CALLING A SPADE, A SPADE: A RETURN TO 'COUNTERESPIONAGE' FROM 'COUNTER-INTELLIGENCE'

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Abstract

This paper argues that our theorising of 'counter-intelligence' leaves much to be desired. It maintains that in terms of engagement with the concept, current theory lags far behind our understanding of intelligence – which itself has frequently been accused of being 'under-theorised' in definitional debates. By carefully assessing current works on counter-intelligence theory and practice, and interrogating this theorising, I find three flaws that are necessarily in need of being addressed.

First, I argue that previous authors have all attempted to locate the essence of 'counter-intelligence' in its activities and not in its goal. Second, the article demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of scholars who have engaged in setting the boundaries and defining counter-intelligence have worked, or currently work within the US intelligence community. This US intelligence practitioner emphasis in the literature not only undermines the integrity of the concept as it results in mono-cultural understanding but, more profoundly, it has sanitised our understanding of the concept. Thus, lastly, I argue – by exploring contemporary developments in security services – that activities from these state bureaucracies are best defined by a return to 'counterespionage' and a move away from 'counter-intelligence'.

Keywords: *counter-intelligence, counterespionage, intelligence theory, intelligence studies, philosophy of language*.

Countering Intelligence

Our theorising of 'counter-intelligence' leaves much to be desired. In terms of engagement with the concept, current theory lags far behind our understanding of intelligence – which itself has frequently been accused of being 'under-theorised' in definitional debates (Andrew, 2004, pp. 170-184). There are obvious reasons why our knowledge and understanding of 'counter-

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intelligence' is behind other elements frequently associated with intelligence. First and foremost is linguistic – the ordinary treatment of prefixes. An uncritical glance could dismiss counter-intelligence by simply asserting that the hyphen assures the reader that 'counter-intelligence' is simply an attempt to frustrate the attempts of intelligence. In no term containing a hyphen is the second part unconnected to the first; for example: anti-personnel, anti (or counter) – clockwise, counter-force or counter-plot. Common usage of the word 'counter' in ordinary language would further indicate to the reader that counter-intelligence is simply that which counters intelligence; a verb that encapsulates an act in opposition to a noun (in this case intelligence). As such, the prefix and hyphen are relegated in the meaning of the concept – if one has a sure concept of intelligence then they understand what is being countered, thus what counter-intelligence means. All that is left for those who wish to contribute to a literature of counter-intelligence is to describe what efforts can be taken to 'counter' intelligence. Hence, as will be shown below, the literature focuses almost exclusively on methods – the 'vaults mirrors and masks', to borrow the title from one of one of the most popular titles on counter-intelligence (Sims and Gerber, 2009).

What is missing from the literature is engagement with 'counter-intelligence' (perhaps more pragmatically written 'counterintelligence') as a noun, as a unique concept distinct from 'intelligence'. This refers to theorising on counter-intelligence which is not partly or wholly contingent on intelligence. The meta- argument of this paper is for a linguistic turn and a return to counterespionage from counter-intelligence, both in semantics and essence. The paper starts by showing the evolution of counterespionage into counter-intelligence and the problems, both semantic and conceptual, that this has caused. From there the paper goes on to argue that previous authors have all attempted to locate the essence of 'counter-intelligence' in its activities and not in its goal. It argues that is a consequence of all majorities of scholars who have engaged in setting the boundaries and defining counter-intelligence have worked, or currently work within the US intelligence community. This US intelligence practitioner emphasis in the literature not only undermines the integrity of the concept, as it results in mono-cultural understanding but, more profoundly, it has sanitised our understanding of the concept. Thus, in the final section, I argue by exploring contemporary developments in security services that activities from state bureaucracies are best defined by a return to 'counterespionage' and a move away from 'counter-intelligence' with a focus on the aims of counterespionage and not a sanitised focus on means.

The inception and growth of 'Counter-Intelligence'

Counterespionage and counter-intelligence signify the same concept when discussing contemporary developments in security services, but the words' genealogies are distinct. It is best to start at the start, with the etymology of both words. The etymology of a word is important as it teases out root ideas, provides clarity and vivid context for a concept being signified (Donald, 1872, p. V). The etymology of 'intelligence' comes from the Latin word — *Intelligentia, intelligens* — meaning 'communicator of news' or 'one who conveys intelligence' (Donald, 1872, p. 266). Espionage, on the other hand, is from the French *espionnage* meaning 'spying', which is from Middle French *espionner* 'to spy'.[1] *'Espionner '*, in turn, is from mid-thirteenth century French *espier*, meaning 'to watch stealthily' (Donald, 1872, p. 161).

Language obviously has all sorts of uses, but we ordinarily use it to communicate an idea as clearly as possible. This, however, is not its only function; it can also be used to obfuscate. The substitution of 'counter-intelligence' for 'counterespionage' is an example of such euphemistic obfuscation (Donald, 1872, p. 161). The George Bush administration's efforts to retitle 'torture' as 'enhanced interrogation techniques', is a well-known example of deliberately using a more complex term to hide its less pleasant aspects (Cole, 2009).

Obfuscation can also occur in the social sciences when writers attempt to emulate the rigour of the natural-sciences and circumvent the imprecision of ordinary language with unnecessarily complex terminology (Walt, *Foreign Policy*, 15 February, 2013). This is not to say that the employment of sophisticated language does not have a useful purpose. The development of discipline-specific terminology is often vital to explaining new, complex concepts by stipulating exactitude upon terms and making them measurable via experiments or observation. 'Counter-intelligence', however, conveys no extra rigour, extra precision in terms of meaning, no better understanding of the activities it purports to delineate than 'counterespionage'. In fact, counter-intelligence does the opposite – it is (and has been) used by government legislation, security organisations and academics to conceal 'the soft underbelly' of the less scrupulous methods of the concept lurking below the surface. It has also been used to obscure the extent to which surveillance for legitimate security purposes can quickly slide into suspicion against those who do not conform to dominant social or political norm.

[1] Both 'intelligence' and 'espionage' are from the seventeenth century.

Earliest British intelligence files illustrate the all-encompassing nature of the terrain that a concept signified by either counter-intelligence or counterespionage had to unavoidably traverse. In 1921, an MI5 report produced by G. Branch on 'the investigation of espionage', in the preface on 'the experience of M.I.5 from 1909 to 1918', produced a rather pivotal distinction. In the latter years of the First World War, German intelligence sent fewer agents to the United Kingdom for the purpose of 'espionage proper', as the bulk of Britain's armed forces were abroad (The National Archives, KV 1/39, 1921, p. 8.). The experience of MI5 between 1909 and 1918 was that Germany's concept of espionage embraced 'the whole life of the state: naval, military, economic, political and social...' with even 'the conduct and fortune of private citizens of interest to them' (The National Archives, KV 1/39, 1921, p. 7.). They did not only collect information related to military preparedness, but also 'stirred up discontent and strikes' and conducted 'commercial penetration.' (The National Archives, KV 1/39, 1921, p. 7) As such, in understanding what countering 'espionage' was, MI5 needed to cover the same expansive concept of espionage in order to counter it. Here is the salient part of the report: 'its [Germany's] elements are so various and inclusive that in legislation the wider term, "German agent" is now substituted for that of spy, and similarly the expression "Defence Security Intelligence" of larger connotation than "counterespionage" has been adopted to express more adequately the work done by M.I.5.' (The National Archives, KV 1/39, 1921, p. 9) From the early 1920s, terms like 'defence security intelligence' started to come into use, though the explanation offered here was because – ironically – counterespionage failed to capture the alleged breadth of German intrigue within Britain. Counterespionage would remain the dominant terminology to define the activities of secret and security services in English-speaking countries until the run up to the Second World War. From the mid-1930s onwards, however, counter-intelligence would begin its precipitous rise and eventually over-take counterespionage, which simultaneously began its slow decline – leaving us where we are today, where counter-intelligence reigns supreme.

This trend is not just observable from impressionistic anecdotal engagements with the files and the literature, but also through gigantic leaps in search engine technology that enable the scanning and registering of impressions of the use of specific terms. *Google Books Ngram Viewer* – an online search engine that charts frequencies of any set of comma-delimited search strings using a yearly count of n-grams found in sources printed

between 1500 and 2008 – demonstrates unequivocally the substitution of 'counterespionage' with 'counter-intelligence' since the 1920s.[2]

The adoption of 'counter-intelligence' instead of 'counterespionage' over time would have been a rational shift if it reflected a desire to encompass the broadening of the German activities within the concept identified in the MI5 report in 1921. However, 'counter-intelligence' – much like the word 'intelligence' – is preferred by governments the world over for the clean, clinical veneer it paints over the activity. The word semantically projects a sense of 'communicator of news' and not 'watching stealthy', as the etymology of both the words above shows. It is a clever trickery of language aimed at sanitising the business by illuminating activities that go along with the concept, while detaching it from the *espion* – the spy. As the next section will show, counter-intelligence theorising within the literature is similarly purged of its dubious motives, means and ends; whilst most frequently being analysed during wars and against foreign states, conferring a cloak of legitimacy over the activities.[3] However, despite the seemingly neutral framing, counter-intelligence is more than that.

Counter-Intelligence in the literature

Ordinarily Scholars are typically the individuals best placed to highlight the discrepancies between jargon and terminology, and comprehensive and partial theorising; as they are the individuals with the best command of the discipline. However, when it comes to understanding counter-intelligence, the overwhelming majority of those who have contributed to the debate on the theorising of the term have been former or current practitioners. As such, they are the least likely to highlight discrepancies, as they have a strong interest in projecting an image of 'counter-intelligence' that confers legitimacy and proportionality, as they have (in some cases still do) partaken in it.[4] The term 'counter-intelligence' adds

[2] An 'n-gram' is a contiguous sequence of n items from a given sequence of text or speech. The items can be phonemes, syllables, letters, words or base pairs according to the application. The n-grams typically are collected from a text or speech corpus. In the case of *Google Books Ngram Viewer* it is scanned books, newspapers, periodicals and journals available on *Google Books*. Even with the criticism of the software, the trends both ways are pronounced enough to demonstrate a switch out of 'counterespionage' and switch in of 'counter-intelligence.' See: *Google Books Ngram Viewer*, words searched 'counter-intelligence' and 'counterespionage' and variations of spellings, available from: https://books.google.com/ngrams.

[3] Unless within the studies of intelligence, the writers are talking about Soviet counterespionage.

[4] I highlight in text and footnotes when a scholar has worked in the intelligence community throughout the remainder of this exploration on definitions.

nothing to counterespionage – which was the term used in the nineteenth and most of the early twentieth century. Not only does the term deceive, but the significant body of writing claiming to theorise counter-intelligence is limited and written almost exclusively by former intelligence officers, leaving only a partial understanding of the concept at best.

Quite apart from the ambiguities in our understanding as a result of the aforementioned semantic obfuscation, our knowledge of counter-intelligence is less complete than our knowledge of other components of intelligence for other reasons. There are three primary factors at work here. First, much of the recent theorising on intelligence generally within the literature has almost entirely ignored 'counter-intelligence'.[5]

Second, as we have already seen, counter-intelligence is in a 'semantic rut' (Geschwind, 1963, p. 25). In 1963, C.N. Geschwind identified in the CIA's journal *Studies in Intelligence*, that '"intelligence" as the root of "counterintelligence" distorted thinking on the term, noting 'it is no exaggeration to say that the word "counterintelligence" has become one of the most dangerously misleading in our language because it enshrines the concept that in counterintelligence we are countering the operations of a hostile intelligence organization.' (Geschwind, 1963, p. 25) His reflection is still as accurate in the twenty-first century. In the US (where the majority in the discipline broadly known as 'Intelligence Studies' define intelligence as timely, good, relevant information to help decision-makers formulate sound policy) counter-intelligence is simply the thwarting of those same endeavours by foreign intelligence services.[6]

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[5] See, for example, Richard Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007); Gregory Treverton et al., *Toward a Theory of Intelligence*: *A Workshop Report* (Arlington, VA: Rand Corporation, 2006); Len Scott and Peter Jackson, 'The Study of Intelligence in Theory and Practice', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 19, No. 2 (2004), pp. 139–69; Loch Johnson, 'Preface to a Theory of Strategic Intelligence', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter-intelligence*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (2003), pp. 638–63; Loch Johnson, 'Bricks and Mortar for a Theory of Intelligence', *Comparative Strategy*, Vol. 22, No. 1 (2003), pp. 1–28; Michael Warner, 'Wanted: A Definition of "Intelligence"', *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (2002), pp. 15–22; David Kahn, 'An Historical Theory of Intelligence', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (2001), pp. 79–92; Stafford Thomas, 'A Political Theory of the CIA', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter-intelligence*, Vol. 11, No. 1 (1998), pp. 57–72; and Michael Handel, 'The Politics of Intelligence', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (1987), pp. 5–46.

[6] See the following for broad definitions of intelligence: Frederick L. Wettering, 'Counterintelligence: The Broken Triad', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 13, No. 3 (2000), pp. 265-300; Roy Godson, *Dirty Tricks or Trump Cards: U.S. Covert Action and Counterintelligence* (Washington, DC: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1995), p. 2; Warner, 'Wanted: A Definition', pp. 20-22; Jennifer Sims, 'The Theory and Philosophy of Intelligence', in Robert Dover, Michael S. Goodman and Claudia Hillebrand (eds.), *Routledge*

Lastly, and proportionately the weightiest explanation of the three, is connected to the core of counter-intelligence. As the countering of foreign intelligence takes place within the jurisdiction of the state, it intersects with citizens who have constitutional rights – rights that (in the US) severely curtail the repertoire of tools a permanent federal bureaucracy mandated to perform counter-intelligence would otherwise exploit. Connected to this quandary is the almost exclusive theorising on counter-intelligence by individuals currently or previously employed within the US intelligence community. With respect to theorising on the subject, the preponderance of engagement by intelligence officers has skewed our understanding of counter-intelligence. Since the early 1960s, research has been undertaken that sketches out a theory of counter-intelligence which focuses on legitimate methods, a focus on agents from foreign states during war and expresses a disregard for the *purpose* – the overall objective of all counter-intelligence operations.

Occasionally, counterespionage is split into two branches: defensive measures (efforts taken to prevent a rival's espionage) and offensive measures (deception activities an intelligence organisation may take in order to purposely mislead other rival intelligence organisations).[7] Unsurprisingly, theorising by officials or former officials has focused on either 'passive', 'reactive' or 'defensive' activities – keeping sensitive information in vaults and behind firewalls, protecting state secrets by maintaining good levels of personnel security, conducting background investigations and reinvestigations, and observance of the 'need to know' principle.

The less theorised component is frequently described as 'offensive'. When discussing offensive measures, counter-intelligence takes the form of recruiting double agents (moles) to learn the identity, methods and operations of the intelligence service from 'their' spies. It endeavours to preoccupy or distract a rival state's counter-intelligence apparatus with the goal of achieving 'strategic deception', by the double agent(s) feeding a steady stream of disinformation and by manipulation. However, offensive measures are

Companion to Intelligence Studies (London: Routledge, 2014); David Kahn, 'An Historical Theory of Intelligence', *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 16, No. 3 (2001), p. 79.

[7] See, for example: Hank Prunckun, *Counterintelligence Theory and Practice* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2012); James M. Olson, 'The Ten Commandments of Counterintelligence', *Studies in Intelligence*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (2001), pp. 81–87; David Tucker, *The End of Intelligence: Espionage and State Power in the Information Age* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2014) p. 74; William R. Johnson, *Thwarting Enemies at Home and Abroad: How to Be A Counterintelligence Officer*, 2nd ed. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2009), pp. 1-4, though Johnson, like many of the authors cited in this section, thinks of counterespionage as being a sub-section of counter-intelligence. It is worth adding that Tucker worked within Department of Defence, Johnson within the CIA.

usually broached in defensive terms, controlled and clean operations that are frequently framed against agents of foreign powers, with little to no mention of how counter-intelligence intersects with the lives of a state's citizens. Nor are there mentions of offensive measures – agents provocateurs, blackmail, informants, intimidation, subversion and deportation – which are rarely included in the theorising of the institutional arsenal historically of western security services.

Not all attempts to understand counter-intelligence have focused on this bipartite framework. The majority of counter-intelligence theorists' classifications of counter-intelligence have been either on a tripartite or quadripartite basis. Indeed, one author has approached counter-intelligence by breaking it down into a quintipartite (Redmond, 2010, pp. 537-554.).[8] Though the conceptualisation proliferates, the focus on outside forces continues. Michelle Van Cleave – who served as the first National Counter-intelligence Executive under President George W. Bush – notes the 'signature purpose of counterintelligence' as to 'confront and engage the adversary' (Van Cleave, 2007, pp. 1-15). Across her three major contributions, she conceptually broke counter-intelligence down into four components: identifying (spies); assessing (analysis); neutralising and exploiting (offensive) (Van Cleave, 2007a, pp. 5-11; Van Cleave, 2013, p. 58).[9]

George Kalanis and Leonard McCoy also split counter-intelligence into four sections (penetrating hostile intelligence services, research and information collection on hostile intelligence services, disrupting and neutralising hostile intelligence services and assessing the bona-fides of defectors), a typology that is not dissimilar to that of Van Cleave (Kalaris, McCoy, 1988, pp. 179–187). Moreover, like the former-Counter-intelligence Executive, the pair – both former CIA counter-intelligence officers – focus on 'hostile intelligence services', not citizens whose crimes would not be considered espionage, but potentially treason. In addition, no mention is made of the use of belligerent methods, attributed only to hostile intelligence (Richelson, 1989, p. 318).[10] Christopher Felix – a pseudonym for another intelligence officer, James McCargar, who served in the CIA during the early

[8] Paul Redmond is yet another counter-intelligence officer, indeed an extremely senior one. At the time of his retirement he was head of Counterintelligence at the CIA. His five parts are: (1) as Counterespionage; (2) as Asset Validation; (3) as Disinformation Operations; (4) as Operational Tradecraft; (5) as the Recruitment and Running of Counterintelligence Sources.

[9] Though in the latter article she breaks up counter-intelligence differently from in her earlier *Counterintelligence and National Security*.

[10] Jeffrey Richelson also offers four functions in the practice of counter-intelligence virtually identical to Kalaris and McCoy.

Cold War, also defines counter-intelligence in four parts (Felix, 2001, p. 126; Stout, 2004, pp. 69-82). In 1989, a further group of counter-intelligence experts met and also defined counter-intelligence in terms of organisational activity, functionally splitting counter-intelligence into four similar groups to those above (Graffenreid, 1989), p. 3).

Jennifer Sims and Burton Gerber – two more individuals who have contributed to theorising on counter-intelligence from within the US intelligence community, also define counter-intelligence based on four activities: 'Decision makers matching wits with an adversary want intelligence – good, relevant information to help them win. Intelligence can gain these advantages through directed research and analysis, agile collection, and the timely use of guile and theft. Counterintelligence is the art and practice of defeating these endeavours. Its purpose is the same as that of positive intelligence – to gain advantage – but it does so by *exploiting*, *disrupting*, *denying*, or *manipulating* (my own italics) the intelligence activities of others.' (Sims and Gerber, 2009).[11] Uniquely, Sims and Gerber provide a purpose, to gain advantage, but the purpose is sufficiently broad to be almost meaningless.

Equally, counter-intelligence theorists' classifications of counter-intelligence have been developed on a tripartite basis, with a focus on mechanisms and disregard for purpose and non-foreigners. The first to expound such a typology was another former CIA officer, Charles V. Cate. (Cate, 1958, pp. 87-92; Wasemiller, 1969, pp. 9-24)[12] Building upon Sherman Kent's tripartite framework for considering intelligence matters, the author discusses counter-intelligence as a confluence of knowledge, activity and organisation (Kent, 1949, p. IX). Arthur A. Zuewle – a former Soviet analyst from the Defense Intelligence Agency – also breaks down counter-intelligence into three constituent parts with two of those – 'aggressive' and 'defensive' – mirroring the classical duel taxonomy. He adds 'preventative' to the mix, segmenting defensive measures, mirroring Soviet ideas of prophylactic measures to some degree (Zuehlke, 1980). Along the same lines, Frederick L. Wettering – another retired CIA officer – conceptualises counter-intelligence as: 'protecting secrets', 'catching Americans that spy for foreign intelligence services', and 'frustrating attempts by foreign intelligence services'.

[11] Sims served as Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence Coordination and as the Department of State's first coordinator for intelligence resources and planning. She has also served on the staff of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence. Gerber served for thirty-nine years as an operations officer in the CIA.

[12] Soon after, A.C. Wasemiller also defined counter-intelligence three ways: as an activity (consisting of counterespionage and security) and a product (reliable information about enemies who use stealth to 'attack' the state).

(Wettering, 2000) Roy Godson strikes a similar chord, defining counter-intelligence as a state's effort 'to protect their secrets, prevent themselves from being manipulated, and (sometimes) to exploit the intelligence activities of others for their own benefit'. (Godson, 1995, p. 2)

Godson, who served on the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board under Ronald Reagan, sagaciously observed in the same book that most writing fails to include not just counter-intelligence but covert action as important 'elements' of intelligence' (Godson, 1995, p. 2). Godson, though not an intelligence officer, was a consummate Washington insider during the Reagan era whose general thesis was that these clandestine arts would be important tools of statecraft in the post-Cold War World. Precisely because he was an influential advocate of the best counter-intelligence constituting an 'offensive defence', his 1995 book highlights the classic myopia within the theorising on intelligence broadly; it demonstrates that under-theorising, combined with popular misconceptions, has resulted in counter-intelligence being regarded as a 'dirty tricks' (Godson, 1995, p. 2). His comments represent an illustration of the remarkable gap between all the sanitised theorising I have considered thus far in this section and a more grounded historical perception of counter-intelligence, which is missing.

Like Godson, John Ehrman – another former-CIA officer who specialised in counter-intelligence – provides a taut definition: 'Counter-intelligence is the study of the organization and behaviour of the intelligence services of foreign states and entities, and the application of the resulting knowledge.' (Ehrman, 2009, pp. 5-20) However, his definition does not fit well with the three types of counter-intelligence operations he identified in his article as the revolve around activities as oppose to process and products: (1) Classic penetration: an officer from a rival service is recruited and provided information from within; (2) Double agents: someone who appears to be working for one intelligence service but in reality is controlled by another and (3) Surveillance by area: through access to agents or physical and technical surveillance to uncover activation and contacts on an enemy service. (Ehrman, 2009, pp. 5-20)

There is a crucial observation we can draw from this section: that everyone that has contributed to a body of literature on counter-intelligence has at some point in their career worked within, or in concert with, the US counter-intelligence community, many within security sections of the CIA. From all the above semi-practitioners/ semi-theorist we have several key – sometimes overlapping – methods and concepts that continually recur; which to borrow a phrase from one of the articles, I would call the classic 'anatomy of counter-intelligence' (Wasemiller, 1969, p. 9):

(1) Being offensive;
(2) Is both an activity and a product?
(3) Entails covert/overt penetration;
(4) Involves double agents and catching spies;
(5) Requires extensive surveillance;
(6) Aims at disrupting and neutralising rival intelligence agencies;
(7) Seeks to protect secrets by *various* means. (Jelen, 1991, pp. 381-399.)[13]

These mutually combined components (which are not exclusively or mutually/jointly sufficient) make up the boundaries of what these authors considered counter-intelligence. As in the next section I endeavour to move beyond them, going forward I will consider them collectively as 'classic counter-intelligence'. The list of characteristics is sanitised and narrow, and avoids regrettable episodes and unsavoury methods in the history and use of counter-intelligence. Chapters in history where the intelligence community has not been used against a rival intelligence service, but rather against one's own citizens, tend to be overlooked.

The various theories considered above are also often disconnected from legislation and conceptions of what it means to be 'disloyal', an 'enemy', 'spy' or 'traitor'. They are equally disconnected from the earliest history of counterespionage, before the Second World War, or what counter-intelligence would mean in a non-state context. Most bizarrely, few provide an 'end' to their list of 'means' outside of the successful completion of the operation for the sake of the operation. In other words, the conception of this subject is remarkably tactical and often lacks strategic context. Counter-intelligence is taken to be a self-evident good and is rarely considered through a critical lens.

A return to 'Counterespionage'

Accordingly, I argue for a return to counterespionage. For an adoption of a much broader and more intuitive stance on the essence of counterespionage, free from the constrained path of the above authors who have so far contributed to the 'theories of counter-intelligence' debate. Instead, a new old term – counterespionage – needs to be deployed that semantically distinguishes itself from the above activist practitioners/

[13] Jelen – a former Director of Operations Security at the National Security Agency – provides an interesting overview of counter-intelligence, though ventures no theory of his own. In this respect he is much like H.H.A. Cooper and Lawrence J. Redlinger, *Catching Spies: Principles and Practice of Counterespionage* (Boulder, CO: Paladin, 1988), p. X.

academics whilst reincorporating the sanctioned with the unsanctioned components of the concept.

Although some authors, like George F. Jelen and William R. Johnson, have thought of counterespionage in narrower terms than (even sometimes as a sub-category of) counter-intelligence, I wish to suggest that the former term better encapsulates the essence of the activities (Jelen, 1991, pp. 381-383; and Johnson, 2009, pp. 1-4). On the one hand, the word 'intelligence', is suggestive of a civilised and justifiable activity that a state undertakes to gain knowledge of the world around them in order to protect the citizen. On the other hand, the word 'espionage', signifies something rather more dastardly, it conveys concealment, subterfuge and/or deceit. It is more than just the gathering of information presumably for the purpose of better informing policy. The two activities – counter-intelligence and counterespionage – are conceptually, and in terms of their etymology, extremely close. One, however, conjures up images in the mind of practices uncivilised; where the other does not. It is the difference between 'torture' and 'enhanced interrogation techniques'.

Theories of counter-intelligence are sanitised, and like the literature on counterespionage, bear little resemblance to the reality of the historical record outside of war. This representational problem however, is not entirely unexpected. If the history and theorising of a discipline are dominated by current and former practitioners, it will not be close to neutral in its approach. Returning once again to the analogy above, it would be akin to a history of torture in America being written by current and former interrogators and jailers from Guantanamo Bay.

Much of the theorising discussed above emphasises 'foreign enemies' (often a code for Soviets), protecting secrets, surveillance and stealing secrets. It is a classical Cold War understanding of counter-intelligence. It fails to talk about supporters of, for example, communism who undertake some of the same activities of Soviet spies but are in fact Americans taking no orders from Moscow. It also fails to account for those on the level of abstraction below; those individuals who do not steal secrets or sow seeds of discontent but provide the material safe-haven for those who do. Or the level of abstraction below that; those who do not even provide a material safe-haven but support the same communistic ends. Their crime is in thought, not in deed, but the history of counterespionage is littered with examples of individuals who have been persecuted for holding opinions that challenged the dominant status quo. That is the real essence of counterespionage. It is concerned with protecting the predominant political social order from various threats, and is not selective in terms of the various offensive and defensive measures it employs.

Substantial theorising within the classic counter-intelligence literature has focused on methods (or activities) – the means – but the ends seem to be simplified, focusing largely on the prevention of intelligence collection by a foe. Not only are less genteel methods side-lined – including agent provocateurs, blackmail, informants, intimidation, subversion, deportation, group infiltration, smear campaigns and integration – but a focus on the means is wrong headed; as the methods are of secondary importance to the goals. Counterespionage is best understood by its *aims*, which are always systematic means delay, frustrate and suppress preliminary stages of organisation before more advanced forms of 'revolutionary radicalism' can develop (Chomsky, 1999, p. 303). It 'counters' these threats through the maintenance and utilisation of activities not ordinarily associated with law enforcement or the army. But so often counterespionage simply concerns itself with the activities of awkward citizens who annoy the state.

Once you analyse counterespionage by its aim – discouraging the fermentation and influence of hostile ideologies – it increases the scope of moments in history that would be considered relevant to an understanding of counterespionage. It opens counterespionage to the unpleasant methods listed above, as opposed to being restricted by the arbitrary lists suggested in most of the previous theorising. It also opens theorising to include the role of the private sector, which has previously been shut out of almost all generalised conceptions which focus on states in the international system.

A definition based on aims also gives us a more complete *critical* account of counterespionage, as it does not just focus on threats to the nature of the state during wartime, but threats from jihadist, organised labour, anarchists and other movements that emanate domestically and challenge the prevailing ideological paradigms. It incorporates countersubversion, counter-conspiracy and – to borrow the wording from the UK Security Service Act – the '…protection of national security against threats from espionage, terrorism and sabotage from the activities of foreign powers and from activities intended to overthrow or undermine parliamentary democracy by political industrial or violent means.' (United Kingdom, *The Security Service Act 1989* (c 5), § 1(a) and (b))

Conclusion

Counterespionage has no meaning without dialectic. Without acknowledgement of a process of societal evolution within the literature on the concept, counterespionage has no deeper meaning. Understood extrinsically, as currently in the literature, counterespionage is relegated to be

understood like a fork (which can only derive purpose through human action). An understanding of counterespionage through human use only not does further our understanding of the concept but ultimately masks it. Counterespionage can only be understood teleological – through engagement with its end goal.

Other than arguing for a fundamental rethink on the theorising of counterespionage, this paper calls forward three other substantive claims. First, that the literature needs a broader basis of contributors, preferably those who are not American and not from the intelligence community. That along with different voices a more sophisticated appraisal of both the history and concept that engages with the counterespionage from an interdisciplinary footing needs to take place. And lastly, that the word 'Counterespionage' ought to make a return at the cost of the corrosion of Counter-Intelligence. This linguistic reversal is not just necessary to avoid obfuscation and equivocation. More importantly, if words are not used correctly, language is not in accordance with the truth of things and wisdom cannot follow. This was true when Confucius uttered it first 475 BC and it is still true today.

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