
For a New Strategic and Competitive Intelligence

We are not only in a changing world; we find ourselves in a world where traditional structures are evolving, in which the power of the state and the relationship with its citizens is beginning to change. Technological breakthroughs are forcing us to rethink traditional models and ways of working. The digital revolution has opened up new, unexplored fields of activity, destroying our traditional notions of discipline demarcation, creating a hybridization of fields and its actors. The loss of cyberspace borders has led to a multipolarization of cultures, meaning that we need to start taking a particular interest in them in order to make sense of our present reality. The primacy of sovereign power has been conquered by the power of some companies and the public/private relations balance due to the mutual interest of both parties. Faced with the radical transformations in which we must take part, pragmatism and realism are essential in the reconstruction of our referents.

1.1. Our assessment

For 500 years, according to the analysis of British historian Paul Kennedy [KEN 10], the most powerful state was the one with the most significant coercive force at the local, regional or international level through military capability, economic leadership or the possession of essential natural resources. Today, we are experiencing a paradigm shift. Joseph Nye [NYE 04] announced in 1990 that power would no longer be based on force, but on the ability of a state to obtain the support of other states based on

shared values without the need for coercion, by relying on communication and exchange that the State controls. In response to some criticism, in his latest book, he adds to the outdated hard power, which is favored by George W. Bush, and the emerging soft power, advocated by Barack Obama, as well as an intermediate stage: smart power [NYE 09] advocated by Hillary Clinton. In these three scenarios, the overall strategy is at the heart of the approach and its practice, drawing on the deepest possible knowledge of all facets of the environment and its likely evolution.

Within states, we are witnessing the same phenomenon at the corporate level with a direct impact on the practice of capitalism or liberalism and the expectations of users. After 30 years of creating value for the shareholder, we rediscover that the company is at the heart of community life and has a societal role, as the presidents of Danone and Veolia have recently reminded us [POS 09]. In order for it to be effective, a company can no longer stay in a closed circuit where it is only interested in its own competitors and customers. Profit must benefit investments, research, employees and, of course, shareholders. It cannot rely solely on this practice, however, like some financial practices of investment funds that have largely contributed to the current difficulties of the industrial world. The behavior of GAFAM [WIK 18a] (Google, Apple, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft) is very revealing here in terms of a new vision of the world and its environment. To emerge from or to stay in the current competition, a company must understand and integrate the geopolitical context, the evolution of ideas, the expectations of the users, the declarations of values and the changes of practices. This complementary knowledge involves in-depth studies that are constantly updated to decode the true reality hidden behind perceived reality [JUS 17] to create effective and efficient strategies.

The strategic errors of large public institutions and private groups have led to industrial and financial disasters, which are often resolved through the use of public funds, without any responsibility being seriously sought by those in power. Despite the collective refusal to study the objective reasons, giving in to the temptation of the scapegoat or fatality, Areva business, Alstom, Technip, Lafarge and how many others show a real strategic weakness. Beyond management and the market, this weakness can only be explained by the lack of information on the competitive and industrial reality of their environments. Those young elites who are straight out of school and thus protected from the harsh reality of the market, and who live in small circles, understand failure as just a sure step in the normal progression of

their careers, without understanding the current evolution of the field. This denial, crossed with the mediatization of the methods and practices that led to these situations, contributes to a climate of unhealthy doubt in civil society that distances it from politics and the State [GAV 03]. Yet the analysis of reality and of what is happening in the world shows that the future passes through a very close public/private network in which everyone contributes to the common cause. The state can no longer assume all its missions alone and large and medium-sized companies cannot survive in isolation. Today, everything is connected. Similarly, at the regional level, as for SMEs, this situation becomes a necessity, as shown by the result of the referral “territorial intelligence” of the CESER of the Alpes Provence Côte d’Azur region [CES 17].

Widespread political correctness, imposed by the ruling classes to circumvent the pitfall of democracy and reduce the range of thought and capacity for exchange, is eliminating this contradiction. Unlike Greek philosophical rhetoric or the *disputatio* of Renaissance humanists, only sophist rhetoric is validated, preventing the opponent from expressing themselves outside a defined framework that becomes the limits of thought. Since this contradiction has become impossible, it leaves the field open to media, political or social pressure groups to manipulate the information in order to make it compatible with the agreed thought [MON 10]. In this context, the perceived reality is based on a virtual base built on a set of imposed values that reject or eliminate all that is wrong with the path to transformation. It is therefore very difficult for the analyst to find the elements of a true reality or at least of what is closest to it [FRI 04] to technically escape from this single line of thinking [DEM 00] and to make heard other possibilities. This involves the introduction of artificial intelligence to improve strategic foresight by facilitating the collection, processing and analysis of all data available in Big Data, including those from open, digital, electronic or social sources. We therefore enter the field of smart economy [MED 17].

In this complex environment, the individual evolves by becoming a proactive and cooperative player who benefits from a level of knowledge that is out of step with previous generations and thus benefits from an extensive social network. Immersed in cyberspace, these individuals know how to use the necessary tools and can integrate the permanent evolution into their work, thus setting them apart from the older generations. Their

openness to international travel and media opens them up to a whole new set of opportunities. Acting autonomously through an ability to acquire information and form an idiosyncratic opinion, the chain of command is disrupted by an expectation of decentralization of decision-making processes and a willingness to assume one's share in the operational process.

1.2. The present day

In 1999, Richard Heuer [HEU 99] had already shown the cognitive challenges that would be faced by intelligence analysts; be they scientists, economic or military because of the complexity of the problems, the variable reliability of the data, the growing volume of available information and the multiplicity of actors. Confronted with a double uncertainty by the intersection of complex and indeterminate intelligence problems, linked to the totally artificial denial and influence operations, at each step of the process, they tend to use cognitive biases derived from filters of their own. The problem is therefore analyzing the data and drawing useful conclusions by going beyond the limits of the human mind. This leads to applying artificial intelligence, but also the use of the theory of deterrence games which allow a fairly simple way of classifying, selecting or eliminating competing hypotheses relating to a set of data such as those shown by Michel Rudnianski [RUD 16].

Making this kind of claim leads to questions surrounding how competitive intelligence is practiced in France. The Martre and Carayon reports [DEL 06] and the formation of the *Académie d'intelligence économique* (academy of competitive intelligence) by Robert Guillaumot [SAL 15] were greatly useful in opening France's eyes to the positive effects of these methods founded across the Atlantic; the lack of knowledge of which had had a negative impact on progress in France. Founded in the United States in the 1980s by Michael Porter, competitive, and later, strategic intelligence rapidly developed and was an integral part of the federal budget of every president, responding to computer and digital evolutions. The system was built around the Advocacy Center (1993) [EXP 18] which builds on the National Economic Council [WIK 18b] created the same year. The group has been gradually reinforced by a legal, defensive and offensive system, including the Omnibus Trade and Competitiveness Act (1988) [WIK 18c], the Toricelli Act (1992) [CUB 92], the Statement of

Administrative Action (Uruguay Round Agreement Act 1994) [URU 18], the Helms-Burton Act (strengthening the embargo on Cuba 1996) [WIK 18d], the Amato-Kennedy Act [COS 96] against rogue states (1996), then the Patriot Act (2001) [DOU 15]. We might also mention the anti-corruption scheme with its 2010 Dodd-Frank [USC 10] and FATCA [FAT 17] extraterritorial legislation, which is based on the 1997 FCPA [USD 97] Act and was mobilized by its implementation by elected officials and all US administrations. All have understood that the preservation of world leadership in the face of Chinese methodical growth and the fierce emergence of other countries should center around the centralization of information, public action to support all American companies and the permanence of efficient economic and technical intelligence at the service of the public and private sectors.

The work carried out in France since 1994 and especially in 2002 has allowed us to model the competitive intelligence approach, at both the levels of development and of practice. This popularized the required state of mind, as defined in Philippe Lemerrier's 5V grid [LEM 14]. It led to the discovery of the usefulness of monitoring and analysis, the importance of security and the practice of influence. It made it possible to draw up a territorial network with the local councils and chambers of commerce. It also opened the field of international standards and practice and inspired policy implementations of competitive intelligence in countries in Europe and Africa, as well as in China. On the other hand, they showed that France had a lot of useful information for the companies that remained in their ministries due to a strict partition that goes against the necessary transversality of the approach. They also showed the difficulty of convincing SMEs/SMIs with the model used which, for them, seems to be reserved for large companies. The problem comes from the fact that, during the period where France tried to improve existing structures, the world evolved and France did not integrate this change. As Eric Delbecque wrote [BLA 08], in France, competitive intelligence has been reproduced over the years, but always to the same specifications.

This is also due to the fact that this activity involves taking an interest in both the competitive and the global environment. In this context, it is important to recognize that, despite an export requirement imposed on all companies for development or survival reasons, most of them have a complete lack of knowledge of the geography, geopolitics and cultural

realities that they interpret through the prism of a hexagonal vision that is generally subcontracted by intermediaries [FIO 16]. Beyond the local subtleties that can create misunderstandings, like Taiwan on the maps of China or the former Spanish Sahara on those of the Kingdom of Morocco, this is particularly true for Africa. In this continent, which in the coming decades will experience the strongest demographic and economic growth, most of our leaders are opposed by the followers of a traditional developing world, or ecologist vision. The problem is that none of this has to do with the reality of the countries concerned whose younger generations have been trained in the best universities in the world and who are already ahead of us in certain areas, such as mobile phones and electronic banking [LOU 13].

In a 2012 report, Louis Gallois [WIK 18e] emphasized that France is weak in collective intelligence at all levels and in all categories of business. We do not know how to work in packs, as Christine Lagarde once professed [DAV 10]. It is true, as Pascal Frion [FRI 09] pointed out in a later thesis in his books, that the methods and techniques proposed in order to practice CI have proved to be better adapted to large industrial groups. Yet this approach is ultimately very useful for small businesses which understand the principles and exploit them for their particular needs. Admittedly, the inadequacy of the means implemented and the indispensable relays have not really provided the best conditions for the necessary process of increasing awareness of CI.

The functioning of the competitiveness clusters is a good example. Their quasi-majority did not practice competitive intelligence as it had firstly been defined; that is to say, the collection of useful information according to the objectives or ongoing projects of the cluster to create the intelligence. As a result, users perceive it more as an aid to communication than as a tool that enriches analysis and facilitates decision-making.

Without going as far as the Small Business Act practiced by the Americans, one can only regret the incapacity of the State and most local authorities in helping the development of local industries and actors by public order. It is indeed regrettable that the General Delegation for Armaments makes it necessary for the SME/SMI of world defense to go through large industrial groups to respond to bids with the consequences that we imagine on their margins. It is equally regrettable that regional bids involve national or international expertise without analyzing the local situation [LAL 18].

It would make sense to include local expertise in these bids, even if they are obliged to work in liaison with other selected groups. The historical and cultural absence of transversality has a negative effect. France suffers from a weakness in territorial intelligence while our regional and departmental structures with administrations, territories, communities and companies give us possibilities that are unknown elsewhere. France has a successful example in Corsica where, as part of the training, a DU (diplôme universitaire – university diploma) [UNI 18b] situates local actors and external experts in an inclusive open offer. This state of affairs largely contributes to the low weight of French SMEs in intra-European exports [CHA 17].

1.3. Tomorrow

The context in France has meant that by simply focusing on the economic sphere in a conceptual framework derived from hard power, competitive intelligence remained fixed in a particular time period without taking into account the current world revolution. However, the work of Bernard Nadoulek [NAD 97] on the necessary integration of culture in analysis, that of Christian Harbulot [HAR 14] on the power relations and the impact of geopolitics, as well as the work of Steven Dedijer [CLE 04] at Aklund University on the socio-cultural environment, has long shown that other factors need to be addressed. Since then, some, aware of the restrictive side of the approach, have introduced a strategic dimension. However, we still have far to go, given that our approach does not allow us to extract multiple influences seeking to impose themselves in the world of information and communication. We continue to practice top-down at the expense of the bottom-up approach, which is currently a strong expectation of civil societies, beginning with the youngest. France has not succeeded, like the United States, in building lobbies of all kinds, as we have seen in the failed three-fold attempt to create a law on corporate secrecy, such as the United States'. This has existed for a long time in English-speaking countries. However, the French have developed pyramidal intelligence, stemming from the *trente glorieuses*; the 30 years following the end of the Second World War, on a theoretical and methodological base of traditional functioning of intelligence and competitive intelligence that no longer fits in with the realities of today [MAH 15]. We have not sufficiently grasped the possibilities offered by the cognitive dimension and the descriptive or prospective analyses in order to develop the intelligence of situations and adapt to the evolution of potential means.

This is exemplified by the award obtained in November 2017 in the United States by Frenchman Christophe Bisson at the Congress of the World Organization for Strategic and Competitive Intelligence (SCIP) [CIW 17] for his research in strategic hybrid systems allowing any type of private or public organization to better detect and interpret weak signals in a complex and volatile environment [BIS 18]. Here, information is no longer the single key, even if we need it. In other words, the goal is strategy and advanced decision-making for competitive purposes. We are far from traditional anticipation, which is too static in relation to the evolution of the environment. Conventional modes of monitoring only allow the reaction, especially since it incorporates cognitive biases and a silo/partitioning approach. In the most recent research carried out by Bisson, we remove everything that is no longer essential, from intellectual property to computer security, to get a cross-sectional view in order to work on the prediction-simulation part of the short and medium term decisions, and adapt our vision in the long run. We are also interested in guiding machine learning for tactical and strategic purposes, because the volume of information grows too quickly to rely only on algorithmic power, the detection of fake news and the in-depth analysis of social networks. Of course, we cannot compare the state of the most advanced research with our practices, but we must keep in mind where we are going in order to alter our trajectories. Intelligence culture and practice must incorporate the dimension of innovation that allows for predictive analysis and detecting structuring trends.

France has not sufficiently taken into account the persistent deficit of the culture of strategy and foresight as it becomes essential to make when competing at a global level. Although, having integrated a competitive intelligence approach, at the level of defining the framework of the action, we should have opted for an approach of hybridization of prospective steps and CI, like the research group on strategic intelligence from the University of Liège [UNI 18b]. As a result, we lose this prospective and, more recently, this predictive ability that fundamentally changes the perception of the problem. Moreover, we have not sufficiently taken into account, at the level of the state as at the corporate level, the consequences of Big Data. The exponential growth of information from all sources in a permanent stream facilitates, in the absence of effective crosschecking and prioritization, all imitations, misinformation, repetitive errors and unfounded rumors. The selection process in a system holding too much information is extremely complex and the algorithms also have their conceptual limits even though

artificial intelligence can improve them through learning. Just as we can separate the internet into three layers (the Web, the deep web and the dark web) with their specificities and their interweaving, we will have to learn how to segment and manage the types of information and how to adapt our research to different needs to avoid excess and reduce costs.

While France is known for the quality of its mathematicians, and while the Silicon Valley is full of French engineers, our research, with few exceptions, does not reach the level of international competitiveness of the main countries in this specific field. This is probably due to the fact that, in France, there is an emphasis put on fundamental and applied mathematics. Our academics have a hard time accepting a science that favors transversality, as this does not allow for categorization. However, our authorities should promote interdisciplinarity in this area by organizing the effective involvement of universities and research centers in national development, as this has been masterfully successful for a long time at CEA. In July 2017, a symposium held in Corsica [UNI 17] showed that this was possible if there was a common drive of each party involved. Similarly, if we want to innovate, we could imagine a social responsibility for research (RSR) as well as corporate CSR. At a time when IN-Q-Tel [IQT 18] is funding 137 projects directly related to artificial intelligence and its use in all sectors of intelligence, we cannot continue to limit the scope of action open to our researchers and our teachers or to compartmentalize orders and developments at the service level. Only a political will can help us break free from this penalizing situation for all the actors, as well as damaging atmosphere for the country.

The research and practice of competitive intelligence cannot be evoked without mentioning training. Using a repository designed in 2004 by a dozen eminent specialists, developed by course models (OCDIE Competitive Intelligence and Organizations) [OCD 08] covering all the major aspects of the problem, updated in 2013 by the inter-ministerial delegation of competitive intelligence (D2IE) [D2I 14], it analyzes the past and the present on both theoretical and practical levels. On the other hand, not taking into account the current digital revolution and the entry into cyberspace, it cannot project itself in the future, because this would lead to another model by process change. Yet this is what we will have to do by rethinking the entire approach of intelligence gathering in the context of the economy and strategy. In this context, it is important for the analyst to speak several

languages in order to be able to branch out and not remain in an incomplete system. Let us not forget that one can obtain between 10 and 20 times more information in English than in French because of the great difference in the amount of data and the data banks available.

1.4. Conclusion

The discovery that the methods applied in CI were also beneficial in activities as varied as sport, law, the social sphere, tourism, ecology, and research should have made us understand that we had chosen a restrictive approach that essentially left us penalized. We had to resolutely adopt strategic intelligence to encompass all the possibilities offered, at the national and global levels, and to get out of a sectorization prejudicial to the openness required. That's why it's time to invest in a broader concept using all the new technologies, including artificial intelligence. This will link CI with strategy by designing real-time information collection and analysis systems directly related to strategic roadmaps and prioritizing their complexity to allow for their use in each type of business.

The difficulty and the interest of our discipline reside in the fact that it is at the crossroads of the advanced technologies of science and the millennial generation. Mixing experience and modernity based on a pragmatic realism already existed in a simplified form at the dawn of humanity and is today at the heart of the construction of our future.

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