Mark Phythian, *Understanding the Intelligence Cycle* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2013). Pp. 167. US$135.00. Hb. ISBN 978-0-415-81175-0.

As a student I first encountered the intelligence cycle in Michael Herman's *Intelligence Power in Peace and War*, but it was only later – whilst training as an intelligence analyst in Scotland – that I came to fully appreciate the influence of this concept upon both the study and practice of intelligence. Mark Phythian's edited volume *Understanding the Intelligence Cycle* immediately engages both the student and the practitioner by contrasting the ubiquity of the intelligence cycle with its frequent dissonance from the realities of intelligence work. Phythian's introduction outlines the central contention that binds the following nine chapters: that we must begin to recognise the gap 'between representation and reality', adopt 'a more critical approach' to the intelligence cycle, and consider whether it is now time to 'move beyond' this concept as a means of thinking about intelligence. Within the sometimes parochial and path-dependent confines of the intelligence world, this is radical thinking. *Understanding the Intelligence Cycle* provides a critical and timely appraisal of the intelligence cycle and its place in contemporary intelligence work. Crucially, an informed reading of this volume also stimulates our thinking on the nature of intelligence studies as an academic discipline.

One of the foremost strengths of *Understanding the Intelligence Cycle* is the extent to which its contributors bridge the gap between academic theory and practitioner experiences. Phythian's introduction describes the intelligence cycle in its most common form and progresses to highlight the need to think critically about it. The triumvirate of chapters after Phythian's introduction share a conceptual focus on 'what's wrong with the intelligence cycle'. Michael Warner places the intelligence cycle in historical context and discusses its application to new, challenging contexts, such as cyber. He suggests that, in the final

analysis, the continuing use of this dated, heuristic device may be doing more harm than good. Whilst praising the attempt at parsimony, Peter Gill and Mark Phythian agree that the intelligence cycle is now a dated concept that requires a major re-fit, if not retirement from discourse. The challenges of complexity in contemporary intelligence work – including risk, bureaucratic politics, interactivity, comparative analysis, covert action, technology and oversight – point to the inadequacies of the intelligence cycle model. Gill and Phythian highlight the need to move beyond the one-dimensional nature of the cyclical model, and instead propose a web based model. Drawing upon his experience as an intelligence analyst, Julian Richards reflects upon the intelligence cycle as an instructional tool, including an appreciation of the benefits of its simplicity in communicating processes for those new to intelligence work. Richards progresses, however, to outline the problems of the intelligence cycle. These are not simply mechanical, in the sense that the intelligence cycle fails to represent some aspects of intelligence work, but that the intelligence cycle itself is 'simply not postmodern enough'. Importantly, Richards recognises that moving beyond the intelligence cycle will require cultural change, and not simply the provision of new diagrams.

These chapters provide a conceptual basis that is useful as the volume progresses to traverse more empirical ground. Exploring the intelligence cycle in a military context Davies, Gustafson and Rigden outline how the basic intelligence cycle has been adapted in the UK to reflect the core functions of intelligence, and form a new doctrine. Aaron Brantly's chapter on the role of intelligence in the cyber domain reconsiders the very nature of intelligence itself. Brantly sensibly outlines an effective cyber strategy to be one that employs an 'all source' approach to intelligence as a means to profile the offensive and defensive cyber capabilities of enemy nations. In the cyber context Brantly also usefully shows how decision-makers in the traditional intelligence cycle can engage in tasking, but that any uncertainty in their requirements may result in 'push' processes from the intelligence community, in

conjunction with ‘norm entrepreneurs’. Brantly’s assessment here seems astute: this proclivity for push is likely to be especially prevalent in cyber, where knowledge and understanding in strategic and policy circles may be shallower than in comparison to traditional threats. James Sheptycki explores the shortcomings of ‘intelligence cycle thinking’ and makes the case for moving beyond the intelligence cycle in policing. Several aspects of Sheptycki’s critique should create concern for observers of policing: from a managerial culture that prevents institutional learning to the misuse of strategic analysis to justify policy. His critique also extends to the delusion that ‘more data is better data’ and the related issue of panoptic power, which ultimately increases insecurity. Sheptycki’s contribution should also be praised for its willingness to recognise the heterogeneity of actors within intelligence-led policing, and the impact of subcultural expectations in intelligence work. David Strachan-Morris breaks fresh analytical ground with his exploration of intelligence in commercial business, before David Omand brings his considerable experience to bear in considering whether it is time to move beyond the intelligence cycle.

The choice of contributors should be commended for extending the disciplinary vista, reflected well in Sheptycki’s criminological concern with the intelligence cycle as it pertains to policing and crime; dual concerns that are oftentimes neglected in discussions of intelligence. However, whilst the authority of the contributors is beyond doubt, their selection does disclose a degree of Anglo-American ethnocentricity within intelligence studies. The empirical focus of the contributors undoubtedly extends beyond the universities, institutions and agencies within which they are based, yet the analytical gaze nevertheless remains narrow in a global context. In moving ‘beyond’ the intelligence cycle it may have been useful to gather expertise and analysis from a broader range of nations (and non-state actors) in order to assess the extent to which their intelligence communities, broadly defined, accept, reject, subvert or challenge the traditional understanding of the intelligence cycle. From a

disciplinary standpoint, Sheptycki makes the convincing case that intelligence studies must foster a new interdisciplinarity that goes beyond scholars and practitioners of intelligence and towards the contributions of human rights and civil liberties scholars and activists.

The closing sentences of the volume, penned by former CIA officer Arthur S. Hulnick, reflect upon the prospects of this collective call to move beyond the intelligence cycle. Hulnick's (contestable) contention that intelligence studies has grown into a legitimate academic discipline can only be strengthened by the adoption of a more critical approach to its central subject matter. Whilst intelligence studies may not wish to develop a critical turn of the depth that has emerged in terrorism studies there may be much to learn from this companion field: the commitment to challenge the role of established actors, to remove ethnocentrism, and to attract academics from a diverse range of disciplines. Ultimately, *Understanding the Intelligence Cycle* presents an authoritative, compelling and critical account of the utility of the intelligence cycle in contemporary intelligence work. A thorough reading of this work would benefit both the intelligence practitioner and the intelligence scholar.