

INTELLIGENCE AND THE POLITICAL SCIENCES: THE MISSION OF THE C.I.A.

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Abstract. *After the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 the international system is in continuous and turbulent transformation. The national system itself no longer exists, if not as a part of the international one. The old-style framework is skipped, and cannot represent the contemporary world any more. Politics cannot be applied only between “Nations”, but rather among sub-systems, “turbulent” and with one major characteristic: uncertainty. Such political turbulence implies a change of parameters, as the system boundaries are no longer able to contain the fluctuations of the variables. The “State-centric” world currently coexists with a “multi – centric” one, equally powerful, though more decentralized. Systemic interdependencies make the international system so complex, turbulent and “chaotic” to warrant a new look. The international system co- evolves with society and is then sensitive to events of feeble importance which may have serious consequences. This new world is readable only with a “systemic” approach, or better with a holistic one. Consequently, we must abandon the linear and Cartesian focus, nowadays obsolete. Cinema and literature have always focused on a romanticized image of the C.I.A. as the spy Agency whose agents were characterized by great lack of scruples in means and methods, in order to achieve their goals (including the license to kill) and a strong antagonism against their colleagues from other countries. In fact, the role and mission of the C.I.A. are clearly set out in the Charter, which describes it as an Agency that provides estimates functional to the maintenance of National Security and the right to the country’s self-determination.*

Keywords: *Intelligence, Secret Services, Security, National Intelligence, C.I.A.’s mission.*

Intelligence and the Political Sciences

After the end of the Cold War and the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 the international system is in continuous and turbulent transformation. The national system itself no longer exists, if not as a part of the international one. The old-style

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framework is skipped, and cannot represent the contemporary world any more. In this respect, J. N. Rosenau¹ stated: "Politics is not international any more, but post-international." Politics is no longer applicable only between "Nations", but rather among sub-systems, "turbulent" and with one major characteristic: uncertainty. Such political turbulence implies a change of parameters, as system boundaries are no longer able to contain the fluctuations of the variables. The turbulence, just as in physics where it refers to fluids, is a flow regime characterized by stochastic changes, and random properties. It is unstable, with random movements. Even nowadays a computing system is defenseless against the irregular motion of fluid parameters and processes, if you do not fully calculate every possible variable. The nature is irregular, but the degree of irregularity remains constant at different scales, it is "fractal". This is suitable for many fields. The structural parameter in transformation is marked by "bifurcation": this means that a tiny change in the parameter values of a system can create a sudden change in the "quality" of the same. In other words, this means that the "State-centric" world currently coexists with a "multi-centric" one, equally powerful, though more decentralized. Systemic interdependencies make the international system so complex, turbulent and "chaotic" to warrant a new look. The international system co-evolves with society and is then sensitive to events of feeble importance which may have serious consequences.

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The uncertainty is nowadays common. The so-called unexpected events become regular cases, the faults are normal and minor accidents give rise to serious consequences. Within complex systems, in fact, interactions cannot be provided as separated from the action of various factors; and strategies depend on the strategies of others. The only way to master change and win such turbulence is through the capability to learn and fit to new situations. This requires analytical skills, intelligence, forecasting and planning / programming, in a word, strategic analysis capabilities. In order to analyze such a mobile and dynamic system, it is necessary to update the methodological tools at our disposal. The causal principle is in crisis. The causal determination is not that one way among many to help you to determine the right decision. Among these methods, or categories, there are three priorities: interaction (or causal connection between them, or functional interdependence), a statistical approach (in other words the final result of joint action of independent or quasi-independent entities), and a holistic structural determination (with a global effect). In other words, we have here the denial of the Cartesian way of thinking and the assessment of a systemic principle.

Only a systemic manner of approach, in fact, can help us understand the context within which each problem develops and each solution should be pursued. It is therefore a prerequisite to refer to the theory of chaos and complexity.

¹ J. N. Rosenau, *Turbulence in world politics: a theory of change and continuity*, Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1990, passim.

² *Ibidem*.

Complexity is “order”, organization, complexes woven together. Chaotic systems appear “random”, but are actually “deterministic”. It means that their future developments are defined by their initial conditions. Thousands of years ago the teachings of Hermes Trismegistus, the Thrice Great, echoed: “For every cause we have an effect and every effect has its cause; everything happens in accordance with the Law. The case is just the name we give to the unknown. Many are the plans of reason, but nothing escapes the Law”. It is mathematically demonstrated that even a very simple non-linear system can be complicate.

Therefore, we cannot analyze a complex system like the one characterizing our current world in the era of globalization with simple linear coordinates. It is necessary to refer to a system that takes into account the interaction between systems. The outcomes will thus be more “conditional”, and “probability” will give way to a higher predictability.

In short, we must have an approach based on the complexity of social systems, taken as in a constant learning phase, in a sort of reaction, adaptation and change even in stable situations.

The “forks” mentioned by Rosenau are connected to the complexity theory. Stability and instability are equivalent. And the more complex a system is, the more numerous the disturbances and fluctuations that threaten systemic stability. Obviously, stability depends upon the magnitude of the disturbances; it is also connected to the sensitivity of the system, referring to the initial conditions. It is the so-called “butterfly effect”, that makes a forecast impossible. The mechanistic Cartesian and Newtonian approach and linearity cannot tackle the complexity. In fact, if you want to manage such “complex” processes with old tools you should abandon politics, which is the art of managing the complexity and drive the change. The social systems are open systems, without mechanisms or structures. Their sub-systems are internally linked to each other, not externally.

The only form of control is macroscopic, through an influence on the systemic parameters, and not microscopic, through exerting control over the subsystems.

In nowadays’ world, in which we live, whose future will most likely not adjust to our expectations, the intelligence system and the strategic warning intelligence are preconditions for security. Until a few years ago, the intelligence system was able to let us know our enemy’s military power. Today, it is a priority to understand the history, culture, psychology, and intentions of our counterpart. The enemy is often invisible, with a “snap” and “ubiquitous” structure, due to the globalization: nothing to do with the traditional organizations.

The countermeasures are connected to the speed with which dangers and threats are identified and appropriate action is taken. The intelligence analysis Report of a strategic situation and its likely development, the crisis management and the risk evaluations are, moreover, the functional definition and pursuit of National interests.

An intelligence Report begins by analyzing intelligence data, but it is aimed at making predictions. The intelligence cycle, in short, is the functional activity of prediction, subsequent to planning activity. Indeed, one can argue that there is no intelligence without foresight and forecasting. The worldwide intelligence

failures are due to a lack of knowledge in history, culture, psychology and the geopolitical and geostrategic areas analyzed. A serious gap compared to the knowledge that our “enemies” have about our culture and society. The intelligence cycle is developed in three different and complementary phases: description, explanation and prediction.

The purpose of the intelligence cycle, such as a science, is to predict the future in order to control the environment in any way we consider it.

While the official science has a nomothetic approach, and tries to reach a general and universal rule, the intelligence analysis has an idiographic and analytical approach, with a special attention to the particular.

The particular can thus turn into the universal.

The intelligence cycle is carried out through various analysis steps that follow a scientific method:

1) Direction

Intelligence requirements are determined by a decision maker to meet his goals. For example, in the United States, requirements can be issued from the Congress or the White House.

2) Collection

In response to requirements, intelligence staffs develop an intelligence collection plan applying sources and methods and seeking data from other agencies. Collection includes HUMINT (human intelligence), IMINT (imagery intelligence), ELINT (electronic intelligence), SIGINT (Signals Intelligence), OSINT (open source, or publicly available intelligence).

3) Processing

Once the collection plan is executed and information arrives, it is processed for exploitation. This involves the translation of raw intelligence materials from a foreign language, evaluation of relevance and reliability, and collation of the raw intelligence in preparation for exploitation.

4) Analysis

Analysis establishes the significance and an implication of processed intelligence, integrates it by combining disparate pieces of information to identify collateral information and patterns, then interprets the significance of any newly developed knowledge.

5) Dissemination

Finite intelligence products take many forms, depending on the needs of the decision maker and reporting requirements. The level of urgency of various types of intelligence is typically established by an intelligence organization.

6) Feedback

The intelligence cycle is a closed loop; feedback is received from the decision maker and revised requirements issued.

In the field of international relations intelligence can be considered as an unconventional tool to protect and promote national interest as a whole; not always, however, the history of the Information Agencies has proven to be at the height of their task. Reflecting on September 11 and American intelligence, the inability to know how to develop “information on a certain aspect of international affairs“

is clear. This is, of course, a specific case but in everyday life the impact of intelligence on military operations, diplomatic, economic and international relations is evident.

International relations are closely interwoven with intelligence. US specialized literature has dealt extensively and exhaustively with the various steps of decision-making in foreign policy, especially since the Second World War, due to the prominent role of the United States. In the decision-making process, information plays a key role. Knowing how powerful a potential enemy is in the strategic and military field can permit to adequately prepare for the hypothetical clash, to be aware of one's own and other limits, and to identify any weaknesses.

Power factors are considered to be linked to:

1. training, motivation and, hence, to the quality of the human factor;
2. the resources, equipment and budget at disposal, the times of maneuver, *i.e.* the ability to summon up forces and weapons over time and space, and finally command and control structures.

The United States was rather slow in adopting a structure of autonomous intelligence independent from the military forces (Army, Navy and Air Force) or from the departments in which the United States' executive was divided.

This slowness was due both to government institutional weakness, and to limited participation in international events for most of the nineteenth century.

In the beginning, the United States intelligence has always been characterized by a certain weakness. The inconsistency of the intelligence apparatus was due to the weakness of the executive and the strong distrust of large sections of the population towards structures that were secret and without public supervision. In addition, the isolation of the United States and its lack of involvement in international affairs and in the European conflicts of the nineteenth century are other reasons for the American delay in the field of intelligence. One of the main reasons which led the National states to build up their own espionage and information gathering structures was the need to better understand the opposing powers, their industrial and military capacity, their secrets and their weaknesses.

It was not until the Eighties of the nineteenth century that the Army and the Navy of the United States created their own information structures. In the early years of the twentieth century there was rapid progress in the field of technical and cryptographic security, and the United States were once again late, not only with regards to Great Britain, but also to other powers.

During World War I, indeed, all the major powers had strengthened their information equipment. Once at war, the United States was forced to rely almost entirely on British intelligence and managed to ensure an adequate informative support to the American Expeditionary Force sent to fight in Europe. In the beginning, United States intelligence focused mainly on internal affairs. The responsibility of subversion and counter-intelligence was delegated largely to the War Department, which used patriotic organizations such as the American Protection League. The participation of private bodies to subversive activity and counter-intelligence was intense, although these were gradually replaced by the Federal Government.

Between the two wars, the Army and the Navy intelligence suffered from a radical dismantling. In the Department of State, a special office called U1, responsible for the coordination and supervision of the intelligence activities carried out by various agencies of the Federal government, was created. Although this office was closed very soon (1927), two of the pillars considered to be of great importance in the future of the CIA were proclaimed: a centralized control of intelligence, and the predominance of the civilian authority over the military in operations management. At the outbreak of the Second World War, the American intelligence system was still inadequate, so much so that the defeat at Pearl Harbor was declared an “intelligence failure”. From then on, all the reforms of United States intelligence moved toward the prevention of a new surprise attack in the United States.

In June 1942 the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was created. At its head was William J. Donovan, a hero of the First World War and a Republican, close to Churchill. Under Donovan’s leadership, the OSS had responsibility for both analysis (screening and analysis of information), and operations (promoting propaganda, psychological warfare and covert operations).

After the Second World War, the OSS was to coordinate the overall US information gathering. The director had to be a civilian directly relating to the President, without being subject to the chiefs of staff or the Department of State.

Harry Truman, who became president of the United States in 1945 following the death of Roosevelt, was suspicious and decided to close the OSS in = September of the same year, as soon as the war with Japan was over.

It was part of the general process of dismantling of the warfare system. The United States did not have an intelligence agency until 1946, when the creation of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) took place.

The Mission of the C.I.A.

The mission of the C.I.A. is clearly set out in the Charter, which describes it as an Agency that provides estimates functional to the maintenance of National Security and the right to the country’s self-determination.³ “The C.I.A. is an independent Agency responsible for providing National Security Intelligence to senior US policymakers. The Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (D/CIA) is nominated by the president with the advice and consent of the Senate. The Director manages the operations, personnel, and budget of the Central Intelligence Agency”.⁴ In the pursuit of this goal, the Charter is based on solid ethical principles; however, over the decades, these have rarely been observed. The Agency’s mission, in fact, aims to safeguard the United States – the Charter states: “Pre-emptive threats and further US National Security objectives by collecting Intelligence that matters, producing objective all-source analysis,

³ www.cia.gov – accessed January 2014.

⁴ *Ibidem.*

conducting effective covert action as directed by the President, and safeguarding the secrets that help keep our Nation safe” – and highlights the moral requirements of its agents for service rendered to the Nation.⁵ The Charter shows: “Service. We put Nation first, Agency before unit, and mission before self. We take pride in being agile, responsive, and consequential”⁶.

Other missions are: integrity⁷, reliability⁸, preparation⁹, courage¹⁰ and ability to work in a group¹¹. Relying on these qualities, C.I.A. agents are able to bring to fruition the tasks that the United States government gives them, in order to address challenges the country’s government is facing in the context of international relations.

The Charter also states the key challenges of its mission: “Key challenges: Close Intelligence gaps with enhanced collection and analysis on the countries, non-state actors, and issues most critical to the President and senior National Security team; Fulfill our global mission to give customers decision advantage as they confront an unprecedented volume and diversity of worldwide developments that affect US interests; Leverage technological advances for better performance in all mission areas – collection, analysis, covert action, and counterintelligence – while protecting against technological threats to the security of our information, operations, and officers; Improve the ways we attract, develop, and retain talent to maximize each C.I.A. officer’s potential to contribute to achieving mission; Better manage Agency resources during a period of fiscal austerity.”¹²

Due to such factors, the C.I.A. has accompanied the entire history of the United States since the times of the Cold War and through all the critical moments of international warfare. Historians and international sciences researchers have different interpretations of such political phases, so it is not always easy to know the actual weight and the precise function of Intelligence, especially in the case of the so-called “covert operations”. Most likely, it is time to help the experts, but also the public opinion, to formulate a more precise idea of future scenarios and give an account of past Intelligence operations that lasted for decades and that, despite criticisms and scandals, still have an important role in the United States political system.

⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁶ *Ibidem*.

⁷ “Integrity. We uphold the highest standards of lawful conduct. We are truthful and forthright, and we provide information and analysis without institutional or political bias. We maintain the Nation’s trust through accountability and oversight” (www.cia.gov – accessed January 2014).

⁸ “Stewardship. We preserve our ability to obtain secrets by protecting sources and methods from the moment we enter on duty until our last breath” (www.cia.gov – accessed January 2014).

⁹ “Excellence. We bring the best of who we are to everything we do. We are self-aware, reflecting on our performance and learning from it. We strive to give our officers the tools, experiences, and leadership they need to excel” (www.cia.gov – accessed January 2014).

¹⁰ “Courage. We accomplish difficult, high-stakes, often dangerous tasks. In executing mission, we carefully manage risk but we do not shy away from it. We value sacrifice and honor our fallen” (www.cia.gov – accessed January 2014).

¹¹ “Teamwork. We stand by and behind one another. Collaboration, both internal and external, underpins our best outcomes. Diversity and inclusion are mission imperatives” (www.cia.gov – accessed January 2014).

¹² www.cia.gov – accessed January 2014.

The Intelligence Cycle

The Intelligence cycle includes an analytical phase that transforms the raw and purely quantitative information into actual “knowledge”. This process is called “Intelligence cycle” and is divided into five stages. “The collection, analysis, and coordination of information useful to United States is the primary mission of the Central Intelligence Agency. At the heart of the mission lies the so-called intelligence cycle. The C.I.A. defines the cycle as the process by which information is acquired, converted into Intelligence, and made available to policymakers. The cycle has five phases: planning and direction, collection, processing, production and analysis, and dissemination [...], though, as a former C.I.A. analyst notes, the ‘cycle’ is really less a series of discrete phases leading from one to another than a matrix of steady interaction between producers and consumers of Intelligence, with multiple feedback loops”.¹³

1. Planning and direction: the decision-making directorates point to the Intelligence Agencies their interests and define the objectives of investigation and research: “This step comprises the determination of Intelligence requirements, preparation of a plan for collection, issuance of orders and requests to information-collection agencies. This step is also considered to be the beginning and the end of the cycle. It is the beginning because it involves drawing up specific collection requirements; it is the end because finished Intelligence, which supports policy decisions, generates new requirements”¹⁴;

2. Collection: has the objective of accumulating the maximum amount of information;

3. Processing: has the objective of processing information. “This step entails the acquisition of information and the provision of this information to processing or production elements. Information is collected from numerous OPEN SOURCE of Intelligence (or OSINT), including newspapers, magazines, books, the Internet, and foreign television and radio broadcasts. Information is also collected from the various traditional Intelligence disciplines, such as HUMINT (Human Intelligence), COMINT (Communication Intelligence), IMINT (Imagery Intelligence, formerly PHOTINT for Photographic Intelligence), ELINT (Electronic Intelligence), MASINT (Measurement and Signature Intelligence), TELINT (Telemetry Intelligence), RADINT (Intelligence gathered from Radars), SIGINT (Signals Intelligence), and TECHNINT (Technical Intelligence)”¹⁵;

4. Production and analysis: tries to contextualize the information gathered. “In this step information is converted into finished Intelligence through the integration, analysis, evaluation, and interpretation of all-source data and the reparation of Intelligence products in support of known or anticipated consumer requirements”¹⁶;

¹³ L. K. Johnson, *America's Secret Power*, New York, Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 76.

¹⁴ W. T. Smith, *Encyclopedia of the Central Intelligence Agency*, New York, Facts On File, 2003, p. 137.

¹⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 137.

¹⁶ *Ibidem*.

5. Dissemination: the assessments and evaluations are distributed to decision-making directorates. “In the final step in the cycle, finished Intelligence is conveyed to consumers in a suitable form. Each day, finished Intelligence is hand-delivered to the President and his key National Security advisers. Certain policy makers receive finished Intelligence. They may make on the basis of information decisions that lead to the need for more information. Thus, the Intelligence cycle continues”.¹⁷

The decision-making directorates participate in the Intelligence cycle at the planning and dissemination stage; in this phase there are lots of problems, since requests made to the Intelligence Agencies not always represent the real needs or priorities. “7 1905.4. Procedure for production. [...] (b) The General Counsel of C.I.A. and Deputy Directors or Head of Independent Offices with responsibility for the information sought in the demand, or their designees, shall determine whether any information of materials may properly be produced in response to the demand, except the office of General Counsel may assert any and all legal defenses and objections to the demand available to C.I.A. prior to the start of any search for information responsive to the demand. C.I.A. may, in its sole discretion, decline to begin any search for information responsive to the demand until a final and non-appealable disposition of any such defenses and objections raised by C.I.A. has been made by the entity or person that issued the demand”¹⁸.

The most difficult step is, of course, the fourth one, as an error of assessment almost inevitably entails a bad final choice for those who commissioned the analysis. One of the main problems concerning dissemination was to “establish uniform criteria for the determination of relative priorities for the transmission of critical National foreign Intelligence, and advise the Secretary of Defense concerning the communication requirements of the Intelligence Community for the transmission of such Intelligence”.¹⁹

On the other hand, those who receive the final information are not always fully satisfied with it.

For instance, in the course of the war in Iraq, “the United States was able to do a much better job of integrating the National Intelligence effort by CIA, NSA, NRO and NIMA into the war-fighting effort, but coordination problems still remained, and war fighters note that over classification, compartmentation, and restrictions on the release and dissemination of Intelligence continued to present major problems. To put it bluntly, many actual users of Intelligence in combat still see over classification and disseminations as major problems and the security officers as much of a threat as the enemy”.²⁰

¹⁷ *Ibidem*.

¹⁸ National Defence, ed., LSA List of CFR, 32, Washington, U.S. Government Printing Office, part 800 to End, revised as of July 1, 2003, p. 435.

¹⁹ US Central Intelligence Agency – C.I.A., *Handbook. Strategic information, activities and regulations*, Washington, International Business Publications, 2013, p. 262.

²⁰ A. H. Cordesman, *The Iraq Wa: Strategy, Tactics, and Military Lessons*, Washington, Center for Strategic and International Studies, 2003, p. 185.

Conclusions

Fiction and literature on Intelligence create a different imagery in people's mind. Some consider Intelligence as a world of secrets and intrigue made of phantasy and set out in spy novels, films and sitcoms from which most people get their information about Intelligence. Others look at the Intelligence panorama as a source of evil, a hidden world of secrecy and deception, in the name of which some are authorized to carry out nefarious acts such as political assassinations. On the other hand, Intelligence professionals have a different point of view. They consider Intelligence as a particular way to get information useful for the political world. To political leaders, Intelligence indeed may be a political asset or liability, depending on whether Intelligence helps the fulfilment of National political aims. However perceived, Intelligence evokes strong passions both in its proponents and opponents. These passions arise mostly as the result of the controversial aspects of political sciences, creating different points of view and opinions. In any case, the Intelligence science should be intended as illuminating and supporting foreign policy at any international level. As an outcome of a high number of perspectives, Intelligence has the clear mission of helping governmental activity. 10 International studies on Intelligence, take into account different angles of the topic, sometimes insisting on the relationship between the C.I.A. and the U.S. government, other times taking an internationalist perspective. There is no doubt that the C.I.A. sparked several scandals at an international level and consequences that have occurred at times had a strong impact on public opinion. There is therefore a strong disconnection between the image of Intelligence that comes from fiction and the real one.

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