PLANNING INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES IN A DYNAMIC SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

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The hypothesis introduced by this article is that, in order to perform intelligence missions and to obtain valuable intelligence for the consumers it is necessary to implement processes and tools to support planning activities. Today's challenges consist rather in the ability of intelligence organizations to identify and initiate new connections, processes and communication flows with other partners operating in the security environment than to plan in their own name secret operations. From this point of view, planning activities should focus on new procedures, at a much more extensive level in order to align institutional efforts beyond the boundaries of their own organization and the national community of information. Also, in order to coordinate intelligence activities, strategic planning must be anchored into a complex analysis of the potential impact of existing and possible future global phenomena that shape the security environment and thus identify better ways of improving results.

1. INTRODUCTION

Security cannot be achieved in the absence of information and intelligence so, regardless of which type of security is approached, all requires intelligence, namely the specific product of intelligence organizations. Real opportunities and possibilities for prevention and countering potential threats exist only to the extent that quality, multisource intelligence, often regarding a specific target.

2. ATTRIBUTES OF INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITY PLANNING

Planning in intelligence organizations is initiated in order to achieve its assumed missions and strategic objectives and, to reach this goal, it uses dedicated tools and processes. In order to ensure a uniform operational approach and to achieve coherent planning, specific concepts designed to establish and provide relevant, valuable arguments about the direction to follow, the steps to take, their pace, support means are used and developed to contribute decisively to the goal or mission for which the organization exists. The goal must be achieved at quality standards in order to operate beside other similar organizations in the same environment, to obtain advantages and to be recognized as one of the best organizations in the field.

Empirical opinions related to planning view it as frustrating and discouraging because it seemingly does not provide any real help, is irrelevant in comparison with other

activities that define the organizational mission, abstract and often controversial, contradictory, etc., purely formal, and it takes time. However all organizational actors act more or less consciously according to a plan.

Planning facilitates the decision-making process and as a function of management supports management processes and managers. There is a real need on behalf of decision makers to identify and visualize the steps that must be performed in order to achieve certain goals or priorities - so it is appropriate to determine in advance its related activities and milestones. But how should planners ensure this without adding other stressful activities to the work or tasks which are essential for carrying out the mission of each department and to bring added value to all of those?

The answer is to develop a results focused planning.

From this point of view, there are five essential elements in planning focused toward results:

(1) a clear purpose of planning;

Most often, setting goals and objectives to certain processes and projects or even regarding the whole organization' activity, as well as their corresponding activities offers a clear purpose of planning.

(2) setting the structural elements or factors involved in the implementation of processes and tasks;

From this point of view, planning must take into account the flows related to the tasks and also to the competencies of each department or function involved.

(3) evaluate activities performed (and point out the existing achievements and shortcomings or deficiencies found) to guide the whole planning;

Plans and planning rely on the findings and conclusions drawn from the evaluation phase, in terms of the degree of achieving the objectives. Evaluation uses a series of performance indicators or evaluative criteria whose analysis offers the image of what has been achieved and what exactly constitutes immediate priorities.

(4) making a realistic planning involving all the needed elements and resources in its materialization;

In elaborating the plan it is extremely important to involve part people who will perform those planned activities. At the same time, it is essential to follow the guidelines from the strategic level – because all the Plans are part of another big plan which must ensure that organizational efforts are heading in the right direction and also in the same direction.

(5) planning processes and activities focus towards achievable activities and relevant results.

For planning to focus on relevant and achievable results, it must put in practice and develop clear and flexible tools to support and orientate complex activities. Such tools may consist in operational procedures or in developing and applying the needed concepts such as risk management.

Planning focused on results is real, authentic, and useful for employees. It is well-augmented (on the basis of strategic guidelines and the assessment of ongoing or completed activities) but it does not get lost in details and does not become overly obsessed with certain methods, tools or indicators. Planning directed toward results is based on well-grounded data or evaluative conclusions. It is accomplished by looking at the most relevant aspects in terms of quality, value and

importance for the area of activity to which it refers and provides focused and concrete measures for action.

Planning focused toward results:

(a) is clearly relevant to the key actions of the departmental or organizational mission (depending on the level at which it is performed) and also for the strategic decisions;

(b) directly addresses what clearly requires particular attention and does not get lost in the details;

(c) favors general tasks and activities rather than the accuracy of detailed activities in order to achieve important goals or strategic orientation;

(d) resists the temptation to focus on those results for the attainment of which planning the needed activities is most easily to;

(e) delivers the processes and activities in a simple but not simplistic way;

(f) is useful -both at strategic, operational and tactical level;

(g) guides and clarifies the phases and steps to take, as well as the thinking and decision making processes;

(h) provides the clarity needed by employees to know specifically what they have to do and within what time frame.

When planning it is incredibly easy to get lost in methods and tools that bring non-essential details to attention. Therefore, applying a model of planning focused towards results obviously brings added value and makes it more than just control methods and reports. Planning means processes, measures, activities and well-reasoned tasks, aimed at achieving the most important specific actions for meeting departmental/organizational mission. From this point of view, planning must be succinct and straight to the point, but at the same time it covers the whole range of departmental or organizational responsibilities.

Planning that does not lead to action and consequently is not directed toward results may seem technically correct at a first glance but it totally misses the overall essence for which it was developed. Such plans are not useful for taking the right actions or for developing the rationales needed for breaking down appropriate activities (1). It can be said that planning which does not lead to action:

• tends to address directly the activities/tasks without clarifying what exactly are planned for (not clearly setting the ultimate goal);

• often fails to involve the people most able to identify the necessary steps or involve them wrongly in the inappropriate phases;

• identifies tasks and processes that are far too detailed (are broken down into many other activities) and they offer a relatively narrow picture of the facts;

• fails to mention the usefulness of the final tasks or the processes planned;

• gets lost in details and the beneficiaries must go through a series of data that fails to present those important elements that they actually need to know (i.e. what actually matters, what needs to be done, what can be done in order to progress);

• the delivered conclusions and findings do not clear out the area of interest and when it is the appropriate time to take action.

Planning as a process itself implies finalizing stages in a water fall sequence. Studies in the field [1] indicate that the number of activities and tasks included in the planning stages depends on the size of the organization so that different organizations apply different planning processes.

For intelligence activity planning to be valuable it should permanently analyze the changes produced in the security environment and anticipate possible future phenomena as well as further solutions that allow the effective fulfillment of intelligence tasks. In other words planning is looking at the past and determining what needs to be done in the future, taking into account events that are likely to occur and relevant to the planning area. As presented in **Figure 1**, it analyzes the past and the future and identifies what is adequate to be done to accomplish organizational mission.
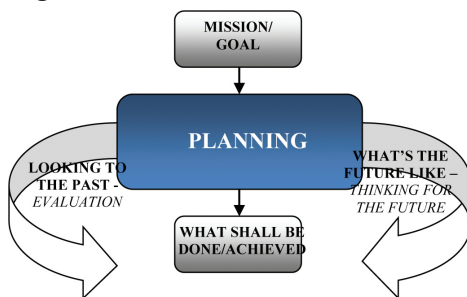

Fig. no. 1. The concept of planning in intelligence organizations

Specialists [2] indicate that planning does not take into account and is not concerned only about the future. Planning does not mean predicting and does not involve solely the future. Problems, issues and challenges are already present in that area or segment of activity which is planned for (for instance, there are situations where the starting point is a managerial risk or a possible security threat).

Thus, planning concentrates on the identification of problematic aspects and positive ones, it rises for debate and analysis important processes and ultimately delivers proposals and possible solutions to optimize operations and projects.

As far as solutions are concerned, they are related to what is already being carried out or what is initiated, and sometimes new phases/tasks are seen as opportunities to the current requirements. Most of the times there are employees who are already working on some specific tasks/activities and managers must develop plans to implement and correlate these.

At organizational level, intelligence planning must focus on both current security challenges and those likely to occur in order to analyze the implications these may generate in relation with intelligence operations and to propose viable strategies accordingly.

But what are those aspects that planning should take into account in order to keep pace and to manage the new challenges posed by the current and future security environment?

Globalization and the rapid development of technology have led to major changes of security environment. It is common sense that in the last years the rate of change has accelerated. Those who act in synergy with the current major challenges and thus prepare themselves and also prepare the organization for change will be the leaders and will dominate the future. Those who wait until these challenges will become important and current issues are the ones most likely to be left behind and perhaps never to recover. An organization that is prepared to cope with the change is the one that holds proactive managers in driving the change in the sense that Peter Drucker calls *"that future which has already occurred"*[3].

3. FEATURES OF NOWADAYS' SECURITY ENVIRONMENT

Events and phenomena that have marked the security environment at

the beginning of the XXI century show that the concept of *national security* has evolved to such an extent that its previous premises are no longer valid nowadays. Today's global realities differ significantly from those of the time when intelligence organizations and communities were established [4].

Global Trends 2030: Alternative Worlds, an unclassified document released by the National Intelligence Council of USA, provides a framework for thinking about the future, and stimulates dialogue on the challenges that will confront the global community in the next years. Therefore, it is important for planning to take into account the issues posed by new global phenomena (existing or likely to occur) and with a major impact on intelligence missions, and to identify concrete ways of adapting the organization to future implications.

*"The world of 2030 will be radically transformed from our world today. By 2030, no country-whether the US, China, or any other large country-will be a hegemonic power. The empowerment of individuals and diffusion of power among states and from states to informal networks will have a dramatic impact, largely reversing the historic rise of the West since 1750, restoring Asia's weight in the global economy, and ushering in a new era of "democratization" at the international and domestic level. In addition to individual empowerment and the diffusion of state power, we believe that two other **megatrends** will shape our world out to 2030: demographic patterns, especially rapid aging; and growing resource demands which, in the cases of food and water, might lead to scarcities. These trends, which are virtually certain, exist today, but during the next 15-20 years they will gain much greater momentum. Underpinning the megatrends are **tectonic shifts**-critical changes to key features of our global environment that will affect how the world "works".*

*We believe that six key **game-changers**-questions regarding the global economy, governance, conflict, regional instability, technology, and the role of the United States-will largely determine what kind of transformed world we will inhabit in 2030. Several potential **Black Swans**-discrete events-would cause large-scale disruption. All but two of these-the possibility of a democratic China or a reformed Iran-would have negative repercussions."* [5]

Intelligence requirements are growing and changing along with a continuous dynamics that is shaping countries' profile nowadays. As a result, in achieving the intelligence organizations' missions few of the old assumptions referring to the need for an intelligence establishment, its missions or capabilities that give a dominant advantage over adversaries [6] apply.

The belief among intelligence practitioners and researchers is that this status quo is the consequence of the current geopolitical, social and technological context which has generated developments and changes that have forced security organizations to rethink the operational means and methods, taking into account tasks such as: sharing information with partners across country borders, developing joint operations, exchanging expertise and using common models and concepts – things that in the past, were hard to imagine.

The need to build new security architectures is identified as a result of the fundamental changes produced in the security environment, with

a major impact on intelligence missions and its specific structures, and last but not least on the concepts and definitions used in intelligence. An overview of the fundamental changes that have occurred over the past two decades underlines the significant differences between the types of national security threats from the past and those that currently constitute or appear to constitute threats for the future [4].

The old paradigm of wartime intelligence which requires special undercover efforts against a single state enemy that is often capable of launching nuclear and conventional attacks against Europe and America is completely different from the new intelligence paradigm which recognizes that the most likely and dangerous threats to occur come from non-state actors that use nonconventional weapons including hijacking aircraft and releasing virulent pandemics diseases. The new intelligence paradigm acknowledges that 90% of today's conflict situations are of a civil nature. Moreover, it also embraces the challenges and opportunities posed by open sources information - assuming that there are vast amounts of information in many languages, which do not necessarily wait to be secretly collected but mostly to be properly understood [7].

Deborah G. Barger, in her work Toward a Revolution in Intelligence Affairs, shows that the future of intelligence must be viewed and assessed in a broader context - the approach should be performed from a systemic level rather than by pieces, and that is why much more nontraditional participants must be welcomed for debates. To be able to manage future challenges marginal organizational changes

are not sufficient. Instead, as the author suggests [6], a revolution in intelligence affairs is needed.

Some of the issues that the aforementioned writer talked about in 2005 as solutions for the security management field have found applicability in current intelligence organizational practices and have been adopted within the various forms of international cooperation.

The goal of planning is to support organizational efforts for reaching valuable results in accordance with intelligence organization's mission. These results translate (in the case of intelligence) into preventing and combating security threats through specific means of intelligence collection and processing/ exploitation. Because the security environment in which specific intelligence activities are performed is highly dynamic and intelligence missions are permanently affected by new phenomena – which occur at national, regional or global scale. For the reaction to these challenges to be in accordance with the requirements and mission undertaken – namely, immediate and useful in supporting decision makers - it requires continuous organizational adaptation and flexibility. The role of planning is to guide intelligence activities and to put the right solutions for the organization into practice to keep up and to be ahead of the current and future trends/megatrends that shape the global security environment.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Current and future challenges [8] of the security environment relevant for intelligence planning are:
a) wide variety of complex threats;

The changing nature of threats and the changing nature of peace and war have led to the multiplication of threats and in the same time of the target intelligence required. Today is needed information relating to economic and political situation in areas that formerly were minor preoccupations. In addition to the request for more information and coverage of new targets, there are intelligence requests from organizations which in the past had no need of such support.

b) impact of the new politics in intelligence;

The new politics in intelligence from today are much more open and promote transparency of the specific activity, context which has generated change in attitude regarding secrecy. U.S. intelligence policy is often shaped in the public debate and this trend is unlikely to change given the great political and economic pressures for openness. The expectations of the American public from the intelligence organizations are: prevention of any terrorist attack; anticipating any surprises; continuing to defense their right to privacy.

c) new models for intelligence;

A feature of the new intelligence environment lies in the difficulty of the intelligence collection and complexity to analyze data – to transform raw/unprocessed data into useful information. Rising costs of technical collection systems have made them to be considered values that can produce an enormous quantity of data which instead requires a very large investment before any information is collected. Some environments can be penetrated through the use of advanced technology which however can be extremely expensive and

therefore access to such systems is limited.

Today, the political and economic analysis currently used by the U.S. intelligence community has developed a series of extremely complex specialized statistical and econometric models.

d) expectations of consumers;

At national level, the structures that receive intelligence products according to the law have become more complex and with more employees. The demand for quality intelligence transmited with a higher rapidity will increase substantially due to both free access at refined analysis from open sources and the advances produced by the current information technology that enables real-time dissemination of information-in response to the consumers' questions.

e) development of new technologies;

Characteristics of using IT (multiple and simultaneous action, along with instant answers, technological dependence and mass organization along geographical boundaries) will increase the potential for producing frequent discontinuous changes in international system. Information technology is entering the big data era and social media and cyber security will be large new markets. Citizens' fear for developing a surveillance state may lead to pressure the Governments to restrict or dismantle the big data systems.

As possible long-term planning response reactions to all these challenges I included:

- transforming intelligence capabilities (mainly of those who deal with intelligence collection from specific different sources of information) in order to permit the collection and processing of large

amounts of data and building new ones to keep up with the nature of future threats;

- identifying the processes and stages through which intelligence organization will adapt and learn how to operate effectively in an environment where the audience asks for many answers in connection with the intelligence activities. There is a need to ensure balance between organizational values which state for the perpetuation of secrecy (according to the principle of need-to-know) and new ways to share information to the public opinion;

- anticipating the requirements of information which should be collected by technical systems and also planning for long term functionality of these systems. Planning investments in complex systems must consider which targets should be covered and what are the priorities in building such systems. There is a need for long-term planning, whereas complex collecting systems requires long periods of time to develop and to be profitable must remain in production for many years;

- developing effective communication with consumers as a priority, in order to determine by mutual agreement the optimal ways for the dissemination of the various types of messages (raw information, complex analysis, transmitting questions and providing answers, etc.) and building communication systems adapted to their needs/requirements;

- intelligence organizations must identify ways to take advantage of the benefits of new technologies along with providing solutions to the new arising threats

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