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Occam's Follies: Real and Imagined Biases Facing Intelligence Studies

Author Biography

Dr. Matthew Crosston is the Miller Chair for Industrial and International Security and Director of the International Security and Intelligence Studies (ISIS) program at Bellevue University. Crosston has authored two well-received books, several book chapters and nearly a dozen peer-reviewed articles in venues like the *Journal of Military and Strategic Affairs*, *Comparative Strategy*, *Strategic Studies Quarterly*, *International Politics*, *Journal of Conflict Transformation and Security*, *Journal of Global Analysis*, and *Democracy and Security*. His research agenda continues to address counter-terrorism, intelligence analysis, failed democratization, and cyber war/ethics. Crosston has spoken out across the globe promoting interaction between intelligence agencies that share common interests but lack connectivity, as well as fostering improved collaboration between the academic and intelligence communities. Crosston was named the 2013 Outstanding Instructor by the International Association for Intelligence Education (IAFIE). He has a BA from Colgate, MA from the University of London, and PhD from Brown.

Abstract

More than a decade removed from 9/11 many across the academic and intelligence communities profess the importance for greater collaboration and cooperation. This mutual diffusion of knowledge, methods, and research would ideally produce both a stronger Intelligence Studies discipline and new talented cadres for both communities. The emphasis is not just logical because of the continued relevance of traditional threats, but is also common sense when considering new challenges represented by emerging threat issues and an oncoming demographic crisis: the fast-approaching retirement of the baby boom generation means a new generation of scholars and practitioners is rising now. Developing that new talent, however, has not been nearly as collaborative, cooperative, or smooth as it could be. This analysis examines the problems preventing real engagement and sincere knowledge diffusion between the academic and intelligence communities. These problems go beyond platitudes about confidential materials and top secret clearances, but hint at underlying prejudices on both sides that only exacerbate attitudinal bias. If not overcome this problem threatens to undermine both the capabilities of future Intelligence Community practitioners and the quality of academic community scholars within Intelligence Studies.

Introduction

More than a decade removed from 9/11, many across the academic and intelligence communities profess a need for greater collaboration and cooperation. This mutual diffusion of knowledge, methods, and research would ideally produce a stronger Intelligence Studies discipline in general and new cadres of intelligence professionals more specifically. This article examines the problems preventing real engagement and sincere knowledge diffusion between the academic and intelligence communities. While improved interaction is common sense because of the necessity in countering both traditional and emerging threats, there are significant obstacles facing this collaboration. These problems go beyond platitudes about confidential materials and top secret clearances and hint at underlying prejudices on both sides that only exacerbate bias. More importantly, these issues are not just the legacy of a bygone era, perpetuated by an older generation that just doesn't understand the 21st century. They testify to serious problems that exist when interaction remains limited and partnership is viewed through mutually skeptical eyes. This skepticism pervades both the academic and intelligence communities, creating real and imagined biases across analytical and anecdotal lines. This results in an attitudinal wedge that can only be overcome if more intellectually open and less professionally hubristic attempts to engage emerge from both sides. If these analytical and anecdotal issues are not overcome, then they threaten to undermine not only the capabilities of future Intelligence Community practitioners but could call into question the academic legitimacy of Intelligence Studies as a discipline.

The Analytical Quandary: Formal Challenges to Cooperation within Intelligence Studies

The following section offers insight on the formal intellectual barriers hindering practitioner-scholar interaction within Intelligence Studies. Three aspects in particular are highlighted not because they are the only problems facing the discipline but because of their basic importance overall to how research is conducted and how the field looks not only at projects to pursue but the methods and approaches used to pursue them. Emphasizing such elementary aspects exposes the severity of the problem: if the 'simple' issues are in disharmony, then inevitably more complex challenges only widen the gap between the two sides.

The West and the Rest

One of the increasingly relevant trends over the past several years has been an emphasis on the 'Anglosphere.' This is the contention that the West (which is itself dominated by the US and UK) has a troubling tendency to both view intelligence from its own particular perspectives and push a standardization of such views across the global community without truly analyzing how well a 'one-approach-fits-all' method works.¹ The consequences of this habit are quite damaging and impact both purely theoretical scholarship and applied empirical field work. For example, Western scholars of Intelligence Studies not only disagree on a single succinct conceptualization of 'intelligence,' but many of those definitional varieties fail to address a non-Western reality. The process of performing intelligence outside the Anglosphere is not an exclusively foreign engagement domain, meaning serious domestic security concerns often become subsumed by

¹ Richard J. Aldrich and John Kasuku, "Escaping from American Intelligence: culture, ethnocentrism and the Anglosphere," *International Affairs* 88:5 (2008).

intelligence organizations in such countries. This analytical oversight is relatively ignored by both practitioners and academics alike. The Anglosphere, dominated by states mostly uncomfortable with intelligence activity in domestic affairs, has subsequently dismissed such interference as signs of internal corruption, domestic oppression, or democratic deformity. While some of the cases outside of the Anglosphere can in fact be categorized thusly, the entire non-Western intelligence world should not be painted with such a broad negative brush. Yet many analysts and scholars do just that, thereby closing intelligence off from greater accuracy and exposing it to a higher likelihood of analytical misjudgment.

On the one hand, intelligence scholars are too permissive with multiple definitions. This is to the discipline's detriment as the lack of consensus prohibits diverse research from communicating with each other. This is no small matter as it is cross-communicating research which builds a body of knowledge. On the other hand, they are inflexible when considering aspects of variation not innate to the Anglosphere. This is despite the fact that the inclusion of non-Western domestic factors has real empirical value and would increase the accuracy of intelligence research. Thus, the definition problem is multi-layered: research is framed in a semi-disorganized manner, caused by having too many definitions covering too few cases and there has been a reluctance to embrace a non-Western intelligence reality.²

The consensus problems of scholars are equivalent to the framing problems of practitioners, as empirical frames of analysis for field observations that exclude key information are just as limiting as patch-work sets of definitions. Embracing intelligence as an exclusively foreign-policy domain and not engaging domestic concerns, therefore, creates analyses that miss whole swaths of information, pushed aside as internal security measures or law enforcement issues. Again, for states outside the Anglosphere this is a false distinction: there is no relevant separation between foreign policy objectives, national security priorities, and domestic regime concerns. All of them encompass and influence the supreme priority: the power, position, and security of the state. It matters little whether that is in the global system amongst regional neighbors or at the local level dealing with domestic stability: intelligence is about gaining insight from information, often by any means necessary.

Whether or not Western scholars and practitioners endorse such a viewpoint does not alter the reality of how non-Western states do their intelligence business. Failing to engage them at their level and on their terms provides a cautionary tale that explains how historic shifts can sometimes be missed. This is different from the critiques of fine scholars like Richard Betts, who thought many intelligence failures occurred simply because of too-lofty expectations, or Amy Zegart, who believed meaningful reform could alter the institutional landscape of the intelligence community, thereby making it more accurate and agile.³ Failure to overcome the aforementioned conceptualization flaws, however, means that the concerns of Betts and Zegart can be addressed while intelligence analysis *still* goes analytically astray. Most important here is how neither side helps lead the other beyond their respective conceptual and observational road blocks. In

² Crosston, Matthew, *Dragons and Tigers and Bears, Oh My: Chinese, Indian, and Russian Intelligence Constructs in Comparative Perspective* (2013, forthcoming), manuscript submitted for publication.

³ Betts, Richard, *Enemies of Intelligence: Knowledge & Power in American National Security* (New York, NW: Columbia University Press, 2007); Amy Zegart, "The Domestic Politics of Irrational Intelligence Oversight," *Political Science Quarterly* 126:1 (2011).

essence, they stay out of each other's way. Consequently, this cooperation failure produces research that deforms the body of knowledge (a debilitating error for any emerging discipline) and creates analyses blind to on-the-ground realities (a mortal wound for any intelligence brief).

The Dilemma of Under-theory

The 'under-theorization' of Intelligence Studies is not new. Nearly a half-century ago Klaus Knorr broke it down perfectly:

"There is no satisfactory theory of intelligence – neither a descriptive theory that describes how intelligence work is actually performed nor a normative theory that attempts to prescribe how intelligence work should be conducted...There are beginnings and fragments of such theories...but a fully developed theory or set of theories does not exist. As long as [theory] is lacking, we have no criteria...for judging whether intelligence work...is done well or badly or for specifying ways of improving it."⁴

Discussions about how the lack of a cogent theory for intelligence has hurt not only academic research but also practitioner analyses have existed for nearly a decade.⁵ While this problem flows from the lack of definitional consensus and multiplicity of concepts discussed above, these issues are not solely responsible: at present there are probably less than a handful of scholars devoting any serious research time trying to advance the theoretical strength of Intelligence Studies as a discipline. This is not so much about achieving a critical mass or trying to acquire a specific numerical quota of scholars, but as long as the discipline exhibits a weak level of commitment and curiosity to this issue it will not be 'fully-theorized' any time soon. This matters because an academic discipline without theory will de facto become a simple storing house for data, nothing more. It is the presence of theory that trains analysts and scholars alike to produce information that is internally consistent, logically complete, and falsifiable. This training is what allows us to move beyond simple descriptive inference and achieve more profound causal relationships, which is essential to both communities within Intelligence Studies. Thus, theory is not just an ivory tower conceit but needs to matter to practitioners as well.

It is of course no easy task to create rigorous and encompassing theory in a discipline that so many still view as a largely applied field. It also does not help that much of the 'practical' analytical training done inside of many intelligence communities tends to view the 'academic rigor' associated with theory as a luxury it rarely has time to afford. But the need to break down this false scholar-practitioner barrier is essential for the proper development of Intelligence Studies as a real discipline: the end goal would be applied theory that analyzes what scholars look to investigate with rigor and captures what practitioners strive to encapsulate in succinct briefings. One of the strongest contemporary voices to this need recently wrote:

"These questions – framed in an applied way – get at the core need for a theory of intelligence analysis that explains why some intelligence analysis responsibilities shift over time and why others remain constant. Without that theory, intelligence agencies will inevitably shift resources to the highest threat and reduce resources devoted to other

⁴ Klaus Knorr, "Failures in National Intelligence Estimates," *World Politics* (April 1964).

⁵ Christopher Andrew, "Intelligence, International Relations, and 'Under-theorization'," *Intelligence and National Security* 19:2 (2004).

targets. In other words, to borrow an analogy, they will approach the subject matter of intelligence analysis in the same way that five-year-olds play soccer: everybody runs to the one spot on the field where the ball is, with no thought given to what happens when the ball moves to another spot. This problem of managing resources is a direct outgrowth of the inability to explain or predict these shifts in analytic coverage.”⁶

Breaking down this barrier is really about uniting empiricism with theory, which is a core achievement for any legitimate social science inquiry. In essence, it is seeking answers that can be both intellectually rigorous while being empirically accurate: something Intelligence Studies should consider its Holy Grail. Unfortunately, at the moment, a false debate has been allowed to fester as to what causes the lack of such theory: is it because Intelligence Studies is simply a field that does not lend itself to theorizing or is it because not enough scholars have taken up the drumbeat to work together with practitioners to develop it? This article posits that it is the latter and not the former, which is why greater interactive communication becomes so crucial.

An important off-shoot of this comes from Robert Jervis. He has pushed for Intelligence Studies to consider developing a variety of theories from many different perspectives. This to him is the only way to tackle the unwieldy world of intelligence.⁷ This also carries with it the potential for cross-discipline legitimation. If greater scholarly investment is made to combine the lessons of Marrin and Jervis together, to devote more dedicated time uniting empirical reality with theoretical power while allowing the discipline’s definitions and concepts to be flexible but still accurate, then it seems imminently plausible that Intelligence Studies will not only improve its intellectual grounding but will potentially be an analytical beacon for other disciplines suffering from the same multi-faceted complexity (Human Security, Global Affairs, Energy Security, and Military Studies come immediately to mind).

Finally, keeping faith with its applied nature and practitioner cogency, a suggestion made by Marrin is likely crucial for the development of theory within intelligence studies:

“Perhaps intelligence studies will become more like military studies...as it continues to develop its conceptual and theoretical foundations. Theorizing tends by its very nature to be the product of academia, but over time the concepts developed in academia tend to seep into the world of the practitioners and shape the approaches that are subsequently taken. This is why the military has established its various centers of academic learning; they provide a good place to study the practice of war, develop new concepts that are then worked into new doctrine, which – once they are tested and proven effective – are then taught to practitioners.”⁸

No one questions the real-world relevance of intelligence. If anything the problem has been inverted: working to establish Intelligence Studies as a legitimate academic discipline. That effort, however, has a bitter irony: Intelligence Studies the academic discipline often breeds resentment from the very practitioners it is meant to help. This resentment, however, is not

⁶ Stephen Marrin, “Intelligence Analysis Theory: Explaining and Predicting Analytic Responsibilities,” *Intelligence and National Security* 22:6 (2007).

⁷ Robert Jervis, “Intelligence and Foreign Policy,” *International Security*, 11:3 (Winter 1986-1987).

⁸ Stephen Marrin, “Intelligence Analysis Theory.”

because the academy is of no use to practitioners. Rather, it is that the two sides too often communicate in a manner that shuts down cooperative interaction and drives up animus. This is the crucial lesson to take from this section: if the dilemma of under-theory is ever to be overcome, then it will have to be not just empirically applicable but also part of the operational quiver of the everyday practitioner. If such a theory, or theories, of Intelligence Studies can be developed, then much of the practitioner bias can be surmounted. It would be a first step to move current thinking beyond self-limiting analyses about what intelligence ought to be but is not.⁹

It would also be a respectful refutation of those who argue that the practical nature of intelligence makes theoretical development inconsequential: this study argues that the maximum impact for Intelligence Studies is not achieved going down a path paved by dentists and lawyers, where PhDs and devotion to theoretical strength are unnecessary. Intelligence Studies grounded by theory creates greater depth of empirical meaning and expands the consequential applicability brought forth by hard-earned experiential learning. At its best, this is what theory always does and it is why Intelligence Studies' Ph.D. cousins (including International Relations, Comparative Politics, and Conflict Resolution and Negotiation) invest so heavily in it. Given the various problems hindering the development of Intelligence Studies at present, theoretical maturation would only *enhance* the discipline, not hold it back. Making it more scholarly is not a zero-sum game that results in the degradation of applied meaning and relevance. In the end, the discipline must be acknowledged by both the academic and the practitioner, embracing theory and empiricism eagerly rather than begrudgingly. That acknowledgement only comes through greater interactive cooperation. If done, then Intelligence Studies will be more useful in the field and more impactful on the Ivory Tower. Very few disciplines deftly accomplish both.

Prisoners of Preconception

Anyone who has worked through post-mortems on the Iraq war is familiar with the pitfalls associated with 'groupthink' and preconceptions. Indeed, it is perhaps one of the few modern examples of consensus across American partisanship:

“Of all the methodological elements contributing, positively and negatively, to the Intelligence Community's performance [in the Iraq war], the most important seemed to be an uncritical acceptance of established positions and assumptions.”¹⁰

Some have argued such assumptions emerged from an administration not interested in counter-arguments and alternative information. Others pointed to embedded preconceptions within the Intelligence Community itself, making it impossible to jump off the analytical train once it started rolling down the track. Both camps show the important compensating role academics could play within Intelligence Studies: through formal training academics are meant to be equipped with the techniques to look for and avoid such bias. While this is technically true, it has also been documented that academic 'experts' can be just as much prisoners of their own

⁹ Richard J. Aldrich and John Kasuku, “Escaping from American Intelligence: culture, ethnocentrism and the Anglosphere,” *International Affairs* 88:5 (2008).

¹⁰ Richard K. Herrmann and Jong Kun Choi, “From Prediction to Learning: Opening Experts' Minds to History Unfolding,” *International Security* 31:4 (2007).

assumptions.¹¹ This is especially so when diving into the ambiguous and complex world of intelligence research, where subject matter does not always neatly follow a particular theory or exclusive methodology. Consequently, this work agrees with the simple yet elegant warnings of Herrmann and Choi, who meant to refine analytical thinking and promote learning:

- 1) The temptation to relegate basic judgments about other countries to simplifying assumptions must be resisted.
- 2) Abstract conceptions of power that are so multifaceted and multidimensional that they have no operational traction must be relied upon less.
- 3) Experts, whether academic or practitioner, need to move beyond 'factor wars' designed to show that one favorite causal factor is more important than another, concentrating instead on the combined and interactive effects of multiple factors.

The need to avoid hubris is tantamount for it afflicts both communities equally. Jervis' seminal work on perception and misperception documented how policymakers tended to not subject causal claims to rigorous tests but instead weighed firsthand experience more than they should and engaged in sloppy searches for causes, typically grabbing on to topical events.¹² Intelligence analysts are meant to be trained to avoid such bias but it is clear from the first decade of the 21st century that not every analyst or intelligence agency follows this code zealously. Not to be outdone, some have rightfully pointed out how academic scholars can also bring their own preconceptions to the table: it is not entirely uncommon to find the egocentric academic doubtful that anyone in the intelligence community is capable of having a 'rigorous' idea. Swinging the hubristic pendulum back in the other direction again, some have noted how getting academics 'to write tersely, to focus more on their findings and less on the preambular contextual backdrop, and to venture future outlooks in their written assessments has often proved difficult.'¹³ In short, both academics and practitioners need to think more carefully about their own analytical glass houses before they lob stones in any particular direction.

Despite the already existing rules on both sides to avoid such thinking, preconception that begets misperception that begets faulty intelligence analysis continues to afflict both academics and practitioners alike. The only 'remedies' offered to overcome this problem deal mostly in homilies, such as think smarter, put things together better, and stick with only the preconceptions that are accurate. How to do any of this is left mostly unexplored, of course, except to advise consulting people with alternative points of view.¹⁴ Indeed, perhaps the biggest preconception of all is attitudinal. Instead of finding mutually enhancing connectivity, efforts seem to reinforce working separately but adequately: academics can swing principles of academic freedom and

¹¹ P.E. Tetlock, "Accountability theory: Mixing properties of human agents with properties of social systems," in J. Levine, L. Thompson, & D. Messick (eds.), *Shared Cognition in Organizations: The Management of Knowledge* (Hillsdale, N.J.: Erlbaum, 1999).

¹² Jervis, Robert, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976).

¹³ Bowman H. Miller, *The Intelligence Community-Academic Partnership: Of Smarts and Secrets*, 3rd Annual Patuxent Defense Forum, St. Mary's College, 2008.

¹⁴ Richard K. Herrmann and Jong Kun Choi, "From Prediction to Learning: Opening Experts' Minds to History Unfolding," *International Security* 31:4 (2007).

methodological purity like hammers of condemnation, proclaiming their open source insights more valuable and more accurate than classified materials, while practitioners can dismissively note how academics often bend their own research rules in order to justify heavy financial investments and ensure positive tenure decisions.¹⁵ These accusations are not absent foundations in reality, and indeed could be subjects for their own individual research projects, but their importance here is that they are hyperbolic and only exacerbate the interaction problem.

These problems only intensify in institutions trying to develop Intelligence Studies programs. A small sub-group of institutions known as 'military-friendly schools' have long specialized in degree programs catered to Intelligence Community interests. While not trying to disparage in any way, a major problem has been a tendency to be too heavily imbalanced towards part-time, adjunct 'professional' faculty. There can be no doubt that real-world experience adds depth and detail to a program. When a program, however, is dominated by such, and when those professionals serve only in an adjunct capacity, then the resulting program impact is negative. The critical analytical thinking skills mentioned above are quintessentially *academic* and best taught by terminally-degreed, full-time faculty dedicated to promoting them.

The even bigger danger: as more schools have tried to develop degree programs focused on intelligence and national security, they have followed the military-friendly school model, poaching retired IC professionals to fill their programs with adjunct, part-time faculty without surrounding them in an academic setting. This dominance by practitioners-as-teachers has given a false impression of harmony and an illusory conclusion that the best Intelligence Studies programs need little participation from academic actors and no scholarly foundation. Degree programs infused with professionals but not backboneed by trained academics lessen the impact of professional experience: instead of discipline-rich and theoretically-rigorous applicability, programs are left with a decidedly anecdotal and conversational feel.¹⁶ Telling war-stories in the classroom is indeed fascinating, but it does not adequately train the next intelligence generation, whether they are scholars or analysts.

In sum, the three challenges to academic-practitioner cooperation examined here are by no means an exclusive list of problems. The point was not to break down all possible obstacles. Rather, it was to take three very basic but essential aspects of Intelligence Studies research and show that even the most fundamental levels of collaboration and cooperation have significant barriers to overcome. Intelligence Studies cannot move forward if the two communities that form its bedrock foundation have problems settling on definitions, cannot develop rigorous theory, and suffer from too many hubristic preconceptions. Regardless of whatever career aspirations students of Intelligence Studies have, the discipline's future success will be dependent upon its ability to address these issues at a conceptual, methodological, and theoretical level while still making a priority of empirically-oriented knowledge: those who *think it* are equally important to those that *do it* and vice versa.¹⁷ The above challenges were formal and analytical. To assume these as the most damaging for the long-term future of the discipline would be natural, but

¹⁵ Len Scott and R. Gerald Hughes, "Intelligence, Crises, and Security: Lessons from History?" *Intelligence and National Security* 21:5 (2006).

¹⁶ Matthew Crosston, "The Problems of Perspective: Creating New International Security and Intelligence Specialists," *Homeland Security Today* (December 2011).

¹⁷ Stephen Marrin, "Training and Educating US Intelligence Analysts," *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 22:1 (2008).

misplaced. For there are other challenges, informal and anecdotal, that might end up being the sharper attitudinal Sword of Damocles hanging over the head of Intelligence Studies.

The Anecdotal Quandary: Informal Challenges to Cooperation within Intelligence Studies

The Intelligence Side

This section deals with uncomfortable realities that do not lend themselves to quantitative study or answer to methodological demands. This does not limit or reduce the impact such realities have on the present and future state of the discipline, however. More importantly, few seem willing to deal with these realities and address them in a sincere and probing way. That is why the present work hopes to act as a conduit to help push forward a naked discussion about the informal academic/practitioner relationship problems within Intelligence Studies.

Before diving directly into some of the attitudinal biases and experiential prejudice that can exist between intelligence practitioners and members of the academic community, it will be easier to offer an appropriate parallel: namely, the tension that exists between intelligence operations and analysis. Many on the operational side of intelligence have always feared that analysts would mishandle reports from the field and perhaps even reveal the identity of clandestine sources. Analysts, for their part, have often mistrusted operations officers because they were often deemed ‘devious.’¹⁸ This mistrust was further fueled by a thinly-veiled animosity where introverted analysts bridled at the abrasive personalities typical of operations officers and extroverted op agents snidely dismissed the so-called nerdy desk jockeys.¹⁹ Interestingly, this is akin to the subtle disrespect between Comparative Politics and International Relations scholars in Political Science. Many comparativists will joke how preposterous it is for IR theorists to think they can understand how the world functions and what motivates nation-states when they are usually so loath to look up from their desks to stop crunching numbers and determining statistical relevance. If one wants to achieve a true understanding of how things actually work, then one must be out there deeply entrenched. As the dismissal implies, only comparativists have that passionate experience.

These splits parallel academics and practitioners quite remarkably. Academics on the whole are indeed an introverted group. Even those atypical few who exhibit extroverted personalities rarely compare to the assertiveness necessary to be a successful operations officer in the intelligence community. This is not said as an insult to academics: it is simply an admission that what is required to be successful in the ivory tower is not the same as what is necessary to be successful out in the field for the intelligence community. This simple acceptance has transformed over time, however, and morphed into disrespect from the intelligence side toward academics in general. Scholars perceive this as an experiential arrogance that is damaging to a still-poorly-developed collaborative environment with academia. To be sure, these degrees of disdain will vary from one agent to another just as from one academic to another. So while these groups are admittedly not uniform monoliths, it still does not undermine the basic premise: the fundamental barrier hurting the collaborative practitioner/academic relationship from the intelligence side is a

¹⁸ Arthur S. Hulnick, “What’s Wrong with the Intelligence Cycle,” *Intelligence and National Security* 21:6 (2006).

¹⁹ Ibid.

simple lack of respect for what the academic scholar does and how s/he goes about collecting scholarly information.

Interestingly, if arrogance from experiential advantage often accounts for operations agent bias, then information access is often culpable for intelligence analyst bias. While certainly not all, there are nevertheless many analysts in the intelligence community who divide the world between those with a security clearance and those without, between those who have access to top secret information and those who have to 'wallow' in open source materials.²⁰ Add to this the fact that much of the writing within intelligence has to be more journalistic in style than formally academic and it becomes easier to see why practitioners can find 'rigorous scholarship' to be nothing more than long-winded pontification and simply not applicable.²¹ Allowing writing style and resource access to predetermine value is a dangerous game that can be extremely short-sighted. Bowman Miller powerfully described the long-term consequences:

“[What intelligence practitioners and analysts] fail to recognize is how vast, complicated, and interconnected the world of the 21st century is...Academic and other non-government experts not only provide depth of vision and insight; they also, of necessity, can help ensure some level of attention and monitoring on that huge array of countries and issues which go relatively neglected by analysts and agencies focused on the challenges du jour...Area studies specialists across the nation, most with extended periods of foreign residence and teaching experience along with proven cultural sensitivity and language capability, have their own networks of unpaid, but generally eager and forthcoming, informants...For their part, on the other hand, government intelligence analysts may be lucky to visit their overseas portfolios for two weeks every two or three years and are, in many agencies, banned from communicating with or attending conferences involving foreigners. They often lack the depth of experience, language skills, and cultural Fingerspitzengefühl of their academic counterparts.”²²

There can be no doubt that such a thing as 'classified-itis' exists: it is the tendency to dismiss reports not built upon classified information and not vetted through trusted sources. Consequently, this tendency can make the academic work of scholars seem valueless, as the massive majority of professors do not have top secret clearances and do not base their research on classified materials. It relegates their scholarship into a position of lesser impact and meaning. I can personally attest to this mentality while creating the Intelligence Studies program at my institution: several members of the intelligence community, comprising four different agencies, asked whether it was even *possible* to teach intelligence when top-secret security clearances and access to classified material would not be the admissions criteria for each student entering the program. Even though segments of intelligence today work with open sources, there still seems to be a 'second-class status' designation shackled to it by many.

This mentality misses the aforementioned inescapable fact of contemporary intelligence life: the world has become too complex and varied for any one government, let alone a single agency or

²⁰ Miller, *The Intelligence Community-Academic Partnership*.

²¹ Hulnick, "What's Wrong with the Intelligence Cycle."

²² Miller, *The Intelligence Community-Academic Partnership*.

intelligence community, to monitor all of it continually and effectively.²³ This means there is not only a place of prominence for academics in the intelligence field: their place should in fact be considered critical for the evolution of Intelligence Studies. They are already collecting the data, pondering the problems, and attempting to predict future crises in the areas intelligence professionals want to know about but might not have the personnel, money, or reach to invest in properly. This place of prominence is further justified when examining the new research standards being set for intelligence analysis by the Assistant Deputy for the Director of National Intelligence for Analytic Integrity and Standards:²⁴

- Properly describe quality and reliability of underlying sources
- Properly express uncertainties or confidence in analytic judgments
- Properly distinguish between underlying intelligence and analysts' assumptions and judgments
- Incorporate alternative analysis where appropriate
- Demonstrate analytic consistency over time or highlights and explains changes in judgments
- Demonstrate relevance to US national security interests
- Provide logical argumentation
- Make accurate judgments and assessments

The hope in these standards is in how much they mirror *elemental academic practice* for scholars who try to have an applicable empirical relevance to their work, for those who seek to have their work impact policy and governmental practice. If intelligence analysts begin to assess their work with a similar analytical and methodological framework as academics (and it seems the above standards will begin to do that), then the relationship between them will be built not just upon common subject interests but upon mutual procedural respect. After all, the strongest collaborative relationships in academia tend to be established by scholars who have a theoretical and methodological kinship, rather than simply a subject matter similarity. Such an evolution would be a dramatic improvement from the intelligence side of the relationship. It would not, however, entirely address the collaboration issues holding back the academic side.

The Academic Side

“When you talk to professors about [publishing intelligence-related articles in peer-reviewed journals], they often say, ‘Well, I don’t want to study something as nasty as

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Mark M. Lowenthal, “Towards a Reasonable Standard for Analysis: How Right, How Often on Which Issues?” *Intelligence and National Security* 23:3 (2008).

intelligence: these agencies are overthrowing governments and stealing secrets, and sometimes even trying to kill people. I just don't think it's a very good topic to study.'... In American values there is a widespread suspicion of secrecy, particularly government secrecy, as somehow associated with bad regimes...After all, it is true that here are a set of secret organizations that from time to time cheat, lie, and steal."²⁵

Despite the presence of scholarly journals emphasizing intelligence, the building of Intelligence Studies programs, and the emergence of scholars who wish to focus on intelligence research, an old and powerful prejudice still persists throughout the academic community toward intelligence. Unfortunately, this bias has its roots in real history, epitomized in 1968 by Dr. Earl C. Bolton, Vice President of the University of Cal-Berkeley and discreetly consulting for the CIA, when he wrote that fostering deception about CIA involvement in university projects was justifiable, noting that 'the real initiative might be with the agency but the apparent launching of the research should, wherever possible, emanate from the campus.'²⁶ Even before that low point there has been constant suspicion focused on any interaction between the intelligence and academic communities. Some of the 'lowlights' include:

- From 1955-59, Michigan State University had a \$25 million contract with the CIA to provide academic cover to CIA agents stationed in South Vietnam who performed such jobs as drafting the government's Constitution and providing police training and weapons training to the repressive Diem regime.
- In 1956, the CIA established the Asia Foundation, providing it with approximately \$88 million in funding each year. The foundation sponsored research, supported conferences, ran academic exchange programs, funded anti-Communist academics in various Asian countries, and recruited foreign agents and new case officers.
- The CIA started the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Center for International Studies in 1950. By 1952, the former Director of the CIA's Office of National Estimates Max Millikan became the director of the center. In 1955, the CIA contracted 'Project Brushfire' with Millikan to study the political, psychological, economic, and sociological factors leading to 'peripheral wars.'
- In the mid-1950s, professors at MIT and Cornell launched field projects in Indonesia to train the elite of Indonesian military and economic leaders who were later behind the coup that brought Suharto to power and left over 1 million people dead. The elites trained at the Center for South and Southeast Asian studies at the University of California at Berkeley.²⁷

The point in highlighting this list is not to say it is perfectly historically accurate. Rather, it offers a testimony to the power of perception: starting in the 1950s and intensifying through the

²⁵ Loch K. Johnson, "Harry Howe Ransom and American Intelligence Studies," *Intelligence and National Security* 22:3 (2007).

²⁶ Robert Witaneck, "The CIA on Campus," *Covert Action Information Bulletin* (Winter 1989).

²⁷ Ibid.

Vietnam era an independent grassroots movement swept across college campuses, powered largely by liberal faculty that found no common ground with the intelligence community. More reasons were added on in the 1980s and 90s as to why the intelligence community and American college campuses should not mix: these ranged from the belief that secrecy was antithetical to academic freedom; objections about the IC's supposed use of torture and assassination; efforts to recruit professors and students; and the IC's assumed long-standing role in undermining democratic movements around the world.²⁸ These arguments would remain and form a new 21st century anti-intelligence eruption across campuses in the wake of 9/11, initiated again by mostly liberal faculty suspicious of a perceived invasive push by intelligence agencies into America. But in this emergence there are sharp differences with the past. If the past had accurate assessments of intelligence community objectives and then extrapolated from them for faculty purposes, this new era of indignation makes many inaccurate assessments and then purposely exaggerates the 'successes' of the intelligence community on college campuses. This is important to the present article as this manipulation powers a new generation of academic suspicion towards all things 'intelligence.' Not dealing with it openly means an attempt to heal the sickness from the academic side by treating the symptoms while ignoring the cause.

For example, the economic downturn of 2008 is seen as a fertile planting ground for the intelligence community. The logic states that need breeds opportunism, as a scarcity of funds leads scholars to shift their research questions and suspend ethical concerns about funding sources.²⁹ Quite simply, this is a financial exaggeration: most of the programs that have tried to encourage university investment in Intelligence Studies have been just that - encouragement and nothing more. It is true the intelligence community recognizes its need for new and talented cadres. But it is not true that it has been dumping millions upon millions of dollars into various universities all over the country in order to be able to *dictate* to them the nature of their curriculum, the content of their courses, and rigidly direct faculty research agendas. It may make for compelling headlines but it is not based on substantive evidence.

The Intelligence Community Centers of Academic Excellence (IC-CAE, often scathingly referred to as 'Icky') are another prominent example of this trend. Academic posturing states that this network uses universities to train intelligence personnel secretly within existing programs. Campuses that agree to alter their educational missions to such 'intellectual outsourcing' are handsomely rewarded with funds from the intelligence community. The IC-CAE's true aim, therefore, is to 'bribe' universities with fellowships, scholarships, and grants if they adapt their curricula to the political agendas of American intelligence.³⁰ As the point of contact for my university in a four-university IC-CAE union, the Great Plains National Security Education Consortium, the description above bears no resemblance whatsoever to how the program actually works. None of the four campuses see themselves as outsourced programs being used by intelligence personnel. None have been 'bought off' with an intellectual quid pro quo, changing existing curricula to mirror intelligence community agendas. In fact, the funds are fairly modest and not tied to employment promises. The IC-CAE program is, quite simply, a rather tame effort by the United States government to increase interest in an area of need. It has not resulted in an

²⁸ David Price, "Silent Coup: How the CIA is Welcoming Itself Back onto American University Campuses," *Counterpunch*, available at: <http://www.counterpunch.org/price04092010.html>.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Price, "Silent Coup."

explosion of Intelligence Studies programs or created dozens of classes run by Officers in Residence or forced faculty to lose research because it was deemed classified.³¹

Much of the academic bias percolating around college campuses today is dangerous simply because of how ignorant it is. A few exaggerations here and there can be innocent mistakes. A systematic approach that seems to foster the development of purposely inaccurate myths, however, is something that needs to be actively engaged and defeated. There is no doubt that any program that sought to limit academic freedom, forced students to pursue employment against their will, or deceptively changed the university's curriculum without review from standard faculty processes, should indeed be a program shunned by every college campus. The intelligence community today, partly because of its own financial stresses and partly because of the aforementioned professional arrogance, does not have this as an agenda or objective. What's more, Intelligence Studies is slowly developing a legitimate academic reputation, sitting comfortably alongside long-respected disciplines like Foreign Policy, Global Affairs, Security Studies, Comparative Politics, and International Relations. The 21st century threat environment is changing. The ways of war are evolving. The need for cross-cultural understanding is increasing. All of these realities demand that Intelligence Studies have a place at the intellectual table for both scholars and practitioners. To deny that seat based upon a negative historical legacy that no longer applies or on a contemporary propaganda campaign that is not accurate is the real antithesis to academic freedom.

Before anyone is tempted to dismiss such academic bias as the raving of extremist faculty, representing but a small percentage, be wary: do not discount the possibility that the global war on terror (GWOT) is as potentially generation-defining as the Vietnam War was for an earlier generation of intellectuals. Whether it be legal discussions about the PATRIOT act, moral debates about 'black prisons,' or ethical concerns over drone activity, there is certainly mental fuel available for anyone set on undermining collaboration between intelligence and academia. This issue also goes beyond partisanship: while many view the two terms of George W. Bush as the foundation for newly-born cynicism toward intelligence, there are others who rightly point out that many elements of the Bush national security policy were advancing initiatives first begun under Bill Clinton. In addition, many aspects of the Bush intelligence doctrine have continued under Barack Obama. It is therefore impossible to sweep these issues under a rug of anti-Republicanism. There is a difference between recognizing the flaws in an opponent's logic and mistakenly thinking the opponent is irrelevant: the former will power progress in Intelligence Studies while the latter will cause its regress.

Conclusion: Overcoming Occam's Follies

For a long time it was just an interesting factoid that both communities within Intelligence Studies believed in utilizing Occam's Razor, that research principle of parsimony and succinctness, only with academics following it in the traditional manner and practitioners inverting the principle on its head. Regardless of how it was employed, both communities aimed for the same intellectual end-game: producing powerful, compelling, concise explanations to complex problems that impacted a maximum audience. Unfortunately, this quaint distinction on

³¹ Philip Zwerling, "The CIA Returns to Campus and Resistance Begins Again," *Z Magazine*, available at: <http://www.zcommunications.org/the-cia-returns-to-campus-and-resistance-begins-again-by-philip-zwerling>.

a logic principle was one of the few attempts to explicitly examine the differences and divergences between the two communities, to contemplate why academics and practitioners do not communicate better for their mutual intellectual and analytical benefit. As this piece has elaborated, there are many more serious and immediate problems to engage than trying to decide which intellectual direction to point Occam's Razor.

The key for Intelligence Studies is to not let practitioner arrogance or academic ignorance get in the way of true cooperation that has that rare possibility of being theoretically valid, empirically important, and impactful on policy. Before that cooperation can begin in a truly substantive way, however, a reality check has to take place: there have been attempts to explain the flaws, gaps, and challenges facing Intelligence Studies intellectually, but not attitudinally. Several distinguished scholars have scrutinized it from theoretical, methodological, and empirical perspectives. What has been missing up to now, however, has been a willingness to 'engage the attitudes,' to critically probe the experiential and mental biases endemic to both sides when interacting with each other and, most importantly, evaluating each other's work. Once each side admits and overcomes its own tendencies toward prejudice and preconception, it will then be more plausible to create partnerships based on mutual respect, intellectual freedom, financial independence, and thoughtful curiosity. It is these partnerships which will produce the best intelligence analysis and it will not matter if it is produced in the Ivy League or at Langley, because the work will finally be speaking in similar research tongues and done by colleagues not working at cross-purposes or through petty rivalries.

It is true there have been examples of collaborative success, but nowhere near the level that is needed or possible. In real terms this means the academic community continues to miss high-quality intellectual opportunities to investigate crucially important work in critically important regions of the world while the intelligence community continues to be at risk of missing historical tipping points that will ultimately be characterized as intelligence 'failures.' Working together with common standards, shared methods, agreed concepts, and similar project end goals is what will dramatically minimize these dangers. Make no mistake: in some ways overcoming the attitudinal biases between the actors will be a much harder row to hoe than ameliorating the lack of intellectual evolution within the discipline. This is why the present work does not name names or make lists: that is a meaningless exercise, given the problems faced are widespread and encompassing to the entire discipline. There are no bogeyman programs, rogue agencies, or deviant scholars at which to point a sole accusatory finger. Rather, there is a need to face all the biases, real and imagined, so that Intelligence Studies takes its rightful and unique place in the intellectual pantheon. Only when openly addressing these analytical and attitudinal biases, facing them head on, and eliminating them once and for all can Occam's follies have a chance of being overcome.