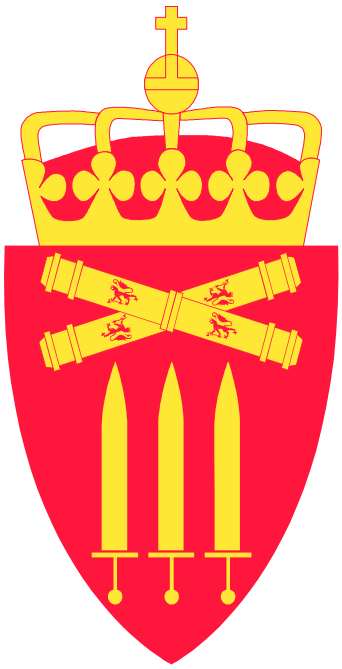

Norwegian Defence University College

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MA Thesis

Tales of the Future

An Exploration of Intelligence Dissemination, Prediction and Storytelling

KM Sundal

Summary

What characterises dissemination of intelligence?

This thesis answers the question by studying intelligence dissemination as *storytelling* and *prediction*. It argues that the dissemination stage of the intelligence cycle *translates* processed intelligence into a product servicing the decision-maker. Faced with the risk of error and misunderstanding, the dissemination stage can *secure the reliability* of the conclusions, as it was formed at the processing stage. Dissemination is *contextual*, emphasising a dynamic of actors and their environment, which is familiar and understandable to the consumer. It delivers the service at an *appropriate time*.

This way, intelligence dissemination makes the output of the processing stage *accessible* and thus *applicable* to the consumer. This is how the stage *fulfils the purpose of intelligence* by providing the consumer with improved situational awareness and an ability to create policy of a quality otherwise impossible. In combining these features to a narrative, intelligence can *stand out* with the decision-maker, and *succeed in the narrative battle* for his attention.

We must put the information out.
We must capture the narrative.
-- General Sir Rupert Smith, 2007 (:40)

Intelligence is presentation.
-- Lars Ulfving, 2002 (:97)

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While writing is lonely, and the shortcomings in this study are mine alone, a number of people deserve my sincere thanks for their help and inspiration:

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Lt col Pål Fauske and Stig Andresen, whose confidence and patience never wavered, and who always kept an open door for me. Lcol Ron Ruiters, who re-tutored me in warning intelligence and timely dissemination, and who commented on some, regrettably un-published, parts of the thesis. My employer and NATO IMS, who allowed me to take part in the Alliance's Crisis Management Exercise in March 2010. Observing intelligence dissemination at NATO HQ first-hand constituted an important basis for the thesis.

Kjetil Hatlebrekke and the speakers and participants at his NDSCC course on intelligence, autumn 2009, who complicated my over-simplified view of the intelligence process. The library staff at the Norwegian Defence University College, who enthusiastically scavenged own and others' shelves in order to satisfy my reading whims.

My co-students and friends over the past two years, who listened when I was frustrated, told me so when I was being stupid, and guided me when I was astray. Thank you, *kull 4*.

And, more than anyone; Ayla, Lea and Mette, for being there, while accepting that I was not; for caring, when I seemed not to; and for distracting me, when I needed to be. Thanks.

Lenseveien; May 24th 2010.

KM

Smiling; Like a child
Into the cool remnant of a dream
-- Jim Morrison, 'Ode to L.A.', 1969

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1 Introduction: What Characterises Dissemination of Intelligence?

make.believe
-- Sony Ericsson slogan, November 2009

1.1 Embarkation Point and Research Question

Literature and thinking on dissemination of products from intelligence organisations to intelligence consumers is filled with contrasts. On the one hand, there are statements like 'Dissemination tends to be intelligence's Achilles Heel,' (Herman 1996:45) and 'This end stage is often the most difficult step in the intelligence cycle,' (Johnson 2009:46). On the other, the texts spend preciously few pages investigating these complexities further[1]. This paradox is the inspiration for this thesis.

There may be three reasons for such contrasts.

- One; the dissemination stage does not cause any trouble for the intelligence process. From the quotes above, this might not be the case.
- Two; studying dissemination as an isolated phenomenon is not possible. That may be so, intelligence-making is a highly integrated process, but the dissemination stage is nevertheless singled out in textbooks and doctrinal approaches, and may thereby deserve some attention.
- Three; dissemination has not been subject to extensive academic scrutiny. If so, that fact may prove a starting point for this study.

Then, *what characterises dissemination of intelligence*? Springing from the observations above, this will be the thesis' research question.

The thesis will argue that the dissemination stage of the intelligence cycle *translates* the output of the intelligence process into a service, which fulfils the purpose of intelligence itself by enabling the decision-maker to do something he otherwise could not. Faced with the risk of error and misunderstanding, the dissemination stage can *secure* the reliability, accessibility and applicability of the product by utilising elements of narration, making the intelligence product *stand out* to the decision-maker. Thereby intelligence may *shape* the consumer's frame of reference, and be a valuable contribution to his situational awareness.

This introduction will further outline the basics of the thesis; its purpose, its analytical construct and foundation in literature, its research design and its structure.

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[1] See f i Herman 1996:44-47 (4 pages of 385) and Lowenthal 2009:62-64 (3 pages of 329). The *quality* of the literature should of course not be estimated by volume alone, but the brevity does nevertheless beg the question posed in this thesis.

1.2 Aim and Purpose

This section will introduce *what* the thesis aims to achieve and *why* it does so. The rest of the chapter will show *how* this is going to happen.

1.2.1 Aim: What to Achieve

The aim of this thesis is to provide a thorough exploration of the dissemination stage of the intelligence process. It will discuss dissemination's *purpose*, explore particular *challenges* when conveying intelligence predictions, and it will discuss the *narrative* aspects of transferring processed intelligence products to the decision-maker.

1.2.2 Purpose: Why Achieve It

The purpose of this thesis is to elucidate an understanding of what and how the dissemination stage contributes to the purpose of intelligence. This may, in turn, lead to a better understanding of how the dissemination stage is utilised to the benefit of intelligence agencies and their consumers.

1.3 Construct of Analysis

1.3.1 Application of the Research Question

What characterises dissemination of intelligence? The thesis will answer the research question by studying intelligence dissemination as storytelling and as prediction. It will explore literature and theory on intelligence, prediction and narratology. As gaining an understanding of the concepts in the research question – intelligence and the dissemination of it – is part of the thesis' project, each of these concepts will be elaborated at separate stages in the study. The purpose of this section, then, is to show *how* the thesis will conduct this exploration of the concepts.

1.3.2 Place in Research Field

This thesis will study one particular segment of intelligence, its dissemination from the provider to the consumer. If the larger field of research on intelligence is represented by the (somewhat normative) question 'what constitutes good intelligence?' (cf Lowenthal 2009:174), the thesis' relative position in the field is illustrated by figure 1.1.

The thesis will not explicitly debate other questions. Though, delineating dissemination towards other parts of the research field and intelligence cycle will at times be necessary to elucidate its

properties. This goes in particular for intelligence *processing*, dissemination's forerunner, and for intelligence and its *purpose*, which dissemination serves.

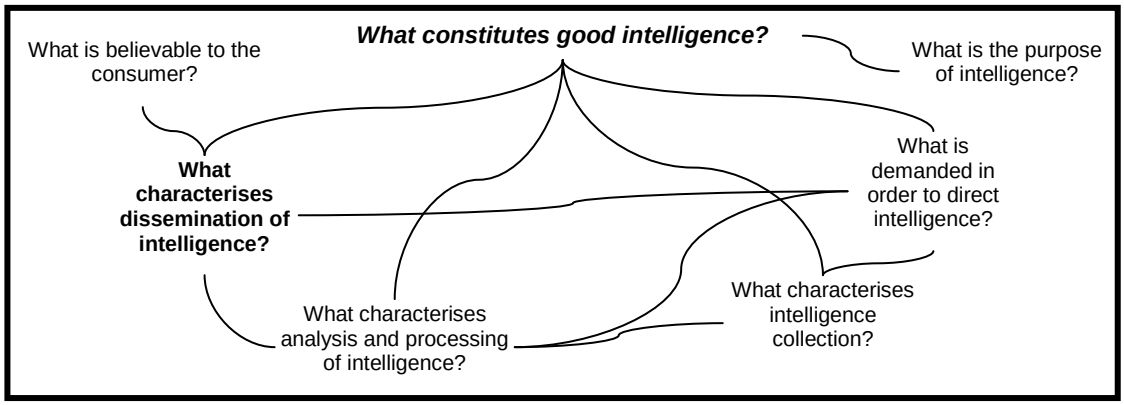

Figure 1.1. The intelligence research field. Research questions are examples only.

1.3.3 Progress of Inquiries

The research question is a rather broad and open one. The project of answering it will be broken down into four specific questions, which will be explored and discussed in turn.

- *What constitutes intelligence, and how is it put together and conveyed to the end user?* Answering this question provides a framework for analysing dissemination's role as part of the intelligence process. It is done in chapter 2.
- *What is achieved at the dissemination stage of the intelligence cycle?* Answering this question provides an understanding of the purpose of dissemination and the tasks attributed to it. It is done in chapter 3.
- *How does intelligence dissemination adhere to narratology?* Answering this question provides an insight to how intelligence dissemination may stand out in a larger flow of information. It puts intelligence dissemination in the context of strategic communication, where several sources claim influence on and attention from the decision-maker. It is explored in chapter 4.
- *What needs to be disseminated to support a predictive conclusion?* Answering this question provides an understanding of how assessments with no corresponding factual basis can be made understandable. It does however require a supplementary exploration of what an intelligence prediction is, and how it is constructed during intelligence processing. This is done in chapter 5.

By this approach, the analysis to follow aims to explore, describe and discuss the dissemination of intelligence, not only from textbook or doctrinal 'how-to' positions, but as well from perspectives of content, challenges and communication.

1.3.4 Dissemination: What and Why

This thesis is all about the concepts of dissemination and its character. As a preliminary operationalisation, intelligence *dissemination* denotes the conveying of information from the intelligence organisation to the end user. This is the study's subject, and it will be detailed extensively, starting in the next chapter.

The motivation for studying intelligence dissemination is twofold. *One* is the contrast in intelligence literature referred to at the start of this chapter. *Another* is intelligence's place in the flow of information inflicting on the decision-maker. Describing his *War Amongst the People* paradigm, Sir Rupert Smith illustrates the challenge to a commander trying to win the public's hearts and minds (2007:36):

> 'We operate now as though we were in a theatre or Roman circus. The theatre commander needs to produce a more compelling narrative than his opponent in the minds of the people.'

He concludes (2007:40):

> 'We must put the information out. We must capture the narrative. We must understand the theatre of operations as a theatre and the theatre commander […] must be setting out in his campaign to write a more compelling script than his opponent. We must explain ourselves to the people in the theatre and those at home and in parliament.'

Looking at his approach allegorically, from the perspective of intelligence, demonstrates the importance of successful dissemination. The tempo of contemporary decision-making is increasing (Coker 2007), and intelligence needs to *stand out* to its audience. If not, the rather expensive process is in vain. To do so, intelligence can be analysed like storytelling – just as Sir Rupert indicates that strategic communication can. As intelligence often implies prediction (Hagen 2009), an intelligence narrative conveys a story of how future developments will be. Bent Flyvbjerg (2001:137) indicates that a narrative form is particularly beneficial for conveying predictions, as narratives

> 'provide us with a forward glance, helping us to anticipate situations even before we encounter them, allowing us to envision alternative futures.'

This is the reason for the selection of topics included in the thesis. Answering the research question by way of this approach may contribute to the understanding of how intelligence can stay relevant and applicable to a decision-maker.

1.3.5 Characteristics: What and How

Where and how, then, will the study look for the '*character*' of intelligence dissemination? In broad terms, the thesis will understand 'characteristics' as

- what dissemination 'does' or 'achieves' – its tasks;
- how it is formed by its challenges, and how it faces them; and
- its relationship to other phenomena or entities in the intelligence process.

However, the subject matter of this thesis is somewhat hard to grasp. 'Dissemination' is a phase in a cycle. Chapter 2 will show it as a square in a flow-chart. Can a phase have character? Which qualities are implicitly conferred upon a 'phase' in a project looking for its 'character'?

Chapter 2 will argue that dissemination is a function in the intelligence process, not a structural element. This is a study of that phase, not of a group of human beings. Stating, as this study will repeatedly do, that dissemination 'does' something is therefore troubled. Whether the phase is active, in creating or adapting something of value for the decision-maker, or passive, merely transmitting products previously constructed, is a question that will be debated several times over. The thesis will, however, show that what is done in or during the dissemination stage of intelligence-making is different from what goes on in the other stages. And, obviously, the process is not a machine. What is done, is done by humans. Some of them are analysts or managers, as well as disseminators. And in that case, it may be useful to know the crafts apart.

The thesis will, for good and bad, tend to treat dissemination as an active entity, at least linguistically. In the following, intelligence dissemination will 'do', 'act', and 'achieve'.

The analysis to follow will isolate and explore one concept related to the research question at a time. It will attempt to elucidate dissemination's character in *two parallel* ways. *One* is to study dissemination from several perspectives.

- Initially, the dissemination stage will be studied from the perspective of its *formal position* in intelligence at large.
- Expanding this, dissemination will be studied from the perspective of *communication*, as intelligence, in order to stay relevant, needs to stand out among *several sources* of information that inflict on a policy-maker's decision.
- Intelligence dissemination will as well be discussed in the context of what kind of product that is to be conveyed. *Predicting* future events is a *forte* of intelligence. Foretelling the unknown is a demanding task to dissemination, and may reveal more of its character.

The *second* angle to character elucidation is to contrast findings with a line-up of challenges facing them.

- The description of dissemination is contrasted with some sources of error in the intelligence cycle, in order to conclude which role dissemination has in mitigating them.
- The brief exploration of narratology is contrasted by the concept of discourse failure in intelligence dissemination, in order to shed light on how compelling, consistent dissemination can maintain an innovative edge when transferring predictions.
- The outline of prediction in science and intelligence is challenged by strained validity and high demands to reliability. The contrast sheds light on which preconditions that may back up a presentation of predictive intelligence.

Overall, positive and negative qualities will be dealt with rather equally. The study's purpose is to explore and describe. It will be modest what regards the normative. It is ambitious for a study like this to go into explicit recommendations on amendments, just as it is prudent not to over-emphasise any problems and challenges to its subject. The thesis, therefore, will be careful on both accounts. The aim of the study is not to find what may be wrong with dissemination and why things do not work, but to point to what does work, and why these things carry importance[2].

1.4 Review of Literature

While being elusive and brief on dissemination as such, the literature on intelligence production and the relationship between intelligence provider and consumer is in steady voluminous growth. This overview will mention some works that influence this thesis. The literature falls in three main categories[3]:

1. *Textbooks*, aiming at academic and professional education, offering a holistic perspective on intelligence's role and function.
2. Texts on *specific subjects*. A not insignificant portion of these are on the causes and effects of intelligence failures.
3. *Doctrinal texts*, aiming at providing guidelines (how-to and SOPs) for personnel actively engaged in intelligence production, management or consumption.

[2] There are numerous studies on what does not work; this will not be another. How intelligence often is studied by its negation is returned to in section 3.7.

[3] A fourth *category* is intelligence history, but this bears less on the thesis and is thus omitted. A fourth *source* for the thesis is the works on epistemology, prediction and narratology. These are not works on intelligence specifically, as this section discusses, and will be referred to in section 1.5.3.

Two *textbooks* will be keystones among the thesis' sources. Michael Herman's (1996) *Intelligence Power in Peace and War* covers history, purposes, processes and debates about intelligence, primarily from a British point of view. Mark Lowenthal's (2009) *Intelligence – from Secrets to Policy* is remarkable for its brevity on dissemination (pages 62-64), but re-captures most of dissemination's qualities in its presentation of intelligence analysis (chapter 6). Written from a US point of view, the 4th edition offers modern and recognisable considerations on the intelligence process, and is overall more practical and less philosophical than Herman's book.

Academic *texts on specific subjects* are abundant – and a large part is on intelligence's shortcomings. Uri Bar-Joseph's (2003; 2005) efforts to explain the lead-up to the 1972 Yom Kippur war has identified several concepts of intelligence failure with universal value. Richard Betts (2003; 2009) contributes to understanding politicization and the unavoidability of intelligence failure. Traditional studies of intelligence failure tend to focus on errors based within the intelligence organisation (cognitive errors), or error erupting from mission creep (integrity errors). Neumann and Smith (2004) introduced discourse failure as a source of error embedded in the linguistic and conceptual interface between the intelligence organisation and the consumer. This is a third category of error, presenting particular challenges to the dissemination stage.

Woodrow Kuhns (2003) offers employable discussions on validity and reliability in predictive intelligence. Peter Gill *et. al.*'s anthology on intelligence theory[4] contains several elaborated, specific contributions to intelligence production, purpose and provider-consumer relations. Marrin (2009) and Johnson's (2009) articles, in particular, go into some detail on dissemination and on its delineation towards other parts of the intelligence process.

Study of *doctrinal texts* is limited by the classification official texts on intelligence procedures naturally are bound by. Only two will be referred to in the thesis[5]. The *Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Operational Doctrine* (FFOD 2007) outlines intelligence briefly, but will be assumed to be in accordance with the current state of play. The Norwegian Army's handbook on operational planning (FR 3-1 2004) outlines tactical and operational guidelines in more detail, though in the

[4] Gill, Peter, Stephen Marrin and Mark Phythian (eds.) *Intelligence Theory – Key questions and debates*, Abingdon: Routledge, 2009.

[5] NATO's *Allied Joint Intelligence, Counter Intelligence and Security Doctrine* (AJP 2 2003) offers a basic and brief view of NATO's best practice on intelligence production. For reasons of classification, it is used *exclusively as background* for this thesis. In spite of being classified *NATO/PfP Unclassified*, its content and positions are *not generally releasable*. The doctrine has, however, been used to check the usage of other doctrinal documents. Apart from this note, it will *not be referred* in the thesis.

same vein. Ulfving (2002), though a *textbook*, is based closely on Swedish and NATO doctrinal approaches. It will as well be used as a source to current practice.

As a consequence of the literature's lack of depth on the dissemination of intelligence, there are few pointers to what – if anything – the dissemination stage does to improve intelligence, reduce error or enhance understanding. (However, there are plenty of pages written on what can be done by collection or processing.) This thesis will explore what role, if any, dissemination may have to these ends.

1.5 Research Design

1.5.1 Approach to Research Design

This chapter has outlined most of the thesis' research design already: It has a qualitative, literature-based, exploratory approach, open-endedly aiming to identify some characteristics, or the lack of such, unique to intelligence dissemination as a phenomenon. The *phenomenon* is a phase in the intelligence-making process, where its outcome is transferred to the end user. This is *not* a case study, as it does not study one or more *instances* of dissemination, which can be singled out in time, space or context (Jacobsen 2005:92). Delineating the subject matter is indeed an implicit part of the thesis' inquiries. It is, however, a study of an activity, a process (Creswell 2009:13). Studying a phenomenon shares the *intensive research design* of a case study: collecting and analysing information (literature and previous studies) in order to draw some conclusions that may contribute a clearer understanding of the phenomenon (Jacobsen 2005:89).

This thesis has modest ambitions beyond this. On the basis of this approach, it has limited merit to attempt generalisations to all cases of intelligence dissemination. However, the elucidation of the phenomenon's character invites coming to a somewhat detailed understanding of the dynamic between the factors included (Jacobsen 2005:97). Chapter 6 will attempt to conclude by an outline to that effect. Therefore, modestly, the thesis will border on generalising a theoretical contribution to the study of intelligence dissemination.

The research question does not presuppose any causality or correlation, and therefore, the thesis is not founded on any explicit variable interplay. It will not seek *causal* explanations (cf Jacobsen 2005:108ff). The intelligence process is not causal. Chapter 2 will show it as an interplay between individuals acting towards a common purpose. Chapter 3 and 6 will show that the character of dissemination as well may surface both before, during and after dissemination temporally takes place.

Therefore, the thesis' research design is intensive and qualitative, exploratory and describing, based on current practice and academic study, and it aims at understanding the character of a phenomenon and a process, in order to contribute to a clearer theoretical understanding of the role of intelligence dissemination.

1.5.2 Approach to Theory

This is a study of literature and theory on intelligence dissemination. Apart from its aim to contribute to a clearer understanding of the concept and the concluding outline in chapter 6, the thesis will not *apply*, *test* or *create* any particular theories or models. The theoretical inputs to the discussions will, however, be of three kinds:

- Intelligence, its purpose and process, including the role of dissemination, will be studied based on textbook or doctrinal sources. These are not theories proper, but the intelligence cycle will be outlined as a simple model in chapter 2. The terminology and frame of analysis established on this basis will be maintained throughout the thesis. Primary sources for this information is FFOD (2007), Herman (1996), Ulfving (2002) and Lowenthal (2009).
- Narratology, the study of narrative forms, complements the exploration of intelligence dissemination. It has its roots the study of literature and creative writing. The thesis will conduct a discussion on the concept's implications, primarily based on tutorial texts, supplemented by von Wright's (1971) and Bent Flyvbjerg's (2001) theories on social science.
- Prediction is a theoretical and epistemological concept. The discussions on its construction and implications for dissemination are primarily based on the models of Georg Henrik von Wright (1971).

1.5.3 Approach to Sources

Intelligence as a topic is not inviting to academic study. Contemporary products and practices are usually classified, and studying historical sources may not produce conclusions useful for today's circumstances. Sources are thus somewhat problematic. The thesis' approach to sources can be outlined according to their three kinds (cf 1.4)[6]:

[6] Apart from the sources explicitly mentioned, it shall of course never be ruled out that other background, lectures, texts, discussions and experience influence the thesis. This does not, however, have any conscious bearing on the text, which is based on the sources quoted. A particular note should be made, however, on that I during the work on the thesis was allowed to participate in NATO's Crisis Management Exercise in March 2010. This provided valuable insight into strategic intelligence warning, processing and dissemination. My participation was organised jointly by my employer and NATO IMS, and I am grateful to both facilities.

1. Academic texts are prone to studying history, or may be based on the personal experience of their author. They do, however, constitute a major part of the thesis' source material, and will be exploited to the degree they contribute to clarification and inter-linking of concepts related to intelligence dissemination and prediction.
2. The texts on specific subjects will be exploited with similar scrutiny as textbooks. When views differ, they will be contrasted in order to improve insight and understanding. This goes in particular for the sources on philosophy or knowledge theory in chapter 4. The sources for this information are primarily textbooks, some of which are primers for undergraduate philosophy studies. This way the thesis aims to stay within 'mainstream' interpretation of epistemological concepts. Original sources are used primarily in the cases of von Wright (1971) and Flyvbjerg (2001). When applicable, though, these sources will be contrasted against textbook positions[7].
3. The few doctrinal texts and guidelines will be studied at face value – meaning that their content is assumed to be *current practice*. It has slim academic benefit to assume that the opposite might be the case.

1.5.4 Alternative Solutions

This introduction started out with a not-so-latent criticism of the poor state of studies of intelligence dissemination. On that basis, a study seeking to explore the field could take a number of approaches, apart from and along with the one described and chosen here. The same can be said for the approach to the research question: a broad and open question like that can be answered in a number of manners. A couple of alternative solutions may be mentioned here.

In one end of the spectrum, an obvious way to study effective dissemination of intelligence products is to *survey* the intelligence *consumers*. What kind of product do they need, and when, in their view, does the intelligence agency succeed in disseminating their products convincingly? The results would be subjective to the decision-makers, of course, but could be of fundamental importance in learning about why resource-demanding intelligence products are sometimes ignored in decision-making, and how the agencies may improve their standing.

[7] Flyvbjerg (2001) sparked a certain debate on the purpose and method of social science. The anthology *Making Political Science Matter: Debating Knowledge, Research, and Method*, edited by Sanford F. Schram and Brian Caterino (New York: New York University Press, 2006) brought some positions together, and will be referred to as appropriate. The reason Flyvbjerg features repeatedly in the thesis is that his practical (so-called *phronetic*) approach to social science as a contribution to policy-making bears several similarities to the understanding of intelligence outlined in chapter 2 in this thesis.

This study does not go anywhere near this solution. The decision-maker as an entity in the intelligence process is not explicitly studied. It is assumed that he will treat a disseminated intelligence product with, as a minimum, equal interest as he would any other source of situational awareness. The reason is *threefold*: Surveying consumers would take both time and resources, and selecting the proper number and kind of respondents could prove demanding. Second, attaining unclassified information – basically, getting respondents to avoid contemporary examples – could prove difficult, and answers without context could be of less value. Lastly, a proper starting point for such a study would be to have a fairly good grip on the characteristics of dissemination as such – which is what *this* study aims to provide.

Keeping the analysis internal to the functions of intelligence, then, could have made for a study *comparing* the qualities of or interaction between dissemination and other stages of the intelligence cycle. Delineation of concepts could have been done by contrasting, rather than isolating, them. Furthermore, a comparative study would have provided knowledge on more than one stage of the intelligence process, which would benefit a challenging academic subject.

When this study does not attempt this approach either, it is for reasons of exploration and space. Intelligence collection and analysis is prolifically dealt with in the academic and doctrinal literature already. Dissemination is not. Thus, there is presumable more left to explore in one concept than in the others. Treating other stages of the intelligence process as deeply as dissemination is in this thesis, would furthermore push the set boundaries of the study. This would not encourage exploration. And, like with the other alternative above, a proper understanding of dissemination may be useful *before* moving into comparisons or more extensive studies.

1.6 Outline and Outlook

Apart from this introduction and from the concluding chapter, in which the research question is posed and answered, respectively, the thesis will be composed of four main chapters.

Chapter 2 will describe *intelligence* as process, product and, most of all, an empowerment of the decision-maker. The chapter will establish a *framework* and terminology for the thesis, and will also point out that *prediction* is integral to many intelligence products.

Chapter 3 will discuss the features of *intelligence dissemination* as a part of the intelligence process. It will argue that this stage, by conveying relevant and applicable information in a

timely manner, fulfils the purpose of intelligence. By introducing cognitive and integrity errors, the chapter will as well discuss dissemination's ability to amend error, and question the stage's suitability for separate study.

Chapter 4 will discuss the implications of *narrative forms* for the dissemination of intelligence predictions. By discussing the impact of discourse failure, the chapter shows that a narrative format alone can not overcome challenges put to dissemination. Still, studying narratives in intelligence dissemination enhances several possibilities that may be constructive.

Chapter 5 will discuss some approaches to *intelligence prediction*, and thereby identify which premises need to be conveyed to support forecasting assessments. By studying how a prediction is constructed, the chapter shows how *reliability* in the processing of intelligence predictions can lead to credibility and *understanding* in dissemination

Lastly, chapter 6 will conclude with an attempt to *draw a more detailed outline* of the dissemination stage of the intelligence cycle, in response to the research question. It will as well look back to the both the detailed inquiries in section 1.3 and to the more colloquial questions in section 1.1, and briefly discuss whether there was *anything to learn* from the study at all, or if the literature is brief on dissemination for a reason.

2 Intelligence: What, Why, How

Strategic intelligence is a process, a means to an end.
The end is security and the maintenance or enhancement of a relative advantage.
-- *Mark Phythian 2009 (:67)*

2.1 Purpose and Outline

The purpose of this chapter is to describe what intelligence is, what it does and how it does it. This is done for two reasons. One is to establish terminology to be used in the thesis. The other is to introduce an *understanding* of intelligence by way of its *purpose*, which in the next chapter will be argued to be *similar* to those of the dissemination stage in the intelligence cycle.

This will be done in *three* main parts. Sections 2.2 and 2.3 will outline an understanding of *intelligence*, along with its *aim and purpose*. Sections 2.4 to 2.6 will describe a common approach to the *intelligence cycle* and point to how it is applied and understood in the thesis. Before a brief summing up, sections 2.7 and 2.8 will outline some approaches to the intelligence *product*.

A *main argument* of this chapter is that intelligence agencies work to service and empower the decision-maker, by providing him with processed information that increase his foundations for choosing an adequate course of action[1].

2.2 Intelligence: Product, Organisation, Process

The traditional *understanding of intelligence* denotes three parallel concepts (Herman 1996:1-2; FFOD 2007:145; Lowenthal 2009:8):

- the *product* that the intelligence organisation brings to the consumer;
- the agency or *organisation* that in itself provides the product; and
- the *process* in which the intelligence product is formed.

Figure 2.1 illustrates these three aspects of the intelligence concept. While not a theoretical foundation *per se*, these concepts may constitute a framework for studying intelligence.

The *process*, often referred to as a *cycle*, constructs the intelligence *product*. The process and the product are both *organised* within the *intra-intelligence sphere*, as part of the intelligence *agency* (Lowenthal 2009:3-5). The product is then disseminated to the consumer, the decision-maker,

[1] This thesis is not a study of intelligence as such, but of the dissemination phase of intelligence. This chapter, then, serves to establish general terminology of intelligence that will be maintained throughout the thesis. And, as chapter 3 will argue that the intelligence dissemination fulfils the very purpose of intelligence, it is advantageous to establish a whole-process view early.

outside the intelligence sphere.

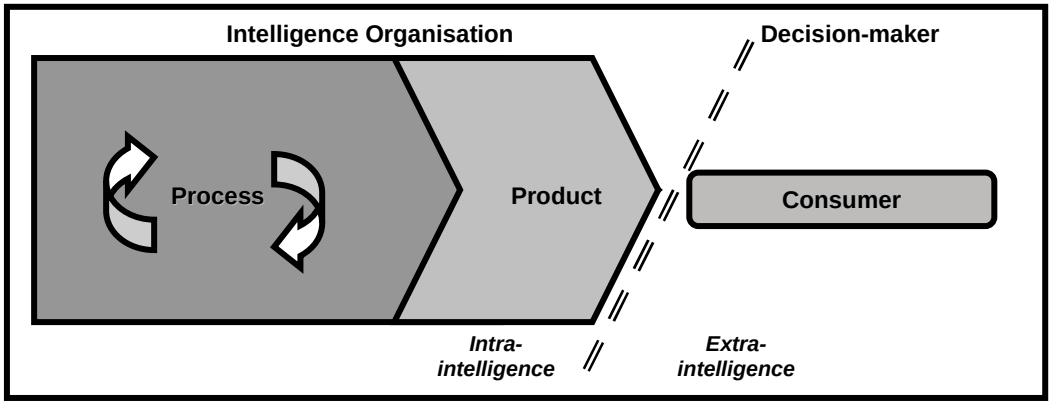

Figure 2.1. Intelligence as organisation, process and product.

The cycle will be outlined in section 2.4 and illustrated by figure 2.2. The *predictive* nature of some intelligence products will be discussed in chapter 5. The intelligence organisations as such will not be explicitly studied in this thesis[2]. *Intelligence dissemination*, the topic of this thesis, operates on the fault line between the intra- and extra-intelligence spheres. While it will be addressed throughout the thesis, chapter 3 will examine its position in the intelligence cycle and its contribution to the purpose of intelligence.

2.3 An Understanding of Intelligence by its Aim and Purpose: Servicing the Consumer

More specifically than the three-partition above, intelligence may be understood by its *purpose*, which lies in the *extra-intelligence sphere*: '[…] to enable action to be optimized by reducing ignorance', as Sir David Omand (2007:99) puts it. Intelligence's purpose involves being *put to use*. 'Intelligence refers to information that meets the stated or understood needs of policy-makers, and has been collected, processed and narrowed to meet those needs', Mark Lowenthal (2009:1) states. His understanding emphasises the consumer of intelligence[3], and how his needs are serviced by the work of the intelligence organisation. Highlighting the hunger of the consumer even more, Jennifer Sims (2009:154) understands intelligence as 'the collection, analysis, and dissemination of information for decision-makers engaged in competitive

[2] This thesis will focus on the way in which the transference of an intelligence product serves to fulfil the purpose of intelligence as a phenomenon and service, and will thus not enter into historical or structural discussions on agencies. Intelligence organisations, what figure 2.1 calls the intra-intelligence sphere, will in the thesis as well be referred to as the *intelligence provider*, as opposed to the extra-intelligence *consumer*.

[3] Several phrases are used to refer to this entity; f.i. customer, recipient and policy-maker (Herman 1996:39). This thesis will employ consumer and decision-maker to the same end. The use of masculine pronouns to refer to this entity is not intended to ignore the similar position of female and male decision-makers. The thesis will not study the consumer explicitly. However, the relationship, personal and institutional, between the intelligence organisation and the consumer is very likely to inflict on the quality of dissemination (Marrin 2009:147). Cf section 1.5.4.

enterprise'. These approaches all point to the *aim* and *purpose* of intelligence: to provide a consumer with information, in order to fill a need.

The *aim* of intelligence[4] is to provide the decision-maker with collected and elucidated information that is within his sphere of need and interest. Intelligence's *purpose* is, by way of such information, to influence and improve the decision-maker's basis for choosing his course of action; in short, to put him in a position where he can *do something he otherwise could not do* (cf Phythian 2009:58; Johnson 2009:34-35). Therefore, the information must be *applicable* to the decision-maker (cf Malnes 2009:2).

Michael Herman (1996:2) refers to efficient and applicable intelligence as the consumer's degree of *intelligence power*, understood as a 'capacity to produce effects that are more advantageous than would otherwise have been the case'[5]. Intelligence is a tool, a service to increase the analytical ability of the decision-maker (cf Scott and Jackson 2004:3)

Intelligence organisations provide this power by collecting and processing data and information, which is submitted – disseminated – to the decision-maker. This processing is often referred to as *production*, and the submitted information, written or oral, is referred to as a *product*. The product is thus the 'processed and narrowed' information which the policy-maker needs. But, importantly, intelligence does not serve its purpose by the product alone, but by the applicability provided to the consumer by way of the product and by the way it is disseminated to him[6].

2.4 Process: The Intelligence Cycle

Intelligence-making is a relay. Each leg, stage or phase works together to fulfil the purpose of intelligence. As outlined above, this end is reached only at the last stage, and prior stages may

[4] In this thesis, the term *aim* is used to describe *what* is to be achieved, and the term *purpose* will describe *why*, to what end, the aim is to be achieved.

[5] Herman explains that his concept of intelligence power is built on the quoted definition, which he in turn quotes from p 291 of L. Freedman's article 'Strategic Studies and the Problem of Power', in Freedman, L., P. Hayes and R. O'Neill (eds.) *War, Strategy and International Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992). This understanding of power retains the core of conventional social science definitions of power, where A can make B do something A wants, which B otherwise would not have done, because A controls some means of sanction (Gilje and Grimen 1993:181-182).

[6] A note should be made about the *secretive nature of intelligence*, which is consciously left out of this description. Intelligence matters are prone to classification for *two* reasons: i) in order to protect the organisation's *sources and methods*, which if compromised, are expensive to restructure (an intra-intelligence reason), and ii) in order to protect the decision-maker's *intent and knowledge*, which if compromised, will erode the relative advantage he gets from intelligence, and thus erodes the purpose of intelligence (an extra-intelligence reason). Thereby, the secrecy involved in intelligence is a *means* to those two ends, and is not a characteristic of the intelligence organisation, process or product *per se*, and will not be an explicit topic of this thesis (cf Phythian 2009:59; Sims 2005:37-40).

have own, partial aims. This section will outline a *conventional understanding* of the intelligence-producing relay; commonly referred to as a process or a *cycle*.

Intelligence is formed through a gradual, sequential, progressive flow of production, where all functions are inter-dependent (Herman 1996:39; Johnson 2009:34; Marrin 2009:131). The process repeats itself in cycles, building an ever better understanding of the topic at hand (FFOD 2007:147-48; Ulfving 2002:75-76). All stages are involved at all times, working on different phases of different topics (FFOD 2007:147). In the conventional model of the cycle outlined here, the basic assumption is that the consumer's information requirements precede the intelligence production process, and that the product of this process precedes the consumer's actual decision-making (Marrin 2009:133-36)[7].

There are several models for the cycle (Herman 1996:ch 3; Lowenthal 2009:ch 4; FFOD 2007:147), sometimes adapted to fit different levels of intelligence. For the purpose of the thesis, the four stages *Direction*, *Collection*, *Processing* and *Dissemination* suggested by the *Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Operational Doctrine* (FFOD 2007:147-148) offer a simple, applicable approach. These four core stages remain, along with the concept of the *Consumer* (the decision-maker) (Herman 1996:39), implicitly parts of most models. (It is the direction and content of the links between them that differ[8].) In brief, the stages play out like this[9]:

- *Intelligence Direction* prioritises resources in three respects: with regard to tasks from and needs of the consumer; with regard to the intelligence organisation and the intelligence process; and with regard to the intelligence organisation's partners, sources and sensors.
- *Intelligence Collection* exploits openly or candidly, hidden and open, technical and physical sensors and sources, in order to gather diverse and credible data and information on the topic at hand, and delivers these to single- or multiple-source processing.
- *Intelligence Processing* denominates all collation, analysis, interpretation, elucidating (Omand 2009) and methodical evaluation of the gathered single- or multiple-source data and information, in order to form predictive assessments that make uncertain estimates less uncertain.

[7] As a.o. Marrin (2009:136ff) points to, this simple approach may be challenged by the fact that decision-makers may have agendas and intelligence personnel may have particular biases or pre-suppositions. This will be returned to in chapter 3 and 4 of this thesis. However, when doing a rather exploratory study like this, there is little reason to start out with the assumption that the conventional approach is wrong.

[8] See, f.i., Herman 1996:284-296.

[9] This overview is based on Herman (1996:39-47); Ulfving (2002:ch 6), AAP-6 (2010:2-I-6) and FFOD (2007:147-148).

- *Intelligence Dissemination* is made up by the conveyance of the processed intelligence product to the consumer, at a time and in a form which makes it understandable, usable and valuable to him, reducing his degree of situational ambiguity.

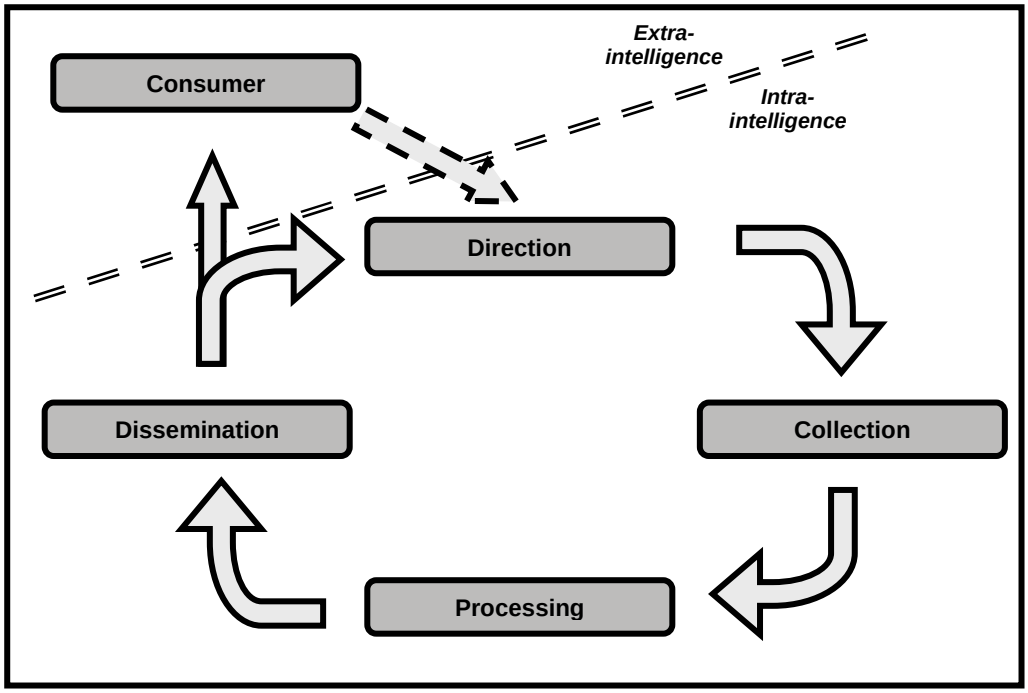

Figure 2.2. The intelligence cycle (simplified), adapted from FFOD (2007:147) and Herman (1996:39).

Figure 2.2 illustrates the cyclic nature of the interplay between the four stages, along with a few other components that inflict on the understanding of intelligence production.

The *consumer* is the end user of the intelligence product, and is often synonymous with the requesting or tasking authority and/or the decision-maker. The consumer is outside the intelligence sphere (Herman 1996:39) (as illustrated by the dotted line in figures 2.1 and 2.2), but is inside what Omand (2007:120-122) calls 'the circles of trust'; the institutions with access to a states apparatus of power in dealing with high-level decision- and policy-making.

Returning to the relay analogy; while all stages of the cycle may have separate tasks, dissemination as the last stage is to fulfil the very aim of intelligence itself: providing applicable, relevant, reliable information in a timely manner. But like in a relay, this last stage cannot do it all by itself.

2.5 Stages vs Structure

The stages in the intelligence cycle do not coincide with the organisational structure of an intelligence agency (Aasberg 2009). There is not necessarily major physical or mental distance

between the production and analysis in the processing stage and the transference of the product in the dissemination stage. Analysts often construct and present their own products in person, adding to dialogue between provider and consumer (cf Lowenthal 2009:111). Nevertheless, the processing stage is qualitatively different from the dissemination. Evaluation, interpretation and integration of collected information demand a broader, more detailed approach. All aspects of this processing cannot be transferred to the consumer, and the selection of the relevant and appropriate is done with specific regard to dissemination (cf Lowenthal 2009:64). The mental processes and considerations differ between the two stages[10]. While not necessarily a separate structure in the intelligence organisation, dissemination is a separate process, and may be suited for separate study.

2.6 Intelligence Dialogues

A further way of explaining the intelligence process is by way of dialogues, the internal and external communication involved in it (Hagen 2009). These will at times be referred to later, and thus get a brief mention.

- The *tasking dialogue* is between the consumer and intelligence direction, and aims at clarifying what tasks the intelligence organisation should perform, what topics it should study, and to which ends.
- The *internal dialogue* is continuous between all four functions of the intelligence sphere of the cycle. It is the study of these processes that has triggered other, alternative models of the intelligence process. The dialogue aims at clarifying the status of the tasks, the availability of information, and the appropriateness of the product, in order to determine how the tasks are being solved[11].
- The *product dialogue*, between personnel involved in dissemination of the product and the consumer, aims at determining whether the product meets the consumer's needs. The output of this dialogue may trigger the tasking dialogue, further illustrating the cycle.

Intelligence is formed and used by individuals. The concepts of dialogue therefore underscore that, in spite of the abstractness of some other concepts elaborated on in this thesis, intelligence is *all about* human beings actually talking to another (cf Johnson 2009:46-47; Marrin 2009:147).

[10] This will be part of the discussions in chapters 4 and 5.
[11] Lt-Gen Hagen referred to this as 'intelligence dialogue'. To reduce ambiguity, it is here renamed 'internal dialogue.'

2.7 Product: Kent's Typology

While intelligence on the one hand constitutes a *service*, a contribution to the general power base of national decision-makers, an intelligence agency more often than not executes the service by way of *concrete products*, analyses, assessments and estimates – documents and briefings. Sherman Kent distinguished between three types of intelligence output (Herman 1996:105-108):

1. *Current-reportorial* intelligence reports recent developments on the topic at hand, and may offer limited, short-term predictions. The scope of this reporting is limited in both temporal directions: it constitutes new development, may supplement regular open-source journalism, and may offer a most-likely version of what may occur until further reporting is available. It may be immediate during a situation that develops quickly or unexpectedly, or it may be founded on established surveillance in areas of permanent interest. Its prime characteristic is that it avoids longer historical trends and any deep-rooted features of infrastructure, ethnography or economy, and that forecasting is brief and of limited ambition. Today, scheduled routine reporting, delivered at pre-determined intervals ('reporting periods') is usually made up of current-reportorial intelligence, and is in effect referred to as *current* intelligence (Lowenthal 2009:113; AAP-6 2010:2-C-20).
2. *Basic-descriptive* intelligence reports outline features of a considerably more lasting nature. Such reporting detail permanent or inertly changing topics, and are suitable when familiarizing a decision-maker with a situation or area. Typical issues are political relations, economic, resource or infrastructure features of a society, military order of battle, religious influences and biographies of core personnel. Here, it is not the content of what is presented, but the manner in which the data are collected that make the product intelligence. Such *basic* intelligence may form the platform for prediction in the two other reporting categories (AAP-6 2010:2-B-2). The initial stage of Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace (IPB) would as well be an example of basic intelligence (cf FR 3-1 2003:77).
3. *Speculative-evaluative* intelligence reports may be based on both current reporting and basic intelligence. Their prime characteristic is their emphasis on prediction of future events, days, weeks or years ahead. Such reports are intended to support longer-term policy, and should aid the decision-maker to take steps to avoid, change or increase the effects described in the reporting, all in the national interest. Thus, current intelligence may share parts of the methodology, but is based primarily on ongoing or recent events. Speculative-evaluative intelligence may be referred to as *long-term*, as opposed to current, intelligence (Lowenthal 2009:114). It takes any available scope of time, space and force into consideration, and makes an assessment or an estimate of what will be. This ability to predict is at the core of any intelligence agency's *raison d'être* (Herman 1996:106-107).

Prediction of future events or developments is explicit in the first and third output type and only indirectly a part of the second (how will the environment inflict on future operations or actions?). Later on, the thesis will go on to study how predictive products like these – the outputs of the processing stage of the intelligence cycle – may be translated through dissemination in order to constitute an enabling and empowering service to the consumer.

2.8 Product: Warnings, Assessments and Estimates

It may be useful to elaborate slightly on the variety of *form* in intelligence products, in order to clarify what intelligence dissemination has to convey, and which bearings this may have on the study of dissemination. These concepts will be referred to in the discussions later in the thesis. A.o., chapter 5 will return to predictions, as found in Kent's typology. These are found in both intelligence warnings and intelligence estimates or assessments.

Intelligence *warning* is a central justification for keeping intelligence organisations (Herman 1996:154; Kuhns 2003:94), and notifies decision-makers that an incident will happen before the actual fact. According to James McDevitt (nd[12]), *time* is at the essence of warning intelligence. He distinguishes between tactical and strategic warning, where the former is issued only after a hostile action is initiated, but before its consequences are severe. Strategic warning issues notification before any adversary action has taken place at all. In order to monitor a given situation, certain events are assumed to forego the warned-about incident. These are isolated in intelligence processing as *indicators*, and work best when they are

- *necessary* preconditions of the development,
- *unambiguous* to detection and consequence, and
- *visible* to the point where the collection apparatus can actually track them.

When the intelligence analyst determines that indicators are sufficiently telling, a warning may be issued. This is known as indication and warning (I&W) methodology (McDevitt; Handel 2003:20; Lowenthal 2009:133).

[12] Unfortunately, my copy of James McDevitt's article, as entered in the literature list, is not dated or paginated.

Intelligence *estimates* (or *assessments*) are predictive, but not merely warnings[13]. In an estimate (as process and product), the intelligence analyst will identify the contextual forces involved, inflicting on the situation and development at hand (Kuhns 2003:97). She will consider history, incrementally, and make judgements as to whether current issues are out of step with previous ones. Assessing this totality, the estimate will make conditioned, justified statements to the decision-maker on how the current situation may play out over a given future time period, and assign a degree of probability to its own assessment (Herman 1996:258; Lowenthal 2009:136-37). This leaves room for the decision-maker to evaluate his situation, and to come to a decision with considerable room for manoeuvre.

It may seem like a warning is more direct, less infringed by all-source processing, than the more carefully elaborated estimates, making the former more actionable to the decision-maker (cf Kuhns 2003:94;97). This not necessarily so. An intelligence warning, due to its indicators, may be as contextual as an estimate. Intelligence organisations will explicitly or implicitly put analytical scrutiny on any collected information that may indicate a warning. Thereby, warning does not emerge outside a context already provided and maintained by estimative processes[14].

2.9 A Summary: *Enhancing a Relative Advantage*

This chapter has outlined some concepts central to the understanding of intelligence. This was necessary in order to found the discussions on the dissemination stage of the intelligence cycle in the next chapters.

In this chapter and in the thesis, intelligence is understood as

- product, process and organisation, which ultimately
- *aims* to provide the decision-maker with processed information that is within his sphere of need and interest, for the *purpose* of improving his foundation for choosing own actions, and thus put him in a position where he can do something he otherwise could not do.

[13] The use of the terms estimate and assessment is not unambiguous in literature. Herman (1996:237) and Lowenthal (2009:136) point to differences between UK and US terminology, but that is most likely only a part of the explanation. In US usage, any full-text intelligence report is referred to as an estimate (Kuhns' (2003) arguments draw on this American approach.). In British/European usage, an assessment is the evaluative part of an intelligence report, containing justified, conditioned predictions. Estimation is a methodological process, as described in the text, as much as a product. This thesis will (apart from the current section) primarily refer to assessments in the European sense, and estimation as its methodology.

[14] However, it is what is *not* warned about that constitute a surprise. Surprise – what blindsides an intelligence organisation and a decision-maker – is what was never predicted, not analysed, or was put aside. What blindsides you is still what you do not see, or do not see well enough to identify (cf Handel 2003; Wirtz 2003:105-108).

Intelligence production is *cyclic*, but the staging of the cycle ought not to be confused with the organisation of an intelligence agency. Intelligence dialogues are maintained at all stages in order to make production transparent.

Intelligence products take various forms to serve different purposes. Speculative-evaluative products make long-term predictions or forecasts. These may be expressed as estimates; contextual, conditioned analyses that present open-ended or alternative versions of future developments. This leaves the consumer free to consider his options. Warning is, as a form of prediction, a core function of intelligence. Warnings predict specific events or developments by way of a set of collectible, clear indicators.

The next chapter will narrow the focus to the topic proper of the thesis, the dissemination stage of the intelligence cycle.

3 Dissemination of Intelligence

> This end stage is often the most difficult step in the intelligence cycle […]
> -- *Loch K. Johnson, 2009 (:46)*

3.1 Purpose and Outline

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and discuss the *dissemination stage* of the intelligence cycle, in order to explore its strengths and its weaknesses. A parallel purpose is to hint at an answer to the second colloquial question in chapter 1; whether intelligence dissemination can be studied as a separate phenomenon.

This will be done in *two* main parts. Sections 3.2 to 3.6 will outline some basic understandings of *what* this stage is supposed to do, and discuss briefly its capacity to achieve the goals put to it. Thereafter, sections 3.7 to 3.9 will introduce a small selection of problems from the abundant literature on intelligence failure, and point to how some *sources of error* may inflict on the qualities of dissemination.

A *main argument* of this chapter is that the dissemination stage fulfils the purpose of intelligence by conveying relevant and applicable information in a timely manner. The dissemination stage can not *increase* these qualities beyond the output from the processing stage. It does, however, play an active role in adapting and conveying the information in a manner which makes it *accessible* and comprehendible to the consumer. The challenges put to the dissemination stage from sources of error within the intelligence cycle can nevertheless primarily be mitigated elsewhere. In sum, this points to some challenges when studying dissemination isolated.

3.2 The Dissemination Stage

There is little academic or doctrinal disagreement about what is to be achieved by the dissemination stage of the intelligence cycle. Michael Herman (1996:44) states that '[dissemination's] aim is the delivery of useful, user-friendly product at the right time, especially when timeliness is at the essence for decision-taking'. The *Norwegian Armed Forces Joint Operational Doctrine* (FFOD 2007:148) explains dissemination as '[…] providing the right user with the right information at the right time' (cf AAP-6 2010:2-I-6). The terminology fits well with the role of an intelligence agency: the Norwegian Intelligence Service aims to provide the decision-maker with *timely, reliable* and *relevant* knowledge (NIS 2006:1).

The following discussion will amplify a few key characteristics of dissemination, and will take the Norwegian doctrinal definition (FFOD 2007) as its point of departure. While *right user* and

right time are rather functional and measurable entities, the understanding of the *right information* will be given extra emphasis, as this essentially constitutes the qualities of the product that is disseminated[1].

3.3 The Right User

The consumer's position in the intelligence cycle was briefly outlined in chapter 2. End users of intelligence are most often pre-determined before the product is ready for dissemination. This aids in fitting the foci of the product to the needs of the consumer (through a dialogue or liason) (Herman 1996:45-46; Johnson 2009:46-47). In operational-level intelligence there tends to be an integral hierarchy where the intelligence organisation is tasked to collect, process and deliver intelligence on a given matter by a given time. To *whom* intelligence is disseminated is thus a matter of command and control, and of security and authorisation. These subjects will not be dealt with further in the thesis, which will assume that the designated consumer is in a position to task, receive and utilise intelligence products.

3.4 The Right Information

3.4.1 An Overview

In order for the information[2] to be 'right' for the consumer, it must be relevant and applicable. *Relevance* is about what the consumer needs: whether the product *answers the question* put forth by the consumer, and whether the product expands his *knowledge*. *Applicability* is about whether the product, apart from being relevant to the consumer's sphere of interest, is fruitful to *use*: whether it can be exploited to his advantage (Johnson 2009:46-48). Where relevance, objectively, points to the consumer's interests and questions, applicability is subjective to how intelligence can contribute to the consumer's exploiting a relative advantage (cf Phytian 2009:67). Nevertheless, none of this takes effect if the product is not disseminated in an *accessible* manner[3].

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[1] As the topic of this chapter and the thesis lies embedded within the word 'dissemination', a few lines on the paradox of the meaning of this term may be worthwhile. Etymologically, to *disseminate* is based on the Latin *disseminatus*, of *disseminare*, made up of the prefix *dis*, meaning 'away' or 'in all direction', and *seminare* (of the root *semen*), to 'plant' or 'sow' (Dictionary.com). Literally, to disseminate means to spread (a message) as wide as possible, and to as many recipients as possible. (Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English). In intelligence, dissemination relates to specific, tailored conveyance of the intelligence product to a pre-determined consumer. This is quite another thing than the limitless, one-way mass broadcasting the term dissemination originally implies.

[2] 'Information' – as the doctrine states – is here to be understood as the output of intelligence processing.

[3] The concept of *accessibility*, ensuring understanding with the decision-maker, is addressed in 3.4.3, but is implicitly the main topic of chapter 4.

3.4.2 Relevant Information

Relevance has two dimensions.

- First and obviously, a relevant intelligence product *answers the question posed*, meets the consumer's needs for clearer understanding (Lowenthal 2009:64). Does it not, it will not be integrated into decision-making, whether or not it is reliable or valid. Should the topic be picked up on later, the assessments may be overtaken by events, and thus worthless to the consumer (Johnson 2009:46).
- Second, in answering the question posed, the intelligence product can volunteer information and assessments needed in order to present a balanced and full-spectrum view of the topic. This may require more or other information and factors than the consumer asked for, but provides *added value* to his knowledge base (Lowental 2009:111; Sims 2009:156).

An intelligence agency thus both answers the questions put to it (through a '*pull*-principle' from the consumer's point of view), and provides ('*pushes*') analyses that, based on pre-determined task-lists and previous questions, ought to be of interest to the consumer. In the second instant, getting the consumer to take in analyses he did not know he asked for or needed is a harder dissemination task than providing answers to questions in which the consumer has declared interest (Marrin 2009:131-32; Johnson 2009:46-47).

In any case, the tasking and product dialogues between the intelligence provider and consumer are key to the former's understanding of the latter's needs (Herman 1996:45-46). This, as well, is a double-edged sword. Consumers are more likely to appreciate intelligence assessments that solidify existing policies or ambitions (Johnson 2009:47-48)[4]. Disseminating intelligence *selectively* in order to get the decision-maker's attention runs the risk of losing out on important or alternative assessments that should have been considered. *Too little dialogue* can make the intelligence provider ignorant of the needs of 'the real world', rendering the dissonant assessment irrelevant and ignored by the consumer. Both these phenomena relate to politicization (cf Betts 2003), which will be briefly discussed later in this chapter.

3.4.3 Applicable and Accessible Information

The product's *applicability* relates to the consumer's ability to draw useful inputs to his decision-making from the product. This goes beyond the relevance; the product may be relevant, in addressing the consumer's needs, but if the format, wording or context is poorly tailored, it will nevertheless be misunderstood or ignored (Ulfving 2002:97). Therefore, the intelligence product

[4] Chapter 4 will discuss how intelligence can be disseminated to resonate with a decision-maker whose policy counters the intelligence product.

needs to be conveyed in a manner, pace, structure and format which is *physically* and *mentally* accessible to the consumer.

The discussion on the qualities of dissemination may occasionally be lost in practicalities. 'Electronically, there is never enough communication capacity', Herman (1996:45) laments, reflecting the challenges of secure and precise means of communication. These are physical considerations, solvable by non-intelligence means (computer systems, translation, communication – all speedy, flexible and robust, of course), and will not be further debated in this thesis.

Herman (1996:2) emphasises how adequate intelligence ('right information') empowers the consumer, increases his clarity of perception of his own situation and possible choices, and puts him in a position where he can *act*. 'Actionable intelligence' is a lauded term (Johnson 2009:47) that demonstrates how the disseminated product fulfils the aims and purpose of the intelligence process by being *applicable*. Applicable intelligence provides 'information for decision-makers engaged in competitive enterprise' (cf Sims 2009:154).

Applicable (or actionable) intelligence consists of information that speaks directly to the consumer's position (Omand 2007:99). The aim is not that the decision-maker necessarily shall *act* based on the intelligence assessments, but that they contribute to a *clearer perception of other factors*, and thereby that the decision-maker can *evaluate* his options better. This, as well as actually taking action, is an outcome of applicable intelligence[5].

However, for intelligence to come across as actionable requires that the product is *mentally accessible* to the consumer. Where *applicability* is a quality with the content, topics and assessments of the product, *accessibility* is a quality with the dissemination stage as such. If the wording, perspective or content of the product is too far from the consumer's frame of reference, he will neither understand nor apply the intelligence. The foundation for applicable intelligence may be laid in stages preceding dissemination, but the foundation for accessible intelligence is made by the dissemination stage. Here, the output from the processing stage is adapted to the consumer's preconditions for understanding. The product's applicability is made accessible to the

[5] This illustrates why the thesis will employ the terms 'actionable intelligence' and 'applicable intelligence' to similar ends. The reason is partly semantic (regarding the need to use the noun 'applicability' (there is no similar noun form of the adjective 'actionable')), and (more importantly) partly dynamic, as *applicable intelligence* is not necessarily solely translated to 'action', but as well encompasses the consumer's perception and understanding of his situation – his *posture*.

decision-maker by the way 'the story of the assessment' is told. Chapter 4 will return to this narrative aspect of dissemination.

Returning to the 'pull' principle of *relevant* information, in tasking the intelligence provider, the consumer needs to take his own aims and ambitions into account, and know what obstacles he needs more information about in order to mitigate them. Proper tasking dialogue may allow the intelligence organisation to add – 'push' – further information that may be relevant to the consumer's sphere of need and interest (Herman 1996:45; Johnson 2009:47). Amplifying the product's relevance may increase its applicability. And vice versa.

For instance, when considering different military approaches in a peace support operation, the decision-maker needs to know not only the qualities of his opponent, but as well assessments on collateral damage and on the assessed response from civilians[6]. With this information, the decision-maker can prevent unintended implications by engaging constructively with third parties, giving him an advantage before military action is taken. Adding further, accessible value, the intelligence product can tell the consumer why and how particular key people can aid in facilitating his intentions[7], perhaps even to reduce the scale of kinetic operations. At strategic level, in a trade agreement negotiation, national authorities will benefit from information on the adversary's options and desires beside and beyond the agreement at hand, in order to determine who of them needs a rewarding or quick settlement the most. Information on the adversary's motivation or political vulnerabilities may nudge the decision-maker to see the value of applying intelligence information. This, more than *merely* lists of facts and figures, orders-of-battle, statistics and biographies, is actionable and applicable intelligence. This separates Kent's speculative-evaluative category of intelligence output from the basic-descriptive one. And the potential for application of intelligence information is the basis for Herman's intelligence power.

3.5 The Right Time

The timely dissemination of intelligence products hinges on when it needs to reach its purpose: when the increased clarity provided by the assessment can facilitate the consumer's decision-making. Timeliness is therefore the intelligence agency's window of dissemination opportunity. When circumstance demands a decision, the consumer will not wait for the ultimate intelligence product. Christopher Coker (2007:87-89) demonstrates how the increasing tempo of modern

[6] This grows ever more important when considering Sir Rupert Smith's (2005) *War amongst the people* paradigm.
[7] So-called Key Leader Engagement (KLE).

operations creates risks in decision-making. This affects intelligence dissemination in that the consumers' need for risk management and speedy, quick-fix solutions may fragment the consistency of dissemination and understanding of intelligence products. Intelligence must reach him in sufficient time to be actionable (Kuhns 2003:85). Therefore, timeliness is in fact *integrated in the concept of applicability*. The latter will thus be used to this end, as knowledge presented at an inappropriate time (both too early and too late) will not be put to use.

Timeliness emphasises the forecasting nature of intelligence. It must look sufficiently far ahead to remain relevant even when the consumer makes policy. Thereby, timely dissemination is related to intelligence prediction (returned to in chapter 5).

3.6 Dissemination: Aim and Purpose

Based on the preceding outline, the *aim* of the intelligence cycle's dissemination stage is to convey relevant, applicable and timely assessments within the consumer's sphere of need and interest (cf Lowenthal 2009:64), in order to reduce ambiguities in his situational awareness (SA[8]) and thus fulfil the *purpose of intelligence*, to put the consumer in a position where he can do something he otherwise could not do. For any of this to take effect, though, the dissemination stage must make the product *accessible*, thus *understandable*, to the consumer.

The dissemination stage fulfils the aims and purpose of intelligence. It runs the last lap of the relay that is intelligence-making. However, and *totally* ruining the athletic aspect of the relay analogy, dissemination has little to offer beyond maintaining the position the forerunning stages have provided. The dissemination stage does not collect, analyse or produce intelligence. It does not, it can not, advance the intelligence product beyond and above the qualities of processing. True, bad dissemination can destroy reliability, but good dissemination can not increase it beyond where it was following processing. When selling cars, good salesmanship cannot increase the performance of a car's engine beyond what was created at the factory. The other way round, however, bad salesmanship can ruin a car sale. The entire intelligence process has been in vain if the consumer does not appreciate the message, value, relevance and applicability of an intelligence product (Johnson 2009:46; Betts 2003:62).

[8] To achieve and maintain *situation awareness* (SA) means that an individual or group of such are aware of current conditions, understand the situation's immediate impact, and even may be in a position to foresee the further developments from the current situation (FFOD 2007:95;176). In military terms, SA is an operational-level concept, but it may just as well be employed at other levels, denominating the oversight held by a decision-maker. Enabling the consumer to foresee how current and future development may impact on his own situation, thus allowing him to find measures to maintain his advantage, may be considered an aim of predictive intelligence. In this thesis, the term *situational ambiguity* denotes the opposite of SA.

Dissemination straddles the interface between the intra- and extra-intelligence activity, where intelligence products are delivered from the processing unique to the intelligence provider to the decision-making and implementation unique to the consumer. In the dissemination stage of the cycle, the output from processing is translated 'into a form which is both understandable and usable by the non-expert' (Hastedt, in Marrin 2009:135[9]). Echoing the aim and purpose of intelligence, again, dissemination is the craft of *translating product into service*. The intelligence analyst, *qua* disseminator is a bureaucrat, an adviser to the decision-maker, *'speaking truth to power*' (Marrin 2009:136; Malnes 2009:1-2).

Returning to the car sale analogy, dissemination is *not merely salesmanship*; it is *design* and *preparation* as well. This final stage between the factory and the consumer does not do anything with the performance of the car's engine, but it makes sure that the seats are comfortable, the paint job appealing and the instrument panel easy to use. However, as Herman (1996:293-296) points to, this may in fact indicate an alteration of the intelligence cycle: following the preferences of the consumer, adjustments to design and dissemination may affect the production process in the cycle's next revolution[10].

The analogy invites comparisons to other conveying, presenting and disseminating functions, like news anchors (they do not always write the presentations, and they certainly do not make the news), spokespersons (they do not decide the policies they present, but they do the writing and speaking, even take questions, in order to convey a message credibly), weather presenters (who did not make the weather, nor analysed the indicators or made the forecasts).

This means that creating relevant and applicable intelligence – and disseminating it – is close to creating and telling a story, a dynamic of actors and aims. On the one hand the story*teller* can not change the factual basis or conclusion of the message. On the other, he can increase interest and understanding – the perception of relevance and applicability – with the recipient by presenting it in a compelling and accessible manner. Thereby, while the dissemination stage is *passive* regarding the crafting of the intelligence message (the content of the warning or estimate), it

[9] The quote is originally by Glenn Hastedt, p 54 in 'The New Context of Intelligence Estimating: Politicization or Publicizing?', in Stephen J. Cimbala (ed.) *Intelligence and Intelligence Policy in a Democratic Society*, Dobbs Ferry, NY: Transnational Publishers Inc, 1987.

[10] This will be briefly returned to in chapter 6, by Figure 6.1's concluding outline of the dissemination stage.

plays an *active* role in adapting the message for consumer appliance. This narrative perspective of intelligence dissemination will be the topic of the next chapter.

3.7 Introduction to Error and Misconception in Dissemination

3.7.1 On Error

Having spent a chapter and a half exploring some proper qualities of intelligence dissemination, it is time to introduce some adversity and opposition. In intelligence, the potential for wrongdoing has a haunting presence (Betts 2009:87). Virtually any study on intelligence finds it necessary to outline its own take on the possibilities of intelligence errors[11]. So will this: The thesis will study errors in intelligence from *three* perspectives:

1. Sources of error in the workings of the intelligence cycle and organisation; *cognitive* and *integrity* errors. The impact of these will be discussed in the remaining sections of this chapter. They pertain to the objectivity of the product and of the intelligence organisation, respectively.
2. Sources of error in the semantic transference of intelligence; *discourse failure*. This pertains to the mental accessibility of the product, and directly affects the dissemination stage. The impact of discourse failure on intelligence dissemination is discussed in chapter 4.
3. Sources of error related to the kind of content which is disseminated; epistemological challenges to *prediction*. This affects both applicability and accessibility, as it deals with the conveyance of s statement's reliability. It will be discussed in chapter 5.

Understanding successful intelligence integrally encompasses understanding of how to avoid common errors identified by the trade and academically (Kuhns 2003:80; Lowenthal 2009:ch 6; Herman 1996:ch 13; Bar-Joseph 2005:ch 19). This implies to some degree that intelligence is understood *by its negation*; by blunders instead of adequateness. In this sense, students of intelligence are taught the craft in a manner similar to learning to drive by debating ever new ways to stall or crash the car. On the other hand, intelligence *successes* are not always available for study. One reason is the obvious concern for security and necessary secrecy. Another is the epistemological challenge of determining whether an intelligence prediction actually corresponds with the truth (cf chapter 5)[12].

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[11] Academic literature tends to refer to intelligence wrongdoings and the resulting political misunderstanding and inadequate political and military action as *failures* (cf Herman 1996:221-226). This study will primarily use the term *error* for incorrect procedure and action within the intelligence cycle, and *failure* for faulty procedural or political *outcomes* of these errors. The term *discourse failure* will be maintained in discussions in chapter 4, mainly due to the complexities of its cause and its effect.

[12] This is as well why the thesis chose to approach an understanding of intelligence by its *purpose* in chapter 2, to demonstrate the qualities and effect of successful intelligence.

Furthermore, when attempting to identify the potential to overcome or minimize one kind of error, other kinds must be tested or checked for. Unsuccessful intelligence is unlikely to stem from one source of error only. The attacks on the US in 2001 were preceded both by analytical errors (the inability to collate collected information on the terrorists' tactical intention and ability) and discourse failure (the inability to express the threat to American civilian infrastructure). The misinterpretation of Iraq's WMD programme in 2003 was a result of both proximity error (the CIA's alleged willingness to over-represent assessments in line with the administration's political needs) and by cognitive error (the incomplete understanding of Curveball's position).

3.7.2 Cognitive and Integrity Error

Sources of error of the first kind on the above list erupt in the intelligence process. They tend to be described in either administrative or analytical terms or by such causes. Administrative errors are about misconduct regarding an intelligence provider's role and regarding the purpose of intelligence. This study will collectively refer to them as *integrity errors*. Analytical errors are about wrong, insufficient or incomplete thinking in the intelligence production process. These will be referred to as *cognitive errors*. This is not to say that one category is less abstract or more conscious that the other; they are not necessarily so. It is the subject matter of the error that differs: the *role and function* of intelligence versus the *production* of intelligence.

The two next sections will in broad terms describe integrity and cognitive errors, and discuss their implications for the dissemination of intelligence[13]. As this is the last stage of the cycle, any possible source of error in the previous stages will necessarily inflict on it downstream[14].

3.8 Integrity Errors: Politicization (Proximity Error)

Politicization implies that the intelligence organisation abstains from reporting assessments known or assumed to be outside of the consumer's interests, aims or perception of reality (Betts 2003:59). It erodes integrity and objectivity, as the intelligence provider tailors reporting to the consumer's preferences and perception of reality, and not to its own judgement (Marrin 2009:136).

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[13] The general sources for the description and categorisation of errors include Herman 1996:ch 13; Bar-Joseph 2005:ch 19; Neumann and Smith 2004:96. Further or more specific sources will be noted in the text when appropriate. The outlines in this and the next chapters are, however, condensed and selective, and do not aim at being a full-scale description of the intelligence error field.

[14] And, as the process by name and nature is cyclic, any error erupting in or carried on by the dissemination stage will inflict on dissemination again, one cycle further on.

Politicization implies mixing up tasking and product dialogues, as discussions on the product's form and content and on the intelligence organisations further tasks are conducted in the same fora. The outcome is flawed inputs to the intelligence cycle, making politicization self-reinforcing.

Politicization inflicts on intelligence dissemination's conveying the 'right information' to the consumer. It particularly inflicts how information that has not been requested is *pushed* to the consumer, in order to fulfil intelligence's purpose. It is the double-edged sword of applicability. If providing applicable information gets more important to the intelligence organisation than providing relevant information, then the *proximity* of the provider to the consumer is skewed. The CIA has been accused of this following its input to the Bush administration before the 2003 Iraq invasion (Marrin 2009:139-40). However, the choices that lead to such role or proximity error are not made by the people disseminating intelligence. They are made by those directing intelligence, and the decision on how to *act* on any intelligence assessment is obviously made by the consumer.

The degree of closeness between intelligence providers and consumers is illustrated by the different positions of former head of the ONE Sherman Kent and former DCI Robert Gates[15] (Betts 2003:60-62). *Kent* argued that the credibility of an intelligence organisation hinged on its objectivity, and that this should not risk being compromised by proximity to policy-making processes. This implies that the intra- and extra-intelligence spheres in figures 2.1 and 2.2 should remain intact. Kent's view favours the *relevance of the product* over its applicability, meaning that all factors are objectively analysed at the expense of providing the decision-maker with intelligence tailored to his needs. While challenged in the US, Kent's view remains a cornerstone of intelligence organisations' self perception and claim to relevance (cf NIS 2006:6).

Some decades later, Robert *Gates* took the position of applicability, fearing that the Kent model could lead the Agency to political irrelevance (Betts 2003:61; Herman 1996:109-110). As was the case after no WMD arsenals were found in Iraq, the Gates approach risks that an intelligence agency is held responsible for the political decisions of the consumer. The intra/extra-intelligence spheres are breeched. But, by being overly sensitive *not* to care about the consumer's agenda and need to act politically, the Kent model risks that the disseminated product is

[15] Sherman Kent headed CIA's Office of National Estimates from 1952 to 1967, and had formative influence on the development of the intelligence craft in post-war USA. Robert Gates was Director of Central Intelligence between 1991 and 1993.

overlooked, and thus irrelevant, in spite of its care to relevantly push objective assessments. Intelligence is a service, and a service without an end user is pointless (Johnson 2009:46). Intelligence products are in support on one particular political actor, they are not neutral (Sims 2009:156). On the other hand, intelligence may also be a corrective, a 'devil's advocate' versus pre-determined policies (Omand 2007:107-08; Betts 2009:89-90[16]). And, as often may be the case when studying the extremes of a spectrum, the most fruitful approaches are usually found somewhere between them.

3.9 Cognitive Errors: Analysis and Perception

As phenomenon, activity and method, intelligence is a cognitive, mental process. Thereby, the analytical activity – of both collected single-source data and in processing of multi-source estimates[17] – is wide open to a number of inaccuracies, misperceptions and other imperfections of the human mind. The literature on this kind of errors is extensive, and this short list is based on Bar-Joseph's (2005) and Neumann and Smith's (2004) summaries.

Politically or culturally conceived world-views of individuals or groups affect and limit their ability to study matters neutrally and level-headedly. This makes for conscious or unconscious presupposition or *bias*, and ends up in incomplete analyses[18] because of selective collection and interpretation of data and/or incomplete processing.

The multitude of interpretation that biases may lead to, echo in some degree the Duhem-Quine thesis, which points to that any observed data may lead to more than one theoretical generalisation; so-called *contrastive under-determination* of data (Stanford 2009[19]). In intelligence terms, this means that *more than one* assessment or prediction may be drawn from each set of collected data. *Which* assessment is eventually drawn may be determined by biases, and the result is brought into the product.

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[16] Both Omand and Betts illustrate intelligence as a corrective to policy-making by similar anecdotes: a US president (Reagan and Johnson, respectively) makes an analogy of policy-making as milking a cow, with intelligence eventually ruining the milk by swinging the cow's tail trough it. Laconically and *very* precisely, Betts (2009:90) adds: 'From the point of view of the consensus-seeking politician, this was criticism; to a pure analyst, it would have been flattery.'

[17] That is, analysis done in both the collection and processing stages of the intelligence cycle.

[18] In this context, 'incomplete' or 'sub-optimal' will refer to analyses or processes that have not been carried out in full, meaning that there were other, available factors (which is not necessarily the same as facts) to consider or include. However, a 'perfect' intelligence analysis or process is unattainable, as it seldom is possible to gather all data or input on a particular subject.

[19] Stanford 2009 is an entry in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, on the website of the Center for the Study of Language and Information, Stanford University, California, USA, and is therefore not paginated.

The human need for certainty and order limits the time individuals allow a problem or situation open to a wide spectrum of exploration or interpretation[20]. Delineating the discussion at a sub-optimal point in time, may lead to *cognitive closure*. This may be both a prerequisite as well as a result of biases, and prevents information which is incompatible with the established views from being evaluated. *Groupthink* is a collective form of cognitive closure, and implies that a consensus or least common denominator is established within the analytical community, limiting awareness of situational change or factors outside the consensus. For dissemination, the outcome is the same as from biases: the *premises* of the assessment or prediction are incomplete or flawed. Cognitive closure is a common explanation for Aman's failure to warn Israeli authorities at the outbreak of the Yom Kippur war in 1973 (Bar-Joseph 2005; Lowenthal 2009:324-325).

Basing the (expected) behaviour of others on one's own pattern of action is referred to as *mirror imaging* (Lowenthal 2009:7-8; 120-21). In part a formal-logical error of induction, it implies an assumption of universality, where more than one actor will act identically given the same circumstances. Mirror imaging may to some extent be related to the rational actor theory in international relations (cf Phythian 2009:57-58; Neumann and Smith 2004). As intelligence deals with explaining and understanding an actor's situational self-perception and intended aims and actions, mirror imaging is a fundamental error, eroding the very bedrock of intelligence's purpose.

The errors listed above can emerge in all stages of the intelligence process. Though they are *obvious fallacies* in the *processing stage*, such flaws of human analysis and perception are present in all stages of the cycle. The impact on the disseminated product is obvious, as the errors inflict on the premises of the analysis and assessments. Both tasking, internal and product dialogues are affected. The consumer and the direction stage, along with processing, contribute to collection plans, and analysis of single- and multi-source data are both prone to losing out on vital information because individual analysts and teams of such do not realise the significance of the collected materials at hand. In sum, there is an abundance of ways in which collection, analysis and processing can be affected by errors that stem from the natural and even unavoidable imperfect mechanisms of the human mental cognitive processes (Heuer 2006:pt III; Schulsky and Schmitt 2002:ch 3).

[20] Bar-Joseph (2003:182; 2005:248-251) bases his interpretation of cognitive closure on Arie Kruglanski's theories of lay epistemics and the concept of epistemic freezing. Bar-Joseph points to Kruglanski's 'concept of the "need for nonspecific closure", that is a concept that "represents the desire for a definite answer on some topic, *any* answer as opposed to confusion and ambiguity"' (Bar-Joseph 2003:182).

By the time cognitive errors in the intelligence product reach the dissemination stage, there is precariously little that can be done to mitigate them. An incomplete analysis can appear perfectly rational, objective, reliable and valid, and can be submitted convincingly to the consumer. An analysis can state, correctly, that the sky is brown, when it is based on observations on a cloud-free, sunny day, though (consciously or unconsciously) made through dark, tinted sunglasses.

In the end, nevertheless, objectivity, relevance and thereby applicability lose out. Political – not to mention military – actions decided on flawed information may end in fiasco. This was the case with the 1973 Yom Kippur war, which the Israeli side, biased by their perception of own military supremacy, did not conceive the Arab states as capable or willing to initiate. In several respects, the US' inability or unwillingness to realise Japanese ambitions in the Pacific facilitated the 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor.

Though the literature on intelligence failure is abundant with suggestions and practices to avoid or limit the extent of cognitive errors, (see f i Lowenthal 2009:143ff; Herman 1996:228ff), it also acknowledges that the risks are not likely to be permanently overcome (see f i Betts 2009).

3.10 A Summary: *the Most Difficult Step*

This chapter has explored the dissemination stage of the intelligence cycle. An employable understanding of dissemination may be expressed like this:

- The *aim* of the intelligence cycle's dissemination stage is to convey relevant, applicable and timely assessments within the consumer's sphere of need and interest, in a manner accessible and understandable to him, with the *purpose* to reduce ambiguities in the consumer's situational awareness and increase the value of his basis for decision-making.

The quality of intelligence dissemination is tied to three conditions:

- Its *relevance*, meaning the degree to which it provides the consumer with assessments he has requested or needs to be made aware of. Products without relevance will be ignored by the consumer.
- Its *applicability*, meaning the degree to which the consumer can employ the information for his own purposes. Non-applicable products soon lose reason and relevance for the consumer.
- Its *timeliness*, the degree to which the product is still actionable for the consumer when it reaches him. Assessments that are overtaken by events are not applicable and thus of no value.

Intelligence products that are *not* disseminated in this manner lose accessibility and risk being ignored or left unutilised by the consumer, rendering the rather expensive intelligence process in vain. However, the intention of an intelligence product is not merely that the consumer should *act* upon it, but that it assists him in perceiving other factors and other information more clearly, thus (again) reducing his situational ambiguity.

The dissemination stage is vulnerable to integral and cognitive sources of error. However, overcoming them cannot be done in dissemination alone. They erupt at earlier stages in the process, and good dissemination can only make cosmetic amendments. This last stage cannot *increase* the quality of an intelligence product beyond where it was following analysis and processing. However, during dissemination, the output from the processing stage is translated into a service to the consumer, by securing that the message is understandable and accessible to him.

Dissemination is separated by function and aim from earlier stages of the intelligence process. In spite of this, the discussions of this chapter seem to doubt the stage's applicability for separate study. In particular, it depends on a qualitatively good processing output in order to fulfil its purpose. The rest of the thesis will continue the exploration of the dissemination stage with this aspect in mind.

This chapter did primarily study *what* the dissemination stage is to achieve; relevance, applicability, timeliness. The next chapter wills study *how* this may be achieved, how the relevant, applicable and timely intelligence product is made *accessible*.

4 Intelligence Dissemination and Narratology

Speaking truth to power is notoriously difficult,
because power often refuses to listen
-- *Loch K. Johnson 2009 (:47)*

4.1 Purpose and Outline

The purpose of this chapter is to explore narratology, and discuss its implications for the dissemination of intelligence. The idea of storytelling – narrative communication – was mentioned in the previous chapter; understanding narratives may be important to make intelligence accessible to the decision-maker (Flyvbjerg 2001:137; Smith 2007:40). Therefore, this chapter will consider the relationship between intelligence dissemination and narratology – 'how best to get an honest story honestly told' (Geertz, in Flyvbjerg 2001:137[1]).

This will be done in *three* main parts. Sections 4.2 to 4.4 will *describe narratology*, its form and implications for intelligence dissemination. Returning to the potential for error in intelligence, section 4.5 will discuss *discourse failure* in dissemination. Section 4.6 will follow this discussion up by debating whether narrative intelligence dissemination may reduce discourse failure when the intelligence product concludes in adverse of the consumer's political ambitions.

A *main argument* of this chapter is that there are several similarities between narratology and intelligence dissemination, but it may be debated whether this actually constitutes news or real progress in understanding the latter. A narrative format alone can not overcome challenges put to dissemination. Studying features of narratives can, however, provide useful perspectives on accessible, applicable intelligence dissemination.

4.2 Narratology

Intelligence needs to be disseminated convincingly, Herman (1996:46) implies: 'Salesmanship is part of the game'. While intelligence should refrain from any recommendation on policy (Lowenthal 2009:3-5), chapter 3 argued that intelligence products need a sound presentation in order to resonate with the decision-maker. This implies a relationship of trust (Herman 1996:45). This is based not only on the intelligence provider's track record, but as well on how intelligence products are substantiated and disseminated (Marrin 2009:137-138). The applicability of an intelligence product depends on whether the consumer understands the premises of the assessment (Johnson 2009:46-47). As will be returned to in chapter 5, this maintains reliability

[1] The quote is originally from Clifford Geertz' *Works and Lives: the Anthropologist as Author*, Stanford. CA: Stanford University Press, 1998, p 9.

from processing through dissemination. It contributes to accessibility, to being understood, to *convince* the decision-maker of the applicability of the product.

However, intelligence products are not decision-makers' only source for situational awareness. Other sources and considerations influence them as well (Johnson 2009:47), and while intelligence may not be more truthful or important, a lot of resources are wasted if intelligence products are left irrelevant for the consumer's policy. Sir Rupert Smith (2005:284-285) illustrates how media influence both the public and the decision-maker, and points to the need to 'write a more compelling script' (2007:40). To present an argument or assessment in such a manner that people draw conclusions from and act on it, to succeed in the 'narrative battle' (Freedman 2006:75;78), are similar to the purpose of intelligence dissemination (Hagen 2009).

Narratology is the study of the structure and impact of narrative forms (Felluga 2003; Jahn 2005[2]; Flyvbjerg 2001:137). Freedman (2006:22) defines a narrative in strategic communications[3] as 'compelling story lines which can explain events convincingly and from which inferences can be drawn.' Jahn (2005) points out that

> '[…] all narratives present a story. A story is a sequence of events which involves *characters*. Hence, a narrative is a form of communication which presents a sequence of events caused and experienced by characters.'

Both understandings illustrate some common features between narrative storytelling and intelligence dissemination. While Jahn emphasises the *features* of the narrative (a sequential story, actors, actions and consequence), Freedman emphasises the *consequences*, inferences, of the narrative for the audience – the consumer. This invites two discussions, on the content of the narrative, and on its implications. The next two sections will take the discussions on[4].

[2] Felluga 2003 and Jahn 2005 are both tutorial texts posted on the websites of College of Liberal Arts, Purdue University, Indiana, USA, and English Department, University of Cologne, Germany, respectively. The sources are therefore not paginated.

[3] And, to be thorough, communication can be defined as 'the sharing of meaning through the exchange of information' (Castells 2009:54). This thesis is mostly about 'sharing' (form) and 'meaning' (content).

[4] A note on terminology: A narrative is a *form* of communication or dissemination – a way of promoting a message, a story. Narrato*logy* is the study of narratives. This thesis will employ the two terms similarly when it comes to the impact or lessons of studying or employing a narrative form. However, intelligence cannot be 'disseminated narratologically'. Occasionally, the *terms* 'narrative dissemination' or 'intelligence narrative' are used to denote intelligence dissemination that apply (consciously or not) elements that are re-found in narratives or narratology.

4.3 Narratives and Intelligence Dissemination: Story, Agency, Structure

Jahn's understanding of a narrative points to its *internal* features: a story, a sequence of events, experienced by actors. Intelligence products assess developments and actors that inflict on the decision-maker's position. They may be disseminated sequentially, emphasising how one development lead to another. An 'intelligence narrative' may thus present a sequence of events caused or initiated by specific actors or conditions, and experienced by those actors and by the decision-maker. This may aid in emphasising the *premises* of the assessment.

Furthermore, Jahn points to characters, actors, as what provides the dynamics of the narrative storyline. This introduces the *agency-structure* problem, which persists in both intelligence and social science: where to look for explanations in analyses and processing, and what to emphasise when establishing understanding in dissemination (cf Malnes 2008:159-160; Ulfving 2002:91-92). Actors are able to make motivated choices inflicting on their surroundings. These surroundings may be structural, but they are as well institutions and mechanisms, created by or made up of other actors. The structures create a framework the actor must adapt to rather than overcome (Hovi and Rasch 1996:84-85; Grimen 2004:ch 9). The understanding of the interplay between agents and structures provides fruitful inputs to both social science and intelligence analyses. Intelligence may successfully *combine* structural and agency considerations, and present assessments of how a given actor and his environment will inflict on the decision-maker's situation (Ulfving 2002:92).

A regular threat assessment may illustrate this. An assessment of a potential threat is made up of a multiplicative equation of the adversary actor's capabilities (structural; man-made and nature-given, *secrets*) and intentions (un-materialised; embedded within the agent, *mysteries*). Analysis of one part of the equation is meaningless without considering the other.

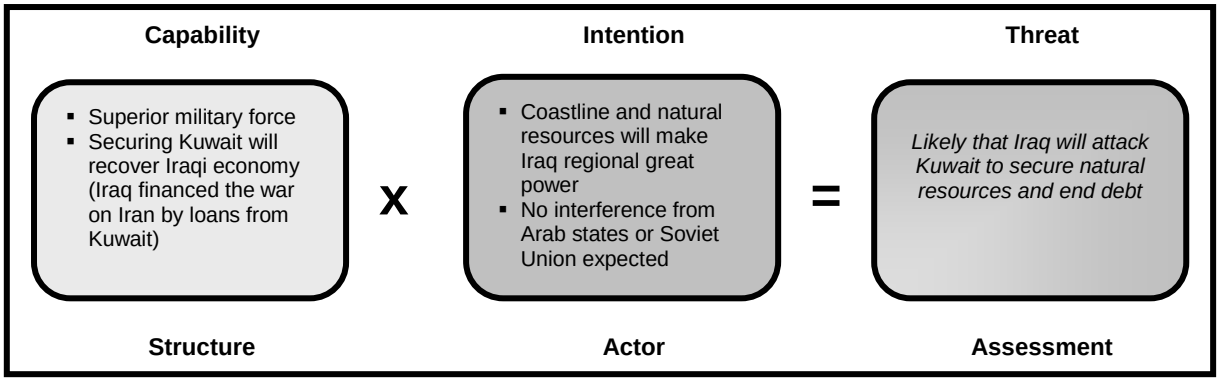

Figure 4.1. Agency and structure in a threat assessment (example from Gulf Region early 1990).

This demonstrates how a combination of structural and agency considerations are necessary in order to produce a reliable intelligence assessment. Intelligence products benefit little from purely individualistic or collectivistic methods; agent-less structures or structure-less agents do not present all the relevant premises of the conclusion (Ulfving 2002:92; cf Grimen 2004 ch 9). This *reciprocal interaction* between agent and structure is part of what Bent Flyvbjerg (2001:137-40; cf Schatzki 2006:126-127) calls *phronetic* social science. Flyvbjerg (2001:138) argues that:

> 'Phronetic researchers deliberately seek out information for answering questions about what structural factors influence individual actions, how those actions are constructed, and their structural consequences.'

The same can be said of intelligence analysts (Ulfving 2002:92).

This discussion illustrates two matters:

- The terminology may be slightly different, but the job done by a narrative and by disseminating an intelligence product is *similar*: Telling a story in order to convince a recipient that the presentation is of value. Narratology does in this respect *not add* significant new insight to dissemination.
- The agency-structure discussion pertains just as much to the *processing* stage as to the dissemination stage. The former considers both agency and structural data to construct an assessment. Narratology aids thus slightly in *delineating* between processing and dissemination, or rather, illustrating how the latter springs from the former[5].

4.4 Narratives and Intelligence Dissemination: Applicability for the Consumer

Freedman's definition, while maintaining the aspects of compelling story lines, includes the aspect of *the narrative's implications*, which Jahr's does not. Adding value to the consumer's situational awareness is likewise the purpose of intelligence. Freedman's approach reflects this similarity, and that it is the *take-away* from the narrative format that is important, *not* the form itself. The latter is merely a means to reach an end. Narrative intelligence dissemination may stand out in the decision-maker's stream of information (cf Castells 2009:142-144), and may avoid him ignoring or missing significant analyses due to what Johnson (2009:48) calls 'other pressing concerns'.

[5] Which, given the intelligence cycle in figure 2.2, really is not much of an insight, either.

Intelligence processing includes a plethora of factors and data, agents and structures, in an attempt at creating objective, thorough analyses, free of cognitive error. When disseminating the analysis, the narrative approach, still honest to the output of processing, *deductively 'selects'* how and when to convey the output (cf Lowenthal 2009:128-29)[6]. Dissemination's aim is to 'explain events convincingly' (cf Freedman 2006:22), thus empowering the decision-maker to draw inferences and act to secure a relative advantage (Phythian 2009:57).

This perspective returns to the understanding of intelligence dissemination outlined in chapter 3. Dissemination ensures the accessibility of the product, and translates it into a service for the decision-maker. All findings, all conclusions at the processing stage *do not* find their way into the disseminated product. The product is *adapted* to the needs of the consumer. Through internal vetting, it is made as applicable as the provider can make it (see a o Betts 2009:100-01; Lowenthal 2009:139-40) [7]. The ensuing narrative is a balance between what the consumer asked for ('pulled' in the tasking dialogue) and what the provider finds relevant to add ('push', a.o. through the product dialogue).

Dissemination, like a narrative, can 'link certain events while disentangling others', in order to 'explain events convincingly' (Freedman 2006:22-23). Thereby, the narrative perspective increases the understanding of *how* intelligence dissemination makes processed intelligence accessible to the consumer.

4.5 Narratology and Discourse Failure

Chapter 3 discussed the potential for conceptual and integrity error in the intelligence process. This chapter has shown that intelligence dissemination contains narrative elements. It may therefore be worthwhile to view narrative dissemination in the light of misconceptions that may erupt in the actual semantic transference of information and understanding. This section will study the impact of discourse failure, as outlined by Neumann and Smith (2004), on the conveyance of accuracy and understanding in the relationship between the intelligence provider and consumer.

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[6] This, by the way, is why *brevity* is hard to achieve when analysts prepare their own dissemination (Lowenthal 2009:147). The analyst can simply not refrain from putting forth *all nuances* of her work, while the decision-maker most often only has time for the highlights.

[7] This, of course, runs the risk of integrity error, if assessments or information that the consumer 'would not like to hear' are deleted. In order to reduce this risk, internal vetting may focus on 'what the consumer *should* (endure to) hear', rather than what he would *prefer* to avoid listening to.

4.5.1 Discourse Failure

Neumann and Smith (2004:96) define *discourse failure* as '[…] the constriction of the language and vocabulary to identify, analyze, and accept that a significant threat exist[s]'. A *discourse* can be understood as an applied framework for actors' communication (Flyvbjerg 2001:123-24). In intelligence dissemination, a discourse between the intelligence provider and consumer is an outcome of the content, language[8] and inherent expectations and sublime understandings in the three intelligence dialogues (see section 2.6). It is the context of language that an intelligence product is delivered in. It forms the basis for the resulting understanding with the consumer. When this framework is inaccurate or not understood similarly at both ends[9], intelligence dissemination can not serve its purpose. Or worse; it is counterproductive, in that the consumer is left with a mirage.

Discourse failure amplifies any other errors present in the intelligence process. The causes of discourse failure are not necessarily found at *any one stage* in the intelligence cycle. Language and context exist *between* the stages. Discourse failure can be understood as a dysfunctional language-contextual frame of reference, within the intelligence organisation, with the decision-maker or between the two.

The 2001 attacks on the USA may serve as an example. The failure of the US intelligence community to collect, collate and convey domestic threats before September 11th 2001 was enhanced by discourse failure. The language to express hijacking and crashing of fully loaded civilian aircraft into populated buildings did exist on September 10th. The *words* were there, it was possible to create and present this version of the future (Johnson 2009:47). But the proper *discourse* was not present, there was no context, no understanding in which to construct or express the scenario, both within the intelligence community and between the community and the consumer. Thus, it never was, and by September 12th, hindsight had made the scenario grimly obvious (cf Goodman 2005:60).

4.5.2 Causes and Expressions

Discourse failure may be caused or created by a pre-determined position or agenda in one of the parties to the discourse. Pre-determination of policy with the decision-maker can, according to Neumann and Smith (2004:98-106) emerge from the (political) left or right:

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[8] Language, in this context, has of course nothing to do with grammar, syntax or linguistic knowledge. It has, as will be shown below, to do with the epistemic and conceptual reference of the language, words and syntax.

[9] The 'Mars and Venus' terminology in interpersonal relationships similarly indicate divergent discourses – a discourse failure.

- Discourse failure on the *left* is understood as an overly benign understanding of sub-state actors and anti-western attitudes, as was displayed by i.e. the Clinton administration in the 1990s. This resulted in an under-estimation of the threat from f.i. al-Qaida.
- Discourse failure on the *right* is understood as a lack of comprehension that sub-state actors like al-Qaida could constitute a persistent threat without extensive support and direction from a state proper, as was displayed i.e. by the Bush administration both before and after September 2001 (Neumann and Smith 2004:103-05).

Furthermore, depending on which account the discourse is inaccurate, discourse failure can take *epistemic* or *conceptual* form[10]. *Epistemic discourse failure* reflects a mismatch between the applied wording and reality. Conspiracy theories may be an example[11]; assuming that something exists where it does not. In understanding the intentions of a counterpart, misinterpretations of agency or structural indicators may lead to over-estimation of threat. Epistemic discourse failure was manifested on the right in 2003, when the US administration made its case for an Iraqi WMD programme and for a working link between the Iraqi regime and al-Qaida. Policy over-rode (lack of) evidence (Neumann and Smith 2004:105)[12].

Epistemic discourse failure may express itself inside the intelligence sphere, like a bias or other cognitive errors: If the intelligence organisation is culturally liable to overestimate the malicious intentions of one particular actor, this will lead to incomplete, flawed analyses. Furthermore, epistemic discourse failure may as well be the *inversion* of bias or conspiracy theories; seeing *nothing* where harmful intentions in fact are – as in discourse failure on the left (the US' ignorance of Japanese intentions in late 1941 may, again, serve as an example).

Conceptual discourse failure reflects a mismatch between the applied wording and the interpretation of the words. Before September 2001, anti-US terrorism seemed to be commonly understood as small-scale or executed overseas[13]. The terrorism discourse did not allow for the term to include asymmetric armament and methods, nor targets on US soil. The discourse failure

[10] This dichotomy was first outlined by Raino Malnes, and I am grateful for being allowed to borrow it.
[11] At least the faulty ones.
[12] Neumann and Smith (2004) hint at the influence of classic realism in the study of international relations as a cause of discourse failure on the right. In this respect, these understandings of pre-determined context in the intelligence provider-consumer relationship are related to the level of analysis issue; where to look in order to find what explains developments, threats and opportunities in international relations. Realists consider states the acting unit of the international system, and discourse failure on the right fails to see nuances beyond that. It is, however, not a task of this thesis to study how any approach to international relations may inflict on intelligence matters (cf Phythian 2009; Malnes 2008:7-8).
[13] With the exception of home-grown terrorism; the Oklahoma City attack in 1995 was not small-scale or abroad.

on the left in the 1990s likewise failed to attribute the fitting label ('threat') to movements like al-Qaida. It may be argued that, had the west engaged al-Qaida militarily or politically in the 1990s, the potency of the organisation in the 2000s may have become severely reduced (Neumann and Smith 2004:102).

The next section will discuss whether narrative forms do intelligence dissemination any favours in the face of discourse failure and pre-determined policy.

4.6 Narrative Intelligence Dissemination, Discourse Failure and Pre-determined Policy

By default, policy-makers have policies. In a democratic society, a majority of the informed voters ratify this policy by regular intervals. The Clinton administration's discourse failure on the left and the Bush administration's ditto on the right were sanctioned twice each by US voters. Therefore, as was mentioned in chapter 3, it is challenging to convey assessments that are *not in concordance* with the desired policy (Johnson 2009:47-48).

The intelligence cycle (as described in chapter 2) is constructed on the assumption that decision-makers do not make policy before evaluating intelligence inputs. Stephen Marrin (2009:136ff) argues that this assumption is incorrect, and the pre-determination of policy implicit in discourse failure supports his argument. This section will discuss whether narrative intelligence dissemination can dull, if not overcome, such political adversity.

Addressing political adversity is about presenting assessments that are unfamiliar to the decision-maker's world view. Narratives are contextual, and start on 'common ground' (Flyvbjerg 2001:137; Freedman 2006:90). In dissemination, the intelligence analyst can make a conscious, *deductive choice* of where to form the basis of the conveyed product. This may reduce the risk of *conceptual discourse failure*, which evolves from a lack of common context. It does not change the assessment to please the consumer, the *designs* it to be *understandable* to him.

However, in order to know 'where to start', the intelligence provider must be familiar with the decision-maker's position, in order to *choose contextual factors* within his perceptive range. This line of argument highlights the Gates model of proximity, as well as the tasking and product dialogues between the intelligence consumer and provider (cf Neumann and Smith 2004:106-07; Hagen 2009).

Epistemic discourse failure, however, evolves from a lack of understanding of factual intentions or abilities of an (adversary) actor, which may lead to over- or under-representation of the threat he poses (cf Neumann and Smith's definition of discourse failure and the outline of a threat assessment in figure 4.1). The narrative's ability to convey understanding of an actor's intentions and structural constraints can alleviate this (cf von Wright 1971:5-7; Flyvbjerg 2001:70-71).

Intelligence can furthermore shape the discourse early, before other sources engage in the narrative battle for the heart and mind of the decision-maker. Disseminating products early *displaces the battle*, making intelligence stand out, allowing it to 'capture the narrative' (Smith 2007:40) and to serve its purpose. Intelligence can achieve this for two reasons:

- Intelligence is an institutionalised service, dedicated to the decision-maker's purpose[14]. The tasking dialogue thus puts intelligence ahead regarding what the consumer needs.
- The uniqueness of its sources (cf Lowenthal 2009:111), which makes data available for analysis and subsequent dissemination at an earlier stage than intelligence's competitors in the narrative battle.

Such reliance on the *form of dissemination* may, however, be a false promise. Context and understanding is constructed by the preceding processing, not by the form or time of dissemination. The narrative form helps, though, in 'thinking outside the box' in order to break discourse failure, by linking and disentangling factors (Freedman 2006:23). It attains its compelling power by *selecting* premises for a conclusion or prediction, but the process also risks 'settling' a topic prematurely. Such convincing story lines may increase an *epistemic* discourse failure, where the story compellingly reinforces a misconception of reality (cf Laitin 2006:48-49), which can have evolved from a cognitive error at earlier stages of the intelligence cycle.

Therefore, narrative dissemination can be leading the consumer from one 'box', one mindset, to another. Nassim N. Taleb (2007:308-09) refers to a similar concern as a *narrative fallacy*; where the need for confirmation and order (cognitive closure) leads to a narrative being retro-fitted to scarce or insufficient data. Narrative intelligence dissemination may thereby turn out to be *both* a helpful tool *and* a risk, bringing the provider-consumer discourse out of an inadequate framework, but just as easily into *renewed* cognitive closure or discourse failure.

[14] This may sound like politicization. It is not. The intelligence organisation exists for – and is funded by – the decision-maker, and is thus a tool in his policy-making. This is an institutionalised relationship, and just as the intelligence organisation is directed to provide a service to the decision-maker, the latter needs to inform the organisation about his needs at the earliest possible time (cf Sims 2009:154-56).

4.7 A Summary: *Notoriously Difficult?*

This chapter has explored narratology in the context of intelligence dissemination, and discussed the usefulness of a narrative approach in mitigating faulty discourses in the intelligence provider-consumer relationship. In intelligence dissemination, a narrative can be understood as a consistent story line emphasising the possible outcomes of a dynamic agency-structure interplay, from which the consumer may draw conclusions that aid in his decision-making. A narrative may aid in making the disseminated product accessible. It becomes easier to understand and thus to apply for the non-expert (cf Marrin 2009:135).

The value of a narrative as a tool in dissemination or as a frame of reference to understand dissemination has been discussed against discourse failure. Combining findings on intelligence dissemination and narratology has some merit in overcoming discourse failure manifested as a pre-determined political ambition with the decision-maker. When intelligence products are disseminated to a non-receptive consumer, narrative intelligence dissemination can alleviate conceptual and epistemic discourse failure by

- establishing a common, contextual frame of reference between the provider and consumer of intelligence,
- disseminating an understanding of other actors' intentions, and
- do this early and timely enough to shape the discourse and win the narrative battle.

However, narrative dissemination is merely a form element, and remains a double-edged sword. It can bring the discourse out of an inadequate framework, but can just as easily close the contextual framework again, ending in renewed cognitive closure or discourse failure.

The chapter may thus conclude that narratives are not all-powerful tools that can aid in all of intelligence dissemination's problems. Narratology is a complementary approach, not an alternative to the findings of chapter 3. However, discussing narratives in intelligence dissemination enhances several possibilities, terms and obscurities, and the understanding of intelligence dissemination may be better off for it.

5 Intelligence Dissemination and Prediction

By knowing things that exist, you can know that which does not exist.
-- *Miyamoto Musashi,* Gorin no Sho*, the Book of the Void, 1645*

5.1 Purpose and Outline

The purpose of this chapter is to explore prediction in science and intelligence, in order to demonstrate *what needs to be disseminated* to *support* a predictive statement. The chapter will study the premises that make predictions reliable in an Inductive-Probabilistic model, and how intelligence predictions are disseminated in a manner which preserves their reliability. This may elucidate the character of dissemination by studying the actual product, as well as the challenges connected to disseminating it.

This will be done in *three* main parts. Sections 5.2 to 5.4 will *describe scientific prediction*, the epistemological challenges to it, and briefly outline von Wright's Inductive-Probabilistic model for prediction. Sections 5.5 and 5.6 will introduce some concepts of *intelligence predictions*, and show how narratology ties in to elucidate the premises that support a predictive intelligence conclusion. Section 5.7 will finalise the thesis' analyses by discussing whether narratology implies that the product's convincing ability has more merit to the consumer than its truth.

A *main argument* of this chapter is that a intelligence prediction is founded on a context familiar to both the provider and consumer. The uncertainty of the predicted development is explicitly stated, and the prediction arcs from context to conclusion via this probabilistic conditioning. Therefore, the reliability of a prediction can be maintained, in spite of it remaining inductive and uncertain. Nevertheless, there may be instances where the applicability of predictive intelligence sometimes may be a better measure of success than its degree of truth.

5.2 Prediction: Definition and Typology

Prediction is, along with description and explanation, one of three functions of science (Hovi and Rasch 1996:123; Kuhns 2003:85). Hovi and Rasch (1996:123) *define* prediction as a 'justified statement which forecast at least one observation which is not already known to the person making the prediction'[1], and emphasise the need for an accompanying analysis justifying the statement's degree of probability. Their definition also covers *retrodictions*, statements about unknown factors of the past.

[1] My translation.

Hovi and Rasch (1996:124-129;133-137) add two typologies to the concept of scientific prediction. Depending on its justification, a prediction can be

- based on a pre-observed *empiric regularity*;
- a forecasting based on *theoretic reason*; or
- a *self-fulfilling prophecy*.

And, depending on its degree of stated certainty, it can be

- *deterministic*, absolute and unconditioned; or
- *probabilistic*, uncertain and conditioned.

This chapter will study intelligence predictions as probabilistic, based on theoretic reason or empiric regularity. As it is the decision-maker, not the intelligence agency, who may decide action and thereby influence future events, the prospect of intelligence predictions as self-fulfilling prophecies may for this study be ruled out.

Predictions based on observed regularity are founded on inductive reasoning, generating an estimate of future development from the outcomes of previous, similar events (cf Kuhns 2003:88). Predictions based on theoretical reason assess future outcome based on an inductive[2] development from pre-suppositions, indicators[3] and hypotheses (which, in the Popperian sense, are not yet falsified)[4].

5.3 Knowledge, Truth, Validity and Reliability

'Intelligence is really little more that useful knowledge – useful to the policymaker – and epistemology is the study of knowledge' Kuhns (2003:81) states. Hovi and Rasch's definition of prediction states that a predictive statement is about an entity which is *not known*, and therefore needs to be justified. *Knowledge* is commonly understood as a justified, true belief (Malnes 2008:97). These approaches point to the need for *justification*, in order to make a prediction

[2] In theory about the advancement of knowledge, an *inductive* approach implies generating theories or generalisations on the basis of a limited number of observations (f.i., concluding that all swans are white after observing 50, 100 or 1000 swans). In spite of any applicable conclusions drawn from them, inductions may eventually turn out wrong (the Earth is *not* flat, and it is *not* at the centre of the solar system), as they do not conserve truth. The opposite is done in *deduction*, which aims to maintain truth by concluding on the specific from the general (f.i., swans are birds, as they have two wings, reproduce via eggs and are bipedal, all of which are defining characteristics of birds). A deduction cannot be wrong, because its antecedents are correct (a 'swan' that does not reproduce egg-wise, have more than two legs and no wings, would thus not be a swan at all) (cf Jacobsen 2005:28-29; Popper 1960:16-17).

[3] The I&W methodology mentioned in chapter 2 may be assessed as predictions (warnings) based on theoretic reason: the hypothesis that a given set of indicators will pre-determine and forego another, specific event (McDevitt).

[4] Predictions are naturally inductive, as they are about future (or, as in Hovi and Rasch's definition, at least about the unknown). It is logically impossible to deduce from the truthfulness of present observations to the unknown future.

understandable to the recipient. An intelligence prediction, therefore, is challenged its degree of *truthfulness*; by its *validity* and *reliability*.

Truth is a concept open to some epistemological debate (cf Kirkham 1995), it will for the purpose of this thesis simply be understood as a corresponding relationship between a statement and the phenomenon the statement describes[5] (Malnes 2008:96; Kirkham 1995:ch 4).

The *validity* of a scientific statement or conclusion denotes the degree to which it corresponds with (the observable) reality – the social or historical phenomenon it describes, explains or predicts. In qualitative social science, validity is often understood as the statement's credibility and trustworthiness (Creswell 2009:190-91; Repstad 2007:134-35). In prediction, therefore, validity translates to whether the predicted development *actually takes place*. This can only be determined retrospectively, at which point any validity inquiry will no longer deal with prediction, but with the *explanation* of a historical occurrence. Assuring *validity in prediction* is therefore closing on the logically impossible (Kuhns 2003:93).

The *reliability* of a scientific statement or conclusion denotes the degree to which it evolves justifiably and transparently from its premises. In qualitative social science, reliability is often understood as others' ability to corroborate the statement; in effect, to which degree the reader is justified in assuming that the conclusion is correct, given the available data or premises (Repstad 2007:134-35; Creswell 2009:190-94; Johnson 2009:46[6]). In prediction, reliability concerns two matters:

- whether the current events that may lead to the predicted conclusion are true, and
- whether the premises of the predictive statement justify – lead logically to – it.

In short, reliability in prediction is the foundation for a prediction's epistemological success, and depends on whether the prediction is drawn from indicators sufficiently relevant to it (cf Handel 2003:20; Hovi and Rasch 1996:124)[7].

Assuring the reliability of a predictive statement may be somewhat more subjective, and dependent on what the consumer deems credible. Basically, a statement's credibility to the consumer depends on whether it is sufficiently in correspondence with his present knowledge

[5] This is in essence what is known as the *correspondence theory* of truth.
[6] Johnson (2009:46-47) uses *accuracy* to similar ends as reliability, and points to this as one of four qualities of intelligence dissemination, along with relevance, timeliness and applicability.
[7] In I&W methodology, the reliability of the predictive statement rests with the necessity, clarity and visibility of the indicators (see section 2.8).

and perceptions (Malnes 2008:111-12). The closer the prediction is to the familiar, the more likely it is to be found reliable, and vice versa. This, of course, is a challenge to intelligence dissemination. Too far away from the familiar, and relevance and applicability is lost; too close to current perception, and intelligence runs the risk of proximity error.

5.4 Anatomy of Prediction: the Inductive-Probabilistic Model

This chapter has shown that a predictive statement must be justified in order to make it credible and thereby applicable to the consumer. As intelligence predictions are probabilistic (Marrin 2009:143; Lowenthal 2009:131-33), they need, as part of their justification, a statement that sums up *both* the analyst's confidence in its premises, *and* (thereby) in the conclusion drawn on this basis (t.i. the *reliability* of the statement). In terms of the intelligence cycle, however, this concerns the craft of *intelligence processing*; how a prediction is constructed.

In order to explore *what needs to be disseminated* in order to support a predictive conclusion, this section will take *one step back* from intelligence dissemination and study an approach to the *processing of a prediction*. As an example of how a predictive statement may be reliably constructed, this section will in brief terms describe the Inductive-Probabilistic model for prediction, as developed by Georg Henrik von Wright.

The objective of the example is to show *how* the contextual and justifying premises need to be carried into the presentation of a predictive conclusion in order to maintain its reliability[8].

Von Wright took Carl Gustav Hempel's Deductive-Nomological model as a point of departure. This model intended to explain a foregone event by outlining its antecedents: its contextual circumstance and the effect of a (inductively reasoned) covering law for this particular instance (Hovi and Rasch 1996:41; Grimen 2004:183). Hempel's famous example was based on: the contextual circumstance C, leaving a car in sub-zero temperature with its radiator brimming with water, and the covering law L, that water freezes and expands its mass at such temperature. Together, these premises produced, and thereby explained, the event E: the ruptured, leaking car radiator the following morning[9].

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[8] Von Wright (1971:11-12) refers to the premises of the explanation or prediction as basis or antecedents. In this thesis, the term *premise* is used to the same end: to denominate what here is shown as C and L/Lp, or in intelligence, considerations forerunning a prediction.

[9] The contextual preconditions may as well be split in two: one general (there is a lot of water in the radiator) and one specific 'trigger' (the temperature drops below 0 °C) (Gilje and Grimen 1993:109-13). As the purpose of the example is to show *the evolution* of the model by von Wright, it will stick to the regular version.

Georg Henrik von Wright (1971:11;13-15) presents an adaptation of Hempel which he calls an Inductive-Probabilistic model for prediction. In Hovi and Rasch's typology, this approach is *probabilistic* and based on *empiric regularity*. Using similar terminology as the covering law model, von Wright (1971:13) explains:

> 'The object of an inductive-probabilistic explanation, too, is an individual event *E*. The basis is a set of other events or states $E_1,\ldots, E_m$. The covering law, the "bridge" or "tie" connecting the basis with the object of explanation, is a probability-hypothesis to the effect that on an occasion when $E_1,\ldots, E_m$ are instantiated, it is *highly probable* that E will occur.'

Applied to the same example as Hempel, with *p* indicating a degree of probability of the regularity of the law, the Inductive-Probabilistic model would be[10]

Explanans:	$C_1, C_2, C_3 \ldots C_n$	*Water-filled radiator in sub-zero temperature*
Probabilistic law:	$Lp_1, Lp_2, Lp_3 \ldots Lp_n$	*Water has previously frozen and expanded in sub-zero temperature*
Explanandum:	Ep_x	*The radiator will break, with x probability.*

Von Wright points to the *bridging nature* of the law. It leads the reasoning from the contextual events C to the unknown event E. In this respect, it adds transparency to scientific prediction, and the method increases the predictive conclusion's *reliability*. Its *validity* would still depend on the *degree* of probability versus the factual outcome.

At the same time, the law allows for inductive reasoning, from the known C to the unknown E. It merely adds the possibility for and acceptance of 'that E might have *failed* to occur' (von Wright 1971:13). To Karl Popper, this uncertainty is not only acceptable; it is the keystone of science. The potential that the next observation of water at a temperature below 0 °C (Lp_n) will *not* involve expansion of mass; the potential that the law is *falsified*, is to Popper the very thing that would make this three-part argument scientifically acceptable (Kuhns 2003:86ff; Skirbekk and Gilje 1987:301-02; cf Popper 1960:33-38).

5.5 Prediction in Intelligence

Quoting Nicholas Rescher[11], Kuhns (2003:85) states that

> '[…] an intelligence forecast, like one made in science, should be a "rational prediction that is based on grounds whose merits are discernible prior to the event … Predictions whose merits are discernable only after the fact are useless."'.

[10] For consistency and simplicity, the lettering C and L from Hempel's model is retained, rather than von Wright's E and p.

[11] Kuhns quotes Rescher's contribution on prediction in *The Oxford Companion to Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), which I unfortunately have not had the opportunity to study.

Rescher's approach to intelligence predictions echo both scientific prediction and intelligence dissemination:

- '*Discernible grounds*' are re-found in the premises of a predictive statement.
- Predictive intelligence, like any intelligence product, must be *timely* in order to be applicable (cf chapter 3); it must be brought to the consumer when he needs it, as, obviously, predictions must be made before the fact.

Chapter 2 showed that prediction is integral to intelligence (Hagen 2009). This section will outline how prediction is integrated in intelligence, and give a simplified example of how the Inductive-Probabilistic method is echoed in intelligence products.

5.5.1 Uncovering the Unknown

Returning to Sherman Kent's categories of intelligence output, prediction is re-found in *speculative-evaluative* and *current-reportorial* intelligence. The latter kind forecasts into the rather near future, but longer-term prediction is the mainstay of speculative-evaluative intelligence. Intelligence predictions, therefore, always need approaches that improve the possibility to observe and uncover that 'which is not already known to' the analyst (cf Hovi and Rasch's definition).

Kent as well distinguished between three types of intelligence statements (Kuhns 2003:84):

- indisputable *facts*;
- the *knowable*, but unknown; and
- the *unknown*.

Predictive intelligence assesses the unknown and presently unknowable.

Simplifying further, Robert Gates dichotomised intelligence's focus into 'secrets' and 'mysteries' (Herman 1996:103; 2002:11).

- *Secrets* are known to some, but hidden; thus, potentially knowable.
- *Mysteries* are not known by any, and thus presently unknowable.

A state's order of battle, the location of a terrorist's safe haven, a doctrine, a conscious intention – all these are secrets. Uncovering them may take investigation, good collection and prudent interpretation of the collected information (Ulfving 2002:83-84). How a state will fare militarily in conflict next week, how the terrorist will operate from the safe haven, how the doctrine and the intentions will be implemented – these are mysteries. Uncovering them is impossible. Unlike

the secrets, they are not existing entities[12]. Predictive intelligence may however assess these developments, by studying their corresponding secrets, and as Hovi and Rasch's definition indicated, make justified statements about the unknown.

Gates' dichotomy of secrets and mysteries reflects von Wright's (1971) studies on scientific inquiry. On the distinction between explanation and prediction, he wrote: 'Prediction looks forward from what is to what will come, explanation usually looks back from what is to what went before' (von Wright 1971:1-2). As the latter may be revealed through the study of truthful correspondence (Malnes 1996:3), it relates to positivism, the Gallilean tradition (von Wright 1971:2-4) and to Gates' secrets, the uncovering of the hidden, the knowable. This knowledge contributes to the *contextual conditions* for the prediction.

Prediction, on the other hand, is in von Wright's view (1971:2;5-7) related to the Aristotelian epistemological tradition and to the qualities of *understanding* (cf Flyvbjerg 2001:70-71; 2006:73). Understanding 'the aims and purposes of an agent' involves a 'form of *empathy* […] or re-creation in the mind of the scholar of the mental atmosphere, the thoughts and feelings and motivations, of the objects of his study' and is 'connected with *intentionality* in a way explanation is not' (von Wright 1971:6). These are as good statements on the purpose of intelligence and intelligence analysis as any (cf Herman 1996:106-107; Johnson 2009:41-42; Ulfving 2002:81).

5.5.2 Construction of an IPB

Intelligence Preparation of the Battle-space (IPB) may serve as a demonstration of the Inductive-Probabilistic aspect of an intelligence prediction[13]. In operational-level intelligence, the IPB produces and maintains assessments of interest to own forces and operations in a given area. It is done by three sequential stages:

1. Description of the area of operations, in order to evaluate its effects (including both mental and physical constants) on plans and operations.
2. Threat evaluation, in order to assess how any adversary, neutral or friendly actor in the area ordinarily operates.

[12] Intelligence collection can only gather data on the existing, *secrets* at best. It takes analysis and processing to enter into *mysteries* and prediction. The Inductive-Probabilistic model demonstrated one approach to the latter in science. These principles are just as employable in intelligence processing.

[13] The sources for this information are a.o. FR 3-1 2003:77ff; Ulfving 2002:79-81 and FFOD 2007:147. The outline is much simplified (a.o., it is often described in four, rather than three phases (here, the defining of the battle-space is combined with area description)), however, the intention of the example is to demonstrate the staged process towards assessing a mystery, the prediction. IPBs are primarily used in operational and tactical military contexts, but the *principle* may just as well take effect when constructing strategic or speculative-evaluative intelligence.

3. Course of action (CoA) evaluation, in order to assess how the actors will act when own forces commence operations.

The first stage is descriptive, focusing on basic intelligence and the uncovering of Kent's indisputable facts and Gates' knowable secrets. This makes up the prediction's context, its explanans (E, in the Inductive-Probabilistic outline above).

Thereafter, IPB analyst develops the actor in question's commonplace *modus operandi*, his doctrinal course of action, the manner in which things have been observed to be done earlier (L, above). The likelihood that these observations again may take effect is given a degree of probability (p, above). The sources for this stage may both be of Kent's secretive and Gates' mystery kind, as the link between past and future behaviour and intentions may be incompletely developed, even with individuals.

In the IPB's final step, the bridging nature of the probabilistic law assists the processing analysts crossing into the predictive assessment. The analytical outcomes of the two previous stages (C and L) are combined to form a prediction about how the actor will operate in the given environment (E, above).

This is merely the processing side of things. However, the IPB is built *and* disseminated, incrementally to the consumer. Each stage is presented individually, which allows the consumer to change, adapt or advance plans at a similar pace. This ensures that all assessments, at each step, are anchored to the already known, the uncovered, the familiar (cf FR 3-1 2004:ch 7; Ulfving 2002:79).

5.6 Disseminating Predictions

So far, this chapter has explored prediction in science and its application in intelligence. This section will outline an understanding of predictive intelligence, point to how predictions are supported by their context, probability and time, and show some common features with narrative dissemination. This improves understanding of the character of intelligence dissemination, as it shows how it can create accessibility, understanding of the premises of a predictive conclusion, and thereby make it actionable.

5.6.1 Predictive Intelligence

Predictive intelligence can be understood as *contextualised and justified intelligence analyses that forecast future development at an event horizon that allow decision-makers to act in order to influence own position, and that assign a certain degree of probability of the actual occurrence of the forecast developments*. A rather bulky sentence, it at least brings together some of the features that need to be brought into dissemination in order to present predictions to decision-makers in a relevant, applicable manner:

- The *context*, provided by general knowledge, news sources, previous intelligence reporting or by knowable secrets, uncovered in the foregoing intelligence cycle.
- A probabilistically conditioned *justification*, usually (as in the IPB) incrementally based on previous behaviour of the actor, or on the actor's stated intent, when assessed credible[14]. The temporal scope of the prediction must be in accordance with its *timely delivery*, enabling the consumer to take appropriate measures to secure his own interests.
- These premises arc into the *predictive conclusion*, how the actor will behave given the context, in a given future.

This may not always be made explicitly, though. Nor does it have to be. Intelligence products and presentations do, however, tend to explicitly differentiate between what is fact (in Kent's terms) or (knowable) secrets (in Gates'), and what is the uncertain assessment, the prediction of a mystery (cf Ulfving 2002:97-98).

5.6.2 Context

The *contextual factors* form a starting point, one end of the 'bridge' (von Wright 1971:13) that a predictive statement makes from the present to the future. The discussion on narratives and discourse failure in chapter 4 similarly showed how a contextual 'bridgehead' can improve common understanding and alleviate conceptual discourse failure. In the same vain as narratives, this context consists of actors, their intentions and their ability to adapt to their surroundings, like von Wright (1971:6) hinted at.

5.6.3 Probability and Time

Intelligence predictions, like Inductive-Probabilistic ones, need probabilistic conditioning (Marrin 2009:143). The conditioning illustrates uncertainty. It highlights the possibility of inductive misassumptions in the premises – the data and the indicators – and thereby in the conclusion itself. Thereby, the probabilistic conditioning maintains the reliability of the product to the consumer.

[14] This assessment is further conditioned, adding to the total probabilistic uncertainty.

In practice, this is done by assigning a phrase or syntax regarding the likelihood of the statement to it (cf Lowenthal 2009:132)[15]:

> *'Based on the stable current conditions, it is likely that policy X will continue for the next six months. Therefore, development Y is highly likely, while the likelihood of event Z is low'.*

An assessment like this, while abstract for the sake of the example, includes the context ('current conditions'), the inductive, incremental probabilistic assumption or 'law' (policy likely to continue), followed by two conditioned predictions.

The example as well included an assessment of the *temporal scope* of the prediction (the predictions are reliable for six months, the same period as policy X is assessed to hold up). Chapter 3 showed that timely dissemination is a necessary condition for applicable intelligence. In prediction, there is an explicit conflict between spending time collecting and analysing data to increase reliability of the premises, and the need to present the prediction at a time when it holds actionable value to the consumer. Intelligence products need to reach the decision-maker well before the fact (FFOD 2007:146). Forecasts of predictive intelligence allow decision-makers enough time to take active measures, not only passive. This window could be five minutes or 50 years, the essential feature is that predictive intelligence is sufficiently long-term to allow for it.

5.6.4 Prediction and Narratives

Von Wright's approach to scientific prediction illustrated how an intelligence prediction is made reliable to the consumer by maintaining the antecedents. The conclusion appears correct, given the available data and premises. By conditioning the premises by uncertainty and temporal scope, the prediction can maintain applicability. Together, these antecedents of the prediction provide the decision-maker with information *beyond* the predictive statement itself. They expand his basis for taking pre-emptive action. In this light, predictive intelligence, while challenged regarding truth and validity, *can* be disseminated in a manner that fulfils the purpose of intelligence.

It is alluring to conclude that a *narrative form* is suited to convey predictions.

- Like predictions, narratives build (in von Wright's words 'bridge') from a familiar context of actors and their environment.

[15] The discussions on the labels in dissemination are growing (cf Lowenthal 2009:131-33). This thesis focuses more on the methodology of presentation than on the terminology of it, and thus leaves this discussion out.

- A narrative can convey history, how the actors traditionally manage themselves, thereby elucidating their intentions.
- The narrative can, based on this, outline a future case of events, where the character of the actors, their intentions and their context create a new, reliable development.

It could, however, just as well be the other way round; that conveying a prediction nevertheless implies 'doing narrative' (cf Flyvbjerg 2001:136).

Anyhow, for the sake of the character of dissemination, it is worth noticing how three different understandings of a setting for strategic communication[16] *share* a number of features:

- *Intelligence dissemination* relies on relevance, applicability and accessibility.
- *Narratives* are based on familiar contexts and story lines, inferences for and understanding to the recipient.
- *Prediction* is based on context, and arc through probability into an outline of future development.

This shows the complexity of intelligence dissemination, particularly when presenting predictions. Furthermore, it underscores how dissemination differs from processing, as it takes the processed intelligence further, making it accessible and understandable to the consumer.

The next section will discuss whether these features put intelligence dissemination in a position where the applicability and accessibility provided by its (narrative) form is more important than its actual content.

5.7 Narrative Intelligence Dissemination, Applicability and Truth

Returning to an offspring of the Kent and Gates approaches to provider-consumer proximity, this section will debate whether the applicability so compellingly and accessibly conveyed in narrative dissemination can make up a predictive statement's lack of truth.

This chapter has shown how *validity* is challenged in intelligence prediction and in the assessments on mysteries. This challenges the conveyance of *knowledge*, as knowledge invokes truth (Kuhns 2003:81, Malnes 2008:97-98). However, chapter 3 tended to argue that *applicable insight* is of more value to the consumer than is relevant knowledge *alone*. Chapter 4 further indicated that the knowledge gained from an intelligence narrative allows the consumer to

[16] In this context, strategic communication can be understood as the sharing of a uniform message from one institutional actor (the intelligence provider) to another (the consumer).

discern among the other compelling stories in the narrative battle (cf Smith 2007:40; Freedman 2006:22;78).

Furthermore, in the Gates model of proximity between intelligence provider and consumer, the applicability of the product can, at least to a certain degree, take precedent over its relevance and objectivity. Even for Sherman Kent, being *believed* was a major ambition of intelligence providers (Lowenthal 2009:146). Actionable intelligence has more value than non-actionable (Johnson 2009:47), and narrative dissemination aims to come across as accessible, and thereby secure the *understanding* at the consumer end. A conclusion could be that the validity, the degree of truth and correctness of the predictive statement, is less important than the inferences the consumer can draw from it (cf Flyvbjerg 2001:137; Herman 1996:47). This is implicitly supported by Freedman's definition of a narrative (see section 4.2).

Emphasising applicability over objectivity is close to the Gates approach to provider-consumer proximity. This line of thought is as well obviously closing on politicization and conceptual discourse failure. It may, as the Kent approach to proximity would argue, eventually reduce the long-term reliability of the product and thereby of the intelligence provider. The contrast between the Kent and Gates approach illustrates that both positions fear losing political *relevance*, though for different reasons (either by ignorance to fact or by obscurity to reality[17]).

However, while truthful knowledge may be relevant to the consumer, he is still likely to act on a storyline that is accessible and *understandable* to him. Knowledge and truth are thus *not sufficient* to put the consumer in the powerful position Herman indicates, where his relative advantage is exploitable (cf Phythian 2009:67). There are several lines of argument to approach this position by.

1. The truthfulness of a predictive statement – or, for that matter, any statement on Gates' mysteries – *cannot be measured*. This makes, essentially, the corresponding aspect of truth in knowledge *irrelevant* for predictive intelligence. Instead, the decision-maker needs something to work with. He needs actionable insight (Johnson 2009:47).
2. As intelligence exists to empower politics, it may by definition spur action from the decision-maker. This action may aim to *change* the impact and form of the predicted events. Measures employed by the consumer will *shape future developments* to a degree where the original

[17] Which may seem like similar causes, but ignorance to fact implies lack of objectivity, while obscurity to reality implies a lacking sense of purpose.

prediction turns out incorrect versus actual fact. The validity of the original statement is thus not only impossible to ascertain, it is *irrelevant* to begin with[18].

3. This as well highlights the temporal imperative of an applicable prediction. Being correct or truthful is of *no value* when the prediction is made to late for the consumer's window of opportunity. In the early phases of a development, an uncertain prediction may have *better chance* at winning the narrative battle (and thus shape the discourse), as it presents itself as actionable. While not precise, a timely prediction allows early action, which may very well be a better outcome than no action[19].

These lines of argument are somewhat far-fetched. They do, however, underscore two points, which make up a *paradox of truthfulness* in the dissemination of predictive intelligence:

- a statement does not have to be a true representation of future events to be applicable, and
- when the statement cannot become true, its degree of truth is an irrelevant measuring stick for its quality.

For the intelligence provider, the paradox underscores the importance of *actually forwarding* a product, even if it is less than perfect. Epistemologically, the paradox is created by the lack of validity, of confirmable correspondence, between the predictive statement and actual fact. Narratologically, it is enhanced by the dissemination stage's ability to present a compelling story line that is more easily perceived as actionable by the consumer.

5.8 A Summary: *That Which Does not Exist*

This chapter has explored *prediction in intelligence* products, and discussed how the character of prediction may inflict on its dissemination. The aim of predictive intelligence is to enable decision-makers to prepare for or influence a development before it actually takes place.

[18] Say, for instance, that ISAF's intelligence branch predicts increased Taleban activity in an Afghan region, based on observation of current preparation and on the Taleban's regular *modus operandi*. The insight comes in time, is actionable, and ISAF may increase its own activity in that region. This, in turn, *prevents or dulls the impact* of the Taleban offensive, both for ISAF and for local civilians. On the one hand, this erodes the relationship between the intelligence prediction and the actual fact. On the other, it does not erode the relationship between the contextual factors and the factual development: at the time the assessment was made, the Taleban was *in fact* recruiting in the area and planning concrete actions. Thus, the assessment might actually say that the Taleban was *planning* for action (intention) and gaining strength (capability), which together made up the threat that, if unchecked, *could have* implications for ISAF in the region.

[19] For instance, the intelligence organisation may state that event E (an escalation of military training and readiness in a neighbouring state) will happen at time T (within 14 days). This information enables the decision-maker to instigate measure M (increase own readiness and surveillance along the border). However, by T, E does not take effect. Instead, an even more aggressive move E+1 (a realistic exercise involving hostile positioning for invasion in border areas) happens at T+1 (within the month). While *wrong in two instances* (extent and time), the original intelligence product allowed the decision-maker to do M, by which he was prepared for an exercise, and at T+1 was in a far better situation (having improved SA) to understand what was going on. Had the assessment not come forth in the first place, because of the risk that it was wrong, the decision-maker would be susceptible to misinterpreting E+1.

Prediction deals with the unknown, what Robert Gates called *mysteries*. It rests in what von Wright called the Aristotelian scientific tradition, emphasising the *understanding* of another *actor* and his *intentions*.

Prediction is a scientific concept, a rational and justified statement on an unknown development. While the validity of such statements is constricted, their reliability may be constructed and illustrated through contextual and probabilistic premises. This justification is however not able to overcome the *problem of induction*; the possibility that human experience (on which assumptions of the future are based) will be proven wrong at the next crossroads. The discussion in this chapter seems to indicate that these premises *support the reliability of a predictive statement* when they are disseminated along with it.

However, emphasising the narrative aspects of dissemination, a predictive product's truthfulness can be subordinated to its accessibility and applicability. A prediction's degree of truth is impossible to ascertain, and can thereby not be the standard to which a prediction is held. At the same time, a statement does not have to be a true representation of future events to be applicable to the consumer, actually improving his situational awareness.

For intelligence purposes, this chapter has argued that the ability to predict in a probabilistic, but timely and reliable, manner is vital for an intelligence provider. Predictions about matters of concern and importance for the consumer may constitute important inputs for his further decision-making. This is why reliability in the processing of intelligence predictions can lead to credibility and understanding in dissemination.

6 Towards Some Conclusions

Dissemination tends to be intelligence's Achilles Heel.
-- Michael Herman 1996 (:45)

This is what will be.
-- Bruce Springsteen, 'Magic', 2007

6.1 Purpose and Outline

The purpose of this thesis has been to elucidate an understanding of what and how the dissemination stage contributes to the purpose of intelligence, in order to contribute to a better understanding of how the stage is utilised to the benefit of intelligence agencies and their consumers. Four chapters have examined the purpose and process of intelligence, the dissemination stage of this process, the relationship between intelligence dissemination and narratology, and the particularities of disseminating intelligence predictions, respectively, in order to answer *what characterises dissemination of intelligence*.

This concluding chapter will revisit the findings and make an effort at bringing them together as a whole. The chapter does so in *four* parts. Section 6.2 will answer the research question by providing a simple model for dissemination in the context of the intelligence cycle. Sections 6.3 and 6.4 will then answer the specific questions that detailed the research question in chapter 1, and as well indicate what the thesis has come to regarding the informal inquiries on studying dissemination that introduced the thesis. Then, section 6.5 will note a few lessons on research design, before section 6.6 finally concludes on the thesis' research question.

6.2 The Character of Intelligence Dissemination: Towards a Detailed Outline

The character of intelligence dissemination was outlined in basic form in chapter 3, and the discussions in chapter 4 and 5 added further detail. The dissemination stage of the intelligence cycle translates the processed intelligence into a product servicing the consumer, fulfilling the purpose of intelligence by providing him with improved situational awareness. The dissemination stage does this by

- Deductively selecting premises and conclusions from the processing stage for presentation to the consumer. This is done by vetting, internally in the intelligence organisation, and ensures that the disseminated product conveys and maintains the reliability and justification established in processing.
- When conveying predictions about an unknown, future development, providing the consumer with a familiar context or starting point, thereby reducing the risk of conceptual discourse failure.

- Ensuring that a product actually is disseminated at a time when it is applicable for the consumer. Assessments of mysteries will never be absolutely truthful, but they may shape the consumer's perception of context and discourse at an early stage. Thus, intelligence may go forth in the narrative battle and find itself in an improved position to provide the consumer with even more precise estimates as the situation progresses.

Some of the features discussed in this thesis are brought together in figure 6.1. Here, the dissemination-consumer relationship of the intelligence cycle shown in figure 2.2 is outlined in more detail, emphasising how the processed intelligence at the dissemination stage is translated into a service.

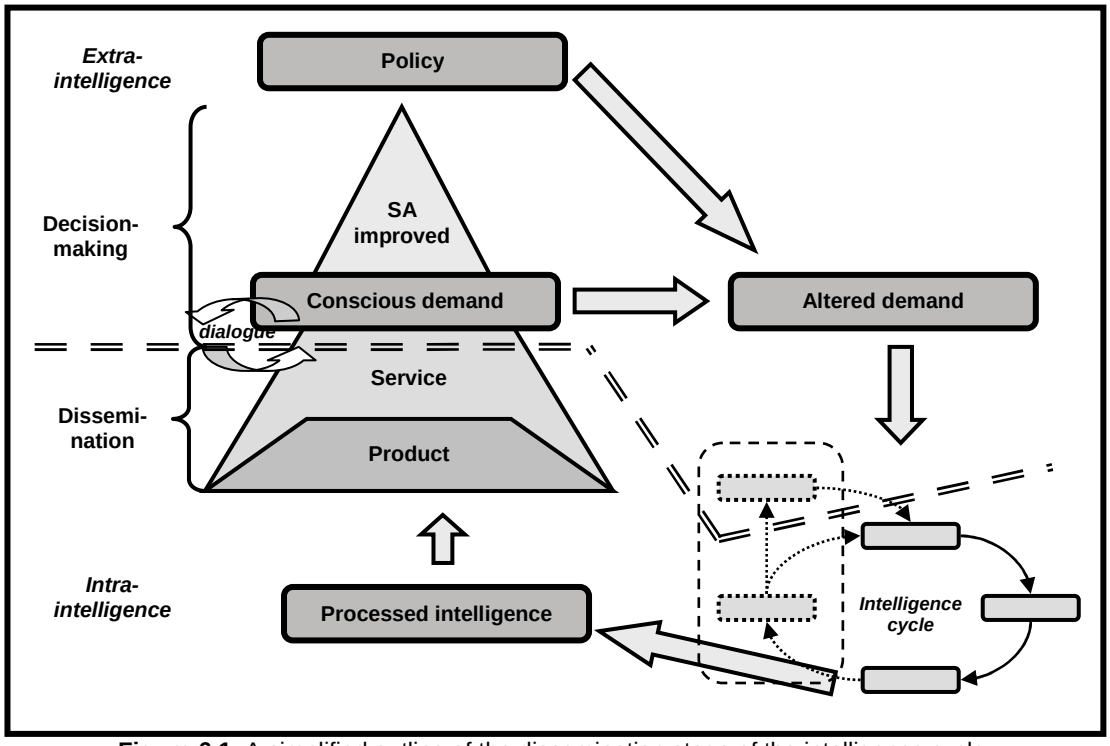

Figure 6.1. A simplified outline of the dissemination stage of the intelligence cycle.

- The 'standard model' of the intelligence cycle (figure 2.2) is shown bottom right. The dotted square shows the portion detailed in figure 6.1.
- The output of the processing stage is translated (as was outlined above) from product to service, resulting in the consumer improving his situational awareness.
- The disseminated intelligence product addresses the already stated (conscious) demands of the consumer (which he 'pulls' from the intelligence organisation), but as well stays relevant by 'pushing' further insight intended to aid his SA. Any unresolved issues with the consumer are sent back to the cycle (cf the discussion on the direction of the cycle in section 3.6).
- The resulting policy changes the consumer's demands, and the cycle re-starts.

The outline suggested in the figure is based on the findings of the thesis, and gains on the simple outline in chapter 2 by illustrating

- the deductive selection of premises – context and probability – from the processed intelligence product;
- the interplay between provider and consumer in dissemination; and
- the value added to the consumer's SA by way of the intelligence product and service.

The figure illustrates the character of dissemination, in that it is *this stage* of the intelligence process the consumer *interacts with*. The dissemination stage is the face of intelligence. It delivers what the consumer needs and can act on. Therefore, the dissemination stage plays an important role in validating intelligence at large, by making sure that the preceding process has not been a waste of time and money.

6.3 Understanding Intelligence Dissemination: Questions and Answers

Section 1.3 posed a collection of particular questions, detailing the overall research question. The analytical chapters made an attempt to answer one question each. Summed up and brought together, this thesis arrived at these answers.

6.3.1 What constitutes intelligence, and how is it put together and conveyed to the end user?

Intelligence is a an institutionalised process that provides information tailored to a decision-maker's area of need and interest, in order to improve his situational awareness, making him capable of achieving something he otherwise could not. While specialised, the structural and cyclic stages of an intelligence organisation are highly inter-dependent. This has provided a framework for analysing dissemination as a part of the process, as well as the interaction in it.

6.3.2 What is achieved at the dissemination stage of the intelligence cycle?

The dissemination stage of the intelligence cycle conveys processed, relevant, applicable and timely assessments from the intra-intelligence sphere to the consumer outside this sphere. This is as well the object of intelligence itself, as the dissemination stage translates the processed product into a service and improves the consumer's situational awareness. This understanding isolates the purpose of intelligence dissemination from the other phases of the intelligence cycle.

6.3.3 How does intelligence dissemination adhere to narratology?

In intelligence dissemination, a narrative can be understood as a consistent story line emphasising the possible outcomes of a dynamic agency-structure interplay, from which the consumer may draw conclusions that aid in his decision-making. Narrative intelligence dissemination stands out in the decision-maker's stream of information, and puts intelligence ahead in the narrative battle. Studying dissemination from the perspective of narratology puts it in a realistic context of strategic communication. This makes the purpose of dissemination and advantages of intelligence stand out clearly.

6.3.4 What needs to be disseminated to support a predictive conclusion?

Predictions are about mysteries, the unknowable. Predictive intelligence seeks to enable the consumer to prepare for a development before it actually takes place. Predictions lack corresponding truth, and are therefore hard to convey in a reliable manner. They rely on justifying analyses based on contextual and probabilistic premises. These support the reliability of the prediction when they are disseminated along with it.

6.4 On Studying Intelligence Dissemination

Chapter 1 started out with three rather colloquial inquires on the virtue of studying intelligence dissemination at all. The thesis has not addressed these directly, but given that it started from the paradox of slim academic emphasis, the inquiries deserve a brief mention at this point.

6.4.1 The Troublesome Dissemination Stage

Chapter 1 inquired whether the dissemination stage may cause trouble for the intelligence process. The thesis has shown that it can. In spite of good processing, incomprehensible dissemination can ruin the value of intelligence. It is therefore, most likely, not the *lack* of challenge that causes literature to be brief on intelligence dissemination. Both Johnson (2009:46) and Herman may (1996:45) be correct in their lament on the challenges of the dissemination stage.

6.4.2 Disconnecting Dissemination from the Cycle

Chapter 1 inquired whether studying dissemination as an isolated phenomenon is at all possible. The thesis has shown that it at times is hard delineating the study of intelligence dissemination from, particularly, intelligence processing. The quality of the product eventually delivered to the consumer depends on the quality, thoroughness, objectivity and reliability of the analysis at the processing stage. The discussion on the reliability of predictive intelligence shows that studying

dissemination alone can not provide a fully satisfying answer. The literature, too, tends to draw lessons on dissemination from the discussions on analysis (see f.i. Lowenthal 2009:ch 6). Therefore, the integration of the intelligence process may be a reason for the apparent brevity of the literature on dissemination proper.

6.4.3 Former Studies on Intelligence Dissemination

Chapter 1 indicated that intelligence dissemination may not have been subject to extensive study. This may be so, as no entry in the literature list below has the word 'dissemination' in its title. That, of course, does not say much. There are, however, plenty of sources on the interaction between intelligence provider and consumer and on the purpose intelligence is to serve. This thesis has as well been swimming those waters. The existing literature, though, fail at times to make the connection that Johnson (2009:47-48) makes, and that has evolved through the analytical chapters of this thesis: that intelligence reporting may be ignored, lost or not deemed actionable, because of pre-determined policy or other sources *capturing the narrative ahead of intelligence*.

6.5 Notes on the Research Design

Section 6.2 answered the research question by outlining some details on how the dissemination stage serves its purpose. Above, the other questions from chapter 1 have as well been addressed. The thesis has thereby done what it set out to do, concluding on a modest contribution to modelling and theory. However, a brief evaluation of the thesis research design is due.

6.5.1 Method

The thesis has employed an intensive, exploratory, literature-based approach, in order to understand the character of intelligence dissemination as a phenomenon. This approach has proven fruitful in answering the both the specific questions and the research question. The character of intelligence dissemination has been brought out gradually:

- Studying intelligence-making at large was necessary to conclude on dissemination's context; its position as both a separate stage and an integral part of a whole.
- Studying what constitutes dissemination was necessary to approach its contents; what the stage aims to achieve.
- Studying narration in intelligence was necessary to conclude on how the intelligence provider can gain the attention and understanding of the consumer, by shaping a common frame of reference and bring the story to the consumer at a point in time where he is receptive to it.

- Studying prediction was necessary to specify how demanding intelligence content is conveyed; as intelligence commonly features predictions, conveying them is part of dissemination's character. The outline of prediction as well highlighted how elements of narratives and prediction work together to make intelligence dissemination accessible and understandable. This clarity is as well a characteristic of intelligence dissemination.

This approach has contributed to reliable conclusions in the thesis, given the applied sources.

In retrospect, the thesis' major methodological disadvantage is its unconfirmed validity versus actual intelligence dissemination. To ensure this would have required a case study proper, or a survey of the processing and dissemination of a number of factual intelligence products. For the purpose of this thesis, that was not possible. It may, however, be subject to other studies, as may any of the other approaches mentioned in chapter 1.

6.5.2 Use of Literature

The available literature on intelligence is abundant enough to study both dissemination and its place in the intelligence process at large. The thesis aimed to balance some selected doctrinal guidelines and specific texts with mainstream textbook approaches, in order to gain a middle ground on what characterises intelligence dissemination. This proved useful. Initial parts of the thesis relied on textbook and doctrinal approaches, describing what Merrin (2009) would call a 'standard model' of intelligence. As the thesis primarily was exploratory, this was the natural starting point. Later, the thesis moved to sources specifying particular challenges or weaknesses in dissemination and intelligence provision. This approach modified the original textbook positions, but as well made for new insight: delineation of concepts, the importance of premises and context to the conclusions, and the discourse-shaping impact of an intelligence narrative. This was done with a conscious attempt at maintaining the epistemological dimension of both prediction and narratives.

The draw-back is of course that this approach is rather abstract and theoretical. This was not a case study, in the sense that there was no example or historical instance that could give shape to the presentation. This as well affects the validity of the conclusions: they are hypotheses, in that the thesis has not tested them against anything. They are drawn from literature, not from a sample of reality.

In spite of this, the thesis managed, by way of its exploratory design and sub-sets of questions and inquiries, to come to an understanding of intelligence dissemination that was not present and

explicit in either single source before. Thereby, the thesis has fulfilled its modest ambition and purpose.

6.6 *'This is What Will Be'*: What Characterises Dissemination of Intelligence

The dissemination stage of the intelligence cycle translates processed intelligence into a product servicing the consumer. It maintains the reliability of the conclusions, as it was formed at the processing stage. It works from a context of actors and their environment, familiar to the consumer. It delivers the service at an appropriate time. This way, intelligence dissemination makes the output of the processing stage accessible and thus applicable to the consumer. This is how the stage fulfils the purpose of intelligence by providing the consumer with improved situational awareness and an ability to create policy of a quality otherwise impossible. In combining these features to a narrative, intelligence can stand out with the decision-maker. Intelligence can shape the discourse, succeeding in the narrative battle. Through the dissemination stage, intelligence providers can maintain relevance and avoid miscommunication.

This is what characterises dissemination of intelligence.

January 6th –
May 24th 2010

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