Abstract:

A merger of profession and academe in intelligence education, that is professional intelligence education conforming to nationally accredited standards for higher education, has for long been an ‘unresolved problem’ in the intelligence education domain. This paper discusses the creation of a new Bachelor’s degree in Intelligence Studies at the Norwegian Defence Intelligence School (NORDIS). This programme is designed to offer professional intelligence officers, from a variety of Norwegian organisations, the opportunity to develop their academic knowledge of intelligence without interrupting their career progression. It is also designed as a forum for developing a more shared sense of community within Norway’s security and intelligence bureaucracy. The paper introduces the origins of the School, the philosophy that underpinned the School’s work, and the background of the programme. With an emphasis on four core intelligence modules from the ‘academic’ tradition, it also presents the taught elements of the course, ranging from the modules focused on ‘practical elements’, which is described briefly, to the more strictly and traditional ‘academic’ sections, wherein a discussion of the subject matter taught throughout the programme. It concludes with our reflection on the development of the course, and how the vision that underpinned it is being realised.
It started with an idea, and like all visionary ideas this particular one, unlike those resulting from linear and bureaucratic processes, was of course conceived during informal discussions; thoughts were shared and tweaked, and then scribbled down on paper napkins and coasters.

The original idea was that intelligence *operatives*, from different sectors in the intelligence community with extensive experience – deep or broad – would not only continue working in the Norwegian intelligence profession, but would also have the opportunity to advance in their careers. As Sir David Omand says: “Collection of intelligence is a highly specialised set of public service activities that involves maintaining functional organizations able to recruit, train and motivate very different and unique kinds of people.” However, the individuals were often trained on the job and thus often did not have a formal education before entering into the intelligence community. During their careers, many of their home units found it hard to let go of them for several years in order for them to obtain a formal degree. Moreover, although the types of degrees offered at civilian and military institutions would provide them with a degree, the contents of the degree would often be part of a completely different academic field, and thus not necessarily contain topics and approaches that would fit their specific jobs. As a result, sometimes these individuals were passed-by when applying for other positions. Our response was to explore the possibility of a customized bachelors degree programme designed specifically to meet the career requirements of these valued individuals.

Inherent to the idea was the notion that such a programme would help in moulding a more coherent and shared conception of an intelligence *profession*. The lack of one clear identity as an intelligence professional within the intelligence community in Norway could possibly be due to the fact that intelligence can be understood differently between the various organisations. Additionally, the ‘need to know’ principle can create barriers not only between organisations, but also within them. For obvious reasons, very few know what awaits them when they start working in the various security and intelligence services, even though the increasingly open nature of these services in the past few years makes it less of a mystery than it has been in the past. Recruitments are supposed to be diverse, and even though one wants to keep that diversity, it was nevertheless regarded as a strength to instill a sense of a common identity: a profession. This idea has many facets, but one of which is certainly education. In this custom-made bachelors degree programme the professionals were educated in methods and topics specifically designed to meet the requirements of the intelligence community. Some of these requirements were articulated, but
many were not, resulting in professionals-as-students that would eventually become “reflective practitioners”, able to apply a metacognitive perspective on their own practice.

The idea of forming an intelligence profession could arguably be traced back to around 2005 when NORDIS initially began discussing the possibility of combining profession and academe in formally accredited programmes. In the years to follow, this process also coincided with the government evaluations that took place in the aftermath of Anders Breivik’s attack on 22nd of July 2011, and the many official reports that were written. In the subsequent commissioned report, released a year later, a number of critical points were identified: it was pointed out that there was a lack of common understanding of threats; and that although individuals from the defence and justice sector cooperated sufficiently in order to solve the tasks at hand, the organisations themselves sometimes lacked a shared or mutual understanding of their respective functions and limitations, and, consequently, formal cooperation across organisations was not as effective as everyone would like. However, the report did not call for the organisations to reconstruct their structures or roles. The following year a commission looked at how the police was organised and how to improve their working processes, recommended that the police service’s work needed to be more intelligence-driven. This was an acknowledgement, perhaps tacit, of the idea that intelligence is a profession, and one can even argue that the idea of forming a structured intelligence community had planted its seed. Even if not directly linked to the conclusions of the aforementioned evaluations, the NORDIS-process of establishing a programme that would encompass the whole National Intelligence community, nevertheless implicitly responded to the conclusions’ indirect call for a unified intelligence community. This context was the backdrop to the new bachelor’s degree in intelligence studies at The Norwegian Defence Intelligence School (NORDIS).

In 2013 NORDIS was formally accredited by the national higher education authorities, but the NORDIS history originally started out with language courses in 1954. Throughout the years these language courses developed into teaching language as an academic discipline while still keeping in the curriculum the specific context of the intelligence domain and the corresponding language skills required. With the transformation of the language courses into an academic discipline, the contents of the courses were evaluated and approved by the University of Oslo as early as 1976. As a result, the academic influence from the language teachers, as well as the collaboration between the language teachers and the instructors in the intelligence training courses (the latter had strategically begun to recruit intelligence officers with formal academic degrees and were also
in the process of designing a training section and research-informed specialisation course in intelligence analysis), was part of inspiration to the NORDIS Commandant at that time: To establish nationally accredited programmes, first, a combined course for language development and professional intelligence training - now known as the full-time bachelors programme for students recruited from outside the intelligence community, specializing in language and intelligence studies - second, for the new initiative, the study of intelligence as an academic discipline.

With the fusion of professional practice and experience-based knowledge on the one hand, and the high standards of academia on the other, NORDIS was transformed into a nationally recognised university college, formalized through the accreditation received in April 2013, conforming to the articulated requirements of the Norwegian Intelligence Service (NIS), as well as the standards required by the National Authority for Quality in Higher Education (NOKUT), with the overarching aim of bringing the world of academia and the intelligence professionals closer together. The focus of the entire school was to create a programme that looked at the profession not only from the outside (which is the case for many civilian institutions) but also from the inside, which is the case for many professional training institutes, albeit without the rigorous academic standards that flows from a national accreditation. This was also essential in the creation of this particular programme, which aimed to have one foot in the practical world of 'know how' experience and the other placed firmly in the theoretical world of academia, where one has the chance to take the time to reflect and ask the 'why, how come, what if' types of question. With the merging of these views the programme has allowed the students to see where their profession has come from, why it has evolved like it has, and to reflect and debate the defining questions.

Before NORDIS started filling the degree with content it was crucial to structure it in such a way that allowed the target audience to be able to continue working whilst studying. Thus, the programme only required that the students be present in the classroom at the NORDIS campus in Oslo on two occasions, each for two weeks per year. There were three admittance requirements; First of all they had to have a Norwegian Security Clearance. Secondly, the students had to have an agreement with a sponsor in their home unit that meant that the sponsor guaranteed that they would facilitate the time in order to study and attend classes. Thirdly, the students had to already have 60 credits from relevant subjects, in order to show that they had academic ability. This also allowed NORDIS to structure a Bachelors programme with 120
credits over three years, making it bearable for the students who juggled work and school. In order to accommodate and be flexible around individual’s deployment missions, and to create an environment that would seek operational synergies, the school designed the programme with seven modules, four of which were to be standalone modules, not needed to be taken in any specific order.

What is fixed is the first module, taking place in the first and sixth semester, labelled ‘The Experienced Intelligence Professional’. This is a module where the students are allowed to reflect on the more practical parts of their profession. They are given an introduction to a variety of subjects: the role of national intelligence in society with an emphasis on the judicial foundation, as well as exploring how the service is controlled. They also receive a brief overview of the different organisations that comprise the Norwegian intelligence community and explore the different roles and restrictions of the various parts of the security and intelligence services. Furthermore, significant emphasis is placed on the ethics of intelligence and its function in foreign - and security - policy. Throughout the three years the students are given individual assignments and the module is capped with an individual exam, where they reflect upon aspects both of law and ethics in their professional practice.

As a stand-alone add-on module to the introductory module of intelligence-as-profession, the students become familiar with philosophy of science as a foundation for understanding their professional practice. In light of, for example, ontology and epistemology, as well as psychological phenomena such as cognitive bias, they learn that intelligence can be viewed both as art (that is, from an interpretative, or hermeneutical, perspective), as well as a science (that is, from a naturalist, or positivistic, perspective). Regarding the underlying philosophy, the crucial consideration is that the professional task at hand must decide which of these perspectives (i.e., the different ontologies and the different epistemologies) are employed. It is important not to confuse the different types of knowledge that emerges from these different methodological approaches with each other or with ‘true reality’. Regarding the concept of psychological bias, the students learn about the systematic nature of a bias from a cognitive-behavioral perspective. They are encouraged to reflect on the fact that, as humans, they are not perfect sensory-cognitive-judgment machines that decode social phenomena objectively without preconceptions. They instead must always remember that their perspective may distorted by the effects of unconscious bias.
A plenary assignment that has become useful as a tool for understanding ontology and epistemology is the discussion of Santa Claus as a true physically existing entity and Santa Claus as a social construct in the collective minds of children: the two different ontological perspectives of the entity require two different epistemological strategies for acquiring two different types of knowledge. When asked to apply this perspective on the professional practice of intelligence, the students soon become aware of the importance of not confusing knowledge derived from naturalism (positivism, science) with the knowledge derived from interpretation (arts, humanities, hermeneutics) – and vice versa. This plenary assignment may sound like a simple parlour game, but simplicity often works wonders when explaining concepts that are not easily and readily accessible.

Another fixed module, based upon an in-depth reflection combined with continuous distance-learning over the three years of the programme is ‘Practical Intelligence Leadership’. This module introduces the students to a variety of concepts and issues related to leadership. These include general theories of leadership, the difference between governance, management and leadership, and the various, often tacit, leadership aspects in the intelligence domain. These dimensions of leadership are not always specifically covered in the various intelligence literatures. It is therefore of particular interest to reflect upon for the professional’s role in managing collection, analysis and dissemination – and all the people involved in the different stages.

Whereas the aforementioned modules comprise basic elements required in a professional perspective on intelligence (i.e., judicial, ethics, governance, and management, elements that were regarded as mandatory content in a professional program), it was necessary to look outside Norway for content that would fulfil the academic perspective in the programme. This was necessary as the NORDIS approach to intelligence in a professional higher education programme was not limited to intelligence being a component in the study of military power, but as an object of study in itself, and therefore was not part of the traditional programmes in the national defence colleges or the public universities in Norway. In the process of searching for the right combination of scholarly approaches to studying intelligence, NORDIS chose the Goodman-Omand perspective based on the Stafford Thomas typology as regards the academic content in higher education programmes in intelligence. In compliance with the overarching purpose of the programme and the Goodman-Omand approach, with its four distinct perspectives on the intelligence enterprise, visiting professors from King’s College London and the University of Glasgow were asked to become contributors to teaching and research in the programme.
The four modules that they were asked to deliver are flexible and taught every other year, yielding the valuable effect of having two cohorts meeting each other in the classroom. It has been structured after different perspectives in which to view intelligence: history-, function-, structural- and decision makers’ perspective.

**Block 1 - The Historical Perspective**

The first two blocks of the course cover the ‘historical’ and the ‘functional’ perspectives of intelligence. The first block offers students on a broad survey of the rise of intelligence as the activity and institutions of states in the international system, roughly from 1500 to 1945. While the course does introduce the participants to key concepts such as historiography and key skills such as primary source analysis, the main goal is on provide students with the sense of context they will need to reflect on the historical background to their own careers and the agencies they work for, as well as that for the other three blocks of programme. In addition to the academic content, we also offer students a session on essay how to write an essay and how to read scholar articles and monographs. The second block on the ‘functional’ perspective focuses on intelligence as an activity though the whole intelligence cycle, from collection to analysis to dissemination, and its use and abuse as a product. In addition to studying how individuals, organizations and intelligence communities have collected and used intelligence, this block also includes the first of several in-depth discussions of the ethics of intelligence.

Week one of the ‘historical perspective’ begins with two lectures that introduce the students to the historiographical debates in the history of intelligence as well as some of the key epistemological issues and intelligence studies concepts such as the ‘consumer-producer’ relationship. We survey the early modern period: students learn about the dynamics of early modern great-power politics, the rise of the permanent ambassador and professional diplomats, and the influence of espionage and diplomatic reporting in the reign of Philip II of Spain. The students, for example, debate the part played by intelligence in the defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588. We also hold a more general discussion about what ‘lessons’ can be drawn intelligence history based on the work of scholars such as David Kahn, Ernest May and Philip Zelikow. The theme of intelligence and the psychology of command in war runs through the sessions we spend on the Napoleonic period. Here we contrast Carl von Clausewitz’s apparent skepticism about the value of intelligence for the commander with the evidence of the superb use Napoleon and his foes made of timely information at the strategic and operational levels. As we approach the
twentieth century in the second half of week one, the teaching method shifts from lectures to small group work and presentations. Because the students have some background in the history of the twentieth century, particularly the two world wars, we can concentrate on particularly instructive episodes with great contemporary relevance such as the revelation of the Zimmermann Telegram in February 1917, British wartime propaganda efforts in the US and its impact on the US entry into the First World War.

The section on the First World War, which begins the second week of the ‘History of Intelligence’ block, begins by considering the role of intelligence in shaping decision-making in 1914. This is still an area where considerable research needs to be done to build up a clear picture of the way intelligence reporting shaped perceptions among all of the major powers. The background to this question is vital. We begin with a lecture on the evolution of permanent peacetime intelligence gathering bureaucracies within the military staffs of the major European powers. We emphasize the importance of the Prussian Great General Staff system to this evolution.

We then consider the extent to which the emergence of intelligence as a central element in peacetime planning was accelerated by the dramatic impact of both railroads and the telegraph on nineteenth century warfare. The combined effect of this new technology was to transform the conditions of time and space. Railroads changed the speed and scale of mobilization and deployment for war. Information could be transmitted and orders could be communicated at something close to real time. Mobilization and concentration could take place much more quickly and on a much larger scale. But it could hope to be successful without painstaking planning and preparations. This only increased demand for detailed intelligence on an ever-greater range of issues. To meet this demand, the Prussian Staff created two sections responsibility for the collection and organization of information. Crucially, these sections were given responsibility not only for the acquisition and collation of intelligence, but also for its analysis. Staff officers were charged with the preparation of strategic appreciations based on the synthesis and analysis of all relevant information, including received intelligence. This was a major advance from the previous era, when raw intelligence on strategic and operational issues was nearly always analysed by political leaders and field commanders. Another important innovation was the gradual institutionalization of the military attaché. The role of attachés, (military observers accredited to foreign governments) was initially to report on strictly military issues in the state to which they were posted. Inevitably, however, the parameters of attaché reporting expanded to encompass political and economic issues as well. Once again, Prussia led the way in this trend. It appointed
the first attachés in 1816, with other European powers gradually following suit over the next half century.

Great importance is attached in this section to the key product of Prussian General Staff work: the ‘estimate of the situation’. This was the forerunner of what is now known as a ‘net assessment’. Essentially, the Prussian staff system was a response to the changing nature of conflict and the need to manage effectively the ever-increasing volume of information relevant to waging war. Only permanent institutions charged specifically with the ongoing task of information gathering, analysis, and planning, in peacetime as well as during war, could cope with the challenges of strategy in the modern period. All of these were crucial innovations that gave the Prussian army important advantages during the wars of German unification between 1864 and 1871. After the tremendous victories achieved by German military power during this period, the Prussian system became a model for other continental European armies.

The importance of these developments for the history of intelligence is difficult to overstate to our students. Before 1870, foreign intelligence had been an ad hoc affair among most of the larger powers. This is not to say that intelligence services had not existed. They had. But they lacked permanence. By the outbreak of the First World War, however, every major power possessed permanent organizations responsible for gathering intelligence and preparing assessments for decision makers.

We stress that an important but often overlooked consequence of the influence of the Prussian model of staff organization is that the business of gathering and analyzing foreign intelligence came to be dominated by military officials. The result was a militarization of threat assessment that had important repercussions for international relations before the First World War. This meant that intelligence bureaucracies provided decision makers with detailed pictures of the current and future balance of power. But these estimates were not accompanied by similarly detailed political intelligence on the intentions of other actors. The result, we emphasize to our students, was that assessments of capabilities tended to shape assessments of intentions in ways that fed into and reinforced a growing sense of the inevitability of war that was a crucial characteristic of both military and civilian perceptions and decision-making during the crisis of July 1914.
This element of the block is very useful for encouraging students to reflect upon the specific characteristics of ‘military intelligence’ as it is practiced by military officials. Students are encouraged to reflect on the possibility that military officials are inclined to place greater emphasis on questions such as the target’s order of battle and less on what use the target actor might make of the capabilities they possess. We also encourage students to consider the argument that military officials are more inclined towards ‘worst-case’ assessments than their civilian counterparts. This lays the foundations for a theme to which we return frequently over the course of the module and the course in general.

Another major theme of this section of the block is the question of whether the First World War was an ‘intelligence revolution’. There were a number of key dimensions to the transformative character of the war on intelligence practices. By 1918 all of the modern ‘collection disciplines’ were being used systematically to obtain intelligence on the intentions and capabilities of other actors. With the advent of the aircraft and radio communications, war was now waged in the air as well as on the ground and at sea. Imagery intelligence came into its own with the advent of the aircraft and aerial photography, which proved a vital source of information on the enemy order of battle at the operational and especially the tactical levels of war. Communication over the airwaves, meanwhile, led the evolution of increasingly large and sophisticated systems for the interception of radio signals. This was only a part of a wider transformation in the scale of communications intelligence. As the size and complexity of land armies increased on a hitherto unimaginable scale, so did their human and technological systems for communication and for collecting intelligence. The students are asked to take a position on the judgment of John Ferris that ‘the modern age of intelligence began in 1914’.

We then turn to the level of strategy and strategic assessment. The sheer dimensions of the conflict transformed approaches to understanding national power. Armies numbering in the millions remained locked for more than four years in a struggle for national survival that affected every level of belligerent societies. In this new era of mass industrialized war, familiar factors such as demography, industrial power, and financial strength became more important than ever. Added to these considerations were new categories of power, such as access to raw materials or social and political cohesion. We ask the students to reflect on these developments and consider the extent to which they have endured and even expanded since 1919.
The next section of the historical block focuses on the inter-war period. It departs from the observation that virtually all of the great powers, with the notable exception of the United States, entered the interwar period with much larger and better-organized intelligence and counterintelligence services than they had possessed before 1914. A central theme of this section is the interrelationship between both internal and external threats to national security and the intelligence systems that were developed (albeit slowly) to counter these threats.

The case of the USSR is uniquely important to the way this material is taught for two reasons. First, it in many ways embodied the inside/outside character of security threats in an aged of highly-charged ideological struggle. Second, intelligence played a central role in the functioning of the Soviet state from its very beginnings. The Cheka, founded in the dire circumstances of Russian Revolution and civil war, quickly evolved into the central organ for both internal security and foreign intelligence collection. It acquired, and retained, more extensive powers than any other secret service until the rise of the Nazi regime. The result was that there was no independent Soviet foreign intelligence service. The other agency responsible for exclusively foreign collection was the intelligence department of the Red Army. The result was that the search for foreign intelligence was integrated into the vast Soviet state security and intelligence machinery that, by the mid-1930s, controlled the sprawling empire of slave labor established by Stalin’s regime. Students are encouraged to try to imagine the effective functioning of the Soviet State, certainly the Stalinist State, without intelligence.

In this way, our teaching seeks to illuminate the central role intelligence agencies have played in the oppression of political freedom. This sets up the subsequent discussion of the role of the various security and intelligence services in the consolidation and expansion of Hitler’s National Socialist regime after 1933. Links are also made to the role of secret police agencies in other national and historical contexts, from Rome through to the French Revolution and Napoleonic regimes. This, in turn, lays the groundwork for subsequent teaching of both intelligence functions and intelligence ethics.

There is also a full-day section on the role of intelligence in the British and French policies of appeasement during the mid to late 1930s. This section allows us to explore the concepts such as bureaucratic rivalry and the politicization of intelligence more generally. We consider the role of these phenomena in the systematic over-estimation of the performance of the Nazi economy as well as the growth of German land and air power from 1936 through to the summer of 1939.
as well as the role these flawed assessments in underpinning the policy of making concessions to Germany. This material is also useful as a case study of the formidable challenges in the way of assessing economic power and the related question of industrial production. Assessments of German aircraft production are an excellent example of these challenges. This sets up subsequent teaching on the subject of economic intelligence in general and estimates of Soviet economic power in the 1970s and 1980s.

Another important theme in this section of the block is the evolution of machinery for economic intelligence gathering and intelligence sharing and joint assessment across various departments and services within national contexts. Both the French and the British security establishments created organs for the assessment of economic intelligence. In both cases these organs were situated initially within the machinery of strategic policy-making. In both cases they drew overwhelmingly on open sources. This discussion provides an excellent basis for discussing the long history of systematic exploitation of open source information to support decision-making and strategic planning. Just as important is the material we use to teach the students about the creation of mechanisms of ‘joint assessment’ in France and especially in Great Britain before the Second World War. This helps establish the foundations for a more detailed and sophisticated understanding of the evolution of joint assessment as a practice.

Given the great importance of the Second World War to the foundation of Norway’s intelligence community, we spend two days on that period and its legacy, with an emphasis on ‘warning failures’ and surprise attacks. We compare the German surprise attack on the Soviet Union in June 1941 to that of the Japanese surprise attack on Pearl Harbor in December of that year. For the former case, the students analyze a set of UK Joint Intelligence Committee reports from May-June 1941 to highlight parallels between the British and Soviet errors in assessing German intentions. For Pearl Harbor, we have organized a team exercise in which the students play the role of US naval intelligence officers on 6 December 1941 in the context of Roberta Wohlstetter’s famous thesis about the volume of intelligence (or noise) obscuring evidence (signals) of Tokyo’s intentions: each team analyzes a set of Magic intercepts (correspondence from the Japanese embassy in Washington to Tokyo etc.) for evidence of the timing and target of a Japanese attack. Again, we try to integrate some skills and methods teaching into each historical case study. For example, the students are asked to prepare a group presentation on the effectiveness of British and Norwegian intelligence before the event of 9 April 1940, the German invasions of Denmark and Norway, in the form of an essay plan. The students are also offered an introduction to the
use of counterfactual analysis to assess the impact of Ultra on the duration and outcome of the Second World War. We also examine the success of Allied strategic deception in the Mediterranean and in Normandy campaigns in the context of a debate about causation: how do historians know whether a deception campaign has worked and what does that tell us about how to engineer an effective strategic deception.

Throughout both weeks of Block 1 students work in groups to prepare collaborative presentations on topics given to them at the beginning of the block. They are encouraged to approach these presentations as academic exercises, rather than the kind of briefings they are accustomed to give to policy consumers in their day jobs. This means they must engage with the relevant academic literature and take a position on any historiographical or theoretical debates arising from this literature. The instructors provide assistance where appropriate. But the assumption is that students work in groups independently of close supervision from instructors.

**Block 2 - The Functional Perspective**

The second block, ‘the functional perspective’, builds on the history module by placing more emphasis on themes and debates in intelligence studies. The emphasis is on how intelligence is used in international and domestic contexts. We challenge the students, all practitioners, to reflect on their role and experiences as intelligence professionals working at the national and international levels. The first week is organized around five themes: 1) intelligence, crises and deterrence 2) the pathologies of the consumer producer relationship 3) politicization and intelligence failure 4) intelligence Ethics and 5) surveillance and the state.

To explore the role of intelligence in international crises, we introduce students to examine how intelligence contributed to the origins, course and outcome of the 1962 Cuban missile crisis and to the debate about whether the Able Archer exercise of 1983 brought NATO and the Warsaw Pact countries to the brink of war. The Cuban crisis is now extremely well documented and it provides the students with a clear instance of how ideologically motivated behaviour made it difficult for the Cold-War adversaries to predict each other’s intentions and actions. For Able Archer, the students read contradictory scholarly articles about the episode as well as primary material to conclude for themselves whether faulty intelligence processes combined with President Reagan’s aggressive rhetoric and the NATO military buildup led to the Soviet bloc leadership to inflate the threat of a surprise attack. The danger that intelligence might serve to inflate threats and thereby distort national security policy is carried over into a session about the
role of intelligence in the run up to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. The events leading to the Iraq war provides a contested case to provoke discussion of the themes of this part of the teaching programme, including the consumer producer relationship and politicization. Did policy makers in Washington and London extract from their intelligence advisors the inflated threat analyses they needed publicly justify a policy of war? Or can the erroneous conclusions reached by US and UK intelligence about Iraqi WMD be explained by other causes such as poor sources, faulty analysis or a misplaced desire to please political leaders? More generally, we encourage the students to consider whether the pathologies of consumer producer relationships discernable during the Cuban crisis, the Able Archer episode and the run up to the 2003 Iraq war are inevitable? Or can they be prevented with organizational/methodological solutions such as devil’s advocates, red teams or reforms to the intelligence cycle?

Ethics is a core topic that runs through the entire bachelor’s programme, and in this module the students are taught the various ways of framing the ethical dilemmas raised by intelligence work. To teach ethics, we have found that assigning a combination of readings from the purely philosophical alongside those written by former practitioners helps students to bridge their own experiences (as well as Norwegian legal and ethical frameworks and practices) with the more esoteric aspects of the subject. We also ask the students to debate the ethics of various scenarios based on real cases from intelligence history as well as to devise their own fictional ethical conundrums to be presented to the class for a debate. Politics and ideology are integral to the issue of domestic surveillance and legal-moral limits of state power. East German society and the intrusiveness of the STASI into the private lives of its citizens provides an extreme case to study how the surveillance of dissent can if unchecked by moral and political limits can expand to consume the resources of a state and to destroy its legitimacy. More generally, we discuss the ways in which the growth of the internet and social media has both changed the way people think about privacy in liberal societies and the legal-ethical implications of bulk collection, the storage of internet searches and other meta data to fight crime and terrorism. This session concludes with a screening of the classic 1974 film The Conversation, in which Gene Hackman plays the role of a private surveillance specialist.

The second week block is divided into four themes: i) Assessing intentions b) Warning failures c) Forecasting and horizon scanning iv) Intelligence reform. Each theme is approached through the medium of case studies, many of which draw on material related, but not identical to, the earlier historical block.
The first section focuses on ‘Assessing the Nazi Threat’. It focuses on the performance of French and British intelligence in providing a clear and accurate picture of the intentions of the Nazi regime. British and French appeasement also provides a good introduction to the specific problem of evaluating the intentions of political leaders. The misconception at the heart of the policy of appeasement, at least on the British side, was Neville Chamberlain’s conviction that it was possible to negotiate an agreement with Adolf Hitler that would prove relatively durable. The French were much more skeptical of the possibility of such an arrangement as a source of peace even in the short-term. This provides interesting material for a comparative analysis of French and British assessments of Nazi intentions. Because there is a wealth of documentary material available on French and British estimates of the political intentions of the Nazi leadership, this section of the block provides an excellent context for breaking up into smaller groups to consider different aspects of the problem. The relationship between perceptions of capabilities and intentions is central to this topic. Indeed it is a central theme of the entire degree course. To what extent does the picture constructed of a given target’s capabilities shape the way that target’s intentions are interpreted? And vice-versa?

We then revisit the question of the distinctive characteristics of military and civilian intelligence work. Students are asked to discuss and debate the question ‘Military versus Civilian Agency Intelligence Estimates’ with a specific focus on intentions. Students are encouraged to deploy reading they have done in the historical block to inform their perspectives on this question. This is an excellent example of research-led teaching that has the capacity to enhance the perspectives of both students and their instructors. The complex and dynamic relationship between assessments of intentions and capabilities is a badly neglected area in the existing scholarship on intelligence and international security. Debating and discussing this relationship with career intelligence professionals is a fantastic opportunity for to obtain new perspectives on this complex issue.

The next section of the functions block explores the problem of intelligence failure from various angles. It begins with a focused debate based on the challenging arguments pure forward in Mark Lowenthal’s seminal essay ‘The Burdensome Concept of Failure’. The case study we use is the successful attacks on the US of 11 September 2001. The key primary source is The 9/11 Report, which students read before the week begins. We first debate whether the 9/11 attacks can be considered a failure at all, and, if so, what kind of failure. We use this primary material to assess
Amy Zegart’s thesis that the US intelligence and security agencies were guilty of ‘adaptation failure’. Students are asked to give their own opinions on the explanatory power of Zegart’s adaptation failure concept and to reflect on its wider ramifications in the practice of intelligence.

The next section considers the challenges inherent in ‘Horizon Scanning’. The collapse of the USSR is used as the key case study here. The students do background reading on the various assessments that were made of the performance of the Soviet economy and evidence of societal cohesion.’ We devote an hour to analyzing and debating the famous memorandum by Herbert Meyer of November 1983 memorandum assessing the state of the USSR. Meyer, special assistant to DCI William Casey and vice-chair of the US National Intelligence Council, judged that ‘the free world has out-distanced the Soviet Union economically, crushed it ideologically, and held it off politically’ and concluded that the US should ‘begin planning for a post-Soviet World’. Students are asked to set this memorandum within the wider context of assessments of Soviet power and consider two key sets of questions. First, what was the hard evidence Meyer used to support his conclusion? Why was his assessment a relative outlier among similar attempts to estimate Soviet power? Was he right for the wrong reasons (as is sometimes the case)? Second, how were Meyer’s judgments and predictions received by policy consumers? What impact did they have on the perceptions and decisions of key American decision-makers at this critical juncture? This is an excellent case study to explore the formidable difficulties facing all attempts to formulate, interpret and use long-range strategic estimates.

We then move on to consider the politics of intelligence reform. Our focus for this topic is the US reaction to the events of 11 September 2001. The restructuring of the US intelligence community, along with fundamental changes in practices of information sharing across that community, have created a wide array of new challenges and vulnerabilities. These are considered in detail in this section of the block. After a lecture on the politics of intelligence reform in historical perspective, the students discuss and debate the origins, character and effectiveness of intelligence reform in the US since 2001. This discussion is based on reading some of the literature on this question from Richard Betts, Amy Zegart and Peter Jackson.

The final teaching section of this block focuses on ‘The Myriad Forms of Intelligence Cooperation’. Central considerations for this topic are the motivations leading national agencies to cooperate with one another. Is co-operation driven overwhelmingly by national interest? Or does ideology play an important role? We look at the variety of co-operative relationships since the First World War as well as the specific contexts in which these relationships have emerged. We then try to develop a typology for different levels of intimacy in intelligence co-operation relationships: from the sporadic sharing of information to systematic arrangements to coordinate the collection and analysis of intelligence. This section of the block ends with group presentations.

**Block 3 - The Structural Perspective**

The last two blocks of the course cover the ‘structural perspective of intelligence’ and the ‘decision maker’s perspective of intelligence’. The first of these is designed to focus on issues related to the institutions of intelligence within different national approaches. By ‘institutions’ and ‘structures’ we focused on two broad aspects: first, how countries organise their intelligence structures; and second, a consideration of the different means by which intelligence work is regulated in these countries. The intention was to deliver a holistic sense of the manner in which intelligence functions in accordance with a variety of issues, including legal, ethical and public considerations.

In order to achieve these objectives, the first week of the ‘structural’ block began by focusing on the matter of intelligence culture. We then proceeded to examine the organisation, history and historiography, and various key issues associated with the US, the Soviet/Russian, the Chinese, and the British intelligence communities. Each day in the second week dealt with a different theme or issue related to the structure of intelligence. The days invariably began with a lecture, punctuated by questions and discussion, and would be followed by an interactive case-study, designed to build upon the content of the lecture, the students’ reading around the subject and any practical experience they might have. Given than this bloc occurred some months after the previous one, we also discussed the requirements and conventions of academic research and writing (which remained rather far-removed from the day-to-day work of the students) to complement the critical study of our subject matter.

The rationale behind beginning the block with a consideration of intelligence culture was twofold. First, we felt it necessary to equip students with the tools to consider the intelligence structures and communities they would soon study with an eye to their distinct institutional, historical, and cultural locations. Considering the matter of intelligence culture broadly – the culture of
intelligence communities, and the role of intelligence or ‘the spy’ in popular culture - helped the students, most of whom had not studied intelligence as an academic subject previously, to place the communities they would subsequently study in the context of the broader bureaucracies of their respective states, rather than as agencies completely isolated from them.

We also judged it was important to give the students the opportunity to dwell on their own understanding and experiences of intelligence in the Norwegian context. The class was varied in terms of institution, experience, discipline. It had become clear in the discussions concerning the overall rationale of the course that it provided a rare opportunity for a sustained, scholarly, frank and challenging discussion of what intelligence meant in Norway, how different agencies understood and performed their missions, and how they had identified and learned different lessons from the various historical and contemporary threats to Norwegian security. As with many professionals, their day to day focus did not provide them with the opportunity to consider their role, that of their organisation, or of their community in a broader perspective. The discussion of culture was, essentially, designed to foster engagement and a degree of reflection on the question of ‘what is Norwegian culture of intelligence and culture of secrecy?’

Studying these trends required tracing the evolution of intelligence literature and historiography across various countries and communities. The English historiography on intelligence is weighted heavily towards the ‘English-speaking alliance’ - and even within that to the US and UK communities, and, regarding them, to strategic intelligence and covert operations. Other communities, including those that formed the topics for subsequent days, are under-studied in comparison, both from historical and a theoretical perspectives. This preceded a discussion on what the implications of this historiographical imbalance are for the study of intelligence. We placed particular emphasis on the implications for our assessment of intelligence performance and lessons-learned analyses, which, owing to the historiographical and case study bias, must be considered with care. Students were encouraged to question whether or not lessons were transferable across intelligence communities and cultures, or whether intelligence studies remains somewhat parochial, entrenched (mostly) in Western experience and culture. In short, beginning the block with a discussion of intelligence culture was designed to foster critical engagement with the subsequent subject matter.

We then moved on to study specific communities. The objective for each day was to allow the students to consider the evolution of the community in question, the nature of the historiography and the academic source material, and the manner the community is evolving and adapting to
contemporary threats. The first community we studied was the US community, the second was the Russian, the third was the Chinese, the British intelligence community was the fourth.

The US intelligence community is the least problematic to study. There is an abundance of research material, and the students were generally familiar with a number of the organisations, issues, and controversies. There is ample scope to use the US as a vehicle for exploring a wide number of themes. Our approach was historical and thematic. We began with the ‘pre-history’ of US intelligence, before moving on to the creation of the ‘national security state’, the Cold War and the adaptation to the counter-terrorism mission of the twenty-first century. Each period was matched with a discussion of a particular, pertinent issue related to intelligence structures and the impact of structure on performance. For example, we examined the debates over the role of structure in the Pearl Harbor failure through the perspective of a Central Intelligence Group report, and the suitability of current structures for countering international terrorism through the discussions of the 9/11 failure, particularly the 9/11 Commission report, its recommendations and their implementation. The learning objectives focused not only upon developing an understanding of the structures of the US intelligence community, but also how the structure creates specific issues and debates concerning its performance.

The aim of the session on Russian and Soviet intelligence was, similarly, to facilitate the students’ understanding of the methodological challenge of the subject, the community’s history and design, and consistent themes that relate to the community. We began with a consideration of the historiography, and a discussion of the challenges of dealing with a literature that is often written form the outside-in, in collaboration with defectors and intelligence agencies, or with the aid of the organisations being studied. This lay the foundation of our study of the evolution, structures, and operations of the Russian community during the Cold War and beyond. We matched the eras of Russian intelligence with a consideration of the impact of several issues on the nature of the machinery: dictatorship and the legacy of dictatorship; the internal policing function; the distinct and particular requirements for active measures; and the adaptation of the structures to the age of the internet and the Putin era. The issues at the heart of the discussion included questioning the role of the intelligence machinery in the Soviet and the Russian state?

Studying Chinese intelligence organisations and operations is extremely difficult. Therefore, we considered it essential to underline the limited number and quality of sources on the subject at the outset. We began the section with a consideration of the academic perspectives on the models of Chinese intelligence, their origins, and their merits. We then examined the evolution of Chinese intelligence, beginning with the Civil War. We paid particular attention to the
development of PLA structures, and the case studies of Chinese espionage that have been uncovered and publicized in the West. As with the previous cases, the examination of the history, structure and activities of the community was linked with a discussion of particular issues in intelligence studies, and in the relationship between Chinese intelligence and the broader Chinese state. The key issues included the role of economic intelligence in state development, and the evolving role of online espionage and covert actions in Chinese operations. Our aim was to, first, encourage the students to consider the meaning of intelligence in a Chinese context, and, second, debate current, significant issues, such as developing norms for offensive actions in the online environment.

The second week of the ‘Structural’ block continued the content from week one by starting with a day-long session on the UK. This included a consideration not only of how intelligence is approached organisationally in the UK, but more specifically a look at the guiding principles behind it. We examined two aspects in particular: the importance of consensus at a strategic level, particularly the manner in which the intelligence and policy communities interact; and the role that committees play at all level of the process. In the afternoon, a case-study explored the changing definitions of ‘National Security’ in the UK using a variety of official documents. The key point to emerge was how the scope and responsibilities for the intelligence community were changing as a result.

Day two considered the evolution of intelligence in countries that transition to democracy: there is a significant and established literature on Security Sector Reform, but this often ignores the role of intelligence in the development of states and stable governments. The session considered samples of this literature and used a variety of case-studies to explore how the process had worked in practice. One of the underlying themes was a consideration of the different approaches to intelligence in democracies compared to authoritarian states: for instance, if both are concerned with the preservation of the state (regardless of our view of that state), is it really the means by which control or monitoring of ‘threats’ varies that distinguishes them? This theme included an interactive session where the class was split into groups, with each selecting their own country for which to research and prepare their findings.

The third day focused on intelligence liaison. Students were introduced to a variety of historical and contemporary examples, which were then used to explore more generic issues related to what is often one of the most sensitive aspects of intelligence work. Some of the attention was on perhaps the best-known example of intelligence liaison, the long-standing UK-US relationship, but the (also very well-established) Anglo-Norwegian relationship was explored too. The lecture
included not just international bilateral relationships, but also some content on multilateral as well as intra-national relationships. The session culminated with an examination of reasons why states might want to interact, some of the benefits that liaison brings, but also some of the dangers inherent to it. In the afternoon, a long group exercise dwelt on some of these issues by looking at a fictitious scenario in which British code-breakers had intercepted a message whose contents could have entailed Britain being dragged into an unpopular conflict, but in attempting to prevent involvement it would have meant divulging the message. This exercise worked particularly well and group members had various animated conversations on the balance between source protection and acting on important intelligence when liaison relationships are at stake.

The final day-long session considered issues relevant to the preceding content: the question of intelligence ethics, accountability and oversight. The lecture considered this in a variety of ways, from philosophical and political approaches, to the different ways in which oversight is exacted: from public, legal, and judicial, through to trial by the media. The group exercise focused on a hypothetical scenario in which class members pretended to be a journalist who had stumbled upon a secret discussion between a terrorist group and government officials, and questioned their ethical stance and decision-making.

The block was assessed via two group presentations, one for each week. In the second week students were set the question ‘Does Intelligence Need to be Secret?’ In groups of 4 they were given 4 days in which to prepare a 10-minute presentation, for which they were assessed. The question was deliberately vague and designed not to have a specific answer. It was a useful exercise and it was interesting to observe how the different groups, comprising a mixture of military and civilian students, produced varied responses.

In addition to the group work, each student was required to produce a 4,000-word essay, answering 1 question from a list that we had set them. These questions were designed to test not only their grasp of the academic literature, but to try and challenge them to relate their own experiences to what they had read and listened to in class. By and large this was achieved and the essays were of a generally good standard.

**Block 4 - The Decision Makers' Perspective**
The fourth and final block was entitled the ‘Decision Makers’ Perspective of Intelligence’. Our key objectives for this block included designing a series of experiences that ensured our students, mostly practitioners of intelligence, developed an understanding of the relationship between their function and the broader political community they support, as well as empathy for their customers. Our learning outcomes included building upon subject the students had discussed previously and, first, developing an understanding of cognitive issues that impede on decision makers’ appreciation and use of intelligence agencies; and, second, developing an appreciation of how the climate of secrecy is evolving and how this must factor into intelligence activities and considerations, particularly with regard considerations of exposure and ethics. We selected several themes that were relevant to ongoing intelligence-policy challenges. At a basic level the point of this block was straightforward: to discuss and debate the manner in which intelligence interacts with decision makers’; yet contained within this was a number of competing and complicated issues.

One of the central focuses on the first day was the question of proximity: how close should the two communities be and what level of interaction should take place? Various answers to this question were discussed and different national approaches were debated. In the afternoon students were split into three groups for an exercise that attempted to probe these issues in a more practical sense. Each group had the same questions to address (such as ‘Should intelligence ever be withheld from policy-makers in your country, and if so, in what circumstances?’) but the remit for each was markedly different. One group was a large Western government with an unlimited money, influence and concerns; the second group was a smaller mid-size power with global concerns but limited reach; while the third was a small Southern Hemisphere state with no influence and only regional concerns. The exercise sought to identify how each group thought about intelligence, whether money and influence were driving factors in the manner in which they approach a national system and co-ordinated the producer/consumer aspects, or whether a utopian vision of how the two communities should interact was key.

The rest of the week built upon this content to focus on a series of related issues, each of which had the intelligence/policy relationship at its core. The second day considered what happens when the relationship breaks down and intelligence fails. It included detail on different examples of surprise attack, of warning failure and of intelligence setbacks. Different typologies were presented, as were different ways of thinking about some of the issues. A number of less cited examples were drawn upon, including the erroneous British assessments prior to the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, and this was contrasted to the successes encountered when
predicting what would happen with regard to the Iraqi threat to Kuwait in 1961. An exercise considered issues related to predicting crises with the class split into three groups (one were decision-makers; one intelligence analysts; the last academics or external commentators) with each given set information and responsibilities to see how each group reacted to a fictitious scenario.

The third day extended the content of the previous day by considering high-risk low-probability events. The class participated in a detailed examination of threat prediction, of the use of indicators and warnings, as well as the issues surrounding the identification of intentions and capabilities. A detailed case-study on nuclear proliferation and the A Q Khan network was provided to illustrate these points. The day culminated with an exercise looking at the early days of the Cuban Missile Crisis and the issue of balancing risk with intelligence collection: in order to discover what the Soviets were up to on Cuba, would they authorise a politically-risky overflight?

The final day of the first week of Block 4 looked at intelligence and terrorism. It began with an examination of the lessons derived from Britain’s experiences, starting with fighting colonial counter-insurgency, through the intelligence war in Northern Ireland, to more recent examples of Islamist terrorism. The common aspects were considered, as were the differences.

Like previous Blocks, students were provided with the question for their oral exam on the Monday morning, and four days later they presented their answers. The question they were set was: If we accept Betts’ hypothesis that ‘intelligence failures are inevitable’, how should policymakers and the intelligence community approach the problem of surprise? Unsurprisingly a number of the presentations dealt with the Norwegian experience of Anders Breivik. These were interesting and highlighted the value of the diverse student body and the benefits of getting individuals from different organisations to interact and produce an agreed report.

The second week of the fourth block began with an examination of deception. We decided to include deception to allow the class to consider the challenges that recent events, particularly in Crimea and Ukraine, pose for consumers. Consumers are increasingly pressured by the pace of events to make decisions rapidly and decisively, but in fraught and complex information environments, often fueled by sustained disinformation campaigns. Mutual understanding on the part of intelligence officers and decision-makers of their respective limits and capabilities is, therefore, increasingly significant. The study concerned history, theory and practice, detection, and communication of ambiguity and uncertainty. We focused on two particular issues concerning deception, intelligence and the consumer. First, the impact of deception on the
analytical process, and how efforts to uncover deception in the information can impact upon the generation of a useful product. Second, how deception is not necessarily an external phenomenon, and how intelligence officers and consumers must be equally aware of the danger of self-deception.

The second session focused on the growing importance of the public as a consumer of intelligence products. Our discussion on the matter built upon our deliberations from the previous day on the impact of information technology on intelligence activities, in particular the internet as a vector for exposure, and an eroding force on the secrecy that intelligence agencies could previously count upon. We placed this development in a broader context that included the fallout from the Iraq war, the general move toward openness and accountability in the West, and the requirement that modern counterterrorism has placed on intelligence agencies to be nearer the people. These developments form part of the evolution, that Peter Hennessy has narrated, from the ‘secret state’ of the Cold War to the ‘protective state’, where intelligence officers and security policy must account for the public’s perceptions and expectations to a far greater degree.

The third session focused on intelligence agencies as ‘service providers’, as organisations that provide a wide range of functions that decision makers can utilise in particular circumstances. This required considering of intelligence agencies as broader political actors, and, therefore, a consideration of issues including the dangers of politicisation, and ethics. The students considered various forms of service, ranging from covert actions, to propaganda, to delicate negotiations with various state and non-state actors. The students examined historic and contemporary examples, ranging from the covert actions of the Kennedy administration, to the US Afghanistan operations in the 1980s, to the management of the back-channel between British intelligence and PIRA. The objectives included underlining the broader role of intelligence agencies in statecraft. And for the students to consider the opportunities and risks for intelligence agencies and policymakers when agencies are tasked with providing such services.

The fourth session considered intelligence, leaders and crises. The session was designed as a point of culmination, where each of the issues that had been discussed over the previous sessions and over previous blocs could be brought to bear in an analysis of how intelligence agencies and consumers interact in crises, what their mutual requirements are, and common pathologies that can undermine the relationship when it needs to be most functional. We examined historical and contemporary case studies, including state-focused crises and crises generated by non-state actors, and examined how policy-makers’ requirements would contrast with intelligence agencies’ ability to deliver what was demanded. The class concluded with a simulation designed to challenge the
students to outline, consider, and develop the Norwegian model for crisis management for improved producer-consumer cooperation.

Reflections

While new cohorts are admitted to the programme in 2015 and 2016, the first cohort of students (2014-2017) are currently writing their bachelor's theses. In supervising the students it is evident that the programme has indeed had the desired effect: from the point of entering into the programme, up until writing their bachelors theses, the students have acquired a sound academic approach to studying the intelligence profession and engaging in the literature in the field, and - as tentatively seen from their supervisors' point of view - at a level that may even be somewhat more advanced than the requirements for the bachelor’s level.

From an overarching perspective, the combined profession-academia programme has been successful in many ways: it attracts students from all parts of the national intelligence community. Although originally intended for professionals that did not have a formal degree, the programme has nevertheless started to attract applicants whom have already completed a bachelor’s degree prior to entering the programme, either from the professional defence colleges and/or from a civilian institution. Some students even have a master’s degree. As a result a proportional quota has now been imposed, ensuring that both students with and without a formal degree are allowed to enter the programme. What is important is that both student populations have had the opportunity to view the intelligence profession per se from an academic perspective. Furthermore, in both populations the students report that the programme has given them an opportunity to view their professional practice through the lens of academia and thus become even more aware of the value of profession-as-academe, as well as understanding the various knowledge-foundations of their own professional practice. It seems that this valuable knowledge is what motivates the students, and not necessarily the academic degree in itself.

What is most striking in the classroom, besides the “mature” age of many of the students and the fact that so far there have been very few women, is their eagerness, their interest, and the fascinating, and often unexpected, discussions that arise. The School is conscious about creating an environment where these discussions can thrive; ranging from bespoke security considerations that allow them to talk “freely” in specific contexts, to purposely admitting a diverse set of students,
from different operational backgrounds - be that from defence, police, or the justice department - as well as with different levels of understanding of the intelligence process. The instructors also encourage, and sometimes even provoke, discussion and allow it to develop on its own without remaining wedded in a rigid sense to the specific details of the seminar or lecture.

The structure of having it run for 2 weeks twice per year was initially due to work and potentially deployment considerations, but it has become clear that another benefit is that the students have time to reflect on what they have learned, and compare, question, and bring this knowledge into their everyday work.

The rationale for establishing this new experience-based programme in intelligence studies was built on the original idea that also paved the way for the establishment of NORDIS: The combination of professional studies and high academic standards. Although the language studies at NORDIS have for decades been built on the combination of, on the one hand teaching the students specific language-skills and specific region-knowledge relevant to carrying out various assignments in the intelligence community, and on the other hand securing the training with the high academic standards required for National accreditation, this had not always been the case with the broader aspect of intelligence as a profession. Looking at the NORDIS traditions, one could say that it may possibly have been the language-section of NORDIS, with its emphasis on the combination of academia and the training of language skills - as well as the strategic recruitment of instructors with an academic degree in the professional training programmes - that inspired also the professional-training section to base the training programmes on an epistemologically sound foundation and made it possible to merge professional training and high academic standards into what is now known as an academic programme based both on the professional knowledge that comes from experience and the research-informed knowledge that comes from the rigorous standards of academia.

In designing this programme we contended with many opposing, and sometimes contradictory forces. For example, on the one hand there is the profession's need for speedy training, and on the other the reflective nature of academia. But, looking at the process in retrospect, it is not an understatement to say that the enterprise of transforming NORDIS into an accredited university college and establishing the new bachelors programme for professional students was both visionary and bold. The process, carried out in the spirit of the Norwegian Intelligence Service and of NORDIS, resulted in an
academically robust professional higher education programme that now attracts students from a variety of services within the intelligence community.
DISCLAIMER: This paper is drawn only from released official records and published sources and the views expressed do not represent the views or carry the endorsement of the Norwegian Government.

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