

THE FACULTY OF INTELLIGENCE STUDIES AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF AN ACADEMIC IDENTITY (2019-2021)

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The Faculty of Intelligence Studies 2019-2022 and the challenge of trying to find the best "label" for the years 2019-2022, during which time I took on the role of Dean of the Faculty of Intelligence Studies (FSI), brought to my mind the word "challenge" quickly. Looking back, in those years the Faculty went through a period of transition and increased maturity. On the one hand, it was caught in a short, but modeling history, marked by the need to assert itself as a voice in the military academic landscape of Romania, on the other hand, it started to see its role in a multidimensional way both in its relationship with the

Romanian Intelligence Service and with the national intelligence community, but also with less traditional partners, such as civil society and the European civil academia. In this transition, looking both to the past and to the future, the "challenge" of exercising the role of Dean was complex and also gratifying.

Remembering significant moments and actions that have marked this period, a first thought goes towards the strategic approach to correlate the curriculum assumed by the Faculty to the need of professionalization of intelligence analysts, junior officers, or with already gained expertise. This direction was meant to integrate academic content, reflected in disciplines that aimed to develop the mental model of analysts, to strengthen their critical thinking, their ability to analyze from multiple perspectives or self-monitoring in the analytical process to avoid the trap of cognitive errors, with professional rigors and requirements dictated by a security environment that is unpredictable and effervescent in change. The

transformative process was reflected in redesigning skills, adjusting the taught and seminarized content, as well as diversifying the range of training programs, with the initiation of new programs aimed at developing *clear writing* or intelligence communication (briefing) skills. All these initiatives led to the appointment of FSI, informally, as the "Analysis Faculty", a name that incorporated and reflected its main mission - to train analysts for the national intelligence community. Moreover, a mission has been well accomplished in view of the progressive growth of forming analysts received from the national security institutions in Romania.

I believe that a second distinguishing mark for the period 2019-2022 is the initiation of projects to open the Faculty to the European educational environment. In 2021, the project *Critical Studies in Intelligence, Technologies, and SEcurity Governance* (INSET), an unprecedented initiative for military academia in Romania, was submitted and won in the Erasmus Mundus Design Measures competition. The project (successfully completed in 2024) involved the creation of a new master's degree program in partnership with two other prestigious European universities (Rey Juan Carlos University of Spain and University of Malta). A new European study program, designed in an inter-disciplinary manner, which has allowed taking advantage of the expertise held within the Faculty in security and intelligence studies in solving some related security problems, but also in a regional arena by FSI.

On a (more) personal note, being the Dean of the Faculty of Intelligence Studies brought with it a greater closeness to students, to their expectations, and aspirations. In other words, a kind of special experience, extremely fresh and inspiring. Working systematically with the students from the angle given by the role of Dean meant for me a permanent exercise of communication on multiple levels: by translating the rigors of the profession and ensuring their internalization, by trying to be present through listening and resolution, as well as instilling confidence in my own forces and in a future that is not only of the students, but also of the national security institutions.

Looking forward, perhaps the most important message that the mandate 2019-2022 leaves to future generations is that the field of intelligence studies cannot be reduced to technical or regulatory challenges, but a deeply human construction, rooted in critical thinking, ethical responsibility, and intellectual openness. In these years, the Faculty was more than an academic space - it was a laboratory of ideas, a growing community that learned to ask difficult questions and accept that progress comes through dialogue and by proving the ability to

accommodate a diversity of perspectives. In a world of uncertainty-led challenges, FSI has crystallized its role identity to train professionals — lucid consciences, able to watch for the balance between freedom and security, between a past that invisibly defines us and a future that we build together through predictability. This is perhaps the most precious lesson learned from those years: the conviction that the exercise of intelligence - analytical, emotional, social, and collective - is the most powerful tool of security in a democratic society.

