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# Conceptual hinges between international political economy and Economic Intelligence

## Some disciplinary challenges

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### **Introduction**

Realist theoretical tradition and positivist approaches of international relations erroneously positioned intelligence as a process that is exclusive to national security and defense organizations that also involve politics outside of the state. However, under an international system that prioritizes economic and commercial factors in addition to the strategic goals of the different actors that form a part of that system, states face the necessity of determining the characteristics, evolution, and deployment of economic rationalities to make better decisions and with this improve or maintain the levels of development that the societies they represent intend to reach. Under that premise, Economic Intelligence emerges as a part of the effort by state decision-makers to achieve better positioning within the world economic and commercial architecture. However, trying to understand this international system from a purely commercial perspective or through positions that prioritize the role of interests and the greatest possible maximization of profits ostensibly limits the capacity for understanding and analyzing the political and strategic factors that affect the complex realities under which nations operate and make decisions.

Keeping in mind the existence of the political element linked to decisions regarding regional and international markets necessarily implies that other analytical perspectives and ideas emerging from International Political Economy (IPE) should be implemented to harmonize the intersection between politics and economics in international contexts. This disciplinary exercise, without holistic implications, opens the door to the integration of new categories stemming from Economic Intelligence and brings about greater results for the strategic application of state and corporate decisions. In this sense, the combination of intelligence factors and IPE goes beyond the results that could be obtained through a foreign policy that operates with conservative and traditional approaches.

Thus, the relationship between IPE and Economic Intelligence is carried out and visualized not only within the field of decisions made by states but it also substantially modifies a number of concepts and processes that are evident in both disciplines. In particular, it introduces the geoeconomic analytical basis, the level and complexity of the processes of interdependence, and the notion of security in broader terms than those exposed by realists or liberals to enhance the complexity in the diagnosis of the international system, and the possible decisions made by nations in this context. As this dynamic is achieved, merging additional theoretical and disciplinary spheres, the “hinge” function emerges based on the mentioned concepts and the disciplinary perspectives of IPE and intelligence. Therefore, this chapter investigates those “conceptual hinges,” incorporating the relevant areas of Economic Intelligence that serve to reduce the level of uncertainty within the decision-making process at the highest levels of state.

To achieve this objective, an analysis is carried out on the implications and difficulties represented by the separate disciplines as well as the issues that emerge from establishing links between them. Thus, in broadening the conceptual field, the “hinges” cannot be considered as exclusive segments. Instead, they acquire relevance through the interrelationships with other concepts upon broadening each of the disciplinary perspectives that they represent. IPE and Economic Intelligence, in addition to being linked through the mentioned concepts, also reflect areas of attention that modify the traditional analytical perspectives that stem from international relations, foreign policy, and national security.

It concludes that the crossing, exchange, and interpretation of the “conceptual hinges” between IPE and Economic Intelligence can demystify the sheltered nature of intelligence that

states deploy in their interdependent actions. In addition, the chapter suggests theoretical and analytical tools that can be used in the debate surrounding development in nations and states in contexts of complexity and globalization.

### **The necessity of a discussion about Economic Intelligence**

The efforts to imbue intelligence with a scientific and transdisciplinary quality have been valid for at least three decades. The exchange of knowledge and academic recognitions have moved along a difficult institutional path full of misunderstandings and political ignorance on the part of the establishment in many countries. While the initial debates were channeled through the particular interests of the Anglo-Saxon community, concerned with historical analysis or with the organizational structure of intelligence services with an emphasis on the U.S. context, the growing academic production from diverse regions remains significant for the social sciences, generating concerns and conceptual advances, as well as epistemic and methodological exchanges with economics, political science, geopolitics, and other theoretical fields that include communication, anthropology, and sociology, to name some areas of interdisciplinary research. Intelligence – assumed as a space of knowledge that condenses various methods, subject matters, and projections in internal and foreign policy – has also been researched in terms of the analysis of neo-institutionalism and international law. It would be inaccurate to highlight the historical, economic, and sociopolitical studies related to national security without mentioning the role played by military and police intelligence services during political periods driven by military dictatorships.

In general terms, many analytical and operational fields from distinct disciplines converge in the field of Intelligence but from the strategic point of view. This is seen as the highest level of intelligence based on its inclusive capacity to define national interests and objectives, as well as to plan in function of these goals and to protect them (McDowell 2009). The classic concept of Strategic Intelligence formulated by Sherman Kent in the middle of the twentieth century, has not been subject to substantial changes but has incorporated diverse methodological, theoretical, and technologies aspects to comprehend the current reality and use it as a significant element for future planning (Berkowitz and Goodman 1989: 3–4).

Intelligence in general, and Economic Intelligence in particular, encompass a series of elements tied to appreciation and comprehension, especially within the prevailing context of

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globalization. Beyond the general perceptions that equate it to a secret activity that includes dark segments in its implementation, intelligence constitutes a key function for the performance of any contemporary state because the distinct internal and external actors that intervene in political and economic situations require accurate, objectively analyzed, and verified information to make better decisions. Those decisions are understood not only from the perspective of security or national interests that must be protected, but they also involve other aspects of daily life within the society in which the state must make decisions that allow it to improve its development (Hildebrand and Hughes 2017). However, the classic conception of intelligence includes intrinsic elements that complicate its treatment, systemization, and comprehension. Within these elements, it is possible to point to the epistemic root, an object of study, and a methodological approach.

#### **Box 48.1 Intelligence: a definition**

In this work, we use the framework used by Julian Richards (2001), to explain that it is difficult to provide a unique definition of Intelligence. From his point of view, Intelligence is not the same for the entire world. We need to know how different cultures analyze information, for what purpose, and if that multiple orientations share some point in the analysis process. But at the same time, Richards provides that Intelligence cannot be fully understood, if we don't consider some levels of execution (strategic, operational, and tactical level). And if we add that Intelligence could be seen as a bad or blurrier activity in the eyes of society, the complexity of the context is high to create or assume a categorical position about a concept of Intelligence.

Nevertheless, we consider Intelligence not only as a concept, but also as a category of study.

In that sense, Intelligence is the activity created by a requirement, from the public or private sector, considering information recollected and processed under a scientific method, to achieve objectives in order to take better decisions, and thus, reduce uncertainty. But also, we need to consider that one of the most important things in Intelligence is the necessity of constant feedback, especially when we consider some different analysis methods because, only through that, should it be possible to understand if the current method is the most accurate option to make a better diagnosis of demanded process.

In the proposal definition, the main elements to build Intelligence are, from one perspective, the analysis, and the relation between decision-making and the reduction of uncertainty, for another. Those aspects are the base of any definition of Intelligence, no matter what sphere of work this definition is applied to (public or private sector).

Considering the epistemological base or origin, the discussion is centered on whether intelligence constitutes its own field of study or discipline. And despite that this approach is not new, the perspective of its evolution, the context in which it applies, and the regional and cultural differences of each particular country mean that the epistemic uncertainties related to intelligence remain valid (Rogg 2018).

Although there is no singular conceptualization about the epistemological nature of intelligence, it is possible to visualize a link between positivist currents and the form in which intelligence has been studied. The works that have been made about the subject, particularly those derived from Anglo-Saxon traditions and reasoning, conceive intelligence as a description of events, related to experiences linked to situations of conflict or, alternatively, as a way of constructing and planning for vital decisions where intelligence plays a role (Richards 2010). However, in the twenty-first century, a significant portion of the studies about intelligence began to include a different epistemic root, criticizing the extreme positivism and generating approaches that look to interpret events beyond what is evident. An example of that is the incorporation of the cultural variable in different analyses and perspectives of intelligence, especially applied to interpretations regarding terrorism and other conflicts (Somiedo 2012).

Intelligence also possesses a complexity in explanations and implications when it comes to classifying this field of study. According to Julian Richards, intelligence has been approached from two main perspectives throughout history. First, there is a notion related to the comparison of intelligence systems, on an internal state level and in international scope as well. That point of view emphasizes organizational and bureaucratic criteria, leaving aside the processes revolving around the analysis and production of intelligence. This perspective is explained by the strong influence of US political science on the understanding of intelligence systems, taking as a base the configurations within the state and specifically the controls and counterbalances that an intelligence system must take into consideration (Richards 2010).

The second point of view observes that intelligence systems are also considered as part of the object of investigation, especially in the area of strategic studies. However, the focus of comparison derives from the failures in intelligence services and more concretely in the consequences that those errors have provoked when intelligence services have been unable to warn about violent actions with a regional and worldwide impact (Buckley 2017; Jackson 2008). Beyond the existing problems revolving around the theoretical and disciplinary classification of intelligence, it is necessary to remark that there are common issues related to the erroneous identification made between intelligence and the distinct areas of national security, incorrectly understanding intelligence exclusively as part of security (Bulger 2016). When we speak of traditions and structure of thought, we refer precisely to those that have for decades related intelligence with realism and positivism in the field of international relations. In effect, the states that have opted to use security-related intelligence preferentially as a functional tool for inclusion in regional and global spaces have not managed to achieve their objectives in an integral manner, considering this perspective an area of Strategic Intelligence thought (Hastedt 1998).

#### Box 48.2 Dimensions of intelligence

There are different dimensions of Intelligence. But despite the many perspectives made by academics, the general dimensions of Intelligence are:

- As a product. Intelligence is worthless if cannot produce some consequence in the decision-

making  
process, either to reinforce a decision or change some part of it. But to do that,  
Intelligence should be applied in a document, in order to assure that the analysis has  
been made.

- As a process. This perspective of Intelligence is related to the Intelligence Cycle. To create Intelligence, we need to pass some areas inside that cycle, often starting with the political or technical requirement; then comes the gathering of information and data, and next, the stage of analysis as a unique part. Then, the next step in this cycle is the dissemination to the key actors, to create a policy or take action, as a final part of the cycle.

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Thus, there are different fields and dimensions of intelligence that are applied to diverse areas in the public sector as well as the private sector and have as a primordial element obtaining high-quality processed information. This is a sort of hermeneutic resource that is employed to make better decisions and reduce the level of uncertainty in obtaining results. One of the dimensions of intelligence that seeks to protect the security of a country – understood as the relational set of state and private institutions along with the population as a whole – is Economic Intelligence. One of the principal goals of this form of intelligence is safeguarding the economic, financial, and business interests of a particular country through the structuring and systemization of state information on an internal and external level (González and Larriba 2011).

Another definition is offered by Jeffrey Herzog, who mentions that “Economic Intelligence is information about how those outside the collecting organization’s country develop material goods that are interpreted and presented to inform policymakers” (Herzog 2008: 302). Finally, the other interpretation of Economic Intelligence comes from Gustavo Díaz, who indicates, “Economic Intelligence definitely has a clear state component since it helps states achieve regional gains by gathering information – that is interpreted and spread in time – to reduce the uncertainty of those in charge of the decision-making process” (Díaz 2016: 157).

Based on the definitions mentioned, it is possible to find some points and criteria to establish a better understanding of the concept. First, Economic Intelligence is a perspective of analysis and a set of actions that are associated with the protection and defense of the interests of the state. In other words, Economic Intelligence looks at the position of a particular country to achieve national and international goals. The political and strategic interpretation carried out by the state regarding “its interests” is linked with the economic, financial, and commercial positioning that a specific nation requires. In this sense, Economic Intelligence is configured as a tool of the state and for the state, reinforcing its actions, monitoring the contingencies of markets and corporations, and controlling possible threats that could emerge in regional and global spaces. This last factor can be observed by keeping in mind that the security of a state is no longer limited exclusively to the protection of material elements or related to the classic institutions of

- As an institution. Often, Political Science observes Intelligence as an institution. That means that Intelligence can be located as a part of the public apparatus or bureaucracy of the state. Therefore, it is possible to find some organization, with its own name, dedicated to producing Intelligence inside the government. From this perspective, Intelligence has fluctuations inside the check and balance dichotomy, and also people with political responsibility in charge of these institutions.
- As a function. This dimension is similar in comparison to the last one. When we define Intelligence as a function, we look at Intelligence as a part of the state organization. In this sense, Intelligence can be considered as another branch of the multiple functions of the government, but without an “intelligence” name. In other words, Intelligence should be seen as a normal governmental activity, even if this activity doesn’t have the level of institutionalization that requires and locates the actors or departments that carry out that function.
- As a field of study. Intelligence has transited a long road to be part of the Strategic Studies beyond the contributions of disciplines as Political Science or even the military area. This is because Intelligence has been located as a part of Political Science from the institutional point of view, and with the military sphere through the application. But now, Intelligence has been trespassing national borders and is positioned as a unique field of study, with its own concepts and theoretical approaches.

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security and defense. Economy and its evolution, especially in a negative sense, are considered among the non-conventional threats that can strongly affect states and their societies (Chandra and Bhonsle 2015). In present times, it would be unthinkable to consider national security not linked to Economic Intelligence when it comes to analyzing, for instance, the negative consequences that a nation would suffer from being infiltrated by international organized crime groups. These kinds of links, arising from the international economy, have not received sufficient attention from the academic sectors that work on issues related to international relations and political economics.

Economic Intelligence is related to the protection and safeguarding of a nation's objectives and interests because it adds certainty to the performance of the state actors and businesses through the analysis and assessment of correct decisions. It reduces levels of uncertainty and contingencies in confronting volatile economic scenarios by general models that can explain the success or failure of political intervention or strategy. In addition, similar to all intelligence cycles, Economic Intelligence obtains, provides, and distributes sensitive and sophisticated information between the politicians responsible for making transcendental decisions. This data and knowledge are acquired through distinct mechanisms or operations – some of which are open and others are reserved and secret – that will serve to achieve the planned objectives. The application and analysis of Economic Intelligence have a double dimension. On one side is the internal facet of the nations, and on the other is the external scope related to regional and international settings that form the basis of observation and intervention, constituting the foundation to establish guidelines for increasing or decreasing levels of development. But although all the definitions signal the relevance of the international aspect, they also mention the diagnostics that are elaborated to improve the decision-making process, are from inside the state apparatus. (Olier 2016).

It is important to mention that Economic Intelligence positioning cannot be considered as homogeneous or free of complexities. One example of this is the confusion that exists, in conceptual terms, among interpretations related to Economic Intelligence, and those that are referred to Competitive Intelligence. According to Eric Nenzhelele, this last concept is a form that businesses possess to enhance their competitive structure in relation to other actors in similar areas or goals. Competitive Intelligence is also directly associated with the manner in which businesses establish a diagnostic process with respect to the international environment that surrounds them to take better decisions (CITEX 2011; Nenzhelele 2015). The tendency to link Economic Intelligence with Competitive Intelligence reflects not only in the conceptual environment but also in practice. This happens because the same actors intervene in similar fields but not the same. In effect, while the state can be a participant in the execution of a better Competitive Intelligence process, it is also true that the final result of such intervention is not seen in the state structure but on private business. Competitive Intelligence has a range of action that crosses internal and external spaces, and in turn, it depends on the objectives, interests, and even the actual nature of the business, which may have a national or transnational focus. On the other hand, Economic Intelligence preferentially focuses its analysis specifically on the international system, in pursuit of achieving a better positioning for the state.

In the current international context, a state that does not possess a structure to alert about the importance of the use of Economic Intelligence not only establishes an incomplete parameter regarding the processes that affect it or could affect it; it also works against the achievement of development objectives proposed. Therefore, the relevancy of Economic Intelligence is focused not only in the fact that it is a tool to help the state on an internal level, but it also allows states to position themselves in a more effective manner within an international context dominated by the process of globalization (Cohen 2008). In this sense, IPE appears to be a discipline that attracts, articulates, and condenses distinct aspects related to the process of globalization, the contingencies of the political dynamics of state and corporate actors, and the threats, challenges, and complexities related to security that imply for the countries the need to intervene in regional or global economic affairs involving large amounts of volatility and uncertainty. And at the same time, IPE offers a theoretical and conceptual architecture while permitting the development of

interdisciplinary bridges and links with intelligence, especially in areas that are relevant to its comprehension from an economic perspective, broadening the range of activities related to the previous field of study.

### **International political economy as a disciplinary spectrum**

At the moment when we consider the factors that influence economic and strategic decision making by states, the process of globalization represents a panorama filled with uncertainties and insecurities that affect distinct social and political actors. Globalization itself may not be understood exclusively by considering the intervention of commercial logic and interests; it also needs to be conceivable as a dynamic that unites technological, cultural, and geopolitical dimensions (Mahrenbach and Shaw 2019). Under this perspective, it is necessary to incorporate a point of view that helps achieve an understanding of this variety of factors. Thus, articulating the relationships generated between the state and the market, IPE serving as an optimal and broad disciplinary framework to analyzing different phenomena (Tussie 2015).

IPE has a series of analytical currents ranging from classical conceptions that view the state as an actor subject to market logic, to critical perspectives that question capitalist models in different levels of analysis (Gill 2016). In this sense, it is evident that all countries, independent of their ideological formats, needs consider Economic Intelligence as a necessary resource to achieve better positioning in international markets as well as to achieve other goals and promote their national development. The intelligence analysis and recommendations that result from the process of incorporating IPE categories will not be interpreted by states as isolated units, nor will they prioritize the market as an abstract and omnipresent notion in the economic and commercial sphere. The IPE analytical categories minimize the realist and positivist focus coming from international relations, as well as the currents anchored in national security doctrines. IPE permits a differentiation and visualization of other national and regional actors, locating and analyzing sociopolitical processes arising from the complex relationships within globalization (Rosamond 2003).

One of the categories employed in IPE and international relations to better understand the contexts for the state's application of Economic Intelligence, is the level of autonomy at the moment to make decisions. While it is true that the decisions made by a state will be executed in relation to its interests as well as the potential effects on the society it represents, it is also true that this premise can be ambiguous and inexact due the nature of the actual international environment. Generally, the state is considered as a rational actor, and its decisions are independent of what may be decided by any other actor; but that perspective becomes ambiguous according to the level of autonomy that the state has to reach a specific decision that does not depend entirely on the country itself. In this perspective, states objectives and interests are mixed with other actors, resulting in the necessity to evaluate decisions in a different way (Abdelal 2009).

Therefore, as a result of commercial exchange and the multitude of actors that are part of the international economic system, countries cannot make decisions in a totally independent manner, as the consequences of these decisions have an impact that extends beyond their borders (Kirshner 2009). Thus, it is possible to make a relationship between Economic Intelligence and IPE, as the decision-making process entailed in reasoning from the perspective of Economic Intelligence cannot be separated from the criteria that are considered in other spheres, especially the private sector. Accordingly, decisions of a country find themselves subordinated to the reactions of other international actors, minimizing the role of the state. This may cause a certain level of confusion with respect to the use of Competitive Intelligence, but it is evident that the influence of IPE within the field of Economic Intelligence reinforces the role of the state regarding the comprehension of international political phenomena. But in this matter, it is necessary to incorporate other analytical tools that are ascribed to private business but without giving them a primary role in the process (Díaz 2016).

Economic Intelligence observes and analyzes the positioning that states may have within regional and global markets. Considering that countries are located and operate inside the international global system, Economic Intelligence could allow them to strengthen their performance

or to maintain the necessary safeguards against eventual critical situations or threats. However, the fact of making decisions, or even not making them, would imply a change of perception regarding the state. Therefore, if a country seeks to project an international image that helps it gain a better position with respect to different markets, the information and data that it compiles could amount to be a before and after, in terms of the projection and materialization of its national objectives and interests (Olier 2013).

Having accurate knowledge of previous conditions, along with the necessity of being able to interpret updates and transformations to regional and international scenarios, constitutes one of the substantial factors of Economic Intelligence and its relationship with IPE. An adequate process for diagnosing international context, always from the economic-commercial point of view, implies a political strategy, but the process of collecting information from different sources does not necessarily mean that a decision is made in the short term because actors or countries often act in a shifting manner within the international economic system, when they directly or indirectly signal their interests and objectives. In these situations, Economic Intelligence becomes a great resource for monitoring and take early alerts, in order to states have available to increase the certainty of their decisions and fulfill their goals (Olier 2016).

As has been mentioned, Economic Intelligence is a tool that is functional to the institutions of a country immersed in a complex international context. Thus, Economic Intelligence tries to be an assistant or a guide to reduce the uncertainty of strategic political decisions, but it also offers a structure of analysis that can warn about the potential relationships between entering certain international contexts and the consequences of these decisions on national politics. That warning capacity places the theoretical and methodological discussion of IPE in a key position because of the role of political culture in the composition and understanding that or gives form to the Economic Intelligence process and its relationship to national development (González and Larriba 2011).

#### **Box 48.3 The use of Economic Intelligence: Spain as a case study**

Spain's case is a very interesting model of example because that country saw the necessity to expand their "country brand" beyond European surface. But at the same time, the different governments, since 2011, understood that the past model of security to the country should not be able to confront threats in the new international and regional context. So, in order to connect both perspectives, the Spanish government created a Strategy of National Security, including the

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Considering this perspective that links development with the process of Economic Intelligence is where it's possible to find a bridge between these two notions. That interaction offers some analytical surprises. For instance, a country that achieves moderate economic growth or an eventual better positioning within the international markets does not necessarily bring about a positive evolution in its levels of development (Blyth 2003).

Economic Intelligence, used in conjunction with an explanatory framework coming from IPE looking to safeguard the interests and objectives of a country, also maintains a strong political and social component. With it, the development notion becomes a part of an evaluation of the objectives and interests of the state as well as the process that should be carried out to achieve these goals. Economic Intelligence substantially affects economic security and sustainability of a country and, in turn, plays a role in the state's perspectives on developing itself and protects its population (Díaz 2016; Olier 2016).

These conceptions about the autonomy that may exist in making a decision within the international economic environment, the level of impact that a decision has within the Economic Intelligence process, and the incorporation of non-economic elements but it has a significant influence on a nation's economy, such as development, are keys to explain Economic Intelligence. In this sense, it is necessary to obtain explanatory and analytical categories to enlarge the discussion between disciplines. In that perspective, IPE provides a theoretical context to understand the mentioned categories. The impact of this reasoning can be seen in

Table 48.1.

concept of Economic Intelligence. In this case, despite the protagonist of the armed forces or national police in the maintenance of internal and external security, private actors also have a role to play in Spain's security. This perspective considers Spain's economic environment as an opportunity, but also as a considerable threat, if the government does not take actions to promote their national interest in different levels. Nevertheless, to do that, Spain's decision-makers had to think

differently, from a security–military paradigm to a broader perspective, where economics is one of the main elements to achieve security and, most important, a better level of national development.

In a country historically beaten by terrorism as a Spain, with groups like ETA, this change of thinking was a huge movement, not only in terms of institutions but also in expressions of international positioning. In context, Spain's Strategy of National Security includes Economic Intelligence, as a tool to achieve international objectives, and in that way, increase their perception of security to maintain levels of development according to the needs of their society.

*Table 48.1 Impact of IPE in economic intelligence*

*Decision-making process Positioning and international projection*

*Elements and analytical process*

Economic Intelligence Relatively autonomous The process implies an improvement to the state

Economic, with a link to security aspects

Economic Intelligence and IPE

Subordinated to the behavior and decisions of other actors, including those within the state

Recognized as a process that can generate negative effects

Economic, political, and social, among the most relevant

*Source: Authors' own elaboration.*

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The previous classification is not absolute or definitive because the diverse interpretive perspectives of IPE can generate constant changes in the notion of Economic Intelligence, specifically when this last concept is considered as a field of study itself (Balaam 2013). Through the precepts of Economic Intelligence and the postulates derived from IPE, it is possible to observe different concepts that serve as axes or bridges between both disciplines. That is one of the main challenges that the link between Economic Intelligence and IPE generates, to achieve a better theoretical comprehension of the international context and also the actions and decisions of the states.

### **Conceptual hinges: geoeconomy, interdependence, and security**

Given that IPE establishes new categories and contributions for a better understanding of Economic Intelligence, it becomes necessary to specify the links and areas between both disciplines.

The first area is related to centering the discussion on those aspects in which IPE directly influences the interpretation of Economic Intelligence. On this level, the “conceptual hinges” permit a better understanding of the implications of both Economic Intelligence and IPE on the analysis and decision-making process that accompany the execution of intelligence in any country or even in a corporate environment (Rivera 2012). But also the implications of the “conceptual hinges” are translated through the meaning of positioning on both a territorial and spatial level that a state has with respect to the international economy (geoeconomy), the grade and nature of the dependence it has on other international actors (interdependence), and finally, the protection that could be provided to society through the utilization of Economic Intelligence (security).

The second area is related to the use and meaning of the concept “hinge,” considering two

elements. First, that concept could serve as a joining axis, with the capacity to be deployed in two or even more fields of knowledge, addressing shared objects of study and multidisciplinary commonalities. In this sense, IPE and Economic Intelligence present the challenge of theorizing and analyzing specific fields of study on a macro, middle, and micro level. And in the second place, the concept “hinges” also recognize the interrelationship between IPE and Economic Intelligence, permitting the modification and broadening of traditional conceptualizations with enhancements such as studies related to globalization, the state, transnational organized crime, international relations, security, and politics. Thus, the challenge grows because new perspectives of thought for each of the mentioned disciplines generate greater levels of complexity in the fields of study themselves, as is reflected in

Figure 48.1.  
Interdependence  
Goeconomy  
Security  
International  
Political Economy  
Economic  
Intelligence

*Figure 48.1 “Conceptual hinges” between IPE and economic intelligence*  
*Source: Authors’ own elaboration.*

Another relevant point related to Economic Intelligence is that the concept of the hinge cannot be understood without the presence of distinct disciplinary components. According to that premise, it is necessary for a better understanding of the of the field to take into account the multiple bridges inside each group; but at the same time, each group cannot be observed as an independent element because, in its complexity, it needs to have a relation with the other discipline. In other words, IPE and Economic Intelligence cannot be conceived as a singular and unique perspective of thought. Thus, for instance, elements and processes that share a basis of geoeconomic analysis can be applied to understand aspects related to a country’s level of interdependence with others, or even if the entrance of certain international commercial and economic actors into a territorial space could signify a threat from a state point of view. A similar situation happens with the perspectives of interdependence and security, which acquire a multifaceted perspective within the contexts of IPE and Economic Intelligence, at the moment to know their scopes in the decision-making process.

Geoeconomics is the first term related to the “conceptual hinges,” which can be defined as a field of study that takes as its main research object the influence that economics instruments have within the understanding of territorial spaces (Olier 2012). In this sense, geoeconomics’ perspective of a particular country will have the international system as a principal context to apply its decisions, derived from the international market logic and from different actors that intervene on it. However, the main element derived from geoeconomic positioning is the use of territorial dimension to achieve a better place within the global economy (Blackwill and Harris 2016).

Upon establishing a link between IPE and Economic Intelligence regarding the concept of geoeconomics, it is possible to establish some union points. First, an adequate diagnosis derived from the Economic Intelligence process can help countries decide how to invest or promote their interests, reducing or increasing interdependence, taking into consideration the economic and commercial environment. Geographical location of countries and their involvement within the global economic system should not be ignored, not only for the distances and time required to transfer goods but also principally for the creation of strategies that facilitate access to the exact sites that offer relevant economic value. One of the main examples in this part is the eventual decision to improve port and airport infrastructure, taking into account the capacity of the economy to increase its importation and exportation levels. In the same line, the projection of a territorial space can offer some value for a particular economic activity, such as islands, straits, or even determined regions with strategic benefits (Baracuhy 2019).

Another point related to geoeconomics that establishes a hinge between IPE and Economic Intelligence involves the establishment, amplification, or cancelation of regional integration agreements in the commercial sphere. When considering an international negotiation related to

a regional project, the geoeconomic implications for any country are modified as a consequence of that international agreement because the territorial perspective is extended from a local/national market to one with regional qualities. Nevertheless, even under that point of view, the geoeconomic perspective of a country change in terms of territorial projection, considering that although a state may have a perspective toward a regional space in particular, when it takes the decision to jointly to a specific integration project, that vision can change due to the interests of the regional bloc (Vivares 2018).

The geoeconomic perspectives of any country are tied to the notion of interdependence. In general terms, interdependence can be described as a process that has a somewhat paradoxical double vision. On one hand, it is understood that mutual dependence and collaboration helps to prevent conflicts between countries. But on the other hand, interdependence incentivizes the conflict points between actors involved in the process, as a result of exposing some vulnerabilities of the state, increasing the perception of insecurity. In other words, there is a consequence of transparency in a relation among states and the possibility of a threat when that mutual trust is betrayed (Mastanduno 2012: 220).

Without judging the different theoretical and analytical considerations with respect to interdependence, the direct relationship that concept has with IPE and Economic Intelligence stems from the state's necessity of knowledge in order to increase or decrease the levels of commercial and political relationships with a country, or even with a specific regional area. Determining the capacity of a state to reduce its levels of dependence toward a group of countries requires passing through an initial detailed study from the Economic Intelligence perspective because the consequences of a bad decision in that area can negatively affect national development. Therefore, Economic Intelligence becomes a tool that can establish parameters in the decision-making process, considering that may result in an increase or decrease in mutual dependence. Nevertheless, the consideration of interdependence goes much further than increasing or decreasing the process of interchange of goods and services in the commercial sphere. The concept implications also have repercussions in the complexity that can be seen in the relationships between countries, or even in specific areas such as economic and commercial segments, where it is possible to see outcomes on a political, cultural or social level. Under this logic of thought, although the perspective of interdependence can affect different areas of a society, in general terms, the state is the institution charged with observing the evolution of consequences, both negative and positive, of interdependence process. In this sense, the state can be interpreted as an institution to tries to resolve conflicts and, at the same time, finds a way to improve levels of social development (O'Brien and Williams 2007). Besides, although there can be multiple observable consequences of interdependence on distinct societal areas, there is a tendency to link interdependence with a commercial architecture in which the principal effects of the process express themselves. Thus, the state, by means of its institutional capacity, can help to establish permanent parameters that evaluate the level of interdependence and autonomy in its decisions.

The relationship between IPE and Economic Intelligence, through interdependence, for more complete comprehension, it is possible to present under a double perspective. The first perspective is related to IPE and the parameters around the composition of the international system, especially in commercial and economic aspects. In that way, interdependence becomes an area in which Economic Intelligence can be deployed to evaluate eventual consequences of the link with a determined number of actors, always considering the positioning of the state in a commercial context. In second place, Economic Intelligence can help to make decisions about the need to increase links with one or many countries, for which it becomes necessary to establish clear and pertinent objectives about the role of a country or corporation in the international economic and commercial system. But also, Economic Intelligence allows the deciphering of a better diagnostic, considering current and future needs of the state, without forgetting that the principal objective of that discipline is to increase the perception of security to obtain a better development.

Finally, the last hinge between IPE and Economic Intelligence is related to security. But in this sense, security is understood from the perspective of the necessity to safeguard the objectives and interests of the state, despite the complexity and amplitude that the concept mentioned

implies. Thus, the notion of security does not have a traditional meaning when it comes to establishing a link between Economic Intelligence and IPE given that these disciplines offer a wider view of the phenomena and processes that affect the security of societies. Accordingly, this broadening not only carries with it an understanding of the behavior of security actors, as the role of armed forces or national police, but it also incorporates other actors that, although they may not be security oriented, participate in the process of security as a part of the state (Dent 2009).

It has also been observed that, when incorporating notions of IPE and Economic Intelligence within the composition of security institutions, the broadening also involves new parameters to analyze the contexts in which a country is involved, principally from an economic and commercial perspective. This can be explained because institutions and their actors require technical and scientific specialization beyond the classical security understanding. But at the same time, that specialization helps to articulate a better security system in all institutional capacity of the state, despite the monopoly of the legitimate force used by traditional security actors (Morgan 2007). Thus, it becomes necessary in this hinge to incorporate new actors within the logic of the state for the adequate management and implementation of a diagnosis, which incorporates economic and commercial processes, and a multidimensional sense to the traditional concept of national security.

New outlines, parameters, and theoretical concepts of IPE should be evaluated with the tools provided by Economic Intelligence. In this way, the hinges create links between themselves, in addition to establishing scenarios and guidelines that in turn generate a need to connect the aspects of the interaction between these two disciplines.

## **Conclusions**

Talk of “conceptual hinges” is not only confined to covering vocabulary and terminological precision; it also generates an approximation to the different processes that emerge from a conceptual discussion between IPE and Economic Intelligence. On this point, although some specific linking elements are established, that cannot be considered as an inclusive exercise; the disciplinary relationships between IPE and Economic Intelligence can even be understood through processes such as the declining relevance of the traditional concept of national sovereignty and the intervention of non-state international actors beyond traditional westphalian-state borders.

It is important to mention that the “conceptual hinges” give the green light to understand that a state, beyond its intended model of development and its ideology, must consider the action and consequences of Economic Intelligence in its regional and international projection. This can be understood under the prism of the different guidelines that the state plans and considers, to takes strategic decisions in order to reduce the risk factors and vulnerability. And in this sense, the intelligence and security apparatus should be prepared to warn about any threat to the state plans.

Thus, states and also corporations cannot avoid the use and interpretation of both disciplines in two relevant aspects. First, given that IPE is a discipline capable of analyzing and theorizing about implications of development for society and the state, it opens up points of intervention for the categories coming from Economic Intelligence that incorporate the study of the motivations around decisions made at the highest level of the state. Second, the incorporation of IPE to the matrix of analysis of intelligence through the “conceptual hinges,” opens the door to a cultural process related to the “demystification” of the intelligence functions associated with spying, secretive, infiltration, and conspiracy. From this point of view, Economic Intelligence, while it looks to provide a perception of greater certainty, security, and autonomy within the decision-making process, does not have a direct relationship with the traditional conception of national security.

Recognizing this situation, especially in countries that have a conflicted past when it comes to the function of intelligence, opens up possibilities of creation and the legitimacy of new analysis to understand development under the complex, shifting, and asymmetrical contexts related to globalization. The “conceptual hinges” also help the construction of a direct bridge

between academic discussion and putting into practice these reflections in internal and foreign policy.

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