohesion is also necessary and beneficial to Intelligence support.

The whole issue of harmonizing the relation between analysts and decision-makers is seen in two optimist-versus-pessimist views: there are the *skeptics*, who "believe that potential improvements to intelligence processes are limited… The other perspective is that of the *meliorists* — those who feel intelligence processes can be improved... preferring to believe that the application of well-informed, mindful expertise, as developed in the present work, can bring positive and substantive value to the fulfillment of the Intelligence Community's obligations" (Moore, 2011, p. 3).

6. The Risk of Corrupting Analysis Through Ideology

It is commonly considered that objectivity is a crucial measure of success in intelligence analysis; consequently, in order to achieve effective intelligence support, one should explore the circumstances when the epistemic core feature of analytical endeavor was jeopardized. From the get-go, we can say that two kinds of analysis depreciation are possible: by voluntary actions, or by involuntary actions. Just to touch on involuntary actions, in best cases, "a policymaker might disregard the alternate possibility because of the declared lack of confidence (which might stem merely from a lack of evidence) and choose the evidentiarily better-supported hypothesis" (Moore, 2011, p. 65). This is not politicization yet and may be considered as a misfortunate occurrence (bad day at the office).

As for the other case, intrusions by voluntary actions stem from hostile motives applied against the objectives pursued by the security system and are built on political and ideological bases. Voluntary intrusions bring to life hostile intensions to alter the mechanisms employed by the analyst to reach conclusions and to produce intelligence reports. Such intrusions pervert analysis according to illegitimate goals, on ideological reasons which should be understood writ large, as based on various allegiances including religious, political, emotional, moral bases. Such ideological considerations may be legitimate, reasonable *per se*, but they should be applied within the deontic realm, i.e. while making decisions and performing practical operations, with transparency and managerial accountability, not at all while forging analytical products, which should be kept epistemic.

Influences of ideological nature upon intelligence analysis constitute *deontic intrusions* against epistemic activities. Such intrusions can operate in three directions:

- Horizontal, from the adversary – the *disinformation operations* in the framework of *cognitive warfare*.
- Vertical, from the hierarchic beneficiaries in analyst's own camp, which means politicization of intelligence production.
- From within, through the action of the analyst own psychological determinants, which make the analytical biases of each analyst, more or less significant.

In case of "horizontal intrusions" originating from political entities outside the country; from enemy military forces; from domestic anti-governmental groups, the hostile action clearly targets the decision-making sub-system, which defines such actions as cognitive warfare components. Such intrusions are not subject of these pages, the scope of this paper is not cognitive warfare, although altering the psychological determinants might result from long term hostile psychological interference.

In case of "vertical intrusions", perpetrated by decision-makers within the upper layers of the analyst's own country / military hierarchy, the institutional interest is subverted by individuals who place their own interests above the institutional interests. In other words, as whispered in the British academic world, "policy-makers quickly learn that intelligence can be used in the same way that a drunk uses a lamp post—for support rather than illumination" (Omand, 2010, 179). Such situations were seen when U.S. vice-president allegedly pressured CIA analysts regarding

Iraq's weapons of mass destruction, in 2002, or when officials of Biden Administration allegedly fabricated the long-debated collusion between the then presidential candidate Donald Trump and the Kremlin (the so-called Russia-Gate), before the U.S. elections of 2016. On the issue of Saddam Hussein's WMDs, the Robb-Silberman Congressional Commission concluded: "there is no doubt that analysts operated in an environment shaped by intense policy-maker interest" (Omand, 2010, p. 177).

Both vertical and horizontal intrusions are voluntary actions by actors with ill intentions towards the quality of the institutional mechanism meant to generate intelligence products. In case of ideological intrusions operating within the analytical body, the phenomenon can be involuntary and may count among possible causes of intelligence errors. These ideological intrusions from within operate as individual analytical biases (preconceptions or ideological / political preferences) shown by the analysts. They sometimes appear for whole teams and are called "group-thinking". However, the analysts seldom disseminate intelligence products directly, they operate inside hierarchic institutions, where a very important segment of actors intervene; they are the managers of analysis departments, or directors of intelligence agencies, who belong to the Direction domain of the Intelligence cycle. Their role is to validate the intelligence products before dissemination, and this oversight can correct possible ideological nuances inserted by the analysts or even embraced by larger analyst teams. "At some point however the arguments must stop, and a judgment be reached, which is the job of the senior managers inside the intelligence community. Their role is often underestimated by academics seeking to model the analyst / policy-maker relationship" (Omand, 2010, p. 164). In case these managers are touched by the same ideological bias, group-thinking becomes a loose cannon, and *confirmation errors* impact on the activity of the whole analytical organization by the habit of seeking evidence and judgements to confirm the favorite narrative. In this regard, becomes necessary "to explore the social psychology of the analytic community and the unconscious influences that may cause the analysts to fail to ask the right questions or to pull punches in their reporting, and the psychodynamics around the decision-makers, whether civil or military, and whether these are conducive to rationality" (Omand, 2010, p. 172).

This risk of corrupting analysis through ideology / politicization can be countered even by management measures. For example, in the US, CIA has an "ombudsman for politicization", who defined politicization of analysis as the situation "when intelligence is being illegitimately influenced by the intelligence community's

knowledge of the answers that the policy-makers want to hear" (Omand, 2010, p. 177). Therefore, institutional solutions target not only the individual analyst level, but also the institutional context, where "we are not talking about the individuals within the service who may be unconscious as to the nature of what they are doing but it is the net effect of what they do" (Omand, 2010, p. 177). In situations where analysis is influenced through the chain of command in an honest manner, without hostile intentions, the issue of the optimal distance between the analyst and the beneficiary was approached elsewhere (Mocanu, 2012). Anyway, "there would be dangers in the analyst becoming embedded within the policy community if that were to become the sole analytic resource" (Omand, 2010, p. 181). Therefore, preserving the analyst ability to keep off the decision-maker's management dealings becomes paramount, if the analytical function is to be maintained pristine (Omand, 2010, p. 181). That is to preserve the epistemic character of analysis, in the deontic environment of risk management.

The problem is not that simple, though, as "sometimes the positions that are closer to what policymakers want to hear are actually more accurate in an absolute sense than independent analysis. Identifying incidents of analytic politicization effectively requires shifting the orientation away from diagnosing distortion or bias, which is going to be there regardless, and more in the direction of intent, which can be incredibly difficult. The bottom line is that efforts to achieve objectivity do not necessarily lead one closer to truth, leaving 'truth' – as implied in the phrase 'speaking truth to power' – both a complicated and contested space" (Marrin, 2019, p. 355).

One of multiple solutions in that regard is *network analysis*, where analysts belonging to various intelligence organizations join their efforts to produce intelligence. When analysts seconded by various nations work together, chances are, their ideological biases get balanced, compensated by diverging biases of their colleagues. This happens in NATO analytical bodies, or in coalition analytical structures, during multinational military operations. Within a national framework, so-called "*communities of interest*" can be established among analysts belonging to various intelligence agencies. However, the pool for such collaborative structures is rather limited, since various national agencies have little domains in common. Such teams can also be formed by inclusion of analysts or experts working outside the intelligence organization, in academia, civilian departments, or even selected local authorities.

The impact of corrupted analysis through ideology / politicization upon intelligence support can be defined in terms of either *intelligence errors* or *intelligence failures*. The difference is important. According to Rob Johnston, while intelligence errors are defined as "factual inaccuracies in analysis resulting from poor or missing data" (Moore, 2011, p. 12), an intelligence failure is a "systemic organizational surprise resulting from incorrect, missing, discarded, or inadequate hypotheses" (Moore, 2011, p. 12). Therefore, ideologization / politicization of analysis causes intelligence failures, not errors.

Many analytical failures in intelligence are caused by cognitive limitations, for example, cultural and linguistic barriers, that alter the interpretation of information or are caused by institutional under-achievements. Broadly said, "if we review these failures through their official re-examinations, certain phrases recur: mind-sets, politicization, and faulty analysis" (Moore, 2011, p. 48). Anyway, the political factor surfaces in all points of view, as "explanations for intelligence failure generally include one or more of the following causal factors: organizational obstacles, psychological and analytical challenges, problems with warning information, and failures of political leadership" (Bing). A simple IA quest (on Bing) offers several causes of intelligence failures:

- Information overload (too much information to be effectively processed);
- Institutional fragmentation (cooperation deficit among intelligence agencies, the so-called "*stovepipe*" phenomenon);
- Lack of / deficit of resources (manpower, technology, information sources);
- Disinformation, manipulation by hostile actors – the horizontal intrusion introduced above;
- Organizational deficiencies (bureaucracy, poor management, restructuring, personnel cuts, abrupt change in generations of analysts or analysis managers);
- Political pressure (in view of certain benefits of political nature) – the vertical intrusion mentioned above;
- Technological limitations (somewhat overlapping with the third item);
- Human errors (for individual reasons such as health, fatigue / burn-out, stress, attitudes).

Causes 4 and 6 fit the problem of analysis corruption from ideological reasons, specifically voluntary intrusions. The internal intrusions, from the analyst's own

causes, can occur as human errors as corrupting factors, which are mentioned under item 8 in the list.

7. The Insidious Character of Ideology Intrusion into Intelligence Analysis

The ideological temptation is natural in analysts; it reflects their aspirations and legitimate, humane need for belonging. It also drives the approach leading to the desired course of action *wishful thinking* or serving a legitimate, even noble cause. This feature can be stronger or weaker, but the general direction is the priority to consider that the most favorable hypothesis is the most likely too. Hence, "the analyst identifies what appears to be the most likely hypothesis — that is, the tentative estimate, explanation, or description of the situation that appears most accurate. Data are collected and organized according to whether they support this tentative judgment, and the hypothesis is accepted if it seems to provide a reasonable fit to the data" (Heuer, 1999, p. 44). "Evidence reveals alternative explanations through pattern-primed, induced inferences about what is going to happen or what has happened already in the past. While the inferences are typically uncertain, they do justify beliefs about phenomena. Justifying beliefs (or theories or hypotheses) presents a case for their accuracy but does not guarantee ground (or any other) 'truth'." (Moore, 2011, p. 37) This is how *confirmation errors* appear in intelligence analysis, leading to intelligence failures.

"This approach has three weaknesses: the selective perception that results from focus on a single hypothesis, failure to generate a complete set of competing hypotheses, and a focus on evidence that confirms rather than disconfirms hypotheses" (Heuer, 1999, p. 44). In selective perception, "analysts, like people in general, tend to see what they are looking for and to overlook that which is not specifically included in their search strategy. They tend to limit the processed information to that which is relevant to the current hypothesis" (Heuer, 1999, p. 44). By selecting the information consistent with the preferred hypothesis, the analyst remains with a large pool of coherent information, which generates the sin of *oversensitivity to consistency* - concept extensively discussed in literature (Heuer, 1999, pp. 120-122), as well as the following. This means that the analyst is self-impressed with the value and coherence of a body of information supporting his preferred hypothesis. The mechanism of selective perception can also lead to other shortfalls in intelligence analysis, such as *overestimating the importance of own authorities* (Heuer, 1999, pp. 138-140), as

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Actor in the security environment; imagining an *illusory correlation* (Heuer, 1999, pp. 140-146) among available pieces of information and supposed causalities; anchoring *analysis* (Heuer, 1999, pp. 150-152) in the natural starting point or in the favorite starting presumptions considered for analysis; and *overestimating the probability of a scenario best-rate fallacy* (Heuer, 1999, pp. 156-157), when the concluding judgement is presented in the shape of a scenario of possible events.

In a nutshell, the cure of such analytic fallacies is the working discipline of securing that all possible hypotheses are considered, which is a rule in the *Analysis of Competing Hypotheses* (ACH) procedure. One of the principles of the ACH technique is precisely to make sure the hypotheses are "*mutually exclusive*", meaning that the list of hypotheses considered for analysis cover together the whole body of imaginable possibilities / courses of action. Therefore, "analysts need to take more time to develop a full set of competing hypotheses, using all three… strategies— theory, situational logic, and comparison" (Heuer, 1999, p. 45). Actually, in U.S., "newer Intelligence Community directives provide for presenting alternative hypotheses as well as documenting confidence levels in sources and in intelligence assessments" (Moore, 2011, p. 65). Many "intelligence practitioners" failures include a lack of proper attention to hypotheses and data collection efforts that are contrary to what they regard as the most likely interpretation of available information" (Moore, 2011, p. 65). Therefore, "the careful analyst will… make a quick review of other possible hypotheses and of evidence not accounted for by the preferred judgment to ensure that he or she has not overlooked some important consideration" (Heuer, 1999, 44). It is worth remembering that the other main ACH principle requires the hypotheses in hand to be "*mutually exclusive*", meaning that the courses of action described by the considered hypotheses should not overlap at all, they should reflect totally separate developments of possible events. To conclude on ACH, it has been argued that "analysts who apply a structured method— hypothesis testing, in this case— to an intelligence problem, outperform those who rely on "analysis-as-art", or the intuitive approach" (Moore, 2011, p. 101), also called *experience-based analysis*.

Just to quickly point out, another usual procedure to secure analysis objectivity is "*red teaming*: a means by which another group of intelligence professionals consider alternative explanations for an issue being scrutinized" (Moore, 2011, p. 41), also included in intelligence handbooks.

The adjustments caused by the analyst's own patriotic feelings reflect his honest adherence to legitimate ideals supporting the interests of the organization he serves, in the service of his country (or its national armed forces). Patriotism is the most innocent, even commendable ideology, at all levels; "I work for my country", "I root for the soccer team of my hometown", "I support the music band of my college". This natural attitude brings along consistency in the temptation to foster a laudable general attitude, yet counterproductive to objective analysis, since the intellect requires a constant disposition for change. Ought to acknowledge, "delay in admitting that a key judgment should be changed may prove fatal in the intelligence world" (Omand, 2010, p. 153). This palatable consistency also subverts other two crucial requirements of analysis, curiosity "an essential attribute for the intelligence analyst" (Omand, 2010, pp. 166-167) and ingenuity "another key attribute" of intelligence analyst (Omand, 2010, pp. 166-167), both being intellectual assets that could lead to '*Evrika!'* type intellectual sparks.

Another issue of this *pro domo* ideology is associating hope to analysis, a perverse bad habit whose consequences were described as "hope is the death of analysis". It is obvious that hating the enemy is quite necessary on the frontline or in the trenches but is counterproductive in analysis. Vivid hope and hubris in supporting the favorite team are commendable in the stands but are quite inadequate in properly assessing the chances of the favorite team before the decisive match. Any analysis of a coach or an *aficionado* just before a decisive match tends to be very optimistic and ignores or underestimates any information that cast doubts upon the desired success. Fanaticism in analysis is probably the worst domestic enemy for effective risk management.

Just to cast a look outside the world of intelligence, in the public discourse, the distortion of analytical commentaries, also supposedly objective for balanced media, alter the informational environment with various impacts, ranging from simply biased, hardly noticeable opinions to straightforward blatant propaganda. The mass impact shows when the audience shapes its preferences towards certain information channels or commentators / producers / analysts, depending on how the psychological determinants of the transmitters and the audience harmonize in the public communication process.

8. Conclusions

There is merit in looking at Intelligence support as a communication process between the analytical structure of the intelligence sub-system and the beneficiaries at the level of national security management, or operational planning, in the military domain. This communication occurs through the gateway between the intelligence domain, considered as an open sub-system, and the decisional / risk management sub-system of the larger security / military system.

In essence, intelligence analysis serves the cognitive function of this communication process, i.e. the transfer of objective processed information. Therefore, a core requirement of analysis is to preserve the epistemic character of such service, in view of developing unbiased knowledge necessary to risk management in the security environment, or operational planning. Analytical endeavor is not meant to partake in the antagonist struggle specific to the deontic domain where the decision-makers operate in risk management. Therefore, the working relation between the analyst and the decision-maker includes friction between two different systems "tribes" with divergent work philosophies / the epistemic domain vs the deontic domain. Any individual of these two groups is described by psychological determinants that shape the sensemaking of bilateral communication and can corrupt the epistemic feature of intelligence support.

The efforts to harmonize the analyst – beneficiary communication friction may lead to alterations of the analysis quality by ideological influence, where the analyst can be subjected to ideological bias. Regardless of the nature of this ideology, objectivity is jeopardized, and the analyst is in danger of ditching his objective critical sense indispensable for a clean intelligence product. Ideological intrusions can be involuntary or voluntary, and they can interfere from hostile entities, from hierarchic pressure, or from within the analyst himself.

The analyst can introduce his own ideological biases, including natural legitimate attitudes. As consequence of such ideological intrusions, analysis can be corrupted and analytical errors can occur, with grave impact upon subsequent decisions and actions taken in the complex security environment / military operation.

Various methods are available to counter ideological intrusions, but the main issue is to make such threat conscious at analyst and analysis management level. As a key contribution of this paper, in the psychological approach on intelligence support, is that causes of analysis corruption by internal ideological biases, psychological determinants of the analysts and analysis managers, as well as those of beneficiaries need to be acknowledged, shared and controlled. In addition to psychological

determinants, institutional requirements should be well observed, as well as specifics of epistemic, respectively deontic requirements at play during Intelligence support.

Besides the effects at the level of national security or military authorities, in the public debate environment, this malign phenomenon can turn the supposedly neutral comments into propaganda and persistently biased narrative. Such corrupt construct can mislead the public opinion towards a false image of the reality regarding various issues of international relations, including ongoing security crises or wars. As security tensions heat up, the stress in public opinion leads to radicalization of attitudes, as well as tensions or even violence in social and political actions.

The implications of various considerations raised in this paper point to the need to better control the psychological factors that can corrupt intelligence support. Follow-up research on this approach may lead to identifying or may improve concrete procedures for detecting and treating insidious threats to secure proper and successful Intelligence support, as well as a sane informational environment in the public discourse.

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