
Problems and Perspectives of Economic Intelligence Nowadays

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Abstract

Acquiring knowledge, that is, finding the necessary information, leads to knowledge about the subject of interest. This creates the capability of moving towards the set goal, in every area of work, action and activity, both of the individual and of the organization which one belongs to, of any level, structure and form of organization (nation, state/country and other forms of social organizations). The genesis of the concept of business intelligence indicates that it has its source in the total awareness/intelligence, and as the result, purpose and product of the intelligence activity. Such activity is also followed by the problems which arise from its implementation. In regards to this activity, which also includes espionage (illegal activity focused on secret information which is protected by somebody), business intelligence is legal and ethical activity, focused on the public, open and accessible information. As the other intelligence activities, business intelligence is also focused on the future, which also implies the possession of information about someone's intentions. The perspectives of economic intelligence are reflected in this. Therefore, as the subject of research, by applying the method of synthesis and description, as basic, and the method of abstraction, as auxiliary, the paper points out the problems and analyzes the perspectives of business intelligence in modern business and security circumstances, with the intention of achieving the goal of this paper, i.e. answer to the question: Is it possible to give an answer about the future intentions of the competition on the basis of the public information available to everyone, which mainly concerns the present?

Keywords: intelligence, espionage, economic espionage, information, competition, market

Problems and Perspectives of Economic Intelligence Nowadays

All societies in the world, regardless of the social organization, i.e. arrangement or the level of development of economic, political, cultural or other goods, are subject to a certain form of endangerment, which carries a greater or lesser degree of danger to their survival and development, i.e., their security. Because of this, a pessimistic view of the process of globalization and interdependence also arises, that such processes will not lead to international cooperation, but to competition. Globalization benefits the developed countries, and limits the perspective of less developed countries, leading to new inequalities and deepening of the gap between the rich and the poor.

One of the main reasons for underdeveloped countries to lag behind is the inability to adopt new technologies, which are the catalyst for world affairs. In this manner, technology solves some problems, but also creates new ones. In history, no generation has faced, as today's generation, such form of random violence, which was enabled and made available by modern weapon technology.

What kind of world order awaits us in the future? The very beginning of the 21st century already announced that there will be major changes in international relations: the return of Russia to the world stage, strong, first of all, the economic strengthening and influence of China on a global scale, the European Union facing significant identity problems, the financial and migration crisis, the evident decline of the influence of the United States of America and the strengthening of Islamic fundamentalism, which produces international terrorism on the widest scale. These processes encouraged theorists to deal with the emergence of the new organization of international politics. In this manner, some claim that new bipolarism is being born (Stepić, 2018, p.619), while the others are closer to the opinion that an era of multipolarity in international relations is emerging (Proroković, 2018, pp. 116–124).

Bipolar world no longer exists, but it will not be replaced by the

unipolar world empire either, which will alone control important trends in the development of human society. The world, from an economic point of view, is already multipolar, and as the information revolution advances and interdependence increases, and transnational actors on the international scene become more and more significant, there will be dispersion of power.

Today, in most developed countries, the economy is becoming dominant, to such an extent that it has become the basis of the power and influence of politics, and thus of the state/country.

In the conditions of globalism and global market competition/game, the economic development of one country is significantly conditioned by the business opportunities and economic circumstances of other countries. Finding out the acquired experience and knowledge of others, recognizing and perceiving business possibilities for one's own economy in such market, becomes crucial not only for the economic, but also for the overall development of one's own country. In such circumstances, economic intelligence is becoming the starting point, and thus the basic point of positioning of economic entities on the domestic and international market. Its importance has long been recognized in business practice around the world.

It is indisputable that by analyzing public and the information which is available to everyone and observing former and current processes and events, the answers can be given about the future moves of the competition. However, such answers, although they may individually have a significant degree of probability of realization, only they offer a representation of different scenarios. The practice shows that accurate information about the future intentions and business moves of competitors can only be obtained through the "human source", the so-called insiders, i.e. people within a competing company who have such information at their disposal or from the people who are in contact with them. It is this hard-to-find information that is often crucial. Due to this, an additional question is being asked; is this open, public and the information accessible to everyone? Surely, it is not. It is obvious that directing business intelligence to that spectrum of information implies entering the "gray zone".

Finding out the right and complete information in time results, in the end, in good positioning and business advantage on the market. With this intention, economic intelligence is approached, as the process of collecting business information and acquiring knowledge, which enables important business opportunities to be noticed before others notice them, with the aim to gain a business advantage over the competition. In regards to the collection of business information through the application of economic intelligence, it is also important to recognize the existence of economic espionage, as an activity in the "gray zone" with the same goal, and clearly demarcate them.

In contrast to the global and regional environment, which dedicate great attention and importance to economic intelligence, allocating significant material resources and training people for such activity, here we do not recognize the loss of important information as a problem, nor is it considered a major damage. "It is mistakenly believed that information has no material value, because it is not a tangible object or a material good" (Stajić, 2011, p. 241). Approaching this subject of research, the intention is to look at the problems which follow the practice of economic intelligence, but also the perspective of such intelligence activity in modern business operating conditions.

From the structural point of view, the subject of research is divided into two mutually interconnected units. In the first part, the problems which follow business intelligence as the activity are approached, which is being connected to the second part, in which the perspectives of this activity are analyzed, primarily at the company level, but also at higher levels of social and state organization.

From the methodological point of view, by approaching such subject of research, in the paper, several basic and auxiliary scientific methods were used, in the manner in which, as the basic scientific methods, the method of synthesis (the procedure of scientific research by linking, connecting and unifying) and the method of description (description in order to obtain precise information in order to fully define the observed phenomenon), and

the method of abstraction were used (highlighting the main thing in the subject of study and separating it from the unimportant) as an auxiliary scientific method, in order to show the importance of business intelligence, the problem that follows this activity, finding possible solutions, as well as showing the lack of perspective not only for business, but also for overall state development.

By spotting the exceptional importance that business information and timely and complete intelligence have for the economic/business life not only of one state, but also in wider, international business framework, in the following presentation, with the review of the available literature and in the scope/volume required for the creation of the expert paper, as the subject of more detailed consideration, the problems and perspectives of business intelligence are taken, in order to, within the scope of the concluding consideration, briefly refer to the spotted observations about the importance of the activity of business intelligence for modern business operations as the activity which is gaining more and more significance in the process of economic strengthening of our country.

Business Intelligence – Problems

Finding something out/learning and acquiring new knowledge is permanent feature of human and overall social development. As an activity, intelligence is an indispensable part and important element of state security and building the economic strenght of the country, and thus an important factor in the positioning of the country towards other countries and other international entities.

Today, the world's leading countries are waging economic wars for the sake of market and territorial positioning in comparison to all other economies, especially developing countries. The main goal of all participants in this process is the economic conquest of parts of the world market.

The continuity of striving for greater interstate influence also includes the intention of appropriating other people's technology as an "upgrade" and strengthening one's own economic and thus political power.

With that intention, knowledge is also obtained through aggressive approaches to universities. Recruiting university personnel has become common and continuous activity of intelligence services, both at the state and company level. Thus, this type of scientific staff becomes key resource in scientific and technological research and development.

As part of the business process, economic intelligence is the activity which companies plan, organize and implement in order to take or preserve their market position.

Business knowledge acquired in this manner, through the analyzes obtained from the collected data and information, there is also "the power of the state built, essentially, on knowledge and information technology, so, in the context of the new economy and the new world order, knowledge will become the primordial basis of economic power" (Petrović Piroćanac, 2005, p. 161).

The progenitor of the term economic intelligence, Dr. Stevan Dedijer, considered it crucial for economic development to connect the collected information and, on the basis of the knowledge thus acquired, to recognize the further development processes (Petrović Piroćanac, 2005, p. 173).

At the time of the "easier" access to information and numerous business data, by their processing and analysis, companies come to the opportunity to shape their business environment and "adjust" the business competition to act reactively or to remove from themselves the circumstances that should cause companies to react in such a way to actions of its competitors.

Contemporary business practice arguably shows that it is often very difficult to draw the line between legal business-intelligence activities and illegal business espionage. This leads to the problem – the question/issue of the code of ethics, as the professional manner of behavior, which should be applied during the realization of the business intelligence affairs. Different cultural features and positive/current legal regulations, in different countries, show that something that is considered unethical or illegal in one nation or country does not have the same meaning in other countries. Precisely

for the sake of clearer separation of legal business-intelligence activity from illegal business espionage, i.e. attempts to "unify" different national cultural features, as well as avoiding unacceptable acts during the professional performance of business activities in the field of business intelligence, the principles of realizing such activity at the international level are accepted.

The above stated leads to the next problem – the question; have all dilemmas been resolved by accepting the code of ethics or are there still "grey areas/zones"? "Grey zones" certainly exist, and it seems that they will also exist in the future, for the simple reason in which no code can include all future situations, as well as because in such, specific situations, individuals interpret the provisions of this code differently.

Business intelligence is also focused on the research of management personnel of competing companies. Such activity is quite understandable because the managers are subjects who make decisions. Collecting information about them enables us to perceive their psychological profiles, on the basis of which their future decisions are estimated. This implies collecting data about their personality. In this sense, the question of "entering" their privacy, as well as the question of secrecy and protection of their personal information, is justifiably raised.

A special dilemma before business intelligence is posed by the possibility that the company, by realization of the activities from the legal spectrum of this activity, accidentally or indirectly finds out about the business secrets of other business entities. In relation to this, the following question is asked; will such information be used in making one's own business decisions? In accordance with the ethical business code, it would be appropriate for the accidental learning/discovering of other people's business secrets to be the obligation of the new owner not to use them in order to preserve the business integrity of the competitors. Exceptions of acting in business practices show that such an approach is, however, far from the set rule.

An even greater controversy is created by the result of business intelligence. Namely, although this activity is directed to public, open and information

accessible to everyone, the following question comes up; are also the final products of intelligence activity/work like that? Final, business-intelligence analyses, which originated as the result of processing, interpretation and analytical shaping of public, open and the information accessible to everyone, in reality temporarily become secret and available only to business policy creators and decision makers. Their performance/output is visible to others only afterwards.

It is obvious that business intelligence in its comprehensiveness is undeniably useful and necessary for the application in the modern business conditions of the companies operation, but it is also labeled by the series of specificities, dilemmas and controversial issues to which there is no universal and uniquely acceptable answer. Gradual and further studying of the phenomenon of business intelligence and drawing conclusions by analyzing cases from practice will contribute to the creation of prerequisites for formulating complete (comprehensive) theory that can provide clearer answers to the series of dilemmas. The surest way to avoid and eliminate disputed situations is to act "in good faith", respecting national and international norms, professional legalities and the code of ethics.

Business Intelligence – Perspectives

As the intelligence activity which includes the process of legal collection of public and information available to everyone, by ethical means, their analysis, in order to obtain "useful product", i.e. knowledge based on which decision makers can make rational decisions about the further business development of the company, economic intelligence focuses attention on exploitation so-called open sources.

Almost 90% of the demanded information can be obtained from open sources, without the need to undertake illegal activity. "The largest amount of the demanded information is found "close at hand", and which the analyst is qualified, educated and persistent in his work" (Petrović Piroćanac, 2005, p. 11)

Due to the importance of business development, economic intelligence has a multidisciplinary approach in the analysis of collected data and information. To such an extent that neither the geopolitical and geoeconomic facts, nor the cultural or social environment of the area being processed are neglected.

Leading companies give decisive importance and influence to this kind of activity. With the sole aim to obtain the best possible quality information, and thus the decisions made also, in order to gain the advantage over other subjects. An important aspect of such activities is also the collection of information in order to answer business questions: what is happening in the business environment, what is the place and role that competitors have, why certain activities are happening, what can be expected as future business event, what needs to be done in relation to future business events and in what manner to undertake such business activities.

Although this activity, at the company level, is handled by specially specialized services, to them can also be assisted by the "state structure", when it is assessed that there is a national interest. Then the company's interests are equated with this interest, so cooperation with state intelligence structures can bring better market position of the company.

In this manner, the effectiveness of economic-intelligence work in modern business conditions is confirmed, both on the internal and the external plan.

By strengthening its own economy, the country achieves a better international position, and thus acquires a greater international image. Business intelligence as the activity also contributes to this.

The basic meaning of business intelligence refers to the legal collection of business information and data and their forwarding to users in the parent company or the state. In this sense, the motive by which a certain company is guided is to "find any information (because information is power) that will help the company achieve its goals" (Radović, 2008, p. 145). The goal may be to create a new product or imitate a product, develop new technology, increase market share or advantage, etc.

Places where information and data of interest for business-intelligence activities can be found are formal documents (plans, reports, specifications of products and work processes, technical documentation, etc.), sketches of plans and projects, unimportant pieces of paper (invoices, travel maps, napkins, etc.), internal correspondence (meeting minutes, decisions, resolutions, newsletters, etc.), state institutions (authorities for statistical, patent, business and other associations, archives), which collect various information and data from companies, public services (daily and weekly newspapers, magazines, internet), formal meetings (in companies), informal meetings (after working hours) (Radović, 2008, p. 146).

The biggest internal problem that companies have are their disloyal employees, especially those who work with confidential information or on confidential projects. It is very difficult to protect oneself from such employees. According to some studies, in over 70% of the cases, the employees were responsible for giving away confidential information (Golubović, 2020, p. 57).

How the collected information, from different sources or different information from the same source, will be systematized and, based on that, reported certain findings, which are the subject of further processing and analysis, and then handing them over, in the form of useful information, as the "finished product" of intelligence activity, to the parent campaign or the state, depends on the cautiousness, expertise and capability of experts for business-intelligence activity.

In addition to this, the human factor remains an unavoidable companion and point of support and success of business intelligence activity.

Economic intelligence is an instrument without which there is no modern business. As the "business radar", economic intelligence enables companies to conduct their business effectively, i.e. to remain competitive in the market. By managing business information and data, economic intelligence is the basis for the company's management in the process of making final business decisions, whose implementation leads to the achievement of set goals, i.e. the final realization of the company's previously defined business plan.

The question of security of collected business information and, based on it, acquired business knowledge, is no less important than the question of its disclosure, collection, processing and analysis. Therefore, economic counter-intelligence activity, as the defensive side of economic intelligence, aims to protect access and prevent the disclosure of business information, classified by the appropriate degree of confidentiality, to unauthorized persons, i.e. identifying potential threats and risks to the company's business security.

As the activity of periodic nature, economic intelligence includes several phases, which are carried out during the intelligence cycle (planning phase, management phase, collection phase, processing and analysis phase, final report preparation phase, distribution phase and usage phase) (Trivan, 2012, p. 116). Each of the mentioned phases requires careful planning and systematic realization.

Finally, the knowledge thus produced is distributed to the end user, which represents the final stage of intelligence activity. Due to the willingness and readiness of the user to believe or not in the presented document, it represents a very delicate task (Bonifacio, 2019, p. 12).

During the research, considering the presence of this activity at the world level and in the economic systems of the developed countries, the important characteristics of modern business intelligence were observed/spotted:

1. Business intelligence is the starting point and the follower of the economic development of every country that has strategically decided to strengthen its economy and international position.

2. Carriers of business intelligence are business entities, which, with a strategic approach on the domestic and foreign market, position themselves as the indispensable creators of business operations.

3. Within the scope of business entities, business intelligence is organizationally structured as an independent service, which cooperates with all internal and external elements and factors of importance for business operation.

4. Business intelligence in the non-state sector represents an integral part of the entire intelligence activity at the state level, whose mutual connection and cooperation represent the foundation of the economic development of the state and its good positioning towards others, by strengthening the political and military power of the state.

5. Human capital is the unavoidable factor for the success of business intelligence.

6. Business intelligence is legal and continuous activity of collecting, processing, analyzing and producing useful information and data, in the unlimited space and areas of own interest and action.

7. Modern state is the guarantor of the development of the culture of intelligence, in which the awareness of the importance of knowledge and cognition is woven into the system of basic values of the modern social community.

8. Business intelligence is recognized and acknowledged intelligence activity, elevated to the rank of scientific discipline at the world's leading university centers, in which it is methodologically studied, improved and confirmed by the results obtained in practice.

In the light of the above stated characteristics, business intelligence can be viewed in a broader and narrower sense. Viewed in a broader sense, business intelligence represents the subject's competence to timely identify early signals of economic possibilities or threats to the market position or prevent the loss of information and data labeled as secret.

In the narrower sense, business intelligence could be defined as methodologically regulated, permitted by law, ethical and coordinated activity of the intelligence services of the state and non-state sectors, undertaken for research from open sources, collection, processing, analysis, production, transmission, presentation, use and protection of useful business information and data, required for making business decisions to develop and protect the market position of the business entity.

In this manner, we are getting close to two world schools of thought

about business intelligence and its importance for the success of one country. The bearers of these opinions are Konosuke Matsushita, Japanese business magnate, on the one hand, and Stevan Dedijer, a Swedish professor of Serbian origin, on the other hand. Despite the presence of several national views on this matter, Japanese and Swedish understanding of business intelligence are particularly useful examples for emulation, development and positioning of the Serbian state among contemporary cultures of business intelligence.

There are great possibilities/opportunities for the application of business intelligence in Serbia, especially with the realization of specific social circumstances also, such as: determined commitment to the development of the market economy, gauged/weighted influence of state authorities on the economy, prudent/careful openness towards foreign investments and effective control of the participation of foreign companies on the domestic market, improving the efficiency and responsibility of all segments of the legal system and legal regulation of sanctioning unethical forms of behavior of function holders at all levels of state and business organization, support for the development of business ethics and business culture, comprehensive use and protection of communication and improvement of electronic business transactions.

Although the outflow of important knowledge, information and data in Serbia is not yet considered as great damage, with the presence of certain technological backlog, there is still very interesting information for business competition in the Serbian economy. Little or no attention is given to their protection, with the explanation that it is not about money, object or other material good. However, the information about people, knowledge and potentials are valuable (intangible) assets for anyone who knows how to use them and, based on them, create business opportunities for themselves. Such information is of inestimable significance for all serious companies. This is especially when they tend to attract the management staff of the target companies by work engagement, who also bring with them important information and data. By leaving such personnel to them easily, and forgetting to adequately protect themselves from such behavior of the competition, and failing to

take countermeasures, domestic business entities become doomed to business failure.

With the economic recovery, Serbia is becoming very interesting area for various business observations, so the intelligence activity on the economic plan has become intensive. It should be emphasized that foreign business intelligence activity is particularly present. One gets the impression that the foreigners know the opportunities/conditions and circumstances in Serbia better than domestic economic actors and that they have all the necessary information about domestic companies, on the basis of which they create their policy strategy of imposing requirements/conditions, therefore bringing their companies to a better starting position on the domestic market. Knowing the methodology of such activity remains unavailable, exclusively due to the lack of recognition of the significance of business intelligence as the basis for the development and protection of one's own economy and the building of the economic strength and political power of one's own state. And at the root of this intelligence is knowledge as the starting point of the development, strength and power.

In Serbia, members of the state structures of the security services deal primarily with economic intelligence affairs.

As these services are only occasionally introduced to business data and information as indirect products of their primary activity, experts who deal with economic-intelligence activities should be experts, with special and unique knowledge, ethically built and aware of the importance that initial information entails. As an activity that has its own rules, studying economic-intelligence activity, with its breadth of interest, can lay the theoretical foundations and principles of economic intelligence, applicable in practice. The knowledge/cognition gained about the past activities of individuals and companies of the world's leading economies supports such approach.

Conclusion

Historically observed, intelligence activity is encountered already at

the beginning of the development of human society. What's more, the entire development of humanity can be seen as the process conditioned by intelligence. Getting to know the environment, the manner of forming and building social relations, the action and influence of the environment on individuals and society as a whole, the creation and emergence of objects/subjects, recognition of the importance of cooperation, but also the protection of what has been acquired are, essentially, the result of what constitutes awareness/intelligence.

Therefore, the study of the position and operation of economic intelligence, its value determination for today's development of collectivity (society, state, supranational structures and other forms of social organization), but also of individuals, deserve special interest and research. With particular consideration of the possibility of improving the competitiveness of the economy, business stability and security of the Republic of Serbia.

Intelligence activity as an inevitable/unavoidable link in the business decision-making of the business entities appears as the key weapon in the realization of the business strategy within the completely legal framework. This type of activity can also be encountered and found in the economies of all economically developed countries of the world. Besides the state/government sector, conditioned by the competition and the need to survive on the market, business entities also form sectors that deal with intelligence activities.

As the activity that arose from the intelligence area, which is dominantly connected to the state, from the point of view of ethics, economic intelligence is ethical activity, because the professionalism of the experts who deal with it is indisputable today, although ethics has different meanings in different cultures. The professionalism of the approach to this activity also implies ethics, especially when collecting information and revealing information to competitors, in order to avoid identification with economic espionage.

Economic intelligence is public and legal activity, aimed at collecting information from the open, public and the information available to everyone, in contrast to economic espionage as an illegal and secret activity, which is undertaken in order to collect confidential information, classified with certain

degree of secrecy.

As business function with companies of the world's leading economies, economic intelligence confirms its importance by the fact that it is a market worth almost 100 billion US dollars, on which this activity is carried out in more than 95% of cases of obtaining business data and information.

Although its roots can be found in the early period of the development of human society, economic intelligence is, nevertheless, a phenomenon of the new age. In addition to the importance it has in the conditions of global market business operation and globalization relations, where geoeconomics takes precedence over geopolitics, the theoretical framework of economic intelligence is not fully determined. However, as business practice, it is applied daily on the markets of the leading economically developed countries of the world. As such, it is gradually turning into theory, which is systematically studied at the world's leading universities.

By observing the place, importance and role of economic intelligence in the Republic of Serbia, with the inclusion on the world market and connection with foreign business partners, economic intelligence is becoming important business-intelligence activity, although it is still looking for a place in business practice. The fact that domestic business entities recognize the importance of timely and complete business information for market positioning and further economic development certainly contributes to this. With such development of the business environment, in Serbia, also the experts who, primarily, professionally and ethically, deal with the affairs of collection, processing, analysis, reporting, distribution and use of business information and acquired business knowledge are becoming significant, in order to enable the management of companies, i.e. the decision makers of all form and level of organization, proper and comprehensive assessment of circumstances, possibilities and opportunities for purposeful decision-making and monitoring of the realization of the decisions made.

By applying in practice the already present and accepted rules of work and behavior, and especially by the primary use of data and information

from the so-called open (public, accessible to all) sources, and by skilful review and analysis of the collected material, the future moves of the competition on the market can be recognized. This also gives an affirmative answer to the question asked in the said scientific research paper.

Observing/spotting and showing the problems that appear through the practical application of business intelligence, but also recognizing its perspective within this research paper, nevertheless show that their additional analysis and argumentation go beyond the borders and character of this kind of paper. Broad area, such as business intelligence, deserves much more research and scientific work.

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Problemi i perspektive ekonomske obaveštajnosti danas

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Sažetak

Sticanjem znanja, odnosno saznavanjem, dolazi se do obaveštenja o predmetu interesovanja. Time se kreira sposobnost kretanja prema postavljenom cilju, u svakoj oblasti rada, delovanja i aktivnosti, kako pojedinca, tako i organizacije kojoj se pripada, bilo kojeg nivoa, structure i forme organizovanosti (nacije, države i drugih oblika društvenih organizacija). Geneza pojma ekonomska obaveštajnost ukazuje da ona ima izvorište u ukupnoj obaveštenosti, kao rezultatu, svrsi i proizvodu obaveštajne aktivnosti. Takvu aktivnost prate i problemi, koji nastaju njenim sprovođenjem. U odnosu na ovu aktivnost, koja uključuje i špijunažu (nelegalnu delatnost usmerenu na tajne podatke koje neko štiti), ekonomska obaveštajnost je legalna i etička aktivnost, usmerena na javne, otvorene i svima dostupne podatke. Kao i druge obaveštajne aktivnosti, i ekonomska obaveštajnost je usmerena na budućnost, što podrazumeva i posedovanje informacija o nečijim namerama. U tome se ogledaju perspektive ekonomske obaveštajnosti. Zato se, kao predmet istraživanja, primenom metoda sinteze i deskripcije, kao osnovnih, i metode apstrakcije, kao pomoćne, u radu ukazuje na probleme i analiziraju se perspektive ekonomske obaveštajnosti u savremenim ekonomsko-bezbednosnim okolnostima, u nameri da se ostvari cilj ovog rada, odnosno odgovori na pitanje: Da li se na osnovu javnih, svima dostupnih informacija, koje se pretežno tiču sadašnjosti, može dati odgovor o budućim namerama konkurencije?

Ključne reči: obaveštajna aktivnost, špijunaža, ekonomska špijunaža, informacije, konkurencija, tržište