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Intelligence as a bureaucratic organization: dysfunctions of the Weberian model

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Miles Doctus

Intelligence as a bureaucratic organization: dysfunctions of the Weberian model

La inteligencia como organización burocrática: disfunciones del modelo weberiano

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ABSTRACT. Despite the disparity of the intelligence services’ historical development during the 20th century, a comparative approach reveals that most of today’s democratic political regimes’ intelligence communities maintain apparent similarities in their structure and operation, a product of the Weberian-type bureaucratic organization model’s institutionalization. This article seeks to understand the intelligence services’ organizational aspects from bureaucratic rationality to explore the criticisms of this model and evaluate its relationship with dysfunctions in the specific field of intelligence services. The results show that these distortions affect both the functionality and the legitimacy of these organizations, revealing the need to seek structural changes beyond the current model.

KEYWORDS: bureaucracy; governmental organization; intelligence services; management; state security

RESUMEN. Si bien el desarrollo histórico de los servicios de inteligencia durante el siglo XX fue altamente dispar, desde una aproximación comparativa se observa que gran parte de las comunidades de inteligencia de regímenes políticos democráticos mantienen hoy en su estructura y funcionamiento grandes semejanzas, producto de una institucionalización determinada por el modelo de organización burocrática de tipo weberiano. Así, este artículo busca comprender los aspectos organizacionales de los servicios de inteligencia desde la perspectiva de la racionalidad burocrática, con el propósito de explorar las críticas a este modelo y evaluar su relación con las disfunciones en el ámbito particular de los servicios de inteligencia. Los resultados muestran que estas distorsiones afectan tanto la funcionalidad como la legitimidad de estas organizaciones, lo que muestra la necesidad de buscar cambios estructurales más allá del modelo actual.

PALABRAS CLAVE: burocracia; gestión; organización gubernamental; seguridad del Estado; servicios de inteligencia.

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Introduction

In their different organizational expressions, intelligence services are undoubtedly an area of particular institutional opacity, currently hindering a thorough understanding of their functioning. The previous is mainly because these organizations generally carry out their activities outside the principle of disclosure that normally (and formally) governs the public administration's functioning. Intelligence service activities generally involve a high level of discretion, usually developed and maintained under the cloak of secrecy.

However, despite the mythology surrounding intelligence services (shaped primarily by the Cold War's mass culture), much of the work performed by most intelligence services is routine. In this regard, it is worth citing Sherman Kent, considered by many, one of this field of study's founders.

Intelligence is an institution; it is a physical organization of living persons pursuing the special kind of knowledge in question. Such an organization must be prepared to place foreign countries under surveillance and must be prepared to expose their past, present, and possible futures. It must be sure that what it produces, by way of information about these countries, is useful to the decision-makers; that is, that it is relevant to their problems, that it is complete, accurate, and timely. It follows that such an organization must have a staff of skilled experts who both know (or can be informed) what the current strategic and foreign policy problems are, and who will devote their professional skills to producing useful information on those problems. (Kent, 1965, p. 69, translated from author's translation)

Thus, as this work shows, there are no major organizational differences between the intelligence services institutionalized in Europe and the U.S. during the 20th century and any other agency of contemporary states. On the contrary, most of them have been constituted following a specific organizational model: the Weberian bureaucratic ideal. Undoubtedly, this form of rational organization has represented an unquestionable qualitative leap in the development of states. However, it is worth questioning whether it has also entailed certain perverse effects that have ended up limiting the intelligence services' performance in fulfilling their legally attributed tasks, affecting their functionality (providing input to decision-makers on national security-related issues) and its legitimacy (to the consumers of its products and public opinion in general). In search of this answer, the main foundations of the Weberian conception of bureaucracy are presented, as well as the notes made on the dysfunctions of this model, transferring these elements to the particular field of state institutions dedicated to the production of intelligence.

Theoretical framework

Since the birth of the modern state, security provision has been articulated as one of the social contract's constituent elements. Large institutional machinery has been built as part of the process of rationalization of the public function¹. In that sense, according to Weber (2008):

Among the purely political factors, the tendency towards bureaucratization is influenced with particular persistence by the growing need of a society accustomed to absolute pacification through the application of order and protection ("pólice") in all sectors. (p. 730)

Ultimately, modern intelligence services have been conceived since their constitution, like many other state agencies, as bureaucratic organizations in a Weberian sense, whose fundamental precept is to develop their activity under the premise of rationality in a technical sense. These organizations are characterized by their own normative system that regulates their activity, the articulation of a hierarchy of vertical nature in multiple levels, the primacy of the written document, individual membership of the structure based on a criterion of expertise, and the exclusivity of the work of the civil servants, chosen according to a professional qualification criterion and aspiring to a career of promotion in the organization.

However, it is worth asking to what extent it is possible to build a bureaucratic organization according to the terms described and whether the aspiration to materialize this Weberian ideal does not lead to deviations in the expected organizational functioning. Considering the critical approaches gathered in this work on the conception that has prevailed around intelligence and its production and consumption processes, it is pertinent to approach the intelligence services' functioning by reconsidering the precepts of the Weberian approach to bureaucracy. In this sense, Merton's critique of the ideal type of Weberian bureaucracy allows us to characterize dysfunctional organizations whose functioning is governed by an excessive adherence to regimented procedures². Merton characterizes this type of function with the following features:

- 1 Weber distinguishes between value-based rationalization, i.e., social action based on an idea of duty, and rationality according to ends, whereby "the person acts rationally in accordance with ends who orients his action by the end, means and consequences implied in it and for which he rationally weighs the means with the ends, the ends with the consequences implied and the different possible ends with each other; in any case, whoever does not act either affectively (in particular, emotionally) or according to tradition." (Weber, 2008, p. 21)
- 2 Other classic authors on organizational theory would argue that behind these supposed dysfunctions are, in reality, strategies implemented by the actors involved in the bureaucracy as an organizational system following eminently exhaustive rationality. Thus, according to Crozier (2010): "Rather than describing bureaucratic dysfunctions merely as the automatic consequence of the ordering of technical and human factors necessary to achieve a higher form of rationality, we have tried to understand them as elements of a

- *Low capacity to adapt to the casuistry:* Based on the concept of trained incapacity, traditionally attributed to Veblen, Merton points out that the bureaucracy's need to maintain total adherence to the rules leads to their absolutization, which makes it difficult to act in the face of extraordinary circumstances not contemplated by the regulations and, therefore, creates "blind spots." In this sense:

Discipline, easily interpreted as compliance with regulations, whatever the situation, is not seen as a measure designed for specific purposes but becomes an immediate value in the vital organization of the bureaucrat. This emphasis, resulting from the displacement of the original goals, turns into rigidities and the inability to adapt easily. (Merton, 1968, p. 253)

- *Resistance to intra-institutional change:* The survival and progression of the civil servant within the bureaucratic organization depend to a large extent on his adherence to the established norm, due to the existence of certain institutional mechanisms, so that the norm ends up becoming a symbolic element, rather than a purely utilitarian one, and its observance ends up becoming predominant in relation to the service rendered. Consequently, according to Merton (1968):

Bureaucratic officials are sentimentally identified with their way of life. They have a guild pride that induces them to resist change in time-honored routines, at least, changes that are seen as imposed by others. (p. 255)

- *Depersonalization of the relationship between employee and client:* The observance of abstract norms that do not respond to casuistry implies, according to Merton, a tension between the bureaucrat and the service's end-user, given that a purely formal link prevails between them. Thus:

As officials minimize personal relationships and resort to categorization, the peculiarities of individual cases are often overlooked. But the client who, quite understandably, is convinced of the special characteristics of his problem often opposes such categorized treatment. Stereotyped behavior is not adapted to the demands of individual problems. (Merton, 1968, p. 256)

The following pages explain the birth and development of modern intelligence services based on the Weberian model of bureaucratic organization to subsequently evaluate the extent to which they experience dysfunctions such as those that usually characterize these organizations.

more complex equilibrium that affects patterns of action, power relations, and the basic personality traits characteristic of the cultural and institutional systems of a given society." (p. 265)

Results

In the case of the U.S., the construction of intelligence services as bureaucratic organizations referred to previously had its apogee in World War II and the years immediately following. The process of institutionalization was to be particularly intense between 1941, with the memorandum establishing the Strategic Intelligence Service. This memorandum would lay the groundwork for the creation of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) (Donovan, 1941). Then, the National Security Act of 1947 would lay the groundwork for the progressive building of the U.S. intelligence community (Office of the Director of National Intelligence [ODNI], 2019).

As Warner & McDonald (2005) have pointed out, this process, far from being homogeneous and linear, developed in a varied way in the different units where there were departments dedicated to the production of intelligence. According to Kent (1965), “The State Department, for example, had no intelligence service as such until the fall of 1945 [...]. The intelligence mission, until now, was carried out by non-specialists, who also had a thousand other things to do” (p. 113, author translation). Although it is well known that Kent defined intelligence not only as an activity and knowledge but also as an organization, the first allusion in the specialized literature to intelligence services as bureaucratic organizations date back to 1976. It refers to the mentioned OSS as the U.S.’s “first international intelligence bureaucracy” (Stephens, 1976, p. 2).

Although rational choice models had their heyday only in the late 1950s (especially applications derived from game theory), already during the war, the Applied Mathematics Panel (part of the National Defense Review Committee) began to develop mathematical models to support the war effort under the leadership of Warren Weaver (Weintraub, 2016). In this context, the concept of “military valor” was born in 1946 (*military worth*) as a central element of strategic planning in the U.S. military forces³. This concept, according to Weaver (1946), is “strongly related to the general concept of utility in economic theory” (pp. 200-201). Consequently, it can be said that, in the historical-organizational context of the U.S. military forces in the interlude between World War II and the Cold War, the strategic decision-maker was understood as an entirely rational actor:

Quantification of Military Value measures, along with quantification of cost and quality, can promote rational and consistent judgments. Using these values in conjunction with electronic data processing equipment and programming techniques,

3 According to Weaver (1946), “the essential procedure of a general theory of war is to determine, for any operation O, a plan P, whose values of the decision variables D maximize the military value MW” (p. 201, author translation).

computing sequences of thousands of alternatives is possible. The final result is the selection of the best alternatives. (Brewin, 1964, p. 21, translated from author's translation)

In this historical and organizational context, the newly constituted intelligence services, as bureaucratic organizations, would not take long to equip themselves with regulated procedures to exercise their function. According to Wheaton (2012), the origins of the intelligence cycle can be traced back to the 1948 publication of *Intelligence is for commanders*, written by Lieutenant Colonels Glass and Davidson. In their work, the authors, who had served in the U.S. Navy during World War II, stated that “For a competent commander, accurate intelligence is a weapon, a support. When properly understood by the commander, and used with confidence, it enhances his capabilities for success at all levels” (cited in Taylor, 1993, p. 9, author translation). Over the following decades, this conception of the intelligence production process would become popular within the U.S. intelligence community (currently claimed by the FBI and the CIA, as seen in their respective web pages). It is now also taken up by a not inconsiderable number of intelligence services around the world. However, there are currently more than a few authors who are openly critical of an orthodox conception of the intelligence cycle:

One of the first and most important points to consider with the cycle is to remember that it should not be taken as a template for structuring an organization but rather as a vague conceptual model for new hires. There is a trend within large bureaucracies, which need to organize, train and manage large numbers of people, towards looking for formatted process models that can be easily transmitted and managed. (Richards, 2013, p. 56, translated from author's translation)

Therefore, it is not surprising that other authors have made their own proposals to schematize the process of intelligence production in a more realistic way (Jordán, 2016). This particular approach to decision-making —dominant during the following years, especially with the rise of game theory (Cremades, 2016)— has survived in the *ethos* of entire generations of intelligence analysts. It has facilitated the emergence of strategic surprises in the courses of action adopted by U.S. foreign policy (Aid, 2011), especially when they have been designed on the expectation that other international actors would behave in a “rational” manner (Wahlert, 2012).

However, this type of reflection has had a limited scope in the field of intelligence studies. Despite other theoretical approaches to the intelligence production process, such as the goal-based approach proposed by Robert M. Clark (2013), which emphasized the idea that rational decision-making faces cultural and emotional aspects that can limit rationality, and statements, such as “rational action is only useful as an ‘ideal type’ against which practice should be measured” (2018, p. 578, author translation) by

Peter Gill, there has been little impact on the link between producers and consumers. Thus, although there is abundant literature on the actual analytical obstacles faced by producers (Heuer, 1999), the position of consumers has received much less attention.

The process of bureaucratic institutionalization of the intelligence services did not take long to transcend the national borders of the United States to gradually impose itself, first within the framework of the so-called “Five Eyes Alliance” (USA, Canada, United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand) (Pfluke, 2019), and later on in other countries with democratic political regimes⁴. This situation of “symbolic domination” based, in Bourdieusian terms, on a specific *habitus* (Pouliot & Mérand, 2011) should not come as a surprise. According to Shiraz & Aldrich (2019), “both the empirical focus of academic research and the conceptual framework of intelligence remain deeply rooted in the experiences of the U.S. and its English-speaking allies” (p. 1, author translation). Among the causes that have led to this situation is the U.S. government’s leading role in the second half of the 20th century, the large amount of publicly available information on the workings of the U.S. Intelligence Community (including a considerable amount of declassified documentation), the high internationalization of the specialized literature coming from the U.S., and the regular participation of experts who have had a background in the U.S. intelligence community on the editorial boards of some of the leading journals in the field⁵.

Despite the above, alternative approaches to decision-making processes have proliferated in subsequent decades (Allen & Coates, 2009) that have called into question some of the axioms of exhaustive rationality (Hill, 2005). Among these approaches, Herbert Simon’s (1990) limited or bounded rationality can be highlighted—or, more recently, Daniel Kahneman (2003) and Ariel Rubinstein (1998)—; the incrementalism proposed by Charles Lindblom (Braybrooke & Lindblom, 1998), and the “garbage can” model proposed by Cohen et al. (1972).

4 Although they are not the subject of this article, it is worth making a distinction regarding intelligence services under non-democratic regimes. Based on Gill’s typology of intelligence agencies, under authoritarian and totalitarian regimes, these agencies take the form of political police and, in their most extreme form, what Gill terms *independent security state* (Gill, 2005). Although both types of organizations may present typical features of bureaucratic organizations described above, they require a differentiated treatment due to their different degree of autonomy and penetration in civil society (and, therefore, the different relationship with other state institutions and the type of activities they carry out).

5 Recently, several English-speaking authors have pointed out the shortcomings in terms of the diversity that intelligence studies suffer from today, with reference, among other things, to the predominance of English-speaking countries in this field. A good example of this is the research carried out by Van Puyvelde & Curtis (2016). These authors ascertained the strong prominence of American or English authors (1066 and 608, respectively). After analyzing 1913 papers published in the *Intelligence & National Security* and *International Journal on Intelligence and Counterintelligence* between 1986 and 2015, these authors claimed that organizations dedicated to intelligence production based in the U.S. and the U.K. were mainly used as their object of study (996 and 519, respectively).

Be that as it may, and paraphrasing Alan Turing, every model is an idealization and a simplification, and, consequently, a falsification (Turing, 1952, p. 641). Therefore, the value lies, at best, in revealing the mechanisms that could operate behind the process in question to deepen the knowledge we have about them. However, both in terms of decision-making processes and intelligence production, there is a solid effort to model such activities to offer supposedly optimal sequences for their development. When the cultural and organizational contexts in which they occur are so varied, the specific casuistry can present significant variations. Therefore, it is very likely that none of the theoretical approaches described above alone will answer all the questions that, on an empirical level, the decision-making process may encounter.

Low capacity for attention to casuistry

The bibliography devoted to the study of intelligence failures is abundant, as this is one of the most profusely addressed topics within intelligence studies (Díaz, 2005). In these studies, one of the elements recurrently pointed out as a cause of failure is organizational rigidity:

The sheer volume of information and people that intelligence agencies need to manage creates a need for standardization at all levels. As a result, agencies produce templates, standard operating procedures, and guidelines for file movement, communication, hiring processes, etc. (Hoffmann, 2019, p. 9, translated from author's translation)

In general, the implementation of these canons does not consider specific particularities, so that formal compliance with the processes ends up being articulated as an end in itself rather than as a means to achieve objectives. For this reason, there is little capacity to deal with atypical situations, for which regulated procedures may not be the ideal instruments.

This standardization of processes ends up leaving a strong imprint on the institution's organizational chart based on a criterion of functional specialization, which conditions cooperation within and between organizations. According to Wirtz (2016), "bureaucracies have their own organizational interests, which usually cause their staff to attend to threats and issues that support their programmatic and budgetary priorities and ignore issues that may not be in furtherance of their bureaucratic interests" (p. 4, author translation). This can be particularly detrimental to the fulfillment of the mission entrusted, especially in the case of highly compartmentalized intelligence communities, whether under a thematic, geographic, or functional specialization criterion, since this means that dynamics of rivalry between organizations condition the existing collaboration mechanisms.

A good example of this is the *post-mortem* investigation into the activity of the intelligence community in the aftermath of 9/11. It revealed how damaging these dynamics had been in areas such as information sharing, intelligence sharing, and the use of the intelligence community's intelligence gathering and sharing methods (U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence & U.S. House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, 2002). These dynamics are also very commonly present in international cooperation in intelligence matters, even in those cases where there are close political links, as in the European Union and its Intelligence Situation and Analysis Center (EU INTCEN) (Arcos & Palacios, 2019).

All this leads to increased exposure to high impact events, both those with a very low probability of occurrence and those that are unpredictable by definition —the so-called “black swans” (Taleb, 2007)— and those that are highly probable but not perceived as a threat and not confronted as such —known as “white rhinoceroses” (Wucker, 2016) or “pink flamingos” (Hoffman, 2015). By definition, it is clear that intelligence failures are occasionally unavoidable because of the accumulation of small dysfunctions inherent to complex systems (Perrow, 1984). Moreover, to the margins of uncertainty inherent in decision-making (Betts, 1978), not always attributable to the intelligence services but the political decision-makers (Marrin, 2011). However, there is some consensus that there is ample room for improvement in the performance of intelligence services to avoid this type of undesirable situation (Hedley, 2007).

Resistance to intra-organizational change

Due to their bureaucratic nature and institutional opacity, intelligence services are structures that normally tend to be governed under organizational inertias that are highly refractory to change. According to Durbin (2017):

Since World War II, intelligence reform efforts have been driven by surprise attacks, espionage scandals, revelations of illicit activities, and major transformations in the global order, such as the fall of the Soviet Union. With few exceptions, these efforts have failed to bring about meaningful change. (p. 2, translated from author's translation)

Thus, intra-institutional change in intelligence services usually occurs reactively. Most often, in response to events or established trends of a different order that have challenged their activities and procedures in some way, despite the innovation channels that have recently been established within the company and the undeniable weight of the generational changeover, which causes a growing dissonance between the new generations of analysts and consumers and the rigid “twentieth-century” bureaucratic apparatus (Richards, 2013), which has facilitated some aspects of its doctrine's modifi-

cation (Torres, 2018). From this, the processes of profound change in the intelligence services may be due to different reasons. However, casuistry generally revolves around two fundamental axes:

- *The functionality of the intelligence services*, i.e., adapting to changing risk and threat scenarios by updating doctrine or incorporating new technologies. In this area, the impact of intelligence failures as milestones that usually trigger institutional change is noteworthy; of particular interest here is the reform that took place within the U.S. intelligence community after the attacks of September 11, 2001 (Negroponte & Wittenstein, 2010). Far from having a strictly national framework, this transformation process transcended U.S. borders to indirectly impact other intelligence communities due to some factors that favored the model's internationalization, superficially addressed in previous pages.
- *The legitimacy of the intelligence services*. It is not surprising that public opinion frequently sees intelligence services as organizations operating outside the law using procedures contrary to the fundamental principles of democratic regimes. This is particularly common in contexts where the security sector as a whole is being reformed, with a prominent role for transitional justice (Matei & De Castro, 2019). This is the case in countries immersed in political transition processes or post-conflict situations, where intelligence services have been involved in violating human rights (Cremades, 2017). On the other hand, in democratic regimes, intelligence services structural reform is often undertaken due to scandals related to the overreach of their legally established functions, such as the use of these organizations and their special capabilities (e.g., interception of communications) for partisan purposes. Consequently, it is no wonder that authors such as Andregg have asserted that "intelligence bureaucracies fear ethics." (2012)

It is pertinent to note that these are two interdependent dimensions. Thus, intelligence services, performance depends, to a large extent, on the receptiveness of their products by political decision-makers and the acceptance of their activities by public opinion. At the same time, the credit that these services enjoy will determine such decisive issues for their operation as budget allocations or their institutional design. Therefore, it is common to see intelligence reform processes that aim to improve these organizations' functionality and legitimacy in a synergistic manner.

Finally, it is important to mention that secrecy, as a practice characteristic of the intelligence services (Gill, 2009), is another determining factor that explains the re-

sistance to change in these organizations. This is due to two fundamental reasons. In the first place, there are difficulties in the exercise of control over these organizations by other entities, which makes them highly impervious to exogenous influence. Thus, these shortcomings in auditing have a two-fold dimension: on the one hand, those that affect the political control of the intelligence community, especially when empirical evidence in this field indicates that “the most important impediment to effective oversight is the denial of access to people, places, documents, and recordings” (Farson, 2012, p. 39, author translation); on the other hand, the shortcomings affecting the evaluation of the performance of the intelligence services in the fulfillment of their mandated missions (Cayford & Pieters, 2020).

Secrecy acts as a facilitator of a certain architecture of power within the institution to the extent that it establishes different levels of access to protected information; thus, it functions “as a form of symbolic power that has strong effects on the positions of the actors” (Bigo, 2019, author translation). For these reasons, the processes of institutional innovation in the intelligence services are highly conditioned by the existence of dependent trajectories that operate within them (Piedra, 2012), even more so than institutions of a different nature can be conditioned (Streeck & Thelen, 2005).

Depersonalization of relationships between intelligence producers and consumers

All this leads to one conclusion: intelligence analysts must have a deep understanding of the decision-making processes they support with their products, including the actors involved and the procedures employed (Cremades & Payá, 2017). However, like other bureaucratic organizations, the intelligence services would soon be articulated based on a criterion of depersonalization of the relationship between intelligence producers and consumers, following the traditional Kentian paradigm: “intelligence should be close enough to policies, plans or operations to have the greatest amount of guidance, and should not be so close as to lose objectivity and integrity in its judgments.” (Kent, 1965, p. 180, author translation)

Although this formula has governed the U.S. intelligence community and many others’ functioning and continues to be dominant, the fact is that it has been discussed in specialized publications for some time now. In this regard, the contributions made by Stephen Marrin (2014) stand out, rescuing other classic authors who have expressed criticism of the Kentian position in this and other aspects related to intelligence analysis. For example, Willmoore Kendall (1949) and Roger Hilsman (1956) favored a greater rapprochement between intelligence producers and consumers. Kendall viewed Kent’s proposal as starting “from a state of mind dominated by an essentially bureaucratic con-

cession to the U.S. Government and the intelligence problem” (Kendall, 1949, p. 549, author translation). Sometime later, declassified U.S. intelligence services documents have expressed the same concern within their ranks, with the design of specific actions aimed at disseminating their work among the consumers of their services:

The intelligence community needs to do a better job of making consumers aware of the wide range of products available to them, alerting them to policy-relevant intelligence products, and facilitating more direct contact between producers and users. (Deputy to the DCI for Resource Management, 2004, p. 5, translated from author translation)⁶.

The reasons seem obvious: the distance between analysts and decision-makers has not guaranteed the integrity and objectivity of the former in the face of malpractice on the part of the latter, and there have been many cases in which problems of politicization have arisen (Select Committee on Intelligence, 2004; House of Commons, 2004; 2016). Moreover, this gap between producers and consumers has led to a strong mutual theoretical and empirical ignorance of each other’s work, generating unrealistic and distorted perceptions. All in all, the empirical influence of intelligence on decision-making processes is limited, to say the least. This is shown by studies on the use of intelligence products by consumers, although they show that, ultimately, decision-makers perceive intelligence as one source of information among others available to them (Marrin, 2018; Díaz, 2006).

Discussion

As pointed out in this paper, contemporary intelligence services in the U.S. and much of the European continent are articulated as organizations dedicated to producing action-oriented knowledge. These organizations, born in the war context of the first half of the 20th century, to support the state’s highest decision-making bodies, have undergone a gradual process of institutionalization that has turned them into the intelligence services and communities we know today, i.e., bureaucratic organizations in a Weberian sense. Like other bureaucracies created in the process of rationalization of the civil service, these organizations suffer from dysfunctions such as poor adaptability to casuistry, resistance to institutional change, and depersonalization between the producer and the consumer of intelligence.

Undoubtedly, like other state agencies, the intelligence services’ implicit adoption of the Weberian model of bureaucratic organization has facilitated their institutional

6 This memorandum would lead to the creation of a guide aimed at providing policymakers with basic knowledge about the work of the U.S. intelligence community, which is still published on a regular and variable basis (ODNI, 2011).

development in a historical context characterized by the perception of inter-state conflict as the main risk to national security. However, although references to the changing nature of the environment in which States operate are ubiquitous in the specialized literature (particularly in the aftermath of the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States), theoretical reflection on the organizational adaptation of contemporary intelligence services still has significant shortcomings. This is especially true outside the Anglo-Saxon world, where there are certainly more diverse debates on the subject. Be that as it may, it is undeniable that the discussion on what type of organizations act with greater or lesser efficiency is currently a key element in the face of national security requirements. This is especially because these are long-term institutional transformation processes that transcend the specific reforms that may be carried out within the intelligence services, even though these may be equally necessary.

In this sense, it is possible to identify at least four main lines of research that should be considered for future work. In the first place, the analysis from this theoretical perspective of the very rich casuistry of the historical development of the different intelligence services, with special emphasis on the experiences of Latin America. Secondly, the exploration of alternative organizational models to that of the Weberian bureaucracy, whose implementation will make it possible to achieve superior performance in the functioning of the intelligence services or to design instruments to mitigate the traditional model's dysfunctions. Thirdly, the study of intelligence services under non-democratic political regimes, observing their particularities and concomitants compared to the bureaucratic configuration of intelligence services in democratic countries. Fourthly, the analysis of how these bureaucratic organizations establish interaction frameworks among themselves, both on an interagency level (within a given intelligence community) and international scale (bilaterally or multilaterally).

Conclusion

The dysfunctions inherent in Weberian bureaucratic organizations constitute a significant obstacle to the optimal functioning of intelligence services. Thus, despite the reform processes promoted in various intelligence communities, institutional inertia prevails, which has significant implications for their legitimacy and functionality. In this sense, it is necessary to reconsider the fundamental bases on which contemporary intelligence services have been built and articulate channels of innovation that will make it possible to promote organizational transformation processes.

Despite the general model presented in this paper, the global intelligence landscape is far from homogeneous. We can intuit a certain degree of diversity in terms of state institutions dedicated to intelligence production, even among organizations

operating under democratic regimes. However, there are still critical gaps that significantly limit our understanding of these differences. Although quite a few authors have pointed out the need to advance in consolidating intelligence studies as a field of study, its systematization is still scarce. There is a strong predominance of the case study as a research method. The previous presents a barrier that is difficult to overcome: the disparity in the degree of existing information about each organization, and particularly in the declassified material of each one of them. This asymmetry is a serious obstacle to undertaking any comparative approach between institutions. Its gradual resolution depends on the possibility of other realities that currently remain on the disciplinary periphery of intelligence studies gaining greater prominence.

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