

Human Intelligence: A Study about Agent Behaviour



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Abstract

Agenten die geheime informatie aan een buitenlandse mogendheid doorspelen, beter bekend als spionnen, spelen een gevaarlijk spel. Als ze worden ontdekt riskeren ze in het ergste geval executie, maar meestal komen ze ervan af met een gevangenisstraf. Toch worden er regelmatig agenten gepakt door contra-inlichtingen eenheden of het justitiële apparaat. Waarom besluiten mensen zich in te zetten voor een buitenlandse mogendheid als er grote risico's aan verbonden zijn?

Bestaande verklaringsmodellen die een antwoord bieden op deze vraag richten zich op eigenschappen van de agent: Een loyaliteitsverandering, een narcistisch karakter, financiële problemen of een handeling die chantabel maakt. Een voorbeeld van zo een model is het acroniem MICE (**M**oney, **I**deology, **C**ompromise or **C**oercion en **E**go), waarin vier redenen worden gepresenteerd waarom agenten spioneren. Modellen zoals MICE bieden echter onvoldoende verklaringskracht om het gedrag van agenten inzichtelijk te maken. Een model dat ook rekening houdt met de omgevingsfactoren van een agent biedt meer houvast en maakt beter inzichtelijk waarom mensen besluiten informatie over te dragen aan een tegenstander.

Aldrich Ames en Robert Hanssen zijn twee van de meest schadelijke Sovjet agenten uit de geschiedenis van de Amerikaanse inlichtingen gemeenschap. Bestudering van hun omgeving heeft vijf factoren opgeleverd die bij hebben gedragen aan het mogelijk maken van hun spionageactiviteiten. Deze factoren hebben betrekking op de werkomgeving binnen de CIA en de FBI, de Amerikaanse inlichtingendiensten waarvoor Ames en Hanssen respectievelijk hebben gewerkt. Ze zijn gevonden in biografieën en onderzoeksrapporten die geschreven zijn door commissies die zijn ingesteld na hun arrestatie. Deze bronnen zijn onderzocht door gebruik te maken van kwalitatieve inhoudsanalyse.

De vijf factoren zijn (1) een cultuur van paranoia, (2) het management van de inlichtingendienst, (3) internationale contacten, (4) gebrek aan veiligheidsbewustzijn en (5) de werksfeer. Deze factoren zijn in een model opgenomen. Dit model biedt een aanvulling op bestaande modellen zoals MICE. Het kan gebruikt worden om het gedrag van agenten beter inzichtelijk te maken. Er is teveel aandacht voor motivatie, terwijl omgevingsfactoren medebepalend zijn voor gedrag. De onderzoeksagenda naar de motivatie van agenten binnen 'intelligence studies' moet worden aangepast.

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1. Introduction

*'You might as well ask why a middle-aged man with no criminal record might put a paper bag over his head and rob a bank. I acted out of personal desperation.'*¹

This is a quote from Aldrich Ames, a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) employee and Soviet agent now serving a life sentence in jail for espionage against the United States. He claims he acted out of personal desperation. The question of why he was so desperate then comes to mind. Was it because he needed money, because he liked the thrill, or were there other factors? That is what this thesis is about: why does *a middle-aged man with no criminal record* betray his country by selling classified documents to a foreign state? Espionage has the aura of twilight and secrecy around it. Intelligence professionals have a preference for the term human intelligence (humint) instead of espionage. Humint is information that is collected through interpersonal contact.²

Humint is one of several methods used by intelligence organizations to collect information. Other methods are open source intelligence (OSINT), imaginary intelligence (IMINT), measurement and signature intelligence (MASINT) and signals intelligence (SIGINT), to name but a few.³ The collection of information is part of the 'intelligence cycle', which is used by most intelligence organizations as a tool to conceptualize their professional process. The cycle consists of five steps: planning and direction, collection, processing, analysis, and production and dissemination.⁴ Humint, like the other 'int's', is part of the collection phase, since its goal is to obtain information from human sources. The information may need to be translated or decoded, after which analysts can use it along with other sources of information to produce intelligence assessments (analysis and production). These assessments are then disseminated to whomever has the necessary clearance and needs to know the information that is written in the assessment for his or her decision-making (dissemination). The decision-makers plan new operations or strategies, based upon which they direct intelligence agencies to collect new information (planning and direction). Of course, this is how the intelligence cycle works in theory. In practice, the five steps could all

¹ <http://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/quotes/a/aldrichame290989.html#pGCXq1t1736v69ku.99>, accessed 29-6-2015

² Polmar and Allen, *Spy Book*, p. 273

³ See for a discussion on the 'Int's' Johnson, *National Security Intelligence*, pp. 15-19

⁴ Johnson in Johnson, *The Oxford Handbook*, p. 12

be the beginning or the end of the cycle. For example, during the collection process information might be collected on a different subject than was initially planned. This by-catch can result in an assessment that is used for a wholly different policy decision than was initially intended. The intelligence cycle is theoretically clear-cut, but unruly in practice.

Human sources are a requirement for humint. These sources have to be recruited by case officers (runners, operators) and are called agents (spies). The case officers recruit the agents by applying the recruitment cycle: *spotting* potential agents, *assessing* their suitability and vulnerabilities, *developing* a relationship, *recruiting* the agent when the time is right at the appropriate time, *training and handling* the agent to make him do what the case officer wants, and finally *terminating* the relationship when there is no more need for the agent's information.⁵ The recruitment cycle is traditionally a time-consuming process. Looking for any motivations that individuals may have to commit treason and become agents is mostly done during the assessment phase.⁶

There are several different types of humint: for example, corporate humint, criminal humint by the police, or humint practiced by non-governmental networks like Al-Qaeda or Islamic State, which are an 'international problem' and receive a lot of attention. I have chosen to restrict this study to state-practiced humint because states are still the most influential actors in international affairs, despite developments like globalization that have reduced their influence since the end of the Cold War. In addition, states have intelligence organizations that have the knowledge and resources to structurally mount complex and costly humint operations. Although these operations are mostly covert and thus hard to study, they are still aimed for the most part at collecting information from foreign states and international organizations like the NATO, rather than from non-governmental networks like Al-Qaeda or Islamic State. This will remain true as long as states continue to be the most influential international actors. In sum, I will focus on humint practiced by state-sponsored intelligence organizations and not on other types of humint.

Humint is a dangerous activity, not only for the case officer but even more so for the agent. The case officer usually has diplomatic immunity (unless he is an *illegal*) and is branded a *persona non grata* in the target country if he is exposed. The agent, on the other hand, can face a long prison sentence for treason if he is caught. There are even countries without the death penalty that make an exception for espionage.⁷ This raises the question of

⁵ Burkett, *An Alternative Framework*, p. 13

⁶ Tucker, *The End*, p. 48

⁷ Burkett, *An Alternative Framework*, p. 8

why people decide to engage in this activity. Why do people risk being loathed by colleagues, renounced by family and friends, jailed by countrymen and condemned by history?

The central question I will address in this thesis is the following:

Can the current ideas about agent motivation fully explain agent behaviour?

An answer to this question will be relevant to the leadership of intelligence organizations and counterintelligence officers. They have the responsibility of looking for indications of an increased chance of an employee being recruited. Based on a better understanding of what factors influence agent behaviour, intelligence organization management can create and implement policies that reduce the risk of housing a spy. The answer to this question is also relevant for the scientific community. Intelligence Studies is a rapidly growing field, with academics developing research agendas on various subjects related to intelligence.⁸ If there is an imbalance in the focus of academic research on humint – for example, if it focuses only on a few and not all factors that influence agent behaviour – then the research agenda on this subject needs to be adjusted. In order to assess whether the current ideas on agent motivation can explain agent behaviour, I will first need to take stock of the work done thus far.

1. What factors have been identified?

A study of the existing literature and research done on humint will identify key concepts and developed theories. Acronyms like MICE (**M**oney, **I**deology, **C**ompromise or **C**oercion and **E**go) and RASCLS (**R**eciprocation, **A**uthority, **S**carcity, **C**ommitment and **C**onsistency, **L**iking and **S**ocial proof) will be passed in review. It is claimed that these acronyms explain why agents change loyalty and pass sensitive information to foreign states. This overview of the scholarly work done will provide insight on the current ideas about the motivation of agents and the possible omissions in the body of work. Once the existing literature is assessed, an evaluation will determine whether the key concepts and developed theories provide enough handles to explain agent behaviour.

⁸ See for an example P. Gill, *Theories*, pp. 47-54

2. *Do these factors suffice?*

If so, one might assume that intelligence organisations have adapted their counterintelligence policy to these factors, which would make it extremely hard, if not impossible, for agents to pass information to a foreign entity. If not, there might be other elements, alongside motivational factors, that need to be taken into account when trying to explain agent behaviour.

There seems to be a bias towards a psychological point of view when attempting to explain agent behaviour. In the literature on the subject, a reductionist perspective that explains behaviour with whatever happens inside someone's head is dominant. This seems improbable. Not only common sense dictates a critical stance versus such a reductionist perspective, but a look at criminology, an adjacent field of research, also suggests another explanation. In the quote above, Ames compared himself to a criminal robbing a bank. In criminology, research regularly points to the influence of the environment of the criminal to explain his behaviour. If a youngster is raised in a neighbourhood riddled with drug dealers, he or she has an increased chance of becoming a drug dealer him- or herself.

I will test the following hypothesis:

There are factors in the environment of agents that help explain their behaviour.

Kuo and Sullivan found, in a study done in 2001 on crime and public housing in Chicago, that greenery around houses reduces crime rates when compared to houses with barren land around them.⁹ If trees influence the behaviour of criminals, what factors might influence the behaviour of agents?

There is a lot of academic literature about intelligence and humint. Besides theoretical work, there are biographies on agents, memoirs of case officers, court proceedings of those-not-so fortunate agents, and interviews given by them to journalists or researchers. In addition, after an agent with a high media and political impact is captured, commissions are created that write extensive reports on how the events happened and how they can be prevented from occurring again. These reports are a rich source of data. In Chapter 3 I will comment on which sources I used and why.

⁹ Kuo and Sullivan, *Environment*, pp. 343-367

This thesis consists of seven chapters. In Chapter 2, I provide an overview of the theoretical work done on agent motivation and identify omissions. Which aspects of agent motivation have been researched thoroughly? More importantly, which aspects need more attention? Chapter 3 justifies the method I used to investigate the research questions. I explored two cases by applying a qualitative content analysis on biographies and reports written by commissions on two agents: Aldrich Ames and Robert Hanssen. The result of the research is presented in Chapter 4 and is the input for a model on agent behaviour. In Chapter 5 I make some concluding remarks and reflect on the results. Lastly, Chapter 6 is reserved for discussion and Chapter 7 lists the references used.

2. Theoretical framework

‘Culture, by contrast [to structure], involves the ideas, values, and beliefs that color how agency employees view the world and what they hold dear. All organizations have cultures, some more ingrained than others. When cultures correspond to organizational missions, they can serve as a powerful positive force, emphasizing “the way things are done around here.” But culture can also foster attitudes that sap innovation, block change, and degrade agency performance over time.’¹⁰

The overview of the theoretical work done on agent behaviour will focus on answering the first sub-question: *What factors have been identified?* That will be the aim of the biggest part of this chapter. In the last part, I will discuss aspects of the second sub-question: *Do these factors suffice?* A better understanding of agent behaviour can lead to policy changes by intelligence organizations. In the short term, they can alter vetting procedures, the intelligence community can be better informed of the indicators to which they should pay attention in the workplace, and managers can adapt their style of leadership. In the long run, a better understanding of agent motivation can lead to fewer trust-damaging mole hunts¹¹ and less risk of case officers working abroad being detected.

I have classified the theoretical insights derived from the literature overview into three broad categories. The first category employs a single factor to explain agent behaviour (mono-dimensional approach to agent behaviour), the second category uses several factors (multi-dimensional approach to agent behaviour) and the third category takes environmental factors into account (conducive environment).

2.1 Mono-dimensional approach to agent behaviour

Mono-dimensional theories are characterized by the fact that they point to one factor that explains agent behaviour. The most classic mono-dimensional example is the acronym that is used by case officers to explain agent motivation: MICE.¹² MICE was introduced by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). After a review of cases, the FBI came to the conclusion that there are four reasons why agents decide to betray trust invested in them and

¹⁰ Zegart, *Spying Blind*, p. 63

¹¹ See for an example P. Wright (1987), *Spycatcher*, H.H. Petersen Buchimport

¹² Burkett, *An Alternative Framework*, p. 9

hand over (classified) information to a case officer: **Money, Ideology, Compromise (or Coercion) and Ego.** MICE is the standard theory or, rather, analytic framework used to interpret motivations for espionage.

Money is probably the most intuitive of the four motivations. A case officer offers money to an agent in exchange for classified documents. This is what Cherkashin, the KGB case officer of former CIA employee Aldrich Ames, used as his preferred modus operandi.¹³ Cherkashin changed a one-time money-for-information exchange between him and Ames into a long-lasting case officer-agent relationship,¹⁴ during which Ames gave information about more than 100 operations and 30 case officers and/or agents working for the United States. At least 10 were executed by the Soviets based on Ames's information.¹⁵ Money is something that most people would not reject if it were offered to them. For an agent, money can be a primary motivation. This is often the case when he has significant debt, needs money to retain a certain standard of living, or is simply avaricious. William Bell, an employee of the Hughes Aircraft Corp, sold documents about a radar device to the Polish intelligence officer Zacharski.¹⁶ He said after he was caught that *'Mr. Zacharski had found a fool who needed money. I had a weak spot. He took advantage of me.'*¹⁷ Money can also be a secondary motivation, alongside ideology, for example. Jonathan Pollard, an intelligence analyst for the U.S. Navy who provided more than 800 classified documents and 1000 cables to his Israeli case officers,¹⁸ confessed after being caught that his treason was for ideological reasons: Pollard was Jewish. However, a closer look at his case reveals that he and his wife Anne Henderson seemed to enjoy the money they received.¹⁹

Ideology appears to be the most valiant of motivations. Ana Belen Montes, an analyst working for the Defence Intelligence Agency specialized in Cuba, but also an agent run by Cuban case officers for 17 years, said after she was caught in 2001 that the United States *'has done some things that are terribly cruel and unfair'*²⁰ to the Cuban government. At her sentencing hearing she declared, *'Your honor, I engaged in the activity that brought me before you because I obeyed my conscience rather than the law. I believe our government's policy toward Cuba is unfair and cruel, profoundly unneighbourly and I felt morally obligated to*

¹³ Tucker, *The End*, p. 52

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 49

¹⁵ Polmar and Allen, *Spy Book*, p. 21

¹⁶ Ibid, p. 56

¹⁷ Bell quoted in Taylor and Buchanan, *Treason*, p. 529

¹⁸ Polmar and Allen, *Spy Book*, p. 442

¹⁹ Taylor and Buchanan, *Treason*, p. 529

²⁰ The Washington Post, 28-4-2013

*help the island defend itself from our efforts to impose our values and our political system upon it...*²¹ Of course, being valiant is a matter of perspective: the incoming classified documents made her valiant in the eyes of the Cubans, but the outgoing documents meant treason for the United States. Furthermore, ideology is a reason that agents, who have been caught, like to adopt afterwards. It provides a justification for their actions.²² The aforementioned Pollard might have done just that.

Compromise or coercion is the darkest of motivations, although it is the motivation least preferred by case officers when trying to recruit an agent.²³ The most salient way a potential agent can be coerced is by employing the classic *honey trap*: a target is seduced by a beautiful woman, they share a bedroom together, and photographic or video material is made of the interaction. The material is then used to coerce the (married) target to surrender classified documents. A victim of a KGB honey trap operation is Clayton Lonetree. He was a security guard at the United States embassy in Moscow in the early 1980s. Although he was ordered to report any contacts with Soviet citizens to his superiors, he failed to do so when he started seeing Violetta Seina, a beautiful employee of the embassy.²⁴ Their encounters soon developed into a sexual relationship. At a certain point, Violetta introduced Clayton to her uncle Sasha, who turned out to be a KGB intelligence officer. Clayton spied for about two years, until he repented and in 1986 told his superiors what he was doing. He spent nine years in prison.²⁵

Ego refers to an agent's psychological traits, for example being receptive to ingratiation or having narcissistic properties. Robert Hanssen, an FBI officer who was a Soviet/Russian agent for 22 years between 1979 and 2001, certainly had narcissistic traits. He thought he was intellectually superior to all of his colleagues and felt the urge to prove it by becoming an agent.²⁶ He assumed that no one would have the intelligence to expose him. Although this was not the only reason for Hanssen, it was an important one. I will elaborate on this agent later in this thesis. Ego can be used as an explanation for agent behaviour in a

²¹ Montes quoted in Thompson, *Why Espionage Happens*, p. 203

²² Jonathan Pollard and Ana Belen Montes are two 'ideological' agents who worked for Israeli and Cuban intelligence organizations respectively. Both have been accused of using ideology as a justification for their actions.

²³ Tucker, *The End*, p. 51

²⁴ Thompson, *Why Espionage Happens*, pp. 127-128

²⁵ Polmar and Allen, *Spy Book*, p. 340

²⁶ A Review, <https://oig.justice.gov/special/0308/>, accessed 26-6-2015

variety of ways. One can think of revenge, manipulation, low self-esteem, or even psychopathy, immaturity or dependency.²⁷

MICE as an analytic construct has deficiencies. Although it possesses clarity and simplicity, it lacks resistance to the passing of time.²⁸ To start, money seems to be so obvious a reason that it does not need an explanation. But is there solid, empirical evidence that it is in fact the grand reason that makes people decide to become agents?²⁹ Money is often part of the case officer-agent relationship and when it is, it is virtually always Russian espionage. However, it is too simplistic to merely say that people engage in espionage for money. In addition, empirical research indicates that money as a motivational factor has decreased drastically in the United States since 1990.³⁰

Ideology was a classic motivational factor during the Cold War, a time during which people who had leftist ideals in the West, or capitalist ideals in the Soviet Union, helped the other side. But times have changed. The state of international affairs, in which the influence of political ideology seems to have diminished since 1989 and religious ideology is on the rise, forces us to rethink the assumptions of ideological motivational factors as they were intended by the FBI when they introduced MICE, which was before the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Compromising people and using coercion have not been factors in recent years. In fact, coercion has not been used since 1980 on any known agent operating in the United States.³¹ According to many case officers, '*a coerced agent is a security problem waiting to happen.*'³² The agent is likely to try to break loose from the bonds of whatever he is coerced with instead of using his energy to secretly steal classified information.

Ego as a motivational factor in the MICE acronym functions as a vacuum cleaner. All motivations that do not fit within the first three factors are placed under ego. These factors include ingratiation, narcissism, dissatisfaction, psychopathic behaviour and revenge. The problem with these factors is that they lead to a psychological perspective on agent behaviour. Psychological explanations are insufficient when trying to understand the behaviour of an agent who is engaged in complex relationships and is part of a variety of societal structures. If an environmental element as simple as the presence of trees can reduce criminal behaviour in

²⁷ The Psychology of Espionage, p. 9

²⁸ Burkett, *An Alternative Framework*, p. 10

²⁹ Michalak, *Motives*, p. 1

³⁰ Herbig, *Changes*, p. ix

³¹ *Ibid*, p. ix

³² Tucker, *The End*, p. 51

public housing, as I discussed earlier, then there must also be factors in the environment of agents that have influence on them.³³

In sum, MICE seems to have flaws when used as an analytic construct for agent behaviour. A relationship as complex as the one between a case officer and an agent, set in a context of shifting loyalties, cannot be interpreted with such a simple and straightforward acronym. It simply is not sophisticated enough to capture the complexities of agent behaviour.³⁴

Two authors who take an approach similar to the MICE construct are Taylor and Buchanon. In their article published in 2011 they first explore the concept of trust and argue that it has an important role in the functioning of society.³⁵ Policymakers create laws to punish those who break the trust assigned to them. Nowadays, various anti-espionage laws exist that are used to prosecute people who are suspected of having misused that trust. Taylor and Buchanon studied the PERSEREC Espionage database, to which I will come back in Chapter 3, in search of motivations of agents that have broken trust. They suggest four categories, on which they comment and which are similar to the acronym MICE:

- Ideology: Until the 60s in the 20th century ideology was an important motivation, with people being attracted to communism or fascism. After the 60s, ideology diminished as a motivation. After the Cold War ended in 1989, the process of globalization, the increase in immigration in the US and the rising of – as the authors call it – Islamo-Fascism brought ideology back as a motivating factor for (potential) agents.³⁶
- Money: Money as a motivation for treason has diminished in recent years.³⁷
- Ingratiation: Since the end of the Cold War, ingratiation has decreased as a motivation for espionage.³⁸
- Disgruntlement: This term refers to a feeling of being unappreciated. When people work with secrets, it is smart to treat them fairly in order to make them feel appreciated. If they are not treated as such, they might retaliate and turn to treason.³⁹

³³ Kuo and Sullivan, *Environment*, pp. 343-367

³⁴ Burkett, *An Alternative Framework*, p. 11

³⁵ Taylor and Buchanon, “*Tis worse than murder*”, pp. 518-536

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 528

³⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 528-529

³⁸ *Ibid.* p. 530

³⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 530-533

Taylor and Buchanon claim to have taken a slightly different approach to treason by focusing on ‘*the historical development of expectations of loyalty as well as the vital role trust plays in social development.*’⁴⁰ This may be so, but they do not offer new insights into the factors that explain agent behaviour. Their four categories hardly differ from MICE. They do, however, analyse the way the motivations have changed over time and the way international developments have influenced humint. This notion will be of value later on, when I discuss the theoretical implications of the results from the empirical research that I present in chapter 4. In sum, Taylor and Buchanon provide a MICE-like, mono-dimensional perspective on agent behaviour that misses sophistication. In the following section I will discuss research that provides perspectives with more complexity.

2.2 Multi-dimensional approach to agent behaviour

More compelling are theories that stress multi-dimensional factors that cause agents to commit treason. Burkett, drawing from psychological breakthroughs in the understanding of human motivation since the 1980s, argues for a new framework to replace MICE, which he says ‘*has outlived its usefulness.*’⁴¹ His new framework is captured by the acronym RASCLS, which stands for **R**eciprocation, **A**uthority, **S**carcity, **C**ommitment and **C**onsistency, **L**iking and **S**ocial proof. Burkett borrows these ‘six principles of influence’ from psychologist R. Cialdini.⁴² **R**eciprocation means that people feel the obligation to repay what has been given to them. For a case officer, this means giving advice, help on a bureaucratic procedure or small gifts to a potential agent in order to develop this obligation. **A**uthority in a case officer-agent relationship provides prestige for the case officer. If his cover provides him with the opportunity to claim he has resources or influential friends, he will have an easier time during the development phase of the recruitment cycle. **S**carce items or opportunities tend to be viewed as more valuable. For a case officer, this means that he should emphasize, for example, that he can provide that which a potential agent is lacking, or frame the collaborative relationship as a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. **C**ommitment and **C**onsistency make a relationship trustworthy. A case officer who frames his relationship with a potential agent in the broader context of data-sharing between two countries, who is committed to strengthening

⁴⁰ Taylor and Buchanon, “*Tis worse than murder*”, p. 533

⁴¹ Burkett, *An Alternative Framework*, p. 7

⁴² The principles are outlined in the book: R. Cialdini (1984) *Influence: The Psychology of Persuasion*, Quill/William Morrow

mutual bonds, and who works consistently with foreign policy, has a greater chance of being seen as trustworthy. Liking means connecting with potential agents. This could mean, for example, looking for similarities in outlook on life, or sharing past experiences. Liking runs through the entire recruitment cycle, from the introduction of the case officer to the potential agent to the moment just before recruitment, when the agent feels like the case officer is a person he can trust with his life. Social proof refers to observing others to establish what is appropriate behaviour. A case officer can encourage an agent to steal classified documents by recalling that there have been many others like him, others who were jittery about it at first as well. This can give an agent the confidence that his behaviour is appropriate: there were many before him.⁴³

Burkett presents a model that *'is more nuanced, effective, and founded on empirical data drawn from decades of experiments in the social psychology field.'*⁴⁴ When used to analyse Colonel Stig Wennerstrom, a Swedish Air attaché who was a Soviet agent for 14 years, it indicates that not only his dissatisfaction (**E**go, from **MICE**) with his slow promotions through the ranks explains why he betrayed his country, but also the forecast of a GRU rank (**A**uthority) and the flattering (**L**iking) that befell him at parties by his soon-to-be case officer.⁴⁵

Thompson (2009) is another author who stresses a multi-dimensional perspective on agent behaviour. Although he discusses eight different factors separate from one another in Chapters 2 through 9 of his book *Why Espionage Happens?*, he stresses that there is not one single motivation that can explain agent behaviour.⁴⁶ According to Thompson, *'espionage is a crime with complex, multi-faceted motivational factors that do not lend themselves to easy explanation.'*⁴⁷ Thompson also discusses predisposing factors. These are factors that, if present in a person's character, increase the chance that he or she will engage in espionage. He introduces the concept of 'Distance/Minimization facility'.⁴⁸ Thomson explains this facility as follows: *'This relates to the capacity of most spies to use the distance, both psychological and physical, between themselves and the object of their crime to minimize the act's perceived impact and thereby facilitate espionage.'* This concept can be applied to Aldrich Ames. Ames betrayed CIA agents in the Soviet Union, and these agents were

⁴³ Burkett outlines RASCLS in Burkett, *An Alternative Framework*, p. 13-17

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, p. 17

⁴⁵ Polmar and Allen, *Spy Book*, p. 592

⁴⁶ Thompson, *Why Espionage Happens*, p. xii

⁴⁷ Thompson, *Toward an updated understanding*, 58

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, p. 65

consequently executed. Not only were the CIA agents physically far away, but they were also psychologically distant. These agents could have disclosed to the CIA that there might be a mole (Ames) in their organization. They could have overheard this at the KGB or been involved in the humint operation directed at running Ames. Therefore, for Ames it was either them or himself. Cherkashin, Ames's case officer, told him he was in danger and that the best thing he could do was give up all the names of the CIA agents. Convincing Ames of his danger paid off: he scribbled all the names he knew of Soviets working as American agents on a piece of paper and told Cherkashin to ensure that they would not find out about him. Ames is an example of an agent who has been studied extensively. He is usually used as an archetype agent who spied for money when authors discuss MICE or a similar analytic construct.⁴⁹ In Chapter 4 I discuss Ames more thoroughly and argue that he is not the archetype agent that many consider him to be.

I have discussed two approaches that give insight into agent behaviour: the mono-dimensional approach, which stresses one factor that causes agents to disclose information to a case officer, and the multi-dimensional approach, which adds complexity by putting an emphasis on more than one factor. What is evident when reviewing the academic literature on this subject is the fact that the role of an agent's environment is under-represented. This seems to contradict common sense. Does one's environment not influence the type of friends one has, the chances of becoming part of the criminal milieu, one's job opportunities, and much more in life? Why is it, then, that extreme behaviour such as spying, which can have serious consequences for the agent and his or her environment, is explained by a limited perspective of motivational factors? In the next section, I will discuss these questions.

2.3 Conducive environment

First, I will review the work of two authors who have emphasized the role of the agent's environment. Vashisth and Kumar introduce an interesting typology for the explanation of unethical behaviour, which they consider espionage to be.⁵⁰ It has four approaches:

1. The bad apple approach: The bad apple approach embodies the conviction that individual characteristics of a person determine unethical behaviour. They argue that MICE is the operational expedient of this approach.

⁴⁹ For example Taylor and Buchanon (2011) and Hitz (2005).

⁵⁰ Vashisth and Kumar, *Corporate espionage*.

2. The bad barrel approach: '*The bad barrel approach suggests that organizational and societal factors take precedence in explaining unethical behaviour.*'⁵¹ For example, informal norms at the workplace affect employee behaviour. If colleagues come to work late, then the informal norm of coming to work late can affect employees that would normally arrive on time.
3. The person-situation interactionist approach: This is a combination of the above-mentioned approaches. It considers the interaction between individual psychological and environmental factors.
4. The social network approach: This approach argues that it is not only individual and organizational factors that determine unethical behaviour, but also the social networks a person belongs to.⁵²

The third and fourth approach provided by Vashisth and Kumar provide useful leads towards a more balanced view of agent behaviour. It is notable that there seems to be a serious deficiency in academic empirical research on the environmental factors of (discovered) agents and whether these factors influenced their behaviour. It is not only mono-dimensional or multi-dimensional motivational factors that determine agent behaviour, but also trigger effects (for example a personal crisis, financial hardship) and an '*ease of opportunity*'.⁵³ In other words, situational factors and the environment of an agent also contribute to his or her decision to commit treason. These situational factors form an environment conducive to such a decision. But what are these factors?

Based on the theoretical discussion thus far, the observation that agent behaviour can be explained by examining motivation, trigger effects and the conducive environment is justifiable.⁵⁴ It is puzzling that the agent's environment does not receive more attention from intelligence studies researchers. There are at least two reasons for this lack of attention.

First, by reducing the explanatory factors to motivational elements inherent to the individual agent, a country's intelligence community clears itself of responsibility. If an agent betrays his country, it cannot be partly the fault of that country's institutions. A betrayer is a betrayer: '*Treason: 'Tis worse than murder.*'⁵⁵ This sentiment is vividly expressed by the

⁵¹ Vashisth and Kumar, *Corporate espionage*, p. 86

⁵² The four approaches are discussed on pages 85-87 of Vashisth and Kumar, *Corporate espionage*.

⁵³ *The Psychology of Treason*, p. 2

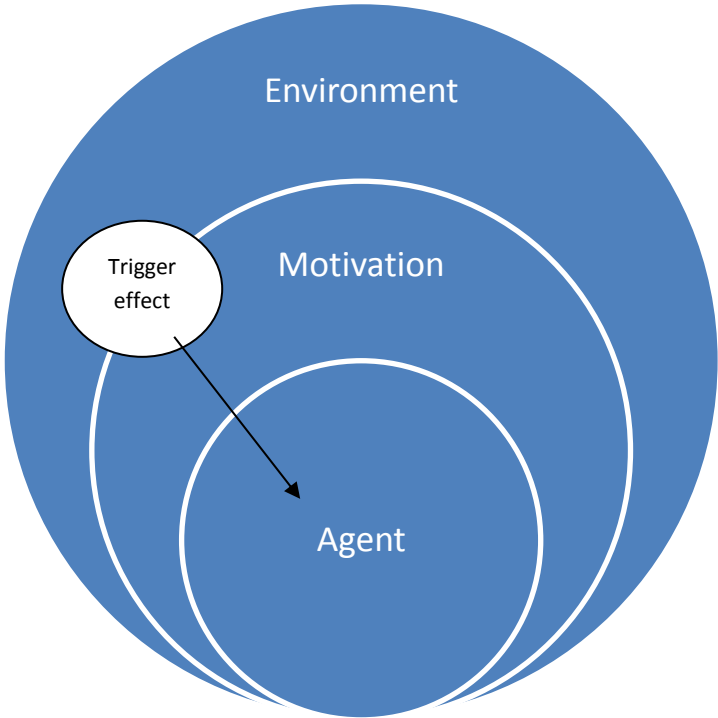
⁵⁴ Michalak, *Motives*, p. 1

⁵⁵ The title of an article written about espionage: Taylor and Buchanon, '*Tis worse*', pp. 518-536

authors of the two biographies on Ames used for this thesis: the titles are *Sellout* and *Betrayal*. An intelligence community that serves its country cannot be associated with such immorality. Instead, it closes its ranks and ostracizes an individual.

Second, it is possible to do research on criminals, but it is not possible to collect data by a participant observation on espionage, for obvious reasons. There are a lot more criminals than agents, they are more readily available for an interview after a short jail sentence, and the government publishes crime rates. These sources of data are not accessible for the study of agents that worked for a foreign state.

Considering that, for explaining agent behaviour it is justified to use three elements, (1) motivation, (2) the environment and (3) a trigger effect, as opposed to only motivational factors, leads to the following model:



This model, as opposed to models based on a mono- or multi-dimensional approach, adds the environment of an agent as an element that helps to explain agent behaviour. The trigger effect can either come from the environment, or it can be a motivational factor. For example, a financial crisis, a psychological breakdown, the realisation that one's career is off-track, or the qualms of conscience. Whatever it is, it is a sudden augmentation of the mentioned effects. Environmental factors include the work environment, the international environment, the security and risk environment, and the social environment (family and friends). In Chapter

4, the results of the case studies of two Soviet agents are presented. Some of these environmental factors apply to them.

3. Method

3.1 Units of analysis

The units of analysis of this study will be two agents: Aldrich Ames and Robert Hanssen. There are two reasons for choosing these agents. First, their actions have been well documented.⁵⁶ One problem with studying humint is that most agents are never caught. That means that a large part of possible cases are not available for study. The ones that remain are the ones that have been caught. Of those agents, some are used as leverage in exchange deals by diplomats or officials between countries. That means that the humint operation of which they were a part remains secret, because the agents do not appear in court. Some others that remain are ‘turned’ by the country they were stealing secrets from. This means that they change sides and become a double or even a triple agent. Turned agents can be used, for example, in a disinformation operation (providing incorrect information to a hostile intelligence organization) or for the hunt of other agents that the case officer is running (by mapping the contacts of the foreign case officer who thinks he or she is still controlling the turned agent). In sum, studying humint is a complicated matter and not many options are available for the selection of cases. The options that are available are the high-impact betrayers of national trust, such as Ames and Hanssen, who have had their photo on the front page of every national newspaper in the United States. Additionally, high-impact agents like Ames and Hanssen stir politicians. Their capture causes the establishment of investigative commissions that produce reports with recommendations for preventing more agents from stealing secrets. These reports are fruitful sources of data. Although the most up-to-date research results would have required the study of agents that have been caught in more recent years, it proved to be too difficult to collect sufficient empirical data on them.

While other agents have also been extensively documented, Ames and Hanssen combine proper documentation with being the most current and up-to-date cases. Ames and Hanssen are viewed by some as the most damaging spies in the recent history of the United States.⁵⁷ Indeed, they functioned as agents for a combined total of 30 years until the 90s of the last century, and Hanssen until as late as 2001. Up-to-date research is relevant for assessing the environment of agents because it is to be expected that environmental factors change over time. Thus, if the two cases studied were agents spying during World War II, the environmental factors would have been related to that specific phase of history; the current society has different characteristics than a society in a time of war. The reason the cases

⁵⁶ See for example Vise, *The Bureau*, and Adams, *Sellout* (biographies), *An Assessment and A Review* (reports), *The New York Times*, 31-7-1994 for a news article and Ellard, *Top Hat's face* and Hulnick, *The Ames Case* for academic articles.

⁵⁷ <http://www.wearethemighty.com/american-spies-military-secrets-2015-06>, accessed on 25-9-2015

studies are limited to one country, the United States, is because of the above mentioned degree of documentation.

The fact that Ames and Hanssen are both Americans does raise questions about the representativeness of this thesis. The results will not be generalizable for all agents: the characteristics of Ames and Hanssen are not sufficiently similar to the characteristics of other agents. For example, agents working in China live in a different culture and thus are subject to different manners and they have a different working environment. The results are not entirely representative for all United States intelligence organizations, but the information will be comprehensive enough to represent the CIA and the FBI because these two organizations have been described extensively in the sources used for this thesis.

3.2 Data collection

An obvious obstacle for scientific research about intelligence, and specifically humint, is the fact that it is secret by nature. The consequence is that it is not possible, and is even prohibited by law, to use classified information about humint operations, which would otherwise be a rich source of data. Even so, there are several sources available to the researcher:

1. Memoires and (auto-) biographies of case officers and agents;
2. Court proceedings of trials of states versus agents;
3. Declassified documents from the archives of intelligence organizations;
4. Interviews given by former agents or case officers to journalists or researchers;
5. Review reports written by commissions after an agent has been caught.

In addition, there have been initiatives to create databases to bring together data on humint and other intelligence-related subjects. One of those initiatives was undertaken by the Defence Personnel and Security Centre (PERSEREC) of the United States Department of Defence. PERSEREC has created an espionage database. It consists of 173 individuals, all Americans, who have been agents for foreign states. On each individual, data has been collected on five categories: (1) biographical attributes, (2) employment and related security clearance characteristics, (3) details of the act of espionage itself, (4) motivations and (5) consequences.⁵⁸ The goal is to analyse the agents to better understand the betrayal of trust of

⁵⁸ Herbig and Wiskoff, *Espionage*, p. x

United States citizens.⁵⁹ The PERSEREC Espionage database has published three unclassified reports on espionage in 1992, 2002 and 2008,⁶⁰ although the database itself is For Official Use Only (FOUO), which means that non-US citizens (like the author of this thesis) are denied access to it. Another initiative is the Centre for Counterintelligence and Security (CiCentre.com), which was established in 1997 by veterans from the United States intelligence community. CiCentre maintains a database called SpyPedia, which is ‘*an open source database that provides a rich source of counterintelligence, counterterrorism, and security-related information for counterintelligence and security professionals.*’⁶¹ These databases provide opportunities for researchers to study the secretive business of intelligence, although some intelligence professionals would prefer it to remain un-studied. I discuss this issue further, along with the denial of my access to the PERSEREC database, in Chapter 6.

As outlined above, the two units of analysis in this study are Ames and Hanssen. Because I want to investigate these agents’ environments, I have used biographies and reports written by commissions as my main sources for the collection of data. A biography is usually a thorough study of the life of a person and his or her environment. Reports written by commissions on foreign agents are deep, thoroughly executed studies of an agent’s upbringing, private life, professional career, social environment, and many other relevant aspects of his or her life. Such studies suit the answering of my research questions better than declassified documents, interviews, court proceedings or news articles. Supplementary sources of data are CiCentre.com and reference books on intelligence and humint.

A limitation of using biographies for academic research is bias.⁶² Bias means that data or the interpretations of the data are distorted. The sources used for this thesis are biographies written by American biographers and reports written by members of the United States intelligence community and politicians. Ames and Hanssen were two agents that betrayed the United States. It is to be expected that the biographies and reports have a certain amount of nationalistic bias. After all, the country of the authors of these sources has been betrayed and their national security has been jeopardized. In addition, it is also to be expected that not all information available on the activities of Ames and Hanssen is described. Intelligence organizations are an important aspect of a country’s national security and as such will not

⁵⁹ Herbig, *Changes*.

⁶⁰ Michalak, *Motives*, p. 1

⁶¹ www.CiCentre.com, accessed 22-5-2015

⁶² Rietveld, *De toepasbaarheid*, p. 2

reveal information that may cause even more harm than the damage that has already been done.

3.3 Data analysis

Qualitative content analysis is a technique that analyses texts to determine whether elements in those texts fit into content categories.⁶³ Although I did not define content categories, this technique was the most appropriate for my research. I identified an area that I wanted to explore: an agent's environment. I then used an inductive-exploring modus operandi.⁶⁴ Without pre-determined content categories, I analysed the cases of Ames and Hanssen. The goal was to identify possible categories that influence the behaviour of agents, although the amount of case studies for this thesis is insufficient to produce conclusive, evidence-based results that can be generalized to all agents. Nevertheless, the results point towards the need to revise the motivations for explaining agent behavior discussed in Chapter 2.

4. Results

⁶³ Segers, *Methoden*, p. 230

⁶⁴ *Ibid*, p. 232

In this chapter, the results of the qualitative content analysis are discussed by introducing Ames and Hanssen and their professional career, the period during which they operated as Soviet agents, and the factors in their environment that were conducive to their espionage. Then, these factors are schematized in the model presented in Chapter 2 for explaining agent behaviour.

4.1 Aldrich Ames

Aldrich Hazen Ames was born on May 26 in 1941 in River Falls, Wisconsin, in the United States. His father, Carleton C. Ames, worked in academia and wrote a dissertation on the role of the British in Burma. He was recruited by the CIA in 1952 for an assignment in Rangoon, Burma, thus creating a launching pad for his son's career. Rachel Aldrich, Ames's mother, spent most of her time raising him and his two sisters, Nancy and Alison.⁶⁵

Ames had summer jobs at the CIA during his teenage years. Later, after dropping out of the University of Chicago, he decided to apply for a permanent job as a clerk typist, which he obtained in 1962 at the Records Integration Division.⁶⁶ For the rest of his career, he worked for the CIA performing functions for several stations and divisions. He held positions as an operations officer with the task of recruiting Soviet agents, but also spent time at the CIA headquarters doing deskwork.

Between 1985 and 1994 he operated as an agent for the Soviet Union (Russia after 1989). During this period, he held positions at the Soviet and Eastern European Division of the Directorate of Operations, the CIA station in Rome, Italy, and the Counternarcotic Centre.⁶⁷ Ames is considered by many to be one of the most damaging Soviet agents in history to United States national interests. Among others, his activities for the KGB (after 1991 its successor, the SVR) compromised dozens of CIA and FBI intelligence operations and cost at least ten United States agents their lives.⁶⁸

The Ames case has been studied thoroughly and many books and articles have been written on various aspects of his espionage activities. The general impression from several authors is that Ames spied for money. He received more than two million dollars for his work as a Soviet agent and, after studying his case, it is clear that money was an important

⁶⁵ Adams, *Sellout*, pp. 16-18

⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p. 32

⁶⁷ An Assessment, http://fas.org/irp/congress/1994_rpt/ssci_ames.htm, accessed 26-6-2015

⁶⁸ Adams, *Sellout*, p. 90

motivational factor for him.⁶⁹ But does it fully explain his behaviour? As outlined in Chapter 3, I focused on Ames's environment in an effort to find factors that may help explain his behaviour. I found that there was one factor of critical influence: his work environment.

4.2 A Culture of Paranoia

*'There is the danger of the counter-intelligence expert becoming so involved in the problems of hostile services, that he starts to see counterintelligence cases through the eyes of the hostile intelligence service he has been studying so long. His judgement then goes. He sees ghosts where no ghosts exist. He invents ghosts to fit his theories. This has happened, and will happen again, and it can lead to disaster. Broadly speaking no highly intelligent, sensitive, counter-intelligence expert should be involved in this fascinating specialization for more than about twelve years. After that the 'Wilderness of Mirrors' starts to take over from common sense.'*⁷⁰

Monje makes a comment about counterintelligence work: *'Angleton [Head of Counterintelligence within the Directorate of Plans of the CIA from 1954 to 1974], according to some, became obsessive about the possibility of double agents within the CIA, although his defenders attributed the obsession to the nature of counterintelligence work.'*⁷¹ Angleton's obsession scarred the CIA for years and years. The counterintelligence officers of the Agency were mauled by his relentless policy.⁷² Ironically, Ames benefitted directly from the inheritance of the culture of fear created by Angleton's mole-hunt.⁷³ Organizational culture at the CIA can be described as a culture of paranoia. Paranoia is a psychological ailment, but it has several characteristics that are observable in CIA culture. These characteristics are (1) a chronic and pervasive distrust and suspicion of others, (2) feelings of being lied to, deceived, or exploited by other people, (3) being perceived, among others, as cold, secretive and serious and (4) looking for hidden meanings in gestures and conversations.⁷⁴

- *Chronic and pervasive distrust and suspicion of others:*

⁶⁹ Thompson, *Why Espionage Happens*, p. 12

⁷⁰ Lockhart in Lathrop, *The Literary Spy*, p. 53

⁷¹ Monje, *The Central Intelligence Agency*, p. 81

⁷² Weiner, *Betrayal*, pp. 217

⁷³ Adams, *Sellout*, p. 42

⁷⁴ <http://psychology.about.com/od/personalitydisorders/a/paranoid.htm>, accessed 13-7-2015

Ames was trained as an operations officer, an employee who is taught to manipulate the behaviour of others by using mostly interpersonal communication. He used communication techniques to assess whether Soviet contacts could become United States agents (see recruitment cycle, Chapter 1). Within the Directorate of Operations, most colleagues and superiors had the same skills. In an organization in which most employees have these skills, it is virtually impossible to trust others: one never knows the intention of the other. Employees that worked at the Soviet-East-European Division between 1985 and 1986, the period during which most intelligence operations were compromised due to Ames's activities, knew very well that they were suspects and under investigation by their counterintelligence colleagues.⁷⁵ In such a pervasive situation, who can be trusted?⁷⁶

- *Feelings of being lied to, deceived, or exploited by other people:*

These feelings find their source in the above-mentioned characteristic of distrust and suspicion. Some counterintelligence professionals call it the nature of their work: exploiting human sources by lying to and deceiving them. If a CIA employee has a meeting with an employee of a Soviet embassy or intelligence organization, how must one determine who is exploiting whom? Marchetti and Marks comment: *'The function of the counterespionage officers is to question and verify every aspect of CIA operations; taking nothing at face value, they tend to see deceit everywhere. In an agency full of extremely mistrustful people, they are the professional paranoids.'*⁷⁷

- *Perceived, among others, as cold, secretive and serious:*

Jones and Silbersahn characterize the identity and culture of the CIA as homogeneous in personnel, scientific, preferring secrets to other types of information, and captivated by consensus.⁷⁸ This characterization coincides with being *perceived, among others, as cold, secretive and serious*. If the reader thinks about the way he or she perceives the CIA, cold, secretive and serious are almost certainly some of the characteristics that come to mind. At least, this is the case for the author.

⁷⁵ The Aldrich H. Ames case, <http://www.loyola.edu/departments/academics/political-science/strategic-intelligence/intel/hitzrept.html>, accessed 26-6-2015

⁷⁶ Adams calls it a culture of fear and recrimination, in Adams, *Sellout*, p. 41

⁷⁷ Marchetti and Marks in Lathrop, *The Literary Spy*, p. 52

⁷⁸ Jones and Silbersahn, *Constructing Cassandra*, p. 36

- *Look for hidden meanings in gestures and conversations:*

Elevating this characteristic to the strategic level of operation, looking for the hidden meaning corresponds with the goal of humint: collecting information about the strategic intent of an opponent. The CIA was created for this reason. After the strategic surprise of Japan's attack on Pearl Harbour, there was political consensus that an independent intelligence organization was necessary to function as a strategic warning for a foreign state's offensive intentions towards the United States.⁷⁹ On an individual level, looking for hidden meanings in gestures and conversations is part of a counterintelligence officer's daily work.

In sum, like a gardener who uses his professional skills for his own garden, an intelligence officer like Ames, trained in the art of manipulating information, does not only use these skills to recruit foreign nationals, he also uses them when dealing with his colleagues and superiors. This is what Ames did in order to hide his contacts with Soviets, to whom he transferred classified United States documents.⁸⁰ A work environment that highly values and encourages these skills reinforces a culture of paranoia and is conducive to espionage.

4.3 Management

The CIA management has been criticized for allowing a mediocre employee with several instances of breaching security protocol to remain within the organization and further his career.⁸¹ Ames once even left a briefcase that contained classified documents in a taxi. The FBI was able to retrieve the briefcase from a Polish migrant, but the information was already compromised.⁸² In addition, Ames was known for coming to work intoxicated. Furthermore, during a background investigation (BI), several indicators of vulnerability became visible. Lastly, Ames was late submitting reports in which he had to account for the money he used for operations, and he had no interest in operational details. These are some of the elements that made him a sub-par operations officer. Despite these instances, CIA management allowed him to remain in the counterintelligence field and advance his career up to GS-14, a relatively

⁷⁹ Polman and Allen, *Spybook*, p. 426

⁸⁰ Bergman, *Operation*, p. 24

⁸¹ Adams, *Sellout*, p. 11

⁸² Hulnick, *The Ames Case*, p. 5

high United States government wage scale. A veteran CIA analyst commented on the CIA management: '*Plagued by poor leadership, the Agency is adrift.*'⁸³

In the case of Ames, the a posteriori critique of the CIA management when he was caught was mostly political due to the ease of the use of the 'failing management' argument and the receptiveness of it by American citizens.⁸⁴ Blaming management is politically opportune. Thompson makes a comment about this. He notes that the United States intelligence community has a '*gotcha*' culture, which is evidenced by the reports written about espionage cases such as the ones written about Ames.⁸⁵ Politicians' retrospective shaming and blaming of intelligence organizations after an intelligence failure increases the public's support of those politicians.

Another interesting observation about management in an intelligence organization like the CIA relates to the culture of paranoia discussed earlier: managers copy case officers' techniques for recruiting new agents when dealing with their own personnel. Why not use communication techniques to manipulate the behaviour of one's personnel if it suits one's interests? Case officers are often promoted to positions of leadership later in their career. Surely they do not forget their training. This enhances distrust between employees and managers in a profession in which trust is the most important element for operational success.⁸⁶ The culture of paranoia is enhanced by distrust. In sum, the CIA management was conducive to Ames's espionage activities because it did not resist and counteract the pervasive organizational culture of paranoia.

4.4 Contacts

Case officers are people that perform their job on the boundary of intelligence organizations. Professionals that work outside the organization they are affiliated with, are called 'boundary riders'.⁸⁷ As such, they initiate and develop contacts with organizations that have different standards than the organizations they work for. These contacts and the presence in a different environment may cause case officers to start behaving according to these different standards which may cause them to become less loyal to their own organization. Ames can be characterized as a 'boundary rider.'

⁸³ Weiner, *Legacy of Ashes*, p. 455

⁸⁴ See *An Assessment, The Aldrich H. Ames Case and A Review* (Ames).

⁸⁵ Thompson, *Why Espionage Happens*, p. 298

⁸⁶ Bergman, *Operation*, p. 10

⁸⁷ Graaff, *Deep throat*, p. 80-83

Ames's job as a case officer was to develop contacts and recruit them for the CIA. As such, he had permission from his superiors to meet Soviet embassy personnel when working in the United States.⁸⁸ When working at CIA stations abroad (notably the stations in Ankara, Mexico City and Rome where he was assigned for a period of time), he received poor job performance appraisals for not actively initiating and developing contacts with Soviet intelligence officers and diplomatic personnel.⁸⁹ Ames reported to his superiors in Rome that he was assessing a possible Soviet agent, Aleksey Khrenkov, the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs officer who worked at the Soviet embassy in Rome, and therefore had to meet him regularly. In reality, Khrenkov, code-named 'SAM II', was his contact with the KGB.⁹⁰ Ames himself has stated that 'lowered barriers' helped him during his period as a Soviet agent, one of them being '*the opportunity to meet Soviet officials under Agency sanction.*'⁹¹

Furthermore, contact with a Soviet official in New York, Sergey Fedorenko, with whom Ames had long conversations about Soviet-American relations, caused him to reconsider his loyalty.⁹² Fedorenko was stationed as a Soviet representative at the United Nations. The CIA targeted him as a possible agent. It was Ames's responsibility to assess and eventually recruit him. Fedorenko and Ames met for the first time in 1973 and instantly liked each other. They both enjoyed discussing world politics and the Soviet-United States relationship. They both agreed on the fact that the super powers were not enemies, but that instead bureaucrats in power maintained the hostile image to remain in power.⁹³ They held similar views and were able to challenge one another in discussion. Their relationship developed into one of friendship and respect.⁹⁴ '*Leveling the playing field,*' as Ames called it later, between him and Fedorenko on political and philosophical matters resulted in a lowering of Ames's loyalty towards national interests. Therefore, the crucial contact Ames had during his assignment in New York, in addition to later contacts he was allowed to have with other Soviets from 1984 through 1986,⁹⁵ facilitated his decision later in his career to become a Soviet agent; this is because these contacts caused Ames to become friends with

⁸⁸ An Assessment, http://fas.org/irp/congress/1994_rpt/ssci_ames.htm, accessed 26-6-2015

⁸⁹ The Aldrich H. Ames case, <http://www.loyola.edu/departments/academics/political-science/strategic-intelligence/intel/hitzrept.html>, accessed 26-6-2015

⁹⁰ An Assessment, http://fas.org/irp/congress/1994_rpt/ssci_ames.htm, accessed 26-6-2015

⁹¹ The Aldrich H. Ames case, <http://www.loyola.edu/departments/academics/political-science/strategic-intelligence/intel/hitzrept.html>, accessed 26-6-2015

⁹² Adams, *Sellout*, p. 45

⁹³ *Ibid*, p.46

⁹⁴ *Ibid*, p.46

⁹⁵ Adams, *Sellout*, p. 279

Soviets and develop respect for the Soviet Union. Ames was a ‘boundary rider’ because his loyalty towards the CIA diminished and his loyalty towards the Soviet Union increased.

In sum, there were three conducive factors in Ames’s environment: a culture of paranoia, the functioning of the CIA management, and his international contacts. It appears that these factors played a significant role in his decision to become a Soviet agent. I will now discuss another high-impact Soviet agent, former FBI employee Robert Hanssen, to determine whether he also had an environment conducive to espionage during the period in which he passed classified information to his case officers, one of whom was Viktor Cherkashin, the same case officer who controlled Ames.

4.5 Robert Hanssen

‘We believe that what is needed at the FBI is a wholesale change in mindset and approach to internal security.’ – Office of the Inspector General, August 14 2003

Robert Hanssen was born on 18 April, 1944. He started working for the FBI in 1976, where he worked until the time of his arrest 25 years later, on 18 February 2001, two months before his retirement. He was a family man and had six children with his wife Bonnie Wauck, whom he married in 1968. She practiced Catholicism, a religion to which Hanssen converted from Lutheranism. He was even a member of Opus Dei. During his 25-year FBI career, he mostly held positions in Soviet counterintelligence, the State Department and the FBI headquarters.⁹⁶ He is described as a mediocre FBI agent with solid technical skills, but lacking the managerial skills that are necessary for the positions higher in the hierarchy.⁹⁷

Hanssen was a KGB/GRU agent during three phases of his life.⁹⁸ From 1979 to 1981 he initiated contact with the Soviets. During this phase he betrayed a valuable United States agent, GRU officer General Polyakov, who was the highest ranking agent at the GRU working for the CIA. From 1985 to 1991, Hanssen compromised scores of top-secret documents and about 25 disks of information. He also passed information about the United States’ recruitment of double agents to the Soviets. Why he stopped in 1991 is not clear. He stated himself that he felt remorse, but it coincides with the collapse of the Soviet Union and an FBI investigation aimed at capturing a mole. Hanssen had knowledge of this investigation,

⁹⁶ A Review, <https://oig.justice.gov/special/0308/>, accessed 26-6-2015

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Ellard, *Top Hat’s Face*, p. 2

indicating that this might have been a reason as well.⁹⁹ In his last phase as an agent, from 1999 to 2001, he passed more sensitive information to the Russians, but he also became the subject of an FBI investigation. On 18 February 2001, just after leaving valuable documents in a dead letter box under a bridge in a park near his home, he was arrested and later sentenced to life in prison.

As with Ames, Hanssen's case has been thoroughly documented. There is consensus on his motivation for becoming an agent: psychological traits (which can be placed under the E of MICE). Hanssen had a contradictory personality: he was a devout Catholic, but visited strip clubs and taped himself having sex with his wife so that his best friend could watch them. Hanssen's colleagues described him as Dr. Death and The Mortician due to his black suits and lack of communication skills, but he was fascinated with espionage and the thrill of outwitting his co-workers, towards whom he felt morally superior. Ellard analyses Hanssen with the Dr. Jekyll and Mister Hyde dichotomy.¹⁰⁰ Besides psychological traits, Hanssen received cash donations and diamonds, which makes it easy to argue that money was part of his motivation.¹⁰¹ When studying a biography and some of the reports written on Hanssen, however, two factors in his work environment were also conducive to his actions.

4.6 A phlegmatic security culture

*'Simply put, security is not as valued within the [Federal] Bureau [of Investigation] as it is in other agencies....Security policies are too often viewed as a nuisance to negotiate around, rather than [as] edicts with which to comply....'*¹⁰²

When Hanssen started passing classified information to the Soviets, he believed he would never be caught.¹⁰³ He had good reasons to assume as much. Hanssen was never asked to do a polygraph test (common in the United States), he only ever did one background reinvestigation, and he never had to account for his financial situation. Security at the FBI was based on trust. No one thought it possible that an FBI employee could be capable of doing

⁹⁹ Ibid, p. 5

¹⁰⁰ Ellard, *Top Hat's Face*, p.8

¹⁰¹ www.CiCentre.com, accessed 22-5-2015

¹⁰² Cited from *The Washington Post*, 5 April 2002, in Latrop, *The Literary Spy*, p. 58

¹⁰³ Thompson, *Why espionage happens*, p. 302

what Hanssen did. Managers had previously reported an over-all lack of security awareness at the FBI, but until Hanssen's arrest no steps were taken to increase security.¹⁰⁴

During his career, Hanssen breached security protocol numerous times. None of the below-mentioned security breaches were documented by colleagues or superiors.¹⁰⁵

- Hanssen hacked into the computer system of the FBI to search for classified documents on Soviet operations. Knowing that he left a digital trail, he reported to a supervisor that there was a computer security leak at the FBI.¹⁰⁶ They believed him and did not investigate the possibility of wrong intentions.
- Hanssen disclosed sensitive information to a British intelligence service and to personal friends.
- Hanssen searched the FBI's Automatic Case Support System (ACS) computer system for documents for which he had no 'need-to-know' clearance. In addition, he queried his own name and address to see whether he was under investigation. The FBI had an audit capability for situations like these, but only used it when someone was under suspicion.
- For a large part of his career, he had no supervision. During work hours, Hanssen used this opportunity to develop encryptions with which he could communicate with the Russians.¹⁰⁷

After his arrest, Hanssen referred to the state of the FBI's internal security: '*If I had thought that the risk of detection was very great, I would never have done it.*'¹⁰⁸ This lax security culture within the FBI was conducive to Hanssen's espionage.

4.7 Working atmosphere

The above-mentioned absence of a polygraph test and the lack of background reinvestigations were part of a culture of collegial trust. Not only did this culture negatively affect the collective security awareness, it also excluded Hanssen from bonding with his co-workers and

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ A Review, <https://oig.justice.gov/special/0308/>, accessed 26-6-2015

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

building collegial trust. He did not fit into the ‘old boys’ network of trustees, not only because he was awkward, but also because the working atmosphere would not accept a misfit.¹⁰⁹

- Hanssen had a sense of superiority over his colleagues, and they felt it;
- He was a loner and did not fit in the group;
- He was a poor communicator and discussed subjects that were of no one’s interest;
- He dressed overly formally, for which his colleagues ridiculed him;
- As a manager, he had no interest in his co-workers and what his unit did;
- He alienated co-workers in general.¹¹⁰

As indicated earlier, aggressive mole hunts like the one the FBI embarked on in 1994 also damage the working atmosphere.¹¹¹ The 1994 mole hunt led to demoralized officers and even caused some experienced officers to resign. Continuous questioning and probing of employees by a counterintelligence team, in their effort to catch a mole, led to a feeling of being under continuous investigation. This was the case for a CIA employee who was wrongfully accused by the FBI for 21 months for the activities for which Hanssen was later arrested. The FBI later apologized to him and his family for the ‘adverse impact.’¹¹² It is not easy to build collegial trust, to bond with co-workers and to work together with them on intelligence operations when one is the suspect of one’s own bureau. This is the working atmosphere of which Hanssen was part. Paradoxically, the environment that was created by the mole hunt that was supposed to catch Hanssen was in fact a conducive factor that helped him remain undiscovered. In a sense, the culture of paranoia that has been identified as a conducive factor in Ames’s environment also played a role in Hanssen’s case. There is less attention for the suspicious behaviour of one specific employee if everybody is a suspect.

4.8 The conducive model

The data collected from the cases of Ames and Hanssen presented above can be used in the simple model for explaining agent behaviour presented in Chapter 2. This model is an

¹⁰⁹ www.CiCentre.com, accessed 22-5-2015 and Hitz, *Human*, p. 273

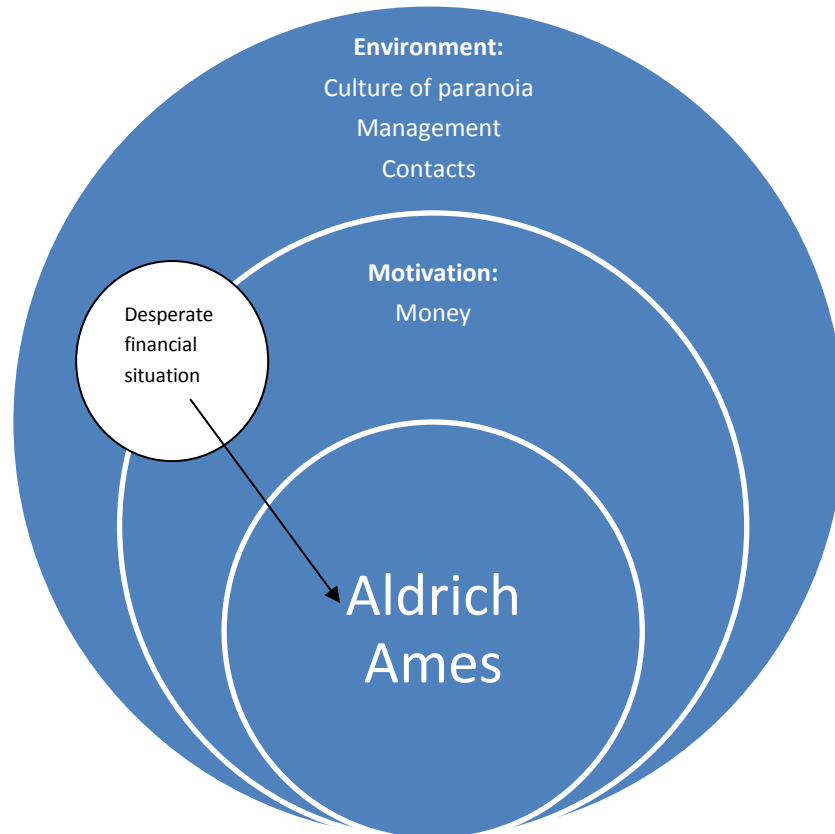
¹¹⁰ A Review, <https://oig.justice.gov/special/0308/>, accessed 26-6-2015

¹¹¹ Gentry, *Assessing*, p. 96

¹¹² Gallagher in Latrop, *The Literary Spy*, p. 58

improvement compared to other models because it accounts for environmental factors that influence agent behaviour.

The following figure explains Ames's behaviour using the results from Chapter 4.



The model depicts Ames, his motivation for spying, and the trigger effect that initiated it.¹¹³

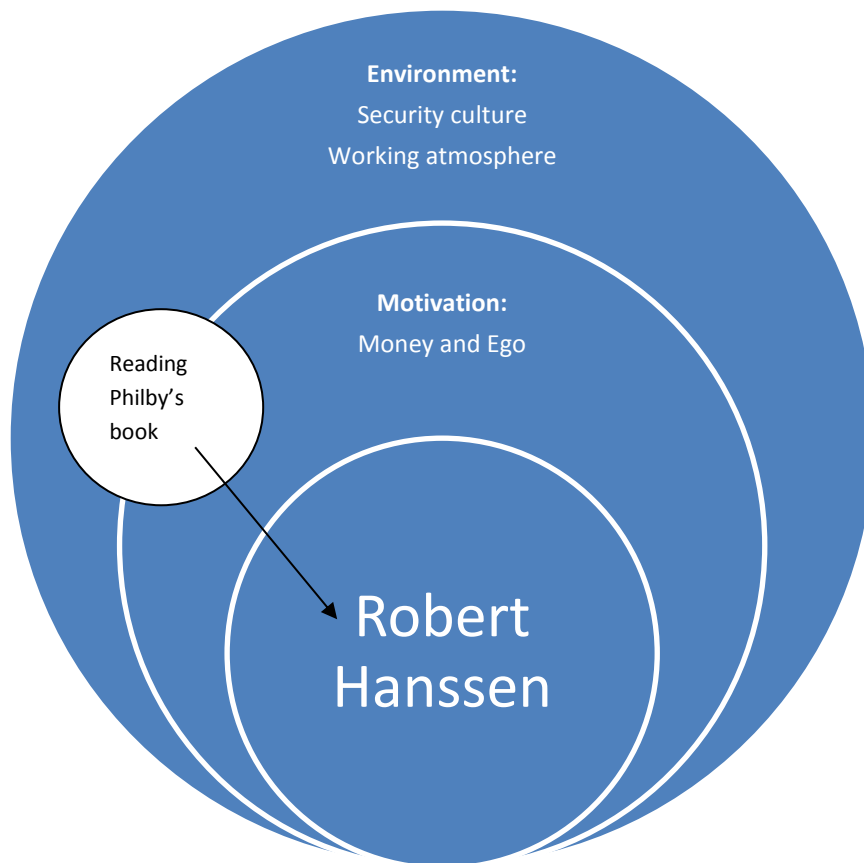
The motivation factor has been indicated by Ames himself: *'I would love to say that I did what I did out of some moral outrage over our country's acts of imperialism or as a political statement or out of anger toward the CIA or even a love for the Soviet Union. But the sad truth is that I did what I did because of money and I can't get away from that.'*¹¹⁴

Whereas mono- and multi-dimensional approaches to agent behaviour discussed in Chapter 2 only pay attention to agent motivation, this model of Ames presents three factors in his work environment that influenced his behaviour.

The following figure explains Hanssen's behaviour using the results from Chapter 4.

¹¹³ Ames in Lathrop, *The Literary Spy*, p. 386

¹¹⁴ The trigger effect for Ames was a financial hole he was in. See Lathrop, *The Literary Spy*, p. 386



In Hanssen’s case, money and his ego are commonly accepted as his motivations.¹¹⁵ Hanssen himself says that he decided upon his course of action after reading Kim Philby’s autobiographical book.¹¹⁶ Philby was one of the most damaging Soviet agents working for the British intelligence organization MI6 as Head of the Counterintelligence branch and, as such, responsible for intelligence operations in the Soviet Union. Hanssen had a worthy role model. In the outer circle of the model, the results from Chapter 4 identify the security culture at the FBI and the working atmosphere as the environment conducive to espionage.

5. Conclusion

5.1 Summary

¹¹⁵ Vise, *The Bureau*, p. 239

¹¹⁶ Hanssen in Lathrop, *The Literary Spy*, p. 387

When attempting to explain agent behavior, an understanding of the domain of intelligence organizations, the intelligence and recruitment cycles, and humint is required. In the introduction, I presented the domain in which an agent manoeuvres. When contemplating agent behaviour, the question arises of why people become an agent for a foreign intelligence organization, and of whether the theoretical notions that have been developed in the past are sufficient in explaining their behaviour. In Chapter 2, I came to the conclusion that the latter is not the case. After reviewing the mono- and multi-dimensional approaches to agent behaviour and the environment conducive to espionage, I argued that the latter did not receive the amount of attention it deserves. The following chapter outlined the units of analysis, the way I collected data and the way in which it was analysed. Chapter 4 discussed the results. I studied the environment of Aldrich Ames and Robert Hanssen, and I gathered information by examining their biographies and the research reports written by commissions after they were caught. By qualitatively analyzing the content of their environment, I developed a simple model for explaining agent behaviour.

The main research question posed in the introduction was whether current ideas about agent motivation could fully explain agent behaviour. Based on the theoretical review in Chapter 2, the answer is that these ideas cannot be considered sufficient. The current ideas that have been identified can grossly be summarized with MICE, although there have been successful efforts at refining the acronym. MICE confines itself to psychologically explained motivations. This thesis has put forward conclusive evidence that not only motivation, but also the environment of an agent are of influence when trying to explain an agent's behaviour. In Ames's case, the culture of paranoia at the CIA, agency (mis-) management and his international contacts all facilitated his actions. In Hanssen's case, the lax security culture at the FBI and the working atmosphere facilitated his 20+ years as a Soviet agent. In sum, Ames and Hanssen's work environments were conducive to their espionage.

5.2 Theoretical implications

The research agenda of intelligence studies, specifically research on agent behaviour, needs to be adjusted. If the environment of more agents is examined and similar results are found to

those of the study of Ames and Hanssen's environments, then the theoretical implication is that current concepts need revision. In Chapter 2 I argued that MICE and RASCLS are insufficient for explaining agent behaviour because they ignore an agent's environment. One way to remedy this is to create another acronym that does not replace but supplements them: WEOC (Work Environment and Organizational Culture) or MICSE (Management, International Contacts and Social Exclusion). Of course, WEOC and MICSE are merely hypotheses, but based on the research on Ames and Hanssen, they should be further investigated.

Another theoretical implication is fairly obvious, but is still worth mentioning. Most academic research on agent behaviour has been done using United States nationals who worked for foreign, mostly Soviet/Russian intelligence organizations. This means that both motivation and environment are narrowly examined. A Chinese national working for a Taiwanese intelligence organization comes from another culture and has a different environment and quite possibly a different set of motivational reasons for betraying his or her country than Ames and Hanssen did. It is important to understand that the academic development of intelligence studies is a Western phenomenon, and that the views, concepts and theoretical constructs that are built are a reflection of this. Most research on agent motivation draws from the PERSEREC espionage database.¹¹⁷ It is one of the richest sources of data on the subject, but it only contains agents who were active in the United States. Furthermore, the academics who study these agents are scholars from the United States as well.

5.3 Practical implications

The research findings presented above should be of interest to the management of intelligence organizations. Managers have the possibility of exerting influence on organizational culture, work environment and trust within their section, bureau or department. They should resist the counterintelligence notion that distrust and paranoia are part of 'the nature of counterintelligence', because if they do not, they create an environment conducive to the event they would rather prevent: an agent working for a foreign state.¹¹⁸ There are several options for intelligence organizations to prevent distrust and paranoia within their ranks:

¹¹⁷ See for example Fisher, *Espionage* and Michalak, *Motives* and Herbig, *Changes*.

¹¹⁸ Adams, *Sellout*, pp. 12-13

- Hiring managers without operational experience. They are not trained in the manipulative communication techniques in which the case officers are trained.
- External auditing. Auditing can be done by private organizations, although measures must be taken to ensure the audit can take place without the disclosure of classified information.
- Measuring work satisfaction among employees. Happy employees create a positive working atmosphere.
- Hiring psychologists and organizational sociologists. They can whether individuals are affected by the culture of paranoia.
- Designate a fixed amount of time during which an employee works within counterintelligence, in order to prevent employees from getting lost in the ‘Wilderness of Mirrors’.

Another option is to direct an internal research project aimed at identifying an obstructive environment. I have only discussed an environment conducive to espionage, but if the research findings presented in Chapter 4 are hypothetically reversed, a work environment obstructive to damaging agent behaviour might emerge. If there are factors that are conducive, there are surely factors that are obstructive.

6. Discussion

6.1 Limitations

*'Some scientists believe that, in the spirit of furthering scientific discovery, research findings must be divulged.'*¹¹⁹

The above is an interesting and perhaps counter-intuitive statement. Sharing research findings is something that is self-evident in the academic community, with an estimated 24,000 scientific research journals being published on a regular basis in which findings are presented for peer review.¹²⁰ The contrast between transparent scientific research and the secrecy of intelligence gathering is obvious. Emil Fuchs, a British nuclear physicist with German roots, illustrates this contrast. He was a Soviet agent during World War II and afterwards and passed documents to a Soviet case officer about the applied science of separating uranium-235 from uranium-238. Uranium-235 is the fissionable material that was used to make the atomic bomb, developed by the Manhattan Project in the United States. The information provided by Fuchs accelerated the Soviet effort of creating their own atomic bomb.¹²¹ In this example, scientific knowledge was developed in a classified research project because it was part of political and military strategy. It makes the above quote more understandable.

As I mentioned earlier, I was denied entry into a research database: the Espionage database from PERSEREC, a research centre that is part of the Department of Defence of the United States. The database is FUOU. This means that entry is reserved to United States nationals: for foreigners, the use of the database is prohibited. My inability to use their data on espionage did not positively affect the quality of my academic thesis. The database may contain data on the environment of Ames and Hanssen that could have resulted in the identification of more factors within their environment. It might also contain data on another agent that could indicate different conducive factors in other circumstances, such as in another intelligence organization. The main limitation of doing research in the realm of intelligence is the lack of empirical data. A geologist delves into the earth and finds a rock; a researcher who delves into intelligence hits one.

6.2 Future research

In Chapter 2 I gave a concise overview of the literature and the research done on humint. The data collection done for this master thesis is just as concise: it consists of the reports and biographies written about two agents, Aldrich Ames and Robert Hansen. Based on this data, I

¹¹⁹ Kramer and Heuer, *America's Increased Vulnerability*, p. 50

¹²⁰ <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2909426/>, accessed 12-4-2015

¹²¹ Polmar and Allen, *Spy Book*, p. 224

have suggested a theoretical model that comprises agent motivation, a trigger effect and the conducive environment, three elements that explain agent behaviour. Future research should be aimed first at elaborating on this model by doing research on more agents like Ames and Hanssen. More data will lead to more refined theoretical models than the one I have introduced. Second, there are some similarities between Ames and Hanssen: both are Americans, worked for the Soviets, spied in the 1980s and 1990s, were employed by large US sponsored intelligence organizations and were active in the field of counterintelligence. When focusing on the environment, it seems probable that agents with a different nationality and cultural background, who worked for another state than the United States, who were active after the end of the Cold War and who worked for commercial intelligence organizations, for the military, for industry or for high-tech companies, will have been facilitated by other factors than Ames and Hanssen were. In sum, the possibilities for further research are present, but they are confined by the amount of information made public. Humint operations are strategic assets that are desperately kept secret by governments.

Another aspect that needs attention from researchers is the trigger effect. I have left it out of this thesis for practical reasons, but if agents indeed need a trigger to start working for a foreign intelligence organization, it is worth creating a research project aimed at identifying what the trigger might be. The results of this project would be useful for intelligence organization management because it would give them guidance in re-examining their employees when a proven trigger occurs in their lives.

Lastly, in this thesis the work environment has proven to be conducive in the activities of Ames and Hanssen as Soviet agents. An aspect of the work environment is bureaucracy. Although bureaucracy was not a factor that emerged based on the five reports and assessments and the biographies of the two agents, it does seem to me that it might be a relevant conducive factor for other cases. The sociologist Max Weber theorized about it and formulated seven characteristics for his 'ideal-type' bureaucracy:¹²²

1. It consists of a continuous organization of official functions (offices) bound by rules.
2. Each office has a specified sphere of competence.
3. The offices are organized in a hierarchical system.
4. The offices may carry with them technical qualifications that require that the participants obtain suitable training.

¹²² Quoted from Ritzer, *Classic*, p. 234

5. The staff that fill these offices do not own the means of production associated with them; staff members are provided with the use of those things that they need to do the job.
6. The incumbent is not allowed to appropriate the position; it always remains part of the organization.
7. Administrative acts, decisions, and rules are formulated and recorded in writing.

These characteristics seem to fit an intelligence organization perfectly. The rationalization of functions within the intelligence cycle is obvious: direction (management/politicians), collection (the 'int's'), processing and analysis (the desk analysts), and dissemination (intelligence organization management), all subdivided into regions (e.g. Middle East) or by theme (e.g. nuclear proliferation). The amount of offices and sub-specialisations at intelligence organizations is enormous. Furthermore, when considering both the characteristics of bureaucracy and the four aspects of the culture of paranoia presented in Chapter 4, it would appear that there might be a correlation, at a minimum, or even a causal connection in that the former enhances the latter. It seems unlikely that a culture of paranoia can flourish within an organization that has none of the seven above-mentioned elements. Research that aims to determine the relationship between bureaucracy and espionage appears to be a fertile academic field.

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