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# Relations between Intelligence Services and Policy Makers: An Analysis of Challenges and Their Causes

This article addresses the relations between intelligence services and political institutions in democratic countries and overviews the main causes of both challenges and the tensions between these issues. The purpose of this publication is to analyze the relations between intelligence services and political institutions of contemporary democratic countries, to determine the fundamental challenges and disagreements of these institutions and to offer suggestions on how to avoid, or at least to reduce, these challenges and their affect on the intelligence activities.

The main dilemmas in these relationships are caused by an insufficient understanding of the role, capabilities, and limitation of intelligence. This is why the article starts with the analysis of the tasks of intelligence and determines its definition. The article deals with the main problems arising in the relationship between intelligence services and political institutions: the lack of clear priorities and requirements provided to the intelligence services; deficiencies in 'feedback'; the over-familiarity or, on the contrary, absence of interaction in the relationship; and the politicization of intelligence.

Whilst acknowledging the inevitable challenge of politicians seeking to affect the process of intelligence, this article aims to avoid the negative effect of politicization of intelligence. It offers a solution to create systematic relations based on confidence and a professional understanding of each other's different responsibilities, capabilities and restrictions. The emphasis is on the balanced divide between domains of politics and intelligence.

## Introduction

Although almost two decades have passed since the crumbling of the Soviet Union, the world has not become a safer place. The spectre of threats, risks and challenges to the security of countries and people has become incre-

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asingly varied. Challenges to the safety of democratic societies are posed by both asymmetric threats such as terrorism and organized crime and also by the 'old' threats and challenges originating from totalitarian states and from the collapse of countries due to political crises, emerging military conflicts followed by humanitarian disasters, ethnic cleansing, genocide and migration problems. Additionally, there are new phenomena of the 21st Century creating security problems to the democratic communities, which must also be added to this spectre of threats. Among these are cybernetic dangers, information wars and other use of information in order to get political dividends in the international arena or domestic politics, challenges to energy security and problems originating from global warming. In contemporary democratic countries the role of intelligence in safeguarding national security is more important than ever.

In democratic countries, most public debates on the subject of intelligence are usually connected to the failures of intelligence: for example, when a certain dramatic event or so called 'strategic surprise'<sup>1</sup> takes place, discussions on the efficiency gaps of intelligence are raised. It is not sufficient to organize the intelligence service itself and its inner activity when it comes to the successful execution of tasks given to it. In a democratic state intelligence does not work for itself. Depending on the results of intelligence, other institutions make necessary decisions and initiate appropriate actions. An intelligence organisation of a democratic country works on behalf of the customers of intelligence information: governments, politicians and other decision makers<sup>2</sup>. Intelligence services are authorized to collect and analyze information by institutions that need certain intelligence data. In the terminology of intelligence, these institutions (mainly the institutions of executive government responsible for the foreign, security and defence policy of a country) are often called the 'customers' of intelligence. The success or failure of intelligence may depend on the relationship with these customers. This is why one of the most important conditions of efficiency of intelligence activity is the clearly defined and harmonious relationship between intelligence services and their consumers. An element of these relations is the necessity for customers of intelligence to understand what intelligence services can and what they can not do, to strengthen the security of a country and society and to ensure their national interests. As the historian Walter Laqueur wrote:

Intelligence not only has to train new recruits but also to educate its customers. This is a formidable task because the latter, at a more advanced age, are very busy people, sure of their own judgement [...]. They have to be convinced of what intelligence can, and what it cannot, achieve<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> For more information on the 'strategic surprise' and on its relation to intelligence look at: Handel I. M. *War, Strategy and Intelligence*, London: Frank Cass, 1989, p. 229 – 281.

<sup>2</sup> Nomikos M. J., "European Union Intelligence Agency: a necessary institution for Common Intelligence Policy?" Look: Koutrakou N.V., *Contemporary issues and debates in EU policy. The European Union and international relations*. Manchester University Press, Manchester and New York: 2004, p. 39

<sup>3</sup> Laqueur, W., *A Word of Secrets: The Uses and Limits of Intelligence*, New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1985, p. 343.

The goal of this paper is: to analyze the relations between intelligence and other governmental institutions, which are closely connected to intelligence services in one way or another; to identify the main challenges and disagreements emerging between these institutions; to determine the reasons for these problems; and to provide possible solutions in order to avoid these challenges or at least to mitigate against them. The scope of the article will only focus on the analysis of relations between intelligence and its customers (i.e. decision-makers). It will not address the issue of parliamentary control and oversight of intelligence services. As far as this function is independent from the role and responsibilities of executive governance in relation to intelligence services.

This article is based on author's personal experience as well as on books and publications released mainly in English. It is confined only to the practice of intelligence services of democratic countries and does not refer to any of them specifically.

## 1. What is Intelligence?

A frequently occurring problem in the relations between intelligence services and customers of intelligence is the different understandings of the role intelligence plays in safeguarding the national security of a country. It would seem that the easiest way to determine what intelligence can do and what it cannot do is to create a unified definition defining the tasks, functions and spheres of intelligence. The problem is that there are many definitions of intelligence. Even countries with long lasting traditions of intelligence have not created a united clear definition. The United States of America alone has more than ten different definitions of intelligence<sup>4</sup>. Firstly, a distinction between the two words – intelligence and information – is needed. The latter can be used to describe any knowledge regardless of the methods used for obtaining it. In the words of a former long-time US officer of intelligence and the current President of the US Academy of Intelligence and Security and professor of the University of Columbia, Mark M. Lowenthal, intelligence is information that has already been systematized, processed and evaluated, and that satisfies the expressed needs of decision or policy maker<sup>5</sup>. Although it cannot be argued against, this definition is not thorough because it does not reveal the reason for collecting intelligence.

The Law on Intelligence of the Republic of Lithuania defines four intelligence related definitions: intelligence, intelligence activity, intelligence information and intelligence service<sup>6</sup>:

<sup>4</sup> Warner, M. "Wanted: A Definition of "Intelligence"", <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/docs/v46i3a02p.htm>, 2008-06-22.

<sup>5</sup> Lowenthal, M. M., *Intelligence: from Secrets to Policy*, third edition, Washington D.C. CQ Press, 2006, p.2.

<sup>6</sup> Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania, the Law on Intelligence, Article No 2, 2000-07-17, Nr. VIII-1861, Žin., 2000, Nr. 64-1931, p.2., [http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc\\_l?p\\_id=171400](http://www3.lrs.lt/pls/inter3/dokpaieska.showdoc_l?p_id=171400), (in Lithuanian), 2008-06-15.

Intelligence – activity of intelligence service that use special and operational methods and means in order to protect a person's, a society's and a state's security from external threats.

Intelligence activity – the collection, procession and analysis of intelligence information and other actions taken by an intelligence service in order to guarantee national security.

Intelligence information – data about actions, plans or intentions of foreign states, organizations or persons which pose or could pose threats, risk factors or dangers to Lithuanian state from exterior, also other data which is relevant in guaranteeing national security.

Intelligence services – subdivision (subdivisions) of institutions with special authorization from the state, which are assigned by this law to carry out intelligence activity.

As can be seen from the above Act, Lithuanian intelligence encompasses three components: intelligence is a service that uses methods of intelligence activity, collects and processes intelligence information, which is important to national security.

Most openly accessible sources refer to intelligence in a similar way. In addition, American political scientists Abram N. Shulsky and Gary J. Schmitt call intelligence (not linking it to intelligence services or activity) the information that is needed to secure a government's policy, to support a country's national security interests and to deal with threats stemming from adversaries or opponents<sup>7</sup>. This definition names the customers of intelligence and outlines the reasons for carrying out intelligence activity, but like the definition of Lowenthal it does not explain the core of intelligence practice. Before trying to define intelligence, it is important to understand that it is a constantly ongoing process (also called 'Cycle') which consists of many closely related processes depending on each others components. In shaping intelligence activity this process is usually presented as below (Figure 1)<sup>8</sup>:

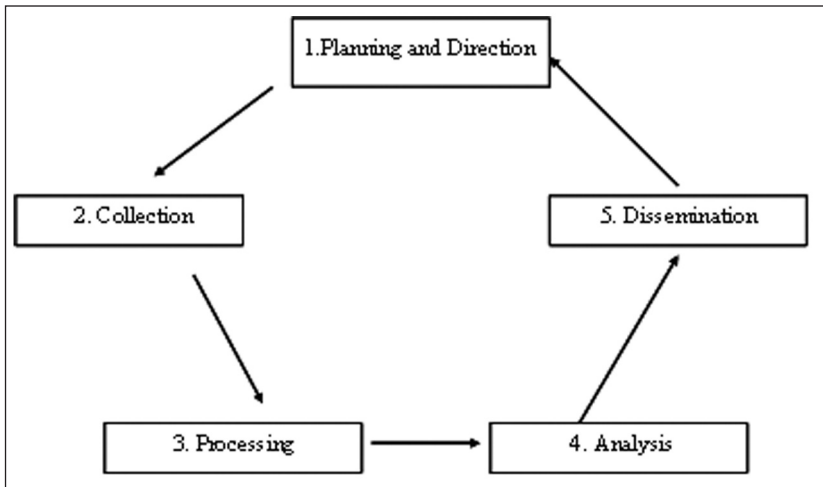


Figure 1. Traditional Process of Intelligence

<sup>7</sup> Shulsky N. A., Schmitt J. G., *Silent Warfare: Understanding the World of Intelligence*, Washington, D.C.: Potomac Books, Inc., 2002, p. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Turner A. M., *Why Secret Intelligence Fails* Dules, Virginia: Potomac Books, Inc., 2005, p. 9.

- Planning and direction – In this stage priorities are set down, the intelligence service gets appropriate authorizations, tasks and requirements of decision makers, politicians and other consumers, in order to carry out intelligence activity;
- Collection - In this stage subdivisions of intelligence gather the required information. In this stage various means of information collection (e.g. technical intelligence, human intelligence and openly available sources of information) are employed;
- Processing - In this stage collected information is evaluated and if necessary translated or deciphered, the relevance and reliability of this information is assessed. Also at this stage, information can be in certain ways sanitized in order to protect the sources of information or the methods used to gather it;
- Analysis and production - In this part of the cycle analysts analyze the information, evaluate it, make forecasts and conclusions and work up the appropriate form for delivery of intelligence to the customers;
- Dissemination - i.e. submission of final intelligence product to the customer, politician or other decision maker.

This is a simplified and theoretical model of intelligence. In practice, when organizing intelligence activity this process is not necessarily fulfilled in the exact order as presented above. In some cases, for example when generating the so-called 'early warning' about threats, intelligence information on likely short term threats to the security of the society or the state is introduced to consumers straight after receiving it. Another frequent deviation from this process of intelligence happens at the very beginning. While planning the intelligence activity, a politician or another policy maker does not form the requirements of intelligence and does not set the priorities. This has a negative affect on the intelligence activity and distorts the intelligence process. The latter problem will be analyzed in more detail later in the article.

Usually intelligence information and the activity used to gather it is linked to secrecy. There is an issue about whether intelligence and associated activity necessarily needs to be classified? There are different opinions and answers to this question. It is widely known that the intelligence services of contemporary democratic countries collect openly available information from the various sources of media: newspapers, journals, radio, television, internet, etc. Intelligence officers call this type of information open source intelligence (OSINT). But if all intelligence activities and their products were limited to openly accessible information would there be a point for a state to maintain intelligence services? This type of information could be collected and analyzed by those institutions that need it. However, not all information about foreign policy or other spheres of national security is 'open'. As Laqueur noted, in 1941 many USA intelligence analysts read Japanese newspapers everyday and still did not find a message about the planned attack on the US forces in the port of Pearl Harbour, executed on 7 December 1941. As well, the Soviet newspaper

*Pravda* did not report on the Soviet missiles<sup>9</sup>. So it is obvious that while the clandestine or discrete activity of states, groups or individuals exist, certain institutions must be informed in a timely manner about possible hazardous events, in order to assure the national security of a state or society in order for them to be able to avoid these events or affect them in a useful or at least less damaging manner. Undoubtedly, intelligence services use classified methods and sources to gather overtly unavailable or secret information, which can not be revealed on any occasion. As Lowenthal explains, the reason why states need intelligence is because some have information they do not reveal to others, so the latter obtain it by using secret methods: because of this and collection methods, they are forced to keep the gathered information classified<sup>10</sup>. Later, this article will return to the subject of classification and explain why sometimes even intelligence produced on open sources has to be classified.

While analyzing intelligence activity it is necessary to mention its application or the objectives of its practice. Intelligence can be strategic, namely directly corresponding to national demands in the fields of foreign politics, security and defence, for example in the realization or protection of national interests. In short, strategic intelligence can be called an activity that supports the state's decision makers at the national level. In the practice of this activity the products of intelligence usually encompass medium or long term views and are called 'intelligence estimates' (USA) or 'assessments' (Great Britain and Australia)<sup>11</sup>.

Finally, intelligence products have to embody various different aspects as they are special knowledge. In the contemporary world, intelligence information can be exclusively civilian by its content, but it can rarely be only military. This delineation is especially unsuitable for dividing a strategic intelligence activity and its products into civilian and military. Nevertheless, institutional separation into civil and military intelligence remains mainly because of the needs of both civil and military institutions to receive intelligence fulfilling their different priorities. Intelligence required by the military command is rarely underpinning to a civilian institution. Intelligence assessments supporting contemporary military operations (e.g. military counterterrorist operations, peace establishment and peacekeeping operations, etc.) can involve a very wide spectrum: from traditional military aspects, such as knowledge of adversary's capabilities and intentions, territorial and geo-meteorological peculiarities, to completely 'civilian' factors, for example a region's economic, social and political aspects, biographies of persons involved in the operation, regional levels of terrorism and crime and also diseases, epidemics and the ecological situation, etc.

Intelligence services can be authorized to carry out operational or tactical intelligence in supporting the Armed Forces. For example, in order to execute

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<sup>9</sup> Laquer, p. 12.

<sup>10</sup> Lowenthal, p.4 – 5.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 133.

a military operation it is necessary for the command to have certain intelligence on the adversary, its capabilities and intentions, territory of operation, etc. Whereas, in the National level intelligence service (which can also be military) support to the policy makers provides them with current intelligence, the purpose of which is provide customers with the information on the latest 'hot' events. This type of intelligence, just like tactical and operational, usually encompasses a short-term period. Generally, the collected current intelligence assists further development of strategic intelligence production. Since the threat of terrorism has increased, intelligence services of many states give priority to intelligence on terrorism. This type of activity normally falls in the category of current intelligence because of the short-term use of the collected intelligence information. By its nature, current intelligence is usually carried out by giving indication and early warning on possible threats<sup>12</sup>. Operational, tactical and current intelligence activities, which require modern and constantly renewable technical means and a degree of professional personnel, are far more costly than strategic intelligence. It would be wrong to believe that in the contemporary world intelligence services of a National level could be only confined to the strategic level of intelligence. Moreover, as it was previously said, final evaluation of strategic intelligence requires daily current information – the 'raw material' of intelligence. From its various and obscure elements, just like in a jigsaw puzzle, a clear image is created. Current threats and challenges to the security of states and societies force states to invest in the creation of complex intelligence capabilities that function at both strategic and tactical levels because sources of tactical threats can become strategic challenges to the security of the country and society. The most obvious illustration of this is the terrorist attacks of Al Qaeda committed in New York, Washington D.C., London and Madrid between 2001 and 2005.

The issue now turns to whether intelligence, its analysis and evaluation need to be regarded as absolute truth? As paradoxical as it would seem, the answer is negative. As Lowenthal claimed 'truth' is such an absolute notion that it would be completely impossible for intelligence services to reach its standard if one was determined<sup>13</sup>. An intelligence service has to collect information, to evaluate certain circumstances which would be difficult to verify - not to mention prove - using other means. If these means existed, it would be more advisable (maybe even less expensive) to use those other, alternative methods. As Michael M. Handel stated:

In the word of intelligence, even technical data concerning performance or the number of weapons, let alone less quantifiable issues such as intentions, military doctrine, and morale, cannot be objectively assessed – which means that clear agreement on their 'meaning' cannot be reached.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Shulsky and Schmitt, p. 58-60.

<sup>13</sup> Lowenthal, p.7.

<sup>14</sup> Handel I. M. *War, Strategy and Intelligence*, London: Frank Cass, 1989, p. 196.

Because intelligence is connected to collecting information on the conditional probability of individual's actions and the analysis of this collected information, British professors Peter Gill and Mark Phythian suggest naming intelligence 'art'<sup>15</sup>. Because of this, when providing its intelligence assessments an intelligence service takes the risks and responsibility for the likelihood of these evaluations. Usually intelligence assessments are related to probable events in the future, which should be treated as anticipated likelihoods or probabilities. By using their knowledge and collected information, intelligence analysts make certain evaluations and conclusions on processes, which will probably happen under certain circumstances and that, are usually affected by human beings in one way or another. The most important requirement to an intelligence service is that their assessments or evaluations should be reliable, unbiased and not politicized.

Should intelligence services be limited to collecting information? In the theory of intelligence, as in practice, there is no unity over this issue. Some services, like the Canadian security intelligence service, are only authorized to advise their government<sup>16</sup>. On the other hand, some services of Western countries have been given the authority to implement certain policy of the state by carrying out the so called 'cover operations'<sup>17</sup>. For example, the CIA carried out cover operations in Chile between 1963 and 1973 in order to influence the political processes within the country<sup>18</sup>. The extent of a cover operation can be very varied – from influencing through the exploitation of media to organising a *coup d'état*. Hunting down terrorists in uncontrolled regions (like Afghanistan) can also be called cover operations. Usually cover activity is used by intelligence services because no other organisation has proper arrangements for this kind of activity. By receiving certain information (such as the whereabouts of a wanted terrorist) an intelligence service is authorized to take action on it by itself (in this case – to eliminate or detain this terrorist). In other words, a cover operation is the continuation of intelligence actions and not intelligence activity and it will therefore not be discussed further in this article.

Given the limited extent of this article, counterintelligence will also not be analyzed, although it is concurrent with intelligence activity, not least of all because of the need to protect intelligence activity and to guarantee its success.

In summary, in this article intelligence will be defined as a continuous classified process in which states' intelligence services collect information on foreign countries, external phenomena and processes taking into account the requirements of authorized institutions. This activity involves the timely res-

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<sup>15</sup> Gill P., Phythian M., *Intelligence in an Insecure World*, Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007, p. 15.

<sup>16</sup> Canadian Security and Intelligence Service Act: <http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/ShowTdm/cs/C-23///en> , 2008-06-30.

<sup>17</sup> Gill, Phythian, p. 5, 13, 47.

<sup>18</sup> Staff report of the select committee to study governmental operations with respect to intelligence activities. 91<sup>st</sup> Congress session. "Cover activities in Chile". <http://www.fas.org/irp/ops/policy/church-chile.htm>, 2008-06-30.



ponse to possible threats to a state's or society's security: after being processed and analyzed, this intelligence is presented to appropriate customers with the purpose of strengthening the security of the state and society and to support the planned and implemented policy of the executive government.

## 2. The Role of Policy Makers and their Impact on Intelligence Services' Activity and Information

### 2.1. The Role of Politics in Intelligence and Associated Challenges

It would be a mistake to believe that the process of intelligence ends when an intelligence service of a democratic state delivers its product (an intelligence paper) to their appropriate intelligence customers. Lowenthal says that the role of politicians and decision makers regarding intelligence services is not limited to receiving intelligence information – “they shape it”<sup>19</sup>. In democratic states, intelligence services are connected to institutions of the executive government, which are the main consumers of intelligence. These institutions include: the state's President and/or Prime Minister, government, various ministries (especially those responsible for the state's foreign, defence and security policy), the command of Armed Forces, law-enforcement institutions and often also other ministries and institutions. These may be responsible for economics and the financial system (or the state's economy, trade, internal affairs, transportation, or even on occasions, environmental protection and health services, etc.). Finally, additional connections include those to other intelligence and security services of that country. The role of parliament is to ensure democratic control and oversight of intelligence services<sup>20</sup>. Put simply, intelligence services are the instruments of government in assuring the national interests of security making, controlling the power and influence of policy formers and other decision makers over intelligence services and its activity – which is self-explanatory. Hence, the role of policy makers and other intelligence customers is one of the main factors influencing the process of intelligence. This role of connecting customers and intelligence obliges both sides to understand each other's tasks, responsibilities and abilities or limitations. When there is a lack of this type of understanding, tension or conflict emerges between politics and intelligence. The reasons for conflict between intelligence services and policy makers are complex. The most dramatic cases happen when

<sup>19</sup> Lowenthal p.174.

<sup>20</sup> More about parliamentary oversight of intelligence services: Bagdonas G., “The Role and Control of Secret Intelligence Services in A Democratic State”, *Kardas*, 2006 m. No2 (419) (in the Lithuanian language).

an intelligence service fails (or allegedly fails) to fulfil its expected tasks. Particularly severe consequences may occur when an intelligence service does not provide an early warning and so-called strategic surprise takes place, which results from an unpredicted security crisis: this is perhaps popularly known as an unexpected and successful attack by an adversary. An example of this type of unexpected security crises that resulted in blaming the intelligence services of not providing intelligence about threats, are the terrorist attacks in New York and Washington, D.C. on September 11, 2001<sup>21</sup>.

Causes for intelligence failure are usually complex. Reasons for the failure to provide intelligence about threats or in providing only belated intelligence, may be due to mistakes in the organization of intelligence activity. It may also be attributable to the lack of interaction and cooperation between intelligence and security organizations, their subdivisions or individual officers, when, due to undue emphasis on the 'need to know' principle of protecting classified information, important intelligence is not presented to responsible institutions or officers on time or even at all. However, as already discussed in the last part of this article, the contemporary process of intelligence is not just a closed inner activity of an intelligence service. Rather, this process has a strong tendency to engage politicians and other intelligence customers in the intelligence business. In some cases, therefore, state institutions that establish the priorities, present tasks or influence intelligence activity in any other way should share the responsibility for intelligence failures. The main problems emerging between intelligence services and policy makers are the non-formulation of priorities and requirements to an intelligence service. Problems also arise due to the absence of feedback, the over-closeness of the relationship or, on the contrary, absolute and lack of interaction and finally, the politicization of the intelligence process<sup>22</sup>.

## 2.2. Planning and Administration of Intelligence

Allen W. Dulles, Director of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) of the USA, between 1953-1961, acknowledged that even the best planner and head of intelligence cannot foresee everything<sup>23</sup>. Precise planning is the most important, but also the most challenging part of the intelligence process. As was already discussed at the beginning of this article, intelligence is carried

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<sup>21</sup> In spite of critical conclusions about the work of intelligence services of USA by the "9/11 Committee" some intelligence experts contradict accusations of failing to give timely warning about Al Qaeda and terrorist attacks of 9/11, more information: Paul R. Pillar "Good Literature and Bad History: The 9/11 Commission's "Tale of Strategic Intelligence", *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 21, No.6, December 2006, pp.1022-1044. "9/11 Commission's conclusions are presented: "*The 9/11 Commission Report*": <http://govinfo.library.unt.edu/911/report/911Report.pdf>, p. 353 – 357, 2008-06-29.

<sup>22</sup> The term of "politicization of intelligence process" is used by Handel, p.187 – 188.

<sup>23</sup> Dulles W. A., *The Craft of Intelligence*, Guilford, Connecticut: The Lyons Press, 2006, p. 78.

out on behalf of its customers – the decision makers. A frequent problem is that those decision makers do not know what kind of intelligence they need and what questions they should pose<sup>24</sup>.

What happens when requirements are not presented to the intelligence service and policy makers do not define the priorities and queries? In the words of Lowenthal, in this case an intelligence service might try to establish the priorities and policy requirements by itself<sup>25</sup>. When this happens the intelligence service risks being accused of participating in policy by taking an active role in the sphere of politics. Besides, when trying to determine a state's priorities by relying only on its own experience and expertise, an intelligence service risks making mistakes and organizing purposeless intelligence activity, which leads to the problem of irrelevance of intelligence.

In the intelligence process, not only is the timely receipt of priorities and requirements important, but also feedback. If absent, an intelligence service is left in obscurity and cannot evaluate its mistakes. In a future chapter the problem of relevancy of intelligence will be discussed more extensively. Ideally, after presenting its first product to politicians an intelligence service receives additional questions and continues the intelligence process by going deeper into the problem and proceeding into a 'second circle' of the intelligence process. At the same time, because of the feedback with the intelligence customers, not only the product of intelligence is improved, but also a better understanding on the decision maker's needs and objectives are reached.

The interaction of intelligence and politics (intelligence officers and policy makers) has to be reciprocal. Intelligence officers (firstly analysts and their leaders) have to know the 'world of politics' - become certain experts of the state's politics so they can see world through the eyes of policy makers<sup>26</sup>. On the other hand, policy makers have to facilitate the work of intelligence officers by allowing them to be informed about political decisions, but this should not incorporate intelligence officers in the process of decision making. Otherwise, if intelligence officers were obliged not only to provide intelligence, but also to suggest developments on decisions of policy that emerge from the provided intelligence, the service would submerge in the sphere of politics. Intelligence would become politicized and its products biased.

### **2.3. The Divide between Intelligence and Politics**

The occasional tension in the relationship between intelligence services and its customers can be partly related to the close relationship between these

<sup>24</sup> Quiggin T., *Seeing the Invisible: National Security in an Uncertain Age*. Singapore: World Scientific Publishing, 2007, p. 53.

<sup>25</sup> Lowenthal, p.56.

<sup>26</sup> Davis J., "Intelligence Analysts and Policymakers: Benefits and Dangers of Tensions in the Relations", *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol.21, No.6, December 2006, p. 1010.

two entities. What distance should there be between intelligence services and policy makers? There are two different opinions in Western countries on the closeness of the relationship between intelligence and politics. The author of the first theory was one of the founders of US intelligence services, Sherman Kent, who saw a threat in the close relations of intelligence services and politicians because of the intelligence officers' 'inadequate independence' on politicians that might possibly develop<sup>27</sup>. This was referred to in the last chapter. However, Kent acknowledged the danger of too deep a divide, which can influence the emerging of 'inadequate guidance'<sup>28</sup>. The theory, supporting the great divide between politics and intelligence prevailed in the USA and other Western countries in the years of the Cold War. Realization of this theory in practice was manifested by limiting intelligence services to presenting information to their customers as bare facts, leaving the interpretation of them to politicians<sup>29</sup>. An explicit divide between intelligence and politics fosters secure objectivity of intelligence products and thus contributes to the reliability of intelligence. This is obtained by subordinating intelligence services to the highest institutions of the executive government, but not including them into the mechanism of making political decisions. For example, one of the former Presidents' of United States, Richard Nixon, used to ask the Director of CIA to make a presentation on foreign countries and their plans to the National Security Council, after which the speaker had to leave the room, which was where then the possible political decisions considering the received information were discussed<sup>30</sup>. This method of relations was effective during the Cold War, when the world was bipolar and the Western countries had an evident source of threat. When such a strategic security environment dominated, intelligence services had obvious priorities in collecting information and analyzing the capabilities and intentions of the Soviet Union and its satellites.

In the last decade of the past century however, when the established strategic security environment changed dramatically, the West was faced with new complex security challenges. These have included: military conflicts based on religious and national grounds (which result in collapsing of states, emerging humanitarian crises, mass migration); the spread of terrorism; the danger of proliferation of mass destruction weapons and their components; organized crime (including drug trafficking); the challenges of energy and information security; and also the economically and militarily strengthening of undemocratic and totalitarian states that challenge Western liberal democracy. All this shaped the development of another position, which supports

<sup>27</sup> Davis J., "Sherman's Kent's Final Thoughts on Analyst-Policymaker Relations" CIA, Sherman Kent Center for Intelligence Analysis, occasional papers: Vol. 2, No 3, June 2003, <https://www.cia.gov/library/kent-center-occasional-papers/vol2no3.htm> , 2008-07-21.

<sup>28</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>29</sup> Laqueur, W., *A Word of Secrets: The Uses and Limits of Intelligence*, New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1985, p. 89.

<sup>30</sup> Kissinger, A. H., "When spies meddle in policy", International Herald Tribune, 12 December, 2007.

closer relations between politics and intelligence<sup>31</sup>. The necessity of a closed interaction between intelligence officials and decision makers is dictated not only because of the changing and exceptionally dynamic security environment, but and also because of the latter's impact on the internal politics of democratic countries: external policy is often coherent with internal policy. If in organizing its activity, intelligence services have always had the need to know regarding the state's middle and long term priorities, then after the Cold War an important necessity has emerged. This is to preserve the relevance of the intelligence process to a state's policy within the current period, reflected in the presented intelligence. As was noted by an intelligence expert during a 'round table' forum of politicians and intelligence leaders in Georgetown University in November, 2003, the worst thing is when intelligence is ignored by politicians because then intelligence loses its connection to a state's policy and this is even worse than intelligence mistakes: "Being wrong – if you were wrong for right reasons - is never a particular problem, but being totally irrelevant to the policy considerations was always the thing that you had to fear the most"<sup>32</sup>.

As was already mentioned above, the very close relationship between intelligence and politics can merge intelligence with politics. This could involve intelligence officers in searching for solutions to problems, which would have a negative effect on intelligence products. This also causing intelligence services to have interests to produce biased and distorted intelligence information, and the intelligence service would thereby lose reliability. There is another negative influence of over-close relations and interaction between intelligence services and the institutions of policy makers. As Laqueur noticed, when an intelligence service approaches policy makers, an unavoidable situation emerges that the latter demands current intelligence<sup>33</sup> (see qualification of intelligence activity and products in Part 1). This might not seem a big issue at the first glance, but in practice the demands of decision makers to provide them with current intelligence can become a serious challenge to intelligence services. This can be explained by the difficulty of effort and expensive resources required to set priorities on current intelligence. Besides the aforementioned, the results are usually inadequate. An intelligence service concentrated on inadequate collection of current intelligence, neglects strategic intelligence activity. This requires long-term effort, usually because of a lack of capability, but sometimes also because of an absence of requirements. This inadequacy of efforts to collect current information is least justifiable as media and other institutions (such as think tanks) duplicate this collection and publicize partially similar current information. In this case, the collection of current information can be influenced by the so-called 'CNN effect'. Another reason why intelligence services should

<sup>31</sup> Davis, 2006, p. 4 - 6

<sup>32</sup> Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University, "Challenging the Red Line between Intelligence and Policy", prepared by Dr. James E. Steiner, March 2004, p.4. <http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/stj05/index.html> , 2008-02-10.

<sup>33</sup> Laqueur, p. 89.

not focus on presenting current intelligence to policy makers is because this type of information is usually fairly unprocessed 'raw material'. As Dulles states, to provide a politician with this kind of information is dangerous, unless he is warned and understands what he is receiving – an unevaluated report, which an intelligence service cannot guarantee to be reliable and accurate<sup>34</sup>.

As we can see, both opinions have their 'pro and cons' and there is no clear answer what distance should be placed between intelligence and politics. Handel noticed that in relations between intelligence officers and politicians a lot depends on human and personal characteristics, also on the countries' political culture and the process of socialization<sup>35</sup>. The divide between intelligence services and institutions of policy makers should be balanced: on the one hand it should secure sufficient informing on politicians' needs and intentions to intelligence staff, on the other hand it should preclude intelligence officials getting involved in politics.

## 2.4. The Problem of Intelligence Politicization

The politicization of intelligence is a frequent problem defined by the special relations between the two different entities: intelligence experts and politicians. Lowenthal called the separation of politics from intelligence "The Great Divide"<sup>36</sup>. Its purpose is the separation of two different functions of government – politics and intelligence – by a 'membrane', whereby politicians participate on both sides while intelligence is restricted to close approaching the membrane of political sphere, but is unable to cross the line.

As was mentioned in the first part of this article, the intelligence process has ambiguities by its nature and this leaves space for obscurity and interpretation, which might lead to distorted intelligence information and to its use for political or other reasons<sup>37</sup>. Handel presented a variety of historical examples in his book, such as when during the Vietnam War, US intelligence had the tendency to underestimate the antigovernment forces of *Viet Cong*, which enabled the demonstration of the effectiveness of the US forces combat activities and gave optimistic expectancies<sup>38</sup>. As Thomas Hughes noticed, frequently analysis of intelligence differs from preconceptions of the policy former and that "almost always there will be a difference between the clear picture seen by a convinced policy-maker and the cloudy picture usually seen by intelligence"<sup>39</sup>. Given this, a politician might try to enforce his views on the intelligence service by using his power, so that the 'clear picture' he sees would be reflected in intelligence

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<sup>34</sup> Dulles, p. 151.

<sup>35</sup> Handel, p. 195.

<sup>36</sup> Lowenthal, p. 5.

<sup>37</sup> Handel, p. 196.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 198.

<sup>39</sup> Hughes, T., "The Fate of Facts in a World of Men: Foreign Policy and Intelligence Making", *Headline Series*, No 233. New York: Foreign Policy Association, 1976, p.19.

evaluations. US intelligence expert, Jack Davis, gave numerous examples of the negative effect of politicians' impact on intelligence: influencing intelligence officers in order to change the content or conclusions of intelligence evaluations or trying to force their opinion on intelligence services, so that it was presented later as intelligence information<sup>40</sup>.

In the first part of this article it was mentioned that almost all intelligence (irrespective of its sources) should be classified to some extent, with some exceptions, for example when it is necessary to warn the society on threatening dangers, such as particular threat of terrorism. The necessity of classification is based on the need to protect intelligence services from involvement in politics. Otherwise, openly publicizing intelligence evaluations (like on the threats a certain state poses or, on the contrary, an absence of such threats) an intelligence service can become involved in the state's political process, in some cases without even leaving the possibility to political institutions to take diplomatic or political measures. An intelligence service is the state's secret service that provides its government with intelligence, which helps solve problems or challenges and it is not a political or academic institution that can openly express its opinion. Given a political – diplomatic necessity, a state's political institution can present information received from an intelligence service publicly, of course, provided that it will not compromise the sources of this information or methods that were used to get it.

As intelligence is a delicate process, there has to be mutual understanding between both intelligence officers and politicians or decision makers. When it is absent, it is difficult or almost impossible, to organize intelligence activity properly. Intelligence is provided to customers in order to facilitate the decision making process. Problems might occur when the presented intelligence evaluations and analyses do not support the decision maker's policy (in contrary to its expectations), or when politicians or decision makers ignore the received intelligence. In the above-mentioned forum of intelligence leaders and politicians at the University of Georgetown, it was noted that some politicians and decision makers try to adopt intelligence to their needs, so it would support the decisions they have made or are planning to make<sup>41</sup>. As an example, an episode from World War II could be mentioned: in September of 1944 the Allies carried out operation 'Market Garden' in the Netherlands, commanded by Field Marshal Bernard Montgomery. This operation was distinguished by the immense amount of airborne forces used, but it was also probably the only defeat of Allied Forces (at least at such a large scale) during the entire World War II. The Alliance planned to take the main bridges in the city of Arnhem with the help of airborne forces, so they could facilitate the attack of American and British advanced troops. As both political and military leaderships were expecting the

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<sup>40</sup> Davis, 2006, p. 1017-1018.

<sup>41</sup> Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, Georgetown University, "Challenging the Red Line between Intelligence and Policy", prepared by Dr. James E. Steiner, March 2004, <http://www.ciaonet.org/wps/stj05/index.html>, 2008-02-10.

quick fall of Nazi Germany, planners of the operation surrendered themselves to the euphoria of the upcoming victory and disregarded intelligence on the real capacities of the enemy. As a result of this the operation failed and joint forces of US, Great Britain and Poland suffered great losses<sup>42</sup>. It is worthy to mention that initially one of the reasons for this defeat was cited as the lack of intelligence about German capabilities. The release of information after its declassification in 1974, however, proved the contrary: the technical capacities of Great Britain's intelligence allowed the unprecedented possibility to read deciphered reports of German military leaders, thereby the planners of the 'Market Garden' operation received accurate enough intelligence on the adversary's forces<sup>43</sup>.

Handel performed extensive and detailed analysis on the relations between intelligence officers and politicians. He describes intelligence politicization as any political interfering with intelligence process that distorts intelligence information and assessments, which makes an impact on analysis or distribution of intelligence products<sup>44</sup>. By using a comparison between intelligence, medicine and meteorology, Handel stated that in all these professions, none of them is an exact science, as each has to invoke quantifiable dimensions as well as forecasts, experience and intuition<sup>45</sup>. In the case of any of these three professions, decisions are often made in obscurity, with pressures imposed by responsibility and the understanding that mistakes will have negative consequences. Only the intelligence officer, however, has an additional challenge – the frequent interference of politicians in the process of intelligence<sup>46</sup>. This can be explained (but not justified) by the fact that politicians and leaders make decisions relying on information they have. In the modern world the significance of information has grown considerably - it has become an instrument and a weapon. In the age of information, when information technologies have developed and various private information companies operate in the market (among these are media, many political – analytical agencies of strategic analysis and think tanks), intelligence services have lost much of their monopoly of information, which they had just a few decades ago. Yet in the shape of the government, intelligence services still maintain a certain information monopoly, providing less choice to politicians in search for effective information tools for implementing their policy. Besides, this also furthers the requirement for closer relations between politics and intelligence, which was mentioned earlier in analyzing the divide between politics and intelligence and the approach of internal and external policies. Due to the influence of the current dynamic security environment and conditions of the above-mentioned internal and foreign policy aspects, a

<sup>42</sup> Bradley, G. Ph. "Market Garden": Was Intelligence Responsible for the Failure?" A research report. Alabama: Maxwell Air Force Base, April 2001, p. 14 – 15. <http://www.iwar.org.uk/sigint/resources/market-garden/bradley.pdf>, 2008-08-08.

<sup>43</sup> Jeffson, J.J. "Operation Market-Garden: Ultra Intelligence Ignored" A Master Thesis,

<sup>44</sup> Handel, p. 188.

<sup>45</sup> Laqueur, W., "The Question of Judgement: Intelligence and Medicine", *Journal of Contemporary History*, No. 18, October 1983, from Handel, p. 188.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*.



completely different reality exists in practice: unavoidable interference of politicians in the intelligence process. Therefore, the model of intelligence process presented in the first part of this article is rather theoretical or idealistic. In reality, intelligence is constantly affected by the surrounding environment, in which the state's politicians, decision makers and society all participate. The theoretical model of the intelligence process does not reflect the influence of this environment. Gill and Phythian have offered a more accurate model of the intelligence process, called 'the funnel of causality' (Figure 2)<sup>47</sup>.

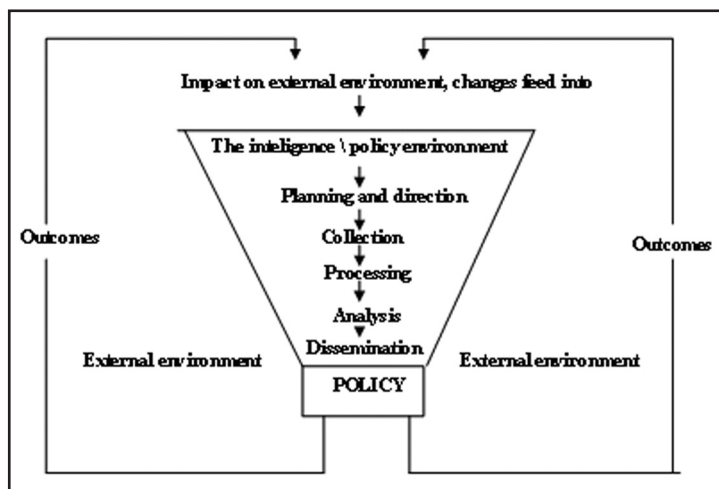


Figure 2. Intelligence process according to Gill and Phythian

This funnel shows that not necessarily all analyzed information reaches the consumer. An element of collected information is filtered out as unnecessary, other parts being rejected concerning the specification of demands received through the feedback (or sensed intuitively by intelligence service) and another part is not analysed after processing and sanitization. Unlike the traditional process of intelligence, this funnel graphically demonstrates the environment around the exterior of intelligence that exists in reality, including the policy makers, who influence the intelligence process. In pursuing effective intelligence activity and its successful results, it is necessary to accordingly organize the intelligence process, considering the inevitable interference of policy makers. This interference can have positive effects when it is limited to giving the priorities of policy makers to the intelligence service, acknowledging with it their interests and the affecting circumstances: there is no discussion on undisputable right of politicians to perform the parliamentary control and oversight of intelligence services. Better knowledge of the political sphere allows an intelligence service to answer the requirements of policy makers more effectively.

<sup>47</sup> Gill ir Phythian, p. 4.

This supports once again the argument of Laqueur, mentioned in the beginning of this article about the essential necessity of intelligence services to train their customers. An additional measure in securing the impartiality of intelligence services is appropriate professional organization of intelligence. This should be aimed at the professionalism of intelligence officers and the standardization of intelligence activity itself, in order to evade the distortion of intelligence information and its adjustment to political decisions or expectations. In addition, the intelligence service should establish the objective criteria and standards for intelligence analysis, which would be difficult to ignore.

## Concluding Remarks

Intelligence services carry out their activity on behalf of policy makers with the purpose not only to respond in a timely manner to possible threats to the state's security, but also to provide their customers (policy makers) with the required intelligence, in order to support the implemented and planned policy of the latter's represented institutions. In other words, most institutions of democratic states (first and foremost those responsible for the state's foreign, defence and security policies and their executive agencies) directly participate in the process of intelligence or affect this process in other ways and its outcome. Such institutions should not ignore the intelligence, as it may have a negative effect on the intelligence process. If an intelligence service's participation in the process of decision making is inadequate (for example, when policy makers use alternative information sources) its activity can become irrelevant to the state's priorities and interests. This is why an adequately close interaction should be organized between intelligence services and its customers. This allows for setting the correct tasks while organizing intelligence activity so that the intelligence process corresponds with the state's primary objectives and interests. Intelligence officers, being informed of politicians' intentions, capacities and problems have to become experts in the 'political sphere'.

The realization of these conditions, however, leads to inevitable participation and even interference from politicians in the intelligence process. In order to avoid the negative effects of politics on the intelligence process, it is necessary to ensure that intelligence services do not get involved in the process of forming and implementing policy. The divide between politics and intelligence must be balanced – intelligence officers should not become responsible for the successful execution and realization of actions and decisions, based on the intelligence information they present. The conditions of effective intelligence – objectivity, reliability and impartiality – can be achieved if sufficient confidence and professional understanding exist between a state's intelligence services and the institutions about each other's capabilities and limitations. Effective intelligence is also predicated on systemic relations based on juridical acts being established which provide executive control of these services and set requirements upon them.