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DOES THE INTELLIGENCE CYCLE STILL EXIST?
(WHAT IS INTELLIGENCE ABOUT?)

Abstract

The author of this study has been dealing with this topic for several years. He raises the following right questions: does the intelligence cycle still exist, how did the intelligence cycle develop and change, what are the real elements of this cycle, which is the content of the request for information (RFI), what are the reasons for the rivalry between the information collectors and the analysts, who are the main critics of the intelligence cycle, what is the essence of their criticism, what are the contradictions between the political decision makers and the analysts. The author answers all these questions and draws the final conclusion that although the intelligence cycle functions in a different way in theory and in practice, there is still a need for the cycle to produce good intelligence products and provide the personnel with an efficient intelligence training.

Keywords: intelligence cycle, data collection, analyses and assessment, policy makers and analysts, criticisms of the cycle, main elements of the cycle, evolution of the cycle, request for information (RFI), further need for the cycle.

In the Hungarian society and scientific circles there is a lot of misunderstandings about the function of the national security system; and the cause of this should be examined from two viewpoints. First, the society identifies the national security system with the scandals and the abuses of the last decades, and with the activities of the state security services of the pre-1989 regime, because the media can only hammer this in the minds of people, due to the mysteriousness that surrounds the national security services. Second, the domestic literature available for everyone is extremely insufficient. This also applies to the theoretical bases of national security intelligence and counter-intelligence activities.

Regarding the theory of intelligence, especially the analysis and assessment activities, I have already pointed out this insufficiency in my study[1] entitled *Művészet vagy tudomány:*

Gondolatok a hírszerző elemzés-értékelésről (*Art or Science: Thoughts about Intelligence Analysis and Assessment*) [Felderítő Szemle (Intelligence Review), 2012/3-4.].

After the publication of the article, based on my research about the theory of national security intelligence, I had to state that there are some similarities not only in the case of analysis and assessment, but also in the case of the theory of national security intelligence itself. This is supported by the fact that one of the well-known search engines[2] on the Internet found only nine Hungarian results when searching for "intelligence cycle" as the description of the process of intelligence, while in English[3] there are 427,000 results for the same term[4]. Among the Hungarian results, there was only one that had the intelligence cycle as its main topic, which was published by Dr. Péter Fenyves[5], under the title *A hírszerző ciklus* (*The Intelligence Cycle*)[6].

In this study the author examined the elements of the intelligence cycle in the case of different foreign national security services, and in the end, he introduced his own version of the intelligence cycle. The author undertook only the task to introduce shortly the cycle, and he did not analyse its particulars or potential problems. The other results only touched upon the notion of intelligence cycle, but did not describe in detail its real meaning. Despite the insufficient literature, several higher education institutions teach the intelligence cycle[7].

Based on the scientific journals and magazines[8], it can be stated that in open sources, most of those who deals with the theory of national security intelligence are representatives of the military sciences. In Hungary, there is scientific literature for the theory of intelligence besides the open sources, because the national security services do have their own broad scientific description of their activity systems. However, these texts are still considered confidential information, despite the fact that in the international literature the theoretical questions can be easily found.

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[1] Dr. Csaba Vida: *Művészet vagy tudomány: Gondolatok a hírszerző elemzés-értékelésről (Art or Science: Thoughts about Intelligence Analysis and Assessment)* pp. 140-141
[2] Google Search Engine, www.google.hu
[3] Term searched for in Hungarian: „hírszerzési ciklus", in English: „intelligence cycle"
[4] Date of access: Aug 1, 2013
[5] Retired Colonel Dr. Péter Fenyves, who has CSc in military science, expert at the Hungarian Association of Military Science, former associate at the Hungarian Military Intelligence Office, former defense, military and air attaché in Ankara.
[6] Colonel Dr. Péter Fenyves: *A hírszerző ciklus* (*The Intelligence Cycle*), pp. 66-75.
[7] Dr. Csaba Vida: *Művészet vagy tudomány: Gondolatok a hírszerző elemzés-értékelésről*, p. 147.
[8] Periodicals considered scientific by the different committees of the MTA (Hungarian Academy of Sciences). In military sciences these are the following: Hadtudomány, Új Honvédségi Szemle, Felderítő Szemle, Szakmai Szemle, Hadtudományi Szemle, Belügyi Szemle, etc.

In contrast with the Hungarian literature, the international, especially the English literature is extremely broad, and in the last decade a significant number of studies have been published in connection with the national security activity. These precisely elaborate on the theories of national security and the factors connected to the intelligence cycle as well. Based on these, the scientific debates surrounding the national security intelligence can be kept track of, as well as the debates about the intelligence cycle.

The Evolution of the Intelligence Cycle

The intelligence cycle describes the process of national security intelligence activities, which is present at every organization (government institutions and private companies) where people gather information. Despite this, the system of the intelligence cycle only took shape by the mid-20th century. The definition of the elements of military intelligence appeared in U.S. regulations around WWI[9], which defined the tasks of data collection, comparison and dissemination. After WWI, four elements of intelligence were identified: requests for information (RFI), collection of data, analysis and dissemination. The full system of intelligence emerged during WWII, which is well supported by the fact that after the war, the theory of the intelligence cycle was formulated and published by Robert Rigby Glass and Phillip B. Davidson in 1948 in their book entitled *Intelligence is For Commanders[10]*. They described the intelligence cycle as a cyclical process, in which the mission (cycle) has four elements: directing data collection efforts, gathering information, analysing information and utilizing the products of intelligence. When examining the origins of the intelligence cycle, Michael Warner[11] stated that the formation of the concept should be basically sought at the points of contact between military sciences and psychology, but in any case it originates from social sciences. After the description and definition of the cycle, the concept quickly spread among the international intelligence community, and thus it became the generally accepted model of intelligence. This is supported by the fact that this is also the base for intelligence[12] at the renowned intelligence services[13]. The system of the intelligence cycle solidified at the end of the 1940s and at the beginning of the 1950s, and it is still considered the classical version.

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[9] Kristan J. Wheaton: *Let's Kill the Intelligence Cycle*. http://sourcesandmethods.blogspot.hu/2011/05/lets-kill-intelligence-cycle-original.html, date of access: 14 July, 2013.
[10] Robert R. Glass – Phillip B. Davidson: *Intelligence is for Commanders*.
[11] Michael Warner was a formal associate of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), who worked at the processing and analysing institution of the CIA, and later he engaged in the history of CIA.
[12] Colonel Dr. Péter Fenyves: *A hírszerző ciklus* pp. 66-75.
[13] American, British, German and French.

The cycle went though smaller changes in the last decades as a result of the development in information technology and information society, which manifested mainly in the breaking up of the working process. In the beginning of the 21st century, some representatives of the national security theory consider the intelligence cycle a "Cyclops"[14], because they think that nowadays it describes the process of intelligence defectively. Among the circles of the U.S. national security theories, a scientific debate developed in 2006 and 2007[15] in connection with the intelligence cycle. The leader of this debate was Arthur S. Hulnick[16], who wrote that "the description of the process is not good, based on which the intelligence process is working"[17]. Presenting the opinion of American intelligence officers, Robert M. Clark[18] in his 2010 study[19] explains that "…the intelligence cycle has become only a theoretical concept … Many intelligence officers admit that the intelligence process 'in reality, does not work like that.' In other words, effective intelligence efforts are not cycles."[20] Mark M. Lowenthal[21] analyses the system of the intelligence cycle in the fourth chapter of his book entitled *Intelligence: From Secret to Policy*[22], and points out that in his opinion, the process of intelligence is not a cycle, but a linear process realising on different levels as a result of constant feedback. Experts[23] participating in the relevant scientific debate also formulated several arguments against the intelligence cycle, claiming that it does not cover the whole process of intelligence.

Description of the Intelligence Cycle

After analysing the defects of the intelligence cycle, we need to discuss what the cycle in fact is. The cycle is a complex description of the intelligence activity, which includes the

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[14] Kristan J. Wheaton: *Let's Kill the Intelligence Cycle*. http://sourcesandmethods.blogspot.hu/2011/05/lets-kill-intelligence-cycle-original.html, date of access: 14 July, 2013.

[15] The source of the debate was a 2006 study by Arthur S. Hulnick entitled *What's Wrong with the Intelligence Cycle?*

[16] Arthur S. Hulnick spent 35 years in the profession of intelligence, worked as an intelligence officer in the U.S. Air Force and for the CIA. Since 1989 he has been working at the University of Boston. His main research topic is strategic intelligence.

[17] Julian Richards: *The Art and Science of Intelligence Analysis*, p. 9.

[18] Robert M. Clark served at the U.S. Air Force, and then worked for different intelligence services for 42 years. He is currently a professor of the University of Maryland and the Intelligence and Security Academy.

[19] Robert M. Clark: *Intelligence Analysis: A Target-centric Approach*.

[20] Robert M. Clark: *Intelligence Analysis: A Target-centric Approach*, p. 11.

[21] Mark M. Lowenthal was the professor of John Hopkins University and the University of Columbia, previously worked for 36 years for different intelligence services, and worked as an expert for Congress.

[22] Mark M. Lowenthal: *Intelligence: From Secret to Policy*, pp. 57-70.

[23] Besides the above mentioned persons, Geraint Evans (intelligence officer of the British army), Lisa M. Palmieri (associate of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security), Julian Richards (professor of the University of Buckingham), among others.

process and system of information gathering, and the main aim of these is to support policy makers (users[24]) with information. Furthermore, it has early warning and forecasting tasks in certain security issues defined by the decision makers.

Currently, there are several versions of the intelligence cycle, which usually differ in the number or in the names of the stages of the cycle. The literature considers the five-element system as the classical version, which consists of the acceptance of requests for information (1), the data collection (2), the data processing (3), the analysis and assessment (4) and the dissemination (5).

The **acceptance of requests for information** stage is a much more complex element of the process than its name suggests, because this stage starts at the users' level[25], when they determine their requests for information and send it to the competent intelligence organization. At the intelligence agencies, these requests are interpreted first, then intelligence is designed and organized, and the data collecting organizations are tasked and directed. User's requests for information must be interpreted first from the intelligence point of view, because the users (mainly politicians, who are not experts at intelligence) do not formulate their questions in the language of intelligence. As a result, these have to be "translated", so that the data collectors and processors and sometimes the analysts can convert them into their own task systems**.** After identifying the questions, the competent organization plans and organizes the fulfilment of the RFI and examines whether the required information is already in the hands of the intelligence service, or it should be collected by the data collectors. If new data is needed, those data collectors are selected, who can collect the required data based on their skills and characteristics. However, it should be kept in mind during the organisation of intelligence work that even the biggest services[26] have limited capabilities, thus the RFIs must be prioritised. During this process, the importance of the original user (in case of governmental services, the position that the user holds in the government), the significance of the required data and the probability of the collection of the data must be considered. Obviously, intelligence services want to fulfil every information demand, but their capabilities limit this ambition.

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[24] On the governmental level, the users are the members of the government, the heads of legislation, the directors of the central government offices and the commanders of the military and law enforcement organizations. In business intelligence, the users are the customers, who are usually the directors of different companies.
[25] Users of the information include political and military leaders and the directors of the central government organizations.
[26] For instance, the CIA and the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service employ thousands or tens of thousands of people.

In order to successfully collect the required information, during the planning and organization process, it is necessary to designate the most appropriate data collector organisation. The aim of this is to increase the efficiency of intelligence, because every data collector organization has different information sources, thus they can collect different types of information. After the selection of the data collector organization, the actual **data collection** starts. Data collection can be complemented in different ways, differing in the tool, the method or the procedure used for gathering data. Based on this we differentiate the branches of intelligence, which have different capabilities and characteristics. According to Lowenthal, in the process of intelligence, the data collectors produce raw data and information[27], but these cannot be considered as the products of intelligence[28], because in most cases they are unintelligible for the users. The amount of raw information determines the success of intelligence. However, this does not mean that the data collectors have to collect as many data as possible, because it would lessen the probability of the successful fulfilment of the request for information. Too much and sometimes irrelevant information can hinder the success, because the data processors and analysts can only process and analyse limited amount of information. Data processors and analysts always have smaller capacities than data collectors, thus the data collectors can only feed information related to the defined topics into the process of intelligence. However, this narrowing constraint may define the success and efficiency of the services in every case. For the intelligence organization, only those data and information exist that was forwarded by the data collectors in the intelligence cycle, because those that were not forwarded cannot be included in the reports prepared for the users.

The next stage of the intelligence cycle is the **processing and systematisation** of the raw data and information. Processing of raw information is needed because the data collected through data collection, especially by technical means (signs, codes, pictures, measurement data) is not practicable for all-source analysis and assessment, and is not suitable for informing the users. Processing raw information might require special skills, for instance decryption capability, or knowledge of a special language. If the raw data is not processed, it is qualified as unusable in the intelligence process. During data processing, raw data gives birth to information, which needs to be systematized to duly support the analysis and

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[27] Between data and information, the following distinction can be made: data is unintelligible for the analysts directly because it needs to be converted into information. Based on this, data can be signs, numerical data and measurement results collected from technical reconnaissance.

[28] Mark M. Lowenthal: *Intelligence: From Secret to Policy*, p. 57.

assessment. During the systematisation, information is recorded, grouped and selected, and the filling of intelligence data stores starts.

After the processing and the systematisation, the next stage is **analysis and assessment**, which basically consists of two parts. In the first part, information is analysed and assessed, during which process the analysts define the cause and effect relations between the pieces of information, draw a conclusion and draft the predictions. For this, they use different analysis and assessment methods, which have three different types: the simple, logical analysis and assessment methods, the bound analysis and assessment methods and the complex analysis and assessment methods.[29] In the course of analysis and assessment, some information is analysed and assessed not only from one source, but from all available sources; this is called all-source analysis and assessment. After the analysis and assessment, raw and processed information go under a qualitative change, and thus become suitable for informing the users. Therefore, analysts can start the preparation of reports, which answers the users' request for information. During the preparation of these reports, analysts take into consideration the original RFI to the largest possible extent.

After the reports (the products of intelligence) are prepared, the next stage is the **dissemination** of information, which can be written or oral. Intelligence services can produce a large number of intelligence products, which all serve the purpose of satisfying the users' requests for information to an adequate degree. These RFIs are worded differently towards the intelligence services. The grouping of intelligence products is based on time, according to which the reports can be grouped as immediate reports, permanent and temporary reports, or long-run predictions that can be prepared for years. The method of informing the users raises an extremely important question: what kind of relationship is between policy makers and intelligence services, and how big the responsibility of intelligence organizations is.[30]

The above-mentioned five stages are the components of the classical theory of the intelligence cycle, which is completed by the system of feedbacks. Feedbacks are present in every stage and between the stages as well. Their fundamental aim is to increase the efficiency of intelligence, and to provide the best possible answer for the users' requests of information.

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[29] Find more information about analysis and assessment methods in my study entitled *Művészet vagy tudomány: Gondolatok a hírszerző elemzés-értékelésről (Art or Science: Thoughts about Intelligence Analysis and Assessment).*
[30] Find more information on this topic in Hadtudomány 2013/1-2. in my report entitled *Korszerű elemző-értékelő eljárások alkalmazása a hírszerzésben (The Use of Modern Analysis and Assessment Methods in Intelligence).*

After the overview of the elements of the classical intelligence cycle, we need to answer the following question: who or which organization does operate the cycle? There are significant differences between the national security intelligence services in this regard, because in the case of services employing large numbers of people and operating on huge financial resources, a separate structural element engages itself in Collection Coordination and Intelligence Requirements Management (CCIRM), which can be found in the U.S. and the NATO intelligence doctrines as well. In the case of intelligence organizations with a smaller number of employees and capabilities, two different methods can be distinguished. One solution is that the analysis and assessment organization defines the process of the intelligence cycle, because it is concerned in all the elements, and this intelligence organization knows what information is needed to answer the users' requests for information. The second solution is that the management of the intelligence services operates the cycle, as a result of which the data collector, the data processor and the analysis and assessment organizations have a smaller scope for action. In these two cases, there is no significant difference in the operation of the intelligence cycle; there is only a slight difference in the independence of the different stages. In my opinion, if there is no possibility of establishing a CCIRM organization, than the analysis and assessment organization is the best for fulfilling this task.

Criticism of the intelligence cycle

Critics of the intelligence cycle concluded from the mistakes of intelligence, from their own personal experiences and the statements and recollections of the current and former employees of intelligence services that today the intelligence cycle is not operating sufficiently, thus it is not suitable for describing the process of intelligence. Problems pointed out by the above-mentioned critics can be divided into four groups. The first negates the existence of the intelligence cycle because (according to representatives of this group), it does not represent the real process of intelligence. The second group, although it accepts that the cycle in part represents the process of intelligence, but says that it is not a real cycle. The third group of critics attack the stages of the intelligence cycle, because they think that the function of the stages does not realize. The fourth group of critics states that some elements are missing from the cycle.

In the followings I will present these accusations, and will try to highlight their relevancy and irrelevancy in the case of the intelligence cycle, and I will suggest types of complements and modernization that could be done.

Some tasks of intelligence are not executed within the intelligence cycle

Hulnick states based on his experiences at CIA[31] that the intelligence cycle does not cover the whole spectrum of activities of intelligence services, because in the case of counterintelligence and covert and clandestine actions, the activities of the service do not happen on the basis of the cycle. Geraint Evans also highlights this problem in his work entitled *Rethinking Military Intelligence Failure*.[32] The American school of the theory of intelligence considers counterintelligence a part of intelligence, thus does not differentiate it from intelligence itself. However, when examining the theoretical activity of counterintelligence, it can be stated that – in contrast to the American theory and practice – it cannot be considered as a part of intelligence, because it has a different aim and a different purpose, and applies different procedures. At the same time, there are some similarities, especially when the counterintelligence organization does information-collecting activities, during which it also applies the intelligence cycle. The difference of the counterintelligence service is also supported by the fact that in several European countries[33], intelligence and counterintelligence activities are managed by different organizations.

Covert and clandestine actions are considered intelligence operations by the classical theory of intelligence, which represent the special branches of intelligence, because these are not always carried out with the aim of collecting information, but to cause disadvantage and loss to the target country, so that the target cannot assert its own interests and cannot protect its own values. Nowadays these include air strikes carried out by U.S. drones in Yemen and Pakistan, which belong to the actions of U.S. intelligence. However, these should be considered military actions rather than intelligence ones, despite the fact that the organisational element, which carries out these actions, belongs to the intelligence. Intelligence actions launched in the framework of information collecting do fit into the intelligence cycle because the collection of the required information can take place in the form of covert action, which – as data collection – is a part of the intelligence cycle. Based on these it can be stated that Hulnick's viewpoint is only characteristic of some special tasks of the American intelligence services, while the intelligence cycle can describe their activities directly connected to intelligence or information collection, based on the classical theory of intelligence. Those that are not connected to information collection (as counterintelligence

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[31] Arthur S. Hulnick: *What's Wrong with the Intelligence Cycle?* pp. 13-14.
[32] Geraint Evans: *Rethinking Military Intelligence Failure – Putting the Wheels Back on the Intelligence Cycle*, pp. 22-46.
[33] Great Britain, France, Poland, Austria, Croatia, the Czech Republic, etc.

and intelligence actions carried out not in order to gather information) cannot be connected to the basic activities of intelligence.

Policy makers do not draft requests for information (RFIs)

In one of his criticisms[34], Hulnick attacks the present practice of drafting RFIs, which starts the intelligence cycle, because he refutes that the users of intelligence, namely the policy makers formulate questions towards intelligence services. In his opinion, the leaders (managers) of the services launch the intelligence cycle based on their own intuitions and the ensuing events. In this case, the aim of the leaders is to draw the attention of policy makers to the security problems threatening the country. Hulnick acknowledges that sometimes policy makers do give signs to the leaders of intelligence that they need information, but in his opinion these do not manifest in concrete questions. This leads back to the question of the depth of relationship between the intelligence leaders and the policy makers, because Hulnick thinks that the leaders of intelligence and the policy makers need to be in such a close relationship that the leaders have to know the problems of the policy makers, because intelligence has to answer these problems. In their studies they mention that other researchers also mention the lack of RFIs. For instance, Lowenthal writes about the vacuum of requests for information, when he asserts that policy makers assume that intelligence services know their demands, so they know what to do, and there is no need to word these demands.

When examining the questions of the lack of RFIs, the notion of RFI has to be defined, because the solution to the problem worded as criticism also lies here. There are different types of requests for information, because it does not limit itself to the written or oral questions of policy makers. RFIs can be laws, decrees, orders or temporary tasks connected to intelligence services and their activities, issued by policy makers and the legislature. For instance, based on the Act on the National Security Services[35], one task of the national security services is to "uncover the efforts indicative of offensive intention against the country"[36], and this can be considered a request for information because the policy maker authorized by the legislature expects information in this topic from the intelligence services. Intelligence cycles launched by these laws are constantly present in the activities of the intelligence services, thus they operate as an independent cycle on their own. Besides the legal instruments, the public and private declarations by policy makers should be considered

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[34] Arthur S. Hulnick: *What's Wrong with the Intelligence Cycle?* pp. 1-2.
[35] In Hungary, national security services, therein the activities of intelligence services are regulated by Act CXXV of 1995 on the National Security Services.
[36] Art. 6 (a) of Act CXXV of 1995.

also as RFIs, in which they outline the topics they engage themselves in. If these fit into the legal responsibilities of the given service, these requests need to be translated to the language of intelligence in the first stage of the intelligence cycle, and the intelligence cycle can start. Based on this, the leaders of the intelligence services not independently, but following the initiatives of the policy makers or the orders of law do they launch the cycle. Of course, the latter solution is not and ideal situation. To fully eliminate the problem, there can be only one solution: if the policy makers (within the legal framework) consciously use the intelligence services. Based on the above, policy makers formulate RFIs towards intelligence before every intelligence cycle, because if the cycle does not originate from the initiation of the policy makers, it questions the legality of the activities of the services.

Data collectors gather information independently

Hulnick's next criticism is that data collectors function independently, do not wait for direction or RFIs; they make an effort to fill the gaps in the databases of intelligence. He supports this with the fact that information sources in the different branches of intelligence are not flexible, since sometimes it takes months or years to find the suitable sources.

When examining the above-mentioned problem, it can be stated that data collecting organizations – especially their technical elements – do not stop their activities when they answer a request for information, but continue them. However, the data collectors' capabilities and sources are not formed independently, but on the basis of the fundamental tasks, so that the subsequent concrete RFIs can be satisfied. Obviously, some foresight is needed from the part of the leaders of data collectors, but they have to work in a fixed system and have to answer the fresh RFIs. Acquiring new data sources or changing the direction of data collection can also happen in connection to the RFIs. Based on this, data collection is not a self-contained activity; it can only operate efficiently as part of the intelligence cycle. If data collection operates independently from the cycle, it engages its capacities in collecting such information that does not serve the operation of the intelligence service. However, we must mention the race between data collectors and analysts because Hulnick formulated his criticism as a data collector, and tried to highlight the priority of data collection. But this is not a good direction because all elements of the intelligence cycle are equally important. The data collector cannot live without the analyst, and vice versa. Based on Hulnick's suggestions, we also have to mention the raw information, about which the data collectors (excluding the analysts) inform policy makers. This is mostly characteristic of information acquired through

human intelligence. Hulnick considers the procedure a faulty decision because a lot of raw data and information is incomplete, contradictory or defective. He regrets that in the case of certain services (countries) this procedure is inevitable because policy makers (with propagandistic aims) make prestige out of it. In my opinion, this significantly constrains the operation of the intelligence cycle, because if policy makers receive the given information at the same time as the analysts receive it, the latter get into a difficult situation, especially when the original information is not real.

The parallel activities of data collectors and analysts

Moving forward along the lines of the previous problem, Hulnick stated that the relationship between data collectors and analysts hinders the operation of the intelligence cycle because the two most important elements of the cycle do not operate in the defined stages of the cycle, but in parallel. This is the case indeed because the data collectors do not stop their sources because of the above-mentioned reasons, while after accepting the RFIs, the analysts start to prepare the answers, during which they first examine if the information is available in the data stores. According to Hulnick it can happen that there is no need for data collectors to elaborate an answer. However, this is a highly ideal case, but analysts can still turn to data collectors to verify, actualise or complete the previous information. Yet, the parallel work does not exclude the operation of the cycle.

The lack of the sharing of information

It was also Hulnick who worded the problems connected to the sharing of information, which is present within intelligence services. Data collectors often do not share all the information with the analysts because they are afraid that the analysts do not handle information suitably and might disclose their secret sources. Mistrust has mainly psychical reasons. According to Hulnick, this comes from the mistaken belief that the analysts are introverts, while operational data collectors are extroverts. This stereotype stuck so much in the minds of the two organizations during the years that it started to hinder the operation of the intelligence cycle.

In my opinion, the mistrust and the competition between data collectors and analysts hinder not the intelligence cycle, but the efficiency of intelligence services, because for the intelligence services the information that is not forwarded by data collectors towards the

analysts does not exist, even if the raw information is directly given to policy makers, because that cannot be considered the end product of intelligence.

Some intelligence products are not the results of the intelligence cycle

According to Hulnick, the most widespread and popular products of intelligence services are the daily intelligence reports. Every policy makers' day starts with these reports. These reports are usually news selections prepared with the use of the media, and are easily comprehensible, short and concentrate on the essence. Information included in these reports do not undergo analysis and assessment, thus these reports are not prepared on the basis of the intelligence cycle.

As for the daily intelligence reports, Hulnick is partly right, but there is some analysis and assessment work in these reports as well, because selection also takes place on the basis of the constant request for information of policy makers, and the analysis and assessment procedures also appear in the method of systematisation and selection of the pieces of information, because they place the information in space and time.

The intelligence cycle does not contain feedback

During the analysis of the intelligence cycle, Lowenthal asserts that an important element is missing from the classical version of the cycle: the system of feedbacks. This has to be present not only among the different structural elements of the intelligence service, but on the part of policy makers as well, because Lowenthal thinks (based on American examples) that there is no sufficient feedback from the part of politicians.

Although the classical intelligence cycle does not depict the system of feedbacks, but the system between the structural elements of intelligence would not work if there were no interaction between them. The direction of data collectors can also be viewed as feedback. As for the users (namely the policy makers) Lowenthal is right, because they react very rarely to the products of intelligence. Feedbacks are usually only negative. However, this problem does not hinder the operation of the intelligence cycle.

The intelligence process cannot be described by a simple cycle

According to Lowenthal, one of the main problems of the intelligence cycle is that it is too simplified and one-dimensional, and that the cycle does not ensure the system of feedbacks. Lowenthal thinks that as a result of feedbacks and intervention by policy makers,

intelligence is a multi-dimensional, complex, and not a cyclical, but linear process, consisting of defined stages. Peter Gill and Mark Phythian worded their own point of view in connection with this, which viewpoint aimed at demolishing the barriers of the intelligence cycle. According to the two authors, several factors (they called them challenges) have to be taken into consideration that the intelligence cycle cannot manage, for instance the risk-based approach, the bureaucratic political system, the interactivity, the comparative analysis, the covert and clandestine actions, the technological development and the supervision of intelligence. After analysing the factors, Gill and Phythian suggests the move towards the direction of a more complex, web-based intelligence. In his study, Hulnick focuses on the description of the intelligence process as a matrix-based model.

In my opinion, the exaggerated (matrix-based or web-based) intelligence cycle would have a result that the cycle would no longer be a general theory, but a method specialised for the given activity system of an intelligence service. However, critics are right in stating that the intelligence cycle is a simplified model of the process of intelligence.

As technology developed, the process of intelligence became much more complex

Julian Richard formulated the suggestion that also appeared on the part of Warner, Gill and Phythian, that the exponential development of technology, as an effect of information society, is much more perceptible in the case of intelligence, because the basis of intelligence is information. Technological development affected the flow of information and resulted in the rearrangement of the disciplines of intelligence. The role of open source intelligence (OSINT) became more important, and the cyber intelligence (CYBINT) also appeared, and the intelligence services still do not know what to do with the latter. Aaron Brantly[37] also draws attention to cyberspace when examining the intelligence cycle, because he thinks the cycle cannot operate sufficiently in this field. In cyberspace, quick actions and reflections against attacks have a significant role.

In my opinion, as an old discipline of intelligence, OSINT is an integrated part of the data collection stage of the intelligence cycle, although it received a bigger emphasis than before, and sometimes it is able to ensure the required data alone. However, in the case of OSINT, one must be careful not to let intelligence become one-sided, since there is still a need for the data and the information collected by the other disciplines of intelligence to

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[37] Aaron Bartley earned his PhD at the University of Georgia, where he engaged himself in international relations. He served at the United States Peace Corps in Ukraine, then worked as a consultant at the organization during the Arab Spring.

maintain an efficient and productive work. However, the case of CYBINT is different, because it is essentially not an information gathering discipline of intelligence; as for its function, it can rather be compared to covert and clandestine actions.

The five elements of the cycle do not cover the process of intelligence because some elements are missing.

Kristan Wheaton[38] examined the stages of the intelligence cycle and their content in the different strategies, doctrines and educational materials of different intelligence services. He found that in U.S. literature, the intelligence cycle consists of four-six stages, and these have altogether 19 different elements. Only the stage of data collection was present in every version. However, these elements can be compared to the five stages of the classical intelligence cycle. The first stage is characterised by requests, needs, control and design. The second stage unanimously consists of data collection. The third stage is characterised by processing, evaluation, summarising and explanation. The fourth stage consists of analysis and the preparation of reports, while the fifth can be characterised by dissemination, utilization, integration and feedback.

In the literature, besides the fundamental concepts, new elements or stages occur in the intelligence cycle, which did not form parts of the classical version. These include the filling of the data stores and databases, utilization and application, and the execution of action. When examining the content of the new stages, one finds that these all have been parts of the intelligence cycle, where they have been a part of one of the stages. For instance, the filling of data stores and databases takes place in the stage of data processing and systematisation, while utilization, application and the execution of action can be connected to dissemination, but these do not directly form a part of the intelligence cycle because they depend on the decision of the user.

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Conclusions

The researchers of the theory of intelligence consider the above-mentioned ten problems as the criticism of the intelligence cycle. Most of the critics deal with the practice of intelligence, because they do not criticise fundamental theoretical questions. It might seem from my answers to these criticisms that I would like to protect the intelligence cycle, but this is not the case, because I agree that it does not cover fully the practice. However, I think that the cycle is a theoretical reflection of the intelligence process, and not its practical realisation. In this regard, I partly agree with Robert M. Clark, who said that the intelligence cycle became rather a theoretical concept than a practical tool. However, Clark thinks that the gap between the theory and the practice is growing, but in my opinion, the theory and the practice should be examined from different viewpoints. For instance, in the case of practice, it is the problems, the mistakes, the errors and the characteristics within intelligence that cause the deviation from the intelligence cycle. When examining the mistakes in intelligence [as I elaborated on the topic in my study entitled *Korszerű elemző-értékelő eljárások alkalmazása a hírszerzésben (The Use of Modern Analysis and Assessment Methods in Intelligence)*[1]], it can be stated that most of the mistakes of intelligence is caused by the deviation from the intelligence cycle; for instance, the lack of the sharing of information. As for the intelligence cycle, one can state that on the theoretical level, the intelligence services still operate along the lines of this method. The difference between the theory and the practice is that the theory provides a framework for the efficient and productive operation of a given intelligence service, but during the practice, the possibilities, the capabilities and the situation of the service have to be taken into consideration, because the activities of an intelligence service employing thousands of people cannot be compared to that of a service employing a few hundred employees. The activity systems of intelligence services, and within that, the elements of the process and the relationship of the structural elements evolved through several decades, thus they can only be altered when some paradigm changes take place in the intelligence services.

In my opinion, the intelligence cycle continues to provide a sufficient theoretical support to the professional activities of intelligence services, thus it remains a key element of efficiently training the intelligence personnel. However, I think that it is necessary to further analyse the above problems to improve the Hungarian theory of intelligence.

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[1] Dr. Csaba Vida: *Korszerű elemző-értékelő eljárások alkalmazása a hírszerzésben*, pp. 77-86.

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