

Intelligence Practices in High-Trust Societies

Scandinavian Exceptionalism?

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Chapter 6

Intelligence Oversight as an Institutional Battlefield

The Danish Experience

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Introduction

In the ongoing discussion about democratic norms that favour openness and transparency, questions are increasingly being raised about the secrecy of intelligence agencies (Aldrich & Richterova, 2018). In response, governments have resorted to formal mechanisms, such as parliamentary committees and independent oversight bodies, based on the assumption that more oversight means greater democratic accountability and legitimacy (Leigh, 2005). However, this strategy has led to new controversies, and several researchers have highlighted *turf wars* in which agencies and overseers fight to expand the scope of their own organizations (Manjikian, 2016, Bruce, Chapter 5 in this volume). In this perspective, oversight is a zero-sum game in which one party's gain is the other's loss.

We contend that, in this perspective, it may be valuable to consider the role of institutional logics and their implications for democratic accountability as an institutional practice. Previous research has emphasized the significance of internal control within intelligence organizations when it comes to establishing and ensuring accountability (Gill, 2020; Lester, 2015). Although external mechanisms like juridical, parliamentary, and financial reviews are important, they interact with internal control mechanisms in different ways – sometimes reinforcing them, sometimes competing with them. Based on these developments, we ask the following question: *How do conflicts between intelligence services and overseers arise from clashes of institutional logics?*

By combining intelligence accountability literature and institutional logics literature, we introduce a framework for analysing and explaining conflicts in democratic accountability. We then apply this framework to a contemporary case involving the Danish Defence Intelligence Service (DDIS) and the Danish Intelligence Oversight Board (the Oversight Board). Our study reveals that conflicts arise from differing interpretations of accountability rather than a simple matter of more or less accountability.

Our contribution to the literature is fourfold. First, we offer a nuanced view of intelligence accountability beyond the dominant functionalist notion of accountability as a matter of legislation and formal structures. Instead, we propose an institutional approach to accountability, which takes into consideration

differing institutional logics. Second, we empirically contribute to intelligence studies by adding a Danish case to the existing corpus of contextualized studies, which is overwhelmingly Anglo-American. In doing so, we make a contribution to a Scandinavian perspective on intelligence studies in high-trust societies. Third, we add to the literature on institutional logics by suggesting two distinct sets of logics within the state order: the *bureaucracy* logics and the *security* logics. Lastly, we contribute to the debate on intelligence accountability by questioning the effectiveness of the intelligence reform agenda, which has generally been characterized by a *firefighting* approach (Johnson, 2014), and invite a broader debate on the structure, logic, and political governance of intelligence.

The functionalist approach to intelligence accountability

Accountability is broadly understood as that which confers legitimacy upon state power (Yauri-Miranda, 2021; Bochel et al., 2015). Previous studies have provided insights into the development of intelligence accountability mechanisms and mapped the many challenges associated with holding powerful but secret organizations to account (Puyvelde, 2013; Hillebrand, 2012; Born & Wetzling, 2009; Leigh, 2009; Phythian, 2007; Matz, Chapter 7 in this volume). These studies have highlighted significant hurdles to accountability, such as ambiguous legislation, oversight bodies with weak mandates, and a lack of political will and knowledge.

However, the existing literature tends to equate accountability with oversight and, in doing so, reduces it to formal accountability mechanisms, such as legal standards, sanctions, and access to information (Bochel et al., 2015; Leigh, 2009; Defty, 2008; Phythian, 2007). Following the same logic, it is often assumed that, left unchecked, the services will abuse their power. In other words, the stronger the oversight, the lower the risk of abuse. However, very few studies have ventured into the understanding of and attitudes towards accountability within oversight bodies and intelligence services (one example is Gaskarth, 2020). As we will see in the case study, the ongoing negotiations and conflicts between institutional logics revolve around diverging understandings of the nature of democratic accountability. As such, the relationship between intelligence agencies and oversight bodies cannot be understood in simple terms as a zero-sum game between a principal and an agent who does not *want* to be held accountable. Rather, it must be seen in terms of conflicting notions of democratic accountability, i.e., between two state actors that both *want* accountability but have different understandings of the concept. Our approach, by contrast, moves the lens away from accountability mechanisms and instead focuses on the actors' specific interpretation of their role in producing democratic accountability. In that context, democratic accountability not only means that the right laws and structures are in place, or that actors comply because they are forced to do so. Instead, the character of democratic accountability is contingent upon the distinct forms of institutional logics associated with it.

Institutional orders and logics

An institutional logics perspective on governance may offer a more nuanced exploration of the conflictual relation between the intelligence service and its overseers precisely because it acknowledges the symbolic dimension of institutional life. Institutional orders are belief systems that shape organizations' behavioural patterns. In this sense, they are symbolic systems (Friedland & Alford, 1991) that shape social reality into a range of ideal types, e.g. family, community, religion, state, market, profession, and corporation (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 55). Each institutional order provides a frame of reference "that preconditions actors' sensemaking choices" and develops over time (Thornton et al., 2012, p. 54). In this framework, institutional orders are translated through a governance system of organizations' institutional logics. DiMaggio and Powell (1983) offer a logics perspective that adds a symbolic dimension to institutions by acknowledging that organizations consist of more than just their rational and functionalist structures. We draw on the general definition of institutional logics as "the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organise time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality" (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999, p. 804).

Shared institutional logics give actors a common normative ground for action (Thornton et al., 2012). To become an institutional actor, people must identify with their role and align their behaviours with institutional logics – in other words, actors must be socialized into their institutionalized roles and identities through social practices and by complying with norms of *how we think and do things around here* (March & Olsen, 1976). Compliance with institutional logics is interpreted as competence (Voronov & Weber, 2016), while deviation is often disapproved of and may even result in disciplinary measures (Lounsbury et al., 2021, p. 270).

However, a single institutional order can consist of competing and potentially conflicting forms of institutional logics, as differences may exist between and across actors governed by the same institutional order (Lounsbury et al., 2021, p. 263). Within a jurisdiction, one logic will predominate over all others – a dynamic that serves organizational congruency (Hinings et al., 2003). Conflicting and emergent new logics may not only coexist but also challenge the dominant one in situations that resemble *institutional battlefields*, on which advocates of conflicting logics compete against each other (Reay & Hinings, 2005; DiMaggio, 1983). In general, the most influential or powerful institutional actors come out on top through the logic with which they are associated. Alternatively, subordinate logics are assimilated into the dominant one, forming a *hybrid* arrangement that somewhat neutralizes the conflict (Meyer & Hammerschmid, 2006). Researchers have drawn on the institutional logics framework to study, for example, how police officers learn, think, and act based on proper and improper responses to emotionally challenging work situations in Denmark (Hartmann & Meier, 2023), the behaviour of actors in the

process of policy implementation in Mexico (Michel et al., 2022), and the political power struggles surrounding public accountability organizations in Zambia (Hathaway & Askvik, 2021).

From an institutional logics perspective, accountability is, therefore, a matter of holding yourself and others accountable for demonstrating a specific set of logics that apply to the organizational setting and constitute a symbolic effort through which institutional actors legitimize not only their institution but also their institutional membership and identity (Lounsbury et al., 2021). According to Thornton et al.'s (2012, p. 55) typology of institutional orders, intelligence services and oversight bodies both belong to the *state* order, which is constructed by democratic principles (e.g. democratic participation, bureaucratic domination, citizenship, and the increase of community good). We argue, however, that intelligence and oversight bodies are linked with different state logics, i.e., bureaucracy and security. Based on this, we propose two sets of state logics – *bureaucracy* and *security* – each with its own distinct understanding of democratic accountability.

Proposing two sets of state logics

One important element that distinguishes the intelligence services from other state institutions is their mandate to collect and process state secrets to maintain state security. Secrecy preserves the state by protecting sensitive information and establishing a confidential, covert sphere via which to pursue state interests (see Ördén, Chapter 3 in this volume). However, this function does not align well with the logics of the state order (as suggested by Thornton et al. (2012, p. 55)), which otherwise governs other government organizations. Bureaucracy naturally permeates the structure of the state and exists within the framework of the security logics. However, while the typology of the bureaucratic logics emphasizes legality, governance by rules, and democratic participation (Friedland & Alford, 1991), the security logics strongly emphasize national security. It is, therefore, important to emphasize how a different set of logics governs the ideas that relate to security.

Within the Hobbesian tradition, security logics encompass specific logics associated with safeguarding the nation-state and considerations of national interests, according to *la raison d'état* (Williams, 2010). We, therefore, propose that a distinction be made between *bureaucratic state* logics and *security state* logics. We argue that the latter involve distinct logics that draw on national security as the source of their legitimacy rather than democratic participation or legality.

The security logics thus give a prominent place to the idea of doing what is necessary to protect the state and the national interest. In contrast to bureaucratic logics, they rest on a decisionist conception of sovereignty, in which the defining features of sovereignty are the state of exception and the capacity to suspend the rule of law (Schmitt, 2005).

This supplementary and distinctive set of security logics offers a broader conception of the state order, allows for distinctions to be made between their constituent elements, and reflects the state order as a potential institutional

battlefield of coexisting and competing logics (DiMaggio, 1983), rather than a coherent unison. This extended framework offers a nuanced view of accountability that allows us to depart from the existing functionalist literature, as explored in more depth below.

A framework for studying institutional logics

We draw on Thornton and Ocasio's (1999) understanding of institutional logics as a set of values, beliefs, assumptions, and institutional rules that materialize in practices over time and thereby constitute *the way we understand and do things around here* in organizations. In operationalizing the theoretical framework that guides our study, we distinguish between the elements of institutional logics as follows:

Values are broad goals or principles that tend to be stable over time and that people find important in life, like equality, freedom, and democratic rights. We use values to guide our behaviour across different contexts. Values may determine behaviour directly by helping us prioritize what is important to us or indirectly by providing a foundation for more specific beliefs, norms, and attitudes (Krasny, 2020; De Groot & Thøgersen, 2013).

Belief is an acceptance that something is true, which may or may not be based on facts (Krasny, 2020). Knowledge differs from beliefs because it is justified *and* true. Whereas values are very broad, beliefs focus on a particular object, like security threats, or a particular behaviour, like protecting the state (De Groot and Thøgersen, 2013). An *assumption* is something we believe to be true but has yet to be proven via causal relationships or existing evidence.

Institutional rules refer to “prescriptions that define what actions (or outcomes) are required, prohibited or permitted, and the sanctions authorised if the rules are not followed” (Ostrom, 1999, p. 38). They mediate power by distributing roles to actors and defining their status, access to organizational resources, etc.

The DDIS case

Our empirical study is based on a Danish case that came to public attention in 2020. It concerns the Oversight Board's substantial criticism of the DDIS, as summarized in a press release that triggered a significant public debate. The Oversight Board reported several critical issues, including the lack of a robust legal culture within the management of DDIS and certain segments of the service. They noted that there had been attempts to sweep the service's potentially unjustified activities or inappropriate actions under the rug. This was done, in part, by neglecting to inform the Oversight Board of matters that were crucially relevant to its oversight role (The Danish Intelligence Oversight Board, 2020). Ever since the establishment of the Oversight Board in 2014, a prolonged conflict had been unfolding between the Oversight Board and the DDIS – a situation that came to a head with the press release.

Eventually, DDIS was acquitted of responsibility by a Special Commission. Nevertheless, the initial press release catalysed a chain of events that culminated in the detention of the DDIS director against whom charges were filed regarding the disclosure of state secrets. This case stands out as the most significant intelligence scandal in Denmark's history. The press release and the subsequent events warrant this study, as they collectively point towards conflicting interpretations of the roles of the Oversight Board and DDIS in the oversight process.

Methods

To investigate the conflict between intelligence services and their overseers, we employ a twofold approach: analysing media content and conducting qualitative interviews with DDIS's managers and the Oversight Board's members and staff. Our goal is to elucidate the underlying institutional logics that drive this conflict, as exemplified in the DDIS case. The design of our study is based on the institutional logics framework presented above.

Analysing institutional logics in the media

The media serves as a window into the institutional logics of key actors in the DDIS case. It offers a platform for these actors to present their arguments and, therefore, reflects the image they intend to project to assert their legitimacy. Our content analysis involves collecting, transcribing, and coding textual material to interpret these communications within their social context (Krippendorff, 2019). We conducted this analysis on two major national media sources: the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR) and the digital news outlet Zetland, which extensively covered the case. These sources provided prominent platforms on which key institutional actors could express their institutional logics, enabling an in-depth qualitative analysis. We applied a coding framework inspired by Thornton and Ocasio (1999) to both full and selected transcripts, which laid the foundation for subsequent qualitative interviews.

Qualitative interviews with DDIS and the Oversight Board

Four sub-objectives informed the design of our study. First, we aimed to enhance empirical validity by supplementing our media analysis with first-hand accounts. Second, we translated our theoretical framework into a semi-structured interview guide, focusing on theoretically informed themes. Third, we sought interviewees who were actively involved in the organizations and played pivotal roles with regard to their institutional logics. Finally, we aimed to collect a comprehensive set of interviews from both organizations to facilitate comparison with media accounts.

To improve cooperation with the Oversight Board and DDIS, the first author conducted two pilot interviews with a former intelligence officer and an

educator of intelligence analysis, which served to refine our interview guide. When approaching both organizations, we outlined our study's purpose and methodology. Both organizations responded positively to our request and provided four interviewees each. We also interviewed a former DDIS manager with extensive experience. Each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes, with most interviewees preferring not to be recorded. The interviewer took notes and reconstructed the main content immediately afterwards. Confidentiality was maintained through anonymization, and all interviewees participated on a voluntary basis as carriers of institutional values and beliefs.

We organized the interview data on the basis of the four sub-elements in the general definition of institutional logics (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999). We thematically coded the transcribed interviews (Gibbs, 2007), followed by a thematic analysis of interviews and media accounts. This process enabled us to construct DDIS and the Oversight Board's institutional logics and perform a comparative analysis, which revealed the conflicting logics and their impact on democratic accountability.

Common goal, different orientations

The following analysis shows that while DDIS and the Oversight Board share a common goal – protecting Denmark – their underlying logics is remarkably divergent. A systematic comparative analysis of their logic elements reveals how DDIS's logics are deeply embedded within state security logics that prioritize *effectiveness*. At the same time, the Oversight Board emphasizes state bureaucracy logics that favour *legal compliance*. While this difference may not come as a big surprise per se, the analysis exposes the complexities of the coexistence of these divergent logics within both organizations, as well as the roots of the conflict between them.

Interviewees from both DDIS and the Oversight Board emphasized their organizations' vital roles in safeguarding Danish democracy. They expressed a common belief that safeguarding democracy is best achieved through legal compliance and effective intervention. According to one DDIS manager, "Compliance and effectiveness can easily go hand in hand". This sentiment was seconded by members and staff of the Oversight Board and also reaffirmed in their annual report, which stated, "Intelligence activities and compliance are not opposites – quite the contrary" (The Danish Intelligence Oversight Board, 2022, p. 7).

However, their core values and orientations diverge when it comes to interpreting their institutional purposes. DDIS prioritizes protecting national sovereignty by focusing on Denmark's defence and interests (The Danish Defence Intelligence Service, 2021, p. 7). A former high-ranking DDIS employee with extensive operative experience underlines this *raison d'être*: "The DDIS exists to protect Denmark against foreign threats. This is its core mission. It is what people go to work for".

By contrast, members and staff of the Oversight Board see their core mission differently. Their aim is to address a threat *within* state intelligence services

– lack of transparency. An employee at the Secretariat explained, “The secrecy surrounding the services is in itself a threat to democracy”. The Oversight Board’s primary value is the Rule of Law. As one of its members put it, “The Rule of Law is the most important value, ensuring that the services comply with the law and protect human rights”.

As such, while the DDIS managers view protecting the state from foreign threats as their most distinguished institutional value, the Oversight Board’s members and staff view protecting the constitutional foundation of the state as theirs. These different orientations reflect the core principles of the security and bureaucracy logics that coexist within the state order. In the following analysis sections, we delve into how the state security institutional logic operates within the DDIS, examine the underlying institutional logics of the Oversight Board, and compare the two competing logics, before discussing their overlapping and conflicting dynamics.

DDIS and the security logics

As expressed by the interviewees, DDIS’s core value is to protect the national state and its interests in alignment with the security logic *raison d’état*. According to one manager, “the organisation is a system-preserving entity contributing to upholding a free society”. However, they also note that public trust (founded in the Rule of Law), while important to democracy, is important to the core function. The DDIS manager elaborates:

Cynically speaking, public trust in DDIS is not essential, as we can still carry out our work even without trust. However, because Denmark is a democracy, and our work is for the greater good, public trust is important.

Thus, the importance of public trust in the service remains symbolic and also subservient to the dominant imperative of preserving the state. This indicates the coexistence of the bureaucracy and security logics, while also highlighting the latter’s predominance (Hinings et al., 2003) in the DDIS.

In line with the security logic, DDIS representatives assume their extended mandate is best fulfilled by acquiring and safeguarding “special knowledge”. One manager elaborates:

A good intelligence service provides special knowledge about foreign and security matters to democratically elected decision-makers. It must also operate within the confines of the law and maintain a high level of professionalism.

This special knowledge is considered vital to DDIS’s identity, without which, as a DDIS manager explains, “DDIS is just like any other organisation”. This special mandate, which is partly exempt from the Rule of Law, is, therefore, a prerequisite for DDIS’s existence.

The interviewees justify DDIS's extensive powers by emphasizing the importance of expertise and compliance. The security logic is reflected in the managers' belief that compliance is effectively integrated into their internal control mechanisms and that external oversight serves to complement this self-monitoring. In the words of one DDIS manager, "The Oversight Board should, to the greatest extent possible, control DDIS's own internal controls and intervene when the Oversight Board believes that self-monitoring is insufficient".

These beliefs lead DDIS interviewees to assume that their expertise is highly regarded and that internal oversight is adequate. This perspective influences their views on external oversight, with some interviewees expressing concern that it could challenge their expertise.

DDIS's security logics also underpin the interviewees' reluctance to fully embrace transparency. The focus is on protecting the special mandate and *raison d'état* rather than the organization's responsibilities in terms of public transparency. The prevailing assumption is that transparency may hinder security efforts. As one former DDIS manager expressed, "We need to be aware that it [transparency] is costly in relation to DDIS's main role". Moreover, the prevalent security logics are evident in the rules for action presented by the former manager, based on their first-hand experience at the DDIS:

Transparency and openness were a sidecar [to the core mission]. I dare say that it was something that irritated a lot of people. Because you don't think they enhance security [...]. And if you're an analyst and busy unravelling something, and suddenly you have to write some blah blah about the general threat picture to every Tom, Dick and Harry... It's up to the leadership to explain to the employees why it's actually very important. It is because otherwise you won't get funding to thwart terrorist attacks.

Noticeably, democratic responsibility towards the public is believed to be a necessary evil instrumental for the institutional self-interests of resource retention and mandate preservation. The security logic thus prescribes the assumption that to protect the state, the DDIS can be trusted to handle "special knowledge" and, as such, deserves exemption from the Rule of Law.

Further, institutional rules for actions are also evident in the heightened security awareness into which new members are socialized. A DDIS manager elaborates: "As a new employee, you need to learn how to handle confidential information and related procedures and be security-aware". This extends to norms of conduct – or *how we do or do not do things around here*. Another manager described these norms as consisting of "not disclosing information about others within the organisation, as you may not know other individuals' stories externally [outside the organisation]", the purpose of which is to avoid "leakage, security breaches, and betraying the organisation's secrets".

In summary, DDIS's *raison d'être* revolves around safeguarding its monopoly on special knowledge, which necessitates an emphasis on the preservation of

special powers and mandates. Despite some elements of bureaucratic logics, such as unclassified publications and acceptance of external oversight with regard to legality, these aspects take a backseat to the dominant security logics of secrecy, *raison d'état*, and legitimacy derived from safeguarding the nation-state.

The Oversight Board and bureaucracy logics

As the sole authority responsible for independently overseeing the legality of the Danish intelligence services, it is unsurprising that the Oversight Board's institutional logic aligns with the bureaucratic state's emphasis on legality, governance by rules, and democratic participation. According to these values, their primary mission is to legitimize DDIS. As one Board member puts it, "the Oversight Board's function in society is to provide legitimacy to DDIS. [...] The Oversight Board is important because the services are important".

According to this belief, and due to their inherently secretive nature, the intelligence services must be kept in check through *oversight* rather than through uncovering specific issues. As expressed by a Board member: "oversight should have a preventive effect, meaning that the less we discover, the better. If there's nothing to find, that's good". Therefore, the act of oversight itself holds intrinsic value. According to one Secretariat employee, to provide effective oversight, "full insight into the relevant area is crucial".

While these beliefs align with the bureaucratic logic of emphasizing democratic participation, governance by rules, and transparency, they also recognize that secrecy plays an important role in the protection of Danish democracy. This secrecy not only is associated with the practices of the intelligence services but is also an integral part of the Oversight Board's own practices and belief system. To quote one Board member:

We cannot have transparency and openness to the public beyond what is disclosed in the annual reports. The annual reports represent only a fragment of the truth, and it is a truth crafted on the services' terms.

While the Oversight Board members acknowledge the necessity of DDIS handling confidential knowledge, they find the secrecy surrounding this knowledge problematic. Consequently, they consider themselves guardians of public representation, as they believe that objectivity and political independence are essential for maintaining public trust in the organization. A Secretariat employee explains, "If there is no trust in the Oversight Board, it has no justification or reason to exist". One Board member explains how challenges to the Board's objectivity and independence risk undermining trust in the entire system:

Trust can be challenged if the objectivity is questioned. Therefore, disagreements [between the Oversight Board and DDIS] are problematic, as at best people are just confused at a higher level, and at worst it may indicate that something is fundamentally wrong with the system.

All interviewees from the Oversight Board stress that, to uphold objectivity, it is important to maintain independence from both political agendas and the intelligence services. As one Board member emphasizes: “the Oversight Board is not subject to government instructions”. The DDIS Case is an example of the lengths to which the Board will go to demonstrate its independence. The aforementioned press release has often been referred to as a draft to be submitted to the minister of defence for approval. However, in a letter to the minister of defence, the chair of the Oversight Board wrote that he was enclosing the press release “to *inform* [emphasis added] the Minister of Defence” (Molin et al., 2023, p. 10), thereby asserting the Oversight Board’s independence.

The central assumption underpinning these beliefs is that the Board is isolated by its responsibilities. As an employee in the Secretariat puts it, “As an Oversight Board, it is not easy to make friends within the State Administration”. A board member further elaborates:

I find that there is respect for the Oversight Board’s work. However, I also believe that the Oversight Board can be seen as a pain in the ass, since being scrutinised is never enjoyable.

The institutional rules and socialization processes reinforce the assumption and experience of a solitary existence and closely resemble the rules and processes of DDIS. “New members of the Oversight Board receive a comprehensive set of rules and security procedures with which they must familiarise themselves”, explains a Board member. As was the case with the DDIS interviewees, the Board members and staff note that these precautions isolate them from both other public organizations and their general surroundings. Another Board member adds, “We must satisfy our need for conversation at work. We are bound by confidentiality and therefore cannot discuss work with anyone outside the organisation”.

In summary, the Oversight Board members believe that the Board legitimizes DDIS, in line with a bureaucratic logic that emphasizes public participation, transparency, and legality. While it also incorporates elements of the security logic, particularly in terms of safeguarding sensitive information, this security aspect is secondary to the dominant logic, namely the broader objective of achieving democratic accountability.

A battle for existence

The prevailing logics of DDIS and the Oversight Board highlight an inherent complexity in democratic institutions. DDIS, tasked with safeguarding special knowledge from public scrutiny, naturally adopts a secretive stance rooted in a security-centric logic of democracy, centred on executive power and accountability towards the executive. By contrast, the Oversight Board operates with a bureaucracy logic, emphasizing democracy as popular sovereignty and accountability towards the public. This discrepancy proves the point that

competing – and potentially conflicting – institutional logics may exist within the same institutional order (Lounsbury et al., 2021), namely the state order. However, it also emphasizes how such logics may adhere to different sets of logics per se.

This contrast reveals a tug of war between the self-preservation of DDIS's security logic and the Oversight Board's transparency-oriented logic. At the same time, the two organizations share some common ground. The bureaucratic logic serves DDIS's goals of retaining resources and maintaining its mandate. Interestingly, security and control can coexist with greater confidentiality. According to Lester (2015), *internal* control may fortify the organization's command over confidential information and, as such, somewhat paradoxically, serve to augment confidentiality.

When one coherent set of logics dominates, organizational stability is maintained, particularly when the core functions are challenged (Hinings et al., 2003). For example, there may be situations in which the Oversight Board's access rights or independent legal assessments are questioned or when DDIS believes the Oversight Board is overstepping its mandate. For example, in 2020, the Oversight Board clearly believed that DDIS was withholding crucial information, which nurtured a sense of existential threat and prompted a press release in which the Board insisted on political action.

From DDIS's perspective, the Oversight Board overstepped its mandate by demanding information that DDIS deemed irrelevant for external oversight. This raised concerns within the DDIS that the Oversight Board might be seeking confrontation. Expressing their concerns, one DDIS manager said:

It can be a threat to trust [between DDIS and the Oversight Board] if the Oversight Board feels they must find mistakes. Suppose they have a self-perception that mistakes have to be found. It's not my understanding that it's a success criterion for the Oversight Board to find nothing. It becomes a problem when they start looking at things they shouldn't be looking at.

The trust between these entities may become strained if the Oversight Board feels compelled to find mistakes, which is not necessarily a success criterion for its work. Such behaviour is rooted in the Oversight Board's identity and its perception of its role in protecting Danish democracy.

The conflict between these organizations arises from fundamentally different views regarding the source of DDIS's legitimacy. The Oversight Board sees itself as the source of DDIS's legitimacy by ensuring legal compliance, governance by rules, and democratic participation. This reflects an understanding of democracy as popular sovereignty, in which the accountability of governmental organizations is a public matter. Conversely, DDIS asserts that its legitimacy stems from its role in national security preservation and executive authorization. This logic originates from an understanding of democracy as centred on executive power, in which the elected leader acts as the carrier of the democracy and to whom public organizations are accountable.

These differing perspectives of democracy resonate with contemporary movements advocating for more openness, transparency, and accountability from those in power. The establishment of the Oversight Board in 2014 marked an attempt to impose a bureaucratic logic on an organisation that historically had been aligned with the incumbent government and, as such, increased the pressure on the intelligence services' foundational security logic.

Ultimately, for both entities, these organizational battles become existential. For that reason, the Oversight Board resorted to issuing a press release. The Board were certainly aware of this intricate interplay. As one Board member stated, "There is an impossibility in intelligence oversight because there is an inherent conflict between secrecy and democratic control". This struggle is not unique to the Danish context but probably occurs in most Western democracies. It would be relevant to further study how this ambiguity is expressed and managed in more established relationships between intelligence services and oversight boards in other countries.

Moreover, this analysis prompts us to question the functionalist approach to intelligence reform. It suggests a need to bring discussions about the sources of legitimacy and the desired nature of intelligence services to the forefront of democratic debates. However, a prerequisite for such debates is the willingness of political leadership and intelligence services to engage in public discourse.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our study demonstrates a complex interplay between two organizations with divergent underlying institutional logics in a Scandinavian context. While both share a common goal of protecting Denmark and its democracy, they diverge significantly in terms of their core values and orientations. The DDIS is represented by a specific set of logics, which prioritizes the protection of national sovereignty and the safeguarding of special knowledge and is grounded in a security-centric logic of democracy that emphasizes executive power and accountability to the executive. In contrast, the Oversight Board focuses on legality, transparency, and public accountability and is thereby aligned with the bureaucracy logics of democracy, which emphasize popular sovereignty.

This contrast adds depth to our understanding of "turf wars" (Manjikian, 2016) between intelligence services and their overseers. The implication is that it is the competition between the DDIS's security logic and the Oversight Board's transparency-oriented logic that challenges not only their relationship but also both parties' reasons for existence. The conflict between these entities arises from fundamentally different views of DDIS's source of legitimacy, which in turn points to conflicting interpretations of democracy. The Oversight Board sees itself as the source of DDIS's legitimacy by ensuring legal compliance, governance by rules, and democratic participation, while DDIS asserts that its legitimacy is based on its executive authorization and its role in safeguarding national security. These insights lend nuance to the dominant

functionalist notion of accountability as limited to legislation and formal structures and instead propose an alternative avenue to pursue, namely institutional logics.

This analysis not only sheds light on the intricate dynamics within the Danish intelligence community but also raises broader questions about the nature of intelligence services in democracies and the theoretical assumption of a single, coherent institutional state order. Regarding the latter, the literature would benefit from further exploring the security state order, with a view to incorporating the security apparatus into our theoretical understanding of institutional logics. On a societal level, the analysis underscores the need for a more in-depth discussion about the sources of legitimacy and the desired role of intelligence services in contemporary democracies. Ultimately, the coexistence of and the clashes between these divergent logics reflect the inherent complexities and challenges of democratic institutions. These struggles are not unique to Denmark but likely arise in many Western democracies. This analysis highlights the importance and deep implications of the underlying logics that influence dialogue between intelligence services and oversight boards and encourages us to rethink the purpose of intelligence oversight: Is it a necessary evil or a constructively critical friend? We will argue for the latter. Yet, if such dialogue and rethinking is to take place, it requires a willingness on the part of political leadership and intelligence services to engage in public discourse and discussion regarding the evolving demands of transparency and accountability in the modern world. At an even more fundamental level, these findings reveal conflicting ideas of democracy as centred on either executive or popular sovereignty.

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