INTELLIGENCE STUDIES – AN ACADEMIC DISCIPLINE?

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Abstract: *Is Intelligence Studies an academic discipline? The subject of many debates, Intelligence Studies represents an intellectual corps of almost four-decade long academic efforts focused on the development of science journals, research monographs, scientific conferences, university academic programs, theses and dissertations, research projects, etc. Its epistemological base is located somewhere between the disciplines of Political Science, International Relations, Security Studies, and History, and its thematic scope is practically limitless, covering topics from Management Studies, through Psychology, to Sociology of professions. This review of the development of Intelligence Studies is trying to map all the established elements of the Studies as a possible academic discipline, and to collect all the intellectual efforts related to critical examination of the Studies within the available academic sources. The expected result should be embodied in the comprehensive map of pros and cons related to the epistemological, methodological, and theoretical potential of the Intelligence Studies at present. State of the art sources and academic contributions in this field will be used as a material for analysis.*

Introduction

During the Second World War, the idea of professionalizing the United States (US) intelligence service was born, which later influenced the final look and ways of functioning of the US Intelligence Community, as well as intelligence services around the world. Behind that idea was the so-called Father of intelligence analysis, history professor

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and intelligence analyst Sherman Kent, who after the war in his most famous work, Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy,[2] described in detail and explained the importance of intelligence for conducting foreign policy, which became some kind of a standard in the professional intelligence of the 20th century. Due to his later engagement as the head of analytical unit at the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Kent gained enough knowledge and experience to observe some of the key gaps that distinguish intelligence work as a casual occupation and intelligence work as a profession and career. Within the article entitled The Need for an Intelligence Literature[3] published in the first issue of the CIA's internal journal, Kent laid the intellectual foundations of what would later be known as the discipline of "intelligence studies" (Dimitrijević, 2022).

As Shulsky and Schmitt noted, over the last quarter of a century, "intelligence - despite the fact that secrecy remains one of its essential features - has been regularly represented in media writings and has become the subject of a large body of academic research and work. Open discussion of intelligence issues is no longer a matter for upheaval and scandal; it is accepted as an integral part of the public debate about state activities in general" (Shulsky & Schmitt, 2002: xi). One of the reasons for this situation lies in the fact that during the last thirty years, a great number of official archives of intelligence services around the world have become available to the professional and scientific public, especially from the Cold War period. Also, when it comes to current events related to intelligence, there is a trend of "leaking" data that becomes available to general public. Finally, intelligence, in the broadest sense, is no longer the exclusive domain of national institutions, i.e. intelligence services, for several decades. For decades, private companies have been using numerous intelligence methods and techniques completely legally and legitimately to obtain data about the market and competition, to the extent that the experiences of individuals in that field are now available to general public, both professional and academic.

Study and explanation of intelligence during the 20th century has been done by various authors, mainly professionals in the field, and also by the members of academic community without necessarily professional experience in the field. At the beginning of the 21st century, the number of authors coming from the academic world is increasing, while the number of papers and research on intelligence is practically exponentially growing compared to the period up to 2001. At the same time, there is an increased interest of the university community in thematizing intelligence as a part of existing academic programs at various faculties, especially security studies.

With this body of preserved knowledge about intelligence, it is not surprising that there have been attempts to establish the discipline of "intelligence studies" advocated by the most prolific authors of the (few) theoretical and research results in this field. However, there is still no clear consensus on what "intelligence studies" should represent and what kind of discipline it should be. This is best explained by the research conducted by Loch K. Johnson and Allison M. Shelton in 2012. The

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[2] Kent, S. (1949), *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

[3] Kent, S. (1955), The Need for an Intelligence Literature. *Studies in Intelligence, 1*(1), 1-11.

research included an online survey of members of the editorial board of the journal Intelligence and National Security, who answered a set of nine questions:

1) What are the key debates in contemporary intelligence studies?

2) Which topics are the most and the least researched in the field of intelligence studies?

3) What are the biggest gaps in the intelligence literature?

4) How would you rate the relationship between intelligence studies and intelligence-based decision-making in the contemporary context?

5) How would you rate the relationship between intelligence researchers and journalists dealing with this topic?

6) What do you see as the biggest challenge facing intelligence studies today?

7) Do you think that intelligence studies will become a recognized topic within larger disciplines such as international relations, political science and history?

8) Should quantitative social science methods be adopted by researchers in the field of intelligence studies, and for which questions would these methods be appropriate?

9) How could the journal Intelligence and National Security be improved in this regard?

The very fact that the opening of these questions took place in the community engaged in research and scientific journalism in intelligence studies speaks about the potential of this area for differentiation as a sub-discipline of existing scientific disciplines. Certainly, regardless of the existence of any thematic branching and subject focus of "intelligence studies", they still remain an "academic supplement to the practice of intelligence in national security"[4] (Marrin, 2016:266), and their study should be approached interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary, primarily due to the unequivocal absence of some of the key constituents of scientific disciplines - theory, language and methods.

Intelligence in Academic Research

The task of intelligence services is to "serve state policy makers by providing relevant, timely and objective information about national security" (Faini, 2015:4), so national intelligence is organized according to this task - it is "a process in which specific types of information of importance to national security are requested, collected, analyzed and forwarded to political decision makers" (Lowenthal, 2002:8). From these relatively simple definitions, we can conclude that an important element of the work of intelligence services is intelligence information, which can be defined

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[4] It is important to note that the approach to "intelligence studies" from the perspective of national security (national security intelligence) is a narrower view of this nascent discipline, while a broader one would include, in addition to it, the perspective of business intelligence, competitive intelligence, and even the field of computing, i.e. artificial intelligence. Certainly, the phrase is recognized and conceptually accepted in the field of national security, so it will be used from that perspective unless otherwise noted.

as "information, not necessarily publicly available, about the forces, resources, capacities and intentions of other states that can affect the lives and security of citizens" (Walters, 1978:621). The complexity of intelligence work in the circumstances of the modern world can be guessed from the aforementioned definitions - it is a process that is (1) directly related to the making of the highest political decisions; (2) the subjects of its interest are threats, challenges, vulnerabilities and security risks; (3) its key resources are diverse information about those threats, challenges, vulnerabilities and risks.

These various concepts related to national or international security issues obviously draw their theoretical and analytical bases from many different theories, concepts, and categories from the established disciplines like sociology, psychology, political economy, organizational sciences, international relations, and finally, security studies. For instance, "the study of the behavior of small states is often implemented through the application of one or more theoretical concepts from the disciplines of international relations and security studies" (Dimitrijević & Lipovac, 2017:73). Likewise, terms like national interest is "located in the core of international relations science and security studies" (Lipovac & Dimitrijević, 2015:88). In the same manner, intelligence can be the subject of research from different scientific disciplines depending on the aspect being examined. If it is the relationship between intelligence services and state policy makers, it will be approached from a political perspective in the way that Matteo Faini did in setting up the theory of the politicization of intelligence services, or Robert Jervis in researching key reasons for intelligence failures of the US in the second half of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century, and also Keren Yarhi-Milo, who dealt with the question of how decision-makers and the intelligence community interpret the intentions of the enemy. If the subject of the research is the learning and behavior of analysts in the intelligence process, cognitive psychology will be used to select the theoretical framework, as Stoney A. Trent did in his research (2007). Certain researchers, such as Christopher A. Theunissen, use knowledge from multiple disciplines. In his case, it is about the relationship between state power (the way it is defined in political theory) and intelligence in the age of knowledge (determined through the concept of information management in management and organizational sciences) (Theunissen, 1998). Nathan A. Kreuter, for example, uses rhetorical theory to analyze the language of the US intelligence community (2010).

On the other hand, in addition to research conducted in established scientific, mostly social-humanistic disciplines, and with the use of adequate theoretical frameworks, there is a smaller body of research results that attempted to theoretically shape what many authors call Intelligence Studies. It is from this perspective that research focused on certain aspects of intelligence, which are recognized as sufficiently complex, and therefore worthy of investment of intellectual effort, were created in order to observe and shed light on some regularities or legalities in them, and then make generalizations. The best examples are the research conducted by William C. Spracher and Stevyn D. Gibson. The first dealt with the research of

academic programs of intelligence work at civilian universities in the US[5], and the second author with open data sources in modern intelligence work.[6] Both authors built their theoretical frameworks on a review of the previous conceptualization of intelligence work, which enabled them to precisely operationalize key terms, develop relevant taxonomies and spot gaps in the existing body of knowledge, while their main methodological tool was grounded theory, which enabled them to open new hypotheses during the research itself.

Certainly, the amount of research published so far is of enough high quality and scope that one can talk about the academic thematization of intelligence work, while one of definite indicators of this claim is the increasing representation of academic programs of intelligence at civilian universities, not only in the US, but also in the rest of the world (Wark, 1993; Hindley, 2000; Rudner, 2008; Landon-Murray, 2011; Gearon, 2015). Since the cited works are the results of the research conducted over the last twenty or more years, it is clear that the body of literature on which these researches are based is relatively recent. What period are we talking about, who are the key authors and what are the key events that influenced the development of this literature?

Notable sources that refer to relevant intelligence literature are the 1978 article The Development of Intelligence Literature in the United States by David H. Hunter, the US Army War College Library publication, Strategic Intelligence, and National Security: a Selected Bibliography from 1992, as well as an online bibliography by J. Ransom Clark entitled Literature on Intelligence Work: a Bibliography of Materials with Essays, Reviews and Comments for the Period from 1998 to 2015. These bibliographies cover all significant areas of intelligence.

Intelligence Studies

This chapter will provide an overview of the most important conceptual and substantive characteristics of intelligence in modern conditions. In this sense, firstly, a brief overview of the discipline of "intelligence studies" that has been developing theoretically during the last few decades will be made, which will provide a historical and theoretical context for understanding modern intelligence. The purpose of this chapter is to present the most relevant knowledge from the discipline of "intelligence studies" that was created during the last 70 years since the first attempts to establish it as a scientific (sub)discipline were developed. Therefore, this chapter will provide enough "evidence" about the disciplinary positioning and scientific foundation of "intelligence studies at the intersection of several different scientific disciplines and sub-disciplines in social and other sciences.

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[5] Spracher, W.C. (2009). *National Security Intelligence Professional Education: A Map of U.S. Civilian University Programs and Competencies (Dissertation)*. Washington, D.C.: The George Washington University.
[6] Gibson, S.D. (2007). *Open Source Intelligence: A Contemporary Intelligence Lifeline (PhD Thesis)*. Cranfield: Cranfield University.

Where necessary, references will be made to historical examples that better explain specific concepts or taxonomies, but a historiographical approach to this topic will certainly be avoided, especially since the subject of the paper refers to the period of modern intelligence work from the second half of the 20th century and especially during the first two decades of the 21st century. Certainly, if some historical events provide additional quality to the elucidation of these terms and the content of contemporary intelligence, relevant historiographical literature on intelligence work will be used.[7]

The establishment of the study of intelligence, that is, an adequate theoretical framework that would deal with this field, suffered from the same deficiency that Kenneth Waltz[8] pointed out when he spoke about the study of international politics, namely that "researchers... the term theory used freely, often to denote any work that goes beyond simple description, and only rarely work that meets the standards of the philosophy of science" (Waltz, 2009:9). It is in this context that Sherman Kent is recognized as a representative of the intellectual predecessor of the theory of intelligence work, and other authors today all too often refer to him as the first theoretician of intelligence work and intelligence analysis.[9]

In his most famous work, Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy (Kent, 1949; 1966), Kent gives intelligence a threefold meaning: "It is 1) a type of knowledge, 2) an organization that creates knowledge, and 3) an activity carried out by an intelligence organization" (Kent, 1965). Herman believes that the second meaning is central, and through that meaning he determines the remaining two: "...intelligence services carry out intelligence activity... for the purpose of creating intelligence knowledge" (Herman, 1996:2). This chapter will provide an overview of the works of the recognized authors, who have dealt with the most important issues in the field of intelligence during the last 60 years. It should be emphasized that the first works in this area are the results of the work of experts with extensive experience in intelligence work and academic biographies, while an increasing number of later works come from the academic milieu.

Attempts to establish a true theory of intelligence work are more recent and are reduced to individual considerations of the possibility of developing a theory from the perspectives of certain scientific disciplines through the use of specific methods and

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[7] Some of these sources are the following: Andrew, C. (2018). *The Secret World: A History of Intelligence*. New Haven: Yale University Press; Haswell, J. (1977). *Spies and Spymasters: A Concise History of Intelligence*. London: Thames and Hudson; Lerner, K. L. & Lerner, B. W. (2004); *Encyclopedia of Espionage, Intelligence, and Security*. Detroit: Gale; Warner, M. (2014). *The Rise and Fall of Intelligence: An International Security History*. Washington, D.C.: Georgetown University Press.

[8] Kenneth Waltz is a theorist of international relations and one of the founders of neorealism in the theory of international relations.

[9] Kent is, of course, better known as "the father of strategic intelligence" or "the father of intelligence analysis". The reference to Kent, however, did not have the continuity that the literature inadvertently suggests. Throughout the Cold War, his contribution was known mainly to members of the intelligence community, and only thanks to the works of Jack Davis in the 1990s, Kent was recognized in the academic community.

techniques of these disciplines. The situation is not made easier by the fact that the literature on intelligence is dominated by professional publications (journalism, essay writing), mostly by authors with previous work experience in this profession, while specific academic literature[10] can be limited to the last thirty to forty years, when the first scientific magazines from this field - International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence[11] and Intelligence and National Security[12] appeared. It should be noted here that the vast majority of the used sources came from the US authors (and somewhat less from British ones), which is a consequence of the fact that the US intelligence community is currently the most developed in the world, as well as that its openness to the public in terms of publishing research is much greater than in the rest of the world.[13]

In 2007, Peter Gill, Stephen Marrin and Mark Phythian edited the collection of papers Intelligence Theory: Key Concepts and Debates (Gill et al., 2009) in which there are some attempts to establish a theoretical and conceptual framework for the study of intelligence. Gill (2009) notes that the term Intelligence Studies is increasingly used to describe the rapid expansion of this field of research interest. He believes that intelligence studies "...have a pre-scientific character in relation to accepted scientific disciplines, but that they describe in a fairly precise way what takes place in them as a process of arriving at concrete scientific knowledge" (Gill, 2009:210). He concludes that "...researchers in already established scientific disciplines such as political science, history, international relations and criminology are increasingly turning to intelligence as an area largely ignored by social sciences before September 11, 2001" (2009:210).

David Kahn, who analyzed the historical approach to the study of intelligence, proposed three principles that the theory of intelligence should provide: "1) intelligence serves to optimize the resources of a given institution; 2) intelligence is a supplementary, not a primary element in the conduct of war; and 3) while intelligence is necessary for defense matters, it is only an option offensively" (Kahn, 2009:8-10). Kahn (2009) discusses that these proposals are testable, but that the problem lies in their limitation to certain types of (now) traditional battlefields, that is, there is very little doubt that intelligence in current circumstances is the primary element for defense and fight against terrorism.

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[10] Academic literature existed before, but it was not published as continuously and systematically as the literature mentioned during the last forty years.

[11] According to the SCImago Journal Rank indicator for 2019, the journal's impact factor is 0.280 and is ranked in the second quarter in the Political Science and International Relations category.

[12] According to the Web of Science Master Journal list for 2019, the impact factor of the journal is 0.481. According to the SCImago Journal Rank indicator for 2019, the impact factor of the journal is 0.308 and it is ranked in the second quarter in the Political Science and International Relations category and in the first quarter in the History category.

[13] Authors from the United Kingdom are dominated by historiographical publications, which is again related to the fact that in this country funds of archival materials of all intelligence services are opened more often, while the most probable reason for the practical hyperproduction of the historiography of intelligence work is the legacy of the former colonial power and/or the need to explain and elucidate various causes of a large number of intelligence failures during that period.

The largest number of scientific and professional works in the field of intelligence refers to intelligence analysis, where several monographs published in the period after the Second World War established the theoretical foundations of Intelligence Studies (Pettee, 1946; Kent, 1949; Hilsman, 1956; Dulles, 1963; Ransom, 1970). On these foundations, during the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s, a large number of scientific and professional articles on intelligence analysis and the intelligence process were published (Jervis, 1986; Johnson, 1986, 1989; Lowenthal, 1993; Burris, 1993; Sharfman, 1995), as well as a couple of monographs on the same topic (Heuer, 1999; Hughes-Wilson, 1999). The period of the beginning of the publication of the academic literature is related to the so-called Year of Intelligence, [14] 1975, when, as a part of the congressional investigations [15] into the abuses of certain intelligence services in the early 1970s, the Church Committee (Frank Church) in the Senate and the Pike Committee (Otis G. Pike) in the House of Representatives produced a huge amount of reports that became publicly available. For the first time, these reports allowed researchers to gain direct insight into the work of the US Intelligence Community, which resulted in an increase in the quality and quantity of published work in this area.

Within the works dealing with intelligence analysis, a special group of works consists of those, whose authors focus on the knowledge and skills of intelligence analysts. Among these authors, Richards Heuer stands out, who in the monograph Psychology of Intelligence Analysis (1999) provided a very detailed analysis of the mental abilities of analysts, the so-called tools for thinking and the most common cognitive biases in the work of intelligence analysts. Since it is the most cited single scientific result in the field of intelligence, the corpus of works that resulted from Heuer's research is huge, of which Rob Johnston's research can be singled out. In the monograph Analytical Culture in the US Intelligence Community: An Ethnographic Study, he analyzed the problem of bias in the work of intelligence analysts, the relationship between secrecy and the efficiency of intelligence, the time constraints that the job puts before analysts, the relationship between default skills and scientific research methodology, the process of training analysts, etc. Johnston provided a typology of variables in intelligence analysis, which he divided into four broad groups: (1) systemic variables, (2) systematic variables, (3) idiosyncratic variables, and (4) communication variables.

Since 2001, the number of scientific and professional articles on the subject of intelligence analysis and the intelligence process has grown dramatically (Hoyt, 2008; Immerman, 2011; Wirtz, 2012; Marrin, 2012; Lowenthal, 2013; Simon, 2013; Marchio, 2014), which was also the case with monographs and collections of

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[14] This year was also known among members of the US intelligence services as the Intelligence Wars (Johnson, 2007:1), which is an excellent illustration of the resistance of the US Intelligence Community at that time to the opening of the intelligence services to the public and the instruments for their control and surveillance. Moreover, after the congressional investigations of the intelligence services in this period, a system of control and supervision over their work, which is common today in the rest of the world, began to establish.

[15] In addition to the investigations resulting from the mechanisms of legislative control over the work of the US intelligence services, the White House also participated in this process through the Rockefeller Commission during the term of President Gerald Ford.

papers (Matthias, 2001; Grabo, 2010; Johnston, 2005; Moore, 2007; Gill et al, 2009; Hall & Citrenbaum, 2010; Johnson, 2010; Sinclair, 2010; Lowenthal, 2011; Agrell & Treverton, 2015). The reasons for this lies, first of all, in the fact that the attacks of September 11, 2001 caused an increased interest in the work of intelligence services with a special emphasis on the issues of intelligence failures, the role of intelligence in the process of making political decisions (Jervis, 2006) and the control of their work. Also, the expansion of the Internet and its users in this period enabled access to an increasing amount of data on the work of intelligence services.

When it comes to books on intelligence work, as early as 1974, Ransom (Harry H. Ransom) provided his division of the books published until then into the following three categories: "1) memoirs or interpretations of intelligence work written and published by former intelligence officers with tacit consent (or even the support of) intelligence institutions; 2) books written on the basis of investigative journalism, whistleblowing or prejudice, which offer authentic views of intelligence work, but fail to meet academic standards; and 3) books (mostly monographs) in which social science researchers and/or historians[16] objectively analyze how the intelligence system functions in a specific historical context" (Ransom, 1974:133). The latter were the fewest, and the reasons for this should be found in the fact that access to data on intelligence work was still limited, regardless of the changes that occurred in the period when Ransom made the abovementioned division of the available literature.

Perhaps the greatest influence on a more serious methodological approach to the study of intelligence work was given by Glenn P. Hastedt. In the 1991 analysis, he proposed new fields for the comparative study of intelligence work, by noting the existing methods of comparative analysis that had dominated the literature up to that point, namely: "1) comparing the characteristics of the intelligence agencies of different countries, and 2) comparing the ways in which these agencies approach a certain event or activity" (Hastedt, 1991).

Many authors often equate intelligence studies with intelligence analysis, and they take the reasons for this from the intelligence process itself, which, together with intelligence analysis as its central segment, resembles scientific research work in many ways. In this sense, "intelligence analysis has many important epistemological similarities with science, such as problem solving, new discoveries, skills in the use of tools, verification of knowledge", etc. (Sfetcu, 2019).

A part of authors who have dealt with intelligence analysis have also examined the use of open data sources in this segment of intelligence work. If we exclude the passing mention of open data sources in papers dealing with intelligence in general and intelligence analysis, the first papers on the subject of open sources were written in the 1990s (Steele, 1995, 1997). In order to continuously publish papers on this subject in scientific and professional journals, this trend continued

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[16] Historians also belong to the corpus of social and humanistic sciences, and here a difference is made in relation to the used research methodology.

in the early 21st century (Hulnick, 2002; Gibson, 2004; Mercado, 2005; Best, 2008; Watson, 2010; Calkins, 2011; Cuijpers, 2013), when the most important monographs and collections of papers in this field were published (Treverton, 2004; Burke, 2007; Wiil, 2011; Appel, 2011; Bean, 2011; Olcott, 2012; Hobbs, Moran & Salisbury, 2014). Along with the actualization of the topic in magazines and monographs, the first master's theses and doctoral dissertations that study open data sources in intelligence work were published (Krejci, 2002; Gibson, 2007; Spracher, 2009; Duvenage, 2010; Valdez, 2011; Holland, 2012; Starr, 2013; Coulthart, 2015).

Also, a great effort in explaining intelligence work in the context of the development of science was given by Wilhelm Agrell and Gregory F. Treverton in the monograph National Intelligence and Science: Beyond the Great Divide in Analysis and Policy (2015), in which they tested the thesis whether there is a great resistance in thinking about intelligence issues from a scientific perspective due to various political and cultural reasons. The goal of their book is to "position intelligence work in the broader context of knowledge creation, rather than as a specific activity or separate organization" (Agrell & Treverton, 2015:3). They explore intelligence work "as one way of creating knowledge for action, a way that is not limited to intelligence work, but that crosses other fields, including those central to the public role of science" (2015:3-4). In this sense, "intelligence is not (regardless of definition, organization and self-image) a matter of closed state security, but also a way of defining problems, structuring data, formulating and verifying explanations and managing uncertainty in the social context in which decisions should be made and actions for certain activities undertaken" (2015:4). When authors talk about intelligence, they "primarily mean intelligence analysis - the process of evaluation, interpretation and assessment, which constitutes the last stage of the intelligence process" (Agrell & Treverton, 2015:4).

Conclusion

Finally, is Intelligence Studies an academic discipline? Due to the fact it is the subject of many debates, Intelligence Studies represents an intellectual corps of almost four-decade long academic efforts focused on the development of science journals, research monographs, scientific conferences, university academic programs, theses and dissertations, research projects, etc. Its epistemological base is located somewhere between the disciplines of Political Science, International Relations, Security Studies, and History, and its thematic scope is practically limitless, covering topics from Management Studies, through Psychology, to Sociology of professions. This review of the development of Intelligence Studies has tried to cover all the established elements of Intelligence Studies as a possible academic discipline, and to collect all the intellectual efforts related to critical examination of the Studies within the available academic sources.

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