INSIGHTS FOR THE CREATION OF A *LIAISON CULTURE* IN INTELLIGENCE: FROM CO-OPERATION TO COLLABORATION

Daniela BACHEŞ*

Abstract:
The paper aims at approaching the concept of liaison culture by analyzing the range of joint operations between Intelligence organizations, generally described as international Intelligence co-operation or collaboration. The two terms are used, in most of the cases, interchangeably, and are meant to suggest the interaction between two or more actors, within a formal or informal context, to enable the exchange of information, know-how or resources for the achievement of a shared or common goal, objective or mission. Thus, it asserts that the various types of exchange, levels of interaction and degrees of integration are part of, and contribute to the development and evolution of the liaison, from a mechanism belonging to the organization's strategy to an organizational culture in itself. In the way just indicated, a short discussion on the meaning of intelligence culture is required and the signification it is given herein. Just as the broad term of Intelligence is subject to multiple definitions, (mis)understandings and interpretations, being referred to as a product, a process or an organization, the concept of Intelligence culture also implies various meanings according to the emphasis on institutional structure, modus operandi or set of values and norms. The meaning I am using here is that of organizational culture in a created environment or the working together in a multinational context; in other words I am interested in the liaison culture as an emerging Intelligence culture characteristic of multilateral collaborative structures, strongly influenced by the agencies' or governments' choice for co-operation/collaboration.

Keywords: *co-operation, liaison culture, collaboration, intelligence*

Introduction

Over the last two years, the subject of interagency working beyond borders has been more and more present within the literature, media, or policy forum investigations and debates. Mostly considered an understudied

* Phd Candidate Brunel University

issue, or sensitive practice kept beyond close doors, and information sharing between countries' stakeholders, yet increasingly under scrutiny since 9/11. International networking among security agencies, or foreign liaison between governments have been representing a fact in the world of Intelligence, the passage from a "need to share" to a "need to build" culture becoming an aspiration in the international Intelligence community. This transformation corresponds to the making up of collaborative environments enabling a joint operating culture articulated by common sets of goals and objectives, where partners agree to exploit their "diverse expertise and organizational resources to create higher value intelligence than an agency or officer can do individually to achieve the mission of the Intelligence Community." (Mcintyre, Palmer & Franks, 2009, pp. 9-15)

The paper aims at approaching the concept of *liaison culture* by analyzing the range of joint operations between Intelligence organizations, generally described as international Intelligence co-operation or collaboration. The two terms are used, in most of the cases, interchangeably, and are meant to suggest the interaction between two or more actors, within a formal or informal context, to enable the exchange of information, know-how or resources for the achievement of a shared or common goal, objective or mission. Thus, it asserts that the various types of exchange, levels of interaction and degrees of integration are part of, and contribute to the development and evolution of the liaison, from a mechanism belonging to the organization's strategy to an organizational culture in itself. In the way just indicated, a short discussion on the meaning of intelligence culture is required and the signification it is given herein. Just as the broad term of Intelligence is subject to multiple definitions, (mis)understandings and interpretations, being referred to as a product, a process or an organization, the concept of Intelligence culture also implies various meanings according to the emphasis on institutional structure, *modus operandi* or set of values and norms. The meaning I am using here is that of organizational culture in a created environment or the working together in a multinational context; in other words I am interested in the *liaison culture* as an emerging Intelligence culture characteristic of multilateral collaborative structures, strongly influenced by the agencies' or governments' choice for co-operation/collaboration.

Intelligence culture

Intelligence culture has been discussed about for many decades already, being permanently present in descriptive or explanatory overviews in the Intelligence praxis of countries and organizations, whether failure or

success has been considered; however, all attempts to develop a conceptual approach or theory of it [intelligence culture] had faint outcomes. Some existing attempts tend to subsume it to the broader concept of strategic culture or security culture, making Intelligence appear as an instrument manipulated to serve foreign policy interests or support policy makers decisions regarding national interest and security (Van Reijn, 2013, pp. 1-2). In this sense, liaison and sharing with foreign partners become a part of a comprehensive approach for achieving national interests and countering security threats. Nevertheless, recently, Michael Hayden, former director of CIA and the NSA, made it clear that many times, although related, the values, policies and interests of a country are never identical with the values, policies and interests of a liaison service; this means that in practice Intelligence organizations have their own *modus operandi* autonomous from the foreign and security policy, thus making possible the interaction and exchange with hostile states, or governments embracing different political principles and interests. Moreover, as Stephen Lander suggested, "states can now much more easily be allies on one issue and adversaries on another", as their working together "is not an end in itself. It is utility that drives collaboration" (Lander, 2009, p. 140).

Without denying the place of intelligence within the national strategy of each country, yet not intending to discuss this aspect now, the paper assumes that Intelligence culture draws upon specific elements that are connected to the strategic culture and the culture of national security, but which are rather based on an organizational logic, built on shared assumptions and practices (resulting from collective values, beliefs, and principles achieved over time), as well as the organization's members (leaders and actors at different levels and covering multiple sectors),which is supposed to shape behavior in various situations requiring knowledge. Compared to the strategic or security culture, which is more connected to history, tradition and identity, the Intelligence culture is an organizational one, much influenced by praxis and therefore more dynamic. Thus, the Intelligence culture is embedded in the political background of a country and is linked to its strategic targets, yet, it knows a series of operational incentives that makes it subject to change, without menacing its stability and continuity in terms of philosophy, objectives and praxis, such as the decision of engaging in cooperation networks or collaborative communities.

Although used interchangeably, cooperation and collaboration bear some distinctions that are essential for a better understanding of Intelligence sharing, but also for getting some insights into the various types of

interagency work and the steps needed for developing a multinational "working together" culture in the field. Both concepts are rooted in the study of learning and teaching methods, being also found in the field of management and business studies, and refer to individuals' and organizations' interactions, required to create cooperative environments and work collaboratively within communities of shared interests. Cooperation and collaboration are based on working together, as determined by similar or common needs or goals whose accomplishment appears difficult or impossible with only one party's existing resources, thus making useful and desirable the sharing of information, resources and ideas with partners. Cooperation is rather a protocol designed to facilitate the achievement of a shared goal or the creation of a product, by gathering people entrusted different tasks, who do their assigned tasks separately, and then bring their results to the table, each of them being responsible for a portion of the problem solving. Collaboration implies direct interaction among individuals not only to shape a product, but to share knowledge creation, through the engagement of participants in their mutual effort to solve the problem together by sharing authority and accepting responsibility among group members for the group's actions. Both cooperative and collaborative liaisons are encountered within the national community and at international level, interactions between Intelligence organizations taking various shapes according to factors such as collection methods, existing or lacking resources, agendas, operating techniques, analytical infrastructure, time, trust, etc.

There are five major types of Intelligence liaison containing various degrees of integration and formalism, which suggests certain preferences and levels in the development of Intelligence culture, namely that of interagency co-working ranging from informal cooperation to collaborative environments and leadership.

The most discreet way of establishing a cooperative context is *crypto-diplomacy*, consisting of the infiltration of Intelligence agents in diplomacy, which enables communication and negotiation between parties, while creating the premises of institutional networking between actors and countries. However, this has been rather related to clandestine diplomacy and is used to consciously "engage in secret and deniable discussions with adversaries" (Scott, 2004), intended to influence an adversary (in this case talking about covert action) or exchange information between adversaries that get to share a common threat (as it has been the case between the USA and Syria in fighting terrorism, or the co-operation between American and

Iranian secret services with regards to the Soviet agents' infiltration in the Tudeh party) (Shulsky & Schmitt, 2002, p. 90).

This suggests a certain degree of openness, flexibility and adaptability of the Intelligence culture, enabling the rationale of the liaison – "each service making use of its comparative advantage in a given location to advance an agreed-upon goal" (Hitz, 2008, p. 158) –, but in the absence of a formalized framework which means more discretion and minimal costs.

The second type of liaison between agencies concerns the offering of *Intelligence support* which, although not a new practice despite its consistent promotion over the past few years, shows that cooperation in Intelligence develops new ways, different from the theoretical conventional model of secret trading. For instance, in an article written by Warren R. Mulholland for the CIA, released in 2004, liaison training is designated as the "oldest and probably the most consistently productive liaison the CIA maintains with intelligence services of other nations" (Mulholland, 1973, p. 7). Providing training, equipment and funds to other agencies is an ordinary practice both within the national and international Intelligence community, institutions and agencies in one country engaging in joint actions, training and knowledge transfer, just as services in states with tradition and resourcefulness in the field are willing to support smaller partners (such as the cyber-security expertise exchange between Romania and Ukraine, or the provision of logistical and intelligence support by the United States to the GCC-led military operations in Yemen).

Cooperation knows a third way through *operation sharing* (Harrison, 2009, pp. 44-46) as involving acting actors bound together by common values, a common ethos and a common mission, but who continue to maintain their operational independence. This modus operandi falls into three categories: parallel operations (the services are operating against the same target and agree to run independently of each other, but keeping each other informed about their work and progress, as it was the case in the NATO – coordinated "stay-behind" Operation Gladio, aimed at countering a possible Soviet invasion), allocation operations (the services engage in a joint operation against a common target, each partner assuming a certain part and task in the game, such as the Nordic defense cooperation during the Cold War) and joint operations (where agencies are fully integrated, a phenomenon mostly seen at national level, where domestic agencies work together – as in the joint operation of the CIA and FBI agents engaged in the debriefing of Soviet defectors to the USA-, and less present at multilateral level, although

aspirations of globally integrated operations among domains and countries of the Coalition (Joint Force 2020 White Paper, 2014), have been expressed for quite a while). The last sub-category is strongly connected to the forth category of liaison, namely *information sharing* which takes the form of trading information for strategic information, facilities access or influence. The passage from a "need to know" to a "need to share" is meant to create channels of effective communication between information stakeholders, that enable the employment of knowledge efficiently and help users connect quickly with each other. Better known as Intelligence sharing, it provides a type of liaison frequently met, both at bilateral and multilateral, in more or less institutionalized structures, in the form of consultations on security threats or production of joint analysis and common databases required in the fight with organized crime and terrorism (besides the variety of bilateral developments, it is worth mentioning the institutions created since the 90s by the European Union that facilitate intelligence sharing between its members (Walsh, 2006, pp. 625-643): the Berne Group, EUROPOL, the Intelligence Centre or the EU Military Staff, as well as the UK-USA sharing of signals intelligence dating back to the 1940s). In this new culture of sharing, actors accept the responsibility to provide, and articulate active collaborative participation in a shared space (that begins to move in the cyber-world). R. Pherson and F. Bishop identify six key imperatives of a collaborative environment (that can also apply "must" characteristics of a culture of collaboration based on Intelligence sharing), namely: mission criticality, mutual benefit, mutual trust, incentives, access and agility and common understanding (Pherson & Bishop, 2014, pp. 108-109).

The fifth type of interaction and the most integrated one is the *full liaison* or *Intelligence collaboration,* how I'll call it herein, the officially sanctioned activity between and among intelligence agencies, based on shared values and norms, and running through formal structures built on characteristic mechanisms: shared security procedures, each participant country has a designed liaison officer at headquarters, joint communication channels, joint staffing of key facilities, as well as normal contacts and close personal relationships among senior personnel. Scholars writing about collaboration, although not always consciously, approach it as an interaction between agencies and countries in terms of joint action during the entire Intelligence cycle (McGruddy, 2013, pp. 214-220) this appears to be a profound integrated form of co-operation, as it gives the possibility of developing more common vocabularies for thinking about problems with

fewer intercultural and international misunderstandings. This form of Intelligence collaboration bears the premises of institutionalization of collaborative practices and cross-cultural enterprise that develops a common lexicon and transparent rules of engagement.

Each of these five ways of interagency working converge at the establishment of collaborative environments, ranging from strategic joint action to a formal culture-oriented multilateral organization. Two good examples for the experience in time of this phenomenon are the models of the UKUSA Agreement and the European Union Intelligence community. The United Kingdom – United States of America Agreement (UKUSA) is a multilateral agreement for cooperation in signals intelligence between the United Kingdom, the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, having emerged from an informal agreement enabled by the 1941 Atlantic Charter to a secret treaty confirmed by the 1943 BRUSA Agreement, that was further extended to the other 3 countries, and opened thereafter to special forms of sharing and coordination with "third parties". The Five Eyes Agreement (as it is also known) evolved towards deepened cooperation that allowed the five nations to "carve up the earth into spheres of primary SIGINT collection responsibility" (Richelson & Ball, 1990, p. 143). Born out of the American-British intelligence cooperation in World War II, and strengthened by "the common language, legal system and culture" (Warner, 2013) the UKUSA's members pledged to share intelligence and not to conduct surveillance on each other. Basically, the agreement created a collaborative context for the SIGINT national organizations that "conceded to standardize terminology, code-words, intercept handling procedures and indoctrination oaths." (Bryce, 1995)

The foundation of a European Union's mechanism for Intelligence cooperation goes back to the 1970s when the European Communities, in their attempt to strengthen integration not only through economic mechanisms, but also by enhancing "co-operation in the sphere of foreign policy", decided to go (gradually) from informal consultations between Member States to formal recommendations reduced to treaties that support "The High Contracting Parties undertake to, inform and consult each other on any foreign policy matters of general interest so as to ensure that their combined influence is exercised as effectively as possible through coordination, the convergence of their positions and the implementation of joint action."[1]

1 THE SINGLE EUROPEAN ACT, TITLE III, ARTICLE 30, European Co-operation in the sphere of foreign policy shall be governed by the following provisions: 1. The High Contracting Parties,

The EU intelligence system has known over the last decade a twofold institutional process of integration: on the one hand, the information exchange between national security and intelligence services has developed, strengthening the horizontal cooperation between the 28 member states; on the other hand, the establishment of European security frameworks and Intelligence structures are strengthening a continental vertical assistance and coordination. The European Intelligence community has known various stages of coordination and integration, the European liaison culture being continuously built on an ongoing inter-organizational socialization defined by the stakeholders' (Brussels and member countries) networking. No doubt, the Intelligence Centre (INTCEN) stands as the expression of the most integrated cooperation structure, its role, products and action aiming at facilitating participation, by developing mutual confidence and understanding within the European Union Intelligence community. While national Intelligence and governments remain the first responsible for the strengthening of the state security architecture and are at liberty to explore bilateral cooperation with both European and third-party states, INTCEN, in coordination with the other EU institutions, is concurrently playing the role of sharing catalyzer for the 28-member community, and that of organizational core of an emerging culture of collaboration.

It is interesting to mention a rather recent approach within the EU Intelligence context, where the horizontal and vertical networks of intelligence and security agencies merge in a liaison culture of tailor-made collaboration, enabled by the vision of collective leadership. Thus, in the last year's context of the fight against terrorism, the discourse in Brussels follows two lines of approach: on the one hand, with regard to the 28-state liaison within the EU community, the term mostly used is that of "co-operation", members being given the freedom to shape their level and "lineament" of participation, while in what concerns the joint efforts with third parties, the HR Federica Mogherini constantly calls for direct police and Intelligence collaboration of the EU, which depicts the collaborative community as an integrated structure.

---

being members of the European Communities, shall endeavor jointly to formulate and implement an European foreign policy. 2. (a) The High Contracting Parties undertake to, inform and consult each other on any foreign policy matters of general interest so as to ensure that their combined influence is exercised as effectively as possible through coordination, the convergence of their positions and the implementation of joint action. (...)

Conclusions

Countering threats and building security has become a multi-agent process, as countries cannot ensure their security alone, security being prone to negotiation within collaborative environments. The liaison or "working together activity" is part of the Intelligence culture of an organization, integrated into the organization's mission, activity and operating strategy, while it also tends to become an autonomous supporting construction of norms, practices and mission across a diversity of independent cultures that are gathered in international communities of shared goals and common mission. Thus, the liaison culture does not draw on monolithic communities or supra-national intelligence organizations that supersede governments and country secret services, but rather works towards the establishment of proper mechanisms, partners and formulae that can bring maximum advantage to the security environment.

Notwithstanding, while cooperation in Intelligence becomes a shared praxis and evolves towards a *must* in countering threats, a complex question arise of how to build a common way of acting and thus overcome the differences in technology, accommodate opposite interests, shape a common voice, assimilate similar practices; in other words how to efficiently prepare actors (organizations, managers, agents) from already existing cultures with their own practices, ethos, and structure, for shaping a different culture of multinational collaboration and joint action, whose understanding should go beyond confined concerns and routines.

References:

1. Bryce, Susan, (1995), The UKUSA Agreement, in Nexus Magazine, August/September, available online at http://www.bibliotecapleyades.net/ciencia/echelon/echelon03.htm, 25 May 2015.
2. Harrison, John, (2009), International Aviation and Terrorism. Evolving threats, evolving security, Routledge, New York.
3. Hitz, Federick, (2008), Foreign Liaison Services and Spying Lawfully, in Hitz, Federick, Why Spy?: Espionage in an Age of Uncertainty, chapter 12, St Martin's Press, New York.
4. *Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance*, Joint Force 2020 White Paper, June 2014, available online at http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/concepts/white_papers/cjcs_wp_isr.pdf, 25 May, 2015.

5. Lander, Stephen, (2009) International intelligence co-operation: An inside perspective in Secret Intelligence. A Reader, Andrew, Christopher, Aldrich, Richard J., Wark Wesley K., (Eds.), Routledge, London & New York.
6. Mcintyre, Joan, Palmer, Douglas, Franks, Justin (2009) *A framework for Thinking about Collaborating within the Intelligence Community*, in *Collaboration in the National Security Arena: Myths and Reality – What Science and Experience Can Contribute to its Success*, (published by the Topical Strategic Multilayer Assessment (SMA), Multi-Agency/Multi-Disciplinary White Papers in Support of Counter-Terrorism and Counter-WMD in the Office of Secretary of Defense/DDR&E/RTTO).
7. Mcgruddy, Janine, (2013) Multilateral Intelligence Collaboration and International Oversight, in Journal of Strategic Security, vol. 6, no. 5, Fall 2013.
8. Mulholland, Warren R., (1973), Liaison Training, in Studies in Intelligence, Center for the Study of Intelligence, CIA, declassified article, vol. 17, no. 2, Summer 1973.
9. Pherson, Randolph H., Bishop, Vaughn F., (2014), Cyber Attack on the Office of Intelligence Production: A Collaborative Simulation, in William J., Lahneman, Ruben, ARCOS (Eds.), The Art of Intelligence: Simulations, Exercises, and Games, Rowman & Littlefield, Maryland.
10. Richelson, J., BALL, D., (1990), The Ties That Bind: Intelligence Cooperation between the UKUSA Countries, Allen & Unwin, North Sydney.
11. Scott, Len, (2004), *Secret Intelligence, Covert Action and Clandestine Diplomacy*, in *Intelligence and National Security*, vol. 19, issue 2.
12. Shulsky, Abraham, N., Schmitt, Gary, J. () Silent Warfare: Understanding the Word of Intelligence", Brassey's INC, Washington, 2002.
13. Van Reijn, Joop, (2013) Intelligence and Strategic Culture: Essays on American and British Praxis since the Second World War, in Intelligence and Strategic Culture, Isabelle, Duyvesteyn, Routledge, New York.
14. Walsh, James I., (2006), Intelligence-Sharing in the European Union: Institutions are not enough, in Journal of Common Market Studies, vol. 44, issue 3, September.
15. Warner, Margaret, (2013), *An exclusive club: The five countries that don't spy on each other*, article available online at http://www.pbs.org/newshour/rundown/an-exclusive-club-the-five-countries-that-dont-spy-on-each-other/, 25 May 2015.