THROUGH INTELLIGENCE TOWARDS KNOWLEDGE, THROUGH KNOWLEDGE TOWARDS STRATEGIC DECISION

Cristina POSAŞTIUC*

Abstract

The complex security environment, the speed at which events unfold, as well as the ever shorter time dedicated to making the strategic decision are indicators of the need for a new intelligence formula, able to generate strategic knowledge, based on integrated formulae, a mixture of "innovation networks" and "knowledge clusters".

The intelligence-academic–business axis should include also "media- and culture-based public", so as to benefit from society's comprehensive knowledge.

The cooperation framework could be built on creating a set of communication tools shared by all participants, establishing and pursuing priorities, developing rapid response mechanisms and analysis platforms, willingly allotting the necessary time for such efforts, as well as bolstering trust-building networks.

Keywords: *intelligence, strategic, knowledge society, collaborative, decision*

Introduction

Contemporary society evolutions, seen as an antechamber of the future, shed a light on a complex and dense picture of knowledge pushing human ability to perceive and understand close to biological and intellectual limits.

More clearly, scientific breakthroughs, discoveries, inventions, or innovations in all sectors and social layers have triggered in the past decades a change of reality, a shift in individual and institutional rhythms, as well as an intensification and speed-up of processes.

* Lector PhD., National Intelligence Academy "Mihai Viteazul", cposastiuc@gmail.com

Particularly, an enhance in information dynamics has a direct impact over the perceived reality increasingly described as dim and even bewildering, affecting, thus, the ability to analyze and make decisions of both ordinary citizen and decision-maker facing a strategic choice.

The radiography of the international political scene, however poor, reveals in dark thick lines the existence of unprecedented challenges facing all institutional stakeholders. They are generated by the need to respond rapidly, efficiently, and sustainably to risks, threats and opportunities which occur and develop as an immutable consequence of social, political, and economic interactions.

Therefore, resorting to theoretical or methodological tools concerning the security issue is no more an odd practice. As Copenhagen School observed even before the fall of Berlin Wall, a natural spread of legitimate strategic concerns over the global impact of daily developments or emerging phenomena trends called for the use of security-specific complex tools for evaluation and decision-making.

Dilemmas in making decision are not a consequence of information society. The past century saw an abundance of academic, philosophical or political debates which came up with many solutions. John Dewey and Walter Lippman, alongside Henry Mintzberg, Peter Drucker, James March or Peter Senge, just to name some of the well-known authors whose works focused on those issues, advanced solutions and models of acting in different circumstances, launched or criticized principles, methods, and organizational models deemed as timely or appropriate for different circumstances or political, social, and economic developments.

These scientific debates reveal as a common ground the consensus on the fundamental role of data-information-knowledge sequence in the activities related to the decision-making process.

For an analyst, Sherman Kent's work is undoubtedly indispensable to naturally integrate intelligence development in the subsequently-agreed acceptance of indissoluble part of the security sector and at the same time as the foundation of knowledge for all institutional decision-makers.

"Intelligence is knowledge", a syntagm he coined in 1949, has marked and continues to creatively influence strategic thinking.

Its feature of visionary intelligence benchmark - as security activity - was certified by the organization and functioning results at the level of governmental institutions, especially the American ones.

In an era marked by uncertainties and concerns about the risk of copycat conflicts on a potential much grander scale, the adoption of a decision-making system based on the professional and strategic use of knowledge has been a historic success. The systemic and integrated approach has managed to maintain a balance, poor as it may be but quite stable, between the decisions of the two antagonistic ideological blocs – communist and capitalist – in a confrontation waged with the most large-scale and varied resources.

The success of the Western model can also be considered a result of its theoretical and practical mobility in the decision-making process, its much faster ability to adapt to the context and, last but not least, its tendency to criticize each element, either particular or general, of the mechanism or principles on which participatory democracy and capitalism are lying, as a prerequisite for change, improvement, and innovation.

The conclusions of the analysis of these models, the geopolitical context, and the new paradigm of the knowledge society are a building block for a vigorous interweaving of all areas of intelligence production, any decision being nowadays a product of a multidisciplinary, multisource, and integrated process.

Being Strategic in Information Age

Contemporary perspective on the meanings of "strategic" and the activities it refers to are various nowadays.

A brief however integrated theory says that the strategy encompasses a wide choice of approaches that Henry Mintzberg divided in five types, known as the 5Ps - plan, ploy, pattern, perspective, and position (Mintzberg, 1987, p. 11).

A comprehensive coverage of this concept supposes a set of extremely diverse and complex activities subdued to the notion of strategic.

Therefore, any strategic action assumes an analysis of data and information, which can be considered a specific form of research that addresses any issue at the level of breadth and detail in the description of threats, risks, and opportunities in a way which helps establish programs and policies (McDowell, 2009, p. 5).

In order to assimilate the overall significance and importance of studying and developing a proactive correlation among intelligence, knowledge, and decision, it is imperative to review current experience and theoretical perspectives.

Acceptance and integration into a modern theoretical and practical system is of a relatively recent date, as a result of the need to organize complex flow of activities in economy and, starting with Sherman Kent, in intelligence.

Thus, modern management theory, from the 14 principles of Henry Fayol to Frederick Taylor's scientific management principles or Peter Drucker's contemporary ones, is dwelling on the vital dimension of an all-encompassing assessment of realities and possibilities. This effort is indispensable to objectively ensure the need to efficiently allocate resources in the long run so as to guarantee the success of the organization – either economic enterprise, or institution or state entity.

In plainer words, the related processes, organizations, and infrastructures are designed and built so as to ensure the output necessary to support, by providing relevant knowledge, an efficient decision-making process resilient to the increasingly diverse challenges facing the contemporary society in the economic, political, social, technological or, in our case, security fields.

As more than one expert observed, the 21st century security environment "leaves intelligence organizations in the position of needing to embrace two distinct paradigms to accomplish their mission: the traditional puzzle-solving paradigm in the case of traditional state-based security threats, and a new adaptive interpretation paradigm to address transnational threats" (Lahneman, 2010, p. 212), which, in the past decade, have become increasingly visible on the international agenda and among national priorities, as well. Given the current circumstances, intelligence communities tend to become "a provider of knowledge" rather than "a producer of information" (Kerbel and Olcott, 2010).

An assessment of the chosen solutions highlights their diversity, transfer of expertise, and mutual influences among experts in areas until recently considered closed and self-sufficient. The idea of pluri-disciplinarity has, in the current context, a meaning far beyond occasional and rather experimental approaches of the 20th century. They turn into a philosophy that creatively influences the entire mechanism of education, research, and development of tangible or intangible assets, a category which also includes intelligence.

Therefore, we are witnessing concerted efforts of adaptation, development, and, not in the least, innovation, so that the solutions offered by

intelligence as a whole were able to cover the entire need-to-know spectrum at all decision-making levels.

Decision-Making in Knowledge Society

In the contemporary security environment, a special emphasis is placed on the strategic perspective of decision-making process and, consequently, knowledge.

The speed-up of economic, political, technological, and social process transforms even the meaning of notion of strategic. Although still valid at doctrinal level in many domains, it becomes increasingly clear that major cleavages occur in projecting, decision-making, and implementing strategic perspectives due to the shrinking capacity to objectively manage the system flows within action plans.

Under these circumstances, intelligence plays a fundamental and challenging role: the production of strategic knowledge on new coordinates. For the state intelligence organizations, it became clear that strategic intelligence cannot but appeal to the full range of available resources and all relevant expertise to support the decision-making process by creating a knowledge base to substantiate the transformation and progress of society.

Political and social transformations, as well as making society aware of the need to preserve the current model of civilization were arguments in favor of reshaping the security environment. Matters may become more complex considering that, in terms of security, certain entities can be both friends and foes, depending on their area of interest.

These changes are triggered by the new typology of risks, but also security interests of the decisions and their actions.

Apart from objective measurable elements influencing decision-making process coordinates, another factor increasingly difficult to manage adds up: the time.

The hectic pace of events puts pressure on both the analyst and the customer/decision maker.

The analyst must constantly adapt the discourse according to developments, ending in some cases to be overwhelmed.

On the other hand, the decision-makers are nudged by the need to know and are always concerned that they lack all available information they might need when undertaking appropriate measures.

This is the reason why the world witnesses an unprecedented boom of requirements generated by the increasing need for analytical materials meant to allow the immediate dealing with any challenge (Betts, 1978, p. 61).

In such conditions, the role of security intelligence is decisive since the expertise pragmatically proves that the resources earmarked for impeding the emergence of a real threat are significantly reduced than those for mitigating the potential effects of those threats.

This reality stands for the shift in customers' interest from explicative descriptive intelligence to estimative intelligence that forecasts developments in areas of interest.

Being aware of the theoretical and practical deadlock of contemporary analysis, particularly due to the devastating negative effects of failing to come up with good predictions (as in the case of 9/11 attacks or the economic crisis), the intelligence community spearheaded reform measures.

The first and most advanced in this regard was the US intelligence community which theoretically and practically relied on a collaborative approach for sharing information and expertise among its different agencies (500 Day Plan for Collaboration and Integration).

If the topics of interest range from nuclear missile technologies to pandemics – not to mention the emerging issues – it becomes clear that a single structure cannot have the necessary expertise. Furthermore, current analytical challenges are less constrained to a paradigm specific to an area of interest, often resorting to multiple disciplines and various areas of expertise, developments that make almost impossible for a single analyst to achieve a strategic assessment.

From Lone Analyst to Community of Analysts

Sharing knowledge and creating optimal conditions for trading opinions, as well as shortening the hierarchical chains to minimum, have the effect of removing some of the bureaucratic short circuits, streamlining the intelligence process, and filling gaps in knowledge in a relevant domain by engaging the whole available human capital, establishing a common language extremely important in simplifying the intelligence process, and clearly specifying the need for turning customer's feedback into a norm.

On the other hand, William J. Lahneman stated that an intelligence community needs to remain a hierarchical structure able to generate or access collaborative networks whenever an inter-disciplinary analysis is required.

Such networks should integrate OSINT through analysts and experts from private entities (Lahneman, 2010, p. 204).

Furthermore, an appropriate response to topical issues requires that the efforts to find solutions to those challenges should be accompanied by strengthening knowledge and galvanizing the adaptability and creativity as supporting factors of the analytical process.

Still in its early stage within intelligence communities, *outsourcing* could be an answer to the unprecedented amount of information, hitting a level that makes impossible the traditional management of data and, implicitly, intelligence flows.

Objectively, it is practically impossible for an analyst to tackle alone and highly professionally all the challenges arising in many areas that have become of interest in the current security context.

The solution of creating a partnership between intelligence structures and academic milieus has gained increasingly more grounds of late, so that, building on the responsibility to achieve the common welfare, they approached together a series of security challenges targeting niche areas or supposing access to fundamental research.

A cooperation formula aimed at extending knowledge necessary to decision making, known under the name of Triple Helix, became more evident in the 1990s. The concept as defined by Henry Etzkowitz and Loet Leydesdorff during 1993-1995 entailed, in a well-known formula since that moment, the idea of a creative interaction among government, academia, and business based on interdisciplinary principles in order to share and, if necessary, produce knowledge for progress. Formulated first as a driving factor in business intelligence policies, Triple Helix formula quickly emerged as an appropriate solution to any organizational model aimed at producing knowledge.

Henry Etzkowitz synthesized the essence of Triple Helix model in 10 propositions which galvanized many of the processes associated with the development of the knowledge society in the contemporary matrix shaped by information technology (Etzkowitz, 2003, p. 296).

For example, Etzkowitz stated that initiatives arising within a Triple Helix interaction become innovation policies, a conclusion which can be extended to any intelligence domain, nationally and beyond. This can be achieved through the optimal use of innovation and fundamental knowledge resources available in academia, efforts to meet the market interests of

industries, preoccupations to social needs, and design and implementation tools of the existing government policies (Etzkowitz, 2003, p. 296).

Perhaps the most representative assertion in Henry Etzkowitz's research, "capitalization of knowledge occurs in parallel with cogitization of capital", characterizes best knowledge's role within the decision-making process in contemporary society, where efficiency is the supreme value of assessing social efforts in Capitalism.

Overcoming the profit-oriented thinking as the expression of successful strategic efforts seems to be possible through a broader approach that would see civil society as a weighting element.

Thus, Triple Helix model is innovatively upgraded through the emergence of "Mode 3", as its creators Elias G. Carayannis and David F.J. Campbell called it. It essentially represents a mix of "innovation networks" and "knowledge clusters" that can serve as the basis of a mechanism for fostering a set of hybrid goods equally or distinctly public/private, tacit/ codified, tangible/virtual in a knowledge economy, society, and polity (Carayannis and Campbell, 2009, p. 202). As an expression of this system, the two postulated the idea of a Quadruple Helix to integrate, beside the above-mentioned formalized intelligence resources, a heterogeneous and unstructured helix called "media-based and culture-based public" (Carayannis and Campbell, 2009, p. 206).

The attractiveness of the architecture proposed by Carayanis and Campbell lies in the possibility to integrate and exploit a significant quantitative and qualitative expertise and innovation potential, which the authors called "creative class", in the common effort to develop a knowledge society.

The variety of the resource, its nonconformist and sometimes anti-cyclical nature can generate difficulties in exploiting its innovative capacity.

On the one hand, it is difficult to integrate values which are non-institutional by definition, freelancers, or even critics of the system into bureaucratic mechanisms.

On the other hand, too much autonomy could generate timing mismatches in critical situations, under the pressure of rapid sequence of events, due to inability to acquire the critical mass of knowledge necessary to make proper decisions.

Even in these circumstances, the Quadruple Helix model can be a source of inspiration for the implementation of a dynamic and comprehensive

support formula for the decision-making process that would put together national knowledge resources.

In our opinion, this direction has the ability to provide solutions to support recent theoretical developments of strategic analysis, which suppose the introduction of some elements assessing uncertainty-induced risk (Kotler and Caslione, 2009, p. 73), by using the extensive knowledge base of the society.

The thorough study of theoretical inputs concerning the theory of knowledge is mandatory for any strategic intelligence provider, category which includes security services as well.

The replication of a formula that integrates national strategic knowledge resources is, amid information society and current geopolitical developments, a first-rate necessity.

The added value gained from setting up a national intelligence community is an argument in support of the idea that the approach was useful and should be extended by including the other helices proposed by researchers.

Decision-makers need all available knowledge and national creativity resources to become effective and proactive nationwide and competitive worldwide.

A flexible formula that includes experts from all academic, government, and business milieus or civil society can be achieved by a joint, conscious, consistent, and willingly assumed effort.

The development of such a system is difficult, given that it involves the instrumentalization of communication in a language shared by all participants, identification and pursuit of priorities, establishment and implementation of rapid response mechanisms and complex analysis tools/platforms, voluntary allocation of time resources, maybe on already-established crowdsourcing principles, the development of trusted networks.

Each of these steps is difficult to achieve and extends over a long period of time. But it is very important to understand the urgent need to translate current exploration efforts, benevolent and constructive as it may be but still experimental, into sheer actions. And now it's time to get started.

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