

Understanding Intelligence Services



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Forumi i Iniciativës Qytetare Forum of Civic Initiative



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The Forum of Civic Initiative (FIQ) is a Kosovan non-governmental organisation promoting the involvement of Kosovan citizens in social and decision-making processes through programmes designed to focus attention on the values and functioning of an open and democratic society.



Saferworld is an independent non-governmental organisation that works with governments and civil society internationally to research, promote and implement new strategies to increase human security and prevent armed violence.

Understanding **INTELLIGENCE SERVICES**

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Jérôme Mellon

A reference tool for those wishing to learn more about the nature and the role of intelligence services in a 21st Century European context.

What is an intelligence service?

An intelligence service is an organisation dedicated to the collection or analysis of information, which is then processed to help a government make decisions. This processed information is known simply as intelligence and to be effective, intelligence needs to be timely, relevant, accurate and predictive. Intelligence services can have different areas of specialisation. For example, domestic intelligence services, also known as security services, provide intelligence relevant to both the internal security of a country and the maintenance of public order and safety. They are usually tasked with the collection of information on those who may threaten the security of the state through espionage, sabotage, political violence, terrorism, or clandestine activities directed by foreign governments. In contrast, foreign intelligence services provide intelligence relevant to the external security of a country and the forecasting of external threats. For example, a foreign intelligence report could advise a government on the probability of one of its embassies abroad being attacked by terrorists. Criminal intelligence services provide intelligence relevant to criminal activities (e.g. organised criminal groups) and corruption, which is used to assist law enforcement agencies. Military intelligence services provide assistance to defence planning and military operations. For example, a military intelligence report could assess the strengths, weaknesses and location of a military opponent, in advance of an open conflict.

Why are they important?

Intelligence services play a very important role in analysing potential threats to national security, discerning the intentions of current or potential opponents, forecasting impending crises, informing military planning and operations, and protecting government secrets. Usually, no other government entity has the mandate, skills or resources to fulfil such important functions. For example, the investigative work of British intelligence services allowed for the detection, prevention and disruption of an alleged terrorist plot to detonate explosives carried on board several airliners travelling from the United Kingdom to the United States in August 2006.

What limits are normally placed on their work?

First, intelligence services are not supposed to do the work of the police (such as arresting people) or the military (such as launching assaults on military opponents). Secondly, they are not supposed to harass, threaten or injure people – these actions are illegal and intelligence officers, as government employees, have to respect the laws of their country and the rights and privacy of their fellow citizens. For example, most security services of modern democratic states are strictly prohibited from investigating acts of lawful advocacy, protest, or dissent, unless these types of acts are clearly linked to threats to national security.

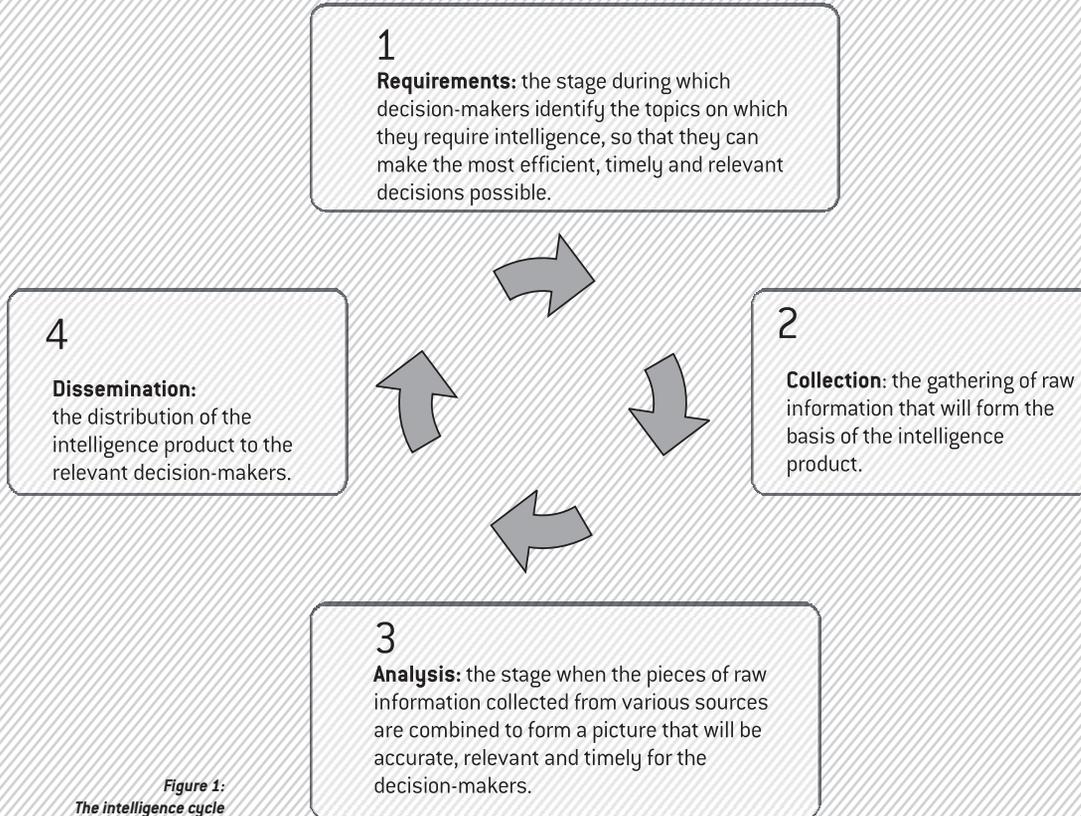
What does the work of an intelligence service involve?

Contrary to popular belief, the people who work for intelligence services, intelligence officers, spend most of their time in offices reading or writing reports and discussing issues with a wide variety of people by telephone or e-mail. Sometimes they may also meet with these people – businessmen, travellers, scientists, diplomats – in order to obtain information. In practice, an intelligence service's work will go through four main stages:

For example:

1. **Requirements:** the Minister of Internal Affairs wants to know whether he should increase controls along the border with his neighbouring country. He therefore asks the director of the intelligence service to assess the risk of terrorists entering the country through that border;
2. **Collection:** intelligence officers analyse reports and statistics about the people crossing the border into the country, and they interview travellers coming from the neighbouring country. In addition, and with the special authorisation of a court of justice, they monitor the telephone communications of a radical group from the neighbouring country which has often threatened, in the past, to bomb government buildings;
3. **Analysis:** all the intelligence officers assigned to this assessment exchange their information, analyse their reports, listen to the recording of intercepted phone calls, and discuss their respective findings to reach a consensus on the threat;

4. **Dissemination:** the intelligence officers submit a final assessment report to their director who, in turn, distributes it to the Minister of Internal Affairs and the head of the border police.



*Figure 1:
The intelligence cycle*

How is the work of intelligence services monitored?

Like any other government agency, intelligence services are placed under the control of elected politicians, namely parliamentarians. However, to be effective, intelligence services need to be professional, non-partisan and independent of any political party. The role of politicians is therefore limited to monitoring the activities of intelligence services on behalf of the population, in order to ensure that they are not used as a tool of the state or of a political party, but instead provide citizens with the safest possible living environment. Usually, effective control over intelligence services is exercised by ministers, who also have the right to request specific information from those agencies.

Although part of the work carried out by intelligence services is confidential, democratic principles demand that these services, like any other government entity, be closely monitored. A combination of the following methods are normally used to enable democratic oversight and monitoring to take place:

- **Parliamentary oversight:** the ability for parliamentarians to draft and negotiate legislation related to the intelligence services' mandate, methods, structures and budget, and to investigate the effectiveness of intelligence services in meeting the needs of the state as well as their compliance with laws and human rights. Most of this oversight work is usually done by a special security or intelligence committee of the parliamentary assembly;
- **Internal control:** the authority, within the intelligence services themselves, of senior officials over the actions of their subordinates, which includes the right to impose disciplinary actions upon intelligence officers who violate laws or overstep their mandate;

- **Executive control:** the liability of the relevant executive officials or ministries responsible for the intelligence services, who can therefore be held accountable for the actions of the intelligence services, including any failures and illegal activities;
- **Judicial review:** the ability of the courts to authorise some specific intelligence activities and to judge alleged violations of the law. While only a limited number of intelligence activities, such as the interception of communications, require judicial review prior to being carried out, all intelligence activities without exception must conform to the law;
- **External oversight:** the role played by the media and civil society in promoting public debate on the activities of the intelligence services and the accountability of officials. External oversight can also include a specific organisation dedicated to anonymously receiving and processing complaints from the citizens about the actions of intelligence services.

Is intelligence secret?

Part of the work of intelligence services needs to remain secret, but not all of it. There is a clear need to keep knowledge of certain intelligence sources, methods, and activities secret from the public, and restricted to the smallest possible number of officials within the government. Yet, a balance must be struck between that need for secrecy and the democratic principles of control and oversight of intelligence services, which requires the parliament, judiciary and wider society to have access to a significant amount of information. In addition, a lot of the information collected by intelligence services is not secret at all, constituting what is called open source intelligence. Such information can be collected through books, newspapers, the Internet or television programmes. Thirdly, the reports and assessments prepared by intelligence services are not always kept secret. For example, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) regularly publishes reports and analyses prepared by its staff on its public website. These documents obviously do not contain any sensitive information that could endanger CSIS' staff or operations, but they benefit from the invaluable knowledge and expertise of qualified intelligence staff. Finally, it is not always essential for an intelligence officer to remain secret about his or her work. In fact, it is not uncommon for certain intelligence officers to make their role known in order that potential informants can more easily identify and approach them to offer information.

Which countries have intelligence services?

The decision to establish intelligence services depends on many factors, including the specific needs of the government, the potential threats faced by the state and its population, the human and financial resources available for such intelligence services, and the political will to engage in intelligence activities. Most countries around the world have established at least one of the four types of intelligence services: domestic, foreign, criminal, or military. In some countries, a single organisation can play the role of two or more intelligence services but either for legal reasons or to protect the different specialisations and mandates of each service, most democratic states avoid establishing intelligence services that play more than one role.

What is the situation in Kosovo?

At the moment, there is no intelligence service within the Provisional Institutions of Self-Government (PISG) of Kosovo. However, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the Kosovo Force (KFOR) of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) have a limited domestic intelligence role, as they both analyse information to assess what the potential threats are to the safety of the population, including natural disasters, violent demonstrations and pandemic diseases. In addition, the Kosovo Police Service (KPS), which is still a unit within the UNMIK Civilian Police structure, has a criminal intelligence role, played by the KPS Directorate of Criminal Analysis, to assist in the investigation and prosecution of criminals. Some organisations, such as the Institute for Strategic Research of Public Opinion (IHSOP) and the Kosovo Information Service (SHIK), are operating in a way that bears similarities with intelligence services. However, as they do so without a legislative basis, and without a level of control and oversight by parliamentarians, these organisations are private enterprises and thus cannot be considered as official PISG intelligence services.

Country	Domestic Intelligence Service	Foreign Intelligence Service	Criminal Intelligence Service	Military Intelligence Service
AUSTRIA	General Directorate for Public Safety	X	Criminal Intelligence Service (BK)	Army Intelligence Service (HNA)
CANADA	Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS)	Communications Security Establishment (CSE)	Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP)	Director General Intelligence Division (J2/DG Int)
CZECH REPUBLIC	Czech Security Information Service (BIS)	Office for Foreign Relations and Information (UZSI)	X	Military Defence Intelligence Agency
FRANCE	Directorate of Territorial Security (DST)	General Directorate for External Security (DGSE)	Central Directorate of the Judicial Police (DCPJ)	Directorate of Military Intelligence (DRM)
GREECE	National Intelligence Service (EYP)	X	X	X
SLOVENIJA	X	Slovenian Intelligence and Security Agency	X	Intelligence and Security Service (VOMO)
UNITED KINGDOM	Security Service (Mi5)	Secret Intelligence Service (SIS)	Serious Organised Crime Agency (SOCA)	Defence Intelligence Staff (DIS)
UNITED STATES	Department of Homeland Security (DHS)	Central Intelligence Agency (CIA)	Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)	Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA)

Table 1: Some selected examples of intelligence services from around the world

Should Kosovo establish an intelligence service?

The question of whether Kosovo should establish its own intelligence service has been raised several times since 1999 and again recently in the local press. In addition, the Internal Security Sector Review (ISSR) project has been reviewing the options for the possible creation of a security service which would provide the PISG with domestic intelligence. While the ISSR is expected to present its final recommendation on that issue in its final report, Saferworld will, in December 2006, publish a research paper on intelligence options for the future Kosovo, which will be available online at <http://tinyurl.com/y7o85j>

Where can I find out more?

- Susanna Bearne et al., National Security Decision-Making Structures and Security Sector Reform, June 2005, <http://tinyurl.com/y46c72>. A thorough report on the intelligence cycle, control and accountability of intelligence services, and intelligence legislation in the context of security sector reform, making it extremely relevant to the current Kosovo context.
- Federation of American Scientists, Intelligence Resource Program, <http://tinyurl.com/3zkx>. This website provides a quick overview of the intelligence services around the world.

- Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Intelligence Services, March 2006, <http://tinyurl.com/umf6n>. Background on the definition, categories and democratic standards of modern intelligence.
- Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, Parliamentary Oversight of Intelligence Services, March 2006, <http://tinyurl.com/yys4q4>. Background on the role, importance and challenges of intelligence oversight.
- Greg Hannah, Kevin A. O'Brien and Andrew Rathmell, Intelligence and Security Legislation for Security Sector Reform, 2005, <http://tinyurl.com/y6vnle>. This RAND report examines the role of intelligence in security sector reform and highlights the importance of control and accountability in intelligence structures.
- Abram N. Shulsky and Gary J. Schmitt, Silent Warfare: Understanding the World of Intelligence, 3rd ed., 2002, <http://tinyurl.com/vn2og>. One of the best and most accessible books available on the theories and concepts of intelligence.

What do these terms mean?

Criminal intelligence: intelligence relevant to criminal activities (e.g. organised criminal groups) and corruption, which is used to assist law enforcement agencies.

Domestic intelligence: intelligence relevant to the internal security of a country and to the maintenance of public order and safety.

Executive control: liability of the relevant executive officials or ministries responsible for the intelligence services, who can therefore be held accountable for the actions of the intelligence services, including failures and illegal activities.

External oversight: the role played by the media and civil society in promoting public debate on the activities of the intelligence services and the accountability of officials.

Foreign intelligence: intelligence relevant to the external security of a country and to the forecasting of external threats.

Human intelligence (HUMINT): category of intelligence derived from information collected and provided by human sources such as spies, informants, travellers, and scientists.

Imagery intelligence (IMINT): category of intelligence derived from photographs and videos, often collected through surveillance aircraft or satellites.

Intelligence: information that has been processed and analysed in order to assist a government in making decisions.

Internal control: authority, within the intelligence services themselves, of senior officials over the actions of their subordinates, which includes the right to impose disciplinary actions upon intelligence officers who violate laws or overstep their mandate.

Judicial review: ability of the courts to authorise some specific intelligence activities, such as the interception of communications, and to judge alleged violations of the law.

Measurement and signature intelligence (MASINT): category of intelligence derived from the analysis of data obtained from sensing instruments for the purpose of identifying any distinctive features associated with the source, emitter or sender, such as radiations, radio frequencies, and acoustic signals.

Military intelligence: intelligence relevant to defence planning and military operations.

Open source intelligence (OSINT): category of intelligence derived from publicly available information, as well as other unclassified information such as newspapers, books, the Internet, and television.

Parliamentary oversight: ability of parliamentarians to draft and negotiate legislation related to the intelligence services' mandates, methods, structures and budget, and to investigate the effectiveness of intelligence services in meeting the needs of the state as well as their compliance with laws and human rights.

Security service: an intelligence service dedicated to gathering, analysing and producing domestic intelligence.

Signals intelligence (SIGINT): category of intelligence derived from communications and electronics signals such as telephone calls, radio communications and radar signals.

The SafePlace Project is a joint programme of work by the non-governmental organisations Saferworld and FIQ which supports the development of an effective, accountable and conflict-sensitive security sector in Kosovo.

www.safeplaceproject.org

Saferworld

The Grayston Centre, 28 Charles Square
London N1 6HT, United Kingdom
+44 (0)20-7324-4646
www.saferworld.org.uk

Forumi i Iniciativës Qytetare

Rr. Andrea Gropa Street, 29
10000 Pristina, Kosovo
+381 (0)38-248-677
www.fiq-fci.org