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# Making an impact on security and intelligence

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Intelligence studies remains a small and discreet discipline that locates itself near to other disciplines such as: international studies, history and area studies, public administration, British politics, and security studies in different mixes and borrowing and utilising different insights along the way. As a discipline it has been characterised and conditioned by the significant characteristics of the activities it seeks to analyse: that of secrecy, empiricism and government security. This short essay takes a snapshot of the developing relationship between scholars and security and intelligence officials through a series of selected issues that have appeared on the horizon of the last ten years. In doing so, it argues that a good percentage of intelligence studies scholars have responded to the opportunities presented to them to impact on the policy world, and that there are further areas in which the scholarly community can add value to policy work.

The so-called 'global war on terror', or 'long war' (depending on which term you prefer) brought security and intelligence scholars closer to the policy and security community in this country and across the Atlantic. This was partly due to timing: the 2004 Butler Report had suggested that a much closer relationship between the two communities would help reduce the chances of intelligence failures in the future. The initiatives that were initially taken by the intelligence community happened to coincide with the terrorist attacks on London in July 2005 and so the first post-Butler contacts focussed on what the research community could offer intelligence officers by way of advanced understanding of the issues around Jihadist terrorism (although all forms of radicalisation were said to be of interest). The absence of a formalised system of contact - be it through the professional associations or research councils - left it to proceed along classical intelligence lines: sporadic and fortuitous personal contact. The first attempt to provide a system, through a research council call for funding proposals, descended into headlines and accusations about the securitisation of the

academy, which was as unfortunate as it was counterproductive.

The big security questions of our time, that have clustered into the threats from terrorism, cyber-security, the proliferation of WMD and societal instability which manifested itself briefly in the UK in the August 2011 riots lend themselves to different points of access for the scholar. For questions around intelligence and WMD the Butler and Chilcot inquiries were obvious starting points, and whilst Chilcot has yet to report the oral testimony provided to the inquiry has provided a rich treasure trove of material that scholars can work with. Similarly, and controversially, the Wikileaks 'Cablegate' files provided an enormous resource of materials that would have ordinarily been obscured to academics, but if and how these files can be used for scholarly work is unresolved and the implications for using them similarly so. Issues around cyber-security provide a good opportunity for multidisciplinary work, but the issues are so sensitive that the primary work done here is going to be mostly policy related, and yet still difficult to connect up to various salient audiences. Whilst at the other end of the spectrum, the primary points of access for the August 2011 riots have been through using raw data from social media and communication sites (key elements of the riots) and interviews with participants and enforcement officials. In publication terms the work done on the riots has been disseminated mostly via the media, think-tanks and blogs, with peer-reviewed publications following on afterwards.

The REF-inspired emphasis on few world-class publications in prestigious peer-reviewed outlets removes some of the motivation for academics to engage in alternative (and more widely read) dissemination routes: from an intelligence and security perspective, it would be helpful if this emphasis was rethought, particularly if our work is to continue making an impact. There would seem to be a great deal of value in exploiting the work of scholars in informing current security and intelligence policy and work. Whilst British academics are highly unlikely to be ever afforded the access to officials and classified material that is possible for



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seconded academics in the US, there is a hidden contribution that could be made by scholars to the background context analysts work with, and an open source challenge to established thinking within the security community.

The positive development from REF culture is the need to generate research impact which has encouraged intelligence scholars to move beyond relatively esoteric analyses of intelligence activity and bureaucracies and towards how their historical and area-specific research can be used to inform and shape deep contextual background for practitioners (in the case of Michael Goodman and my AHRC grant), or in the case of the Brunel Centre for Intelligence and Security Studies in their work with the UK Ministry of Defence. Many of our IR and international studies colleagues come from critical backgrounds, and so this explicit linkage between scholarship and government or private industry activity will look alien (and possibly offensive). It would be for a much longer essay to unpick why this is the case, and the implications it has for the field.

The debates around academic engagement with the security community

are yet to be resolved. Whilst the current government yearns for scholars who are 'more useful' in 'the real world' there are undeniable tensions between the dissemination of academic knowledge into academic outlets and engagement with policy communities. There is also a large vocal community of colleagues who suggest that there should be little place for this work in an academic's professional life. Amongst the unresolved questions are those which verge on ethical considerations, much as there were for anthropologists and the so-called Human Terrain System, and whether the creation of 'pure knowledge' is more valuable than knowledge shaped for a policy audience. The debates within the intelligence studies community are, of course, a microcosm of those that exist within the wider International Relations and Studies community, and until a coherent position is reached on the subject, individuals and groups will continue to pragmatically choose where and how to engage with the stakeholder communities they value.

*Dr Robert Dover is Convenor of the BISA Security and Intelligence Studies Working Group*

## 50th Anniversary of Politics & IR at the University of Edinburgh

'Don't judge each day by the harvest you reap but by the seeds that you plant' wrote Robert Louis Stevenson, one of Edinburgh's most famous graduates. Though he pre-dated the Politics Department by many decades, his saying is as true today as it was then. The seed that was planted in 1963 with the creation of the Politics Department has matured into a superb department of some 30 colleagues, now preparing for a year of celebrations to mark the coming Golden Anniversary. We kick off with a gala alumni reunion weekend from 21 to 23 September, beginning with a roundtable discussion on the question 'What Future for Scotland?' It features some of our best-known graduates, including Malcolm Rifkind, Michael Moore, Susan Deacon, Alice Brown, John Swinney, and Allan Little. In recognition of the anniversary we commissioned a department history by Professor Charles Raab, now retired but present at the creation of the department.

We're proud to look back on our achievements. One of our first Professors, James Cornford, went on to advise successive UK governments on Freedom of Information legislation and constitutional issues. He was also a broker of the Labour-Liberal pact. In the 1980s, the Department's famous 'Edinburgh Conversations,' led by Professor John Erickson, brought together Western and Soviet foreign policy and military officials and helped to build bridges and ensure that lines of communication remained open between the two blocs. PIR also played an important role in the historic creation of the Scottish Parliament, when Professor Alice Brown became its first Ombudsperson in 1999. More recently, Professor Charlie Jeffery was appointed to the influential McKay Commission to consider the consequences of devolution for the House of Commons. Today, PIR is a leading centre for the study of Scotland,

Europe and the world. Our academics have won research grants totalling several million pounds in the last five years for projects on Islamic radicalisation in Russia, constitutional change in Scotland, gender inequality, the performance of financial markets, the foreign policy of the EU, Scottish energy governance, the politics of island regions, the profile of European Commission officials, and European labour migration. We've received awards for teaching excellence, including the Edinburgh University Students Association awards for Innovative Teaching Methods and for Overall High Performer as well as the Political Studies Association 'Sir Bernard Crick Award' for politics teaching (twice).

Our outreach activities have been recognised too, notably when Charlie Jeffery received the Political Studies Association award for Political Science Communication in 2006. Within the University, PIR

colleagues work in close collaboration with The Academy of Government (the UK's first postgraduate institute of public policy), the Europa Institute, the Princess Dashkova Centre (advancing understanding of Russia), and the Alwaleed Centre (promoting understanding of Islam). Our graduates have gone on to shape the age in which we live through their work in governments, think-tanks, international organizations, voluntary groups, and universities, as well as industry and commerce. The 50th anniversary provides an opportunity both to recognize their achievements and to respond to the needs of new students. So we are launching a new 'Next Generation Fund' to support the brightest and best students in politics at all levels. New seeds need to be planted, and as we celebrate the work of colleagues, past and present, we aim to invest in a new generation of leaders and thinkers.