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Virtues of Intelligence Accountability

Beliefs, Practices and Battles in the Danish Intelligence Field

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Virtues of Intelligence Accountability

Beliefs, Practices and Battles in the Danish Intelligence Field

PhD Dissertation

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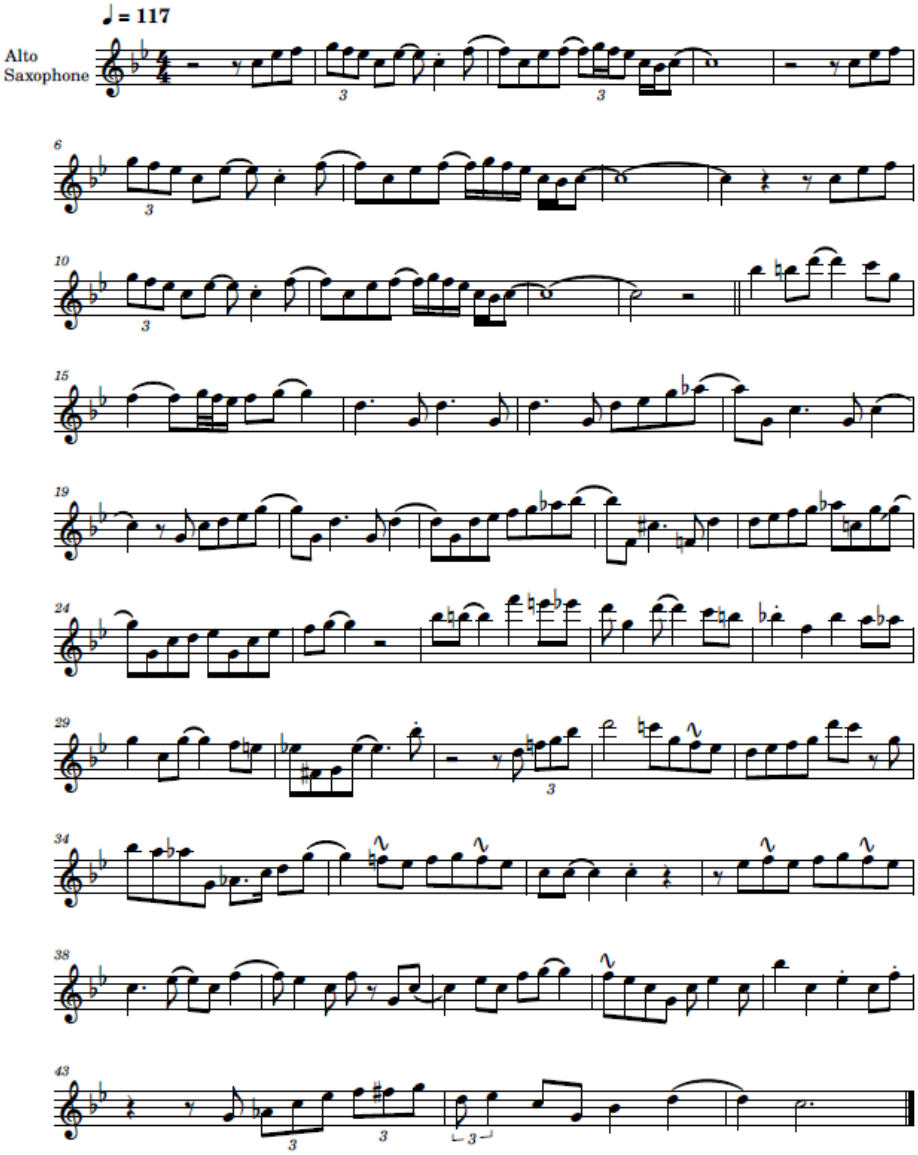
When challenges arise, simply yield and listen.

Desmond Blue

Paul Desmond



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Abstract

The secrecy with which state intelligence services operate fundamentally conflicts with the democratic ideals of transparency, the balance of power, parliamentarism, fundamental rights, and the Rule of Law. Consequently, intelligence services, while essential for national security, embody the paradox which democracies are continuously attempting to resolve by invoking a fundamental democratic principle, namely accountability. This dissertation investigates the complex relationship between intelligence accountability and democracy by addressing the plural understandings of accountability, with Denmark as its focal point. Traditional approaches in Intelligence Studies have primarily centred on formal oversight mechanisms and legal frameworks, viewing accountability as a balancing exercise against security concerns. However, these functionalist perspectives often neglect value-driven beliefs, practices, and organisational dynamics, which fundamentally shape how accountability is understood and implemented within the intelligence field.

Drawing on Critical Intelligence Studies, Public Administration literature, and New Institutionalism, this dissertation introduces the concept of "intelligence accountability as a virtue" to explore how actors within the intelligence field understand and practice accountability. By shifting focus from the technical aspects of accountability mechanisms to value-based understandings, this dissertation elucidates accountability as a dynamic, contested, and context-dependent phenomenon embedded in societal and political frameworks. This approach transcends the assumption that accountability is merely a zero-sum trade-off with security, instead highlighting the ways in which different actors' understandings of intelligence accountability contribute to tensions in the intelligence field and how prevailing accountability virtues shape accountability mechanisms.

Denmark is utilised as the empirical case, as it exemplifies numerous dilemmas and challenges associated with intelligence accountability, and thus functions as a case of how distinct intelligence accountability virtues, as understood by actors, contribute to conflicts among actors and influence accountability mechanisms.

The analysis reveals that organisational actors understand and prioritise intelligence accountability in accordance with their own value-based beliefs, thus underscoring the argument that accountability is an inherently political concept, which is influenced by power structures and should not be reduced to matters of legality and formal oversight structures. These findings suggest that scholarly discussions on intelligence accountability ought to consider the power associated with accountability and acknowledge that stakeholders in intelligence accountability are not limited to formal oversight bodies and political decision-makers but encompass a much broader range of actors and perspectives if intelligence accountability is to be considered democratic. Additionally, the findings demonstrated that intelligence accountability virtues are founded on the perceived sources of an organisation's legitimacy and the elements constituting an organisation's authority.

This dissertation makes three key contributions to the literature. Theoretically, it introduces a conceptual understanding of intelligence accountability as a virtue by emphasising value-driven beliefs and practices rather than focusing solely on formal structures. It also introduces a methodological framework for studying accountability virtues by applying the Institutional Logics analytical framework. Empirically, this study provides insights into the Danish intelligence field, an underrepresented context in Intelligence Studies, demonstrating how intelligence accountability virtues centre on the organisational integrity of the intelligence organisation rather than on democratic ideals of participation, pluralism, and contestation. The case study further illustrates how accountability virtues shape the design of accountability mechanisms favouring internal accountability mechanisms within the intelligence service, while neglecting democratic accountability and limiting legal accountability. Finally, it offers a societal contribution by advocating for open and informed political and public debate to enhance intelligence accountability in Danish democracy, protect democratic principles and fundamental rights, and improve the capacity to protect national security in the long term. In doing so, this research advances both academic discourse and practical understanding of intelligence accountability in democratic societies.

Dansk Resumé

Den hemmeligholdelse, som statslige efterretningstjenester opererer under, står i grundlæggende modsætning til demokratiske idealer som gennemsigtighed, magtdeling, parlamentarisme, beskyttelsen af grundlæggende rettigheder og respekten for retsstatsprincipper. Selvom efterretningstjenester spiller en afgørende rolle for national sikkerhed, repræsenterer de samtidig et paradoks, som demokratier konstant må navigere ved at henholde sig til et af de centrale demokratiske principper: ansvarlighed. Denne afhandling undersøger det komplekse forhold mellem efterretningstjenesters ansvarlighed og demokrati med særligt fokus på forskellige forståelser af ansvarlighed i den danske kontekst.

Traditionelle tilgange inden for efterretningsstudier har i høj grad været rettet mod formelle kontrolmekanismer og juridiske rammer, hvor ansvarlighed ofte fremstilles som en afvejning mellem sikkerhed og tilsyn. Disse funktionalistiske perspektiver overser imidlertid ofte de værdibaserede overbevisninger, praksisser og organisatoriske dynamikker, der i høj grad former, hvordan ansvarlighed forstås og implementeres i efterretningsfeltet.

Med udgangspunkt i kritiske efterretningsstudier, offentlig forvaltning og organisationsanalyse introducerer afhandlingen begrebet "efterretningsansvarlighed som en dyd". Dette begreb anvendes til at undersøge, hvordan aktører inden for efterretningsfeltet forstår og praktiserer ansvarlighed. Ved at flytte fokus fra tekniske og strukturelle mekanismer til værdibaserede forståelser fremhæver afhandlingen ansvarlighed som et dynamisk, omstridt og kontekstafhængigt fænomen, der er indlejret i bredere samfundsmæssige og politiske kontekster. Denne tilgang udfordrer den udbredte opfattelse af ansvarlighed som et simpelt nulsumsspil i forhold til sikkerhed og belyser i stedet de måder, hvorpå forskellige aktørers opfattelser skaber spændinger og former ansvarlighedens praksisser og mekanismer.

Danmark udgør det empiriske udgangspunkt for afhandlingen, da den danske case illustrerer en række dilemmaer og udfordringer i forbindelse med efterretningsansvarlighed. Analysen viser, at organisatoriske aktører konstruerer og prioriterer ansvarlighed ud fra egne værdibaserede overbevisninger, hvilket understøtter argumentet om, at ansvarlighed er et iboende politisk begreb. Ansvarlighed formes således af magtstrukturer og bør

ikke reduceres til spørgsmål om juridiske standarder eller formelle tilsynsstrukturer.

Resultaterne understreger behovet for, at akademiske diskussioner om efterretningsansvarlighed adresserer de magtforhold, der ligger bag konstruktionen af ansvarlighed. Desuden viser afhandlingen, at aktører inden for efterretningsansvarlighed rækker ud over formelle tilsynsorganer og politiske beslutningstagere, idet en bredere kreds af interessenter bør inddrages for at sikre, at ansvarligheden lever op til demokratiske idealer. Analysen fremhæver yderligere, at ansvarlighedsdyder udspringer af de opfattede legitimitetskilder og autoritetselementer, som en organisation baserer sin eksistens på.

Afhandlingen bidrager med tre væsentlige dimensioner til litteraturen. For det første introducerer den en teoretisk ramme for forståelsen af efterretningsansvarlighed som en dyd, der fokuserer på værdibaserede overbevisninger og praksisser frem for udelukkende på formelle strukturer. For det andet præsenteres en metodisk tilgang, der anvender Institutional Logics til at analysere og forstå ansvarlighedsdyder. For det tredje leverer afhandlingen et væsentligt empirisk bidrag ved at undersøge den danske kontekst, som ofte er underrepræsenteret i efterretningsstudier. Resultaterne viser, hvordan efterretningsansvarlighed i Danmark primært centrerer sig om organisatorisk integritet snarere end demokratiske idealer pluralisme, inddragelse og muligheden for at udfordre magthaverne.

Afslutningsvis argumenterer afhandlingen for nødvendigheden af en mere åben og informeret offentlig debat om efterretningsansvarlighed for at beskytte demokratiske principper og grundlæggende rettigheder samt styrke den nationale sikkerhed på lang sigt. Dermed bidrager denne forskning både til den akademiske diskurs og til en praktisk forståelse af efterretningsansvar i demokratiske samfund.

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About IntelHub

IntelHub is an innovative multidisciplinary research project led by Kira Vrist Rønn and hosted at the Center for War Studies at the University of Southern Denmark. In addition to Kira Vrist Rønn, IntelHub researchers include post-doc Adam Diderichsen, post-doc Mia Hartmann, post-doc Hedvig Örden, research assistant Josephine Moll Thayssen and PhD student Melanie Sofia Hartvigsen. This project has two main objectives. First, it focuses on the question of how the legitimacy of intelligence services can be built, maintained, and restored. Questions concerning the legitimacy of intelligence services have increasingly arisen in recent decades, following a series of intelligence scandals in the Western world. In response, IntelHub explores strategies to ensure the legitimacy of intelligence services, with a particular focus on Scandinavian intelligence communities.

The research group prioritises studies on the feasibility of increased transparency and perceptions of accountability. All IntelHub researchers have experience collaborating with governmental institutions, including the police and military. Methodologically, IntelHub concentrates on publicly available sources, including legal frameworks and control mechanisms, along with qualitative interviews and conceptual analyses. The research question is explored through four distinct yet interrelated and multidisciplinary studies, each focusing on the core concepts of institutional legitimacy: legality, accountability, transparency, and consent. By applying intelligence services as an extreme case of building institutional legitimacy under conditions of secrecy, the research project also challenges and enhances the scholarly literature on legitimacy.

Second, IntelHub seeks to advance the Scandinavian perspective on intelligence studies. The scholarly field of intelligence studies has largely been dominated by American and British perspectives, which may not be easily translated into other cultural contexts. Translation into the Scandinavian context may be even more difficult because of the particular Scandinavian culture, which is characterised by a high degree of social cohesion and trust. By engaging with a wide range of international, particularly Scandinavian, partners, IntelHub foregrounds Scandinavia and initiates critical dialogue and discussion on the legitimacy of intelligence services within high-trust societies.

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I Introduction

> "If there is no intelligence accountability, there is no democracy."
> (former UN Special Rapporteur on Privacy, personal communication, October 22, 2024)

Intelligence services rarely occupy our thoughts. When they do, it is either because we just binged watched the fascinating and highly disturbing French spy show *Le Bureau des Légendes* or because a whistleblower burdened by moral qualms leaked classified information to the media. However, these portrayals often fail to address the fundamental dilemmas and societal issues arising from the secrecy employed by intelligence organisations. Interestingly, Western intelligence services have become more visible in recent years, releasing national threat assessments or providing regular updates on the war in Ukraine (Dylan and Maguire 2022; Petersen 2019). This increased openness offers the public some insight into the workings of these secretive entities. Nevertheless, when I suggest truly contemplating intelligence services, I am referring to how their very existence is at odds with the core values and principles upon which most democratic societies are founded.

Institutionalised intelligence is not a democratic idea. Throughout history, intelligence has been employed to give rulers an edge in warfare against external foes and to sustain non-democratic regimes through means of control, surveillance and repression of the population (Boraz and Bruneau 2006; Andrew 2018). From ancient China's Sun Tzu 500 BC to the Middle East's Muhammad a millennium later, intelligence was deemed crucial for military success in maintaining, expanding, or unifying the territories of the sovereign, and medieval Europe excelled in utilising intelligence during the Inquisition to root out heresy among its own (Andrew 2018). The core purpose of intelligence remains largely unchanged. Operating in secrecy, it continues to be essential for gaining decision-advantage over external adversaries, safeguarding against internal threats to the sovereign, and occasionally meddling in other nations' affairs through clandestine operations (Andrew 2018; Johnson 2008b; Sims 2022). In this sense, intelligence services play a role in preserving existing systems, a role that persists. The significant change lies in the fact that the system intelligence

services now protect may be a democracy where citizens demand transparency in governmental actions carried out on their behalf. Secretive government organisations often stand in contrast to democratic ideals, and the process of transforming intelligence agencies to function within a democratic framework is fraught with challenges, dilemmas, and paradoxes (Braat 2016). It is as much a difficulty for new democracies (Martin 2007) as it is still a problem for old democracies (Kniep et al. 2023; Born and Wetzling 2009). The contradiction between a powerful state organisation operating in secrecy to protect a system founded on principles of balance of power, parliamentarism, fundamental rights, transparency, and the Rule of Law is evident. In recent years, this paradox has been exacerbated as democracies allocate the services enormous budgets[1] and far reaching mandates for national security purposes (Koch 2016; Herman 2004), while the public increasingly demands governmental openness and transparency (Richards 2012). To legitimise or at least make this contentious arrangement acceptable, democracies have turned to another fundamental democratic principle: accountability.

Democratic accountability connects authority with legitimacy (McGee 2020; Yauri-Miranda 2021), as illustrated in Figure 1. For authority to be exercised in a democratic manner, it must be legitimate and this legitimacy should be granted on a reasonably informed basis (Beetham 2013). Hence, the importance of accountability, which serves as a cornerstone of democracy. Governments are continually held to account for a range of matters. This process enables opposition parties, the media, the public, and civil society groups to challenge those in power and ideally receive truthful responses. Put simply, democratic accountability concerns the relationship between those wielding political power and the public (Müller-Wille 2006b; Yauri-Miranda 2021). However, democratic accountability extends beyond political decision-makers to encompass state organisations (Bovens, Goodin, and Schillemans 2014), including intelligence services (Born and Leigh 2005). In the realm of intelligence, democratic accountability implies

[1] To mention a few, the budget for the US Intelligence Community increased from $63.5 billion in 2007 to $106.3 billion in 2024 (Office of the Director of National Intelligence n.d.), while the Danish parliament has recently approved an additional allocation of DKK 288.8 million to the Danish Defence Intelligence Service from 2024 to 2025 ('L 191 Forslag til finanslov for finansåret 2025. L 191 - endeligt svar på spørgsmål 23 [L 191 Proposal for the Finance Act for the Fiscal Year 2025. L 191 - final response to question 23]' 2024)

a relationship between these services and the populace. Nevertheless, given the secretive nature of these organisations and the sensitivity of their work, more limited arrangements have been deemed necessary, such as the establishment of formal independent intelligence oversight bodies, with a legal framework mediating the relationship between services and oversight bodies (Müller-Wille 2006b). Over the latter half of the 20th century, most well-established Western democracies have implemented some form of an intelligence oversight system.

Figure 1. The Connector Between Legitimacy and Authority

Inspired by Yauri-Miranda's model in "Principles to Assess Accountability" (2021)

Notwithstanding the widespread recognition in democratic nations that intelligence services should be held accountable through oversight, the intelligence oversight evolution has been marked by inadequacies, scandals, resistance, and political apathy or outright unwillingness to establish proper accountability structures (Johnson 2008a; Leigh 2012; S. J. Andersen, Hansen, and Davies 2022; Hillebrand 2019; Van Puyvelde 2014). The structure of intelligence accountability and its associated challenges differ from country to country and scholars have identified several case-based issues with intelligence oversight. These include the ineffectiveness of oversight bodies in monitoring intelligence services (Johnson 2008a), concerns raised by intelligence services that accountability measures hinder their effectiveness and accusations of incompetence directed at overseers (Wegge 2017; Manjikian 2016), politicians' reactive approach to oversight responsibilities and intelligence oversight reform while neglecting the issue during

periods of stability (Johnson 2014), civil society's thundering against their governments for permitting or failing to prevent mass surveillance, torture, and secret extrajudicial killings (Amnesty International 2015; Transparency International 2021; Reprive 2020; Gossman 2019), and rulings by international legal entities, such as the European Court of Human Rights, against states' intelligence practices, calling for methods more in line with the fundamental rights of citizens (Case of Big Brother Watch and Others v. The United Kingdom 2021; Case of Centrum för Rättvisa v. Sweden 2021). Clearly, intelligence accountability faces widespread challenges and is subject to a range of complex issues that fundamentally threaten democratic values and rights, and therefore, conflicting attitudes towards the concept, coupled with political neglect, should be a matter of concern in any democracy. Furthermore, the accountability of democratic leaders in general and intelligence services in particular become increasingly significant as democracies grow more security-conscious and gradually implement proactive security measures, such as digital surveillance methods, which may conflict with fundamental human rights, including the right to privacy and data protection (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2017).

In Intelligence Studies (IS), academic discourse and proposed resolutions regarding intelligence accountability have primarily centred on oversight in general, and formal oversight bodies in particular (see, for example, Born and Wetzling 2009; Leigh 2009; Caparini 2007). These discussions have largely emphasised the functional aspects of oversight, advocating for more robust legal frameworks (Klaaren 2015; Hardy and Williams 2016), enhanced authority for oversight bodies to sanction the services (Van Puyvelde 2013; Eriksen 2011; Aden 2018; Jansson 2018), better access to information (Greenwood and Huisman 2004; Müller-Wille 2006a; Barber 2017), and increased expertise among those conducting oversight (Defty 2022; Matei 2014; Born 2004). However, an underlying assumption in these arguments is that oversight bodies must not compromise the effectiveness of the intelligence services (Born 2004; Müller-Wille 2006a; Matei 2014), suggesting the need to strike a *balance* between accountability and security. This implies that increased accountability necessitates reduced security and vice versa (Leon-Reyes 2022; Hartvigsen 2024). The prevailing focus on these aspects gives rise to two overarching issues.

First, accountability is not oversight (Farson and Whitaker 2010). Oversight is a precondition for accountability and may lead to accountability (Gill 2020); however oversight does not have the inherent qualities of explainability, discussion, contestation and potential consequences. Second, the common discourse in IS, which emphasises intelligence effectiveness

and advocates for robust legal frameworks and improved institutional structures to balance accountability and security, inadvertently exacerbates existing tensions among actors involved in intelligence accountability by assuming that intelligence services resist being held accountable (Manjikian 2016). The notion of intelligence accountability as a zero-sum game, in which accountability measures and security objectives are opposed, presents considerable challenges. In this framing, oversight bodies are perceived as liabilities in a tug-of-war where security concerns typically supersede accountability, relegating the latter to a position of lesser importance (Leon-Reyes 2022; Tulumello 2021; Heidelberg 2017). This perspective perpetuates a functionalist and problem-solving approach that reinforces prevailing assumptions and maintains the status quo (Klein Goldewijk 2021). Moreover, by portraying the objectives of intelligence services and oversight bodies as mutually exclusive, this zero-sum logic impedes progress in discussions and firmly establishes accountability as a lower priority.

From a broader societal standpoint, democratic nations risk inadvertently compromising essential human rights in pursuit of enhanced security (Tulumello 2021), while their intelligence services may face a gradual erosion of public trust, which could critically impact their work (Diderichsen 2016). While I acknowledge the valuable contributions of existing research on how democracies can design legislation and intelligence oversight to create a system that respects human rights while enabling the services to carry out their work effectively, I argue that a crucial aspect has been overlooked: how the actors themselves understand accountability. The notion that intelligence services are inherently resistant to accountability seems questionable. Previous studies have demonstrated that intelligence professionals are keen to understand their evolving organisational roles within a changing society (Manjikian 2016; Díaz-Fernández 2023) and they often exhibit strong dedication to professional ethics and standards (Caparini 2007). A colleague once shared that her informants from a security organisation emphasised, "we are citizens too". It appears dubious to presume that intelligence professionals have no interest in upholding the fundamental rights of the society they are part of. With this in mind, my attention was drawn to the following reflection: *How can we theoretically and empirically make sense of intelligence accountability as a field of conflict beyond the functionalist and problem-solving approach to better understand the role of intelligence services in the societal and political context in which they exist?*

Drawing upon recent Critical Intelligence Studies (CIS) research, Public Administration literature and New Institutionalism, this dissertation will

demonstrate the necessity for greater emphasis on the understandings of intelligence accountability, rather than solely focusing on legislation and structures. To cover these understandings, I use the concept of *intelligence accountability as a virtue*, which encompasses value-driven beliefs and practices that shape how actors understand the desired and proper qualities of intelligence organisations and officials in relation to accountability. In simple terms, virtues are what actors believe to be true.

My argument is that accountability is not simply a technical concept, but a value-driven one that shapes the beliefs and practices of organisational actors within the intelligence field. This field, understood as an arena of strategy, conflict, and shared purpose (DiMaggio 1983), provides the context in which these understandings unfold. Although the existing literature recognises the importance of actors' understandings, their deeper exploration and conceptualisation remain largely unaddressed (Hartvigsen 2024). Neglecting the virtues of intelligence accountability has several implications. First, democratic accountability encompasses a culture and set of behaviours that go beyond mere compliance with laws and legal frameworks (Born and Leigh 2005). Without studying this culture and behaviour, it becomes challenging to ascertain the presence of democratic accountability. Second, the assumption that intelligence services are unwilling to be accountable may be unfounded as their resistance to accountability measures could stem from differing interpretations of what constitutes desired and proper accountability. Third, portraying conflicts between oversight bodies and intelligence services as a zero-sum game is counterproductive in fostering a greater sense of responsibility towards democratic accountability, as it inherently implies reduced effectiveness, and ultimately, security. Conversely, by examining intelligence accountability virtues, we can gain a more profound understanding of the nature of responsibility towards democratic accountability, rather than simply viewing it as a balancing act. Finally, investigating the virtues of actors involved in intelligence accountability may reveal societal norms and expectations of intelligence services, as well as the origins of conflict among actors and how these understandings and disputes influence formal intelligence accountability structures. Ultimately, studying the virtues of intelligence accountability will contribute to enlightening the scholarly discussions but also society by providing more nuanced perspectives on the role of intelligence services and intelligence accountability beyond the narrow depictions in popular culture and media narratives.

This dissertation diverges from the prevalent scholarly emphasis on the US and the UK by spotlighting Denmark as a case study. Denmark pre-

sents a context characterised by high levels of trust and a strong belief in institutional fairness and integrity (C. A. Larsen 2013), while also demonstrating minimum public and political attention to intelligence accountability reform (S. J. Andersen, Hansen, and Davies 2022). Furthermore, Denmark serves as an extreme case highlighting the importance of intelligence accountability virtues, given the relatively high secrecy of Danish intelligence services (Rønn et al. 2024), weak oversight system (Koch 2016), lack of public discourse (S. J. Andersen, Hansen, and Davies 2022), and deviation from typical post-scandal reform patterns. Furthermore, recent intelligence scandals in Denmark have indicated that conflicts within the Danish intelligence field have been driven by divergent understandings of the Danish services' accountability obligations among key actors. Consequently, Denmark provides an ideal context for examining the significance of intelligence accountability virtues and the potential societal implications of conflicting understandings. The case offers a demonstrative example that substantiates the theoretical arguments presented in this dissertation. My aim is to make a modest yet significant contribution by challenging inherent assumptions in the IS literature and pointing towards a research agenda characterised by increased reflexivity and novel understandings of accountability.

Research Questions and Objectives

Theoretically, this study aims to shift the academic focus from the design and establishment of accountability systems to a constructivist approach that attends to how actors in the intelligence field understand intelligence accountability. The constructivist approach offers a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of the existing conflicts and challenges associated with intelligence accountability while building bridge between the two agendas. The intention is not to resolve the intricacies of intelligence accountability or prescribe ideal practices. Instead, I challenge the prevailing assumptions in IS and suggest potential avenues for change. Empirically, this dissertation investigates the virtues of intelligence accountability and their potential influence on how societies structure their accountability systems using Denmark as an example. On this basis, the project enriches theoretical discussions and provides valuable insights for policy debates on the structure and implementation of intelligence accountability. It emphasises the importance of awareness and reflection on how actors understand intelligence accountability, and how this interpretation guides their actions. The overarching research question directing this PhD project is as follows:

How do actors in the intelligence field understand and practice intelligence accountability and how do these understandings influence intelligence accountability structures?

By attending to this question, the dissertation offers three primary contributions: 1) a theoretical contribution to IS, presenting a sociological and organisational framework for examining accountability as a virtue, thereby elucidating the origins of conflicts between intelligence accountability actors and demonstrating how value-based accountability understandings may influence the prioritisation of accountability systems; 2) an empirical contribution from a Scandinavian (specifically Danish) perspective, which, despite being underrepresented in IS, provides valuable insights, as the Danish case exemplifies many of the dilemmas and challenges associated with intelligence accountability; and 3) a societal contribution through theoretically and empirically informed arguments advocating for a more open and well-informed political and public debate to enhance intelligence accountability in societies that would benefit both security objectives and the maintenance and protection of democratic principles.

To clarify the main research question and offer specific guidance to the study, the project is divided into three sub-questions.

SQ1. *How is intelligence accountability conceptualised in Intelligence Studies literature, what are the implications associated with this conceptualisation, and how can Intelligence Studies move forward?* (Theoretical)

SQ2. *Which virtues do actors attribute intelligence accountability within the intelligence field?* (Empirical)

SQ3. *Which accountability virtues dominate the intelligence field, and what are their scholarly and societal implications?* (Broader implications)

These questions are important for two reasons. First, theoretically, there is a need to understand intelligence accountability as a value-based concept in addition to a functional one. A value-based conceptualisation of accountability allows for a deeper understanding of power dynamics and relationships among various actors in the intelligence field. Mapping the current approach to intelligence accountability and identifying its associated challenges provides the foundation on which I propose a novel theoretical

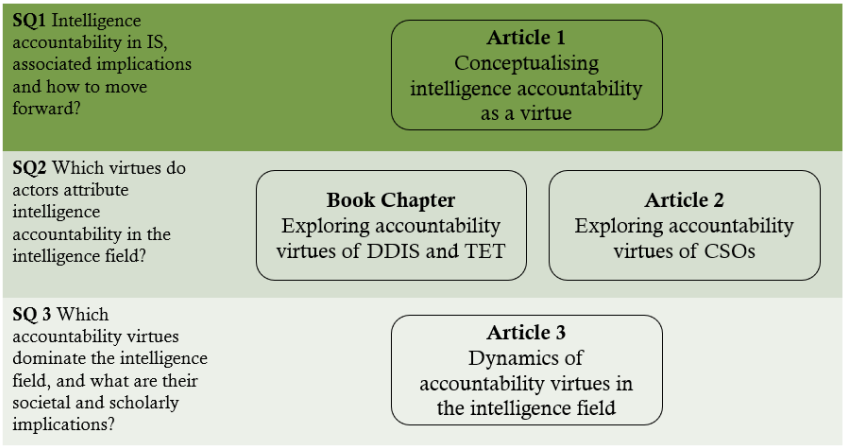
framework that shifts focus on accountability as a virtue. The prevailing assumptions that intelligence accountability is essentially a balancing act, strengthened through expanded legal frameworks and robust oversight structures, fail to account for the agency of those involved in intelligence accountability and the foundations of their attitudes towards it.

Second, there is a scarcity of empirical studies on the understandings of intelligence accountability, particularly those that draw insights from a range of actors.[2] By incorporating diverse sets of actors, I can paint a detailed picture of the accountability virtues at play and situate them within a specific political, cultural, and historical context. Consequently, we can better comprehend the underlying values that shape intelligence accountability in each context as well as the battles for power among actors seeking to influence the normative content of accountability, thereby contributing to the establishment of intelligence accountability systems. Figure 2 shows the relationship between the research questions and the papers.

The research questions are addressed through four distinct but linked papers, consisting of two main parts: a theoretical and empirical. The first part, Article 1, aims to conceptually map and discuss the conventional understanding of intelligence accountability in IS, utilising the distinction between accountability as a mechanism and as a virtue. This article extends beyond a mere summary of current knowledge, seeks to challenge the discipline's methodological approach, and proposes a new direction for studying and thinking about intelligence accountability. The outcome of this discussion forms the basis for the theoretical and methodological approach of the project's core empirical part, which encompasses three studies: Book Chapter, Article 2, and Article 3. These studies explore the accountability virtues within and among the actors involved in Danish intelligence accountability.

[2] Thorough studies of one of the actors include Gaskarth's (2020) enquiry into UK intelligence practitioners' perceptions of intelligence accountability after Snowden and Iraq and Bakir's (2019) exploration of opportunities and challenges regarding civil society actors' role in intelligence accountability. Moreover, I am aware of an ongoing Dutch research project aiming at studying accountability principles in practice within the Dutch intelligence services through empirical investigation (Constantino and Wagner 2024). However, no empirically based articles were published at the time of completion of this PhD dissertation.

Figure 2. Research Questions and Connection to Papers



The Book Chapter concentrates on the accountability virtues of the Danish Defence Intelligence Service (DDIS) and the Danish Intelligence Oversight Board (TET[3]). Article 2 shifts the focus to civil society organisations' (CSOs) understanding of intelligence accountability, and their perceived role in intelligence accountability, along with related practices. Article 3 takes a broader perspective, examining actors in the field of Danish intelligence by mapping various interpretations of raw data collection and its implications for actors' accountability virtues, as well as how these virtues influence accountability mechanisms. Collectively, these studies aim to challenge the conventional understanding of intelligence accountability in IS. They provide new empirical insights into how intelligence accountability is understood and practiced by relevant actors in a high-trust Scandinavian society. Additionally, they will explore how these actors may contribute to existing battles and challenges in intelligence accountability while also suggesting new and relevant ways of studying and discussing intelligence accountability. See Table 1 for an overview of the papers.

[3] I have chosen to retain the Danish abbreviation TET (Tilsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne), as this organisation is recognized by said abbreviation in international fora.

Table 1. Overview of Papers Forming the Dissertation

Abbreviation	Author(s)	Title	Status in Jan 2024
A1 *Intelligence accountability as a virtue*	Melanie Hartvigsen	"Towards intelligence accountability as a virtue"	Published in *Intelligence and National Security*
BC *Battlefield*	Melanie Hartvigsen, Mia Hartmann and Adam Diderichsen	"Intelligence Oversight as an Institutional Battlefield: The Danish Experience"	Published in *Intelligence Practices in High Trust Societies*, by Rønn, Diderichsen, Hartmann and Hartvigsen (eds.)
A2 *CSOs in Intelligence Accountability*	Melanie Hartvigsen and Jaseff Raziel Yauri-Miranda	"Civil Society Organisations in Intelligence Accountability: Democratic Ideals and Practical Limitations"	Under review in *Democratization* journal
A3 *Raw Data and Intelligence Accountability*	Melanie Hartvigsen	"How Perceptions of Raw Data Collection Affect Intelligence Accountability: The Danish intelligence field"	Under review in *Frontiers in Political Science* as part of the special issue "Accounting for the Use of Powers and Technologies in the Intelligence and Security Sector"

Outline of the Dissertation

The introductory framework of this dissertation comprises six parts. The second section, *Existing Literature*, following this introduction, contextualises the study within the current literature by examining the conventional understanding of intelligence accountability in IS and recent publications in CIS. Section 3, *Theoretical Framework*, expands on the literature review and argues for incorporating insights from Public Administration literature and New Institutionalism to investigate intelligence accountability as a virtue within relevant organisations. *Research Design*, section 4, details the methodological approach influenced by CIS and implemented through the institutional logics framework. It also describes the selected case study, namely Denmark, and the data collection and analysis methods. Given the special

circumstances of studying secret organisations, this section also extensively addresses ethical and security considerations and reflects on my own positionality and the methodological limitations. Section 5, *Findings*, outlines my findings in the three empirical papers and discusses their contributions to the debate on intelligence accountability in IS and CIS, along with societal implications. The full versions of each article/book chapter are provided in appendices 1-4. The final section, *Conclusion*, summarises the key contributions and explores potential avenues for future research.

II Existing Literature

> "Oversight is not accountability, but it may lead to it" (Farson and Whitaker 2010, 679).

What is the meaning of accountability? Accountability has become a "buzzword of modern governance" (Bovens, Goodin, and Schillemans 2014, 1). Like other widely used terms, accountability means different things to different people and has different implications in different situations. Historically, accountability stems from the practice of counting something, providing an account of the counted in a social relationship embedded in fulfilment of obligations and potential consequences if the account of the counted does not meet expectations (Bovens, Goodin, and Schillemans 2014). Hence, accountability has everything to do with power (McGee 2020): one must provide answers of one's actions to those with a legitimate claim to such answers, and one must suffer the consequences if the expectations of the legitimate are not met.

The literature on accountability is vast, and except from the above point, there is little scholarly consensus – either across or within disciplines - on how to define and operationalise accountability (Bovens, Goodin, and Schillemans 2014; McGee 2020). Rather than beginning this review with a fixed definition of accountability, I explore how it is framed in IS and consider what this framing reveals about scholarly priorities and its broader implications. I highlight the functionalist tendencies in IS (often referred to as studies *for* intelligence), including the tendency to reduce accountability to oversight. I will also discuss the limitations of this approach, particularly for comprehending actors' understandings of intelligence accountability, and emphasise the importance of embedded organisational understandings and practices, as well as political and social contexts. Finally, I discuss the emerging approach to intelligence accountability in CIS (often referred to as studies *of* intelligence) and argue for bridging the divide between studies *for* and studies *of* intelligence, rather than maintaining their separation.

This section is mainly based on arguments laid out in A1 *Intelligence Accountability as a Virtue*. In addition, I also provide a more extensive review of the recent CIS literature on intelligence accountability. It is worth noting

that most of this literature has been published after the commencement of this PhD project, as well as the data collection and analysis conducted in A1.

Intelligence Studies and Accountability

Accountability is one of the most researched aspects in IS (Aldrich 2009a; Caparini and Born 2007), yet it is also a discipline in which scholarly discussion tends to be theoretically and empirically limited. Intelligence accountability, a sub-discipline of IS, evolved among US based scholars (Zegart 2011), and as a result, the intelligence accountability literature has been affected by the American tendency of reducing accountability to oversight (Johnson 2016) and have an overrepresentation of US and UK case studies (see for example Bakir 2017; Barber 2017; Deeks 2015; Defty 2022; Dobson 2019; Hillebrand 2012; Johnson 2004; 2005; 2008a; 2014; 2016; Leigh 2012; Phythian 2007; Robarge 2009; Van Puyvelde 2013). This has epistemological implications for the current understanding of what intelligence accountability is, how it is supposed to be institutionalised, and what the aim of intelligence accountability ought to be.

Accountability as a concept and function is generally framed as having the purpose of keeping the services' power in check; however, few authors are concerned with providing a definition of accountability and instead turn to the notion of oversight, as I show in A1 *Intelligence Accountability as a Virtue*. However, oversight is not accountability, although it is an aspect of accountability. This is well established in the Public Administration literature (Pérez-Durán 2024; Heidelberg 2017), and also acknowledged by a few authors in IS (for example Farson and Whitaker 2010; Gill 2020). By reducing accountability to oversight, the literature consequently considers intelligence accountability as a formal actor-forum relationship between intelligence agencies (the accountability holdee) and oversight bodies (accountability holder) that are bound together in an institutional relationship within a framework of law and institutional structures. As such, the studies generally seek to evaluate oversight systems by attending to oversight bod-

ies and legislation[4] and analysing whether the services can and are held accountable through either appropriate legal standards (for example Hardy and Williams 2016; Klaaren 2015), sanctions (for example Eijkman and Weggemans 2013), and adequate access to information (for example Greenwood and Huisman 2004; Müller-Wille 2006b), or all three (for example Aden 2018; Barber 2017; Eriksen 2011; Jansson 2018; Van Puyvelde 2013). In this sense, intelligence accountability *is* oversight with a heavy emphasis on control mechanisms through the possibility of using sanctions and the importance of access to information. The common approach is functionalist in nature in line with the general tendency in IS, which traditionally has been grounded within functionalist and state-centric epistemologies favouring "theories *for*, rather than *of*, intelligence" (Ben Jaffel et al. 2020, 325).

Considering the institutionalisation of intelligence accountability, there is a general assumption that oversight takes five general forms: the executive, the legislature, the judicial system, the public, and international institutions (Born and Wetzling 2009; Caparini 2007; Greenwood and Huisman 2004; Koch 2016; Leigh 2009; Yauri-Miranda 2021). In this sense, the executive, legislature, and judicial system are considered to constitute the *formal* oversight system, while the public is considered an *informal* oversight actor. International institutions have played a less significant role in the literature, as "the institutions have limited political power since they cannot directly call national governments to account" (Aldrich 2009a, 45).

Studies concerned with formal oversight bodies generally recognise issues of insufficient legal mandates (Born and Wills 2011; Koch 2016; Setty 2015) or lacking will to conduct oversight of the intelligence services (Born 2004; Johnson 2008a) as the main issues. Additionally, the authors point to a lack of resources attributed to oversight bodies (Defty 2022; Matei 2014) and firefighting tendencies, meaning that intensive investigation and intelligence reforms often take place *after* an intelligence scandal has gone public (Johnson 2014; 2016; Manjikian 2016). Across studies there is a call for more sufficient intelligence reform (for example Gonçalves 2014; Johnson 2016; Leigh 2012; Phythian 2007; Sirrs 2013).

[4] There are exceptions to this approach, including but not limited to Hillebrand (2012), Aldrich and Richterova (2018), Manjikian (2016), Petersen and Tjalve (2018), and Yauri-Miranda (2021).

Studies of the informal oversight system (media, interest groups, researchers) have gained increasing attention, and scholars continuously argue for their importance concerning democratic oversight of intelligence services (Bakir 2017; Dobson 2019; Eriksen 2011; Hillebrand 2012; Johnson 2014; Matei 2014; Robarge 2009; Van Puyvelde 2013; 2014). However, often the informal oversight system is not considered primary but a *substitute watchdog*, as coined by Hillebrand (2012), or the *last forum of accountability*, as Dobson (2019) frames it, when formal oversight bodies are unable or unwilling to hold the intelligence services to account. The institutionalisation of intelligence accountability is thus mainly centred on the formal oversight system with the informal oversight system as a substitute when the main system fails.

On a general scale, the existing literature advocates for ensuring legal compliance while maintaining the effectiveness of intelligence services as the main aim of intelligence accountability. In the widely referenced report *Making Intelligence Accountable: Legal Standards and Best Practices for Oversight of Intelligence Services*, the authors state that "laws should lay down a framework which fosters a culture of openness and respect for human rights" (Born and Leigh 2005, 15). Thus, intelligence oversight should ensure that intelligence services conduct their operations within their legally defined mandate (Born 2004) and that they operate consistently with the state's specific democratic norms and standards, including human rights (Born 2004; Caparini 2007; Eijkman and Weggemans 2013; Hughes and Stoddart 2012; Leigh 2009; 2012; Sirrs 2013). Yet, accompanying the emphasis on legality and consistency with democratic norms is the notion that accountability should not to be an obstacle to the effectiveness of the services (Born 2004; Matei 2014; Müller-Wille 2006a). The effectiveness of the services is contingent upon their capacity to maintain confidentiality, which stands in contrast to accountability, which promotes transparency, responsiveness, and answerability. In this sense, intelligence accountability becomes a balancing exercise between effectiveness (national security) and accountability (Born and Johnson 2005; Johnson 2008a; Leigh 2012; Van Puyvelde 2013).

In sum, the literature reduces accountability to oversight and adopts a functionalist approach, that is, accountability as a means to an end. Oversight and legal control are emphasised, and the formal oversight system is considered the main accountability holder, while the main challenge is to strike the right balance between the effectiveness of intelligence services to

uphold national security and accountability that guards fundamental rights and democratic cohesion.

Critical Implications

As a means to an end, accountability is reduced to a question of oversight and legal control, with an emphasis on the need to remain sensitive to the effectiveness of intelligence services. In this sense, intelligence accountability effectively becomes a means to maintain the services in their current state, the protector of national security, while outwardly ensuring the public that intelligence services' powers are restrained by law enforced by oversight bodies. In other words, accountability has no value in and of itself.

This functional application of accountability has several implications. First, the extensive focus on legal frameworks seems insufficient to ensure proper safeguards for the abuse of power. In many liberal democratic countries, legal frameworks that guard intelligence services remain vague and leave room for interpretation in the interest of effectiveness (Born and Wills 2010; Koch 2016; Setty 2015; Greve 2014). In some states, this is not a serious cause of concern for the general public (Hansen 2016), while in others, even strict laws may not be enough for public confidence (Martin 2007). A state's political history, culture, and public relationship with intelligence services may have implications for how intelligence accountability is understood, regardless of the character and degree of detail in the legal framework. Moreover, IS authors acknowledge the insufficiency of laws standing alone; they must also foster a culture of accountability, including openness and respect for human rights (Born 2004; Born and Leigh 2005). Yet, organisational cultures of intelligence services are seldom studied, and for good reasons – access is notoriously difficult to obtain.[5] Nevertheless, we can hardly say anything about whether the legal frameworks are successful in fostering a culture of accountability without considering the organisational contexts and the applied understandings towards accountabil-

[5] Despite the difficulty in gaining access, some scholars have had success in studying the organisational culture of intelligence services. To mention a few, Eleni Braat has studied the culture of secrecy within the Dutch intelligence agencies (2021) and Tallat Rønn Shakoor has explored the intelligence cycle's application in a Danish intelligence organisation (2023).

ity. Very few studies have attempted to do so[6], and those that do mainly address the culture from a theoretical perspective (for example Petersen and Tjalve 2018; Manjikian 2016).

Second, by placing formal oversight bodies as the primary accountability holder and legitimate actor of intelligence oversight, the ring of secrecy is maintained, as the responsibility of upholding accountability is placed on these bodies' shoulders, and the role of intelligence services remains unquestioned. Secrecy is an inherent part of being an intelligence service, and to conduct thorough oversight, overseers must necessarily adhere to the rules of secrecy. Yet, this just passes the buck to the overseers by maintaining knowledge of intelligence practices and methods within a small group of individuals whose ethics and judgment we are compelled to trust without question. Moreover, placing the responsibility of upholding intelligence accountability on formal oversight bodies while ensuring effectiveness entails other problems. Overseers easily fall victim to accusations of incompetence and ignorance toward intelligence matters (Defty 2022; Matei 2014; Born 2004), while the responsibility and agency of the services are often ignored. Simultaneously, as intelligence becomes more globalised through cross-national cooperation, a practice that national oversight bodies rarely have access to (Gill 2020), national formal oversight becomes increasingly irrelevant (Leigh 2009).

Finally, an equally problematic issue with formal oversight bodies is found in the balancing approach. Attempting to strike the right balance between accountability and effectiveness, overseers are *de facto* placed in a subordinate position to the services (Leon-Reyes 2022). The act of balancing security and other rights is inherently political and lies at the heart of the construction of the liberal order, which is based on an idea that "security may never be achieved, but it is *always* worth trying harder, as long as endangered individuals exist" (Tulumello 2021, 328). Consequently, national security is considered to be paramount (Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde 1998). However, the political agenda and power relations between actors are largely ignored in the literature and the core role of intelligence services is not questioned. Hence, the dominating logic in the literature

[6] One notable exception is Jamie Gaskarth, whose book *Secrets and Spies* (2020) thoroughly scrutinises the UK intelligence community's accountability understandings following the Iraq War and Snowden revelations.

rests on a liberal security logic, meaning that accountability is to be balanced against national security, which effectively places formal oversight bodies in a subordinate position, excludes civil society from meaningful influence, and complicates critical reflection on the purposes and practices of the services.

The core criticism I direct at the conventional literature on intelligence accountability is that it adopts a functionalist understanding grounded in the notion that "intelligence simply *is* state security" (Ben Jaffel et al. 2020, 326), meaning that it is the constructive role of accountability in ensuring the effectiveness and stability of the intelligence services that is emphasised. In this sense, accountability is stripped from value in and of itself, and the inherent power dynamics and conflicts associated with accountability are neglected, such as the practical impact of the balancing approach on oversight bodies. Furthermore, the functionalist approach overlooks the possibility that accountability mechanisms may be designed to serve certain interests other than ideals of democratic accountability and human rights. This is because it focuses solely on the structure of the mechanisms, ignoring the underlying understandings and interests that shape them. Consequently, focusing on assessing and strengthening legal frameworks and institutional oversight structures does not sufficiently cover the scholarly understanding of the nature of intelligence accountability as both a value-driven (and potentially interest-driven) concept embedded in the political history and cultural context of a given national society, and that it is informed and shaped by beliefs, practices, and power dynamics.

In extension, I contend that to challenge the functionalist approach to accountability and become more aware of the understandings underlying accountability mechanisms, we must adopt a broader empirical perspective beyond the Anglo-American realm. Notions of accountability cannot be applied uniformly across different contexts. As within other intelligence related practices, accountability practices are "influenced – or even determined – by each society's history, culture, and organisation" (Rønn et al. 2024). In other words, what is understood as legitimate and who is understood as holding legitimacy varies from nation to nation (Beetham 2013), and this also applies to the intelligence context (de Graaff and Nyce 2016). The core of this argument has also been the foundation of the *societal turn* in IS, which I will discuss next.

Accountability in Critical Intelligence Studies

In recent years, new approaches to intelligence studies have gained ground, emphasising studies *of* intelligence by distancing themselves from the functionalist and problem-solving traditions that otherwise dominate IS and by applying constructivism and critical theory. In this CIS movement, authors are interested in "what intelligence professionals *believe they are doing* when performing intelligence functions" (Bean, de Werd, and Ivan 2021, 470), emphasising that intelligence is a social endeavour that extends beyond the policy-making framework and is shaped by organisational beliefs, practices, and power struggles (Hoffmann, Chalati, and Dogan 2022; Klein Goldewijk 2021).

Accountability has only recently (and after the initiation of this Ph.D. project) received attention within the CIS, with few publications on the subject. The publications have mainly focused on highlighting the epistemological issues with the conventional approaches to intelligence accountability and pointing out constraints by the common-sense approaches presented in the IS literature (Bigo, Mc Cluskey, and Tréguer 2023b). The contributions focus on four themes: the scholar's positionality, oversight as a reflection of the meanings of democracy, intelligence oversight as the legitimiser of the state's secret violence, and the relevance of civil society actors.

The positionality of scholars studying intelligence services is critically discussed by Leon-Reyes (2022), who argues that one must consider how each intelligence scholar approaches their object of study with a distinct life path. In this context, he argues that writers concerned with intelligence accountability are mostly men, white, and from the Anglo-American sphere. In this sense, they are people "that have nothing to hide" (2022, 41). Thus, Leon-Reyes argues, they have little concern for the physical and symbolic violence carried out by intelligence services, and therefore can subscribe to and uphold common-sensical assumptions about intelligence oversight, including access under secrecy, embracing *raison d'état*, diffusion of responsibility, and the need for neutrality. Hence, the message is that to meaningfully engage with the subject of intelligence oversight, one, as a scholar, must be explicit about their own disposition.

The second theme, oversight as a reflection of the meanings of democracy, is an emphasised subject in this literature. The core argument is that the scholarly attention towards intelligence accountability should not be restricted to a certain democratic imaginary. The conventional literature is

dominated by a liberal understanding of democracy, framing intelligence oversight as "a well ordered, institutionalised, and secret arrangement" (Kniep et al. 2023, 211) and thereby ignoring that the demand for strengthened intelligence oversight and associated reforms have mainly been driven by scandals initiated by journalists, whistleblowers, and activists. Consequently, the literature neglects the more agonistic and public origin and continuous development of intelligence accountability, as well as it also rejects other (than the liberal) democratic imaginaries of how intelligence accountability may take form, thereby restraining how we, as scholars, may think of intelligence accountability (Bigo, Mc Cluskey, and Tréguer 2023b).

Setting academia free of agreed truths leads to the third theme of formal oversight as a legitimiser of the state's secret violence. The symbolic power of intelligence agencies (as well as political decision-makers) is a main component of this theme, as it is argued that scholars should question and study the reproduction of secrecy and state violence carried out by the agencies and the role of oversight mechanisms in this regard (Leon-Reyes 2022). Such an example is showcased by a study of the moment modern intelligence oversight was born.[7] By revisiting the Church Committee, Tréguer (2023) argues that the oversight mechanisms created on the backdrop of the investigation were in fact designed to keep secrets rather than promoting accountability, thereby toning down the criticism while maintaining the position and role of intelligence. The criticality of this reveals itself, as the oversight arrangements initiated by the Church Committee set the standards that other liberal states would follow. Moreover, the balancing approach, as highlighted in the section above, is also part of this argument. CIS authors highlight the problems of trying to balance oversight with effectiveness and how it eventually leads to oversight becoming subordinate to the effectiveness of the services, and hence restraining any real criticism of intelligence as a mode of governance through secrecy and state violence (Leon-Reyes 2022; Mc Cluskey and Aradau 2023).

Finally, emphasis is placed on the role of civil society in intelligence accountability. Because formal oversight mechanisms cannot be assumed to

[7] In 1975, the US Senate initiated the first major investigation into the intelligence agencies, carried out by the Church Committee, after revelations of domestic spying published by *New York Times.* This is often considered as the "the birth of intelligence oversight" (Johnson 2008b).

foster accountability *per se*, CIS authors argue for a need to shift the focus from studying formal and institutional intelligence oversight to oversight as a social practice (Leon-Reyes 2022; Kniep et al. 2023; Roller et al. 2023). By acknowledging the role of journalists, whistleblowers, activists, and CSOs in the push for intelligence accountability (or even these actors as *the* locus of accountability), such social practices must necessarily be studied as they are played out by these actors (Leon-Reyes 2022). Kniep and colleagues (2023) accordingly adopt a practice-based approach to the study of struggles of oversight in Germany, the UK, and the US, and argue that intelligence oversight is indeed fostered by public struggles and takes much more agonistic forms than otherwise credited. Hence, they challenge the common-sensical idea of who practices meaningful intelligence oversight.

In sum, what CIS is endorsing is a fundamental break from the conventional idea of intelligence oversight as a structured, institutionalised, and secret endeavour. They ask for scholarly reflexivity towards authors' positing, sensitivity towards common-sense approaches, a reckoning with the role and power of intelligence services, acknowledgement of the agonistic forms of intelligence accountability, and the study of social practices.

Broadening the Scope and Bridging the Divide

I am sympathetic to the CIS project, and fundamentally believe in a need to break with the conventional common senses for the reasons discussed in previous pages, and I argue that a way to do that is by attending to intelligence accountability virtues and battles in the intelligence field. However, two issues remain to be addressed. First, reductionist tendencies prevail in CIS arguments and the studies discussed above. Accountability becomes a question of oversight, and there have been no serious attempts to define accountability in the context of intelligence or reflect upon what accountability entails other than oversight – it being formal or informal, institutionalised or public, delegated or agonistic. The arguments tend to lean towards notions of intelligence services that do not want to be held accountable, rather than gaining an understanding of what accountability might mean to the services and other actors. Other CIS authors attend to the micro-level of intelligence practices and understandings by studying familiar and everyday aspects (Ben Jaffel 2020), and I contend that the same approach to intelligence accountability will contribute to a more nuanced perspective.

However, as the CIS literature is very new and the publications few, the criticism of the conventional approach to intelligence accountability and

oversight as well as the application of alternative epistemologies are only just beginning to take root. Therefore, I suggest broadening the scope from the beginning. Exploring the understandings of intelligence accountability helps achieve this by addressing the underlying values and political elements of accountability, while also highlighting the understandings of accountability within the services. By returning to the core of the concept, that is, accounting for what has been counted and the reception of an account of the counted, Manjikian (2016) and Gaskarth (2020) suggest that we can discern positive ideas of accountability, such as organisational learning and effectiveness, professional norms grounded in societal values and principles, and public confidence and trust. The argument is that the very act of articulating *what, how, why and for whom* generates reflection and rationalisation. In the short term, the revelation of mistakes, failures, and misuse may have a negative impact on public confidence; however, in the long term, public confidence in the overall system that it works for the common good will increase. In this sense, accountability does not become a means to (rightly or wrongly) legitimise intelligence services but gains value in and of itself as a core democratic principle. In other words, services are legitimate because they are accountable; they are not accountable because they are inherently legitimate. In this sense, accountability is not reduced to a supplement of the services' core task of upholding national security but becomes an inherent part of it.

The second issue, I will raise attention to is the upholding of the divide between studies *for* and studies *of* intelligence. This divide seems particularly prominent in the CIS literature on intelligence accountability, as the studies primarily focus on critical aspects of accountability and how common sensical ideas and the rejection of other democratic imaginaries pose essential threats to democracy. In the broader IS literature, the reassessment of the field's objectivist foundation has been challenged for some time now, and prominent authors, such as Bob de Graaff, have called for a divorce with IS and positivist and realist approaches to make way for constructivist approaches (de Graaff 2019). Others advocate for incorporating agonism in IS to allow for studies *of* and studies *for* intelligence to "productively influence each other" (Bean, de Werd, and Ivan 2021, 469). I side with the latter, aiming to contribute to constructive conflict by exploring diverse perspectives on intelligence accountability with the intention to deepen and nuance the scholarly debate and encourage discussion on how intelligence accountability could and should be understood, practiced, and institutionalised. I contend that accountability may have intrinsic value for

intelligence services as well as for democracy at large. Every organisation needs to be challenged on their assumptions and have their behaviour scrutinised by external *and* internal review to avoid maintaining bad policy, missing out on innovative ideas, or sustaining ineffective operational practices (Gaskarth 2020). Hence, studies of intelligence accountability that are interested in what intelligence professionals *believe they are doing* by applying constructivist epistemology are also of interest to intelligence professionals and intelligence agencies. Because accountability is a fundamental democratic principle in public administration, in which intelligence services are part, it is vital for the services to consider accountability in their daily practices. This is also evident in intelligence education which often includes courses on intelligence ethics, accountability and legitimacy related issues.[8] In other words, it appears rather unhelpful to maintain a distinction between studies *for* and *of* intelligence as it may contribute to upholding echo chambers and stagnate development (Petersen and Rønn 2024).

To the core, this dissertation is inspired by and contributes to CIS' efforts to redirect the scholarly discourse on intelligence accountability by challenging the means-to-end and functionalist logic in the conventional literature on intelligence accountability. In doing so, I attend to intelligence accountability virtues, which are value-based beliefs and practices within the intelligence field, and include actors traditionally labelled as informal oversight actors. In this sense, I study what the actors believe they are doing, but I also study why actors do what they do and what they believe is correct to do through an analysis of their intelligence accountability virtues. Moreover, I aim to broaden the scope of how battles over accountability are understood in the literature beyond zero-sum games by redirecting attention to conflicting understandings rather than attitudes in favour of or against accountability measures. Eventually, I attempt to contributing to bridging the divide between studies *for* and studies *of* intelligence services, which may foster more reflexivity within the academic literature as well as among practitioners.

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[8] For example, see the courses offered at the following programs offering intelligence education: *Strategic Intelligence in National security Major* (Patrick Henry College), *Master of Intelligence and National Security Studies* (University of Texas at El Paso), *Intelligence and Security MA* (University of Leicester), *Center for Intelligence and Security Studies* (The University of Mississippi), *Intelligence Analysis* (Lund University), *Intelligence Studies* (University Leiden).

III Theoretical Framework

> "It must seriously be doubted whether technical responsibility, which … is coming to play an ever more important role in our time, can be effectively secured without granting responsible officials considerable leeway and making it possible for them to submit their views to outside criticism" (Friedrich 1940, 22).

In this section, I develop an analytical framework that advances our understanding of intelligence accountability virtues as value-driven organisational behaviours, moving beyond purely functional and problem-solving approaches. To construct this framework, I integrate insights from Public Administration literature and New Institutionalism. Within Public Administration scholarship, accountability has emerged as a central theme, sparking ongoing debates about the ideal conception of public officials. This literature provides a helpful distinction between accountability as a mechanism and accountability as a virtue (Bovens 2010), emphasising the equal importance of studying behaviour and understandings of accountability alongside legal frameworks and institutional oversight structures. New Institutionalism complements this approach by offering theoretical tools to examine logics within organisations, which is helpful in explaining the dynamics and conflicts of intelligence accountability. At its core, this theoretical perspective argues that organisational behaviour is shaped by rational myths aimed at securing legitimacy rather than purely functional efficiency (DiMaggio and Powell 1983).

By synthesizing these disciplines, we can deepen our understanding of intelligence accountability virtues through examination of how organisational beliefs and practices shape accountability priorities and structures.

Making Sense of Accountability

The fundamental question *why accountability?* – which I have previously alluded to – deserves some attention. While many IS scholars emphasises

the importance of accountability, few fully explore its deeper societal and democratic value as a connector between authority and legitimacy. In a democracy where citizens are "self-governing individuals, equal in political participation, consideration and worth" (Olsen 2013, 447), those wielding decision-making power must be accountable to enable citizens to grant informed legitimacy to their representatives. The absence of accountability undermines democracy and paves the way for power abuse (Olsen 2013).

This essential relationship between the public and officials has been debated for nearly a century, beginning with Carl Friedrich (1940) and Herman Finer (1936; 1941), and maintains its relevance today. While the dispute between the two professors initially centred on defining administrative responsibility, it fundamentally addressed what we now recognise as accountability (Heidelberg 2017; Bovens 2010). Friedrich contended that administrative responsibility encompasses responsiveness to "commonly felt needs and wants" (1940, 20), arguing that officials should be judged on the morality of their actions by both expert peers and the public. Finer (1936), conversely, maintained that officials should solely answer to the government of the day and government-established rules and laws. Though the concept of accountability has evolved since this pioneering debate[9], contemporary interpretations align more closely with Finer's perspective (Heidelberg 2017).

To make sense of accountability and show why this debate is still relevant, it is necessary to identify the implications for the understanding of accountability of the two positions. To do so, I build on Bovens' distinction between mechanisms and virtues. According to Bovens (2010), Finer's account eventually emphasises the technicalities of accountability or the *mechanisms* of accountability, while Friedrich was devoted to the behaviour of actors or the *virtues* of accountability. This distinction allows me to avoid contributing yet another definition to the field, instead differentiating between accountability as a value-based concept and its technical manifestation. This framework enables empirical investigation into contextual and actor-specific understandings of accountability without predetermined normative assumptions about its proper understanding, practice, and institutionalisation.

[9] For accounts of accountability's origin and development, see Bovens (2007) and Heidelberg (2017).

The concept of accountability as a mechanism is most commonly applied, and is rooted in the idea of giving account (Bovens 2007). It refers to the formal relationship between a forum and an actor, where the actor is obligated to explain and justify their actions. The actor bears responsibility for providing explanations and answering questions, while the forum serves as the entity to which the actor is accountable (Pollitt 2003). Bovens emphasises that accountability goes beyond simply providing performance data; it also involves a process of questioning, answering, and allowing the forum to make judgements. Bovens defines accountability as a mechanism as "a relationship between an actor and a forum, in which the actor has an obligation to explain and to justify his or her conduct, the forum can pose questions and pass judgment, and the actor may face consequences" (2010, 215). This perspective focuses on how institutional frameworks regulate public actors' behaviour, emphasising these frameworks' capacity to maintain accountability rather than the behaviour itself. Bovens (2007) identifies three essential conditions for effective accountability mechanisms: clear standards, potential sanctions, and information access.

These mechanisms are crucial for ensuring accountable governance, whereby public organizations and officials operate within legal frameworks and democratic norms while remaining answerable for their actions. While compliance and control are central, the distinction between mere rule-following and accountability lies in the requirement to provide justification. However, this model typically applies to "the relationship between the people as voters and elected representatives, or elected representatives and administrative agencies" (Olsen 2013, 448), which eventually limits the public's expression of will and judgement regarding public administration to the practice of voting (Heidelberg 2017). In other words, the politics of political order become excluded from the accountability process (Olsen 2013).

As I argue in A1 *Intelligence Accountability as a Virtue*, conventional IS studies tend to adopt this distinction by framing intelligence accountability through an actor-forum relationship, emphasizing oversight mechanisms, standards, sanctions, and information access, while advocating for stronger legal frameworks and enhanced oversight mandates. This narrow focus on intelligence accountability mechanisms overlooks moral and political consideration and prioritises whether an organisation has followed the rules (Adams and Balfour 1998). It also faces the issue of accountability mechanisms becoming tools of those being held to account (Heidelberg 2017), a key concern within the CIS. In this light, Bovens' distinction becomes even

more relevant in my attempt to bridge the divide between studies *for* and *of* intelligence, as his main argument is that "(a)ccountability mechanisms are meaningless without a sense of virtue, and vice versa, there is no virtue without mechanisms" (2010, 962). To develop a comprehensive understanding of intelligence accountability, we must consider both mechanisms and virtues. Given the extensive examination of mechanisms in existing literature, advancing the field requires redirecting scholarly attention toward virtues, which I will explore next.

Accountability as a Virtue

Accountability virtues represent desirable qualities for government organisations and officials (Bovens 2010). This active process is closely linked to responsiveness, a sense of responsibility, and a commitment to transparent, fair, compliant, and equitable conduct (Bovens, Goodin, and Schillemans 2014; Koppell 2005; Considine 2002). In this value-based sense, accountability emerges as a positive characteristic of both organisations and individuals, where the value of accountable behaviour is woven into their practices. Adopting legal frameworks or oversight structures alone does not guarantee accountability. Rather, it flourishes through virtuous conduct within the organisation, beyond the scope of external rules and regulations. Accountability virtues reflect social constructions that shift according to institutional and political contexts, as well as the nature of the actors involved (Bovens 2010). This variability makes it challenging to establish a universal definition or standard. Each situation demands consideration of the field's specific characteristics and debates, both internal and external, about what it means to be accountable. Thus, understanding accountability must be context-specific, requiring the study of value-driven beliefs and practices of the actors involved.

The application of a value-based concept of accountability, rather than a technical one, necessarily returns the politics of political order to the forefront. Accountability as a virtue naturally becomes a contested and contestable concept, both because there is no universal consensus regarding standards for accountable behaviour (Bovens 2010) and because it is inherently political. In a democratic context, accountability must therefore be subject to criticism and discussion to nurture debate about what constitutes good government and good society (Olsen 2013). As the introductory quote of this section by Friedrich (1940) emphasises, external criticism is vital for effectively securing mechanisms.

Friedrich essentially advocates agonistic pluralism in democratic accountability, where the space of practice is not only for officials to practice their expertise but also to practice the explanation of conduct and decisions regarding the use of the rules to the internal community of peers as well as to the external communities of stakeholders (Heidelberg 2017). In this sense, accountability manifests in spaces where rules prove insufficient. These are spaces where notions of accountability can be challenged, contested, and discussed, and where such engagement is welcomed. This becomes particularly crucial in the intelligence context precisely because legal frameworks governing intelligence services tend to be vague and open to interpretation, as highlighted in this dissertation's literature review and in A1 *Intelligence Accountability as a Virtue*. A parallel argument exists regarding intelligence ethics: the elastic nature of intelligence service regulation makes ethics vital for internal self-regulation (Born and Wills 2010). Whilst accountability as a virtue forms part of internal self-regulation – and thus intelligence ethics – it extends beyond this scope. It encompasses both the sense of conducting oneself accountably *and* the relationship with the accountability holder towards whom one welcomes and embraces being accountable (Evans 2022).

This raises the question: does any behaviour qualify as democratically accountable as long as one believes they are conducting themselves accountably? The answer is: no. "If accountability is everything, it may be nothing" as Bovens notes (2010, 947). This underlines the argument that control, oversight, and compliance are not accountability. They are a part of accountability and a precondition for accountability by constituting the mechanisms for accountability. Essentially, focusing on accountability virtues strengthens the critique of conventional IS' prioritisation of legal frameworks and oversight structures. If there is no space to discuss and contest how the rules are followed and even contest the rules themselves from a diversity of perspectives, virtuous accountability cannot be considered present in the democratic sense, and accountability simply becomes an arrangement of technical rules, which is eventually the consequence of the notion proposed by Finer. This holds true if we consider accountability as a democratic practice. Democratic accountability must therefore be distinguished from other forms, such as bureaucratic and legal accountability,

which emphasise internal and external control and compliance (Romzek and Dubnick 1987).[10] Whilst an actor's value-driven beliefs and practices may align with bureaucratic or legal accountability, thereby constituting their accountability virtue, such virtues do not necessarily address accountability's democratic dimension.

The space of contestation and discussion is not just a physical space, but a certain behaviour and practice oriented towards informed democratic discussion beyond the aggregative model that reduces the public will to the act of voting. Inherent in this argument of agonism is also the need for mutual recognition among parties to acknowledge the legitimacy of the other, even when no resolution to contestation is achieved (Mouffe 1999). Thus, it matters how actors understand and practice accountability as well as how they understand the legitimacy of other actors, and these notions "depend on the type of organisation and on its institutional context" (Bovens 2010, 950; see also Olsen 2013).

The institutional context becomes the principal for gaining deeper knowledge about the virtues of accountability within organisations. By the institutional context, I refer to institutions in an active and living sense. Institutions are the arrangements of specific orders made of "behavioural rules and practices embedded in a structure of meaning and a structure of resources" (Olsen 2013, 450). It is within these institutions that understandings of who answers whom and who can legitimately act and speak on behalf of who develops, changes, and is maintained. From this perspective, accountability virtues become a matter of holding oneself and others accountable for demonstrating a specific belief and behaviour that applies to the specific institutional and organisational setting. Naturally, these virtues may conflict with virtues embedded in other institutional and organisational settings. To elucidate these virtues of organisations, New Institutionalism's theorisation of institutional logics offers a useful theoretical framework to identify the distinct logics within organisations in a certain field of

[10] In Romzek and Dubnick's differentiation of accountability types, they employ the term 'political accountability' rather than 'democratic accountability'. In A3 *Raw Data and Intelligence Accountability*, I also utilise the term 'political accountability'; however, for the purpose of consistency in this introduction to the papers, it is herein referred to as 'democratic accountability'.

practice. The following section account for this framework, which is also the foundation for the methodological approach of this dissertation.

Institutional Logics

Exploring institutional logics in the intelligence field provides a deeper insight into the nature of intelligence accountability and the roots of purported battles among actors in the intelligence field. This theoretical approach, rooted in New Institutionalism, was initiated in DiMaggio and Powell's (1983) seminal work on institutional isomorphism. Their research challenged the functionalist viewpoint, arguing that organisational structures and behaviours are not solely explained by functionalism, but are instead driven by rational myths and logics aimed at projecting an image of rationality and efficiency to gain legitimacy. In this reasoning, accountability is a specific form of institutional practise. It involves individuals and groups responsible for adhering to a particular set of principles relevant to the organisation's context and is a process that serves as a symbolic endeavour through which actors seek to legitimise their organisations (Lounsbury et al. 2021). Scholars have applied the institutional logics framework to elucidate stability, change, and conflicts across various organisational fields (Reay and Hinings 2009; Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury 2012). This approach offers insights into how intelligence organisations and accountability actors, both formal and informal, understand accountability, and how these understandings may contribute to conflicts, challenges, or stability within the intelligence field. Moreover, by situating these actors within a societal and political context, while considering the specific logics of the intelligence field, we can gain a better understanding of whether, how, and why they might understand intelligence accountability in potentially conflicting ways.

The framework is rooted in a sociological understanding that views institutions as comprising distinct regulatory systems. These systems "maintain and bridge different instantiations of logics in a regionalized zone, enabling the meanings and practices that are woven together in and across those instantiations to be perceived as coherent and durable" (Lounsbury et al. 2021, 271). The framework is composed of three primary components: institutional orders, institutional logics, and organisational fields.

Friedland & Alford (1991) sustained and developed DiMaggio and Powell's critique of functionalist perspectives on organisational behaviour by proposing that societies are comprised of *institutional orders*, which are

ideal forms, or meta-institutions, of the state, market, family, religion, profession, corporation, and community.[11] Each of these institutional orders embodies "a governance system that provides a frame of reference that preconditions actors' sensemaking choices" (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury 2012, 54). These ideal types are not intended to mirror social reality; rather, they function as instruments for interpreting cultural meaning, assisting researchers in navigating the often-perplexing details of real-world scenarios (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury 2012). The analytical purpose of these ideal forms of societal institutions is to facilitate the consideration of societal influence on organisations' behaviour, meaning "(b)ringing society back in" (Friedland and Alford 1991, 232).

Institutional orders and institutional logics are intricately linked, with the latter serving as reference frameworks that align with the principles of the former (Johansen and Waldorff 2017). The widely accepted definition of institutional logics describes them as "the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their materiel substance, organise time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality" (Thornton and Ocasio 1999, 804; Lounsbury et al. 2021, 262). In operational terms, the elements of institutional logics are as follows:

- Values: broad goals that tend to be stable over time and are considered important. Values guide and determine behaviour by prioritising what is important and providing the foundation for beliefs and practices (Krasny 2020; De Groot and Thogersen 2013).
- Beliefs: acceptance of something being true notwithstanding whether it is based on fact. Beliefs refer to a particular object or behaviour (Krasny 2020; De Groot and Thogersen 2013).
- Practices: institutional rules that define actions required, prohibited, or permitted. These rules distribute roles, status, and resources; hence, they mediate power among the actors (Ostrom 1999).

From a sociological standpoint, institutional logics are viewed as cultural constructs that evolve over time and simultaneously function as frames of reference or rules of the game (Fan and Zietsma 2017; Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury 2012), while both direct behaviour and are susceptible to

[11] The initial list by Friedland and Alford only consisted of five orders, but was later expanded to six by Thornton (2004) and again to seven by Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury (2012).

agentic change (Thornton and Ocasio 2008). Consequently, a single institutional order may encompass rival and potentially conflicting forms of institutional logics as disparities can exist among actors governed by the same institutional order (Lounsbury et al. 2021, 263).

Institutional logics, alongside structures, form the social structures of meaning that constitute an *organisational field*. DiMaggio (1983) introduced the concept of organisational fields, drawing inspiration from Bourdieu's use of the French word *champ*, which encompasses both an arena of strategy and conflict, as well as shared purpose. The concept of organisational fields emphasises power dynamics and competition as drivers of institutional change. As a result, these fields may be in a constant state of flux driven by competing institutional logics (Hinings et al. 2003). Nevertheless, organisations will eventually conform to the "formal and informal pressures exerted on organisations (..) by cultural expectations in the society within which organisations function" (DiMaggio and Powell 1983, 50). DiMaggio and Powell note that this adaption can sometimes be a direct response to governmental mandates, suggesting that organisational change may align with state-legitimised and institutionalised rules. Consequently, rather than prioritising effectiveness, organisations strive to appear legitimate to their environment. This phenomenon can lead to stagnation within the field, as a dominating logic will be recognised, at least for a period of time, even though all actors may not agree with the dominating logic (Hinings et al. 2003).

A field is an analytical construct that is defined based on the phenomena under investigation. In structural terms, an organisational field encompasses a broad group of key organisational entities that contribute to the production of similar products or services in a broad sense, meaning the totality of relevant actors (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). From a relational perspective, an organisational field functions as a community of organisations that share a common system of meaning, wherein participants interact more frequently and meaningfully with one another than those outside the field (Scott 1994). Fields can be significantly influenced by state politics, as power is both allocated by the state and generated through the activities of organisations within the field (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). In es-

sence, a field is characterised by its actors, structure, logics, and political environment (Scott 1994).

In an organisational context, state intelligence services, intelligence oversight bodies, and other key stakeholders form part of the broader organisational field of intelligence accountability.[12] This perspective, akin to the arguments of CIS authors, regards intelligence accountability as an open-ended phenomenon encompassing all stakeholders (Ben Jaffel and Larsson 2023). Analogous to other fields, this field comprises various actors who create communities (Reay and Hinings 2005) and is characterised by the interactions between these actors, their structure, logics, and the political environment (Scott 1994). Thus, the field encompasses not only organisations producing intelligence, but also entities that provide resources, impose limitations, or present contingencies (DiMaggio 1983). This conceptualisation facilitates the connection between structure (actor alliances), institutional logics (values, beliefs, and practices), and power dynamics (actor dependence or autonomy) in comprehending field-level change or stability. All organisational fields contain competing institutional logics that are temporarily resolved (Hinings et al. 2003). During periods of relative stability, actors within a field acknowledge the supremacy of one institutional logic, even though not all concur with it. This suggests that conflicting institutional logics may elucidate policy stability or uncertainty, and identifying these logics can illuminate potential field developments. Ultimately, this framework enables the exploration of meanings of intelligence accountability, who are legitimate actors, how they practice intelligence accountability, and what are the implications for accountability structures.

This dissertation focuses on the issue of accountability in traditional state intelligence organisations, whilst recognising the de-monopolisation of intelligence and the increasing competition among state intelligence actors and non-state intelligence actors (Zegart 2021; Petersen and Rønn 2019; Bigo 2019).[13] In this sense, intelligence (along with its designated

[12] The concept of *fields* has been utilised by several CIS authors, but within Bourdieusian understanding. Examples include Bigo (2019) and Ben Jaffel (2020).

[13] De-monopolisation of intelligence refers to, for example, the increased tendencies of private companies and individuals using forms of digital surveillance, other state organisations mak-

formal oversight bodies) is considered a state undertaking, thus falling within the state order as per Thornton and colleagues' (2012) typology of institutional orders. The state order is constructed by democratic principles, encompassing democratic participation, bureaucratic domination, citizenship, and an increase in community good. Nevertheless, I contend that the principles of the state order must inherently include a security component, which is currently absent from the institutional order typology. In BC *Battlefield*, co-authored by Mia Hartmann and Adam Diderichsen, we identify this missing element of the state order and differentiate between the *bureaucratic* state order and the *security* state order, which I will elaborate on in the following section.

Expanding the State Order: The Security Logic

From a good governance perspective, democratic accountability should be underpinned by the bureaucratic logics of the state order (Meyer and Hammerschmid 2006). However, intelligence services stand apart from other governmental bodies because of their crucial role in gathering and analysing confidential information to ensure national security. Within the Hobbesian tradition, security logics encompass specific logics related to safeguarding the nation-state and prioritising national interests, in accordance with *la raison d'état* (Williams 2010). Given that secrecy is a fundamental aspect of national security practices, particularly intelligence practices, it is necessary to briefly explore the rationale behind secrecy within the national security context.

The preservation of state interests relies on secrecy, which safeguards sensitive information and establishes a confidential sphere for pursuing national objectives (Ördén 2024). In this sense, state secrecy aligns with Schmitt's controversial 'friend-enemy' theory of sovereignty, which places secrecy at the heart of effective national security (Schmitt 2007). In particular, intelligence practices operate on an adversarial logic that distinguishes between the state and its adversaries (Diderichsen 2019). This specific function of secrecy in national security implies a conceptualisation of secrecy as a legitimate aspect of governance and a crucial tool for stabilisation and

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ing use of intelligence practices, private companies, and CSOs conducting intelligence analysis based on Open-Source Intelligence, etc.

future planning (Horn 2011). Ideally, these secrets remain publicly undisclosed and undebated, creating a space for practices that may not face public scrutiny or require public justification. In this context, national security is self-legitimising.

The secrecy logic is present in some common-sensical arguments often posed by conventional IS authors when discussing intelligence accountability versus effectiveness, as pointed out in the literature review. For example, the notion of the necessity of formal oversight bodies operating in absolute secrecy and the insistence on balancing security against other rights. This underscores that the security logic is not merely an analytical tool for differentiating between the security apparatus and the logics of the democratic state system but also influences how we think about and study intelligence services.

The security logic prioritises the protection of the state and national interests by any means necessary. Unlike bureaucratic logics, they are founded on a decisionist concept of sovereignty, where the defining characteristics are the state of exception and the ability to suspend the Rule of Law (Schmitt 2005). While the bureaucracy state order derives legitimacy from democratic participation (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury 2012), the security state order finds its legitimacy in national security. Although bureaucracy is inherent in the state structure and exists within the framework of the security logics, the bureaucratic logic emphasises legality, rule-based governance, and democratic participation, whereas security logics strongly prioritise secrecy and national security.

This additional and distinctive set of security logics provides a more comprehensive understanding of the state order, enabling differentiation between its constituent elements and portraying the state order as a potential institutional battlefield of coexisting and competing logics (DiMaggio, 1983), rather than a unified whole.

In sum, the institutional logics perspective contributes in at least three ways. First, examining the logics of actors in the intelligence field offers insight into intelligence accountability virtues by identifying core values and beliefs that shape individuals within their respective organisations. It reveals attitudes towards democratic accountability in terms of both established mechanisms and value-based ideals. Second, the way actors comprehend accountability virtues in a democratic context is crucial, as this understanding can significantly influence whether an intelligence official decides to blow the whistle, whether an autonomous oversight body chooses to comply with or oppose the current executive's wishes, and how civil

society engages with intelligence matters. All these scenarios impact the democratic accountability of intelligence services if we consider them ultimately answerable to the public. Third, the logics associated with the role of intelligence services affects our understanding of these services and how they are accountable towards the democratic society. This includes whether intelligence accountability is seen as being towards executive power, as suggested by the security state order, or towards the wider population. By identifying these logics, we can gain a deeper understanding of intelligence accountability virtues.

IV Research Design

> "Intelligence does not exist in a vacuum. It only makes sense in the immanence of social configurations, relations, processes, and dynamics where it is embedded" (Ben Jaffel and Larsson 2023, 3).

The Critical Intelligence Studies Research Agenda

This thesis seeks not only to further the CIS research agenda, but also to expand and refine it by examining intelligence accountability as both an institution and a practice within the broader social context in which intelligence agencies operate. CIS is not a singular research approach to intelligence but rather a highly diverse collection of approaches aimed at questioning the foundational assumptions and frameworks within conventional IS (Phythian 2021). Nevertheless, I outline one of the main arguments posed in the CIS literature relevant to the design of this dissertation.

In CIS, there has been a primary focus on analysing how knowledge and knowledge regimes are produced, processed, and practiced in intelligence, reflecting a primacy given to epistemology and the *epistemological turn* in intelligence scholarship (Klein Goldewijk 2021). Accordingly, the aim is to produce dissensus and provide critique of common-sensical assumptions, practices, and norms of intelligence by revealing "the working of and struggles for power *within* and among intelligence organisations and *between* those organisations and other social and political organisations and institutions" (Bean, de Werd, and Ivan 2021, 468). In the words of influential intelligence scholars Mark Phythian and Peter Gill, "intelligence is a pre-eminently social and political phenomenon, not simply a technical discipline" (2016, 8). Thus, there is a focus not only on the intelligence organisation, its assumptions, norms, and practices, but also on the wider society which the organisation exists to serve. In this sense, intelligence intervention in the public sphere (e.g. through intelligence services' relationship with technology, such as bulk collection of data) and its societal impact as well as impact on marginalised groups are of concern for CIS authors carried by the recognition that intelligence services are a societal good (Phythian 2021); hence, stakeholders are not limited to the executive, formal oversight bodies, and legislative bodies. Civil society also has a

relationship with intelligence services, and this relationship should be studied.

Another central tenet of the CIS challenges the conventional focus on state services and their geopolitical interests as the core subject worthy of examination. This perspective argues that intelligence agencies should not be perceived as detached rational entities that operate in isolation. Rather, it emphasises that these organisations are inextricably linked to and shaped by the societal, cultural, and political landscapes they inhabit. By highlighting this interconnectedness, the CIS underscores the necessity of considering broader contextual factors when analysing intelligence services, rather than viewing them as autonomous providers of neutral information (Hoffmann, Chalati, and Dogan 2022; Ben Jaffel and Larsson 2023; Klein Goldewijk 2021). Therefore, the epistemological turn towards actors, beliefs, practices, and struggles of power is a core element of this dissertation and is enabled through the institutional logics framework.

Methodology

To explore the virtues of intelligence accountability among actors in the intelligence field, and how these virtues influence intelligence accountability structures, I adopted a constructivist approach (Lounsbury et al. 2021). Accountability virtues depend on context, beliefs, and struggles and are shaped through the practice of accountability. They reflect how actors understand and carry out these practices, the basis on which they legitimise their actions, and how these actions contribute to legitimising the organisation. Further, the aim is not to draw predictive inferences but to describe and understand a certain phenomenon (accountability) in a specific context; that is, the project is qualitative in nature. In other words, I do not seek generalised meanings across a variety of contexts, which, moreover, is not a feasible approach when studying accountability virtues (Bovens 2010). Moreover, I seek to reveal the battles for influence among intelligence organisations and other social and political organisations in the field of intelligence. To meet this aim, I engaged in a qualitative constructivist analysis of each actor by attending to their values, beliefs, practices, and battles to gain influence in the intelligence field, thereby exposing power relations and underlying structures.

I applied an abductive reasoning approach, moving fluidly and non-linearly between the theory, collected empirical data, and my positionality as a researcher (Timmermans and Tavory 2012). Abduction means that the

researcher turns away from the conventional view of things and applies both observation and reasoning to arrive at new ideas that better explain something which was previously unclear (Reichertz 2014). This approach was particularly useful, as the selected case (which will be discussed in the following sections) continued to evolve, offering new perspectives and empirical insights throughout the process of the project, as well as the publication of new literature on intelligence accountability from a critical perspective.

Accountability virtues are constructed by the actor. Hence, the ontological standpoint of the project is relativist in nature, as the reality of accountability depends on the understanding of such actors and changes along with changing understandings, which are affected by the specific context in which the understanding is created (Guba and Lincoln 1994). Hence, analysis requires enquiry into the value-based beliefs and practices of actors, as well as the social and political contexts in which they exist. The epistemological view of the project acknowledges that such understanding may be created or developed as the investigation proceeds, as the phenomenon (accountability) itself has an interpretive nature and changes due to societal change and sudden events. This also calls for a methodology based on active interactions between me, the investigator, and relevant actors (Timmermans and Tavory 2012). Accordingly, I have aimed to collect firsthand accounts through interactive interviews with relevant actors in the field of intelligence accountability, as well as being attentive towards societal or political change potentially affecting intelligence accountability virtues. To do so, it is necessary to limit the pool for data collection and to choose a specific case for the study. In the next section, I account for the choice to study a single case, followed by an account of the Danish case.

A Single Case Study

As part of the IntelHub project, this PhD project was originally designed to focus on the legality of intelligence practices through an analysis of accountability and oversight mechanisms by comparatively evaluating the oversight bodies in Scandinavia. The Scandinavian intelligence context has largely been overlooked in IS but stands out as a special case because of the notion of high trust as a vital characteristic of Scandinavian societies. The close intertwining between the state and society makes intelligence accountability a particularly interesting case, as intelligence services are closely integrated into the larger state apparatus (Rønn et al. 2024). A compara-

tive study of the oversight bodies in Scandinavian countries would, on the one hand, expose similarities and contribute to the distinct understanding of the Scandinavian intelligence context, and on the other hand, identify differences with the potential to elucidate the efforts and understanding of each state regarding the importance and institutionalisation of accountability.

During the first six months of the project, I decided to shift my focus from comparatively studying accountability mechanisms to examining accountability virtues within a single case study. This decision was guided by the need for context-dependent information to address the nuanced and complex nature of accountability virtues. A single case study allowed me to delve deeply into multiple understandings rooted in a specific context, and aligns with the recognition that "human behaviour cannot be meaningfully understood as simply the rule-governed acts found (..) in much theory" (Flyvbjerg 2006, 223). The decision to focus on accountability virtues and a single case study emerged from the insights gained during the literature review and the arguments I present in A1 *Intelligence Accountability as a Virtue*. First, as I have extensively argued, accountability mechanisms constitute only part of the accountability story. With the field undergoing an epistemological and societal shift, the project could contribute more meaningfully by investigating organisational understandings and practices of accountability— the core objectives of both BC *Battlefield* and A2 *CSOs in Intelligence Accountability*. Second, there is a notable gap in the literature regarding empirically rich studies on accountability virtues in specific intelligence fields. By focusing on a single case, I uncover the organisational beliefs and practices explored in BC and A2, which are then collectively analysed within the field framework of A3 *Raw Data and Intelligence Accountability*. This approach offers concrete, context-dependent insights into the concept of accountability virtues, addressing the complexities often overlooked in accountability as a mechanism approaches.

Studying a single case has been an object of criticism in academia, including arguments about the inability to generalise, and that it can only be used as a pilot method for preparing a *real* study. However, concrete, context-dependent knowledge of a certain case provides valuable insights and can be central to developing new research agendas by "the force of example" (Flyvbjerg 2006, 228). Further, the purpose of this dissertation is not to make generalisations about accountability virtues as a concept but to explore the concept in a specific context to underscore the overall theoretical argument of the dissertation, namely that understanding and behaviour

matter for intelligence accountability. Furthermore, I provide a theoretical and analytical framework for studying intelligence accountability virtues that can be applied to other cases and potentially lead to a comparative understanding of different societies.

The Danish Case

Choosing Denmark as a case rests on several key argument. First, Denmark, like other Scandinavian countries, exhibits high levels of trust and cooperation (Andreasson 2017) and boasts a relatively low rate of corruption, which also promotes a belief in institutional fairness and integrity (C. A. Larsen 2013). Moreover, Denmark has historically had a strong civil society which has shown the ability to influence the development of the state in general, and the welfare state in particular (Damgaard 2003), implying a civil society that actively engages in the political and societal development of the state. In this sense, studying the virtues of intelligence accountability in Denmark offers an opportunity to explore how a high-trust and low-corruption society engages in intelligence accountability and its inherent tensions. Moreover, a strong civil society provides an interesting context for understanding whether and how democratic norms and values of accountability shape intelligence accountability mechanisms.

Second, the Danish intelligence community has a reputation for being notoriously secretive, and public discussion on matters of intelligence has been notably absent outside the realm of intelligence scandals (S. J. Andersen, Hansen, and Davies 2022; Rønn et al. 2024). Moreover, the literature on Danish intelligence oversight consistently points to its relative ineffectiveness (S. J. Andersen, Hansen, and Davies 2022; Koch 2016). Notably, it is argued that the Danish system potentially falls short of meeting international criteria and principles for intelligence oversight and accountability (Koch 2016; 2023). Politically, there has been little initiative from decision makers to increase accountability in the intelligence community and the intelligence accountability system was reformed only in the aftermath of intelligence scandals (S. J. Andersen, Hansen, and Davies 2022). Furthermore, when public discussions on intelligence matters do occur, they tend to focus on strictly legal questions rather than the normative and political dimensions of the services' role in society (Diderichsen 2016). However, there are ample reasons to discuss the role of Danish services, as they have played a significant part in several controversies throughout Danish history.

One of the most prominent controversies involving the Danish Intelligence and Security Service (DISS) concerns the issue of registration of political opponents.[14] Significant lessons were learned by the Danish public during World War II, particularly illustrated by the Nazis' access to the police intelligence section's national registers of Danish communists, which led to the deportation of over 300 known communists to concentration camps in 1941. In the 1950s, the DISS came under renewed media scrutiny and controversy after it was revealed that the service continued to register individuals adhering to communist ideology, including members of the Danish Communist Party, people subscribing to the Communist Party daily newspaper, and individuals travelling to Warsaw Pact countries (S. J. Andersen, Hansen, and Davies 2022). In 1964, it was made public that between 250.000 and 300.000 Danish citizens were registered based on their political views (Heiberg et al. 2009), even though legal political activity has been explicitly protected by the Danish Constitution since 1953. By the 1960s, the registration of political opponents had become unacceptable in principle, and the first independent oversight body was established in 1964 to monitor DISS registration practices (Koch 2013).

Since the inception of the first body of oversight, reforms within the Danish intelligence community have been sporadic and have only taken place in response to public intelligence scandals or controversies (S. J. Andersen, Hansen, and Davies 2022). This approach, referred to as "firefighting" by Loch K. Johnson (2005), has not resulted in significant improvements to the oversight regime (S. J. Andersen, Hansen, and Davies 2022; Koch 2013; 2023). Moreover, and most importantly, since the beginning of the Danish intelligence oversight regime, disagreements between overseers, services, and the respective ministers about the role and area of expertise of the oversight body have persisted (S. J. Andersen, Hansen, and Davies 2022). These disagreements did not disappear with the new intelligence reform in 2013, establishing the new and current Danish intelligence oversight body, TET. In other words, disagreement is a permanent resident of Danish intelligence oversight practice. These conflicts imply differing understandings of the role of intelligence accountability, but they have not yet been systematically studied. In general, studies on intelligence account-

[14] In short, this means that the government takes an official interest in a matter or person and retains a permanent record of them.

ability in the Danish context are limited. Only a handful of scholars have engaged with the specific subject, and the studies have focused on the legal aspect (Koch 2016; Greve 2016; 2014) or historical progression (S. J. Andersen, Hansen, and Davies 2022).[15] Studying the virtues of intelligence accountability in Denmark has the potential to raise additional questions of the state of democratic accountability in a human rights-embracing democracy and inform intelligence organisations, politicians and the populace accordingly.

Third, the Danish case includes a very recent conflict between an intelligence service and the TET, which hit the public sphere in 2020 when TET issued a press release that gravely criticised the foreign intelligence service DDIS. The press release sparked a heated debate about the practices of DDIS, intelligence accountability, and oversight. TET stated:

> "(t)hat there is an inappropriate culture of legality within the management of DDIS and parts of the service, where the service's possible unjustified activities or inappropriate conditions are sought to be shelved, including by failing to inform the Oversight Board of matters relevant to its control" (Tilsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne [TET] 2020, 2).

The main elements of the criticism concerned DDIS collection and sharing of raw data, suggesting the risks of unauthorised and unjustified collection and sharing of Danish citizens' data, which could compromise the fundamental rights of the Danish people. The press release had enormous consequences for the DDIS, as the Minister of Defence released five top managers from duty. Following this, the Ministry of Defence established a Special Commission consisting of three county judges to scrutinise the allegations. Surprisingly, in 2021, the Commission presented its conclusions, acquitting the top managers of responsibility (Jølner, Beck, and Danielsen 2021) and

[15] Other scholars have focused on aspects closely related to intelligence accountability from a Danish perspective, such as Karen Lund Petersen's conceptualisation of intelligence communication (2019), Lars Erslev Andersen's account of the how Denmark became a security state (2016), Morten Heiberg in his work as part of the PET-Commission and in later publications (Heiberg et al. 2009; Heiberg 2012; 2016), and Rasmus Mariager's study of the surveillance of Danish peace movements during the Cold War (2013).

leaving observers with questions of TET's competence. While TET advocated for more resources and strengthened competency to fulfil an effective control of DDIS in connection with the press release, the Ministry of Defence essentially in 2023 denied the TET access to raw data stored by DDIS.[16] This came under the pretext that TET was never meant to oversee and control raw data, despite several former Ministers of Defence being aware of the practice without questioning it.

This incident did not unfold in a vacuum, and civil society expressed frustration and outrage over the whole affair, as well as its conclusions pointing towards the risks of uncontrolled mass surveillance and sharing of Danish citizens' data with third parties (Bech-Nielsen 2023), thereby reaching different conclusions regarding the nature of intelligence accountability than the Ministry. This case had severe consequences for most parties involved. DDIS lost its top management, and some experts suggested that the DDIS's relationship with foreign services may have been damaged (Kaarsbo 2021). TET has been reformed, denied access to raw data, stripped from its ability to fully independently communicate with the public, and the composition of TET has been changed.[17] The political decision-makers involved have faced allegations of incompetence and overreach of power (Eller and Tofte 2023), and finally have the public been left with a mountain of unanswered questions about the state of the Rule of Law and fundamental civil rights in the democracy in which they live.

The progression of the scandal as well as the long simmering conflict prior to the press release indicate differing understandings of what sufficient intelligence accountability and oversight means and entails, as they were exposed throughout the scandal in the media, and that these understandings may have had a decisive impact on the following accountability struc-

[16] The Ministry of Defence conducted an internal analysis and arrived at this conclusion. The analysis is classified, but an explanation of the conclusions took place during a parliamentary hearing ('Besvarelse af samrådsspørgsmål B om Forsvarsministeriets besvarelsen til TIlsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne om behandling af rådata (afholdes den 21. marts 2023 kl. 14) [Response to consultation question B regarding the Ministry of Defense's reply to the Danish Intelligence Oversight Board on the handling of raw data (to be held on March 21, 2023, at 2:00 PM)]' 2023).

[17] Amendments to the law were introduced 11th of June, 2024 (Justitsministeriet [Ministry of Justice] 2024). For a discussion on the implications of the bill, see for example Hartvigsen, Koch and Rønn's op-ed in *Radar* (2024).

tures. Hence, choosing Danmark as a case serves the overarching purpose of this project, namely, to identify the virtues of intelligence accountability as well as the impact on accountability structures. I conducted an information-oriented selection by choosing an extreme case with the intention of maximising the utility of information in an unusual case, which from the outset is especially problematic (Flyvbjerg 2006). I expected the Danish case to particularly expose the importance of intelligence accountability virtues, as the progress of intelligence accountability in Denmark has been very limited, and intelligence reform has often not been for the better when concerned with accountability obligations. This does not align with the general idea in the IS literature that intelligence scandals often lead to intelligence reform and improved intelligence accountability, while underscoring the importance of differing understandings of accountability and their impact on the development and construction of intelligence accountability mechanisms.

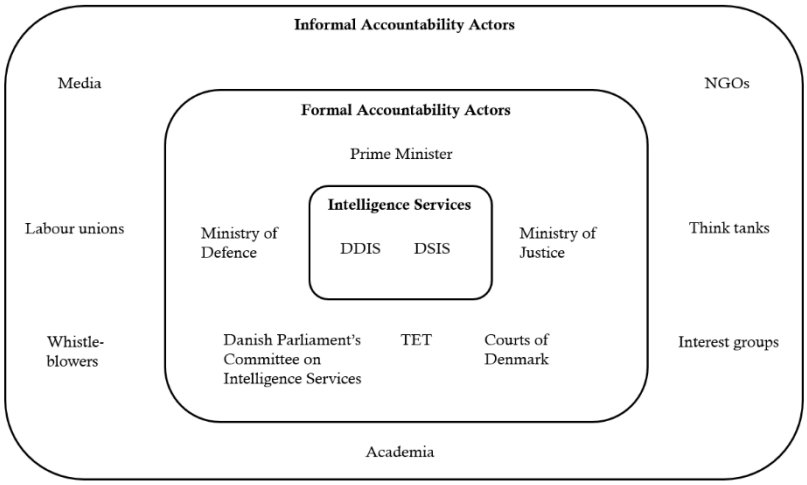
Another vital reason for choosing the Danish case was access. It is well known in the scholarly literature that access to the services, even just interviews, is unsurprisingly difficult, as insiders have little interest in discussing democratic accountability (Gill 2020). Hence, to have a reasonable chance of getting access, a necessity for exploring virtues of intelligence accountability, I deemed it most sufficient to study a context in which I have some prior knowledge about and already have some established relationships within. In the following section, I provide a mapping of the current accountability actors in the Danish intelligence field to create an overview of relevant actors.

The Danish Intelligence Field

Accountability actors in the Danish intelligence field are depicted in Figure 3. The figure provides a mapping of the relevant actors, including formal and informal accountability holders. In short, both DDIS and DSIS are accountable to the Danish government led by the Danish Prime Minister. These services are anchored in their respective ministries, with DSIS under the Ministry of Justice and DDIS under the Ministry of Defence. Moreover, the services are overseen by the Danish Parliament's Committee on Intelligence Services [Folketingets Udvalg vedrørende Efterretningstjenester]. This committee, including its schedule and what is discussed, shared, and deliberated during its meetings, is completely closed to the public, and its members are bound by absolute confidentiality. In terms of judicial

oversight, DSIS is required to obtain a court order for coercive measures, as its operations are directed towards matters within Denmark's borders. DDIS is Denmark's military and foreign intelligence service, focusing on matters abroad. Legal rules on personal data handling generally apply only to persons residing in Denmark. In other situations, DDIS' activities are typically unregulated by law. As an all-source intelligence service, it has freedom in choosing collection activities (Koch 2023). Both DDIS and DSIS are subject to oversight by TET. This ensures that the services process information about individuals in accordance with the specific provisions outlined in the Danish Security and Intelligence Service Act and the Danish Defence Intelligence Service Act (Tilsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne [TET] n.d.). In addition to formal accountability actors, a number of civil society actors have been engaged in intelligence accountability through media coverage, reports, contributions to public discussions, public consultation hearings, academic work, and whistleblowing. This mapping has been an evolving exercise throughout the project, and the mapping of informal actors has been based on informal conversations, public consultation hearings, and media comments.

Figure 3. The Danish Intelligence Field: Accountability Actors



The mapping of accountability actors in the Danish intelligence field, as depicted in Figure 3, serves as a foundational context for understanding the broader landscape of intelligence accountability that extends beyond the actors explored in this dissertation. Not all actors were included in this

dissertation for several reasons. First, identifying the institutional logics of all actors requires more time than what a PhD project offers. Second, some actors are inaccessible because of strict confidentiality, such as the Danish Parliament's Committee on Intelligence Services. Third, I chose to focus on only one intelligence service, the DDIS, because the conflict between DDIS and TET most clearly exemplifies the conflicting logics and elucidates the importance of accountability virtues. Finally, media, whistleblowers, and academia have not been included based on time restrictions. This contextual groundwork informs the subsequent data collection and analytical processes for the three empirical papers in this dissertation, which are described and discussed in the following sections.

Data Collection and Analysis

This dissertation consists of both conceptual (A1) and empirical contributions (BC, A2, and A3). Accordingly, the data collection for each contribution varies. The conceptual contribution, A1 *Intelligence Accountability as a Virtue*, is based on scholarly literature on the subject, whereas the empirical contributions are based on interviews, media accounts, official documents, and reports.

In total, I conducted 18 interviews, analysed two books, four podcasts, four TV documentary episodes, 11 investigative journalistic articles, six official reports, and a large number of official statements, reports, public consultation responses, etc. A full overview of the collected data is presented in Table 2.

To underscore the reliability of the findings of this dissertation, I strive to present the data, methods, and analytical approach as transparent and clear as possible (Lewis et al. 2003) by describing both the data, the methods of collection, the reflections prior, during, and post data collection, as well as analytical coding schemes. Moreover, I have paid much attention to projecting the connections between the concept of accountability, the findings of the project, and the data from which they were derived to demonstrate validity (Lewis et al. 2003). In this sense, I have emphasised rich, authentic descriptions that reflect the participants' language and meanings to capture the phenomenon of accountability accurately and meaningfully. In the following sections, the reflections and choices behind each data collection and analysis strategy are explained.

Table 2. Overview of Data Collection

Output	Actors	Key Objective	Material and Sources
A1 *Intelligence Accountability as a Virtue*		Literature review and re-conceptualisation	Journal articles and books • 68
BC *Battlefield*	DDIS & TET	1 Identify the institutional logics of DDIS and TET regarding intelligence accountability. 2 Discuss how these logics contribute to conflict in intelligence oversight.	Interviews • 5 DDIS • 4 TET • 2 pilot Media content • DR • Zetland
A2 *CSOs in Intelligence Accountability*	CSOs	1 Investigate the institutional logics of CSOs regarding intelligence accountability. 2 Analyse how they contribute as potential enhancers of intelligence legitimacy	Interviews • 8 individuals from 7 organisations
A3 *Raw Data and Intelligence Accountability*	DDIS, TET, & CSOs	1 Investigate how raw data perceptions inform accountability virtues. 2 Discuss the field dynamics and its implications on accountability structures	Official publications • DDIS • TET • CSOs Public Statements • Danish media Consultation letters • Danish Parliament website Interviews • 5 DDIS • 4 TET • 7 CSOs

Article 1 ***Intelligence Accountability as a Virtue***

The conceptual contribution, consisting of a thorough review and discussion of the existing literature as well as a novel approach to the study intelligence accountability, is based on a collection of relevant literature on the subject since 2001.[18] The aim was to conduct an *Integrative Review* (Torraco 2005), meaning that I strived to "overview the knowledge base, to critically review and potentially re-conceptualise, and to expand on the theoretical foundation of the specific topic as it develops" (Snyder 2019, 336).

The literature was chosen for review based on two criteria: First, the paper must be concerned with intelligence issues and practices connected to national intelligence services. This criterion effectively excluded papers concerned with executive accountability towards intelligence issues. As this of course is a relevant perspective and the distinction between accountability of the intelligence organisation and the executive is arguably blurred, it is beyond this dissertation to venture into such discussion. Second, the papers had to define accountability, to some extent. The reasoning behind this criterion rests on the realisation that many authors refer to accountability, yet without engaging with it or defining it further, which would make a conceptual discussion challenging. As Bovens writes "many scholars talk about accountability, but few study it rigorously" (2010, 947). IS is no exception to this, as revealed by the results of the literature search. As an example, the initial literature search in EBSCO resulted in 92 papers, but after reviewing the papers individually, only 30 papers fell within the two criteria (see Table 3 for an overview).

Table 3. Result of Literature Search[19]

Database	Initial result	Criteria-meeting results
EBSCO	92	30
ProQuest	271	8
Pearl Growing Search		30

[18] Papers prior to 2001 were excluded based on the reasoning that discussions and studies of intelligence accountability gained significant focus after 9/11 due to intelligence challenges and assumed intelligence failures (Aldrich 2009b; Ott 2003).

[19] Simplified version of *Table 2. Results* in A1 *Intelligence Accountability as a Virtue*.

As shown in the table, 68 papers fulfilled the criteria and were included in the literature review (for a full list, see Appendix 6). In line with the aim of integrated reviews, the analysis was conducted to critically examine the main ideas and relationships of the issue (Snyder 2019). First, I did a complete reading of each paper and then conducted the initial analysis conceptually structuring the topic by adopting the Bovens' (2010) guiding theory distinguishing between accountability as a mechanism and accountability as a virtue. 66 papers fell under the first category, whereas only two papers fell under the second category. It must be noted that the literature search was conducted in the spring of 2022, and since then, several papers and an edited volume have been published that would fall under the accountability as a virtue categorisation (for example Roller et al. 2023; Kniep et al. 2023; Bigo, Mc Cluskey, and Tréguer 2023a). These papers have been considered especially for A2 *CSOs in Intelligence Accountability* and A3 *Raw Data and Intelligence Accountability*.

Following the categorisation of the collected papers, I used three general codes that each included several sub-codes which were then applied to the papers falling within the mechanism category (see Table 4). The three overarching codes are mechanisms, conditions for accountability, and the main arguments. These codes serve the purpose of deconstructing the topic into its basic elements (Torraco 2005): who is understood to be the main mechanism of intelligence accountability, what are the necessary conditions for achieving intelligence accountability, and what are the main challenges for intelligence accountability.

Table 4. A1 Codes for Analysis

Key Codes	Sub-codes
Mechanisms	Executive
	Legislature
	Judiciary
	International bodies
	Civil society
Conditions for accountability	Standards
	Sanctions
	Access to information
Main challenges	Legal frameworks
	Effectiveness

The deconstruction of the topic allowed me to expose taken for granted knowledge, that is, all responsibility is placed on oversight mechanisms for maintaining effectiveness, and highlight some of the shortcomings, including the lack of attention towards actors' understanding of intelligence accountability. In terms of the two papers within the virtue-category (Manjikian 2016; Petersen and Tjalve 2018), both papers introduce a theoretical perspective and served as a starting point and inspiration for synthesising new knowledge on the topic (Torraco 2005). Grounded in the critical analysis, I suggest a new conceptual framework to study intelligence accountability by attending to the emerging CIS that has made critical enquiry into other aspects of IS (as elucidated in previous sections), and I suggest the institutional logics perspective and Bourdieu's political sociology as suitable for overcoming taken for granted assumptions and illuminating gaps in the literature.

Book Chapter *Battlefield*

BC *Battlefield*, which is co-authored by IntelHub researchers Mia Hartmann and Adam Diderichsen, laid the groundwork for the methodological approach of the empirical part of the dissertation. In this study, we aimed to identify the institutional logics of intelligence services and oversight bodies and, on that basis, investigate, elucidate, and discuss the roots of the conflict between them on a deeper level than simply assuming a zero-sum game. We chose a research setting where we knew that there had been a controversial, large-scale conflict, namely, the recent conflict between DDIS and TET, as previously described. To identify institutional logics, we needed materials that expressed such logics. Drawing on institutional logics literature, we identified two sets of materials: media content and interviews (Reay and Jones 2016). Because of the conflict's publicity, we were aware that key stakeholders had issued statements (overt and covert) to the media explaining their actions and the beliefs driving them. This allowed us to gather a substantial amount of textual, video, and audio data, with the potential to shed light on the logics guiding the two actors (Reay and Jones 2016; Krippendorff 2019). Rather than conducting a broad and exhaustive search for public media communications, we focused our collection on two national public media sources that primarily covered the case in depth.

Specifically, we collected data from the TV documentary *Mørklagt*[20] produced by the Danish Broadcasting Corporation (DR) and the podcast *Genstart*[21] also produced by DR. Moreover, we collected data from the article series *Væggene har Ører*[22] in the digital newspaper Zetland, which offers one of the most extensive coverings of the case. These documentaries, with their persistent format, not only experienced a growing appeal among the general public but also transformed into crucial platforms. Here, the key institutional actors involved in the case would consent to interviews, advocate their positions, and convey their messages to both the wider audience and their counterparts. The documentary and podcast episodes were transcribed to enable textual coding.

Lastly, I also read two books covering the case, providing perspectives from both DDIS and TET. The first book[23] was written by Lars Findsen, the (at the time of the TET press release) director of DDIS, in which Findsen describes the process leading up to the press release from his perspective. Memoirs of former directors of intelligence have been one of the main sources of intelligence studies, as they provide first-hand experiences (Davies 2001). The other book[24], which also covers the progress of the case and various actors, is written by journalist Hans Davidsen-Nielsen, who has been covering Danish intelligence services throughout most of his career. The books mainly provided a general overview and background knowledge

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[20] 'Mørklagt: Spionchefens hemmeligheder' [Obscured: The Spy Chief's Secrets] and 'Mørklagt: Forsvarsministerens hemmeligheder' [Obscured: The Defence Minister's Secrets]. The TV-documentary covered four episodes broadcast on October 13 and 18, 2023, and February 27, 2023. Link: https://www.dr.dk/drtv/episode/moerklagt_-spionchefens-hemmeligheder-_1_3__344632.

[21] 'Reboot' in English. The podcast covers various societal themes, yet the specific episodes that we collected data from were published January 14, 2022, August 28, 2022, and October 10, 2022. Link: https://www.dr.dk/lyd/special-radio/genstart-2642056922000.

[22] 'The Walls got Ears' in English. The article series consist of 12 articles published between December 2022 and November 2023. Link: https://www.zetland.dk/historier?series_id=f38c9c83-15b2-4d33-bb94-b5bb0dd34c1b.

[23] Findsen, Lars, and Mette Mayli Albæk. 2022. *Spionchefen: Erindringer fra celle 18 [The Spy Chief: Memoirs from Cell 18]*. Politikens Forlag.

[24] Davidsen-Nielsen, Hans. 2022. *Spion Blandt Venner: Statshemmeligheden, Der Ændrede Danmark [Spy Among Friends: The State Secret That Changed Denmark]*. Gyldendal.

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of the case rather than providing actual data for the analysis. For a full overview of the data sources, refer to Table 5.

We applied a coding framework inspired by Thornton and Ocasio (1999) to the transcripts by identifying values, beliefs, and institutional rules. This coding provided us with an initial overview of the institutional logics at play among the key institutional actors involved in the conflict. Second, we performed another layer of coding to map out the differences, contradictions, and explicit conflicts between these institutional logics prevailing within the two actors. Following the coding, we did a content analysis to interpret these communications to the media/public within their social context (Krippendorff 2019) and eventually made a comparison to the ideal type of the state order. This strategy is also called *pattern matching*, which means that the researcher "describe and evaluate institutional logics based on the identification and comparison of actual data to "ideal types"" (Reay and Jones 2016, 446). In this process, we realise the missing element of the state order, namely, the security state, which led us to conceptualise the security state order to effectively capture essential categories for comparison (Thornton 2004).

Table 5. BC Overview of Data Sources

Sources	Data type	Institutional perspective
DR	TV-documentary 'Mørklagt'	DDIS
DR	Podcast 'Genstart'	DDIS
Zetland	Article series 'Væggene har Ører'	DDIS, TET
Lars Findsen	Book 'Spionchefen: Erindinger fra celle 18'	DDIS
Hans Davidsen-Nielsen	Book 'Spion Blandt Venner: Statshemmeligheden, Der Ændrede Danmark'	DDIS, TET
Pilot Interviews	2 semi-structured interviews	Former DDIS employee, intelligence scholar
DDIS	5 semi-structured interviews	DDIS, 1 former DDIS manager
TET	4 semi-structured interviews	TET (Board and secretariat)

The media sources were naturally not created in accordance with the specific needs of this project; hence, we also sought to conduct interviews to increase the validity of our results (Davies 2001). Based on the realisations subtracted from the mapping of institutional logics and the conflicting views and battles in the public media, we proceeded with qualitative in-depth interviews with selected institutional members of DDIS and TET to supplement and enhance empirical validity. This approach of triangulation is especially important in IS to overcome the limitations of strictly collecting data from either interviews or publicly available data, which standing alone can give a misinforming picture due to secrecy (Van Puyvelde 2018; Díaz-Fernández 2023). Further, interviews are especially important for the identification of institutional logics, as "the expressive power of language provides the most important resource for accounts" (Hammersley and Atkinson 1995, 126).

A few points need to be made regarding conducting interviews in the intelligence research field. Intelligence officials often prefer not to discuss their work with researchers because of the legal obligations of confidentiality that are often applied to their work (Van Puyvelde 2018; Díaz-Fernández 2023), making the question of access a specifically important one. On the other hand, interviews with intelligence officials can help fill gaps in knowledge and generate new understandings of intelligence practices which cannot be revealed by scrutinising publicly available information. As such, data triangulation can provide a more accurate representation of the concept by combining several data sources and types (Davies 2001; Hammond 2015). Conducting qualitative interviews with intelligence officials is not fundamentally different from other research fields, but government secrecy intensifies the challenges associated with interviews as a data collection method, and therefore needs careful design and conduct (Van Puyvelde 2018; Díaz-Fernández 2023; Davies 2001). Therefore, I will outline and substantiate the reasoning behind the applied design.

In the institutional logics framework, informant selection is vital to sufficiently capture the institutional logics of an organisation. Key carriers of institutional logics in an organisation are "professional elites and the bureaucratic staffers that have an interest and some jurisdiction over critical policy domain (..) that shape organisational life" (Lounsbury et al. 2021, 272). Accordingly, we conducted interviews with staff at the top management level in DDIS and TET. We approached both organisations through formal channels (e-mail), outlining the purpose of our study and methodology to increase response rates (Van Puyvelde 2018; Díaz-Fernández 2023).

TET responded positively to our request and provided four interviewees, including board members and secretarial staff. All interviews with the TET were conducted in May 2023. Obtaining access to DDIS was somewhat more difficult and prolonged. Initially, the service provided one interviewee at management level, and the interview was conducted in May 2023. At the end of the interview, I suggested conducting interviews with other managers in the organisation, to which the participants responded positively with a promise to deliver the suggestion to the management of the organisation. This approach can be characterised as convenience sampling (Van Puyvelde 2018), as we essentially relied on organisational willingness to provide participants whom they saw fit. The Service eventually agreed to provide three more interviewees from the management level, whom I interviewed in September 2023. The logic behind eventually providing additional interviewees is hardly identifiable; however, in the IntelHub group, we have experienced significant curiosity from intelligence practitioners in general, which suggests that we have succeeded in creating an understanding of our research as legitimately open for the perspectives within the intelligence organisations. We believe that this approach partly contributed to enabling access. In addition to the four current managers of DDIS, I interviewed a former DDIS manager with extensive experience. The reason behind interviewing a former intelligence officer was that former intelligence officials are often able to speak more freely than their serving colleagues (Van Puyvelde 2018; Díaz-Fernández 2023), and I could potentially capture an understanding that was less restricted by her/his current employee.

Prior to the interviews, an interview guide was sent. We designed the interviews as semi-structured to enable an explorative approach and encourage the conversation to "digress and possibly reveal new issues and angles" (Van Puyvelde 2018, 382). The interview guide was constructed to identify values (broad goals and principles), beliefs (something accepted to be true), and institutional rules (prescriptions that define actions) according to Thornton and Ocasio's typology (1999). As we understood that intelligence accountability might be a sensitive subject, given the recent events in the intelligence community, I conducted two pilot interviews with a former DDIS intelligence officer and an educator of intelligence analysis to refine the interview guide and gain feedback on question formulations.

In accordance with the constructivist framework underpinning this study, the knowledge elicited from interviews was not regarded as pre-existing but rather as co-constructed and negotiated during the interview

process. Thus, the interview's optimal approach emphasised interactive engagement (Legard, Keegan, and Ward 2003; Järvinen and Mik-Meyer 2005). The questions were formulated as open and broad as possible, while still remaining on the track of the subject. An example of such a question is "If you were to describe DDIS'/TET's societal role with a metaphor, what would that be?". This kind of question serves to "provide access to the meanings people attribute to their experiences and social worlds" (Miller and Glassner 1997, 100). We also used closed questions such as "do you believe that the public has confidence in the intelligence services and their expertise?". This kind of question served to gain more specific insights into the interviewee's understanding of their own organisation in society (Legard, Keegan, and Ward 2003). Moreover, we asked questions covering their understanding of the other organisation, meaning we asked DDIS about TET and vice versa. This had the purpose of elucidating their self-understanding through their understanding of the other. See Appendices 7 and 8 for interview guides (translated from Danish to English). Considering this, it is necessary to briefly address the matter of language.

There is no word in Danish equivalent to the English word accountability. For this reason, this word will not appear in the interview guide, as we had to use other words to frame the questions and capture the meaning of accountability. First, it is important to point out that in Danish, the words control [kontrol] and oversight [tilsyn] are often used interchangeably (S. J. Andersen, Hansen, and Davies 2022). For example, is the Danish Parliament's Committee on Intelligence Services commonly referred to as the Control Committee [Kontroludvalget]. Hence, one needs to know the context and why either word was used in a specific context; hence, we have paid careful attention to which words were used in which contexts. Moreover, to overcome the obstacle of language while remaining faithful to the theoretical approach, we asked questions covering legitimacy, authority, and the space in between occupied by accountability. In doing so, we asked questions regarding their societal role, the ideal, their primary audience, perceived authority, expertise, etc., and used words such as transparency [gennemsigtighed], openness [åbenhed], responsibility [ansvarlighed], and trust [tillid], all of which are associated with accountability (Bovens 2007).

All interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and took place at the premises of the DDIS and TET, meaning that the meetings were tightly controlled and coordinated due to security measures. I was not allowed to bring any technical devices and hence relied on notetaking by hand during the interview, which is not an unusual practice when interviewing intelli-

gence officials (Van Puyvelde 2018; Díaz-Fernández 2023). To get as accurate a construction of the interview as possible, I reconstructed the content immediately after the interview by voice recording based on notes and memory. The reconstruction was subsequently transcribed. Because I was not allowed to record the interview, which limited the interaction to some degree, and hence not able to capture the language used by participants, hesitations or tone in detail, I took notes on these subjects based on my memory and also made notes of the interview situation, including initial attitude and change of behaviour during the interview for subsequent reflection and analysis (Legard, Keegan, and Ward 2003).

I will provide a few notes on the experience of interviewing intelligence professionals, which may have had an impact on the analysis. As most of the interviewees were receptive and complied with the premise of the study, a few interviewees attempted to dominate the interview agenda by either starting the interview with shortcutting the pre-agreed interview duration, repeatedly returning to the same point while neglecting other aspects of the theme, or by saying that they had no view of the subject. I accommodated these attempts by rearranging the interview to fit with the new time schedule, insisting on asking questions related to other aspects of the theme, and asking questions in different ways to subtract views (Legard, Keegan, and Ward 2003). Furthermore, I became aware that some of the interviewees may have discussed potential answers before the interviews, based on the strikingly similar answers provided to some of the questions. Whether this is the case, I do not believe this to have compromised the analysis – maybe it may even have benefited it. As institutional logics refer to organisational values, beliefs, and behaviours carried by key personnel, the potential negotiation and discussion among managers may even underscore the particular logics as expressed during interviews. After the interviews were conducted, most interviewees required to review transcriptions of the interviews. Note that revisions to the original transcripts were purely reformulations and not revisions of meaning.

In the analysis, we organised the interview data based on the subelements in the general definition of institutional logics (Thornton and Ocasio 1999). We thematically coded the transcribed interviews (Ritchie, Spencer, and O'Conner 2003; Gibbs 2007) by applying two overarching codes identified in the initial analysis of media content, namely, the logics of the security state order and the bureaucracy state order. Based on this coding, we identified three themes related to accountability: internal controls, authority, and oversight. Internal control refers to the mechanisms in

place within DDIS to monitor and control legal compliance. Authority refers to the political authorisation of DDIS' practices, and oversight refers to external oversight, including that of TET, media, and civil society. Table 6 presents the final coding scheme applied to the data. This approach allowed us to outline the institutional logics of DDIS and TET, leading to a comparative analysis that highlighted their conflicting logics and effects on democratic accountability.

Table 6. BC Coding Scheme

	Internal control		Authority		Oversight	
	Security	Bureaucracy	Security	Bureaucracy	Security	Bureaucracy
Values						
Beliefs						
Rules						

As we were exploring the institutional logics of the organisations, we sought to emphasise the meanings of the interviewees in reporting our findings by featuring a large number of block quotes. There is a risk of this approach, as the interviewees may dominate the study; however, we found that to provide a convincing argument of the institutional logics of both organisations, evidence in the form of quotes and thick descriptions of the context was needed (Reay and Jones 2016) to the extent that the book chapter format allowed us. Many of the reflections and learnings from the BC data collection for the BC was transferred to A2 *CSOs in Intelligence Accountability*, which I will turn to next.

Article 2 *CSOs in Intelligence Accountability*

A2 *CSOs in Intelligence Accountability*, co-authored with Postdoc Jaseff Raziel Yauri Miranda, aims to explore the institutional logics of CSOs in Denmark to elucidate their understanding of their role in intelligence accountability and rationalisation behind their practices. The study was inspired by and answers very recent publications on the subject exploring more agonistic forms of intelligence accountability by reviewing the role of media and civil society across a variety of cases and events (Roller et al. 2023; Kniep et al. 2023). The idea emerged and was refined through discussions in academic workshops, close attention to societal debates, and developments within the intelligence oversight regime. Initially, we wanted to conduct a comparative analysis of Denmark and Spain to provide a qual-

itative exploration of civic oversight, which varies between states. However, during the data collection process, we found that the Spanish case offered very few responses (only two written responses from actors in academia), making a comparative analysis challenging. This resulted in the decision to omit the Spanish case from consideration and centre attention on the Danish case.

To explore the logics and practices of intelligence accountability within Denmark's CSOs, we conducted qualitative interviews with the key actors. Our research questions were as follows: How do CSOs perceive their role in ensuring intelligence accountability? And how do they rationalise their contributions as potential enhancers of intelligence legitimacy? Rather than observing practices directly, we investigated the reasoning behind them, as interviews provide insight into participants' understanding of both the challenges and opportunities regarding practices of influence towards intelligence accountability. This understanding of their rationales behind the actions adds intrinsic value to our analysis (Hitchings 2012).

Complying with the theoretical foundation of this dissertation, the analysis is anchored in the institutional logics framework, meaning that the basis for understanding CSOs rests on the community order typology. Hence, CSOs' role is to provide politics with normative and ideational content (Reuter, Wijkström, and Meyer 2014). Accordingly, the institutional logics framework was operationalised as democratic values, beliefs about intelligence accountability, and institutional rules as practices of influence.

To identify the key actors, I scrutinised public statements to media outlets, screened public consultation letters, and had informal conversations with individuals close to the field. I identified organisations and individuals from CSOs who actively contributed to public debates on intelligence accountability. To capture the institutional logics of the organisation, I requested interviewees either in leading positions or experts on the subject of intelligence accountability (if the organisation is large enough to allocate different subjects to specific departments and/or individual employees). I reached a total of 19 CSOs, including labour unions, international and national non-governmental organisations, interest groups and think tanks. Thirteen responded, of which seven agreed to participate, while the remaining six declined because of a perceived lack of expertise on the subject or scheduling conflicts. Among the seven who agreed to participate, one preferred to be anonymised, while the other six consented to be identified by

organisational affiliation and some by organisational position. For an overview of participating organisations, see Table 7.

Table 7. A2 Overview of CSOs

Organisation	Interviewee(s)	Date of Interview
Anonymous civil society organisation	Leading figure	11.01.2024
Forbundet af IT-professionelle, PROSA [Association of IT Professionals]	Chair Political advisor	27.02.2024
Institut for Menneskerettigheder [Danish Institute of Human Rights]	Executive officer	24.01.2024
Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark, IDA [Danish Society of Engineers]	Senior Consultant	31.01.2024
Retspolitisk Forening [Legal Policy Association]	Former Chair	19.01.2024
Landsforeningen for Forsvarsadvokater [National Association of Defence Lawyers]	Member	30.01.2024
Transparency International Denmark	Chair	09.02.2024

I contacted all organisations through formal channels (e-mail) with an invitation to participate, an outline of the purpose of the study and its methodology, and examples of expected interview questions to provide transparency. In line with the methodology of BC *Battlefield*, interview questions were broadly formulated to allow interviewees to express meanings about their experiences and social worlds (See Appendix 9 for the interview guide translated from Danish to English). Examples and reasoning for such questions include the following:

- "What does democracy mean to you/your organisation?" This question served to achieve an understanding of democratic values, providing a foundation for beliefs about intelligent accountability.
- "Do you believe that civil society actors can contribute to intelligence oversight, and if so, how?" This question served to gain insight into their beliefs regarding their actual and ideal roles in intelligence accountability.

- "What impact do you see your work having on intelligence issues?" This kind of question aims to elucidate which practices of influence the organisations use, and whether they perceive these practices to have an effect.

The interviews followed an in-depth interview methodology (Fontana and Frey 1994) and lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Six interviews were conducted at the premises of the organisation, one was conducted using Teams, and one was conducted over the phone. All participants agreed to record the interviews, allowing me to devote full attention to listening to the interviewee and engaging in a more interactive interview (Legard, Keegan, and Ward 2003) than was the case with BC *Battlefield*.

All recordings were subsequently transcribed, and the transcriptions were organised according to key theoretical themes: values, beliefs, and institutional rules, as well as the perceived effects of their efforts towards influencing intelligence accountability. As the community order is about providing normative content to politics, the analysis focuses on the interpretation of such normative content through the meanings of the interviewees. This approach is also called *pattern inducing* (Reay and Jones 2016) and implies identifying logics by coding and analysing the transcriptions to show beliefs and behaviour guided by particular logics (Friedland and Alford 1991). The key component of the analysis is the clustering of text segments into meaningful categories (Ritchie, Spencer, and O'Conner 2003; Gibbs 2007) that reveal values and beliefs that guide behaviours. Using NVivo to arrange and rearrange text pieces into categories, I conducted three layers of coding with the results of each layer serving as the guide for the next layer. See Table 8.

In this paper, we strived to show as much of the raw data (quotations) as possible to present a convincing picture of the organisations' institutional logics (Reay and Jones 2016). As such, we were able to provide insights into the interviewees' explanations for their chosen practices of influence, show the underlying values and beliefs guiding these practices, and reveal the non-synchronicity between the value systems and practices of influence.

Table 8. A2 Layers of Coding

Layer	Code			
1	Democracy	Intelligence accountability	Practices of influence	Perceived effects
2	Values Beliefs	Values Beliefs	Permitted Prohibited Required Sanctioned	Negative Positive
3	Democratic discussion Free choice Distribution of power Civil rights Transparency	Role of intelligence services Role of CSOs Legitimacy of intelligence services		

Article 3 *Raw Data and Intelligence Accountability*

The final paper of this dissertation, A3 *Raw Data and Intelligence Accountability*, serves to collect insights from the previous two papers together with other data types (see Table 9) in an organisational field framework by attending to perceptions of raw data collection and how these inform intelligence accountability virtues and accountability mechanisms. The development of the idea was influenced by the two previous studies, as well as developments in the Danish intelligence community, such as the Ministry of Defence's decision to revoke TET's mandate to oversee raw data, the following parliamentary hearings, and objections from CSOs (Bech-Nielsen 2023). My thoughts on the subject were further refined and focused during discussions at a PhD course "Information and Data in Society" at Copenhagen University.

Table 9. A3 Data Sources

Sources	Data type	Institutional perspective
DDIS	• Biennial reports *Indblik* [Insight], 2019, 2021, 2023 • Interviews	DDIS
TET	• Annual Report: DDIS, 2021, 2022, 2023 • Press release 24.08.2020 • Interviews	TET
Civil society organisations	• Public statements • Open letters to politicians • Public consultation letters • Interviews	Civil society organisations
Media content	• Commentaries • Op-eds • Expert interviews	Civil society organisations Executive
Danish Parliament website	• Public consultation letters • Transcripts of response to consultation questions	Civil society organisations Executive

Similarly to A2 *CSOs in Intelligence Accountability*, I applied a pattern inducing approach by gathering empirical data on the subject and identify logics associated with raw data collection and accountability by analysing and coding the text to show how accountability virtues are guided by particular understandings (Reay and Jones 2016; Friedland and Alford 1991). The approach cannot be categorised as purely inductive, as I applied theoretical categories for both raw data collection and accountability, with a prior expectation of how the various actors would align themselves with specific logics. In other words, the analytical process and reasoning of this study are dominantly abductive, as the navigation between theory and empirical data has been a process ongoing throughout the entirety of the PhD project, eventually resulting in this particular study. Hence, the analysis of under-

standings of raw data collection is the interpretive element of this study, as I clustered text elements referring to raw data collection into categories of how reality (raw data collection) is presented (Phillips and Schrøder 2005) and based on that related the categories to the two ethical positions on raw data collection and privacy issues, namely the access account and the control account (Macnish 2018; Inness 1996). Moreover, I specifically placed the organisational field in the current political context to elucidate the power positions of the various actors within the field to explain change/statis (Hinings et al. 2003).

The analysis was constructed based on findings from the previous two empirical studies (BC and A2) and textual data that provided access to the various actors' perceptions of raw data collection. These textual data were extracted from a range of different sources, including actors' websites, media content, and the Danish Parliament website. Furthermore, the data types vary, including official reports published by TET and DDIS, public statements and open letters from civil society actors, commentaries published by the media, and, importantly, public consultation letters to bills concerning intelligence and security organisations' handling and access to raw data. In these public consultation letters, actors express their particular views on raw data collection and the associated concerns and possibilities in detail, thus providing insight into the logics on which these actors build their beliefs.

After identifying the institutional logics of actors through an interpretive analysis of perceptions of raw data collection and how these inform their intelligence accountability virtues and priorities, I discuss the importance of the political domain to field battles. Thus, I identify the logics of political decision-makers by analysing textual data from media content (in which politicians in government have expressed their opinions) and transcripts of parliamentary hearings on the subject. The consideration of political actors is necessary to understand the intelligence field, as they provide opportunities and limitations regarding intelligence practices. As intelligence researcher Antonio M. Díaz-Fernández notes, "this domain [intelligence] can only be understood with the inputs that other actors can offer (..) these actors represent the multiple mirror-like facets of a polyhedric cube and should never be dismissed" (Díaz-Fernández 2023, 4). The comparison of field-level actors' logics with the logics of political decision-makers allowed me to suggest the most dominant (politically supported) logic in the intelligence field and to propose explanations for the failure to drive meaningful progress in the Danish intelligence field.

Considerations of Ethics and Security

Throughout this PhD project, I had many reflections regarding the ethical aspects of the conducted studies, as the collected data contain personal information, and studies involving data from intelligence organisations are generally a sensitive matter. The research project was reported to the SDU RIO Legal Services for review and approval of data collection and processing. Moreover, I have been responsible for all the empirical data management in BC, A2, and A3. In this section, I explain how I handled the *Principles of Research Integrity* as presented in the Danish Code of Conduct (2014) in relation to data collection, processing and reporting.

Starting with the collection of data, especially the interviews with DDIS and TET, required careful consideration due to the organisations' confidential work. To adhere to the principles of *honesty* and *transparency,* my co-authors and I clearly outlined the purpose of our study and methodology in the invitations that we send to the organisations (Van Puyvelde 2018). After acceptance of the invitation, but before the interviews, we sent another document with a more thorough outline of the aims of the study, the methodology, participating organisational actors, data processing (access limited to authors), expected outcomes (a book chapter and a journal article), and the interview guide. We also emphasised that we would not (purposefully) ask any questions about or address topics subject to confidentiality. Information shared by intelligence officials as well as oversight officials has a more complicated character than what is the case in many other contexts, as they have a legal obligation not to disclose information related to their work (Díaz-Fernández 2023; Van Puyvelde 2018). This is also true in the Danish context. At the outset, this dissertation is not concerned with classified information about intelligence methods, resources, or capabilities. However, because accountability issues concern methods, resources, and capabilities, the risk of touching on these themes exists. For the same reason, I made sure to explicitly state that I had no interest in confidential knowledge at the beginning of the interviews if the interviewee expressed doubts about my status of security clearance (which I did not have). This process was designed to protect participants and fulfil the requirements of informed consent (Israel 2015) by ensuring that participants were given full information about what it meant for them as carriers of institutional values and beliefs to take part in the study. In the document outlining the project, we also informed the participants that the interviewer (I) would bring a declaration of consent for them to sign (Van Puyvelde 2018). In accordance

with the principles of reliability and responsibility, the declaration of consent outlined participants' rights regarding processing of personal data in accordance with the Danish Data Protection Regulation, SDU measurements put in place for proper protection during collection and processing of data, and information about complaint options. Similar procedures were followed for CSOs data collection.

The storage and processing of data were strictly conducted on SDU security-approved storage solutions, such as OneDrive and SharePoint. All participants for BC *Battlefield* (DDIS and TET) required full anonymity, except for organisational affiliation and organisational status. To accommodate this requirement, I never wrote down the names of the interviewees in my interview notes but provided each participant with a code number to the transcription documents of the interview notes and audio reconstruction of the interviews. These documents were stored in my SDU OneDrive, to which only I have direct access. The list of code numbers that allowed the identification of the interviewees was stored separately on SDU SharePoint, to which only I and the SDU-affiliated co-authors, Mia Hartmann and Adam Diderichsen, had access. This procedure ensured that no files were shared or stored outside the SDU domain, and no third party had access to the files. At the publication stage, we only referred to interviewees as 'DDIS manager', 'employee at TET secretariat' and 'TET board member'. These references were accepted and confirmed by interviewees.

CSOs participating in the study for A2 *CSOs in Intelligence Accountability* were recorded during the interviews. All recordings were conducted with audio recorders and directly transferred to SDU OneDrive for storage and transcription while being deleted from the audio recorder. All transcriptions were labelled with name, position, and organisational affiliation, except for one, which was required to remain anonymous. Only I had access to the audio recordings, and transcriptions was not shared with the co-author Yauri-Miranda, mainly because of language barriers. Although most CSO participants did not require anonymity and agreed to be referenced with name, position, and affiliation, we decided to anonymise everything except for organisational affiliation when reporting the results. The reasoning behind this choice was that we wanted to avoid our study from becoming a platform for actors to promote their own specific agenda and allow for the logics to take the centre stage of the paper.

In terms of reporting, there are ethical research guidelines, such as *transparency,* that I have not been able to strictly apply to, given the sensitivity of the organisations in this project. This is far from controversial in the

research field of intelligence (Díaz-Fernández 2023; Van Puyvelde 2018; Davies 2001), and I have provided as much information as it was deemed possible and acceptable for participants.

In summary, none of the empirical data has been shared with third parties, and only to a limited extent has it been shared with co-authors. The quotes featured in the three empirical papers are, of course, publicly shared, but have been fully anonymised where required. In addition, some participants required a review of quotes intended to be featured in the final research paper for publication, and these requirements were accommodated.

Reflections on Positioning and Limitations

One of the critical arguments of CIS is the importance of reflexive researchers when studying matters of intelligence (Leon-Reyes 2022). Therefore, I would like to add a few words on this topic and discuss my positionality, which has been a complicated theme throughout the project, and the limitations of the collected data and analytical framework.

I am an external civilian researcher, and my experience in the intelligence field is limited to a six-month academic internship in a section of education in the Danish Intelligence Regiment. Hence, I have limited practical knowledge of the organisational culture and accountability and oversight processes beyond informal conversations with former and current intelligence officials and intelligence oversight officials. This limited experience, together with the fact that direct observations of organisational cultures in these secretive organisations are close to unimaginable (Díaz-Fernández 2023), have led to an awareness that achieving a full picture of organisational accountability virtues is very challenging. This awareness has followed me throughout the three years of this project and has led to many reflections concerning my data, analysis, and eventually the results, as well as questions in relation to my own biases and interpretations of what I heard and saw. Little have been written concerning the positioning of the researcher in the field of intelligence[25], and most of my reflections

[25] An example is Van Puyvelde's (2018) step-by-step guide on conducting interviews in research fields limited by government secrecy. Another example is Díaz-Fernández' (2023) book chapter on his own experiences as a researcher in the intelligence research field. This book chapter was published after the initiation of this Ph.D. project but has proved to be extremely helpful in post-reflections on my own practice as a researcher.

and choices in this regard have been the result of informal conversations with colleagues and other researchers working on intelligence subjects. My colleagues in IntelHub have previously held positions as *inside outsiders* (Brown 1996), meaning that they have been working within security organisations; hence, throughout the project, I had a connection with practice through colleagues as well as other researchers associated with IntelHub.

I have an educational background in emergency preparedness and international security, with a dominant focus on fundamental rights and the responsibility and accountability of authorities. It was with these "glasses" that I entered this project and understood intelligence accountability. From this perspective, and by scrutinising the academic literature and observing the events that unfold in Denmark easily lead to the impression that intelligence services do not want to be held accountable – a misleading perception, as others have noted (Manjikian 2016). To free myself from this bias, or at least challenge it, I maintained awareness of where I myself is coming from (Van Puyvelde 2018; Leon-Reyes 2022) and sought to adopt a role of the '(wo)man from Mars' (Lofland and Lofland 1984), meaning that I positioned myself as a novice when engaging with the subject, especially in conversations and interviews with intelligence officials and oversight officials where I made a huge effort in formulating my questions openly and from a position of curiosity and fascination. An experienced researcher in the field gave me this advice at the very beginning of the project, and I believe that this approach has allowed me to perceive the motivations of intelligence officials in more nuanced ways, moving beyond the notion of balancing accountability and security to the awareness that accountability is not necessarily a counter to security but is merely understood in various ways. Hence, my positioning evolved throughout the project, from initially standing on the accountability side of the balance scale to stepping down from the scale altogether and observing the phenomenon of intelligence accountability in its own right. This reckoning with the exercise of balancing accountability and security further speaks to my aim of building bridge between studies *for* and *of* intelligence.

While interviews provide a great opportunity to explore the meanings that actors ascribe to their behaviour and beliefs, there are some limitations to this research method, especially in the intelligence research field. First, I was not able to choose myself who I would like to interview in the DDIS and TET. Intelligence organisations tend to keep the details of their organisation charts secret, along with the identification of most employees. Only top management is usually known by name to the public (Díaz-Fernández

2023), and Denmark is no exception to this rule. Hence, the interviewees were given to me, and they all turned out to be individuals placed at the management levels of the organisation. Given my theoretical framework and the fact that serving senior officials can provide current and topical material on the subject, this caused no great concern in relation to the results, as the interviewees' level of access to and knowledge about accountability must be perceived as sufficient. However, senior officials often prepare their answers in advance and have them reviewed by the public affairs office (Van Puyvelde 2018), which I suspect was also the case for some of the interviews I conducted with senior officials in both the DDIS and TET. Given the external factors of the time of the interviews, which were influenced by an ongoing legal case against a former director of DDIS and the uncertainty about the reform of TET, I was aware that interviewees would possibly be highly focused on how they answered the questions and framed their answers. This includes self-serving motivations and selective disclosure to present their organisation in good light, which is not an unreasonable expectation given the conflict between the two organisations. For the same reason, I chose to include an interview with a former DDIS manager. Considering these circumstances, including the full anonymity given to participants from DDIS and TET, I (or any other external researcher) have no way to verify whether the understandings expressed during the interviews are generally applicable to the whole organisation. However, by combining the interviews with publicly available information through triangulation (Van Puyvelde 2018; Díaz-Fernández 2023), I tried to overcome the limitations of the interview data, which allowed me to draw conclusions about the organisational values and beliefs that the organisations wish to project as attributes they possess to the world external to their organisation.

Analysing institutional logics in intelligence organisations also presents several challenges and limitations. First, the pattern-matching technique applied in BC *Battlefield* ideally requires full investigation of the context to reach an understanding of the ideal type (Reay and Jones 2016). For the reasons outlined above, this is highly unlikely to be possible in an intelligence organisation. Hence, the conceptualisation of the security state order and the associated logics is not constructed on pure empirical evidence, as would be ideal, but is a combination of tendencies empirically observed and established theoretical notions of the security logic of the state. Determining the ideal type of the security state order requires deeper and broader investigations of the organisational context of intelligence services, yet

whether such an investigation will be realistic is yet to be seen. Another constraint related to the empirical limitations of determining the ideal type is the possibility that our insights have been constrained by established theory, potentially leading to the neglect of other dominating institutional logics at play within the organisations (Reay and Jones 2016). However, this is a limitation that we were aware of, as the intent of the pattern matching approach is exactly to compare the characteristics of ideal types. Moreover, the limitations of empirical enquiry into these organisations challenge attempts to identify institutional logics beyond the theoretically determined ideal types, as observations of organisational behaviour without a predetermined purpose are unlikely to be a request accommodated by the services.

Given the obvious limitations of this dissertation, I have made a great deal out of presenting my studies and discussing my results with both insiders and experienced researchers in the intelligence field. This included attending conferences where I knew intelligence officials would be present, such as the International Studies Association Annual Convention and the International Association for Intelligence Education European Chapter Annual Conference. I also participated in themed workshops, allowing for extended discussions of my data collection, analysis, and results with experienced researchers, as well as researchers specifically working on intelligence accountability. These discussions and informal conversations have helped challenge and develop my theoretical and methodological choices and have provided additional perspectives and information to my thinking about this subject, which the empirical data or the published literature have not been able to provide.

I am not close to having achieved profound knowledge and understanding of intelligence accountability virtues, but I believe that I have contributed to opening the door to a new research agenda. My research has contributed to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the practices, logics, and motivations of actors in the intelligence field towards intelligence accountability. Such insights will benefit both intelligence organisations in understanding their own behaviour and practice, as well as broader society in understanding the "problem children of democratic societies" as the services have been called by a Danish researcher (Greve 2014, 15 my translation from Danish to English). Furthermore, this research agenda will illuminate the democratic challenges arising from society's reluctance to establish normative standards for the activities of intelligence services and their obligations to the populace they are entrusted to defend.

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V Findings

In this PhD project, I set out to understand two interrelated subjects: how actors in the intelligence field understand and practice intelligence accountability, that is, accountability virtues, and how these understandings influence intelligence accountability mechanisms. In this section, I will account for my findings and answers to the research questions and discuss these findings in terms of scientific and societal implications. Sub question 1, (*How is intelligence accountability conceptualised in Intelligence Studies literature, what are the implications associated with this conceptualisation, and how can Intelligence Studies move forward?*) is addressed and accounted for in Section II *Existing Literature* and in Section III *Theoretical Framework.* Hence, to avoid repetition, I will not elaborate this further. Moreover, regarding the empirical findings in BC, A2, and A3, I will not account for the findings of each paper in isolation from each other but rather provide a unifying story of each actor involved in this project, followed by an account of the findings in relation to the Danish intelligence field. The papers have different empirical focuses, and the theoretical emphasis differs as well, but they are linked together by the argument that actors' accountability virtues depend on the foundation of their values embedded in the social setting, and that it is these differing virtues that contribute to conflict rather than a tug-of-war between accountability and national security. In the following, I will answer sub question 2 (*which virtues do actors attribute intelligence accountability within the intelligence field?*) by accounting for the accountability virtues of DDIS, TET, and CSOs. First, I map the underlying logics of the organisations' role in democratic society. Second, I provide the societal and political context. Finally, I account for each actor's accountability virtues.

Accountability Virtues of DDIS

To understand the accountability virtues of DDIS, one must first understand the logics driving the organisations and the societal context within which the organisation exists (Olsen 2013). In BC *Battlefield*, we identify the institutional logics of DDIS. As a system preserving entity, DDIS' main goal, its cause for existence, is to safeguard the sovereignty and interests of

the Danish democracy from external threats by equipping decision-makers to make informed choices in the realms of foreign policy, security, and defence.[26] Accordingly, the core value of the organisation is to protect the state and its interests in alignment with *raison d'état*, which is the foundation of the security logic and prioritises effectiveness. For the organisation to be effective in achieving its goal, two overarching and co-dependent sources of authorisation constitute the beliefs of the organisation. The first is preservation of special knowledge. Special knowledge is obtained through various methods, but bulk collection of raw data has become an ever more vital tool for the workings of DDIS (Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste [DDIS] 2023), as I point out in A3 *Raw Data and Intelligence Accountability*. The second is secrecy. Without secrecy, special knowledge is hardly preserved, and being able to not disclose information is a core institutional rule of the organisation. In other words, the justification for the existence of DDIS lies in its ability to provide special knowledge; to do so, secrecy is a necessity. Moreover, the organisation understands itself as having inherent legitimacy, given executive authorisation and its purpose of national security.

These logics ought to be seen in the light of the societal and political context within which the organisation is embedded. DDIS was established in 1967 but was only placed on a statutory footing in 2013. Prior to 2013, oversight and control were primarily confined to the executive. Hence, scrutiny of DDIS by an external oversight body is a relatively new phenomenon, and political initiatives towards more openness and transparency of the service have been scarce and driven mainly by public scandals (S. J. Andersen, Hansen, and Davies 2022).

With these insights in mind, DDIS's understanding of and emphasis on accountability becomes rather unsurprising. The overarching focus lies on the rather narrow aspect of legal compliance, with an emphasis on internal control and answerability towards the executive, as we argue in BC *Battlefield*. The strong emphasis on internal control, or bureaucratic accountability, as I call it in A3 *Raw Data and Intelligence Accountability*, aligns well with special knowledge and secrecy, as it can reinforce the organisation's control over its special knowledge and maintain secrecy (Lester 2015), both inter-

[26] This emphasis can also be observed in the DDIS biannual report *Indblik* [Insight] (Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste [DDIS] 2023; 2021; 2019).

nally and externally. This also resonates with the belief that DDIS has legitimacy in and of itself; hence, its own internal control mechanisms are understood as sufficient, as I highlight in A3 *Raw Data and Intelligence Accountability*. Moreover, answerability towards and authorisation from the executive has been the dominant logic of intelligence accountability for decades, suggesting that the logics of the bureaucratic state order and legal accountability that were introduced with the establishment of TET in 2013 may have challenged the foundational organisational self-understanding embedded in the security logic of DDIS, and may explain why logics of the bureaucratic state order and legal accountability have not gained much traction beyond the internal control mechanisms of legal compliance. This argument is also supported by the subtle scepticism towards TET observed among the DDIS interviewees, who emphasised that the ideal role of TET would be to control the service's *own* control; hence, TET is not understood as the primary accountability mechanism that provides DDIS with its democratic legitimacy. In terms of accountability to the public, it is mainly believed to serve as resource retention and mandate preservation, mainly exercised through the publication of the biannual report *Indblik*, in which DDIS explains its mandate, tasks, and organisational structures. Hence, communication from the DDIS towards the public exists, but democratic dialogue and discussion are absent.

In short, the accountability virtues of DDIS, the virtues they believe to be true, align with their core security logics, and are exercised through legal compliance manifested in internal control mechanisms (bureaucratic accountability) and answerability towards the executive, which ultimately also serves to preserve the special knowledge of the organisation and maintain secrecy. The accountability virtues of DDIS are depicted in Figure 4. Considerations and emphasis on external oversight (legal accountability) and democratic accountability exist but take a subordinate position to the logic of the security state order and bureaucratic accountability. In simple terms, the virtue of accountability relies on the integrity of the organisation, that is, good behaviour of DDIS officials entails compliance with the internal bureaucracy of control mechanisms. Towards the broader populace, DDIS' message concerning intelligence accountability seems quite clear: trust us, we got this!

Figure 4. DDIS Accountability Virtues

Accountability Virtues of TET

TET was effectuated in 2014, and the statutory purpose of the oversight body was to ensure that Danish intelligence services handled information about individuals and entities in compliance with the Danish law (Tilsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne [TET] n.d.). Accordingly, the main goal of TET, as argued in BC *Battlefield* and A3 *Raw Data and Intelligence Accountability*, is to safeguard Danish democracy, specifically citizens' rights. Despite the common goal of DDIS and TET to protect Danish democracy, TET is not concerned with safeguarding against external threats but against the internal threat of the very existence of intelligence services. In this sense, the core value of the organisation is the Rule of Law, and similarly to DDIS, they believe that to safeguard Danish democracy, legal compliance is vital, yet it must be ensured by an external and independent entity, namely TET. Two associated beliefs underscore the value of the Rule of Law. The first is objectivity, in that TET is inherently objective in its oversight activities and assessments, and the second is political independence, in that they are not subject to government instructions. Hence, the logics of TET are embedded in the bureaucratic state order, emphasising legality, governance by rules, and democratic participation (Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury 2012).

TET fundamentally believes that TET exists to provide legitimacy to intelligence services by emphasising democracy as popular sovereignty and accountability towards the public, which TET is representative of. In other words, the act of oversight itself has intrinsic value. In accordance with

their mandate, TET operates with confidentiality and follows institutional protocols aligned with the principles of the security state order. This approach is necessary for TET to effectively fulfil their assigned responsibilities. However, although the rules of secrecy and confidentiality are exercised with great caution, the main objective is to uphold the Rule of Law.

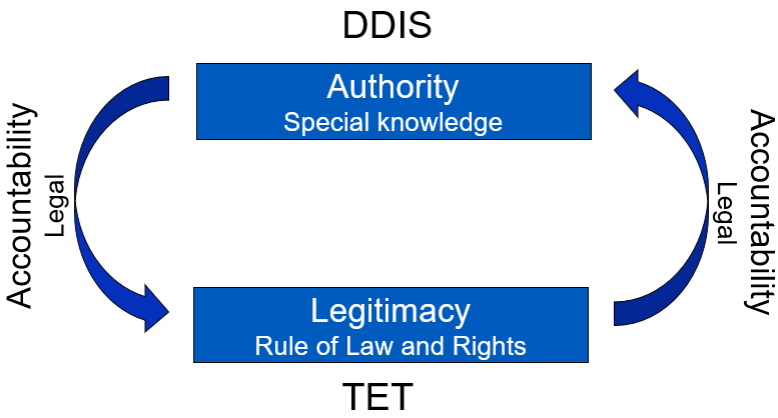
TET is an independent entity; however, the oversight body is politically dependent in several ways. First, Board Members are appointed by the Minister of Justice after negotiations with the Minister of Defence. Before the intelligence reform that was passed in June 2024, the Chair of TET was nominated by the presidents of the two high courts but with the new reform all members of TET are now exclusively politically appointed.[27] Second, TET has no binding power to sanction the services. TET can only express its opinions on matters that are critical. If the service in question decides not to follow a recommendation from the TET, the service must notify the TET and submit the case to the respective Minister for a decision. If the government does not follow the TET's recommendation, the Parliamentary Committee on the Intelligence Services must be informed (Koch 2016). An important element to consider in this context is that the Parliamentary Committee is subject to absolute confidentiality. This effectively maintains all intelligence-related matters within a circle of secrecy, with the executive holding the last word. Moreover, the political will towards TET can be summarised as a lack of willingness to accommodate the oversight body's continuous concerns since its establishment in 2014 (S. J. Andersen, Hansen, and Davies 2022).

Despite the structural restrictions on intelligence oversight, the virtues of accountability within TET rest on the conceptualisation of *legal accountability* based on the relationship between two autonomous parties in which one mandated by law oversees the other. Thus, emphasis is placed on external oversight (Romzek and Dubnick 1987). In addition, it is the law that practically guides TET's oversight duties. In this sense, the desired good

[27] Folketinget [Danish Parliament]. 2024. *Lov Om Ændring Af Lov Om Politiets Efterretningstjeneste (PET), Lov Om Etablering Af et Udvalg Om Forsvarets Og Politiets Efterretningstjenester Og Lov Om Beskyttelse Af Whistleblowere (Styrkelse Af Tilsynet Med Efterretningstjenesterne) [Act on Amendment of the Act on the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (DSIS), the Act on the Establishment of a Committee on DDIS and DSIS, and the Act on the Protection of Whistleblowers (Strengthening Oversight of Intelligence Services).*

behaviour and quality of government officials are to comply with the established laws and be fully responsive and cooperative towards the external oversight body, which is a manifestation of intelligence legitimacy. However, this does not mean that if the law (or rather the interpretation of the law) changes, so does the organisational beliefs, even though TET's practice will. Since the Danish laws governing intelligence services and mandating TET are rather vague (Koch 2023), room is left for interpretation, leaving TET's ideal of objectivity challenging to adhere to in practice.

Figure 5. TET Accountability Virtues



There is a dominating understanding in TET of how the law ought to be constructed and/or interpreted, which is in accordance with the interpretation by the European Court of Human Rights, as I show in A3 *Raw Data and Intelligence Accountability*. Despite the insistence of several of the TET interviewees on objectivity and the Rule of Law as an overarching guidance for their work, A3 shows that it is the rights of the citizens that are TET's main concern, and that they are critical towards certain interpretations of the law that do not carefully consider fundamental rights as the main concern. For example, when the Ministry of Defence found no rea-

son for TET to oversee raw data stored by DDIS.[28] Hence, the virtues of legal accountability, as understood by TET, refer to fundamental rights, meaning that the desired behaviour of government officials is to always ensure the fundamental rights of citizens. In simple terms, TET envisions itself as a guardian of these rights. The accountability virtues of TET are depicted in Figure 5.

Accountability Virtues of CSOs

Denmark has a strong civil society tradition that has shaped state development and norms of citizenship and civil rights, and has influenced societal progress (Damgaard 2003). The historical relationship between CSOs and Danish intelligence services is yet to be explained, but civil society has periodically viewed intelligence services with scepticism, especially due to the Danish Security and Intelligence Service's historical practice of monitoring citizens solely based on legal political activities, despite such activities being protected by the Danish Constitution (S. J. Andersen, Hansen, and Davies 2022). More recently, several CSOs were active in the debates following the TET press release by criticising intelligence methods, including the collection and potential sharing of raw data as well as the political handling of the affair (Bech-Nielsen 2023). The findings of this research project show that CSOs generally understand intelligence accountability in a fundamentally different way than DDIS and, to some extent, TET, and that the basis of their beliefs rests on different values. The CSOs who participated in this project emphasised two key values: democratic discussion and freedom of opinion. Democratic discussion is considered essential, with CSOs believing that their role is to contribute to state legitimacy by presenting plural viewpoints. This belief aligns with logics of the community order prescribing that the role of CSOs is to provide politics with normative and ideational content (Reuter, Wijkström, and Meyer 2014). Moreover, CSOs believe that to protect freedom of opinion, the state must priori-

[28] Stated by the Minister of Defence during a parliamentary hearing in 2023 ('Besvarelse af samrådsspørgsmål B om Forsvarsministeriets besvarelsen til TIlsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne om behandling af rådata (afholdes den 21. marts 2023 kl. 14) [Response to consultation question B regarding the Ministry of Defense's reply to the Danish Intelligence Oversight Board on the handling of raw data (to be held on March 21, 2023, at 2:00 PM)]' 2023)

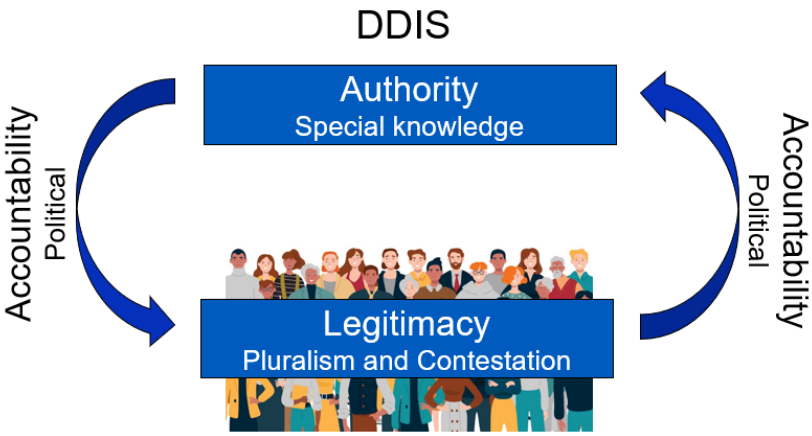
tise civil rights and adopt citizen-centred and responsive governance, which aligns with an agonistic view of democracy, grounded in contestation, pluralism, and participation (Mouffe 1999). Together, the values and beliefs of CSOs reflect a vision of democracy, where civil society's active participation strengthens state legitimacy, based on contestation and engagement with multiple perspectives.

In terms of the relationship between intelligence services and CSOs in Denmark, it is relevant to note that intelligence services gained a more prominent status in society after 9/11, and civil society actors have been incorporated into security logics through counterterrorism and counter-radicalisation networks of voluntary informants within local communities. These policies have been largely unquestioned by civil society (L. E. Andersen 2016). Moreover, CSOs have traditionally acted as influencers of public opinion, especially during scandals involving intelligence services or when intelligence reforms were initiated by making statements to the media. Nevertheless, civic engagement in intelligence matters has been somewhat limited (European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights 2023). Additionally, politicians have been reluctant to talk about intelligence issues with CSOs, and organisations have mainly sought to achieve political influence on bills regarding intelligence accountability through public consultation letters. However, this method is generally viewed with scepticism because of the perceived limited impact of consultation letters in general, which Yauri-Miranda and I show in A2 *CSOs in Intelligence Accountability*. This scepticism is underscored by research on the efficiency of consultation letters, pointing out the limited practical effect on legislation (Pedersen 2021). In general, there is recognition among Danish CSOs that legislative processes have become too fast with extremely short deadlines, making it challenging to produce qualified consultation letters.

Regarding intelligence accountability, CSOs view democratic discussions and pluralism as essential to their role in ensuring the legitimacy and accountability of intelligence services. They believe that fostering an informed debate about the capabilities, remits, and practices of these services requires transparency, diverging from the traditional security logics rooted in state protection. Instead, their perspective emphasises citizen rights, civil liberties, and citizen-centred governance. Accordingly, these actors advocate accountability practices that prioritise pluralism, democratic dialogue, and civil rights. While they recognise intelligence services as vital to a democratic society, their focus is on scrutinising the methods used to ensure security, particularly concerning the collection, processing, and poten-

tial sharing of raw data. They argued that such practices must align with democratic principles to avoid privacy violations and abuse of power. CSOs ideally see themselves as taking on dual roles as watchdogs and knowledge contributors. As watchdogs, they oversee decision-making outputs and administrative behaviour. As knowledge contributors, they ideally see themselves as providing expertise in judicial matters, civil rights, and related technologies, thus promoting inclusive and participatory accountability. This dual approach reflects a tempered agonistic view of democracy by emphasising collaboration and contestation, rather than antagonism. This understanding reframes accountability as a political question in accordance with democratic accountability (Romzek and Dubnick 1987; Heidelberg 2017), which ensures that intelligence practices are transparent, participatory, and consistent with democratic norms.

Figure 6. CSOs Accountability Virtues



In this sense, the desired quality and behaviour of government officials regarding intelligence accountability are willingness and responsiveness towards pluralism and contestation embedded in a public democratic discussion. However, while upholding the ideal of agonism in intelligence accountability, their actual practices of influence, which mainly rely on public consultation letters, are more closely aligned with traditional delegated oversight, which reveals a discrepancy between values and practices in the CSOs' logics. In short, CSOs maintain democratic ideals of agonism in intelligence accountability but recognise their limited practical impact as

overseers of intelligence services and influencers on intelligence governance.

The Danish Intelligence Field Dynamics

Having accounted for SQ2 in the previous three sections, I now turn to the first part of SQ3: *Which accountability virtues dominate the intelligence field?* Given the three distinct virtues of accountability stated above, it is fair to conclude that competing logics exist in the Danish intelligence field. The organisational field framework suggests that the presence of competing logics within a field may cause conflict among actors (here DDIS, TET, and CSOs), as they struggle to establish their own logics as the dominating (Hinings et al. 2003). In the Danish intelligence field, these competing logics have contributed to escalating the conflict between actors, which has been simmering since 2014[29] and erupted in 2020, with TET's press release initiating the biggest Danish intelligence scandal in recent times. Hence, it is reasonable to say that the field has been characterised by uncertainty and conflict rather than stability. According to the institutional logics literature, such conflicts contribute to the evolution of organisational fields (Hinings et al. 2003), but another factor is also decisive for how the field may or may not evolve, namely, the politics of the state (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). Actors' efforts to push their own accountability virtues in the field have taken place through various means, yet a general tendency has been shown in terms of the success (or lack of) of such efforts by TET and the CSOs. Attempts to influence the status quo have been met with rejection or minor attention from the executive and lawmakers, which brings the importance of the political domain into the field battles among actors.

To make sense of these field battles, the dynamics among the actors, their structure, logics, and the political domain play a crucial role (Scott 1994). DDIS and TET have a formalised statutory relationship, which can

[29] Disagreements regarding the role of intelligence oversight have persisted since the establishment of the first Danish intelligence oversight body, The Wamberg Committee, in 1964 (S. J. Andersen, Hansen, and Davies 2022). However, as this dissertation focuses on the current intelligence oversight body TET, previous disagreements between the Wamberg Committee, Services, and Executive are not considered in depth for the purpose of this research.

be characterised as a forum-actor relationship (Bovens 2010) within the scope of personal data protection. In this sense, the two actors may have a direct influence on each other within the structures given by the law, which is, to some degree, independent of politics, as long as their relationship does not become political. The direct relationship between DDIS and CSOs is largely absent and only facilitated by political decision-makers and the legislative assembly, who can choose to enable an indirect relationship by, for example, being attentive towards the public stated concerns of CSOs or consider public consultation letters in the drafting of bills. Also the relationship between TET and CSOs is rather limited and mostly exercised indirectly when, for example, TET refers to public consultation letters issued by CSOs in connection with their oversight duties (Tilsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne [TET] 2019). Thus, the field is characterised by structural opportunities and constraints. These structures have different consequences for various actors. TET has a direct influence on the workings of DDIS, given their mandate in the sense that they can assess the legality of DDIS intelligence practices (however, within the limited scope of personal data) and express their opinions about this matter to the public to the extent that their confidentiality obligations allow them. The restrictions refer to the lack of sanction opportunities and dependence on the ministerial interpretation of the law. DDIS must necessarily be considered the most resourceful actor in the field with large resources and extensive methods to carry out its tasks, which carries heavy political prioritisation.[30] On the other hand, DDIS is restricted by its confidentiality in terms of explaining and justifying conduct to the public, yet this is also a strength in the sense that when DDIS does express anything publicly, it is hard to contest the given information. CSOs have no statutory power in the intelligence field, which in the Danish case favours delegated oversight; hence,

[30] Examples of the political priority of the Danish intelligence services are an additional allocation of DKK 288.8 million to DDIS from 2024 to 2025, which corresponds to a 23 percent increase in DDIS' budget ('L 191 Forslag til finanslov for finansåret 2025. L 191 - endeligt svar på spørgsmål 23 [L 191 Proposal for the Finance Act for the Fiscal Year 2025. L 191 - final response to question 23]' 2024), and an additional allocation of DKK 789.8 million to DSIS from 2025 to 2027 ('Besvarelse af spørgsmål nr. 28 fra Folketingets Finansudvalg vedrørende forslag til lov om finansåret 2025 (L 191) [Response to question no. 28 from the Danish Parliament's Finance Committee regarding the proposal for the Finance Act for the fiscal year 2025 (L 191)]' 2024).

CSOs are largely dependent on political willingness, public opinion, and engagement regarding exercising influence in the intelligence field. Conversely, CSOs have no obligations of confidentiality and hence can freely express their opinions publicly.

As an organisational field consists of organisations sharing a unified system of meaning (Scott 1994), the actors share the common goal of protecting Danish democracy, which entails both the existence of intelligence services as well as intelligence accountability. However, how Danish democracy ought to be protected, and which accountability mechanisms are vital for maintaining protection, differs among actors and depends on the accountability virtues of the organisations. The conflicting logics at play in the field are the logic of the security state order (valuing *raison d'état* and emphasising internal bureaucratic accountability virtues), the logic of the bureaucratic state order (valuing the Rule of Law and emphasising external legal accountability virtues), and agonistic democracy logic (valuing the democratic discussion and freedom of opinion and emphasising democratic accountability virtues). Each adheres to a different understanding of the source of intelligence legitimacy. The security state order finds legitimacy in the core task of the intelligence service, namely *raison d'état*, while the bureaucratic state order underscores external oversight as the root of intelligence legitimacy, and agonistic democracy logic applies legitimacy to intelligence services through democratic dialogue, pluralism, and contestation. Hence, the conflicting logics eventually engage in a battle of existential character for DDIS and TET, while CSOs do not have as much at stake in the conflict.

Institutionalised intelligence has traditionally been a state endeavour, meaning that intelligence generally and intelligence accountability particularly have been highly affected by the politics of the state as intelligence services and intelligence oversight bodies get their mandate and budgets allocated by political decision-makers. Hence, the intelligence field is highly affected by the politics of the state, which also means that power is assigned to the different actors by the state just as well as created by the activities carried out by the actors (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). The societal and especially political focus on security and protection against external and internal threats in Denmark (L. E. Andersen 2016) is by large an opportunity for DDIS whose core task is to protect the state and its interest and has enjoyed increased political allocated resources to carry out this task. As I argue in A3 *Raw Data and Intelligence Accountability*, the executive has generally supported DDIS in terms of raw data collection, which has

been the main object of conflict between DDIS and TET and the main concern of CSOs in recent years. Concerns over raw data collection have contributed to the shaping of the Danish oversight system; that is, leaving the main control of raw data to the DDIS, which fits neatly into the prioritisation of the bureaucratic accountability system. The executive's priority for bureaucratic accountability at the expense of both external legal accountability and democratic accountability is derived from several factors. First, the political neglect of TET's concerns and requests for a strengthened mandate indicates a lack of prioritisation of external legal accountability. The executive has tended to interpret or amend the law in favour of already established practices within the services, so that practices that were identified as problematic by the TET then became unproblematic under the law.[31] Moreover, despite the political promise of a strengthened intelligence oversight in relation to the intelligence reform enacted in June 2024, several elements of the reform rather implies increasing political dependency and restrictions, which has also been pointed out by several organisations, including the Danish Institute for Human Rights, Den Danske Dommerforening [The Danish Association of Judges], Retspolitisk Forening [Legal Policy Association] and myself in collaboration with Kira Vrist Rønn.[32]

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[31] Not only was the interpretation of law specified by the Ministry of Defence to now include oversight of raw data in 2023 ('Besvarelse af samrådsspørgsmål B om Forsvarsministeriets besvarelsen til TIlsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne om behandling af rådata (afholdes den 21. marts 2023 kl. 14) [Response to consultation question B regarding the Ministry of Defense's reply to the Danish Intelligence Oversight Board on the handling of raw data (to be held on March 21, 2023, at 2:00 PM)]' 2023), also in 2016, the DSIS law was revised following substantial criticism from TET, allowing the service to retain information that they were previously obligated to delete (*Forslag til Lov om ændring af lov om Politiets Efterretningstjeneste (PET) (Ændring af PET's opgaver i forhold til den alvorligste organiserede kriminalitet og PET's forpligtelse til sletning af oplysninger) [Proposal for an Act to Amend the Act on the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (DSIS) (Amendment of DSIS's tasks concerning the most serious organized crime and DSIS's obligation to delete information)* 2016).

[32] Concerns about the independence of TET in the intelligence reform were expressed in public consultation letters to the bill ('Høringsnotat om forslag til lov om ændring af lov om Politiets Efterretningstjeneste (PET), lov om etablering af et udvalg om forsvarets og politiets efterretningstjenester og lov om beskyttelse af whistleblowere (Styrkelse af tilsynet med efterretningstjenesterne) [Consultation Memorandum on the Proposal to Amend the Act on the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (DSIS), the Act on the Establishment of a Committee on the Intelligence Services of the Armed Forces and the Police, and the Act on

Second, spaces of democratic discussions and contestation regarding intelligence in general and intelligence accountability specifically are limited due to political inattentiveness towards concerns expressed by CSOs and the structural limitations of the public consultation processes. In other words, not only is DDIS the actor receiving the largest budget, the most far-reaching mandate, but the accountability virtues of DDIS also resonate most with the political powerholders who exercise great influence on the field. Together, these field dynamics effectively make bureaucratic accountability the dominant virtue.

Accountability Virtues in the Danish Intelligence Field

Considering the above outline of the findings, the overall conclusion of the case study in this dissertation is as follows: intelligence accountability virtues in Denmark is predominantly guided by the logic of the security state order and prioritises bureaucratic accountability. Bureaucratic accountability within DDIS is maintained as the main accountability mechanism, meaning that virtues of accountability centre on the organisational integrity of DDIS. Attempts have been made to challenge the dominating logic, with TET being the only true challenger (by issuing the notorious press release in 2020, forcing the executive to act); however, TET is also the actor who suffered the most consequences in the aftermath of the scandal. In this sense, the dominating logic currently faces no serious threats from other logics, which is underscored by the fact that the Danish intelligence field is highly affected by the politics of the state which enforces more influence on the evolution of the field than the internal battles among the field actors. Consequently, the field appears to be in a state of stagnation. The political stance on the subject may explain why development in the field is challenging to facilitate by other organisational actors trying to forward alternative logics. Another explanation, which is yet to be explored, is that there seems to be little engagement and involvement in the subject in the general population. The reasons for the lack of engagement are unclear but may be associated with the high-trust society characteristics of Denmark, in which

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the Protection of Whistleblowers (Strengthening Oversight of the Intelligence Services)]' 2024).

there is a generally strong belief in institutional fairness and integrity (C. A. Larsen 2013).

Moreover, internal bureaucratic accountability is not democratic accountability. It may be politically implemented and supported in a democracy, but it is not democratic accountability in the sense that Friedrich advocated for in the 1940s, because it is *internal* (Heidelberg 2017). This means that the space of accountability is not open to external stakeholder communities. Spaces of discussion and contestation may exist within the organisation; this is still an open question, but it is evident that they do not exist externally to DDIS. When they eventually appeared, as was the case with the press release issued by the TET, they were again closed by the political domain without thorough public discussion. Eventually, intelligence accountability does exist in the Danish intelligence field but it is not democratic accountability. Internal processes of control are obviously essential for ensuring proper intelligence accountability; however, they are far from sufficient. Internal mechanisms of control must be complemented by robust external oversight mechanisms, which is one of the key arguments in the conventional IS literature on intelligence accountability (see for example Born and Johnson 2005; Born and Leigh 2005; Gill 2020). Without adequate external oversight, intelligence services continue to pose a threat to democracy and leave the potential for abuse and violation of citizens' rights as unresolved and uncertain issues. This remains a key concern for any democratic society that upholds democratic values and principles. Furthermore, the absence of democratic accountability leaves civil society with very limited influence on the governance of intelligence services. This is problematic for reasons such as the inadequacy of formal oversight mechanisms, as pointed out in the literature review and as the case study in this dissertation shows. TET has not been particularly successful in getting Danish political decision-makers to favour human rights concerns over intelligence effectiveness. In addition, the limited influence of CSOs on the governance of intelligence and the restricted dialogue with the political decision-makers and the DDIS make the fostering of democratic accountability challenging, as democratic discussions of how the Danish people wants to be represented by its intelligence services are constrained by limited knowledge of what is facts and what is not.

In simple terms, I find it fair to conclude that democratic intelligence accountability in Denmark faces difficult conditions and that intelligence accountability is not perceived to hold value in and of itself, but rather is a tool to ensure the public that the services' power is kept in check. In other

words, Finer's understanding of accountability as adherence to politically decided rules and procedures largely reflects the understanding within the Danish intelligence field and the Danish political domain.

Having discussed the first part of SQ3, I will now turn to the second part *what are the scholarly and societal implications?* in the following sections.

Scholarly Implications

This PhD project provides important contributions to the literature on intelligence accountability by highlighting the significance of organisations' accountability virtues in the field of intelligence. The consideration of values, beliefs, and practices of accountability within intelligence organisations, oversight bodies, and CSOs extends our current understanding of intelligence accountability in several ways. First, the virtue-approach eventually challenges the common-sense assumption often found in the literature about striking a correct balance between accountability and security. The balancing approach has been criticised for leading to *turf wars* between intelligence organisations and oversight bodies (Manjikian 2016) and keeping the oversight bodies in a subordinate position (Leon-Reyes 2022). My findings suggest that the battles among actors are not so much a conflict over more or less accountability, but more about the actors' conflicting understandings of accountability and prioritised accountability mechanisms. Thus, it is not an issue of an intelligence service that does not want to be held accountable, but an issue of what kind of accountable behaviour is expected of them, in their own view and in the view of external actors. This is at least true in the Danish case and may also be true in other cases. Manjikian (2016) points out that since the Church Committee, the American intelligence community has expressed willingness and even initiated discussions about their societal role and identity on several occasions, suggesting a more positive attitude towards accountability questions than most of the literature suggests. In the Netherlands, the two Dutch oversight bodies regularly hold meetings to ensure that they align their interpretations of the legal basis for the intelligence services' practices (Review Committee on the Intelligence and Security Services 2022), suggesting close attention to the specific understanding of intelligence accountability. These are just examples suggesting that understandings of intelligence accountability matters, yet more studies of intelligence accountability virtues in different national contexts are needed to elucidate the extent to which they matter and how they matter in every specific context.

Second, in extension of the previous point, the case has shown that the cause of conflict among actors is not simply found in the question of whether intelligence services are accountable or not. As the connector between authority and legitimacy, the understanding of what it means to be accountable has been shown to depend on the sources of legitimacy and authority as understood by the actor in question. The findings of this dissertation show that actors attribute different sources to intelligence legitimacy, which leads to various understandings of accountability. Additionally, the findings show that sources of authority are also relevant to how accountability is understood and prioritised. Specifically, for the Danish intelligence field and the DDIS, intelligence authority is closely tied to special knowledge derived from particularly raw data collection. In other words, the study of intelligence accountability must also consider the sources of legitimacy and authority to gain a deeper understanding of why some accountability mechanisms may be prioritised over others in a certain context. In this sense, the dominant focus on stronger legal mandates and the sufficiency of intelligence oversight structures is not enough to accommodate the challenges associated with intelligence accountability if they are not grounded in a thorough understanding of the sources of legitimacy and authority.

The third implication for the scientific understanding and discussion of intelligence accountability is directly derived from the above implications. Focusing exclusively on accountability mechanisms is too narrow of an approach. We need to understand accountability virtues to understand the mechanisms: why they are structured in the way they are, why the law is designed as it is, and why oversight bodies have certain mandates while lacking others in different national contexts. Accountability mechanisms are technical aspects of intelligence accountability. Accountability virtues are political. If it is true that mechanisms and virtues are insufficient without each other, as Bovens (2010) argues, and as this dissertation's findings support, we must conclude that intelligence accountability is inherently political. Reducing accountability to technicalities neglects the systematic and political interests behind certain choices of those technicalities. My findings show that actors provide accountability with meanings that align with organisational priorities, making intelligence accountability a battle between different interests and eventually also a matter of power distribution within the organisational field. Accountability is about power. This point also speaks to the notion of formal intelligence oversight bodies needing to earn the trust of intelligence services to maintain intelligence effec-

tiveness while still conducting oversight duties. If oversight bodies must earn the trust of the services to oversee them and simultaneously ensure the effectiveness of the services, we must also assume that the services are in a more powerful position, as they can always withdraw their trust in the oversight body. In this sense, even if the oversight body sufficiently conducts its oversight duty by identifying critical issues within the services and making a public statement about this, it will always be a potential target for accusation of compromising the services' effectiveness. In other words, accountability remains impossible regardless of the legal framework or oversight structures. Thus, it is not just the power dynamics among actors in the intelligence field that are important to consider. The power of common-sensical arguments in the literature also needs to be challenged. The power of the common-sensical line of thought maintains the oversight bodies in a subordinate position, as Leon-Reyes (2022) points out.

Moreover, the power of certain logics in a specific society may have strong implications for the prioritisation of intelligence accountability mechanisms. In the Danish case, internal bureaucratic accountability is the most prioritised mechanism, yet it is the least discussed and empirically studied aspect of intelligence accountability in the scholarly literature, leaving a knowledge gap with a potentially significant importance for the state of accountability. Furthermore, this dissertation raises broader questions about the nature of intelligence services in democracies, the logics associated with their role, and democratic governance in general. Mia Hartmann, Adam Diderichsen, and I identified in BC *Battlefield* an additional institutional state order that differs from the bureaucratic state order already existing in the institutional logics literature. Hence, we argue that the state order is not a coherent order but rather consists of at least two state logics that may conflict with each other. Most importantly, one (the bureaucratic state order) upholds popular sovereignty, while the other (the security state order) emphasises a decisionist conceptualisation of sovereignty. This possibly creates tensions within democratic governance structures, but the tensions also extend to broader society, especially to the interactions (or lack of) with CSOs. As Yauri-Miranda and I find in A2 *CSOs in Intelligence Accountability*, CSOs take a normative approach to intelligence accountability grounded in ideas of agonistic democracy. This finding supports the CIS authors' call for more emphasis on agonistic forms of intelligence accountability, but we also find that in practice, agonistic forms of intelligence accountability are restrained by structural and symbolic factors, as well as an understanding of public de-emphasis. In this sense, our findings show a

gap between the normative and actual roles of CSOs in intelligence accountability, at least in the Danish case, which contrasts with other studies of civil society's influence on intelligence accountability (see for example Kniep et al. 2023; Van Puyvelde 2013). Thus, my initial argument concerning the study of intelligence accountability within each specific context is supported by these findings.

My last and perhaps most important point to be made regarding scientific implications is that scholars studying intelligence accountability ought to be very clear about what they mean when they use the accountability concept. As my findings show, accountability can be understood in several ways, with significant implications for what are deemed the proper accountability mechanisms in the intelligence context. Legal and bureaucratic accountability should not be confused with democratic accountability. Most IS literature has focused on the legal accountability aspect of intelligence accountability by studying whether the laws are sufficient or whether formal oversight bodies are able and willing to hold the services legally to account. By contrast, democratic accountability entails the inclusion of a broad spectrum of stakeholders (including CSOs) and, importantly, the existence of spaces for contestation in which the morality of officials' actions can be judged by expert fellows and the public. In this sense, accountability is much more than just oversight and the legality of the services' practices. Accountability is morality, ethics, and politics which should be subject to public discussion, contestation, and disagreement. In this sense, tensions between actors are welcomed and even perceived as vital for a healthy democratic discussion. Such a conceptualisation of democratic accountability is mostly absent from the IS literature, and the CIS literature is only just beginning discussions.

Societal Implications

While this dissertation has mainly focused on rethinking intelligence accountability in scholarly discussions and using Denmark as a case to underscore my argument, the findings of this dissertation also have significant implications for how we as a society can think about intelligence accountability, particularly in the Danish context, but maybe also in other national settings.

The striking thing about the Danish intelligence context is, that despite the seemingly lack of democratic accountability, the questionable legal accountability, and the series of scandals involving the services in recent

years, the public still seems to be relatively inattentive towards the issues. Therefore, the present question that I have continuously asked myself through this project has been: is weak intelligence oversight and lack of democratic accountability really such a big problem in the Danish context? The answer is yes, and I will explain why.

Recently, I was asked during a presentation on the Danish intelligence oversight reform passed in June 2024 whether the solution to the problems of intelligence accountability in Denmark could be, that the services and the oversight bodies refrain from communicating with the public, thereby avoiding the risk of ending up in yet another scandal. On the surface, it appears that increased openness led to more scandals. Undoubtedly, this approach could potentially shield the public from information and prevent crucial enquiries, allowing services to operate undisturbed. However, on a practical level, development in the international intelligence environment, the increasing engagement of CSOs in intelligence matters, and technological development all speak against the effectiveness of such a solution. Western intelligence services have shown a greater tendency to share insights for the purpose of external influence (Dylan and Maguire 2022), increase public resilience towards disinformation (Janjeva, Harris, and Byrne 2022), and designate the public as an agent "that can act on the request of the agency" (Petersen 2019, 320). CSOs and the media have often been drivers of bringing scandals to light (Kniep et al. 2023; Roller et al. 2023) and not communication from the intelligence services themselves. Lastly, technological developments and the increasing threat from cyberattacks have led to intelligent services engaging in co-production with private companies to help define the threat (Petersen 2019). There might be other areas where the services could learn from civil actors with certain expertise, such as the Danish CSOs advocated for and, as Gaskarth (2020) and Manjikian (2016) suggest. Intelligence services need the public, and retrieving to the black box will not refrain CSOs and the media from scrutinising intelligence matters or refrain whistleblowers from leaking information to the public, and the service may miss out on important opportunities for innovative ideas and to learn from other actors to the benefit of national security and society. The dependence on the public is just as true in the Danish context, where both Services, DDIS, and DSIS have increasingly communicated to the public, including awareness campaigns targeting researchers, publications describing the organisations' tasks and structure, engagement with different critical sectors, and so forth. In other words, Danish intelligence services need the public and private companies; hence, there is al-

ready a relationship between the services and the public. If the public perceives the services as legitimate and engages in collaboration or complies with the services' advice, accountability must occur, especially if the services are perceived by the public to act in ways that do not align with societal values and norms. Moreover, as pointed out by American Allan Dulles, the first civilian Director of Central Intelligence, six decades ago:

> "Free peoples everywhere abhor government secrecy. There is something sinister and dangerous, they feel, when governments "shroud" their activities. It may be an entering wedge for the establishment of an autocratic form of rule, a cover-up for their mistakes" (Dulles 1963, 231).

Of course, the Danish context differs greatly from the American context, and Danes generally have more trust in the authorities than Americans. However, the findings of this dissertation show that the source of legitimacy varies between different actors, and these differing understandings have contributed to conflicts and scandals in the intelligence field. This calls for a democratic discussion about how the legitimacy of intelligence services is to be understood on a societal level, which requires willingness from the political leadership and intelligence organisations to engage in a debate that enables the public to convey informed legitimacy to the intelligence services. It also includes a societal rethinking of what the purpose of TET is – a necessary evil implemented to strike a balance between accountability and security, or a critical but constructive friend holding value in its own right. It may show that there is a societal desire to keep intelligence accountability restricted to bureaucratic and legal accountability, yet the discussions to reach that conclusion ought to be democratic, involving a broad spectrum of stakeholders, so that the public is well aware of the state of their fundamental civil rights and how they may be compromised. This is vital for addressing societal insecurity which has already been identified in the literature, including limitations on individuals' autonomy and free choice, and changes to democracy itself (see for example Bauman et al. 2014; Maras 2012; Parsons 2015; Peissl 2003). In this light, a new approach to intelligence reform relying on the democratic debate about the fundamental role and legitimacy of intelligence services, the implications for fundamental human rights, and the formal as well as informal oversight bodies ought to be enacted rather than relying on legislation and restructuring of the formal oversight system alone.

Moreover, taking the democratic accountability of intelligence services seriously inherently means taking human rights seriously (Born and Leigh 2005). It is striking how little emphasis has been placed on the role of human rights in Danish intelligence accountability legislation and political discussions. In a public consultation letter from the Danish Institute of Human Rights to the enacted bill on intelligence reform in 2024 underscores this point.

> "The Danish Institute for Human Rights considers it problematic that the draft legislation does not address Denmark's international obligations, particularly the European Convention on Human Rights" ('Høringssvar over lovudkast om ændring af lov om Politiets Efterretningstjeneste (PET) og forskellige andre love (styrkelse af Tilsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne) [Consultation Response on the Draft Bill to Amend the Danish Security and Intelligence Service Act (DSIS) and Various Other Acts (Strengthening the Oversight of Intelligence Services)]' 2024, 2).

Rather, emphasis has been placed on legal compliance through internal bureaucratic accountability and partial external legal accountability, as this dissertation shows. In the short term, legal compliance, often a question of technicalities, is not equal to a broader understanding of justice and may enable practises to be lawful but unjust in accordance with human rights, a point also made by the Director of the Danish Institute of Human Rights, Pernille Boye Koch, who argues that the current Danish legal framework governing DDIS is insufficient with regard to recent jurisprudential developments at the European Court of Human Rights (Koch 2023).

In the long term, it is not given that a Danish high-trust society prevails, as trust in authorities is already declining in Denmark (Primetime 2024). If the development continues, the services could potentially find themselves in a situation of public suspicion and loss of democratic legitimacy if human rights are neglected in favour of compliance and effectiveness oriented towards state interests. Overlooking human rights in intelligence accountability mechanisms risks undermining the very democratic values that the mechanisms are meant to protect. In other words, Denmark faces serious challenges regarding democratic accountability and human rights concerns in intelligence.

In contrast, in Norway, a country in which Denmark is comparable in many aspects, such as welfare, economy, and wealth, statutory provisions governing intelligence services must comply with both national laws and

international human rights standards, particularly the European Convention on Human Rights. Incorporated into Norwegian law in 1999, the Convention takes precedence in cases of conflict (The Parliament Appointed Committee for Intelligence Oversight, n.d.). Norway can serve as an example of incorporating human rights into Danish legal provisions guarding intelligence services.

Without human rights and democratic participation as cornerstones of intelligence accountability, the democratic fabric frays. Trust, so carefully woven over decades, can unravel, leaving a void where scepticism and suspicion take root. Denmark faces a pivotal moment - one that invites reflection on how its intelligence practices can align with the nation's enduring commitment to democracy and the fundamental rights of its people.

VI Conclusion

My PhD journey started with a reflection on how we can make sense of intelligence accountability as a battlefield, beyond the functionalist and problem-solving approach. I wanted to understand how actors in the intelligence field make sense of intelligence accountability and how these understandings influence intelligence accountability mechanisms, with the aim of gaining deeper knowledge of the role of intelligence services in the societal and political context in which they exist. To answer this question, I began by reviewing the IS literature to elucidate common-sensical assumptions and point out the inherent limitations of approaching accountability as a technical concept, which restricts the literature from gaining a deeper understanding of the battles and dynamics associated with intelligence accountability. Inspired by sociological methodologies and New Institutionalism, I developed a framework to study accountability as a value-based concept grounded in the political and social contexts in which it exists. This enabled an explanation of the causes of conflict among actors in the intelligence field and how institutional logics inform accountability virtues and accountability mechanisms. This conceptualisation of accountability in combination with a constructivist approach to organisational behaviour and practice challenges the common-sensical assumption of intelligence accountability as a zero-sum game by pointing out that it is not so much a question of actors wanting intelligence accountability or not, but a question of how actors understand intelligence accountability.

I applied the framework to the Danish case of intelligence accountability, based on the argument that the Danish case embodies many of the dilemmas and challenges associated with intelligence accountability, and hence serves as a show case of how distinct intelligence accountability virtues as understood by actors contribute to conflicts among actors and influence accountability mechanisms. My analysis of the institutional logics of DDIS, TET, and Danish CSOs reveals that organisational actors understand and prioritise intelligence accountability according to their own value-based beliefs, underscoring the argument that accountability is an inherently political concept that is influenced by power structures and should not be reduced to questions of legality and formal oversight structures. These

findings suggest that scholarly discussions on intelligence accountability ought to consider the power associated with accountability and acknowledge that stakeholders in intelligence accountability are not limited to formal oversight bodies and political decision-makers but include a much broader range of actors and perspectives if intelligence accountability is to be considered democratic. Additionally, the findings showed that intelligence accountability virtues are founded on the perceived sources of an organisation's legitimacy and the elements constituting an organisation's authority.

Lastly, the findings of this dissertation contribute to theoretical and empirical evidence that calls for an open and informed political and public debate to enhance intelligence accountability in Danish society for the purpose of protecting democratic principles and fundamental rights, as well as improving the ability to protect national security in the long term.

How to Move Forward

Based on the insights provided by this research, future research seeking to enrich scholarly debates on intelligence accountability and provide a theoretically and empirically solid foundation for political decision makers as well as intelligence organisations could take several directions.

Theoretically, the scholarly debate needs to engage in a broader discussion of democratic accountability and how we ought to understand it in the context of intelligence. This will necessarily require an acknowledgement that accountability is essentially about power, which will help understand why functional efforts based on accountability as a mechanism approach fall short of gaining a deep understanding of intelligence accountability and supporting transformational change. We need to return to the discussion initiated by Friedrich (1940) and Finer (1936; 1941), meaning that instead of conventional IS and CIS separately finding comfort in the two rooms farthest away from each other in the Intelligence Studies Villa, we should do what Friedrich and Finer never did[33], namely meet in the lobby and acknowledge the importance and co-dependence of both accountability

[33] Finer eventually acknowledged that he and Friedrich focused on two different aspects of the responsibility of officials, but they never found mutual acknowledgement of each other's arguments (Bovens 2010).

mechanisms and virtues in intelligence and begin a discussion of how we can consider both approaches in IS. Such acknowledgement will enrich and deepen the scholarly discussions and benefit the intelligence community and the society. Mapping accountability virtues and the power dynamics associated with them may help identify the possibilities and restrictions associated with democratic accountability. In this regard, studying the political domain is relevant. For example, how politicians in government have understood intelligence accountability over time and the efforts of opposition parties to challenge the sitting government on its governance of intelligence services. A recent study reveals the struggles of the Swedish opposition to grab opportunities to initiate or participate in enquires into intelligence scandals (Matz 2024), which indicates that, within the political domain, actors engage in power struggles relevant to intelligence accountability and the outcome of intelligence reform. Further investigation into the political struggles concerning intelligence services will shed light on the political priorities of intelligence accountability and whether there is a distinction between the priorities of the opposition and government.

This dissertation makes a small contribution to enable such discussion by pointing out the importance of virtues and suggesting virtues' implications for mechanisms, but more research is needed to explore the relationship between mechanisms and virtues, how they mutually influence each other, and based on which set of values they operate. In this context, scholarly discussions could be further enlightened by considering and further exploring the logics of the security state order in relation to the bureaucratic state order, as this distinction and relation influences both the mechanisms and virtues of intelligence accountability, as we show in BC *Battlefield*. Ideally, studies of the dominance of security logic in democratic governance of intelligence services could take a historical perspective, because by identifying the characteristics of the ideal types at different points in time, it is possible to show changes (or lack of) in logics more clearly (Reay and Jones 2016). In line with this, broader questions must also be addressed, including the general public's understanding of its sources, security in general, and intelligence accountability. In other subfields of IS, research have shown the importance of popular culture as the most widely shared discourse on intelligence (Blistène and Van Puyvelde 2023; McCrisken and Moran 2018) and how intelligence services have used popular culture to portray a certain idea of their organisations and activities (Brattvoll and Castro 2023; Zegart 2010). A question which may be important in understanding the public notion of intelligence accountability is how is it por-

trayed in relation to security concerns in popular culture? Answering this question may help understand the extent to which intelligence accountability is a public concern.

Moreover, to be able to theorise the relationship between accountability mechanisms and virtues, more research into the intelligence field of various national settings and the dynamics between actors is needed to elucidate general tendencies and national specificities. For example, it would be fruitful to explore how intelligence accountability is understood and practiced in more established relationships between intelligence services and oversight bodies to gain an understanding of whether the length and depth of the relationship are important for the inherent logics within the organisations and the level of conflict. Furthermore, on a broader scale and beyond the relationship between formal intelligence organisations, it is vital to scrutinise the circumstances under which CSOs mobilise and challenge the *status quo* of intelligence accountability, such as the efforts of Bits of Freedom in the Netherlands to challenge the oversight structures (de Werd forthcoming) and Big Brother Watch's success in taking the United Kingdom to the European Court of Human Rights over privacy rights and the right to freedom of expression (Case of Big Brother Watch and Others v. The United Kingdom 2021). By identifying certain factors enabling or restricting CSOs in a comparative manner, we may be able to suggest ways to enable democratic accountability and design frameworks for incorporating CSOs and the general public into accountability structures and intelligence governance in a more agonistic fashion (Lowndes and Paxton 2018). The symbolic dimension also comes into play in this context because identifying the efforts of CSOs and the opportunities as well as restraints sheds light on the imaginaries of intelligence legitimacy. Analysing not only their current practices and initiatives but also their historical constraints and unrealised potentials (Cantó-Milà and Seebach 2024) is of interest in this context, as both past legacies and envisioned futures may shape how and why CSOs engage with intelligence accountability as they do.

Assuming that democratic accountability applies to intelligence services, meaning that the legitimacy of intelligence services hinges on their ability to engage constructively with critique from civil society, we must also assume some level of what my colleague Adam Diderichsen coins as *readability* - that is, the necessity for sufficient openness to enable informed critique. Hence, a research agenda venturing into how to connect democratic accountability and readability in a meaningful way would enable the development of tools helping intelligence services provide such information

without compromising their national security obligations and civil society to gain a better understanding of intelligence practices and thereby provide informed legitimacy to the services.

Considering the above, the understandings, practices, and priorities of intelligence accountability may have implications for society as a whole. Surveys from 2021 show that the majority of Danish citizens do not believe it to be acceptable for the authorities to collect citizens' data without consent (Jørgensen 2019), and that one in three believe that exactly that is taken place and that they have moderated their behaviour accordingly (M. Larsen 2021). This indicates that society is already affected by uncertainty regarding what is collected by whom. However, more research is needed to establish the extent to which data collected by intelligence services is a public concern, and whether intelligence accountability structures have a direct impact on public perspectives and concerns regarding data collection. The introduction of AI in the work of intelligence services (Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste [DDIS] 2023) makes this matter even more pressing by posing questions on privacy issues and data protection when data are only accessed by a computer.

In closing, I return to the words of the former UN Special Rapporteur on Privacy: "If there is no intelligence accountability, there is no democracy." Whether one fully embraces this statement or not, its resonance is undeniable. The imperative of intelligence accountability grows ever more urgent as technological advancements accelerate, the international security landscape becomes increasingly complex, and democratic institutions face mounting pressure. The study of intelligence accountability is not merely an academic pursuit; it is a cornerstone of safeguarding democracy itself. It demands our unwavering attention and commitment to explore it through diverse analytical approaches. Only through rigorous and multifaceted research can we deepen our understanding of its complexities and meaningfully contribute to the ongoing dialogue about democracy and intelligence accountability.

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Appendix 1: Article 1

Towards Intelligence Accountability as a Virtue

Melanie Sofia Hartvigsen

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Appendix 2: Book Chapter

Intelligence Oversight as an Institutional Battlefield
The Danish Experience

Melanie Sofia Hartvigsen
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Adam Diderichsen

Chapter 6 in *Intelligence Practices in High-Trust Societies: Scandinavian Exceptionalism?*

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Chapter 6

Intelligence Oversight as an Institutional Battlefield

The Danish Experience

Melanie Hartvigsen, Mia Hartmann, and Adam Diderichsen

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6 Intelligence Oversight as an Institutional Battlefield

The Danish Experience

Melanie Hartvigsen, Mia Hartmann, and Adam Diderichsen

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

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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 & Thogersen, 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 Thogersen, 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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Appendix 3: Article 2

Civil Society Organisations in Intelligence Accountability
Democratic Ideals and Practical Limitations

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Civil Society Organisations in Intelligence Accountability: Democratic Ideals and Practical Limitations

This study addresses a gap in Intelligence Studies by conducting an empirical investigation into how various civil society actors perceive their role in promoting accountability within the intelligence services. Applying the theoretical frameworks of democratic agonism and institutional logics, the study explores how civil society actors perceive their role in ensuring intelligence accountability and rationalize their contributions as potential enhancers of intelligence legitimacy. Through in-depth interviews with eight civil society organisations in Denmark (NGOs, labour unions, interest groups, and member-funded associations), the research analyses their values, beliefs, and institutional rules concerning intelligence accountability. The findings reveal a tension in which actors advocate for deeper democratic values and contestation, but adapt to existing institutional oversight practices, leading to an imbalance between their ideals and the limited impact of their actions. To explain this imbalance, we discuss the symbolic and practical dimensions that influence the role of civil society, addressing power asymmetries, access to information, and social imaginaries of security. Ultimately, this research contributes to ongoing debates on democratic accountability and suggests paths for enhancing civil society's impact on intelligence accountability and policy-making processes.

Keywords: civil society organisations; democratic accountability; agonistic democracy; intelligence services; intelligence accountability; intelligence legitimacy

Introduction

Conventionally, Intelligence Studies (IS) literature has acknowledged formal and institutionalized oversight bodies, which possess legitimacy affirmed by law, as primary accountability holders.[1] This viewpoint often equates intelligence oversight with intelligence accountability. However, oversight can lead to accountability and is a prerequisite for it, but they are not synonymous.[2] Broadly understood, accountability is the connector between state power and legitimacy[3], and in a functional manner, accountability involves "providing answers to those with a legitimate claim and facing potential consequences"[4], but the concept remains a subject of debate.

Hartvigsen suggests that intelligence accountability extends beyond legality and formal mechanisms and encompasses accountability virtues[5], which are the desired qualities of government organisations and officials.[6] Other scholars such as Kniep et al. argue that this involves promoting the participation of social actors in the realm of accountability.[7] This domain encompasses not only intelligence elites but also a wide range of actors, including the media, scholars, and civil society[8], thereby situating accountability within a societal context.

In this context, a division emerges between accountability holders (elite and non-elite) and approaches to accountability (traditional oversight versus more democratic participation and contestation). Despite this, there is limited research on whether civil society organisations (CSOs) have legitimate claims as intelligence accountability holders and the practical role they play in holding intelligence services to account.[9] CSOs have acted as watchdogs of secret power and an influencer of public opinion, particularly when formal oversight mechanisms are inadequate.[10] Moreover, CSOs represent the broader populace in a democratic context. Nevertheless, the extent to which CSOs are included in intelligence accountability depends on the perceptions of democracy that underlie established oversight structures and requires further study.[11]

Recent research has investigated the practices and challenges of CSOs in intelligence accountability.[12] However, these studies have

overlooked how CSOs perceive and envision their role in enhancing the legitimacy of intelligence services through democratic accountability practices, which have resulted in a lack of understanding of the underlying principles guiding these practices. In response to Critical Intelligence Studies' call to emphasize everyday practices and the societal embeddedness of intelligence services[13], this study explores how CSOs perceive their role in intelligence accountability through an exploratory case study of Danish CSOs.

To investigate this matter, we utilize two theoretical frameworks: democratic agonism and institutional logics. Democratic agonism provides a foundation for comprehending how contestation and citizen participation can bolster legitimacy[14], and institutional logics offers insights into the values, beliefs, and practices that shape the roles of CSOs.[15] We concentrated on Denmark, where CSOs, including NGOs, think tanks, labour unions, interest groups, and member-funded associations, hold significant sway. These actors are potentially crucial to the intelligence accountability debate, as they have historically influenced the norms of citizenship and civil rights, thereby shaping societal progress.[16]

The following research questions are posed: How do CSOs perceive their role in ensuring intelligence accountability? How do they rationalize their contributions as potential enhancers of intelligence legitimacy? These questions allowed us to explore the beliefs, roles, and practices that mark the CSOs. The study examines the presence of different views of democracy and accountability through cooperative oversight alongside delegated democratic institutions or by pursuing contestation and deep scrutiny in an agonistic democratic ideal. Thereby, the study expands the literature on democracy and intelligence accountability beyond conventional oversight institutions and covers the tensions, contradictions, and challenges faced by civil society organisations in this area. Accordingly, this study addresses a significant gap in the IS literature regarding the perceived (normative) and actual (practical) role of CSOs, as well as the broader implications for the democratic legitimacy of intelligence services.

We found that the CSOs imagined a proactive role rooted in the values of agonistic democratisation, however, their actual influence

practices were more closely aligned with the traditional delegated democratic oversight. The CSOs perceive agonistic contestation as a virtue of intelligence accountability, yet there was a disparity between the envisioned and actual roles of CSOs presumably caused by structural and symbolic restraints. Thus, although agonism theoretically enhances intelligence legitimacy, it remains far from being realized in the transformation of the conventional delegated democratic model.

Intelligence accountability and civil society

Conventional wisdom in IS frequently associates legitimate intelligence accountability actors with formal oversight systems, including legislative, executive, judicial, and expert bodies. This viewpoint is rooted in a Schumpeterian logic of delegated democracy[17], whereby *agents*, or delegated bureaucrats, act on behalf of *principals*, citizens. In this context, legitimacy is constructed linearly and is primarily considered an outcome of elections and delegated decision-making processes. As a result, debates on intelligence accountability have mainly focused on liberal, functionalist, and technocratic views[18], with some exceptions.[19]

Moreover, the rapidly emerging Critical Intelligence Studies (CIS) literature further challenges the conventional perspective by examining intelligence oversight through the lens of CSOs and their diverse democratic practices. Kniep et al. investigate these oversight practices and demonstrate that "practicing 'oversight' can take much more agonistic, contentious, transnational, and public forms than most of the literature on oversight suggests, or that applicable policy frameworks acknowledge." [20] This approach aligns with an agonistic vision of democracy. Agonism can be defined as a democratic practice that is continuously open to questioning, disagreement, contestation, deliberation, negotiation, and change through citizen participation.[21] In this framework, legitimacy is co-created by the people who engage in the formulation, decision-making, and assessment of policies beyond periodic elections or reactive responses to scandals.[22]

Agonism, as defined, encompasses mutual recognition among conflicting parties, who acknowledge each other's legitimacy, even in the absence of a rational resolution to their conflict.[23] This perspective blurs the division between elites and the people, as well as the distinction between formal oversight mechanisms (administrations, parliaments, and courts) and civil society organisations that shape accountability virtues. Agonism entails a dynamic tension, as ideas and values are negotiated among these actors, and civil society organisations contribute to redefining and enhancing both accountability virtues and oversight mechanisms.[24]

Traditionally, issues of openness, transparency, and democratic quality assurance in political decision-making are often sidelined in matters of national security.[25] This raises the question of whether CSOs continue to view themselves as legitimate accountability holders in the realm of intelligence. Thus, to gain insight into how CSOs perceive their role in ensuring intelligence accountability, we employed a qualitative approach and conducted interviews with CSOs. This allowed us to explore this aspect as well as their rationalisation for how their contributions can enhance the legitimacy of intelligence services.

To address these questions, the logics of civil society organisations were analysed from three distinct perspectives: firstly, the normative perspective, which encompasses CSOs' understanding of their role within democracy and, specifically, in the realm of intelligence accountability. Secondly, the practical perspective was considered, which involves the methods and strategies used by these organisations to fulfil their perceived role and the factors they deem necessary to achieve influence. Lastly, the structural conditions that either facilitate or hinder the impact and contributions of CSOs in the realm of intelligence accountability were assessed. Hence, we aimed to explore *meaning*, *practice*, and *context*.

The study of civil society organisations, including meaning, practice, and context, is facilitated by the institutional logics perspective. This perspective allows for the identification of the underlying democratic perceptions, pillars of legitimacy, and perceived virtues of accountability. This framework is useful in elucidating the nuances of

CSOs' envisioned roles and rationalized practices with respect to intelligence accountability and legitimacy.

The 'institutional logics' perspective

The area of research known as 'institutional logics' falls within the broader fields of organisational behaviour and institutional theory.[26] Institutional logics traces its origins to New Institutionalism, particularly through DiMaggio and Powell's influential paper on institutional isomorphism, which criticizes the functionalist perspective.[27] DiMaggio and Powell posit that organisational structures are driven solely by rationality and efficiency. Instead, they argue that organisations are shaped by rational myths or logics, which help them gain legitimacy by projecting rationality and efficiency to their external environment.

Institutional logics are defined as "the socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality."[28] Therefore, institutional logics encompasses both meaning and practice, thus establishing the 'rules of the game'. These logics not only guide behaviour but can also be altered by agents within the system.[29]

Institutional logics gain significance within the broader framework of institutional orders. Societies are composed of various institutional orders, including idealized forms of family, religion, state, community, market, profession, and corporation.[30] Each institutional order functions as a reference frame that shapes actors' understanding and decision-making processes. In this research, we adopt Reuter et al.'s general concept of the community order as "the institutional habitat of a particular type of actors whose role is to provide politics with normative and ideational content."[31] This implies that one of the main functions of civil society organisations is to generate, express, disseminate, and uphold values, ideas, and ideologies, with the aim of maintaining the normative status quo or achieving normative change in response to specific contexts and challenges.

This definition allows an exploration of both notions of traditional democratic delegation and democratic agonism by acknowledging the potentially conflicting logic within a specific domain. For instance, the state apparatus can be considered as one of the main domains for championing the ideas and values promoted by influential CSOs. In this context, CSOs can engage with intelligence agencies primarily for two reasons: to influence policy, or, if they adopt a more oppositional stance, to increase intelligence accountability.[32]

To avoid drawing a dichotomy between cooperation and conflict, we employ Thornton and Ocasio's conceptualisation of institutional logics, which refers to a set of values, beliefs, and institutional rules that are embedded in organisational practices and that shape understanding and actions over time.[33] In implementing the theoretical framework that underpins this study, we aim to investigate three key aspects of civil society organisations (*meaning*, *practice*, and *context*) in relation to intelligence accountability. Therefore, we differentiate between the elements of institutional logics as follows:

- *Values* are long-lasting goals or principles, such as equality, freedom, and democratic rights, that hold significant importance in life and guide behaviour across various contexts. Values can influence behaviour directly by helping to prioritize what is important or indirectly by forming the basis for more specific beliefs.[34]
- *Beliefs* are more specific and focus on particular objects, such as security threats, or specific behaviours, such as protecting the state.[35] Beliefs are the acceptance that something is true regardless of whether it is based on facts.[36]
- *Institutional rules* are defined as "prescriptions that define what actions (or outcomes) are required, prohibited or permitted, and the sanctions authorized if the rules are not followed."[37] These rules mediate power by assigning roles to the actors and determining their status.

In this study, values are manifested in the democratic principles that CSOs deem essential, and which guide their behaviour regarding their

broad democratic perceptions as CSOs. Beliefs are interpreted as specific attitudes toward how state (and intelligence) legitimacy is upheld, and how intelligence accountability enhances intelligence legitimacy. In this respect, values and beliefs are essential in addressing the first research question, as they provide a framework for mapping and analysing the roles that CSOs ascribe to themselves in the context of intelligence accountability. Additionally, institutional rules are translated into the rationalisation of practices of influence in the intelligence domain and the practices' perceived effectiveness, thus elucidating what actions civil society actors deem to be required, prohibited, etc., and identifying CSOs' perceived status as legitimate accountability holders. Hence, this dimension sheds light on the second research question and provides new insights into the practices and context of civil society organisations in their perceived roles.

Methods and Ethics

To examine the logics and practices of intelligence accountability among CSOs, we conducted qualitative interviews with relevant organisations in Denmark that traditionally has a strong civil society tradition.[38] We employed a qualitative approach with the aim of elucidating the underlying institutional logics that drive the actors' envisioning and practice of intelligence accountability. Instead of observing the actors' practices directly, we explored the rationalisation behind their practices, as qualitative interviews allowed us to gain insight into the interviewees' perceptions of opportunities and obstacles in the practice of intelligence accountability. Thus, understanding the rationalisation of practice is valuable in itself.[39]

Our study design comprised three main tasks. First, we developed a semi-structured interview guide based on our theoretical framework, focusing on the key themes of democratic values, beliefs about intelligence accountability, institutional rules (practices) related to intelligence accountability, and perceived structural challenges and opportunities in contributing to intelligence accountability and legitimacy.

Second, based on a thorough exploration of Danish civil society, including informal conversations, a review of public statements, the screening of public consultation letters[40], and workshops, we identified organisations actively working on matters of intelligence accountability. We also reached out to organisations with a natural interest in intelligence or security. We contacted 19 civil society organisations, including labour unions, international and national non-governmental organisations, interest groups, and think tanks. Of these, 13 responded and seven agreed to participate in the study. Those who declined cited a lack of knowledge on the matter or scheduling conflicts.

Finally, our aim was to provide a comprehensive picture of the logics and practices of CSOs based on first-hand accounts of the most active and engaged participants. We interviewed eight individuals from seven different organisations (see Appendix 1), including individuals with extensive experience in the field, comprehensive expertise on topics relevant to intelligence, and prominent voices in the public debate. All interviewees were informed about the study's objectives, methodology, data processing, anticipated outcomes, the full interview guide, information about procedures for lodging complaints, and information about the ability to revoke consent in accordance with the Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity.[41] All interviewees voluntarily provided a written consent to participate in the study. Ethics approval was not required for this study, as obtaining prior approval is mandatory only for specific categories of health research projects and studies involving laboratory animals. Nevertheless, the Research Ethics Committee at the University of X reviewed the project and confirmed that it complies with Danish law (case no. 24/55575). Furthermore, as the study involved the collection of personal data, the data collection, management, storage, and processing procedures were approved by the Legal Service of the University of X (notification no. 11.935). One interviewee preferred to remain anonymous regarding their organisational affiliation, while the

remaining seven consented to be identified by organisational affiliation.[i] The organisations were:

- Association of IT Professionals [*Forbundet af IT-professionelle*]
- Danish Institute of Human Rights [*Institut for Menneskerettigheder*]
- Danish Society of Engineers [*Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark*]
- Legal Policy Association [*Retspolitisk Forening*]
- National Association of Defence Lawyers [*Landsforening for Forsvarsadvokater*]
- Transparency International Denmark

Following an in-depth interview methodology[42], the interviews lasted between 60 and 90 minutes and were recorded for subsequent transcription. The transcribed responses were organized according to the key theoretical themes: values beliefs, and institutional rules, then coded using an open coding approach identifying the normative content, and finally analysed through interpretation of the normative content through the meanings of the interviewees.[43] This process enabled us to identify the actors' democratic values, beliefs about intelligence accountability, institutional rules (rationalisation of practices) concerning intelligence accountability, and perceived structural challenges and opportunities in contributing to intelligence accountability and enhancing legitimacy.

In the following sections, we provide a detailed analysis of the meaning and practice regarding intelligence accountability. First, we examine the general democratic values of civil society organisations who emphasize agonism as a virtue. Second, we explore the beliefs of civil society organisations regarding intelligence accountability, noting their

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[i] The anonymity of one civil society organisation does not distort the scholarly meaning. The values, beliefs, and institutional rules identified within the anonymous organisation are closely aligned with those of the others. Consequently, the insights derived from this organisation are representative and do not introduce any methodological inconsistency in the analysis.

belief in a watchdog role, as well as their desire to be a helping hand. The third section addresses the rationalized practices of influence, using examples such as consultation letters, and the fourth section examines the context and perceived effects of these practices, while highlighting the constraints and institutional rules that limit the actions of these actors.

Analysis

Civil society's democratic values and beliefs: Agonism as a virtue

Regarding broader principles of democracy, the interviewees emphasized two key *values*. These are democratic discussion, and freedom of opinion. Each of these values comprises a collection of supporting *beliefs* regarding the state's legitimacy, which will be explored further below. Generally, these beliefs are grounded in ideas of contestation and participation, thereby aligning with the agonistic view of democracy as a desirable virtue.

Initially, democratic discussion is widely regarded as an essential *value* of democracy. As highlighted by on interviewee from an organisation dedicated to promoting transparency, when asked to elaborate on the significance of democratic discussion in establishing legitimacy:

> Because they exist [conflicts]. And if they don't exist, it's because something is wrong. That is, because there simply aren't any organisations and societies where everyone agrees on everything, unless it's because some force is used to ensure that everyone agrees on everything. So, pluralism must necessarily exist. (CS8)

Accordingly, the CSOs *believe* that they contribute to the pluralism necessary for state legitimacy by presenting diverse normative inputs on specific issues. Furthermore, restricting the discussion to particular themes is undesirable, as emphasized by one member of an interest

group:

> In a democracy, it's crucial that public debate remains open to a wide array of topics and perspectives, rather than narrowing [it] down to just a few. Preserving pluralism is essential, ensuring there's space for all viewpoints. (CS6)

The discussion is believed to incorporate conflicts between various actors, civil and political, as these confrontations highlight the implications and benefits of specific policies. This is underlined by one interviewee from a labour union:

> Sometimes we [CSOs] clash as well. But those ways of clashing are important for figuring out what are we losing, what are we gaining? Where should we place the principle of proportionality? How should we weigh the benefits for society as a whole against those of individuals? (CS5)

In this manner, the *value* of democratic discussion is upheld through *beliefs* of pluralism and conflict, which are considered crucial components of the legitimacy of the state. These statements suggest a willingness to engage with plural views in democratic discussion and conflicts, mirroring the notion that democratic practices should be open to questioning, contestation, and negotiation. However, for these discussions and conflicts to have a significant impact on democracy and state legitimacy, there must be some political encouragement, or at least responsiveness, towards the plural themes, views and inputs presented by CSOs, as per the thesis of democratic agonism, which acknowledges the legitimacy of the parties involved.[44] Despite this, many interviewees *believe* that the inherent and healthy conflict in the democratic discussion between political decision-makers and CSOs has increasingly been neglected by the former. This, however, only serves to highlight the importance of an active civil society, as emphasized by one of the interviewees:

> As the legitimacy of political parties increasingly hinges on electoral success rather than dialogue and support from a broad voter base, civil society's roles in the democratic debate and legitimacy becomes ever more crucial. (CS8)

Second, a significant number of interviewees emphasized the importance of freedom of opinion as a core democratic *value*. They argue that to maintain this value, the state must prioritize civil rights and adopt citizen-centred approaches that are responsive to the expertise and professional input of CSOs. The CSOs *believe* that this can be achieved through inclusive, responsive governance. One interviewee from a member-funded association articulated this value particularly well:

> Freedom of the individual to hold their own opinions, whatever they may be, politically, religiously, or in any other respect. But it is also freedom for the individual from state authority. That is legitimacy. That there are rules and legal safeguards for the individual that are upheld by the state authority. (CS7)

It is a widely held belief that civil rights and citizen-centred governance are indispensable components of freedom of opinion and the legitimacy of the state. Freedom of opinion is a fundamental right enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which affirms that individuals have the right to seek, receive, and impart information and ideas.[45] This right is of paramount importance in fostering citizen-centred governance, which entails that institutions and processes are guided by the views and needs of citizens.[46] The CSOs believe that they play a vital role in providing valuable knowledge and expertise for the common good, both to the political system and the broader public. To the public, CSOs offer a foundation of knowledge that can inform citizens' views and opinions, as stated by an employee of a non-governmental organisation:

> CSOs, as they work with these topics on a daily basis, have the time to research and figure out what's what. Some things

> can also be quite technical and difficult to find answers to. CSOs can convey this information to citizens. I think civil society plays a very central role in informing society about what challenges there might be, what one should be politically interested in. (CS4)

The function of informing the public is linked to legitimacy as an output of elections and decision-making. In addition, the CSOs consider themselves to contribute to the input of legitimacy by co-creating formulations, participating in decision-making, and evaluating regular policies using their specialized knowledge and expertise, as stated by one interviewee from a labour union:

> Our task is to keep reminding politicians that there are opportunities to solve these problems, which involve ensuring the citizen's rights to the best of our abilities by utilising the knowledge present in the specialized civil society organisations. Because we can all contribute to the solution, by pointing out what can help promote these possibilities, ensuring that we do not undermine the rights we have as citizens too severely. (CS2)

The actors believe that their role is connected to the output as well as the input of policies, thus providing democratic legitimacy to political decision-making and democratic governance through contestation and participation. The aggregated institutional logics of the interviewees suggests that they believe state legitimacy and civil society to be closely intertwined; civil society's participation and contestation increase state legitimacy. In essence, the logics on which the values and beliefs of the interviewees rest have characteristics of an agonistic vision of democracy. Therefore, the CSOs aim to provide politics with normative and ideational content by disseminating their ideas and achieving influence over political decision-makers. In the following section, we will attend to intelligence accountability and the perceived role of civil society in this regard.

Intelligence accountability beliefs: Being watchdogs but also 'helping hands'

In the case studied, the interviewees *believed* intelligence legitimacy to be closely intertwined with the legitimacy of the state. This connection is particularly important because much intelligence work is concealed from the public, particularly in Denmark. As a result, the general public cannot make an informed judgement about the specific legitimacy of intelligence services.[47] Instead, according to the interviewees, the legitimacy of intelligence services is contingent upon broader *beliefs* in pluralism, civil rights, and citizen-centred governance.

The legitimate role of intelligence services is understood as maintaining democratic conditions by providing security and safety. However, this logic is grounded in a particular *belief* in pluralism, as articulated by a representative of an interest group:

> What an intelligence service aims to do, whether it's of the military or the police, both internal and external, is precisely to maintain democratic conditions. But not necessarily in the exact form they exist. One really needs to be mindful of pluralism. (CS6)

In accordance with the emphasis on pluralism, the legitimacy of intelligence services is believed to rest on political and democratic dialogue and discussion of the role of intelligence services. One staff member from a national non-governmental organisation expressed this viewpoint on the desired process of democratic construction and the negotiation of laws governing intelligence services:

> One can discuss the set of rules they operate under. How much democratic legitimacy does it have? At the level of the parliament, politically, within society, how much is it debated what powers intelligence services actually have? In the best of worlds, I think there should be a broad political discussion on how we want them to operate, so that they

> have the best possible set of rules that align with the political desire, the population's desire. (CS4)

In keeping with the customary function of civil society in democracy, it is generally believed that an enlightened and democratic discussion about the capabilities, remits, and competences of intelligence services necessitates some degree of familiarity with their practices. All the individuals interviewed emphasized this point, observing that such knowledge is far from being acquired and is mostly dependent on unverified information. When commenting on revealed practices within the Danish intelligence community, one interviewee from a labour union stated:

> With Snowden it came out that the things we thought, okay, they [the intelligence services] probably do this. Yes, they did. And then all those things where we thought, theoretically, they could do this, but they probably don't. But they did. Virtually everything. And they also did some things where we have to say, God, can you even do that? We hadn't thought about that. (CS3)

The focus of the interviewees on pluralism and qualified dialogue in democracy influences how they perceive the concepts of security and safety. Their perspective does not originate from a traditional security logic, i.e., doing what is necessary to protect the state and the national interest in accordance with the Hobbesian tradition.[48] Instead, it stems from the logic of bureaucracy that prioritizes securing citizen rights and promoting citizen-centred governance.[49] In fact, one interviewee from a labour union expressed this quite clearly:

> I think challenging the notion of 'to ensure the state' is valid. Because what about ensuring the citizens? Who are they [the intelligence service] really for? The state institutions? Or is it the society, including the citizens? […] In the ideal world,

> they would be more focused on ensuring the security of the citizens than on securing the state system. (CS5)

The citizen-centred security focus is consistent with the general belief that citizen-centred governance is an essential aspect of legitimacy. Furthermore, at the core of the understanding of intelligence legitimacy is the focus on protecting citizens' rights through sufficient intelligence oversight systems. According to a staff member of a national non-governmental organisation:

> I believe oversight of [the] intelligence services is important and plays a very central role. In fact, perhaps more centrally in this area than in many other areas of public administration one can think of. […] All their work is conducted with a very high degree of secrecy. So, in order to ensure that they also work in a manner that is in accordance with legislation and the mandate they have received from the Parliament, there is simply a need for us to have a strong oversight of the intelligence services so that we as citizens in society can trust that they do not act illegally, and that none of our data is unnecessarily intercepted. (CS4)

Ultimately, the interviewees' notions of agonistic forms of democracy extended to the virtues of accountability believed to be required to enhance intelligence legitimacy. Thus, these actors do not believe that "core political democratic bureaucratic ethical principles of control must be constrained – in the name of national security"[50], but instead advocate pluralism, democratic dialogue, a focus on civil rights, and citizen-centred security as essential accountability beliefs.

In this context, CSOs have two key roles: acting as watchdogs and as helping hands. This dual approach entails overseeing the outputs of decision-making and the behaviour of administrators, as illustrated by one interviewee from a national non-governmental organisation:

> I believe that the media, CSOs and citizens can play a crucial role in terms of observing the practices utilized by the intelligence services. They play a vital role in following up on whether there are any occurrences that are not in order or not in accordance with the intelligence services' own legal framework. (CS4)

The function of CSOs as watchdogs is generally acknowledged in the literature on informal oversight mechanisms.[51] This role can easily coexist with traditional liberal notions of delegated democracy, as these are based on citizens as *principals* and intelligence bureaucrats as *agents*. However, the additional role of serving as a knowledge base for intelligence methods and legislation resembles the concept of agonism, which emphasizes not only scrutiny and contestation, but also the inclusion of citizens as *agents*. This role involves utilising CSOs' expertise in judicial matters, including civil rights and civil rights-centred technologies. In this capacity, civil society organisations can actively engage in intelligence policy-making and oversight, rather than merely observing or being passive audiences in accountability efforts. One labour union interviewee explained that their organisation attempted to fulfil this role:

> We have tried to step in and push from the other side, saying, 'You [the intelligence service] want to be able to do this. We also want you to be able to do this, but if you do it this way, it means such and such negative consequences in terms of citizens' freedom.' So, it's an attempt to investigate the toolbox and say, 'We also want you to be effective, but you have seven things in the toolbox. These two, you shouldn't use. We need to remove them. And then use the other four. (CS5)

This statement embodies an additional aspect of the general belief held by the majority of the CSOs with respect to intelligence services. The services are considered a necessary and appropriate component of a

democratic society and are therefore not viewed as adversaries. This is a vital element considering the tempered agonistic vision of democracy, as it resembles tempered contestation (rather than pure antagonism), but also inclusion and co-participation as fundamental to democracy. In that sense, the CSOs in this study share common ground with the services: the security of Denmark is important. The point of contention, however, lies in the practices employed by the intelligence services to attain this objective.

Practice(s) of influence: Consultation letters

The practices of influence employed by CSOs to fulfil their perceived roles regarding intelligence accountability are shaped by institutional rules derived from their values and beliefs.[52] These rules can be classified into two prescriptions, which define what is considered *required* and what is considered *permissible*. The required prescriptions mainly refer to the role of civil society organisations as watchdogs, involving judicial evaluations and communication with the public on critical issues. The necessity of these prescriptions depends on the origin and purpose of the respective organisation. For most organisations, it is seen as a duty to communicate with the public about significant issues related to intelligence services. Not only do they need to convey their knowledge, but they must also do so in a way that is easily understandable to the general public. This responsibility was emphasized by one interviewee from a labour union:

> That is another task we have. It's to be able to explain these things to people who don't know anything about it. That is, to put it into context and understand what we mean by the problem in this context. So, we don't get lost in the technical details about the CPU clock speed, or whatever we might come up with to entertain people. But simply try to tell them in such a way that they can understand what it's about, so they will participate in the debate. (CS3)

The interviewees indicated that certain prescriptions are permissible, which pertains to their understanding of themselves as a knowledge base for intelligence methods and legislation. These practices are linked to the policy inputs. The actors identified a range of practices, including public reporting and communication, workshops and consultation letters, with the last mentioned being viewed as the most crucial, as highlighted by one interviewee from a member-funded association:

> It is super important to have the opportunity to submit a consultation letter because there may well be some perspectives that otherwise wouldn't necessarily come to light. And I'm also fully aware that consultation letters don't always lead to any changes in the bill, but still, the consultation response will be part of the preparatory work. And in that way, it can be really important to include it anyway. Because then it may be that at a later point, others come across it, and maybe some things will be changed at a later point. (CS7)

Some CSOs have experienced their consultation letters being referenced in parliamentary debates and section 20 questions[53], as noted by one labour union representative:

> In consultation letters, you can delve deeper and explain further. Sometimes, we've written things where we've seen that political parties have used them. The opposition has used them for section 20 questions. So, you think, well, at least someone has read it and used it. (CS5)

Additionally, the Danish Intelligence Oversight Board has on at least one occasion, referenced a consultation letter from an interest group to address a specific question regarding the sharing of raw data between the foreign intelligence services and the domestic intelligence service. In the Annual Report 2018, the Danish Intelligence Oversight Board specifically referenced the pertinent consultation letter and the minister's

subsequent remarks.[54] Evidently, the public consultation letters submitted by CSOs contribute to some extent to political debates concerning intelligence accountability, as well as the Oversight Board's practice and understanding of its own oversight role.

Another permitted prescription emphasized by most interviewees is the importance of fostering public debate. One representative from a labour union, for instance, shared their approach to seeking influence through public discussions on matters related to intelligence:

> Typically, we write articles. Or we participate in panel debates that focus on the subject. And then we formulate proposals that we like to send to the politicians in this context. (CS2)

The practices of influence employed by actors included in this study appear to be consistent with traditional methods of exerting influence and do not suggest a high level of activism or protest, as explained by one interviewee from a labour union. The interviewee justifies these methods by citing the low priority of the issue among the general public:

> We're not rallying for a demonstration in front of Christiansborg [the Danish parliament], as we can feel that this issue isn't as significant among the Danish population. (CS3)

In summary, the institutional rules of required and permitted behaviour regarding intelligence accountability address both the inputs and outputs of intelligence accountability policies. However, logics and practices must also be considered in relation to perceived impact. As evident in the previous quote, a significant factor is how the interviewees perceive the influence of their efforts. Furthermore, adapting to the general public's mood suggests lower expectations of the effectiveness of practices in fostering influence and promoting the ideal of agonism in intelligence-accountability practices. Therefore, the institutional logics of the CSOs should be assessed within the context, as this may present both

opportunities for and constraints on their roles.

Discussion

A context of restraints: Experiencing limits in the practices of influence

There was general scepticism among the interviewees regarding whether their practices and efforts of influence had any real impact on intelligence accountability. This scepticism was attributed to two interrelated phenomena: the limited responsiveness of the executive and the legislative processes surrounding intelligence matters.

The perceived unresponsiveness of the executive stems from the belief that political decision-makers are generally unwilling to discuss matters related to intelligence services, as expressed by one interviewee from a national non-governmental organisation:

> There is no doubt that the political level in general has a harder timer debating with us on this matter [intelligence] than others. (CS8)

Problems have been identified in the legislative process regarding CSOs having their concerns about a bill addressed. According to an anonymous member of civil society:

> It is just minor things you can achieve with consultation letters. The situation has been that there is always a comfortable majority for the government's proposals on intelligence services regardless of who is in power. And it's very difficult, if not almost impossible, to get anything through. I don't experience there being anything that I would characterize as a dialogue. They are obliged to hold public hearings on bills, and they do, and they also read the consultation letters, take a position on some of the points. But it's very rare that anything comes out of it. (CS1)

Perceptions of the practice of submitting consultation letters as inputs to influence the outcome of the legislative process are two-fold. On the one hand, submitting consultation letters is considered a crucial tool for CSOs to exert influence; yet, on the other hand, limited effectiveness of consultation letters is widely acknowledged. This seemingly counterproductive practice can be viewed as an attempt by actors to demonstrate their legitimacy and influence in society, as was the argument of DiMaggio and Powell.[55] However, the efforts allocated to generating consultation letters are perceived as being increasingly challenged by the legislative process. This trend is not exclusive to legislation pertaining to intelligence matters as one interviewee highlighted:

> The legislative process has become so fast, and the deadlines for submitting consultation letters, in many cases, have become extremely short. It's actually difficult to produce a qualified consultation letter. Furthermore, the vast majority of bills are practically finalized before there is even an opportunity to submit consultation letters. (CS7)

In conclusion, CSOs face difficulties in influencing the inputs of intelligence accountability policies despite their efforts. The Danish case illustrates that civil society is driven by values and beliefs rooted in agonism, which involves contestation and participation in democracy in general and intelligence accountability in particular. However, civil society's ability to influence policies to enhance legitimacy is hindered by political unresponsiveness and legislative procedures.

The institutional logics of CSOs in relation to intelligence accountability reveals a discrepancy between the actors' values and beliefs and their practices of influence. Although CSOs view agonism as a virtue of democratic accountability, their potential to affect the accountability of the intelligence services is limited. In the following section, we explore some explanations for this discrepancy, including symbolic, structural, and institutional dimensions.

Agonism virtues and the attempt to increase democratic accountability

As previously stated, Danish CSOs acknowledge the legitimacy of intelligence services in a democratic society. However, they believe that this legitimacy is enhanced through contestation and participation in intelligence accountability, particularly regarding intelligence methods that may restrict citizen freedom. This is evidenced by the two key elements of how the CSOs perceive their role in relation to intelligence accountability: namely as a watchdog and a helping hand. In other words, they do not view themselves as a friend or a foe but as a critical partner who can challenge and inspire intelligence practices that will ultimately enhance the deeper democratic legitimacy of the intelligence services.

These objectives align with an emerging trend highlighted in the literature: the increasing engagement of civil society by fostering collaboration with a variety of societal organisations, as well as with government agencies and international partners.[56] Such collaboration ensures that diverse perspectives are considered in decision-making related to intelligence policies. CSOs are encouraged to actively participate in policy discussions, oversight mechanisms, and public debates on intelligence matters. The aim is to foster a culture of accountability, and civic engagement can reinforce non-delegated forms of democracy in the typically secretive field of intelligence.[57]

In this sense, agonism is considered a virtue in the context of democratic accountability, as it acknowledges the legitimacy of CSOs as accountability holders in the intelligence domain. Incorporating these actors into this secretive field not only promotes intelligence accountability, but also strengthens democratic accountability. Conventional IS emphasizes rules and bureaucratic accountability, which rely on established top-down power structures and institutions.[58] However, this form of bureaucratic accountability may undermine democratic accountability by eliminating inherent tensions and contestations. By contrast, CSOs view accountability as a political concept that recognizes the importance of these tensions. As noted by one of the interviewees, without conflict, democratic conditions are fundamentally flawed.

In this study, the perspective of CSOs aligns with the political concept of contestation, whereby tempered confrontation enables a world of diverse values.[59] In such a space, public and CSOs can challenge the decisions made by intelligence officials and demand justifications. This suggests that the legitimacy of intelligence services depends on creating more spaces for contestation, thus allowing civil society and the public to influence decisions. These spaces include the co-creation of arenas in which the public can help solve societal problems.[60] For example, co-creation is already a reality in Denmark's intelligence community, particularly when countering cyberattacks.[61] Similar spaces exist in other countries, such as the Netherlands, where organisations such as Bits of Freedom influence debates on national security and intelligence.[62] Therefore, it is reasonable for Danish CSOs to strive for more agonistic forms of democratic intelligence accountability.

However, in traditional democratic institutions of delegation, spaces for confrontation are often a topic of controversy. For instance, there is often limited contestation in intelligence matters by parliamentary opposition parties. One member of civil society stated that the government's intelligence reforms usually have a comfortable majority, regardless of who is in power. While further study is needed on the role of the Danish parliamentary opposition in intelligence matters, similar issues exist in Sweden, where the opposition struggles to enforce parliamentary inquiries into intelligence matters.[63] Recent political negotiations on intelligence reform in Denmark also highlighted the opposition's powerlessness when a constituent party brokered an agreement with the government.[64] When the opposition is passive, civil society can take an active role by making spaces for contestation and participation which is crucial for maintaining or increasing democratic accountability and legitimacy.

In short, CSOs perceive their role to be that of contesting intelligence practices, which necessitates spaces for such contestation. However, integrating this role into practice is hampered by numerous obstacles due to the limited regulatory and institutional support for civic engagement in intelligence matters, which is not unique to the Danish case[65], and constraints in institutional practices and rules, such as the limited capacity of parliamentary groups to provide oversight. Despite

the CSOs valuing agonism in intelligence accountability, the practices and perceived effects of these values are often diluted in the roles of the actors, as they not only seek contestation (a watchdog role) but also critical cooperation (a 'friendly hand'), and in the limitations of the institutional delegation democratic model itself. This creates a situation in which agonism is present in the values and beliefs of CSOs, yet it appears the be far from being realized in practice. This is at least true in the Danish case. The following section explores the explanations for this discrepancy.

Explaining the limitations: Asymmetry of power and imaginaries of state security

We have discussed how the values and beliefs of CSOs concerning agonism in intelligence accountability do not correspond with their actual practices of influence or the perceived impact of their efforts. We have seen that the actions of CSOs primarily involve writing consultation letters, which they consider crucial but which they ultimately believe have minimal effect on final policies. Formal consultations are intended to enhance regulatory quality and legitimacy by permitting societal interests to be voiced, resulting in rules based on extensive and open dialogue beyond parliamentary discussion.[66] However, in Denmark, consultation partners are invited to comment on legal texts at a late stage and concentrate on the output of legitimacy. Research indicates that public consultation in Denmark has a limited impact, rendering it ineffective in ensuring regulatory quality.[67] This aligns with the experiences of CSOs, thus creating a paradox between their expectations and practices.

As DiMaggio and Powell emphasized, organisations frequently adopt logics that promote their legitimacy by appearing rational and efficient.[68] Since public consultation is a common strategy for CSOs[69], adhering to this practice may not be deemed irrational despite its limited effect. The practice may be perceived as legitimising CSOs' own organisations, the democratic procedures, and formal policymaking structures in general. The findings imply that all parties involved in the

consultation process fulfil their roles, which allows them to assert that the democratic process was followed. However, this raises the question of why CSOs persist with an approach that they largely doubt and do not explore innovative solutions that align with their core values and beliefs about intelligence accountability.

The non-synchronicity between beliefs and practices highlights that this contradiction could be linked to the self-perception of roles at a symbolic level. In this sense, this contradiction can be understood through performativity and impediments to accessing information. CSOs routinely engage in symbolic communication, particularly through public interest group campaigns that aim to mobilize and activate audiences while shaping and reaffirming the identities of both CSOs and the government. This symbolic dimension is evident in strategies such as consultation letters, which, despite their practical objectives, also serve as 'dramaturgical' acts performed on the public stage. Even when CSOs are uncertain about what to include in the letters or when the CSOs anticipate constraints in the law-making process, it still holds significance to write and submit consultation letters. The practice of submitting public consultation letters fulfils public expectations and the norms of society, which demonstrates the commitment of the CSOs to transparency and accountability. That is, the act of adhering to practices such as consultation letters, even when they have little impact on policymaking, can be seen as part of a hermeneutic exercise of representation in the political arena, which involves the interpretation and presentation of reality in order to acquire a role and visibility before the public.[70]

At the same time, the limited scope of practices, such as consultation letters, can be understood as an implicit form of constraint. The lack of responses and the absence of information given by intelligence practitioners to CSOs highlights the power imbalances between the CSOs and state institutions. Power is not only the capacity to execute actions, but also includes the capacity to veto and enforce non-decision, which in this case limits the effectiveness of civil society's practices. In a representative democracy, political scientists studying representation often focus on how representation renders groups present. However, it is equally important to consider how power constraints render groups or information absent beyond the representative logic.

Dovi's typology of political absence underscores this point, demonstrating that evaluating representation necessitates attention to both presence and absence.[71] Thus, the discrepancy arises not only from the symbolic and performative aspects of civil society actions, but also from structural constraints and power dynamics that restrict access to information and effective participation. This dual understanding helps elucidate the challenges CSOs encounter in aligning their values with their practices in intelligence accountability.

In terms of the power imbalance between the state's bureaucracy and CSOs, Denmark has a tradition of sovereign political leadership[72] and a notoriously secretive intelligence community.[73] Typically, accountability holders who are considered legitimate are formally appointed overseers who acknowledge the importance of intelligence services and adhere to a structural logic of bureaucratic accountability in delegated oversight among 'partners'. However, this logic may inadvertently undermine public debate and the contestation of intelligence matters. This is exemplified by the lack of public discussion on intelligence services, in which fundamental practices are classified as sensitive and critical questions are often politically dismissed under the guise of secrecy. This political attitude may stem from a security logic of national security, which focuses on safeguarding the nation-state.[74] This maintains a circle of secrecy, as coined by Bigo[75], in which a select group of people has authority and legitimate claims as accountability holders, and others are excluded. It is important to note that this critique does not advocate complete transparency at all costs. Instead, it highlights the power imbalance that has been naturalized in traditional intelligence oversight, leaving CSOs no choice but to adhere to established but limited practices of influence such as consultation letters.

Another structural dimension to explain the asynchrony between beliefs and practices could be the lack of capacity and interest of some sectors of civil society to deploy more accountability, as they focus on pursuing more security. This may be due to policies implemented post 9/11, particularly in counter-terrorism and counter-radicalisation.[76] These policies involved creating a network of voluntary informants within local communities, which integrates civil society into security logics. Privacy and civil liberties concerned could have been raised towards these

policies, but such discussions have been largely absent, which suggests a widespread acceptance of the security logic that dominates public security issues. The lack of public outrage and concern coupled with the perceived limited influence of civil society may indicate shared social imaginaries of security and intelligence legitimacy. Social imaginaries are common understandings that shape collective practices and influence how we engage in social life.[77] It is worth exploring whether the social imaginaries of security in Denmark contribute to the reluctance of CSOs to adopt more innovative practices.

In this regard, it is possible to identify two contrasting social imaginaries: one permeated by agonism and democratic accountability, and another in which security is paramount to political life. In Denmark, societal actors are grappling with this internal struggle and embodying a dual role, acting either as a watchdog or as a critical friend of the intelligence services. This tension gives rise to new realities at both symbolic and practical levels, representing the intersection of the two social imaginaries. Whereas the first level is rich in possibilities and democracy is seen as an incomplete model, the second level is relatively reduced in practices and rooted in oversight. As a result, there is a normative claim from those actors to broaden the scope of contestation and involve a wider range of voices, particularly in the practices of intelligence accountability.

Conclusion

This study addressed the gap in the IS literature by exploring the perceived and practical roles of CSOs in intelligence accountability. It contributes to discussions on enhancing democratic accountability and the legitimacy of intelligence services beyond traditional agent-principal oversight models. To achieve this, the study applied two theoretical frameworks: democratic agonism and institutional logics. Democratic agonism fosters contestation and inclusivity in policymaking, while institutional logics analyses the values, beliefs and practices shaping CSOs' role.

Interviews with Danish CSOs reveals the values and principles guiding their role in democracy and their beliefs regarding intelligence accountability. We examined CSOs' practices of influence, and the perceived outcomes. The findings indicate that while CSOs advocate for agonistic approaches to accountability, fostering spaces of contestation, their role as watchdog is tempered by a critical yet cooperative relationship with the intelligence services. However, their influence is constrained by institutional structures favouring delegated oversight. This tension between values and practices is exemplified in the dominating use of consultation letters, which highlights the need for more inclusive, participatory mechanisms to align CSOs' values with practical outcomes.

In the discussion, we endeavoured to explain this discrepancy by addressing various dimensions. Symbolically, the actions of CSOs suggestibly serve dramaturgical purposes to meet public expectations rather than achieve policy change. Practically, power imbalances and restricted access to information in the secretive intelligence community limit CSOs' effectiveness. Socially, agonistic values may conflict with a dominant social imaginary of security, where security concerns override democratic accountability.

These findings highlight complex interactions between agonistic values and delegated oversight, as well as broader tensions between democracy and security. The CSOs blend normative aspirations with institutional constraints. While agonistic values offer democratic potential, delegated oversight remains limited in its practical application. This highlights the need for further research to explore these tensions.

Investigating historical constraints and unrealized potential[78] may offer insights into how past legacies and future aspirations chape CSOs' role. Moreover, the difficulty in translating agonistic values into actionable practices raises questions about whether these values resist practical implementation or signal the need for emerging 'practices to come'. While dismissing the former explanation may be overly simplistic, the latter would necessitate further investigation of agonistic values and the development of agonistic practices by raising fundamental questions regarding how to establish agonism and design frameworks for agonistic democracy.[79] Such investigations require exploring how

agonistic democracy can be established, including incorporating citizens into traditionally closed policy process and integrating CSOs into intelligence oversight.

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Disclosure statement

The authors report there are no competing interest to declare.

Notes

[1] Gaskarth, *Secrets and Spies*.
[2] Gill, "Of Intelligence Oversight."
[3] Bochel, Defty, and Kirkpatrick, "'New Mechanisms of Independent Accountability'"; Yauri-Miranda, "Principles to Assess Accountability."
[4] Bovens, Goodin, and Schillemans, "Public Accountability," 6.
[5] Hartvigsen, "Towards Intelligence Accountability as a Virtue."
[6] Bovens, "Two Concepts of Accountability."
[7] Kniep et al., "Towards Democratic Intelligence Oversight."
[8] Dobson, "The Last Forum of Accountability?"; Hillebrand, "The Role of News Media"; Yauri-Miranda, "The Role of the Media and Civil Society."
[9] Gaskarth, *Secrets and Spies*.
[10] Bakir, *Intelligence Elites and Public Accountability*.
[11] Kniep et al., "Towards Democratic Intelligence Oversight."
[12] Bakir, *Intelligence Elites and Public Accountability*; Kniep et al., "Towards Democratic Intelligence Oversight"; Roller et al., "Civic Intelligence Oversight."
[13] Kniep et al., "Towards Democratic Intelligence Oversight."
[14] Mouffe, "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?"
[15] Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *The Institutional Logics Perspective*.
[16] Reuter, Wijkström, and Meyer, "Who Calls the Shots?"
[17] Dover, "Adding Value to the Intelligence Community"; Gill, *Intelligence Governance and Democratisation*; Klein Goldewijk, "Why Still Critical?"
[18] Kniep et al., "Towards Democratic Intelligence Oversight."
[19] Hillebrand, "The Role of News Media"; Bakir, "Political-Intelligence Elites"; Van Puyvelde, "Intelligence Accountability"; Yauri-Miranda, "The Role of the Media and Civil Society."
[20] Kniep et al., "Towards Democratic Intelligence Oversight," 4.
[21] Tully, *Public Philosophy in a New Key*.
[22] Dover, "Adding Value to the Intelligence Community."
[23] Mouffe, "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?"
[24] Bakir, *Intelligence Elites and Public Accountability*.

[25] Buzan, Wæver, and de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis*.
[26] Greenwood et al., "Introduction."
[27] DiMaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited."
[28] Thornton and Ocasio, "Institutional Logics and the Historical Contingency of Power," 804.
[29] Thornton and Ocasio, "Institutional Logics."
[30] Thornton, Ocasio, and Lounsbury, *The Institutional Logics Perspective*.
[31] Reuter, Wijkström, and Meyer, "Who Calls the Shots?," 81.
[32] Bakir, *Intelligence Elites and Public Accountability*.
[33] Thornton and Ocasio, "Institutional Logics and the Historical Contingency of Power."
[34] De Groot and Thogersen, "Values and Pro-Environmental Behaviour."
[35] Ibid.
[36] Krasny, "Values, Beliefs, and Attitudes."
[37] Ostrom, "Institutional Rational Choice," 38.
[38] Damgaard, "Denmark."
[39] Hitchings, "People Can Talk about Their Practices."
[40] As part of the legislative process, the Danish ministries may submit their draft bills for public consultation before presenting them to the parliament. Typically, the minister forwards these consultation letters to the parliament along with a consultation memorandum and the minister's comments when the bill is presented.
[41] "The Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity"
[42] Fontana and Frey, "Interviewing."
[43] Reay and Jones, "Qualitatively Capturing Institutional Logics."
[44] Mouffe, "Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism?"
[45] Universal Declaration of Human Rights.
[46] Grube, "In Search of Society?"
[47] Diderichsen, "Om Efterretningstjenesternes Legitimitet."
[48] Williams, "The Legacies of *Raison d'etat*."
[49] Friedland and Alford, "Bringing Society Back In."
[50] Petersen, "Three Concepts of Intelligence Communication," 320.
[51] Aldrich, "Global Intelligence Co-Operation versus Accountability"; Dobson, "The Last Forum of Accountability?"; Hillebrand, "The Role of News Media."
[52] Thornton and Ocasio, "Institutional Logics and the Historical Contingency of Power."
[53] A member of parliament can submit written questions directly to a minister for written response. These questions are referred to as 'section 20

questions' because they are asked in accordance with Section 20 of the Rules of Procedure of the Danish Parliament.

[54] Tilsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne, "Årsredegørelse 2018."

[55] DiMaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited."

[56] Gill, *Intelligence Governance and Democratisation*.

[57] Yauri-Miranda, "The Role of the Media and Civil Society."

[58] Heidelberg, "Political Accountability and Spaces of Contestation."

[59] Ibid.

[60] Røiseland, "Co-Creating Democratic Legitimacy."

[61] Petersen, "Three Concepts of Intelligence Communication."

[62] Bits of Freedom. "Bits of Freedom Challenges New Law."

[63] Matz, "Intelligence Oversight in Sweden."

[64] Langberg, "SF indgår aftale med regeringen."

[65] European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, "Surveillance by Intelligence Services."

[66] Pedersen, "Making Better Regulation."

[67] Ibid.

[68] DiMaggio and Powell, "The Iron Cage Revisited."

[69] Lundberg and Hysing, "The Value of Participation."

[70] Iser, "Fictionalizing."

[71] Dovi, "What's Missing?"

[72] Røiseland, "Co-Creating Democratic Legitimacy."

[73] Andersen, Hansen, and Davies, "Oversight and Governance."

[74] Williams, "The Legacies of *Raison d'etat*."

[75] Bigo, "Shared Secrecy in a Digital Age."

[76] Andersen, "Denmark."

[77] Markham, "The Limits of the Imaginary."

[78] Cantó-Milà and Seebach, "Between Temporalities, Imaginaries and Imagination."

[79] Lowndes and Paxton, "Can Agonism Be Institutionalised?"

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Appendix 4: Article 3

How Perceptions of Raw Data Collection Affect Intelligence Accountability
The Danish Intelligence Field

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How Perceptions of Raw Data Collection Affect Intelligence Accountability: The Danish intelligence field

Abstract

Collection of raw data has become a central aspect of intelligence accountability. This study investigates the relationship between perceptions of raw data collection and intelligence accountability virtues within a coherent framework to gain a more comprehensive understanding of how intelligence accountability systems are prioritised and justified. The research combines discussions on the ethics of bulk collection of raw data and civil rights with the literature on intelligence accountability, applying this to the Danish case within an organisational fields framework. The study demonstrates that actors within the Danish intelligence field adopt divergent positions on the collection of raw data, and that these positions shape their understandings of intelligence accountability and how they priorities intelligence accountability systems. Furthermore, it is revealed how support from political decision-makers for certain actors is decisive in determining the distribution of power among actors in the intelligence field. Finally, the study calls for further exploration of the political beliefs that shape accountability systems, the perceptions of raw data collection, and the societal implications of bulk collection of raw data.

Keywords: intelligence, accountability, raw data, civil society organisations, oversight, institutional logics, organisational fields, bulk collection

1 Introduction

In 2020, a spectacular case, involving the Danish Defence Intelligence Service (DDIS) and the Danish Intelligence Oversight Board (TET), hit the public sphere and started a heated debate in Denmark about the Service's collection and sharing of raw data as well as about intelligence accountability. The debate was sparked by a press release issued by the TET, which gravely criticised DDIS. The TET stated "(t)hat there is an inappropriate culture of legality within the management of DDIS and

parts of the service, where the service's possible unjustified activities or inappropriate conditions are sought to be shelved, including by failing to inform the Oversight Board of matters relevant to its control" (Tilsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne [TET], 2020, p. 2 translation is my own). The main elements of the criticism concerned the DDIS' collection and sharing of raw data, which implies a risk of unauthorised and unjustified collection of Danish citizens' data. The press release had enormous consequences for the DDIS as five top managers were released from duty by the Minister of Defence. Following this, the Ministry established a Special Commission consisting of three county judges to scrutinise the allegations. In 2021, the Commission presented its conclusions, surprisingly acquitting the top managers of responsibility (Jølner, Beck and Danielsen, 2021), leaving observers with questions about the TET's competence. Although the TET advocated for more resources and strengthened competency to fulfil an effective control of the DDIS in connection with the press release, in 2023 the Ministry of Defence essentially denied the TET access to the raw data stored by the DDIS.[1] This was done under the pretext that the TET was never meant to oversee and control raw data; despite that the TET had overseen raw data since its establishment in 2014 and that several former Ministers of Defence had been aware of this practice without questioning it.

The DDIS' alleged withholding of information regarding the collection and sharing of raw data was among the main reasons for the TET's criticism in 2020 which underlined the risks of unjustified collection of raw data against Danish residents and emphasised the need for control of raw data (Tilsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne [TET], 2020). However, the potential implications of raw data collection and the importance of control measures were understood in a different manner by the Minister of Defence who stated that "as it is per definition not possible to determine whether the raw data includes information about individuals residing in Denmark, it is stipulated in the DDIS Act that the TET are not

[1] The Ministry of Defence conducted an internal analysis and drew this conclusion. The analysis is classified, but an explanation of the conclusions took place during a parliamentary hearing ('Besvarelse af samrådsspørgsmål B om Forsvarsministeriets besvarelsen til TIlsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne om behandling af rådata (afholdes den 21. marts 2023 kl. 14) [Response to consultation question B regarding the Ministry of Defense's reply to the Danish Intelligence Oversight Board on the handling of raw data (to be held on March 21, 2023, at 2:00 PM)]', 2023).

permitted to control the DDIS' collection and sharing of raw data".[2] Hence, the Minister's different perspective on the nature of raw data eventually had a decisive impact on the DDIS' accountability obligation and the TET's accountability mandate.

This incident did not unfold in a vacuum, and civil society organisations (CSOs) expressed frustration and outrage over the whole affair as well as its outcomes pointing to risks of uncontrolled mass surveillance, and sharing of Danish citizens' data with third parties (Bech-Nielsen, 2023). The CSOs thus, reached different conclusions regarding the nature and risks of raw data than the Ministry. The case had severe consequences for most of the parties involved. The DDIS lost its top management, and their relationship with foreign services may have been damaged (Kaarsbo, 2021). The TET has been reformed, denied access to raw data, stripped from its ability to communicate fully independently with the public, and the composition of the Board has been changed.[3] The political decision-makers involved have faced allegations of incompetence and overreach of power (Eller and Tofte, 2023), and finally the public is left with a pile of unanswered questions about the state of the Rule of Law and fundamental civil rights in the democracy in which they live.

Due to this incident, bulk collection of raw data became the centre of a debate about intelligence oversight and accountability, and it is clear that different understandings of raw data collection in terms of violations of civil rights were expressed by different parties and had severe consequences for the interpretation and extent of intelligence accountability. Of course, such debates are not new. Public and scholarly debates about the implications of bulk collection[4], raw data and the right to privacy have exploded in recent years, particularly after the Snowden

[2] Said during a parliamentary hearing ('Besvarelse af samrådsspørgsmål B om Forsvarsministeriets besvarelsen til TIlsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne om behandling af rådata (afholdes den 21. marts 2023 kl. 14) [Response to consultation question B regarding the Ministry of Defense's reply to the Danish Intelligence Oversight Board on the handling of raw data (to be held on March 21, 2023, at 2:00 PM)]', 2023, p. 3).

[3] Amendments to the law were introduced on the 11th of June, 2024 (Justitsministeriet [Ministry of Justice], 2024). For a discussion on the implications of the bill, see for example Hartvigsen, Koch and Rønn (2024).

[4] I use the term *bulk collection* to cover the act of collection of vast amounts of communications signals information. This act is also referred to as *mass surveillance* but because it is not widely agreed what mass surveillance entails, in this article I use the less normative and more descriptive term, *bulk collection*.

revelations in 2013. Whereas state intelligence services across Western societies have received more resources and broader mandates to carry out their tasks, which enables them to collect unprecedent amounts of raw data, CSOs have increasingly campaigned for restricting data collection and emphasised the right to privacy (for example Amnesty International, Big Brother Watch and Transparency International). Whereas the protesters against bulk collection point to the privacy issues of losing control over data by the mere collection of them, governments and intelligence service have tended to reject the idea that privacy is violated as long as the raw data has not been accessed (Macnish, 2018).

Raw data, the fuel that powers the services' engine, and the collection of it is also the main focus of accountability measures and legislation. Within the intelligence accountability literature, data is often considered in simple terms of personal data protection issues (Leigh, 2012; see for example Aden, 2018; Jansson, 2018). As a consequence, the discussions are centred on matters of adequate legislation and formal oversight mechanisms that stem from a perception of raw data as having subjective value. In this sense, all collected data, including raw data, ought to be the object of accountability measures carried out by authorised oversight bodies. However, studies of intelligence practices suggest that intelligence officers understand data as objective and interpretation-free bits and pieces of information collected and selected for analysis (Räsänen and Nyce, 2013; Rønn, 2022).

The Snowden revelations fuelled an already ongoing debate on bulk collection and civil rights but the case from Denmark embodies the different positions within this debate and showcases how perceptions of raw data collection inform accountability virtues, which may eventually have an impact on how accountability is structured and formalised. The Danish case presents us with at least four important questions. 1) How do actors position themselves in terms of perceptions of raw data collection? 2) How do these positions inform actors' perceptions of intelligence accountability virtues? 3) Which accountability understanding dominates the intelligence field and what are the societal implications? 4) What does this mean for future scholarly debates on intelligence accountability?

It is meaningful to consider perceptions of raw data collection and accountability virtues in a coherent framework for deeper understanding of intelligence accountability because accountability is a central element of providing legitimacy to authorities (Yauri-Miranda, 2021) and it

involves 'the obligation to explain and justify conduct' (Bovens, 2007, p. 450). Accountability is thus a matter of justifiable conduct within a given field or in a given situation and is a subjective matter. This paper concerns accountability as the virtues of actors; hence, accountability is a normative concept and therefore dependent on the specific actor (Bovens, 2010). In an intelligence context (and particularly in the Danish intelligence context), accountability is mainly related to the collection and processing of raw data. By identifying understandings of raw data collection, we can infer actors' accountability virtues, i.e. the desirable behaviour of government agencies and officials in relation to when and how the collection and processing of raw data is perceived as justifiable and what accountability mechanisms are considered relevant and important in this regard. Expressed perceptions of raw data collection therefore provide important knowledge about how various intelligence actors understand accountability and why conflicts about justifiable conduct are inevitable in this context.

This paper sets out to combine the discussions on the ethics of bulk collection and civil rights with the literature on intelligence accountability and to apply this to the Danish case in an *organisational fields* framework. Operationalising the organisational field framework as an analytic frame makes it possible to identify the perceptions of raw data collection, how they inform accountability virtues and priorities, identifying the dominating perceptions. This analytical framework enables three contributions: first, it will show the connections between perceptions of raw data collection and intelligence accountability and how they exist in a dynamic engagement between actors within the intelligence field as well as in the political domain. Second, it will provide an empirical example from one of the most digitalised societies in the world (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2020), showcasing the societal consequences of contested perceptions of raw data collection and their implications for intelligence accountability. Finally, it will contribute to the intelligence accountability literature by challenging the common perception of turf wars between intelligence services and overseers, by pointing to accountability virtues being informed by perceptions of raw data collection as a significant element of conflicts among actors rather than a resistance to the very concept of accountability.

The remainder of this article is structured as follows: in the next section the theoretical and methodological approaches will be outlined. The

subsequent analysis is structured around the analysis of the three actors' institutional logics which provides links between perception of raw data collection and intelligence accountability virtues. The three actors are the DDIS, the TET and a collection of CSOs. Finally, the findings will be discussed in terms of societal and scholarly implications and a conclusion will be provided.

2 Theoretical Framework and Methodological Approach

This paper explores perceptions of raw data collection and how they inform accountability virtues, and the theoretical section will address the two topics separately. The ethical approaches (control account and access account) to the collection of raw data are based on the literature of ethics and surveillance, whereas the approaches to intelligence accountability are based on the intelligence accountability literature as well as on public administration literature. Subsequently, the organisational fields framework will be elaborated as the analytical framework of this study.

2.1 Bulk Collection and Privacy: Two Ethical Positions

There is no commonly accepted definition of the term *data*, however, within information system disciplines, data are commonly regarded as factual information that serves as the foundation for reasoning and discussion. That is, data are considered the raw material from which information is derived (as pointed out and criticised by Räsänen and Nyce, 2013). This idea has been challenged on the basis that data is cultural, not natural, and needs to be generated, protected, and interpreted (Gitelman, 2013). Moreover, the increasingly complex challenge of distinguishing between digital and real identities as these are increasingly woven together with the growing digitalisation of societies (Søe and Mai, 2022) reflects the importance of how society understands data, the collection of data and the use of data. Hence, the collection and processing of citizen data is not merely a matter of the right to control personal digital data, but also the right to 'influence the construction of one's identity' (Søe and Mai, 2022, pp. 491–492). Along the same lines, human rights organisations, such as Amnesty International (2015) and Transparency International (Transparency International, 2021), have advocated for greater attention towards the problems of bulk collection pointing to data as the enabler of creating detailed profiles of individual identities, hence as a potential violator of privacy rights.

> *It is the responsibility of the state to ensure that citizens are not subjected to arbitrary surveillance by authorities, intelligence services, and companies that can create a highly detailed picture of an individual's life by collecting sensitive personal data online* (Amnesty International, 2014 translation is mine).

In terms of national security issues, it is often argued that the correct balance between security and civil liberties must be struck (see for example Born and Johnson, 2005; Leigh, 2012). This implies that if society is to be more secure, bulk collection of data must be accepted as a means to identify threats before they unfold, and this may compromise civil liberties such as the right to privacy.

There is a distinction, however, between the mere collection of data and the access to data. In the philosophical literature, the issue of bulk collection and privacy has been discussed from two positions in particular. One position, the control account, posits that when you lose control over your information (for example when it is collected) it constitutes a loss of privacy (Inness, 1996). In this sense, privacy means that people have control over areas of their lives, and that you lose that control as soon as you give it away (voluntarily or involuntarily), since you are no longer in charge of future dissemination of the information. Following this logic, intelligence services' bulk collection of data necessarily constitutes a violation of privacy regardless of whether the data is accessed or not.

The other position, the access account, argues that a loss of privacy only takes place when your information is accessed. According to Kevin Macnish (2018), bulk collection of data is not a matter of privacy as long as it is not accessed; hence, in terms of privacy rights, bulk collection of data does not constitute a violation *per se*. But other important issues are associated with the practice, such as a loss of security (people may feel vulnerable regardless of whether the collected data is accessed or not) and the *risk* that the data may be accessed. In other words, access or no access, the issues of bulk collection of data are related to whether people *understand* bulk collection as a threat to their privacy rights and the fact that their privacy rights may be violated in the future. Macnish further argues that such consequences may be even more severe on a societal scale than an actual violation of privacy rights.

The distinction between these two positions is helpful in formulating which understandings of raw data collection exist and what they reveal about actors' accountability virtues. In the next section, I will account for the intelligence accountability discussion and outline three relevant approaches to accountability.

2.2 Virtues of Intelligence Accountability

Accountability is broadly understood as the connector between legitimacy and state power (Bochel, Defty and Kirkpatrick, 2015; Yauri-Miranda, 2021). In this sense, accountability is a core pillar of keeping powerholders in check and informing those governed about the governing. Hence, accountability has value in itself (Bovens, 2007). There is a distinction to be made between accountability mechanisms and accountability virtues. Mechanisms are institutional arrangements and structures that govern public actors' behaviour, and virtues are perceived positive qualities of accountable behaviour of organisations and individuals (Bovens, Goodin and Schillemans, 2014). They are to be seen as mutually complementary, as virtues of accountable behaviour ought to enable functional accountability mechanisms. However, in the intelligence literature, accountability is most often treated in functionalistic terms that prioritise formal oversight mechanisms and legal frameworks (Hartvigsen, 2024). Accordingly, the literature has tended to perceive intelligence accountability as leading to turf wars between an agent who does not want to be held accountable and a forum struggling to keep the actor accountable (Manjikian, 2016).

However, we cannot understand the nature of accountability in a given context solely by focusing on the laws governing intelligence services and the formally established intelligence oversight mechanisms, as recent literature argues (Gill, 2020; Yauri-Miranda, 2021; Leon-Reyes, 2022; Kniep *et al.*, 2023; Hartvigsen, 2024). Intelligence, as any other social phenomenon, is embedded in perceptions, practices, and power struggles (Ben Jaffel *et al.*, 2020; Klein Goldewijk, 2021). The accountability virtues of those involved are therefore crucial to understand the nature of intelligence accountability in each context. This comprises not only perceptions of intelligence services and formal oversight bodies, but also actors such as CSOs, media, and scholars (Hillebrand, 2012; Dobson, 2019; Kniep *et al.*, 2023; Yauri-Miranda, 2023). Since the aim of this paper is to show how understandings of raw data collection inform

perceptions of accountability, accountability virtues that are the focus of analysis.

Accountability exists on many levels and with various focuses. Hence, to try and understand the accountability virtues of actors, it is useful to turn to predefined categories of accountability. I use the categories developed by Romzek and Dubnick (1987), as they are useful for understanding the desired and emphasised relationship among actors (Ejersbo and Greve, 2016). The three relevant categories are as follows[5]:

- Bureaucratic accountability is based on a logic of a relationship between a superior and a subordinate. It is an internal accountability system with a high degree of control and in which rules must be followed, including politically formulated objectives (Romzek and Dubnick, 1987; Ejersbo and Greve, 2016).
- A legal accountability system is based on a relationship between two autonomous parties in which one, mandated by law, oversees the other. In this sense, the accountability holder is external and there is a high degree of control (Romzek and Dubnick, 1987).
- In the political accountability understanding, the accountability holder is a key stakeholder with a low degree of control but with the ability to impose democratic pressure on government organisations. Such stakeholders include the public, CSOs and political decision-makers. The emphasis in this understanding of accountability is on openness, freedom of information and responsiveness, and the primary question is who the government organisation represents (Romzek and Dubnick, 1987).

These categories are described as accountability systems or standards, but it is important to note that I make no assessment of whether the intelligence accountability system (mechanisms) falls within either of the categories; I only use the categories to understand the *perceived* and

[5] In Romzek and Dubnick's (1987) account there are four categories. The last one is professional accountability. However, this category is less relevant to the study of intelligence accountability, as the contemporary accountability thesis of rules and regulations does not fit well with placing the accountability responsibility solely in the hands of individual employees. Moreover, the analysis shows very limited emphasis of professional accountability.

prioritised accountability virtues of actors via their perceptions of raw data collection.

2.3 Organisational Fields as an Analytical Framework

To expose the inherent perceptions of raw data and how they inform intelligence accountability virtues the analytical framework from New Institutionalism is applied (March and Olsen, 2013). This framework is centred on the concepts of institutional logics and organisational fields, which are helpful for elucidating the analysis and adopting a deductive approach to perceptions of raw data collection. Organisational fields are characterised by the interactions between field actors, their structure, their logics, and the political environment (Scott, 1994). The study contends that the various organisations involved (directly and indirectly) in intelligence accountability can be regarded as part of the same organisational field.[6] An organisational field, as delineated by DiMaggio (1983), comprises actors (organisations) that produce similar services or products, with the actors and their activities constituting the field. DiMaggio's work employed the metaphor of the 'battlefield' to illustrate the concept of organisational fields, emphasising the aspects of power and competition as drivers for institutional change. Consequently, these fields may not be stable, but rather dynamic and constantly evolving.

The fundamental premise of this study is that interactions in an organisational field typically align with the field's dominant institutional logic, which shapes its development (Reay and Hinings, 2005). Reay and Hinings claim that institutional logics are the principles that shape the actions of field actors, that is, the belief systems of such actors and their related practices. The presence of competing institutional logics within a field implies that conflicts may occur, as actors struggle to establish dominance. Stability in the field can only be achieved when one institutional logic is recognised as dominant (Hinings *et al.*, 2003). This suggests that conflicting institutional logics can contribute to explaining policy stability or uncertainty, with change and development only occurring when the logics combine or unify. Identifying the various institutional logics operating within a field can help to elucidate how that field may (or may not) continue to develop.

[6] See Ben Jaffel (2020) and Bigo (2019) for examples of operationalising the field concept in intelligence studies.

This study considers that the organisational field of intelligence encompasses various actors engaged with intelligence accountability. From this perspective, accountability is a particular form of organisational practice informed by inherent values and beliefs. Moreover, in accordance with several recent arguments in Intelligence Studies, this *accountability field* consists not only of intelligence services and their formal overseers (mandated oversight bodies) but also of informal overseers (Van Puyvelde, 2013; see for example Kniep *et al.*, 2023; Yauri-Miranda, 2023). Consequently, the actors considered in this study comprise intelligence services, formal oversight bodies, and CSOs.

Thornton and Ocasio (1999) define belief systems that shape understandings and actions of field actors over time as values, beliefs and institutional rules embedded in practices of organisations. Values are relatively stable principles of significant importance for prioritisation and guidance of behaviour (De Groot and Thogersen, 2013; Krasny, 2020). In this study, these values are found in accountability concepts and security concepts. Beliefs focus on specific objects and are more specific than values. They refer to an acceptance that something is true regardless of whether this acceptance is based on facts or not (De Groot and Thogersen, 2013; Krasny, 2020). In this study, beliefs refer to the field actors' ethical considerations about raw data collection and rights as exhibited by their core values and goals. Institutional rules are concrete practices that support the values and beliefs. In this analysis, the practices related to intelligence accountability priorities and raw data are analysed in order to elucidate attempts to emphasise organisational values and beliefs. Together, these elements constitute virtues of accountability.

2.4 Methods and Ethics

The study employs a pattern-inducing methodology, collection empirical data on the topic and identifying logics associated with raw data collection and accountability. This was achieved through textual coding and analysis, demonstrating how beliefs are shaped by specific logics of the organisations (Friedland and Alford, 1991; Reay and Jones, 2016). Textual elements were grouped into categories depicting how reality (raw data collection and accountability virtues) was presented (Phillips and Schrøder, 2005) in relation to the two ethical positions on raw data and privacy issues (Macnish, 2018) and the three accountability systems (Romzek and Dubnick, 1987). Furthermore, the organisational field was situated within the current political context to elucidate the power

dynamics among actors in the field, thereby explaining change or stasis (Hinings *et al.*, 2003).

The research drew upon a diverse array of sources for textual data, encompassing official publications, reports, public statements to the news media and public consultation letters. These sources provided detailed insights into the organisations' perspectives on raw data collection, associate concerns, opportunities, and accountability virtues, revealing the underlying logics of their beliefs. To enhance empirical validity, the textual analysis was complemented by in-depth qualitative interviews with representatives from the DDIS, the TET, and CSOs. This triangulation approach is a well-established method in Intelligence Studies to address the limitations of relying solely on interviews or publicly available data, which can present a misleading picture due to secrecy (Van Puyvelde, 2018; Díaz-Fernández, 2023). A total of sixteen interviews were conducted: four with DDIS representatives, four with TET board members and secretariat staff, and eight with representatives from seven Danish CSOs. The latter were chosen based on their involvement in public discussions about intelligence accountability and collection of raw data. Interviews are particularly valuable for identifying institutional logics, as language's expressive power serves as a crucial resource for accounts (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1995). To uphold principles of research ethics, information was sent to organisational participants outlining the study's objectives, methodology, participating organisational actors, data processing, anticipated outcomes, the full interview guide, information about procedures for lodging complaints, and information about the ability to revoke consent in accordance with the Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity ('The Danish Code of Conduct for Research Integrity', 2014). All participants signed an informed written consent statement, and all participants remains anonymous.[7] A research ethics approval has not been obtained for this study because ethical approval prior to initiating research projects in Denmark is mandatory only for certain types of health research projects

[7] Anonymity is most often a necessary condition when studying intelligence organisations. Furthermore, this study focuses on the organisation rather than the individual, rendering the identity of specific interviewees less significant in this context. Interviewees were selected based on theoretical considerations, identifying senior personnel as key carriers of organisational values, and those interviewed fall within this category. Consequently, the anonymity of the interviewees does not distort the results of the analysis.

and projects involving laboratory animals. Yet, the present project has received a statement from the Research Ethics Committee at University of Southern Denmark confirming that the project obeys Danish law (case no. 24/55575). Moreover, as the data collection included personal data, permission to commence the data collection, storage and processing has been granted by University of Southern Denmark Legal Services (notification no. 11.935).

Through interpretive analysis of perceptions of raw data collection, the perceived and prioritised accountability virtues were identified. Subsequently, the significance of political factors in field conflicts was examined. To ascertain the logics of political decision-makers, I scrutinised textual data from media sources (where politicians in government have voiced their views) and parliamentary hearing transcripts on the topic. Understanding the intelligence field necessitates consideration of political actors, as they establish the boundaries and possibilities for intelligence actors. By juxtaposing the logics of field-level actors with those of political decision-makers, the predominant (politically backed) logics in the intelligence field was identified. This allowed for offering explanations for the lack of substantial progress in this field. All translations from Danish are my own.

3 Analysis

In the following analysis, I will flesh out the belief systems of the DDIS, the TET and the CSOs, identifying their beliefs with regard to raw data collection and how they inform actors' perceptions and priorities concerning intelligence accountability and associated practices.

3.1 DDIS: raw data and more data in the name of national security – trust us, we've got this

The DDIS, the Danish foreign intelligence service, was established in 1967, but the organisation was not placed on a statutory footing until 2013. Prior to that, the oversight was mainly confined to executive control (Andersen, Hansen and Davies, 2022). As the work by the DDIS has mostly been a black box to the public since its creation, public information about the service has been scarce. However, since 2016, the DDIS has regularly issued the publication Indblik [Insight] in which they provide the public with a peek inside the service.

The DDIS frames its core task as supporting decision-making concerning foreign and security policy (Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste [DDIS], 2019, 2021, 2023). Furthermore, the service equals its efforts with the national security of Denmark:

> *The DDIS is the foreign intelligence service of Denmark, and it works – in secret and in the open – to protect Denmark and Danish interests in a changing world. Our knowledge and efforts – Denmark's security* (Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste [DDIS], 2019, p. 8).

Along the same lines, the interviewees from the DDIS (all at management level) emphasise the role of the DDIS as securing Denmark against foreign threats, or as specifically framed by one intelligence official, the DDIS is a system-preserving organisation which must ensure the free society,[8] which showcases an institutional logic embedded within a state security logic that is specifically oriented towards safeguarding the nation-state and national interests as the core value and goal in accordance with *raison d'état* (Hartvigsen, Hartmann and Diderichsen, 2024).

Within the organisation, raw data collection is perceived as a vital tool necessary to the performance of the core goal as emphasised in the 2023 edition of Indblik:

> *For many years, the DDIS has been a high-tech and data-driven workplace. But in recent years, the importance of technology and particularly the way we handle data have become absolutely decisive for our work* (Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste [DDIS], 2023, p. 7).

It is highlighted that the service thrives on information, continuously needs to keep up with the technical developments, and 'draws on all of it when the situation demands it' (Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste [DDIS], 2023, p. 11). Raw data is the foundation of the objective analyses and assessments that provide the basis for political decision-making. In this way, raw data collection is undeniably tied to the value and goal of safeguarding national security.

[8] DDIS intelligence official at management level. Interview conducted in fall 2023.

The prevailing belief regarding the character of the collected data within the DDIS is that it is indeed *raw*. Moreover, the belief that collected data is raw, that it is in need of preparation, suggests that in order to be of any use, it needs human processing and interpretation (Søe, 2024), as emphasised in this quote:

> *The DDIS gathers large amounts of data, which rarely proves useful in its raw state. The data developers ensure that the data is aligned and systematised so that the analysts can easily find the relevant data* (Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste [DDIS], 2019, p. 33).

This perception suggests an overall ideal of objectivity and of raw data as unaffected by humans, while at the same time it underscores the need for the availability and accessibility of data. Furthermore, the focus in terms of the sensitivity of raw data is mainly on the processes post collection, which means the access to the data:

> *We collect large amounts of raw data from electronic communications daily, which our analysts can search to identify the specific data needed to build an intelligence image. There is significant focus on the procedures for searching through raw data, and for this reason, we conduct an almost exhaustive internal review of all searches related to Denmark* (Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste [DDIS], 2021, p. 13).

The belief that raw data is in need of preparation to be useful (or harmful?) and the extensive focus on access procedures suggests an organisational acceptance of the collection of raw data as vital for the organisational goal and as unproblematic until access. In other words, it is perceived as harmless prior to human preparation and interpretation, and the risk of future access with the intent of misuse receives little attention, as also emphasised by one former intelligence official interviewed for this study:

> *Collected material is merely data in a vast lake. It is so large, with so many entry points, that the only reasonable way to conduct oversight is to focus on what data has been used. If the data is*

> *untouched, it does not matter at all – it just needs to be there. There are capacities to access it if you have a court order.*[9]

This naturally leads to the question of intelligence accountability, as the collection of raw data is not believed to be problematic *per se*, whereas internal control mechanisms and guidelines regarding access ensure compliance with the law. In the DDIS publications there is a heavy emphasis on and outline of the compliance of the internal control and oversight measures with the applicable law (Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste [DDIS], 2019, 2021, 2023). The Service describes that there is a high level of education and awareness of the rules among the employees, and that the efforts are supported by a large number of internal procedures and self-checks. Such emphasis on and prioritising of internal accountability mechanisms largely resemble the *bureaucratic accountability* practice, which emphasises an internal accountability system with a high degree of internal control.

The reclusive nature of the DDIS does not mean that it is not subject to external control and oversight. The intelligence officials interviewed as well as the publications highlight the role of the TET in holding the Service legally accountable as well as their political accountability obligations. These, however, take a subordinate position compared to the internal bureaucratic accountability measures. TET and legal accountability are mainly seen as an external control of the Service's own control but also as a potential challenge to the organisation's expertise and effectives.[10] Political accountability largely comprise the Indblik publications. The series is thought to provide accessibility and dialogue by outlining of the Service's role, tasks and organisation. The Indblik reports can be interpreted as an organisational practice with the aim of providing more transparency and openness towards the general public and thereby eventually contributing to the political accountability obligations of the DDIS.

[9] Former DDIS intelligence official at management level. Interview conducted in fall 2023.
[10] DDIS intelligence officials at management level. Interviews conducted in fall 2023.

> *We publish Indblik in order – as far as our special task allows – to give the public a comprehensive picture of who the DDIS is and what tasks we solve* (Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste [DDIS], 2023, p. 7).

Yet, this is obviously a very controlled and one-way accountability practice, i.e. a practice with the purpose of creating a sense of awareness, understanding and trust[11], as well as serving the purpose of justifying methods of bulk collection of raw data and the need for technological development. In a recent publication, the DDIS Head of Law and Management Support states:

> *Although the DDIS works in secrecy, the Service and especially our field of work and knowledge are subject to great public attention. This entails a need to communicate, because if the DDIS does not communicate, a vacuum arises which others try to fill. Likewise, it is absolutely crucial for the public's trust in the DDIS that we are as transparent as possible* (Forsvarets Efterretningstjeneste [DDIS], 2023, pp. 43–44).

Hence, the organisational practice of publishing the Indblik series serves as a means to support organisational values and goals, as well as to showcase bureaucratic accountability efforts.

In sum, the core value of the Service rests on the *raison d'état* concept in which the bulk collection of raw data is perceived as a vital tool and is believed to pose no serious concerns prior to access. Accountability virtues align with the bureaucratic accountability understanding, in which internal control mechanisms are prioritised and mainly focus on access to raw data rather than collection, whereas external (legal and political) accountability measures are problematised or limited. The values and associated beliefs are further promoted in the Indblik series with the aim of informing the public and justifying practices that effectively provide the DDIS with a voice in the intelligence field that can be hard to contest for external actors.

[11] For an outline of intelligence communication types, see Petersen (2019).

3.2 TET: raw data collection may jeopardise legal rights, and we are the safeguard against misuse (until the Minister says otherwise)

The TET came into existence on 1 January 2014 and is an independent oversight board consisting of five board members and chaired by a High Court judge. A secretariat consisting of eight to ten employees assists the TET with the oversight task, which is limited to the part of the services' work that involves personal data of individuals residing in Denmark. Moreover, the TET has no mandate to issue sanctions or orders against the services but can merely express their opinion. It is up to the Minister whether they chose to follow the TET's recommendations (Koch, 2013). Since its inception, the TET has continuously voiced concerns regarding personal data collection and processing procedures within the services; nevertheless, several times the Ministry of Justice has shown little willingness to accommodate the concerns (Andersen, Hansen and Davies, 2022).

In alignment with the DDIS, the TET sees its core goal as protecting Denmark, however with a very different threat in mind: the internal threat that the very existence of the intelligence services poses due to their secrecy and extensive mandate (Hartvigsen, Hartmann and Diderichsen, 2024). The focus is on protecting Denmark's status as a nation governed by democratic principles and the Rule of Law. This is emphasised by the interviewees from both the Board and the secretariat[12] and also stated in the 2022 annual report:

> *To carry out its important societal function, the DDIS is granted, by law, very broad powers and capabilities to gather data. To ensure the legal rights of individual citizens and businesses in Denmark, these extensive powers are counterbalanced by rules stating that the Service may not direct its collection capabilities against individuals residing in Denmark without a court order* (Tilsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne [TET], 2023, p. 2).

In this way, security becomes a matter of *protection of rights* with a special focus on security of data collection and processing. In other words, the main value of the TET is the Rule of Law, as pointed out by

[12] Interviews with Board Members and employees at the Secretariat. The interviews were conducted in spring 2023.

one Board member during the interviews and the organisation perceives itself as the body legitimising the existence of the DDIS; that is, without the TET, the DDIS would have no legitimacy as a state organisation in a democratic society. This logic is also stated in the annual reports:

> *The oversight activities of the TET contribute to the legitimisation of the DDIS' operations by enhancing public confidence that the Service's activities comply with the law* (Tilsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne [TET], 2024, p. 3).

Accordingly, whereas the DDIS expressed beliefs that raw data was objective and harmless prior to human preparation and interpretation with little attention to the inherent risks of the mere collection of raw data, the TET perceives raw data in rather different ways. The press release issued by the TET in 2020 was partly based on a disagreement between the DDIS and the TET regarding the collection and processing of raw data. Allegedly, the TET did not believe that the DDIS was handling raw data with the integrity needed to secure citizens' rights (Fastrup *et al.*, 2020). The importance of this was underscored by the Chair of the TET in his forewords to the 2021 Annual Report:

> *When the DDIS collects raw data, it is of significant importance that this data is handled in a manner that ensures that the integrity of the information is maintained even after collection. If this is not the case, it could jeopardise the legal rights of individuals, as the DDIS may not be able to comply with the deadlines set by a judge or the legally mandated timeframe for data deletion* (Tilsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne [TET], 2022, p. 6).

Thus, the TET does not object to the collection of raw data, but strongly it emphasises the risks associated with the collection, including future illegitimate access and processing of the data. Hence, their beliefs about the collection of raw data aligns with the issues raised by Macnish (2018), who argues that the collection of raw data as such is not a violation of privacy rights (the access account); nevertheless, raw data needs to be subject to time stamping and deletion rules to decrease the risk of future violations of privacy rights.

Accordingly, the virtues of accountability within the TET seem to rest on the conceptualisation of *legal accountability systems* based on a relationship between two autonomous parties in which one oversees the

other mandated by law. This also means that their interpretation of the alleged threat or risk associated with raw data is practically guided by the law. However, that does not mean that if the law (or rather the interpretation of the law) changes, so will the organisational beliefs even though the organisation's practice will change. During an interview, one board member said that the TET does not have a policy, since the organisation's only task is to assess the legality of the services' conduct. Hence, there is also an ideal of objectivity in the TET, but this objectivity is not directed towards raw data and the interpretation of raw data, but rather towards the correct interpretation and implementation of the law. The Danish laws that govern the intelligence services and mandate the TET are rather vague (Koch, 2023), which leave some room for interpretation, which means that the ideal of objectivity is challenging to adhere to in practice.

This point is further highlighted by the events following the 2020 press release. The Board deemed it necessary for the public to be aware of critical conditions within the DDIS and therefore used the press release to inform (Tilsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne [TET], 2020), but potentially also to call for assistance (Hartvigsen, Hartmann and Diderichsen, 2024). Since the establishment of the TET, the organisation has continuously expressed criticism of some practices within the DDIS[13], but little political attention was directed towards the issue. In this light, the press release can be understood as an attempt to influence the intelligence field. After the Special Commission's acquittance of the DDIS' responsibility based on an interpretation stating that the TET was not mandated to oversee raw data, the TET suspended its oversight of the DDIS' collection of raw data until the government had resolved the disagreement. In 2023, the Ministry of Defence issued a decision on the matter in alignment with the Special Commission, stating that the law mandating the TET was not to be interpreted as giving the TET s mandate to oversee raw data.[14] Following this, the Board adopted the new practice.

[13] In several annual reports, the Board has criticised the DDIS for unjustified searches in raw data and unjustified collection of data concerning individuals residing in Denmark (see for example Hiis, 2020; Tilsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne [TET], 2022, 2023, 2024).

[14] The report by the Ministry of Defence is confidential, but the main conclusions of the report were presented during a parliamentary hearing ('Besvarelse af samrådsspørgsmål B om Forsvarsministeriets besvarelsen til TIlsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne om behandling af rådata (afholdes den 21. marts 2023 kl. 14) [Response to consultation

However, although their practice adhered to the interpretation of the regulation by the Ministry of Defence, the TET's 2022 Annual Report suggests that the Board maintained its position on the regulation of raw data pointing to case law by the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR):

> *…a restriction of the oversight of the DDIS in accordance with the Commission's interpretation would be contrary to the case law of the European Court of Human Rights in* Big Brother Watch and Others v. The United Kingdom *and* Centrum för Rättvisa v. Sweden (Tilsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne [TET], 2023, p. 28).

The statement is followed by an account of the Ministry's decision and ends with 'the TET organises its oversight accordingly' (Tilsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne [TET], 2023, p. 28). It seems that the TET's beliefs regarding raw data hinge on the risk that the collection and processing of raw data may endanger citizens' rights and lean on ECtHR case law to support its views. Although their accountability practice may have changed to comply with the interpretation by the Ministry of Defence regarding raw data, the statement in the 2022 Annual Report suggests that their beliefs regarding raw data collection and accountability virtues have not.

In summary, the core value of the TET is the Rule of Law, and their goal is to ensure citizens' rights. The collection and processing of raw data is believed to pose a risk of violating privacy rights, whether or not the data has been accessed. Accountability virtues adhere to the legal accountability system in which the external oversight is prioritised and seen as vital for the legitimacy of the DDIS, and which is informed by the legal interpretation of raw data and privacy rights by the ECtHR. In an attempt to promote these values and beliefs, the TET issued the 2020 press release in which they underscored the importance of legal accountability, also regarding raw data, but it was heavily undermined by the Special Commission and later the Ministry of Defence, which forced the TET to alter their practice. However, in this case, the new practice does not seem to align with prevailing beliefs in the TET of virtuous

question B regarding the Ministry of Defense's reply to the Danish Intelligence Oversight Board on the handling of raw data (to be held on March 21, 2023, at 2:00 PM)]', 2023).

accountability behaviour. The effort to advance the institutional logics of the TET within the intelligence field was clearly unsuccessful and was undermined.

3.3 CSOs: data is power, and we want to be left alone – but no one seems to care about what we think

Denmark has a strong civil society tradition, and civil society has influenced state development as well as norms of citizenship and civil rights (Damgaard, 2003). Hence, societal progress in the country has been heavily influenced by civil movements and CSOs (Reuter, Wijkström and Meyer, 2014). Concerning intelligence issues, CSOs generally perceived the services with doubt and distrust throughout the last half of the 20th century (Andersen, Hansen and Davies, 2022). This was particularly due to the domestic intelligence service's (the Danish Security and Intelligence Service) persistent practice of registering Danish citizens solely on the grounds of legal political activity, although legal political activity is protected by the Danish Constitution. In addition, entire organisations, specifically a labour union for IT professionals were put under surveillance in the 80s on the grounds of the members' allegedly left – wing political orientations (Schmidt, 2009). After 9/11, the services gained a more visible role in the Danish society (Andersen, 2016), yet contemporary public levels of trust in the agencies remain an open question.

CSOs have different goals depending on whether they are labour unions, human rights organisations, interest groups etc. Nevertheless, they have one value in common as a collective umbrella for the interests they represent: the promotion of the democratic discussion. Such discussion includes pluralism and contestation so as not to be limited or restricted by certain world views or truths, as highlighted by interviewed representatives from several of the organisations.[15] This suggests that the common logic regarding security is that it is agonistic: security is political, and therefore it must be subject to and accepting of conflict between different visions of what security entails (Tulumello, 2021).

This is emphasised by many organisations in terms of arbitrary bulk collection of raw data, privacy rights particularly, and civil rights in

[15] Interviewees from four out of seven CSOs were explicit on this matter. Interviews conducted during spring 2024.

general. The issue is not only the handling and processing of raw data, but the very collection of it. In a collective open letter to the Danish parliamentarians prior to a vote on a law regarding logging of telecommunications data, eleven Danish CSOs expressed their concerns:

> *We believe it is unacceptable that we should all be subject to suspicion and surveillance. A fundamental aspect of living in a free country is the ability to move freely and call whomever we chose without the state knowing about it* (Lemberg-Petersen *et al.*, 2021).

In this way, these organisations challenge the access account approach held by both the DDIS and the TET (while keeping in mind that the TET perceives the future risks and societal implications posed by raw data collection in a more urgent manner that the DDIS) by pushing a different belief regarding the collection of raw data. The belief that the collection of raw data constitutes a violation of fundamental rights is further underlined by Amnesty International in Denmark:

> *A general and indiscriminate logging of the entire population constitutes a significant and serious violation of the right to respect for privacy, the protection of personal data, as well as freedom of expression and information. It exceeds what is strictly necessary or proportional for the purposes of crime prevention or the protection of national security and is therefore in conflict with international human rights standards*.[16]

There are of course variations in whether the organisations consider the collection of raw data a violation of privacy rights or a violation of citizens' fundamental rights in general, or whether they focus on the risks of violating privacy rights. In a public statement the labour union PROSA

[16] Public hearing response to bill regarding logging of telecommunications data ('Amnesty Internationals bemærkninger til høring over udkast til forslag til lov om ændring af retsplejeloven og lov om elektroniske kommunikationsnet og -tjenester (revision af reglerne om registrereting og opbevaring af oplysninger om teletrafik (logning) m.v.) [Amnesty International's comments on the consultation regarding the draft proposal for a law amending the Administration of Justice Act and the Act on Electronic Communications Networks and Services (revision of the rules on the registration and retention of information on telecommunications traffic (logging), etc.)]', 2021).

points to the general problem of bulk collection of raw data in terms of the general democratic values, as well as to the risks of future violations.

> *There is nothing wrong with surveillance – as long as it is targeted and based on concrete suspicion. This is foundational for the Rule of Law. However, arbitrary mass surveillance of all citizens is a dangerous path, one we must do everything to prevent, as it goes directly against the values of our open society, which is built on trust and freedom. Big Brother technology and the cross-referencing of vast amounts of data about every single citizen can be misused – especially when we do not know how future governments will handle it* (Bertelsen, 2019).

Similar arguments have been posed by the Danish Institute for Human rights (Institut for Menneskerettigheder [Danish Institute for Human Rights], 2022). The perception of raw data collection is based on both the control account and the access account. For some of the CSOs, collection in itself constitutes a violation of privacy, while others, who fall within the access account, heavily problematise the bulk collection of raw data, as they go against fundamental democratic values and also pose risks of future violations of privacy rights. The perceived severity of the risks is based on the belief that data is power. As one interviewee pointed out 'data is power and those with access to data can influence society.'[17] The idea is further elaborated by one employee from the Danish Institute of Human Rights:

> *The fight to protect our personal data is crucial because it concerns the human right to privacy. It is about safeguarding people's private sphere, typically against a state that is more powerful than the individual. Just as the state does not have the right to forcibly vaccinate you or enter your home without cause, it also cannot simply collect and use all kinds of information about you* (cited in Kølln, 2019).

In this way, the question of the bulk collection of raw data is believed to be inherently political. The pluralism and contestation of the collection of raw data beliefs are also central to the priorities regarding intelligence accountability among the actors. The general perception of intelligence accountability in Denmark is that it is too closed, and this has been the

[17] Interviewee from an IT labour union. Interview conducted in winter 2023.

centre of the debate among CSOs. Already in 2013, prior to the parliamentary vote on the establishment of the TET, Amnesty International pointed out that the proposed oversight structure would restrict parliamentary and public debate on intelligence matters.[18] This perception was further pushed in the public debate following the TET's press release and the recent debate prior to a reform of the intelligence oversight system.[19] In a public consultation letter to the bill, the interest group Association for Legal Policy (Retspolitisk Forening in Danish) stated:

> *The Association for Legal Policy cannot recommend the proposed bill be adopted in its current form. It would only cement the unsustainable and democracy-weakening secrecy within the system, which, in these times of military rearmament marked by highly one-sided official worldviews and enemy images, is expected to become even more pronounced.*[20]

The Association criticises the one-sided perspective regarding intelligence accountability, and other organisations have called for more public debates concerning intelligence accountability and oversight.[21] Evidently, intelligence accountability is perceived and framed as inherently political, which makes the public, CSOs and parliamentarians from opposition parties stakeholders who are entitled to a voice in intelligence accountability and in the matter of how services collect and process raw data. In this sense, the accountability virtues of the CSOs are

[18] The argument was stated in a public consultation response to the bill establishing the TET ('Om forslagene til Folketingets Kontroludvalg med Efterretningstjenesterne, PET-tilsynet og om den manglende retlige regulering af brugen af civile agenter m.v., jf. Morten Storm-sagen [On the proposals to the Danish Parliament's Intelligence Services Control Committee, DSIS oversight, and the lack of legal regulation of the use of civilian agents, etc., cf. the Morten Storm case.]', 2013).
[19] See for example Bertelsen (2020), Krog (2020), and Transparency International Denmark (2020).
[20] Stated in a public consultation letter adressing the proposed bill ('Høring over udkast til forslag til lov om ændring af lov om Politiets Efterretningstjeneste (PET), lov om etablering af et udvalg om forsvarets og politiets efterretningstjenester og lov om beskyttelse af whistleblowere (Styrkelse af tilsynet med efterretningstjenesterne) [Consultation on the draft proposal for an amendment to the Act on the Danish Security and Intelligence Service (DSIS), the Act on the Establishment of a Committee on DDIS and DSIS, and the Act on the Protection of Whistleblowers (Strengthening oversight of the intelligence services)]', 2024).
[21] See for example the statement of the chair of Transparency International Denmark (cited in Bech-Nielsen, 2023).

based on the idea of a political emphasis on democratic dialogue, discussion and contestation.

This is also evident in their attempts to influence and challenge the traditional logics of the intelligence field. To support the values and beliefs regarding raw data, privacy rights and intelligence accountability, the main practices entail public consultation letters, engagement in public debates and attempts to spark debate.[22] However, these attempts to influence the institutional logics in the intelligence field are deemed to have little effect by actors. Three reasons are highlighted in that regard. Firstly, the organisations experience a general indifference towards bulk collection of raw data by the general public (Kampmann, 2010; interviewee from PROSA). Secondly, there is a general perception that public consultation letters lead to no changes to proposed bills, as the drafts have already been politically agreed upon before the public hearings as highlighted by several interviewees. And thirdly, political willingness is limited as pointed out by the Association of Legal Policy already in 2012 and supported by interviewees from Transparency International and an IT interest group.

> *The fact is, unfortunately, that the way things are structured in Denmark requires a favourable signal from the services before anything can happen. Otherwise, the responsible ministers for the services wouldn't dare to do anything other than reject the criticism* (Elmquist, 2012).

To sum up, the core collective value of the CSOs is the upholding of the democratic discussion and pluralism. The collection and processing of raw data is thus a political question, as it may directly violate democratic core principles and pose risks of future violations of privacy rights. Data is directly related to power in this sense. Accordingly, prioritised accountability practices are framed as being centred on political accountability, in which the public, CSOs and parliamentarians are key stakeholders, and which requires democratic discussion and dialogue. Practices adopted to promote democratic discussion are mainly public consultation letters and engagement in public debate and dialogue. Yet these practices are perceived to have little effect on the dominating logics

[22] Practices highlighted by interviewees from CSOs. Interviews conducted during spring 2024.

in the intelligence field due to experienced political unwillingness, public indifference and structural restraints.

4 Discussion: contestation of the dominating logic in the intelligence field fails to drive meaningful progress – is that a problem?

The analysis suggests that the institutional beliefs regarding collection of raw data vary greatly among the actors in the intelligence field and also inform their accountability virtues in different ways. The DDIS adopts the access account, which emphasises that privacy is only violated when the data is accessed and therefore prioritises the bureaucratic processes focusing on how data is accessed and used in an attempt to ensure that the data collected is only used for legitimate purposes. The TET, on the other hand, has a more nuanced approach to the collection of raw data: they emphasise the associated risks of violating privacy rights on the basis of international rules and legal norms in that regard. This belief informs their accountability virtues (which are of course also given by their legal mandate) in the sense that they believe the oversight of raw data is necessary to ensure that future violations of privacy rights will not take place. Lastly, the CSOs believe the collection and possession of raw data equals power and is therefore a political matter, which must be subject to contestation. Accordingly, this belief informs their accountability virtues which focus on concerns over loss of privacy, unequal power balances, and on working to achieve transparency about surveillance programmes and bulk collection of data; these are virtues of political accountability which prioritise public debates and public expectations.

The framework of organisational fields suggests that the presence of competing logics within a field may cause conflict among actors as they struggle to establish their own logics as the dominating one (Hinings *et al.*, 2003). The analysis has shown that competing logics exist within the intelligence field. These competing logics have contributed to escalating the conflict among actors, which has been simmering since 2014 and which erupted in 2020 with the TET's press release, which started the biggest Danish intelligence scandal in recent times. Hence, it is reasonable to say that the field has been characterised by uncertainty and conflict rather than stability. Accordingly, efforts by actors to push their own values and goals in the field have taken place through various means as previously explained. Nevertheless, a general tendency has been

shown in terms of the success (or lack of) of such efforts from the TET and the CSOs. Attempts to influence the status quo have been met with rejection or minor attention from the executive and the law makers, which brings the importance of the political into the field struggles among actors in the intelligence field.

Firstly, the TET's press release can be understood as an attempt to influence the intelligence field and challenge the institutional logic of *raison d'état* held by the DDIS. The attempt was eventually met with an intelligence reform which stripped the TET of its power of full independence to communicate with the public. Secondly, the effort of the TET to get the Minister of Defence to deal with the issue of raw data resulted in the TET being denied oversight of raw data and being forced to alter their practice. Thirdly, the efforts of CSOs to raise concerns in relation to bills and hence to further their own values and goals in the legal frameworks governing the intelligence field are generally experienced as gaining little attention from law makers, since laws are generally already agreed upon before the public hearings. This point has also been argued in a study on the limited impact of public consultation in Denmark (Pedersen, 2021). And lastly, CSOs' efforts to raise public debate and awareness to put pressure on political decision-makers are generally experienced as being met with little interest. Consequently, the practices of the TET and the CSOs to further their own institutional logics have little impact in the intelligence field.

In general, the executive supports the beliefs of the DDIS in terms of perceptions of raw data collection and hence also accountability virtues regarding prioritised accountability systems. When the TET ceased control with raw data until receiving clarity from the Ministry of Defence, the Ministry emphasised that the DDIS itself was obliged to ensure the legality of collection of raw data (quoted in Quass, 2022), i.e. the bureaucratic accountability system was prioritised. Moreover, in a hearing in the Danish parliamentary Defence Committee, the Minister of Defence stated:

> *What characterises raw data is that it is not possible to determine what information is hidden within these data until they are processed, for example, by decryption or translation. In other words, they are data whose content the DDIS itself does not know. Since it is, by definition, impossible to ascertain whether the raw data contains information about persons residing in Denmark, it*

is stipulated in the DDIS Act that the TET should not oversee the DDIS's collection and dissemination of raw data.[23]

This framing of raw data by the Minister mirrors the access account which is also emphasised by the DDIS, without reference to the associated risks of future violations or the societal implications of the citizens feeling surveilled. This shows that the political power falls in line with the institutional logics of the DDIS, which effectively situates the intelligence service in a rather powerful position in the field without much more effort than justifying their cause (*raison d'état*). In this sense, the institutional logic held by the DDIS must be assumed to be the dominant and most powerful logic due to what seems to be near-unwavering support from the political decision-makers and the political shutdown of contestations regarding perceptions of raw data collection and intelligence accountability virtues.

Moreover, it is evident that the dominating institutional logic of raw data collection and its impact on privacy rights in particular and fundamental rights in general determines which intelligence accountability virtues are prioritised in society. In this context, the dominating logic faces no serious threats from other logics. Hence, bureaucratic accountability within the DDIS is maintained as the main accountability mechanism, which means that virtues of accountability centre on the organisational integrity of the DDIS. It goes without saying that the internal processes of control are vital for adequate intelligence accountability, yet they cannot stand alone and must be complimented by strong external oversight mechanisms as is established in the intelligence accountability literature (see for example Born and Johnson, 2005; Born and Leigh, 2005; Gill, 2020). Without the proper checks and balances, the services remain a democratic problem and the risks of abuse and violations of citizens' rights will remain an uncertain and open question. This ought to be a concern in any democratic society that takes its democratic values and principles seriously.

[23] Quoted from transcript of the hearing ('Besvarelse af samrådsspørgsmål B om Forsvarsministeriets besvarelsen til TIlsynet med Efterretningstjenesterne om behandling af rådata (afholdes den 21. marts 2023 kl. 14) [Response to consultation question B regarding the Ministry of Defense's reply to the Danish Intelligence Oversight Board on the handling of raw data (to be held on March 21, 2023, at 2:00 PM)]', 2023).

In addition, the services' raw data collection must be subject to contestation and public debate. If it is not, this may have several implications. First, the population may experience growing uncertainty and insecurity due to fears related to bulk collection practices. The risks of societal consequences have been well established in the literature, which points to limitations on individuals' autonomy and individual choice, as well as to changes to democracy itself (see for example Peissl, 2003; Maras, 2012; Bauman *et al.*, 2014; Parsons, 2015). In a Danish context, however, there has been no widespread objection to the increased bulk collection of data as also pointed out by some CSOs. But that does not mean that concerns do not exist. A survey from 2019 found that only one in five thought it acceptable for the authorities to collect citizens' data without informing about it (Jørgensen, 2019). And another survey from 2021 shows that 34 percent of respondents 'are to a large or some extent concerned that public authorities are collecting data that they do not want the authorities to know about' (Larsen, 2021, p. 1) and that they have altered their behaviour due to concerns about surveillance.

Another serious societal implication of limited debate about the collection of raw data is that parliamentarians may vote in favour of legislation which they do not fully understand. This seemed to be the case in 2013 when the Danish parliament adopted the legal framework for the DDIS which enabled the Service to collect raw data and disseminate it to third parties. It was later revealed that several parliamentarians were not aware of the law's implications as the issue of raw data collection and dissemination had not been a matter of thorough discussion (Wolfhagen and Stræde, 2014).

With regard to the scholarly debate, which has mainly centred on the legal aspects of accountability and the formal structures of the oversight system, the analysis of this paper shows that to understand the nature of accountability in a given context, we also need to understand the political beliefs regarding raw data collection in relation to the beliefs of the actors in the intelligence field, how they inform virtues of accountability intelligence, and whether these are subject to contestation. The general scholarly focus on legal accountability in the intelligence field leads to unproportionate efforts towards the development of comprehensive legal frameworks and appropriate structures of formal intelligence oversight mechanisms and maintains a narrative of intelligence services not wanting to be held accountable, while neglecting the accountability virtue aspects, that is how actors perceive and practice accountability.

Accountability is inherently political, and actors provide accountability with the meanings that align with their own interests. Hence, accountability cannot be fully understood from a functional perspective: we need to study each case to understand its general tendencies and specificities. Moreover, due to the rapidly developing technological abilities of the services, and since the bulk collection of raw data increasingly constitutes a core pillar of the services' work, attention towards and discussion of perceptions of raw data collection are vital for intelligence accountability matters, as they may inform how states decide to structure their accountability measures. Otherwise, there is a risk that the scholarly discussions and progress on intelligence accountability may stagnate.

5 Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper has demonstrated that actors within the intelligence field adopt diverging positions on the collection of raw data, and that these positions fundamentally shape their understandings of accountability virtues and priorities. The DDIS's logic, centred on the access account, dominates the intelligence field, with significant support from political authorities who reinforce its bureaucratic accountability as a virtue and priority. In contrast, the TET's and the CSOs' efforts to introduce alternative logics focused on concerns regarding future violation of privacy and fundamental rights as well as a prioritisation of legal and political accountability have been largely marginalised, and their contestations have received limited political support or public attention.

Furthermore, the analysis highlights that the competing logics not only risk advancing conflict among the actors but also underscore the lack of a holistic approach to intelligence accountability, which may have serious consequences for society, including civic uncertainty and insecurity, political lack of understanding for the legislation which they pass, and organisational and reputational damage for the intelligence services.

This paper recommends that future scholarly debates expand their focus beyond legal and formal oversight structures. It calls for deeper exploration of the political beliefs that shape accountability systems, the perceptions of raw data collection, and the societal implications of bulk collection. Without such critical engagement, the academic discussion

risks stagnation, leaving key aspects of intelligence accountability unaddressed in an era of rapidly advancing surveillance technologies.

6 Conflict of Interest

The author declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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Appendix 5: Publications and Activities

Publications

Books

Rønn, K. V., Diderichsen, A., Hartmann, M., & Hartvigsen, M. (Eds.). (2024). *Intelligence Practices in High-Trust Societies: Scandinavian Exceptionalism?* Routledge. https://www.routledge.com/Intelligence-Practices-in-High-Trust-Societies-Scandinavian-Exceptionalism/VristRonn-Diderichsen-Hartmann-Hartvigsen/p/book/9781032617039.

Book Chapter

Rønn, K. V., Diderichsen, A., Hartmann, M., & Hartvigsen, M. 2024. "Introduction to Intelligence Practices in High-Trust Societies". In K. V. Rønn, A. Diderichsen, M. Hartmann, & M. S. Hartvigsen (Eds.), *Intelligence Practices in High-Trust Societies: Scandinavian Exceptionalism?* (1st ed., pp 1-8). Routledge.

Reports

Hartvigsen, M. S. (May 2024), background paper "Countering Hybrid Threats: The Danish Experience" for the report *Building resilience to hybrid threats: Best practices in the Nordics* by C. Fjäder & J. Schalin, The European Centre of Excellence for Countering Hybrid Threats. Helsinki. https://www.hybridcoe.fi/wp-content/uploads/2024/05/20240527-Hybrid-CoE-Working-Paper-31-Building-resilience-to-hybrid-threats-WEB.pdf.

Public Consultation Letters

Rønn, K. V., & Hartvigsen, M. S. (22 March 2024), "Høringssvar til Udkast til forslag til lov om ændring af lov om Politiets Efterretningstjeneste

(PET), lov om etablering af et udvalg om forsvarets og politiets efterretningstjenester og lov om beskyttelse af whistleblowere (Styrkelse af tilsynet med efterretningstjenesterne)" in Retsudvalget 2023-24, L 160 – Bilag 1, p. 27-31.
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Essays
Hartvigsen, M. S., & Koch, P. B., (June 2024), "Efterretningstjenesterne og demokratiet: Demokratisk ansvarlighed og tilsyn". Magtudredningen 2.0: Tema 7.2 Hvilke sikkerhedspolitiske forskydninger har der været i det 21. århundrede? Aarhus University.
https://ps.au.dk/fileadmin/Statskundskab/Billeder/Forskning/Forskningsprojekter/Magtudredning/Essays/Tema7/Melanie_Sofia_Hartvigsen__Pernille_Boye_Koch__Tema_7.pdf.

Online Articles
Hartvigsen, M. S., Koch, P. B., & Rønn, K. V. (2024, May 14). Eksperter er dybt bekymrede: Uafhængigheden svækkes for tilsyn med efterretningstjenesterne. *Radar*.https://radar.dk/holdning/eksperter-er-dybt-bekymrede-uafhaengigheden-svaekkes-tilsyn-med-efterretningstjenesterne.

Activities

Conferences, workshops and invited talks

30 January 2025: "Intelligence Services and Democracy: Democratic accountability and oversight". Guest lecture at *Underrättelseverksamhet och internationell säkerhet* course, Lund University, online.

2 December 2024: "Tilsyn med de Danske Efterretningstjenester". Master of Intelligence and Cyber Security Seminar, Odense, Denmark.

23 October 2024: Panel 3 New Intelligence Actors, IntelHub Book Launch and Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark.

22 October 2024: "How Perceptions of Raw Data Collection Affect Intelligence Accountability". Accountability and the Use of Technologies in Intelligence and Security Sectors Workshop, University of Technology, Delft, The Netherlands.

26 September 2024: "Efterretningstjenesterne og demokratiet". Guest lecture at *From Cold War Espionage to Cyber Wars*, Master of Intelligence and Cyber Security, University of Southern Denmark, online.

10-12 September 2024: "Intelligence oversight as an institutional battlefield: the Danish experience" [with A. Diderichsen]. International Association for Intelligence Education European Chapter Annual Conference, Valletta, Malta.

30 August 2024: "Intelligence Oversight as an Institutional Battlefield: The Danish experience". The 17th European International Studies Association Pan-European Conference on International Relations, Lille, France.

12 August 2024: "Efterretningstjenesternes Rolle" Guest lecture at *Dansk Forsvarspolitik og Strategiske Studier*, Centre for Military Studies Summer School, Copenhagen University, Copenhagen, Denmark.

30 May 2024: Roundtable 6: Governance, Accountability and Oversight, Netherlands-Nordic Intelligence Studies Networking Workshop, The Hague, The Netherlands.

15 May 2024: Chair at Scandinavian Intelligence Studies Panel, IntelHub Conference: Intelligence Legitimacy in Theory and Practice, Copenhagen, Denmark.

4 April 2024: "Imagining Intelligence Legitimacy: The Role of Democratic Accountability and Civil Society Actors" [with J. R. Yauri-Miranda]. International Studies Association Annual Convention, San Francisco, US.

4 April 2024: "Invisible legitimacy: Critical perspectives on studying the legitimacy of intelligence services" [with K. V. Rønn, A. Diderichsen, and M. Hartmann]. International Studies Association Annual Convention, San Francisco, US.

11 March 2024: "Efterretningstjenesterne og Demokratiet: Demokratisk ansvarlighed og tilsyn". Magtudredningen 2.0, Copenhagen, Denmark.

20 February 2024: "Rethinking Legitimacy in Intelligence: The Role of Democratic Accountability and Civil Society Actors". IntelHub Workshop with P. de Werd, Copenhagen, Denmark.

23 January 2024: "Intelligence Services and Democracy: Democratic accountability and oversight". Guest lecture at *Underrättelseverksamhet och internationell säkerhet* course, Lund University, online.

12 December 2023: "Intelligence Accountability in a High-Trust Society: The Danish Experience". Intelligence Section Seminar, Lund University, Lund, Sweden.

7 December 2023: "Efterretningstjenesterne og demokratiet". Master of Intelligence and Cyber Security Seminar, Odense, Denmark.

6 December 2023: "Intelligence oversight as an institutional battlefield: the Danish experience" [with K.V. Rønn, M. Hartmann, and A. Diderichsen]. The Norwegian Police University College, online.

11-13 September 2023: International Association For Intelligence Education European Chapter Annual Conference, Copenhagen, Denmark. *Observer*.

9 September 2023: "The Fight for Intelligence Accountability: Power Dynamics in the Field of Intelligence Oversight and the Struggle for Access to Secrets". The 16th European International Studies Association Pan-European Conference on International Relations, Potsdam, Germany.

5 September 2023: "Greenland's Local Perspectives on Foreign Security Threats". Arctic Defence Project Workshop, The Arctic University of Norway, online.

29 June 2023: "On the Institutional Battlefield of Intelligence Oversight: The Case of Questioned Democratic Accountability in the Danish Intelligence Services". The European Initiative for Security Studies Annual Conference, Barcelona, Spain.

8 June 2023: "The Institutional Battlefield of Intelligence Oversight: Democratic Accountability and the Danish Intelligence Services" [with M. Hartmann and A. Diderichsen]. Scandinavian Intelligence Studies Seminar, Odense, Denmark.

10 May 2023: Chair at public panel debate "Demokratisk Tilsyn med Efterretningstjenesterne", Copenhagen University College, Copenhagen, Denmark.

15 March 2023: "Towards Intelligence Accountability as a Virtue? Reviewing the understanding of accountability in intelligence studies". International Studies Association Annual Convention, Montreal, Canada.

2 December 2022: "On the Institutional Battlefield of Intelligence Oversight: The Case of Questioned Democratic Accountability in The Danish Intelligence Services". PhD Colloquium, Department of Political Science, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark.

27 October 2022: "Towards Intelligence Accountability as a Virtue? Reviewing the understanding of accountability in intelligence studies". Danish Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Nyborg, Denmark.

25 October 2022: "Towards Intelligence Accountability as a Virtue? Reviewing the understanding of accountability in intelligence studies". Public Administration Section University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark.

6-7 October 2022: Need to Know XI, Cold War Museum Langelands Fort, Denmark. *Observer*.

20 April 2022: Efterretningstjenesternes Samfundskritiske Rolle Seminar, Copenhagen University College, Denmark. *Observer*.

6 April 2022: Intelligence and the War in Ukraine, 7 Zagreb Security Forum 2022, online. *Observer*.

3 March 2022: "International Spionage – De Etiske Perspektiver". Politologisk Filmklub, Odense, Denmark.

Research visits
1 September 2023 – 30 January 2024: Intelligence Section, Department of Political Science, Lund University, Lund, Sweden.

PhD Courses
May 2022: Research Design, Roskilde University, Denmark

August 2022: Working with Concepts, KU Leuven, online

August 2022: Write an Article 1, Roskilde University, Denmark

November 2022: Write an Article 2, Roskilde University, Denmark

November 2022: Responsible Conduct of Research, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

December 2022: Qualitative Interviews, Roskilde University, Denmark

April 2023: Research Dissemination, University of Southern Denmark, Denmark

October 2023: Advanced Presentation Techniques, Copenhagen University, Denmark

December 2023: Perspectives in Organizational Analysis, Copenhagen Business School, Denmark

June 2024: Information and Data in Society, Copenhagen University, Denmark

Teaching

Spring 2024: Intelligence and International Security [with K.V. Rønn], Master of International Security and Law, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark.

Spring 2022 and 2023: Simulation Game [with other game masters], Master of International Security and Law, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark.

Fall 2022: Introduction to International Security [with V. Keating], Master of International Security and Law, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark.

Examiner Duties

Fall 2024: OSINT [with K.V. Rønn], Master of Intelligence and Cyber Studies, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark.

Spring 2023: Politikugen [with J.C. Pinos], Bachelor of Political Science, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark.

Supervision Duties
Spring 2024: 5 Political Science Bachelor theses.

Spring 2023: 6 Political Science Bachelor theses.

Appendix 6: List of Reviewed Litterature

Accountability as a Mechanism

Aden, Hartmut. 'Information Sharing, Secrecy and Trust among Law Enforcement and Secret Service Institutions in the European Union'. *West European Politics* 41, no. 4 (4 July 2018): 981–1002. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402382.2018.1475613.

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Beith, Alan. 'The Frank Stacey Memorial Lecture: Parliamentary Accountability for Intelligence Services'. *Public Policy and Administration* 18, no. 3 (2003): 1–11.

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Caparina, Marina. 'Controlling and Overseeing Intelligence Services in Democratic States'. In *Democratic Control of Intelligence Services: Containing Rouge Elephants*, edited by Marina Caparina and Hans Born, 1st ed., 1–44. Oxfordshire: Taylor & Francis Group, 2007.

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Accountability as a Virtue

Manjikian, Mary. 'Two Types of Intelligence Community Accountability: Turf Wars and Identity Narratives'. *Intelligence and National Security* 31, no. 5 (2016): 686–98.

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Appendix 7: Interview Guide DDIS

Research Project: 'Oversight of Danish Intelligence Services'

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. Below, you will find a description of the research project, the framework for your participation, and the questions we will ask during the interview.

The project is part of a larger research initiative titled 'IntelHub', led by Associate Professor Kira Vrist Rønn from Center for War Studies, SDU and funded by the Carlsberg Foundation. Overall, the research aims to generate knowledge about how the legitimacy of intelligence services is built, maintained, and re-established in a Scandinavian context. The project consists of four parts: 1) oversight of intelligence services, 2) transparency versus confidentiality, 3) informing the public, and 4) legitimacy.

You have been invited to contribute your knowledge and experiences to sub-project 1, which is primarily managed by Melanie Sofia Hartvigsen in collaboration with Mia Rosa Koss Hartmann and Adam Diderichsen, all three researchers from Center for War Studies, SDU

The focus of this project is on how the democratic ties between the Danish Defence Intelligence Service (DDIS) and the Intelligence Oversight Board (TET) are maintained and strengthened within a Scandinavian context characterized by high trust in governmental authorities. You have been selected for an interview based on your specific expertise and organizational role.

Project Background – Why Is It Important?

Oversight of intelligence services is crucial for maintaining their legitimacy. However, research shows that intelligence services and their oversight bodies face potential conflicts of interest due to differing legal mandates. Moreover, there is a significant bias in the existing literature, which predominantly focuses on oversight efforts to control intelligence services. As a result, the literature and general debate lack an essential perspective on democratic responsibility: that of the intelligence services themselves.

From a constructivist perspective, we aim to understand whether the democratic relationship between these two types of institutions can be strengthened by examining the perspectives and opinions of leading intelligence practitioners and oversight officials in Denmark on the role of intelligence institutions in a democratic society.

Based on an overarching analysis of the similarities and differences in these value systems, we will shed light on how the ties between them can be strengthened within a democratic framework. The interview will therefore emphasize how you, as an expert, perceive the fundamental role and value base of intelligence services and oversight bodies in a democratic society. However, we will not ask about specific cases, methods, or other matters subject to confidentiality.

Framework for Participation

The interview will last approximately 1.5 hours and will be conducted by Melanie Sofia Hartvigsen. You will be required to sign a consent form, which allows you to choose the level of anonymity you prefer. Full anonymity is, of course, an option. In such cases, it will only be mentioned that you are employed at DDIS. The interview will not be shared with DDIS' management or any third party.

Below, you will find the interview guide containing the questions you will be asked. The guide is merely indicative, and our discussions may take other directions depending on what you consider most important to address.

You will be asked for permission to record the interview to allow transcription of the audio file and further work with the content. Both the audio file

and the transcription will be securely stored in compliance with the applicable rules on data protection and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). If you prefer not to have the conversation recorded, notes will be taken instead. You may also review any quotes used, should you wish.

Interview Questions

1. Number of years of experience in DDIS and with intelligence work?
2. What is your primary expertise and role in your current position?
3. What are your experiences representing DDIS externally in relation to the public or other state organizations?
4. What, in your opinion, constitutes a good intelligence service in a democratic Western society?
5. What is the most important thing for an intelligence service to focus on? Why?
    - How should this be expressed?
    - What is the most crucial element of a successful intelligence service?
6. How would you describe the core of DDIS' role in society? What makes DDIS' role particularly important?
    - If you were to describe this role with a metaphor, what would it be? Perhaps using an animal as a metaphor.
    - How does DDIS' role differ from other actors in the state? In the intelligence community?
    - How do you hope employees at DDIS view DDIS and its contribution to society?
    - How would you wish politicians viewed this? Do you think they do?
    - How would you wish citizens viewed this? Do you think they do?
7. How do you understand DDIS as a state authority? (with authority in a specific area)
    - How is this authority expressed in your work?
    - Which other organizations is DDIS most closely connected to?
8. What is it that DDIS can do that no other organization can? How does your expertise manifest in your work?
    - Do you feel that politicians listen to DDIS' expertise?
    - Do you feel that DDIS' expertise is recognized by the public?

9. Who, in your view, is DDIS' most important audience? Why?
10. What do you see as DDIS's most important task in relation to the government?
    - To what extent do you think DDIS operates independently of the political agenda?
11. What is important for DDIS' reputation?
12. How important is the public's trust in DDIS for your work?
    - Do you think the public generally has trust in the intelligence services and their expertise?
    - How do you think DDIS can practically best maintain the Danish public's trust? What can challenge this trust?
13. Does DDIS try to promote a specific narrative about itself to the public? If so, what narrative? Why is this narrative important?
14. Can transparency and openness towards the public exist in an organization like DDIS?
    - How do you understand transparency and openness about DDIS' work? Why? What is important to protect?
    - To what extent do ideals about transparency and openness towards the public influence your daily work? Do you consider it in your work? Does DDIS consider it in its work?
15. What do you generally see as DDIS' most significant success on a societal level in ten years? In twenty years?
    - Why is this goal the most important for DDIS?
    - How does DDIS ensure that the organization as a whole works towards this goal?
16. What values are important for DDIS to highlight to the public? Why?
    - How are these values expressed in your work?
    - What values are important for DDIS to emphasize internally in the organization? Why?
17. What particularly characterizes the working culture in your organization?
    - Do you have a close camaraderie in your organization? Why/why not?
    - How is this expressed in your daily work?
18. What defines a good employee in your organization, in your opinion? What qualities should they possess?
    - What is expected of your employees? What is the most overriding expectation?

19. What qualities does a good leader in your organization possess?
    - What is expected of a leader in your organization?
20. How do you onboard new employees in DDIS? What is the most important thing they need to learn/unlearn to become part of the community?
21. What formal and informal norms of good behaviour does one learn after being in your organization for a while?
    - Why are these unwritten rules important?
    - How does DDIS ensure that employees understand the organization's way of doing things?
22. Are there specific things that can make someone particularly unpopular as a colleague? And as a leader?
23. How does the job at DDIS differ from other types of jobs? Why?

Oversight and Responsibility

24. What, in your opinion, constitutes ideal oversight of the intelligence services in a democratic Western society?
    - What is the most important aspect of oversight work with intelligence services, in your opinion? Why?
    - Where is this expressed?
25. How much of an ideal oversight do you think TET fulfils? Are there other bodies that fulfil part of an ideal oversight?
26. What would you describe as the core of TET's role in society? What makes this role particularly important?
    - If you were to describe this role with a metaphor, what would it be? Perhaps using an animal as a metaphor.
27. How does TET's role differ from other actors in the state? In the intelligence community?
28. How do you hope that employees at TET view TET and what it contributes to society?
    - How would you wish politicians viewed this? Do you think they do?
    - How would you wish citizens viewed this? Do you think they do?
29. Who, in your view, is TET's most important audience? Why?
30. What, in your view, is TET's most important task in relation to the government?
31. What do you generally see as TET's most significant success in ten years? In twenty years?
    - Why is this goal the most important for TET?

Collaboration

32. How do you, as a representative of DDIS, experience being met by other partners (public authorities)?
33. In your opinion, what should an ideal collaboration between the service and oversight look like?
    - How much of an ideal collaboration is fulfilled by the collaboration between DDIS and TET?
34. How different do you think the purposes of DDIS and TET are? Can these two purposes be reconciled? How/why (not)?
    - How do you think DDIS' special role and task are expressed in its collaboration with TET?
35. What synergies/challenges do you experience or imagine arise between the two organizations?
36. What is most important in the collaboration between DDIS and TET to achieve the two organizations' respective purposes?
37. Anything else?

Thank you for your help.

Best Regards,

Melanie Sofia Hartvigsen (primary contact person), *Ph.D. fellow, Center for War Studies, University of Southern Denmark*

Mia Rosa Koss Hartmann, *Postdoc, Center for War Studies, University of Southern Denmark*

Adam Diderichsen, *Postdoc, Center for War Studies, University of Southern Denmark*

Appendix 8: Interview Guide TET

Research Project: 'Oversight of Danish Intelligence Services'

Dear Participant,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this research project. Below, you will find a description of the research project, the framework for your participation, and the questions we will ask during the interview.

The project is part of a larger research initiative titled 'IntelHub', led by Associate Professor Kira Vrist Rønn from Center for War Studies, SDU and funded by the Carlsberg Foundation. Overall, the research aims to generate knowledge about how the legitimacy of intelligence services is built, maintained, and re-established in a Scandinavian context. The project consists of four parts: 1) oversight of intelligence services, 2) transparency versus confidentiality, 3) informing the public, and 4) legitimacy.

You have been invited to contribute your knowledge and experiences to sub-project 1, which is primarily managed by Melanie Sofia Hartvigsen in collaboration with Mia Rosa Koss Hartmann and Adam Diderichsen, all three researchers from Center for War Studies, SDU

The focus of this project is on how the democratic ties between the Danish Defence Intelligence Service (DDIS) and the Intelligence Oversight Board (TET) are maintained and strengthened within a Scandinavian context characterized by high trust in governmental authorities. You have been selected for an interview based on your specific expertise and organizational role.

Project Background – Why Is It Important?

Oversight of intelligence services is crucial for maintaining their legitimacy. However, research shows that intelligence services and their oversight bodies face potential conflicts of interest due to differing legal mandates. Moreover, there is a significant bias in the existing literature, which predominantly focuses on oversight efforts to control intelligence services. As a result, the literature and general debate lack an essential perspective on democratic responsibility: that of the intelligence services themselves.

From a constructivist perspective, we aim to understand whether the democratic relationship between these two types of institutions can be strengthened by examining the perspectives and opinions of leading intelligence practitioners and oversight officials in Denmark on the role of intelligence institutions in a democratic society.

Based on an overarching analysis of the similarities and differences in these value systems, we will shed light on how the ties between them can be strengthened within a democratic framework. The interview will therefore emphasize how you, as an expert, perceive the fundamental role and value base of intelligence services and oversight bodies in a democratic society. However, we will not ask about specific cases, methods, or other matters subject to confidentiality.

Framework for Participation

The interview will last approximately 1.5 hours and will be conducted by Melanie Sofia Hartvigsen. You will be required to sign a consent form, which allows you to choose the level of anonymity you prefer. Full anonymity is, of course, an option. In such cases, it will only be mentioned that you are employed at DDIS. The interview will not be shared with DDIS' management or any third party.

Below, you will find the interview guide containing the questions you will be asked. The guide is merely indicative, and our discussions may take other directions depending on what you consider most important to address.

You will be asked for permission to record the interview to allow transcription of the audio file and further work with the content. Both the audio file

and the transcription will be securely stored in compliance with the applicable rules on data protection and the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). If you prefer not to have the conversation recorded, notes will be taken instead. You may also review any quotes used, should you wish.

Interview Questions

1. Number of years of experience in TET and with oversight of intelligence services?
2. What is your primary expertise and role in your current position?
3. What are your experiences representing TET externally in relation to the public or other state organizations?
4. What, in your opinion, constitutes good oversight of intelligence services in a democratic Western society?
5. What is the most important thing for oversight to focus on? Why?
    - How should this be expressed?
    - What is the most crucial element of successful oversight?
6. What would you describe as the core of TET's role in society? What makes TET's role particularly important?
    - If you were to describe this role with a metaphor, what would it be? Perhaps using an animal as a metaphor.
    - How does TET's role differ from other actors in the state? In the intelligence community?
    - How do you hope that employees in TET view TET and its contributions to society?
    - How would you wish politicians viewed this? Do you think they do?
    - How would you wish citizens viewed this? Do you think they do?
7. How do you understand TET as a state authority? (with authority in a specific area)
    - How is this authority expressed in your work?
    - Which public organizations is TET most closely connected with?
8. What is it that TET can do that no other organization can? How does your expertise manifest in your work?
    - Do you feel that politicians listen to TET's expertise?
    - Do you feel that TET's expertise is recognized by the public?
9. Who, in your view, is TET's most important audience? Why?
10. What do you see as TET's most important task in relation to the government?

    - To what extent do you believe TET operates independently of the political agenda?
11. What is important for TET's reputation?
12. How important is public trust in TET for your work?
    - Do you believe the public generally trusts oversight bodies and their expertise?
    - How do you think TET can best maintain the Danish public's trust? What can challenge that trust?
13. Does TET try to promote a specific narrative about itself to the public? If so, what narrative? Why is this narrative important?
14. Can transparency and openness towards the public exist in an organization like TET?
    - How do you understand transparency and openness about TET's work? Why? What is important to protect?
    - To what extent do ideals about transparency and openness towards the public influence your daily work? Do you consider it in your work? Does TET consider it in its work?
15. What do you generally see as TET's most significant success on a societal level in ten years? In twenty years?
    - Why is this goal the most important for TET?
    - How does TET ensure that the organization as a whole works towards this goal?
16. What values are important for TET to highlight to the public? Why?
    - How are these values expressed in your work?
    - What values are important for TET to emphasize internally within the organization? Why?
17. What particularly characterizes the working culture in your organization?
    - Do you have a close camaraderie in your organization? Why/why not?
    - How is this expressed in your daily work?
18. What defines a good employee in your organization, in your opinion? What qualities should they possess?
    - What is expected of your employees? What is the most overriding expectation?
19. What qualities does a good leader in your organization possess?
    - What is expected of a leader in your organization?
20. How do you onboard new employees in TET? What is the most important thing they need to learn/unlearn to become part of the community?

21. What formal and informal norms of good behaviour does one learn after being in your organization for a while?
    - Why are these unwritten rules important?
    - How does TET ensure that employees understand the organization's way of doing things?
22. Are there specific things that can make someone particularly unpopular as a colleague? And as a leader?
23. How does the job in TET differ from other types of jobs? Why?

Intelligence Services and Responsibility

24. What, in your opinion, constitutes an ideal intelligence service in a democratic Western society?
    - What is the most important aspect of an intelligence service's work, in your opinion? Why?
    - Where is this expressed?
25. How much of an ideal intelligence service do you think DDIS fulfils?
26. What would you describe as the core of DDIS' role in society? What makes this role particularly important?
    - If you were to describe this role with a metaphor, what would it be? Perhaps using an animal as a metaphor.
27. How does DDIS' role differ from other actors in the state? In the intelligence community?
28. How do you hope that employees in DDIS view DDIS and its contributions to society?
    - How would you wish politicians viewed this? Do you think they do?
    - How would you wish citizens viewed this? Do you think they do?
29. Who, in your view, is DDIS' most important audience? Why?
30. What, in your view, is DDIS' most important task in relation to the government?
31. What do you generally see as DDIS' most significant success in ten years? In twenty years?
    - Why is this goal the most important for DDIS?

Collaboration

32. How do you, as a representative of TET, experience being met by the organizations that TET oversees?
33. In your opinion, what should an ideal collaboration between the service and oversight look like?

    - How much of an ideal collaboration is fulfilled by the collaboration between DDIS and TET?
34. How different do you think the purposes of DDIS and TET are? Can the two purposes be reconciled? How/why (not)?
    - How do you think TET's special role and task are expressed in its collaboration with DDIS?
35. What synergies/challenges do you experience or imagine arise between the two organizations?
36. What is most important in the collaboration between DDIS and TET to achieve the two organizations' respective purposes?
37. Anything else?

Thank you for your help.

Best Regards,

Melanie Sofia Hartvigsen (primary contact person), *Ph.D. fellow, Center for War Studies, University of Southern Denmark*

Mia Rosa Koss Hartmann, *Postdoc, Center for War Studies, University of Southern Denmark*

Adam Diderichsen, *Postdoc, Center for War Studies, University of Southern Denmark*

Appendix 9: Interview Guide CSOs

Research Project 'Rethinking the Legitimacy of Intelligence Agencies'

Dear [organisation],
We are reaching out to you in the hope that, with your knowledge and expertise, you would like to participate in the research project *Rethinking the Legitimacy of Intelligence Agencies*. Participation is interview-based. Below, we outline the research project, the framework for participation, and the questions we will ask in the interview.

The project is part of a larger research initiative titled 'IntelHub', led by Associate Professor Kira Vrist Rønn from Center for War Studies, SDU and funded by the Carlsberg Foundation. Overall, the research aims to generate knowledge about how the legitimacy of intelligence services is built, maintained, and re-established in a Scandinavian context. The project consists of four parts: 1) oversight of intelligence services, 2) transparency versus confidentiality, 3) informing the public, and 4) legitimacy.

You have been invited to contribute knowledge and experiences to Subproject 1, which is primarily managed by Melanie Sofia Hartvigsen from Center for War Studies, SDU in collaboration with Jaseff Raziel Yauri-Miranda from Deusto University, Bilbao, Spain.

The focus of this project is the extent to which civil society actors contribute to maintaining and enhancing the legitimacy of intelligence agencies in a democratic society. [Organisation] has been selected for an interview based on specific expertise and societal role. We hope that a representative from your organization who has specifically worked with intelligence-related issues, such as consultation responses or other relevant activities, will participate in the interview.

Background of the Project – Why is it Important?

Traditionally, civil society actors have not played a significant role in discussions about oversight and accountability of intelligence agencies, either in literature or in practice. However, research shows that civil society actors (and, to a great extent, the media) have served as the last guardians of intelligence accountability when official oversight mechanisms have failed. Additionally, research indicates a bias in the literature, which predominantly focuses on how democratic societies can establish effective formal oversight mechanisms and legal frameworks for intelligence agencies.

As a result, an important perspective on the democratic legitimacy and accountability of intelligence agencies is missing: the role of civil society actors. From a constructive perspective, we aim to gain insights into understandings and practices concerning the legitimacy and democratic accountability of intelligence agencies from leading civil society actors in Denmark and Spain.

Based on a broad analysis of general trends, logics, and practices, we will examine the extent to which civil society actors contribute to the democratic legitimacy of intelligence agencies through the exercise of democratic accountability. Therefore, the interview will focus on how the participant, as an expert, perceives the principal role and value foundation of intelligence agencies in a democratic society, as well as the challenges and opportunities the participant faces as a civil society actor in holding the agencies democratically accountable.

Framework for Participation

The interview will last approximately 1.5 hours and will be conducted by Melanie Sofia Hartvigsen. The interviewee will need to sign a consent form where they can choose the degree of anonymity. Full anonymity is, of course, an option. In such cases, it will only be noted that the interviewee is a representative of [organization].

The interview will not be shared with third parties and will only be accessed by Melanie Sofia Hartvigsen and Jaseff Raziel Yauri-Miranda. Participants will be asked for permission to record the interview to allow for transcription, ensuring we can work with the content more effectively. Both the audio recording and transcription will be securely stored in compliance

with current data protection laws. If recording is declined, notes will be taken during the conversation instead.

Interview Guide
Below is a list of the questions we will ask. The guide is indicative, and our conversation may take other directions depending on what the participant considers most important to discuss.

Context

1. What is your organizational role?
2. What is your professional background?
3. How many years of experience do you have working in a civil society organization?
4. How many years of experience do you have working with intelligence services?
5. How much of your working time do you spend on intelligence-related matters?
6. What is your area of expertise? (Law, politics, technical, other)

Understanding of democracy

7. What does democracy mean to you?
8. What are the most important democratic values?
9. How do democratically elected leaders maintain legitimacy in your eyes?
10. How do public organizations and bureaucracy maintain legitimacy in your eyes?
11. Is openness and transparency in governance important, and if so, why?
12. Is citizen oversight of state organizations important, and if so, why?
13. How important are civil society actors/organizations in a democracy?
14. In your opinion, what does an ideal intelligence agency look like in a democratic society, and how does it operate?

Understanding of intelligence services

15. What should intelligence agencies primarily focus on?
16. What is the role of intelligence agencies in a democratic society?
17. How can intelligence agencies be legitimate in a democratic society?

18. How well do you think Denmark's intelligence agencies meet this ideal?

Intelligence oversight

19. What role does oversight of intelligence services play, and why is it (not) important?
20. What is the primary purpose of oversight of intelligence services?
21. How effective do you think the current oversight mechanisms are in holding the agencies responsible?
22. Do you think civil society actors should play a role in holding state intelligence agencies responsible? If yes, why is this important?
23. Do you think civil society actors can contribute to the oversight and control of intelligence agencies? How can civil society actors contribute to and improve oversight of intelligence agencies?
24. Which actor do you think is the most important for holding the agencies responsible (and ensuring oversight and control)?

The role of the organisation

25. Which field best describes your organization's focus (e.g., foreign policy, domestic policy, democratic governance, information and communication, government oversight, anti-corruption, or other)?
26. What does your work primarily focus on? Is your work primarily focused on international or national issues?
27. What activities related to intelligence issues does you or your organization engage in?
28. Does your organization collaborate with other national and/or international civil society actors? If yes, what topics do you collaborate on?
29. What impact do you see your work having on intelligence-related issues (e.g., diplomatic pressure, civil actions, conversations with policymakers, prompting official investigations, public statements, conversations with intelligence practitioners, or other)?

Challenges and surveillance

30. Do you believe you are sufficiently legally protected against surveillance?
31. Do you use technical tools to protect your communication and data, such as end-to-end encrypted communication services?
32. Have you ever attended courses on digital security related to your job?

33. Have you ever considered whether you are or have been surveilled by intelligence agencies?
34. Have you ever considered whether you are being surveilled by other means?
35. Do you know of others in your field who have been surveilled?
36. Do you think you have reason to be concerned about the protection of your data?
37. Do you use technical measures to counter surveillance?
38. Is there anything else you think is important to add to this subject?

Thank you for your help.

Best regards,

Melanie Sofia Hartvigsen (primary contact person), *Ph.D. fellow, Center for War Studies, SDU*
Jaseff Raziel Yauri-Miranda, *Postdoc, Deusto University*

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