INTELLIGENCE ANALYSIS

THE INTRICATE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN CITIZENS AND INTELLIGENCE SERVICES IN THE LIGHT OF INTELLIGENCE CULTURE*

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Abstract:

Intelligence operations are often considered mysterious and concealed. This air of mystery has affected how citizens perceive what intelligence services are and do. The interest of intelligence services in understanding what citizens' think of them has considerably grown. However, there is a lack of consistent research on this topic. This article addresses the issues of citizens' perceptions of intelligence activities and citizens' trust towards intelligence services. Moreover, it proposes that the concept of intelligence culture.

Keywords: *citizens, perceptions, trust, intelligence, intelligence culture.*

Introduction

Intelligence services have shown increasing interest in investigating how people perceive national security threats and how citizens perceive what intelligence services do to combat these threats. However, the number of academic works exploring the applicability of such research in the intelligence sector is considerably lower than the

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number of studies related to other areas of inquiry such as, for example, intelligence analysts' perceptions of security issues (Evans & Kebbell, 2012; Heuer, 1999; Wastell, 2010). This lack of relevant literature on perceptions of security issues may be partly due to the almost exclusive focus of traditional security studies on military aspects. Nevertheless, highlighting the importance of citizens' perceptions for intelligence activities would align with the new understanding of security introduced by critical security studies and enriched by research conducted in the last few decades.

As shown later in the article, major issues such as citizens' perceptions of intelligence activities and trust of citizens towards intelligence services have been only rarely systematically studied and some results conflict with common beliefs about intelligence.

A particularly interesting notion which could be usefully adopted to systematize this stream of research is intelligence culture (Aldrich & Kasuku, 2012; Van Reijn, 2011). Intelligence culture can be conceived as an overarching concept including sets of traditions, practices and modalities governing the field of intelligence. Moreover, intelligence culture has been subject to conceptual evolution. The idea was originally associated with an in-depth analysis of intelligence failures (Davies, 2004), before being more recently included in an analysis of dimensions such as collective perceptions of intelligence services (Chiru, 2016). For these reasons, analysing the development of the concept of intelligence culture as well as its contemporary understanding is particularly useful to highlight the connections of two worlds that are only apparently distant: intelligence and citizens.

This article aims to present the main elements governing the relationship between citizens and intelligence. Moreover, by analysing the recent developments of the concept of intelligence culture, it aims to stimulate new research on this topic, which could potentially be of practical interest for the intelligence sector.

The article is organized in three main parts and the following topics are discussed: citizens' perceptions of intelligence operations, the issue of trust and the newest understandings of intelligence culture.

What do they do? Citizens' perceptions of Intelligence activities

June 2013 marked a momentous turning point in the history of intelligence. Indeed, several revelations were made about intelligence activities involving the US National Security Agency (NSA) carrying out domestic and foreign surveillance operations. This ground-breaking event led to a massive set of consequences at the political (Landau, 2013), social (Haim, Weimann, & Brosius, 2018), and legal levels (Wright & Kreissl, 2013). The revelations were extraordinary not only because information extremely sensitive for national security was made public but due to US citizens realizing they might have been monitored by the intelligence services of their own country. In the eyes of a naïve observer, this fact alone could irremediably undermine the trust of citizens in the intelligence services and possibly even towards the government. In fact, citizens' reactions to revelations of this kind have been less definite than one would think, and the entire idea of trust is further explored later in the article.

From that moment, several studies were published on citizens' perceptions of surveillance operations carried out by intelligence services (e.g., Kininmonth, Thompson, McGill, & Bunn, 2018; Kwon & Rao, 2017; Trüdinger & Steckermeier, 2017). Note that most existing empirical studies on the perception of surveillance are about domestic – not foreign – surveillance (e.g., Bromberg, Charbonneau, & Smith, 2020; Reddick, Chatfield, & Jaramillo, 2015). Only few studies have compared what citizens think of domestic and foreign intelligence activities. Previous research has suggested that the diverse emotional experiences originating from the perception of different types of threats to national security may lead to different perceptions of surveillance operations (Huddy, 2009). In particular, it was predicted that fear would lead to a wider acceptance of domestic surveillance operations (Rykkja, Lægreid, & Fimreite, 2011), while anger would be directed to the broader support of intelligence operations beyond national borders (Jentleson & Britton, 1998).

Reddick et al. carried out an interesting multi-method study on citizens' opinions of NSA's surveillance programs using a critical discourse analysis of citizens' tweets on NSA's operations (Reddick et al.,

2015). Additionally, the authors conducted a logistic regression of survey data collected from a sample of Americans on information gathering by the government. Overall, results showed negative opinions towards NSA's surveillance programs. Similarly, a study conducted during the outbreak of the 2020 COVID-19 pandemic on American's perception of surveillance operations carried out to limit the spread of COVID-19 showed relatively low support from citizens (Zhang, Kreps, McMurry, & McCain, 2020). On the matter of health security, it is worth noting the special issue of Intelligence and National Security in 2020. Such issue highlights the importance of sectors other than the military for national security, as Buzan and colleagues postulated (1998). Evidence also shows that factors such as gender, age and political affiliation influence support or opposition of surveillance technology (Bromberg et al., 2020). Previous research demonstrated that elements other than demographic characteristics are predictive of lesser or greater support for preventive policies, including surveillance of the population. For example, it was verified that the combination of low threats, limited previous exposure to threats to national security such as terrorist attacks and a high level of social trust correlates with less scepticism towards such policies (Rykkja et al., 2011). However, results in various contexts are needed, such as countries with a recent history of terrorist events or nations at war. A remarkable stream of research has examined how surveillance activities carried out by intelligence services are perceived, as well as how surveillance activities suppress a set of online activities (Stoycheff, 2016). Studies have also examined how surveillance practices suffocate the expression of minority political views and online political expression (Ping Yu, 2021).

The pessimistic attitudes and opinions of citizens towards intelligence operations that generally emerge from empirical studies on the topic may suggest a widespread negative attitude of citizens towards intelligence services. However, some research has shown that – to the surprise of the authors – a high number of participants stated that intelligence services should be allowed to hack the communications of fellow countrymen and foreigners (de Waal, 2013). These results indicate the existence of three elements to consider. First, timing is important: it is more likely that citizens would be more supportive of

intelligence operations after the occurrence of an event that undermines national security (Westin, 2003). Second, as some authors have suggested (Reddick et al., 2015), governments need to be more efficacious in communicating surveillance programs to citizens, and in a more transparent way, to achieve greater approval for intelligence operations. Third, gaining trust from the citizenry is challenging – especially considering sensitive topics such as privacy and national security – but it is vital for building a lasting relationship. Some research showed that complex psychological processes might occur when attempting to build a trust relationship between the government and citizens (Zhang & Kim, 2018). The trust relationship between citizens and intelligence services might involve processes even more articulated because of the aura of mystery that has frequently affected the narrative about intelligence institutions (Bennett, 2006). This occurrence is worth attention if trust is considered the first step of lasting relationships between social actors (Morrone, Tontoranelli, & Ranuzzi, 2009).

The issue of citizens' trust in Intelligence

A topic that has frequently been the subject of political discourse is the issue of trust from citizens. Interestingly, however, no comprehensive investigation on trust in intelligence services has been carried out to date, with the exception of Hribar and colleagues' recent work (2021). This scarcity of research could be in part due to the significant differences in investigating how intelligence services are perceived in various countries.

One of the major issues when examining trust is the number of intra-disciplinary definitions and interpretations of the concept, as well as the variety of meanings 'trust' has in everyday life (McKnight & Chervany Norman, 2001). The concept of trust has been studied in a several areas, such as its influence on the use of social networks (Varlamis, Eirinaki, & Louta, 2010) and on investment rates (Zak & Knack, 2001). The assessment of trust in the context of intelligence studies is more limited. Nevertheless, previous research has identified a number of factors affecting trust in the institutions, which could be usefully explored when considering citizens' trust in intelligence services, namely (1) competence; (2) a history of honesty, openness and

acting for the sake of the public interest; (3) sharing the same values as the individual (Science Communication Unit – University of the West of England, 2014). Regarding intelligence services, the last two points are particularly delicate. It suffices to think about how the activities of intelligence services in totalitarian regimes affected popular perceptions and attitudes towards them, even after those regimes have been put down. Nevertheless, although the perception of fairness and responsiveness of governments in critical situations generally makes citizens trust their governments (Anderson, 2010), it was found that even scepticism may have a positive effect in citizens' interest in finding answers to questions about the conduct of the government (Pinkleton, Austin, Zhou, Willoughby, & Reiser, 2012). It remains to be investigated whether this occurrence holds for intelligence services, as their activities are generally concealed from the population, and the evaluation of elements such as fairness and responsiveness is difficult.

It is possible, however, to hypothesize that the claim that emotions play a crucial role in guiding citizens' expectations towards the government (Reddick et al., 2015) may also be true for intelligence services. This theory would confirm the importance of studying citizens' emotional responses to national security threats and to the operations undertaken to tackle these threats. In addition, new security issues such as large-scale epidemics, or even pandemics, may require control systems that could be well or poorly tolerated by citizens. For example, it was shown that trust in institutions and one's state governor was associated with a greater support of surveillance policies in responses to the 2020 COVID-19 outbreak in the United States (Zhang et al., 2020), even if a relatively small percentage of respondents supported the use of contact tracing apps. Accordingly, future research on the topic might need to consider how emerging security issues and operations aimed at facing them could alter citizens pre-existing perceptions, attitudes and opinions on surveillance and other operations carried out by intelligence services. The picture is made even more complex by another element that is hard to conceal with the secretiveness intrinsically characteristic of intelligence activities: the communication of risks and threats. It was demonstrated that not providing citizens with proper information about possibly imminent security threats may lead to over – or under – reaction

from the citizenry in response to such threats (Rogers & Pearce, 2013). Withholding information on potential threats has repercussions on threat-related behaviours, particularly relevant nowadays, such as low uptake of vaccinations in response to epidemic outbreaks. In fact, the security sector must face new types of security challenges that might not be strictly related to the military sector but are nonetheless crucial for national security. This instance may require further academic investigation, given that intelligence services are trusted mostly when confronting terrorism or impending threats (Chiru, 2016). Moreover, classical theories on security place military aspects at the centre of the discourse. With the advent of critical security studies and, more recently, with studies that emerged in the last two decades, the scope of the discipline was enlarged to embrace new dimensions, such as political, economic, environmental and social aspects (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2020).

Most existing knowledge on the topic of citizens' trust towards intelligence services has been carried out within an inner circle of disciplines, namely intelligence studies and international relations (George, 2020; Phythian, 2005). In addition to academic research, the topic has been considered in media publications by stakeholders such as heads of intelligence services and politicians (Hribar et al., 2021). Therefore, the interdisciplinarity frequently advocated for security studies seems to not find fertile ground for this specific topic. In particular, the analysis of the influence of emotions on citizens' expectations (Reddick et al., 2015) and trust towards governments and intelligence services might have been hampered by some obstacles. Three impediments might have slowed the application of research designs and methods used in disciplines other than intelligence studies: resistance to empiricism, lack of time and the politicization of intelligence (Puvathingal & Hantula, 2012). The last impediment may prove to be particularly intrusive when planning research on the analysis of citizens' trust in intelligence services, given the political implications of possibly negative outcomes. Nevertheless, further research might shed more light on this dilemma, considering the relative scarcity of empirical research on the topic.

Although the study did not involve empirical research, Hribar and colleagues' work is the first – and only to date – thorough analysis of citizens' trust in intelligence services (Hribar et al., 2021). Their paper proposed a new definition of the concept of trust, which was conceived as a psychological state between two entities, the trustor and the trustee, in which the latter meets the expectations of the former. According to the authors, the trustors – the citizens – are willing to take risks and be vulnerable because they consider the trustee – the intelligence services – as "an appropriate entity". This idea of trust of citizens towards intelligence services is partially in line with the concept of trust proposed by Kee and Knox (1970), according to which two parties are – to a certain extent – interdependent concerning the outcomes of their choices. One party is challenged with the choice of believing in the fairness of the actions of the other, at its own risk. The second party, in turn, is aware that it can betray the other. By translating this idea into the discussion about citizens and intelligence services, it transpires that the unbalanced relationship puts intelligence services in a position of either being trusted or untrusted and in turn, of being capable of acting in line with the expectations of the trustors or betraying them.

To coherently conceptualize this elaborate matrix, Hribar and colleagues proposed a three-dimensional model with the following entities at stake: (1) "citizens"; (2) "influential components" such as politics, the education system and the media and (3) "foreign intelligence services" (Hribar et al., 2021). The citizens were conceived by the authors as the lay public not having a thorough knowledge of intelligence services or issues. Therefore, if trust cannot be based on detailed information about the trustee's activities, the subjective assessment of limited available information becomes the yardstick against which the other party is evaluated. In fact, according to the authors, trust should not be intended as a given truth or objective reality, but rather as a product of the trustor's perception. The second element of the model, the so-called influential components, refers to the group of institutions and actors which, at different levels, mediate the trust of citizens in intelligence services. The influential components were categorized by the authors as follows: the national intelligence system, politics, oversight, the professional public, the education system and the media.

Such entities could potentially increase or diminish trust of citizens in intelligence services. For instance, the media may convey a positive or negative image of intelligence operations and citizens may adjust their trust in them accordingly. The third component of the model, the foreign intelligence services, were presented as a negative factor influencing citizens' trust. The interconnection of these three components is, in the view of the authors, the foundation upon which trust of citizens in intelligence services is built.

Notable works explored how the conduct of intelligence agencies, especially in the attempt to combat terrorism, might pose risks for democracies and highlight the necessity to develop oversight of intelligence activities (e.g., Gill, 2012). Such risks might inevitably hamper the trust of citizens in intelligence agencies.

Some critical empirical studies highlighted another potentially crucial factor: unresponsiveness or not an adequate response to threats and risks perceived by the citizens. Even this aspect might hinder the trust of citizens in the intelligence sector (Sandman, Miller, Johnson, & Weinstein, 1993).

New tools in modern intelligence: the use of the media

The relevance of the media in the security sector is explored in several security studies' works (e.g., Bjørkdahl & Carlsen, 2017; de Buitrago, 2013; Samuel-Azran, Lavie-Dinur, & Karniel, 2015). If the prominence of the media in the academic literature on security studies is well-documented, similarly, the intelligence sector's reliance on the media has been thoroughly analysed (e.g., Bakir, 2015; Hillebrand, 2012; Matei, 2014). The relationship between intelligence services and the media takes various forms, which can take the following forms: (1) the use of media to make the public aware of national security issues; (2) the use of media to create an enemy image; (3) the use of media to collect information.

The use of the media to present national security issues to the public can be ascribed in large part to the idea of securitisation, according to which a given fact is represented as carrying an existential threat to the referent object (Buzan et al., 1998). In the case of intelligence, the referent object is national security. Some authors have

argued that a necessary step to accomplishing a securitising move is gaining the assent of the audience – the citizens – through a narrative that highlights the imminence of an existential threat (Balzacq, Léonard, & Ruzicka, 2016). The concept of securitisation, intended as shifting a security issue from the political debate into the sphere of emergency politics by the creation of an existential threat (Peoples & Vaughan-Williams, 2020), has sometimes been fused into the broader concept of security culture. An example of such occurrence is the attempt of American officials, since 2015, to put in place a securitising process in response to the alleged Eurasian alignment of China and Russia (Ambrosio, Schram, & Heopfner, 2020). This conduct might be considered a simple form of securitisation, except that this behaviour has been recurrent throughout the last few decades in response to actual or perceived threats to US national security. For instance, a securitisation move was carried out following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, similar to what happened during the Cold War. Indeed, the securitisation process not only involves framing an existential threat (Floyd, 2016) but even exposing to the public the source of a potential threat to the national identity and sets of values. This conduct emphasises the impact of cultural determinants of securitisation. This process concretises into the American attempt to preserve their primacy and the political order based on liberalism and democracy (Ambrosio et al., 2020). This example highlights the interdependency of the concepts of security culture and securitisation. In this stream of research, some authors further explored the idea of securitisation, which was described as a spiral process involving the articulation of an existential threat narrative by a securitising actor, the validation of such an existential threat through mass media, its sedimentation in the audience and the actions put in place to tackle such a threat (Gaufman, 2017). Two elements of this scheme are notable: the securitising actor and the media. Gaufman specified that the securitising actor can be not only the government but any other actor with positional power. In this context, the literature has documented intelligence services as actors using media strategies to manipulate information and cause psychological warfare (Magen, 2015). Similarly, past research has highlighted the role of the media as a vital element for the accomplishment of securitisation (Vultee, 2010).

The use of the media to convey a national security threat to citizens is related to another objective of government and intelligence institutions, which is the creation of an enemy image. This use of the media dates back to World War II and the Cold War (Moloney, 2006), when the propaganda of the opposing blocs strived to convey an image of the enemies as undermining their security, welfare and set of values. Using the media to depict the enemy as the source of existential threats remains investigated in the current literature (Bahador, 2015). Relevant studies often refer to classical social psychology theories, such as the Intergroup Threat Theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2017), to stress the role of emotions, intergroup conflict and stereotyping in a process demonising the enemy (Gaufman, 2017). In recent years, the relationship between citizens and intelligence services liaised by the media has taken the form of what some authors identify as social media intelligence (SOCMINT) (Omand, Bartlett, & Miller, 2012).

SOCMINT has some specific characteristics which make it more than a simple intelligence gathering method. Previous research has identified some new areas of application of information gathering from social media for the good of public security. In particular, SOCMINT does not only involve intelligence services gathering near real-time information, identifying criminal intent or better understanding the behaviour of groups of people targeted by intelligence services or the police. Social media can also ensure a better flow of information between the government and the citizens, particularly in emergencies (Omand et al., 2012). This bidirectional stream of information makes SOCMINT a fascinating case of how an intelligence-gathering method could be a way for government and citizens to know each other. Past research treated SOCMINT on a par with traditional intelligence gathering methods such as human intelligence (HUMINT), open-source intelligence (OSINT) and signals intelligence (SIGINT) (Dover, 2020; Şuşnea & Iftene, 2018), to be included in the intelligence cycle. However, the existing literature has highlighted another use of social media by intelligence services, that is, to attempt to create a public image and specific representations of intelligence services. For example, social media accounts of intelligence services make countless references to popular culture, share memes, and make self-referential jokes (Crilley & Pears, 2021). This effort to shorten

the distance that traditionally separates intelligence services from the population has led to engaging and informative content on social media pages (e.g., SRI – Serviciul Român de Informații, n.d.).

The attempt undertaken by intelligence services to build a new relationship with citizens is one of the founding elements of the new understanding of intelligence culture.

A new element in the discussion: the importance of cultural factors

The set of perceptions, trust (or lack of) and interdependency between the citizens and the intelligence services are only parts of a bigger framework regulating the nature of intelligence. The complexity does not reside just in terminology. Intelligence is not only defined differently in various parts of the world (Caddell Jr, 2019), there are also variations in how intelligence is conceived, how it operates, how its operations are perceived and what is expected from it. The complexity and richness of this framework partially reflects the advances through which the entire security sector has evolved from the classical conception of the two-party understanding of security. According to the classical idea of security, the military protected the other party, national security. The advent of new security sectors and actors (Buzan et al., 1998) motivated researchers in security studies to reconsider classical theories (Gruszczak, 2016). In particular, from the last decades of the 20th century, scholars began to cover cultural elements in intelligence studies (e.g., Porch, 1995).

The concept of culture has been extensively studied in a number of disciplines and several definitions have been provided. According to one of the most prominent, culture can be thought of as the shared set of knowledges and practices generated by people to perceive, decode and react to the social phenomena around them (Lederach, 1996). The use of the idea of culture was not new in security studies given that the concepts of political and strategic culture – which intelligence culture can be considered an emanation of – had already been advanced by important authors (e.g., Booth, 1990; Riley, 1983). The novelty brought by the notion of intelligence culture can be extrapolated from the idea of culture presented above. In particular, the study of intelligence culture

can be intended as the analysis of the knowledge of people in relation to intelligence that guides their perceptions, interpretations and responses.

A culture of Intelligence and the role of citizens

At the beginning of the 21st century, the issue of national security broke into everyone's lives. With major terrorist attacks occurring in the West, national security became a topic of widespread and immediate importance. The responses to terrorism provided by different states showed profound cultural differences in dealing with the problem (Rees & Aldrich, 2005). Indeed, the United States immediately declared a worldwide war against terrorism and allocated massive amounts of economic resources to the protection of national security. Instead, Europe's approach was different and attempted to stimulate dialogue and peacekeeping missions, as well as to try to reform the security sector to better tackle possible future security threats.

It is probably no coincidence that this framework of cultural divisions stimulated research on the influence of cultural factors in the intelligence sector. Indeed, in 2004, Davies published a ground-breaking paper in which he first introduced the concept of intelligence culture (2004). Subsequently, a detailed project was published on the US and UK's intelligence communities (Davies, 2012). The work was later expanded by including the analysis of intelligence culture outside the Anglosphere (Davies & Gustafson, 2013).

Davies' aim was not only to include an analysis of how cultural elements influence intelligence modus operandi but also how these elements shape the understanding of intelligence failures, which until that time were seen only as the outcome of a mechanism that at some point was jammed. Davies addressed two of the major issues affecting the concept of political and strategic culture: the vagueness of definitions and the lack of comparative studies. He affirmed that to provide a "value-added" impact to the intelligence studies literature, the idea of intelligence culture had to be applied through modalities and address issues that would help to better understand intelligence. In doing so, Davies asserted that the use of comparative studies serves the purpose better than case studies (2004). In fact, he carried out a comprehensive analysis of similarities and differences of the United States and UK

cultural elements of how intelligence is intended on the two sides of the Atlantic. Nevertheless, he fell into what Duyvesteyn identified as the Anglo-Saxon bias, that is, the unique analysis of intelligence culture in these two countries (2011). This methodological issue affected even subsequent research for a number of reasons, such as the use of the English language, the availability of information and the relative willingness of these two counties to discuss such sensitive topics.

Another bias affecting most of the literature on intelligence culture is the predominant focus on intelligence failures rather than successes (2011) or other dimensions. This focus probably derives from the easily assessable consequences of intelligence failures for national security, whereas intelligence successes are inevitably concealed from the public to protect sensitive information. For instance, the innovative work by Davies mentioned above was conceived as an analysis of cultural elements to explain intelligence failures in the UK and in the United States (2004). In particular, Davies argued that although intelligence services of different countries share common practices during operations, they might fail in significantly different ways. Consequently, the analysis of intelligence failures through the lenses of culture might allow researchers to understand the nuances of how intelligence is intended in different countries. Such analysis might not be so easily performed via other modalities, precisely from the reluctance of the intelligence sector to provide information about its functioning.

The analysis of intelligence failures offers some other points for reflection. For example, it was argued that a common practice often impairing the functioning of the US intelligence sector was the oversimplification of security threats. This oversimplification took the form of the transformation of complex threats, which comprised social, political and economic factors into simplistic rhetorical exercises (Duyvesteyn, 2013). Concurrently, in the intelligence sector, there has been an excessive reliance upon the so-called rational action theory, according to which people often operate in the most logical way in ambiguous situations. Unfortunately, this is not always the case, particularly when dealing with national security threats. Other factors, such as emotional processing of stimuli and previous experience, might come into play. These two biases confirm the importance of considering

multifaceted threats potentially undermining national security and the study of how people perceive them, emotionally and cognitively. A notable attempt to communicate risks, threats and activities carried out to tackle them was conducted by the directors of the MI5, MI6 and GCHQ. Such attempt might constitute a first step to shorten the distance between the public and intelligence sector (e.g., "MI5 Director General Andrew Parker gave a speech to the BfV Symposium in Berlin on 14 May 2018.," 2018).

The influence of people's perceptions and behaviour on intelligence operations has one emblematic example: the Malayan emergency. At the end of World War II and for a period lasting several years, an insurgent war was fought between pro-independence fighters and the British Empire. Among other factors, this armed conflict has historical importance because it led to the creation of a specialized division of the police operating in this territory, which was called "Malayan Police Special Branch". The police special branch acted following the "hearts and mind" strategy, according to which operations should be carried out not in a purely coercive manner but should strive to induce emotional reactions in the opposers to persuade them to pass to the other side of the dispute (Dixon, 2009). The Malayan Police Special Branch operated in synergy with the regular police and carried out collaborative, and in some instances forceful, tactics with the population. This strategy allowed for effective management of the counter-insurgency campaign, which traditionally repressive tactics had failed to curb. Other authors argued that an effective counterinsurgency should involve more institutions than just the special branch and comprises dynamic and evolving processes that rarely have been considered (Arditti, 2019). Current counter-insurgency practices have been paying increasing attention to the combination of intelligence gathering and the analysis of cultural elements. Nevertheless, As Duyvesteyn noted, minimal empirical evidence exists about the importance of cultural elements – as well as their antecedents and outcomes – in the intelligence sector (2013). A methodological loophole exists that has translated into a poor systematization of the issue. This gap could be in part be related to the legacy of the old tradition of security and intelligence studies, in which the focus was on impeding threats and less on long-term

phenomena concerning cultural elements. Indeed, the focus of some of the significant works on intelligence culture remains on intelligence failures and intelligence operations in general.

However, in the last few years, a new understanding of the concept of intelligence culture – and by extension of intelligence as a whole – began to gain ground. In particular, recent research has acknowledged the importance of citizens as beneficiaries, producers – and generally actors – of intelligence (Dumitru, 2014). This new understanding could potentially reform the foundational concept of intelligence by considering citizens' beliefs as new crucial elements of analysis. In fact, some recent publications suggested the inclusion of citizens as stakeholders in the intelligence sphere (Bean, de Werd, & Ivan, 2021). Citizens' perceptions, opinions, attitudes and behaviours constitute determinants of the new concept of intelligence culture (Matei & de Castro García, 2017). The new prominent role of citizens in intelligence brings a series of consequences, such as the need for them to be provided with information evaluations skills which until recently were reserved to intelligence practitioners (Ivan, Chiru, & Arcos, 2021). This new set of skills and trust that intelligence services can earn from citizens (Estevens & Rodrigues, 2020) set the foundation of the latest understanding of intelligence culture. Interestingly, this idea reflects the new concept of security proposed by the Copenhagen School of security studies, according to which new sectors and actors play a crucial role in the complex matrix of security (Buzan et al., 1998). It is worth noting other contributions that more specifically examined the role of surveillance in modern societies (e.g., Dandeker, 1994). In addition to the intelligence community, citizens and other actors, the new model highlights the importance of the media. Their role in explaining the activities carried out to protect national security is crucial, and they have the responsibility of properly conveying concepts to the public such as intelligence successes or failures (Dumitru, 2014). Within this framework, the media are essential as the primary source of information regarding intelligence, and they also have an educational call: to educate citizens as new security stakeholders about what intelligence services do.

This analysis is not constrained to academic research since some intelligence services have acknowledged the role of media in informing

citizens about intelligence issues. For instance, the Italian intelligence services created a journal called Gnosis, which is designed to discuss topics related to intelligence in an engaging and comprehensible manner. This journal has specifically addressed the topic of intelligence culture (Valentini, 1999). Moreover, their website includes sections on what the intelligence services are, how they operate and the challenges they must address (DIS, n .d.). This effort to inform citizens complies with an Italian law dated August 2007 where Italian intelligence services must promote and disseminate security culture and institutional communication (Italian Parliament, 2007). Current literature has investigated the importance of intelligence agencies' use of social media platforms. For example, Landon-Murray investigated the use of Facebook, Twitter and other social media platforms by the US intelligence agencies (2015). However, it is worth noting that the use of social media platforms by intelligence agencies might lead to unintended consequences, such as conspiracy theories (McLoughlin, Ward, & Lomas, 2020).

Other countries have endeavoured to shorten the distance between intelligence services and the population. For example, Denmark organized a set of initiatives to sensitize people on radicalization and how to address it (Rietjens, 2019), and Spain has included intelligence topics in university curricula (Chiru, 2019). The latter case is an interesting example of the interdisciplinarity that has been advocated for in recent works on intelligence studies (Van Puyvelde et al., 2020).

Overall, it is fair to affirm that the concept of intelligence culture has greatly evolved in the last few years. The concept started as a theory attempting to explain intelligence failures under the new lenses of cultural determinants and evolved by highlighting the significance of cultural factors affecting not only intelligence failures but intelligence activities in general. Recently, it became a paradigm that elevated citizens to the role of security actors and their perceptions, attitudes and trust as crucial factors for the functioning of the intelligence sector.

Conclusion

This article discussed the importance of conducting research on citizens' perceptions of security issues for the intelligence sector.

It identified key issues such as citizens' perceptions of intelligence activities and trust towards intelligence services.

The article pointed out that the relationship between intelligence institutions and citizens starts with the very ideas of intelligence and citizenry. However, while there is widespread agreement about the classical conception of intelligence operations as collection, evaluation, analysis, integration and interpretation of information, vague interpretations of the very idea of intelligence have been provided. This occurrence might confound or even make the public sceptical about what intelligence institutions are. Future research might address this issue by systematizing the theoretical foundations of the concept of intelligence.

Another issue that arises from the literature review is the relatively scarce investigation of citizens' attitudes and perceptions of intelligence institutions and operations. Indeed, despite some events, such as the 2013 revelations on NSA, had enormous resonance on the news media, this general attention on intelligence issues did not translate into substantial empirical research on what citizens felt and perceived about these issues. Considering the importance of these dimensions, future research may bridge this gap.

Another dimension which should need more extensive coverage in the academic literature is the issue of trust. Indeed, although frequently referred to and advocated within the intelligence sphere, the concept of trust has received only one thorough analysis (Hribar et al., 2021). If trust is considered one of the pillars in social relationships and a topic frequently mentioned in intelligence studies, it cannot predict from a more comprehensive empirical assessment.

The last part of the article was dedicated to the exploration of the idea of intelligence culture. The concept of intelligence culture was firstly introduced as predominantly dealing with the idea of intelligence failures. However, in its latest understandings, this notion offers a theoretical framework within which issues such as citizens' perceptions, attitudes, behaviours and trust towards intelligence services can be systematized. Future research might look at this topic as a promising area of investigation within the intelligence studies literature. In general, the analysis of citizens' perceptions of security

and intelligence issues might help intelligence services strengthen their relationship with the public.

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