INTELLIGENCE AND INTELLIGENCE STUDIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY

INTELLIGENCE AND INTELLIGENCE STUDIES. TIME FOR A DIVORCE?

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Abstract

Many in intelligence still follow Sherman Kent's doctrine of intelligence as a type of social science that should try to develop natural science-like laws which make predictions possible. However, his positivist and realist approach is outdated in the academic world. It would be fruitful for both intelligence and intelligence studies to leave Kent's positivist legacy behind. Constructivism offers much more profitable prospects, especially for intelligence studies, whose academic status is endangered by clinging to an outdated positivism. Meanwhile intelligence, which has often used Kent's ideas as an ideology to fend off intelligence consumers, should do better to no longer pretend to come close to a science. Instead, using Aristoteles division in episteme (science), techne (tradecraft) and phronesis (practical wisdom), intelligence analysis should be seen as practical wisdom (phronesis) for practical decision-making. This would allow intelligence to embrace cognitive diversity in order to proffer different kinds of policy support. Leaning toward constructivism would help intelligence to become more action-oriented instead of information-oriented under the doom of positivism. Following the diverging paths of episteme for intelligence studies and phronesis for intelligence analysis, both should play their own autonomous roles, which would still leave meetings between the two useful.

Keywords: *Intelligence analysis – positivism – constructivism – Sherman Kent – phronesis.*

Introduction

The relationship between intelligence and academic studies is not fixed. Firstly, some practitioners of intelligence studies see them as the study *for* intelligence, i.e. being more practically oriented, trying to

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train students for a career in intelligence, whereas others favour intelligence studies to be studies *on* intelligence, i.e. more reflexive and meant not only to educate future intelligence practitioners, but also future diplomats, journalists, employees of NGOs and so on. Secondly, both inside and outside the intelligence communities there is debate whether intelligence analysis is an art or something close to science (e.g. Herbert, 2013, 653).

Collaboration and exchange of thoughts between (former) practitioners of intelligence and those who study intelligence can be fruitful, just as they can be between military and practitioners of war studies or between diplomats and students of international relations. My argument is that it would nevertheless be good for both intelligence and intelligence studies if the two could become disentangled, leaving no doubt about the own roles of the respective practitioners.

In this contribution I will try to demonstrate how some propagate ideas about intelligence as if it is (almost) a science that can hardly be distinguished from the study that should take it as its object, and show that these ideas have taken the form of an ideology for some, whereas presenting intelligence as a (near-)science may actually hamper positive results and become a burden for the practice of both intelligence and intelligence studies. By pretending that intelligence it should be some kind of science the former is hampered in fulfilling its proper role of proffering guidance to decision-makers in an uncertain world and the latter is thwarted in achieving a better academic status than its current one.

In order to appreciate this argument one will have to take into account differences between the US and Europe, especially regarding the divergent educational systems.

Commonalities and differences between intelligence analysts and academics

At first sight intelligence analysts and academics have much in common. They may have been taught at the same universities or colleges. Because analysts can be academically trained they are sometimes known as the 'eggheads' of the intelligence community. Sherman Kent wrote already in 1949: 'intelligence organizations must

be not a little like a large university faculty. […] They must guarantee a sort of academic freedom of inquiry and they must fight off those who derogate such freedom […]' (Kent 1971, 74). Admiral Stansfield Turner, head of the CIA under President Jimmy Carter, boasted that his service 'had more Ph.Ds. than any other area of government and more than many colleges' (Turner 1986, 113; cf. Smith 1976, 59).

To what extent can intelligence analysts and academic scholars be compared? The work of analysts resembles in many respects that of scientific researchers. They formulate hypotheses, operationalize key concepts, are concerned about presuppositions, analyse data, interpret and integrate those, distinguish between major and minor issues, draw conclusions and try to present their findings as clearly as possible. Many of the methodical recommendations for intelligence analysis are therefore reminiscent of the Research Methodology classes at a university.

Nevertheless, there are some important differences between intelligence analysts and scientific researchers. The pressure of time to come up with an analysis is much greater for intelligence organizations than for research at universities. This may have consequences for the validity of the outcomes. Furthermore consumption of the intelligence products is often limited to brief reports. Scientists mainly work for the long term, while the product of intelligence analysts is usually geared to the short term. It also worth noting that scientific research rarely involves deliberate deception by its research object, while an intelligence analyst must take elusive behaviour by target this into account. In addition, scientists can test their provisional findings at (international) symposia and conferences or in papers before they record their final findings. Because of the secret nature of their work, intelligence analysts often cannot. On the other hand, analysts may have access to secret information that is (temporarily) unavailable to scientific researchers.

Although both professional groups use hypotheses, their functions differ. Scientists start their research with hypotheses which they use to verify or falsify them in whole or in part, while intelligence analysts start their research with targets and then build data-based hypotheses of which the degree of probability is indicated. Finally,

intelligence analysts write to concrete consumers who have formulated their needs for practical knowledge, while scientists often do not know who can and wants to benefit from their (sometimes theoretical) knowledge.

As Agrell and Treverton stated in their 2015 book *National Intelligence and Science*: science and intelligence constitute indeed 'two remarkably similar and interlinked domains of knowledge production, yet ones that are separated by a deep political, cultural, and epistemological divide' (Agrell and Treverton 2015, 3). It is this epistemological divide that will be addressed in this contribution, a divide that seems to have grown over time.

Kent's ongoing legacy

One of the first books on modern intelligence systems considered the founding text of modern intelligence was *Strategic intelligence for American World Policy* (1949) written by Sherman Kent, who during the Second World War had worked for the CIA-predecessor Office of Strategic Services (OSS), specifically its Research and Analysis Branch, 'perhaps the most ambitious effort to merge academia and intelligence in the analysis phase of the intelligence process during World War II' (Agrell and Treverton 2015, 19). After a brief period back at his alma mater Yale University Kent returned to the intelligence world in 1950, where he came to be regarded as 'the father of modern intelligence analysis', with his ideas influencing 'not just the United States but also its friends and allies as well' (Agrell and Treverton 2015, 48).

Kent was a historian by training. Just when he entered the world of intelligence in 1941 he was about to publish *Writing History*, of which it was said that if you replaced the word 'historian' by 'intelligence officer' you would have a good guide for intelligence analysis (Ford 1980, 2). Kent had certain ideas about how intelligence analysis should look like, which he not only presented in his aforementioned book about strategic intelligence, but also especially in two articles, which are still often cited: one about the need for an intelligence literature and the other about words of estimative probability (Kent 1955, 1964). According to Kent, in 1955, the intelligence profession had 'taken on the

aspects of a discipline: it has developed a recognized methodology; it has developed a vocabulary; it has developed a body of theory and doctrine; it has elaborate and refined techniques.' The only thing that was still lacking then was a literature by intelligence's 'most knowledgeable devotees', its 'master practitioners', 'practicing members of the profession' especially about techniques and methods, some kind of house organ literature plus (Kent 1955), a defect that has since been remedied: *Studies in Intelligence*, the CIA in-house publication about techniques and methods, which Kent helped to establish. In short, Kent developed intelligence into a science of analysis, characterized by a strict methodology (cf. Kreuter 2010, 252, 261-262), which in its turn should lead to 'nothing less than a science of prediction', a hubric and elusive aspiration. (Scoblic 2018).

Today Kent's ideas still have a great influence on the self-image of many who work in intelligence. More than three decades after his death his name still figures foremost in the indices of intelligence textbooks and it is sometimes amazing to see how little has changed in the general ideas many have of intelligence analysis over more than half a century since the writings of Kent. Kent's ideas about intelligence analysis have not only become 'the foundational theory of intelligence', they seem to be 'an unquestionable intelligence orthodoxy' (Woodard 2013, 91).

Kent's ideas were anchored in his time and therefore his legacy in intelligence became 'the ongoing legacy of positivism' (Kreuter 2015, 218). These ideas could be summarized as follows (for an elaborate presentation with numerous examples see: Kreuter 2010 and Lillbacka 2013). The mission of intelligence is to see the development of threats earlier than its masters. The masterpiece of intelligence analysis estimates. Intelligence analysis comes closest to social science. Because the task of intelligence is to be prognostic, it would be nice if there would be something like social science laws akin to natural science laws, based mainly on causation and inferences. In order to develop such laws rigorous methods are needed. Or, as Sherman Kent wrote in 1949:

> 'Truth is to be approached, if not attained, through research guided by a systematic method. In the social sciences which

> largely constitute the subject matter of strategic intelligence, there is such a method. It is much like the method of physical sciences. It is not the same method but it is a method none the less. […] In spite of […] great disadvantages, social scientists go on striving for improvements in their method which will afford the exactness of physics or chemistry' (Kent 1971, 156).

The premise for such a science-oriented intelligence analysis was that reality exists independently of people's observations and interpretations. Cognitive limitations can be overcome, e.g. by reducing biases. Propositions can be adjudicated by systematic methods. Propositions or models correctly describing reality are true. Language is a neutral medium for communicating 'reality'. Communication itself is neutral. Accurate descriptions of reality allow for predictions.

In the positivistic or realistic tradition in which Kent stood it is acknowledged that people's interpretations of the world may be faulty, but these faults may be corrected by using a right set of methods, which, mainly thanks to Richards Heuer, came to be known in the intelligence world as structured analytic techniques, and by critical thinking. By clarity of wordings it would be possible to transfer ideas to consumers of intelligence, often policy- or decision-makers. However, the latter are not to be influenced, as the intelligence producers and their products are claimed to be objective, non-partisan and neutral (cf. Woodard 2013, 99). In order to maintain this objectivity and neutrality on the part of the intelligence analysts there should be a virtual wall between the producers and the consumers of intelligence. Or as Nathan Woodard aptly articulates it by analogy to the Bible book Genesis: 'In the beginning there was Sherman Kent. And Kent said: "thou shalt not be policy prescriptive in thine intelligence"' (Woodard 2013, 91-92). And ever since when intelligence producers and intelligence consumers come too close to each other there are 'cries of corruption and scandal' (Lammana 2011, 1).

Against this idiosyncratic backdrop the intelligence producers claim to speak truth to power, avoiding that their products become the victim of politicization, i.e. 'the compromise of the objectivity of intelligence, or of how intelligence is used, to serve policy or political aims.' (Pillar 2012, 473)

It is neither possible nor necessary to run the whole gamut of expressions of dominantly positivistic ideas in the intelligence world. Suffice to show a few illustrations, such as in the early years of the CIA when Allen Dulles in 1947 pleaded for an agency 'whose duty is to weigh facts, and to draw conclusions from those facts (…) The Central Intelligence Agency should have nothing to do with policy'' (quoted in Lamanna, 2011, 54-55) and when Admiral Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, head of the CIA, stated in 1948, a year after the creation of the agency, that the task of an intelligence analyst consisted of 'endlessly putting fact upon fact, until the whole outline appears', thus 'providing the factual basis for high-level policy decisions affecting our national security' (Hilsman, 1952, 3). Such attitudes are still prevalent seventy years later, as shown e.g. by the exhortation by former Director of National Intelligence James Clapper: '"tell it like it is" – straight, objective, unpoliticized' (Clapper 2018, 358, 398).

As said, it is astounding to see how little the so-called scientific outlook of the intelligence community has changed over the years. As Wilhelm Agrell noted:

> 'The conduct of intelligence in terms of technological basis, collection ability and focus changed dramatically during the twentieth century. What did *not* change in a corresponding way was the underlying theory of cognition, the idea that in the end intelligence is about facts, about the "real" world, and that this will be revealed more or less by itself through a linear and to an increasing extent industrialized knowledge-production system. […] There has been only limited and scattered development of the field [of intelligence analysis] since the publication of Sherman Kent's classical book on strategic intelligence in 1949' (Agrell 2012, 129-130).

And actually this is how Kent had intended it to be. For an historian he had a remarkable belief in the permanency of ideas. In a 1966 preface for a reprint of his 1949-book he wrote that, in spite of an augmentation of the intelligence community's task, the principles he had set forth in 1949 would 'always be with us': 'whatever the new

wrinkles, the eternal verities remain': 'the thoughtful effort of bright and studious people conducting their business within the very broad limits of the scientific method is the thing which did the trick', the sum of a great many facts and a method of combining them, and not 'a few rules of the thumb, an appeal to folk wisdom, and a little intuition' (Kent 1971, xviii, 48 and xxi-xxii). After Kent the intelligence shop for science was closed. Kent resembled a defector who told his new masters that every defector who would come after him would be a false one.

Agrell in 2015, this time joined by Greg Treverton, commented on the lack of scientific progress in the intelligence world:

> 'Why did half a century of debate over the importance of a scientific dimension in intelligence analysis lead to such remarkably meagre results? Why has a field so rapidly developing and of such high priority as intelligence not transformed long ago in this direction as a continuation of professionalizing? What we thus should look for is perhaps not the incentives for a science of intelligence to develop but rather the reasons it failed to do so' (Agrell and Treverton 2015, 23).

And the first and foremost reason Agrell and Treverton give for the missing incentives is that intelligence producers keep their tradecraft secret in order 'to draw a sharp dividing line between insiders and outsiders, those in the know and those not in the know and thus by definition unable to add something of substance'. Academic penetration was seen as just as bad as or even worse than hostile penetration (Agrell and Treverton 2015, 24-25).

While Dulles's and Hillenkoetter's statements in the late 1940s could still be seen in line with general ideas in science, which at the time was dominated by empiricism, positivism, realism and optimism about the possibility of developing natural science-like laws in the social sciences, seen from the perspective of today's science many of the elements in the above outlook seem terribly out of date. Facts, threats, truths, communication and language are no longer seen as realities in and of themselves but as constructions.

Science as ideology

Former intelligence analyst Nathan Kreuter characterizes the U.S. intelligence community's adherence to positivism and the concomitant idea of neutral language as an ideology (Kreuter 2015). An ideology is a collection of normative beliefs and values that an individual or group holds for other than purely epistemic reasons. It claims to offer the key interpretation of a certain reality and the ultimate solution to its defects. In the world of intelligence it is mostly political ideologies that are known, such as fascism, communism, nationalism and populism. However professional groups can have ideologies as well, such as medical personnel, social workers or academics. And although '[s]tudying ideologies is not the same as producing them' (Freeden 2003, 71), the cluster of above-mentioned positivistic ideas such as the neutrality and objectivity of intelligence analysis and the need for a wall between intelligence producers and consumers can take on the cloak of an ideology as well. After all, 'the claim of an "apolitical" status is itself a very political claim' (Kreuter 2010, 45).

The best type of ideology is the one that is not detected, that presents itself as neutral, as self-evident normalcy and thus has such a persuasive force that it does not lead to questioning. Such an ideology is the self-concept of intelligence, which presents itself as a-political knowledge or science shielded from the same politics it is supposed to serve, 'a protective mechanism to prevent decision makers from politicizing finished intelligence' (Marrin 2007, 409). However, in order to seem self-evident an ideology needs to have a certain footing in reality.

This does not mean that ideology and practice overlap. Thomas L. Hughes, Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research under the Presidents Kennedy and Johnson, maintained that in spite of the philosophy of the wall between intelligence and policy the American practice has been characterized by 'intelligence in search of some policy to influence and policy in search of some intelligence for support' (Maurer, Tunstall and Keagle 1985, 11). Others too have aired the opinion that the reigning practice in intelligence analysis is intuition, not science or scientific methodology, not even the use of structured analytic

techniques, for which there is often too little time due to the pressure to produce timely and actionable intelligence (Dahl 2012; Khalsa 2009; Marrin 2011, 42-44; Coulthart 2016, 942; Chang et al. 2018).

An ideology can excel by shielding itself off from possible criticism by giving its guardians an authoritarian esoteric status, which makes it nigh impossible for outsiders to contest its preconceptions. Except for religious groups, where could this be done better than in secret organizations, where 'intelligence seeks to secure for itself the authority of expertise' (Kreuter 2010, 35)? There is another link with religion in the sense that the positivistic ideology makes itself untouchable, as testified by descriptions of the so-called wall between intelligence producers and consumers as 'the "sacred curtain"', 'the catechism of the intelligence officer' or his 'basic ethic'(Schmitt 2005, 53; Heyman 1985, 57; Stansfield Turner quoted in Lamanna 2011, 95)

Ideally ideologies are meant to either support aspirations to a certain position or, once these positions have been reached, defending a status quo. Once the ideology has been accepted as the dominant paradigm it can prevent challenges to its core ideas. In that respect the Kentian positivism has been remarkably successful. Although there is a wealth of incitements to new theoretical underpinnings and approaches of intelligence (e.g. Bean 2018), the Kentian approach and the structured analytic techniques are still the dominant doctrine. A remarkable number of intelligence failures has not led to lasting criticism of this dominant approach. On the contrary, since 9/11 the view that intelligence should be seen as a scientific enterprise has increased and this time even the U.S. National Research Council pleaded for such an approach (Agrell and Treverton 2015, 86-87; Dahl 2012; Committee 2011). The ironic outcome of the 2001 and the Iraq-weapons of mass destruction intelligence failures is that in the end they favoured structured analytic techniques, because they have the advantage that they leave behind an audit trail (Agrell and Treverton 2015, 86). These so-called SATs have even been mandated by the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 and have been codified in U.S. Intelligence Community Directive 203. And with the introduction of big data and artificial intelligence the naive

factualism and the idea that data are neutral and not context-bound and as such facilitate predictions may even further prolong the positivist approach in intelligence. (Lillbacka 2013, 318; Scoblic 2018).

Enter constructivism

While intelligence still clings to positivism, following Kent's hope that the social sciences may one day more or less mirror the natural sciences, most social scientists today acknowledge that the overambitious imitation of the natural sciences has created a crisis in the social sciences. They now recognize that if science is supposed to deliver untouchable knowledge then there is little science in it. For instance in complexity sciences, there is a 'realization that we have reached the cultural end of certainties', that it is chaos and complexity that rule the world today, that crisis is permanent (Wallerstein, 2004, 38; Cavelty & Mauer, 2009, 136). Or in postmodern sciences it is accepted that today we are confronted with 'multiple, overlapping and often contradictory narratives' (Cavelty & Mauer, 2009, 134). In the words of the American sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein: we will have to live "with the knowledge that uncertainty […] seems to be the only intractable reality" (Wallerstein, 2004, 56).

Just as positivism was fashionable in science in 1949, when Kent wrote his catechism for intelligence analysis, so is constructivism today. Constructivism does not view reality as objective and given but departs from the idea that the interaction of human minds (re)creates reality. Constructivism offers the most coherent exposure of the shortcomings of the Kentian positivistic/realistic approach in intelligence. While realism may still have worked at a time that intelligence was mainly 'evaluation and comparison of military strength based exclusively on numerical factors', also known as bean-counting, (Agrell 1983, 184-185; cf. Colby 2007; Kivett 2006, 44), constructivism fits much better in a world where intelligence is pre-occupied with intentions and with complexities or wicked problems, which are hard to define, ever-changing, never at rest and which can only be solved by re-defining them through a different discourse or narrative. Constructivism is also better in explaining information and influence operations as part of at least some major intelligence organizations in the world. If accepted as

the leading philosophy behind intelligence instead of Kentianism, constructivism would have tremendous effects not only for the practice of intelligence but also for the way it is studied. What constructivism is or aspires to be can best be shown by juxtaposing it to Kent's positivism and realism (cf. Rathbun 2007).

Tabel 1: Positivism and constructivism approaches (author's perspective)

	Positivism/realism	**Constructivism**
Perception	Objectively real	Intersubjective
Nature of reality	Objectively real	Socially constructed and malleable but often reified as objectively real
Problems of uncertainty	Lack of information	Ambiguity of information
Conception of uncertainty	Ignorance (epistemic or aleatory)	Indeterminacy of a largely socially constructed world that lacks meaning without norms and identities
Challenge of uncertainty	Judge intentions of others	Ascribe meaning
Tools for reducing uncertainty	Information	Norms and identities
Learning	Addition of information for better representation of reality ('updating')	Acquisition of identities and interests through socialization and persuasion leading to normative change
Bias	Error to be eradicated	A given
Language	Neutral and self-evident provided clarity	A rhetorical means to (re)create the world

Communication with consumers	Disseminating a product (finished intelligence)	An ongoing process of joint sense- or meaning-making
Responsibility of intelligence	Ends with dissemination of a good intelligence product	Includes good decision(s) based on good intelligence
Predictions	Possible thanks to accurate descriptions of the objective reality	= performative means to shape reality
Rationality	Instrumental rationality (*Zweckrationalität*)	Value rationality (*Wertrationalität*)
Course of consumers	Act upon (actionable) intelligence	Persuade and influence in order to cause normative change/ (re)creating and (re)defining reality/ strategic communication and construction
Power	Based on intelligence (information advantage leads to decision advantage)	Performativity (the power of language to effect change)
Relations with other entities	Antagonistic (intelligence success of one is the failure of other; no friendly services)	Depending on the performative act : antagonistic or inclusive

How different the two approaches are may become clear from the way the concept of 'common sense' would function in both approaches. To realists common sense means accepting reality as it is. Everything that deviates from that viewpoint is nonsense. To constructivists nothing in the world seems 'common' or 'normal'. In principle there are endless possibilities of defining and redefining the world. Common sense would mean to constructivists that a collective

of individuals or entities shares the same outlook. If one has to indicate an overriding principal difference between the two stances it is that positivist/realist Kentians associate intelligence with the realm of information and constructivists associate intelligence with the realm of persuasion (cf. Woodard 2013, 95). It typifies two ways of thinking about intelligence as Wilmoore Kendall had already noticed in 1949. Kent, said Kendall, did not look upon the course of things as 'something you try to influence but as a tape all printed up inside a machine; and the job of intelligence is to tell the planners how it reads.'(Kendall 1949, 549).

Therefore, although constructivists pay a lot of attention to language, e.g. in the way of text or discourse analysis, the application of constructivism in the world of intelligence would make intelligence much more action-oriented than it is under the current dominant doctrine, which leaves action as a responsibility to the consumer (cf. Rahbun 2007, 552). Such an action-oriented view of intelligence is much more in sync with current developments that stress intelligence's role in influencing behaviour, information operations and strategic communication.

Farewell to positivism in intelligence studies

For certain reasons (i.e. its secretive nature) knowledge about the practice of intelligence has for a long time depended upon the insights of (former) practitioners. A quick overview of intelligence textbooks shows that many of its authors have had experience in the intelligence community. However, the greater the transparency of government, the easier it becomes for outsiders to study government activity. This is also true for the field of intelligence studies. When there was little public knowledge about state's intelligence activities, the insider's knowledge was of great importance. Over the past half century, however, more and more has become known about intelligence activity, to such an extent that it is not difficult to drown in the libraries that have been filled with intelligence monographs and textbooks as well as on the Internet (cf. Scott & Jackson 2004, 139-140; cg the bibliographies on www.iafie-europe.org).

The influence former intelligence practitioners hold over intelligence studies can also be explained by institutional arrangements in U.S. academia, which, in spite of recent developments in Europe, is still the world's major hub of intelligence studies. In the U.S. educational system it is possible to enter academia at an advanced age after a long career in intelligence. Therefore it is not uncommon that intelligence studies are taught by former practitioners. This has guaranteed that the teaching about intelligence has stayed close to the practice of a field where inside knowledge used to be hard to gain. It also meant that the main tendency in intelligence studies was the study *for* intelligence. At the same time it condemned intelligence studies to a relatively low academic status as the list of academic merits of some of these U.S. professors of intelligence studies was rather short.

In Europe it has often been the other way around. It took much longer to get intelligence studies established as an academic discipline. At the same time only those who have finished a Ph.D. get a tenured position at universities and the list of academic merits before one becomes a full professor has to be very long. Because those teaching academic intelligence studies in Europe follow the same tracks as their academic colleagues their academic status is relatively high. Late entries from other career paths almost impossible. Intelligence studies are thus mostly taught by people with little or no direct experience in the intelligence world. The intelligence studies that are taught in Europe are often studies *on* intelligence.

In spite of their more elevated status teachers and students of intelligence at European universities run the risk of jeopardizing their position in academia when they stick to the outdated positivistic knowledge that is often recorded in intelligence textbooks. If these academics who often have to operate within international relations departments or in the field of security studies do not demonstrate the idea that security is a contested concept and that men construct their realities they run the risk of becoming the laughing-stock of their departments. Furthermore, as Scott and Jackson wrote already in 2004: 'An uncritical acceptance of official or semi-official representations of the intelligence process as singularly free of ideological assumptions and political biases leaves the intelligence

scholar open to the familiar charge that she or he is merely legitimising and perpetuating the ideology of the state'(Scott and Jackson 2004, 12). All this hampers the integration of intelligence studies into broader disciplines such as international relations studies (Petersen & Rønn 2019, 315; Scott & Jackson 2004). Let alone that taking the government's perspective makes it difficult to develop *critical* intelligence studies, which would demonstrate how particular narratives become privileged or devalued in the intelligence production process (Kreuter 2010, 43-44).

It is therefore time to 'decolonize' intelligence studies from its referent object, which has manifested itself as its referent subject for too long now. Literary authors do not dictate what is taught in literature studies, diplomats not what is taught in international relations studies and deceased people not what is taught in history classes. Why should it be different in intelligence studies, if it wants to be taken seriously as an academic discipline?

Farewell to the claim for science in intelligence

Meanwhile, should intelligence cling to the outdated so-called scientific approach, while intelligence studies to part from it? The risk of the intelligence world sticking to the currently dominant approach is that it leads to overconfidence in representing the reality where this should not be the case. The scientist Kentian approach has stood in the way of maturing the intelligence process itself. To mention just one example, the idea of a wall between intelligence producers and consumers has, in spite of the idea that intelligence has a support function for decision-makers, led to amazingly little interest in the receptivity of decision-makers for information and the relation between knowledge or information on the one hand and decisions on the other (cf. Woodard 2013, 101).

The wall-argument is an impediment for thinking about the question how information can be disseminated with a maximum or optimal impact, other than some generalities, e.g. about the form in which knowledge should be distributed. Major questions whether information of and by itself has an impact or that emotions should be involved to create impact are side-lined. Previous mind-sets or decisions

of intelligence consumers are hardly taken into account apart from the cliché that today decision-makers have access to more and more information channels of their own. Established beliefs on the part of the intelligence consumers that stand in the way of accepting intelligence analysis seem in intelligence studies to be almost the sole preserve of dictatorships like the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany, not of that of leaders of the free Western World. The general idea is still that after receiving the facts the decision-maker will be convinced and will make the correct decision, and if he does not, it his fault or her stupidity.

Let us see what would happen if one would accept that the positivistic approach of intelligence is something that should not only be left behind by intelligence studies, but also by the intelligence world itself. In that case there are two options. The first is to impose more advanced scientific methods on the intelligence communities. The second option is for the intelligence communities to say goodbye to the ideological scientist claims.

The first road is recommended by e.g. David Mandel and Philip Tetlock:

> 'The IC needs a diverse infusion of ideas from scientists outside the IC. It needs those scientists not only to put forward their best ideas, but also to test them in rigorous experiments or experimental tournaments. The IC should take the most promising results and work with scientific teams to transition these ideas into analytic processes' (Mandel and Tetlock 2018, 4).

It will be clear that in my opinion this is likely to be a dead-end road that will only prolong the shortcomings that followed from the optimistic scientist approach that was begun by Sherman Kent. The second option, to say goodbye to the scientist claims, was ironically given by Richards Heuer in August 2010, when it was suggested to him to have his method of analysis of competing hypotheses, the so-called ACH-method, the crown jewel of the SATs, tested empirically. His reaction was:

> 'Can't we have confidence in making a *common sense judgment* that going through the process of assessing the inconsistency of evidence will generally improve the quality of analysis? Similarly can't we have confidence in making a *common sense judgment* that starting the analysis with a set of hypotheses will, on average, lead to better analysis than starting by looking at the pros and cons for a single hypothesis? (…) If the empirical testing of my two claims about the value of ACH doesn't replicate exactly how ACH is (or should be used in the Intel Community, I would be inclined to ignore it and stick with my *common sense judgment*.'(Quoted in Mandel and Tetlock 2018, 3; italics by me).

Here we come to the kernel of the issue. Forced to choose between the intelligence community's pseudo-science and real science, Heuer gave three cheers for common sense judgments. However, there is no need to be triumphant about Richards Heuer's late confession, because I think the most important thing to note here is that Heuer recognized the real function of intelligence: to reduce the government's ignorance, as David Omand calls it in three ways: by building situational awareness, deliver explanations for the behaviour and motivation of other actors, and prediction (Omand 2010, 24-25).

The rigidity of using certain methods often does not help to realize these goals. The emphasis on methods may lead to the neglect of material expertise (Mandel and Tetlock 2018, 4). Intelligence expert Greg Treverton drew this lesson from experience: 'The more we required our analysts to be explicit about their methods, the more we risked turning them into middle-weights' (Treverton 2007, xviii). After all, there are a lot of analytic issues that would require very little scientific analysis; rather keeping a score-card or filling a matrix would suffice (cf. Herbert 2013, 655-657). As Herbert stressed: it is much better for intelligence analysts to use problem-solving techniques that draw promiscuously from multiple sources of intellectual virtue and professional specialization and 'to embrace cognitive diversity than to seek out a theoretical unity that serves no practical purpose […] While "science" sounds good as part of a catch phrase, its methodological nuts

and bolts have little applicability to intelligence analysis.' (Herbert 2013, 663), where the diversity of issues at stake requires quite diverse types of analysis support (Herbert 2013, 659-660).

Consequently, the practical knowledge that is required does not have to be science. As Greg Treverton writes, since 'truth' cannot be known in a 'blizzard' of uncertainty and complexities, intelligence's standard is and should be 'good enough for government work' (Treverton, 2009, 54), which fits in with Elbridge Colby's conclusion: 'When training the new generation of analysts, therefore, the intelligence community should focus not on achieving the hopeless twentieth-century dream of taming human life through predictive social science, but rather on the murkier but more realistic categories of practical wisdom and intuition'(Colby 2007). Such practical knowledge for (practical) decision-making is also known as phronesis in Aristoteles' epistemology.

Three types of knowledge

Aristoteles' epistemology distinguishes between three types of knowledge: episteme (theoretical know why), techne (tradecraft based upon experience) and phronesis (practical knowledge in support of practical action in a certain context). Or we could say: science, technical tradecraft and phronesis. If one understands intelligence analysis as 'actionable knowledge' or rather actionable foreknowledge (Rønn & Høffding 2013, 709, 711) or, as Sherman Kent stated in his *Strategic Intelligence*, 'knowledge […] which is capable of serving as a basis for action' (Kent 1971, 5), it can be categorized as phronesis according to Aristoteles' division and distinguished from episteme or science. Intelligence reports then come close to what in earlier times was the mirror for princes, also known as *specula principum* or *Fürstenspiegel*, such as for instance Sun Tzu's *On War*, Kautilya's *Arthashastra* from ancient India or Machiavelli's *The Prince* (cf. Lamanna 2011, 5). Such phronesis concerns the analysis of things that are good or bad for men as a point of departure for action (Flyvbjerg, 2006, pp. 4, 57). The central questions of such phronesis are: 1. Where are we going? 2. Is this desirable? 3. What should be done? 4. Who gains and who loses? (Flyvbjerg, 2006, 60, 130-131). Such questions end in shaping reality

rather than describing it. They fit in well with the value- and action-orientation of constructivism, while saving an information-orientation. They are also the type of questions that can be answered both by intelligence and intelligence studies, but both from their own relatively autonomous position.

I do not wish to say that intelligence (analysts) and academia should not cooperate. On the contrary, recognition of the separate roles which intelligence collectors and analysts on the one hand and academics on the other play makes both strategic alliances and ad hoc meetings between the two all the more necessary. However, such cooperation should be done while recognizing that intelligence analysts represent phronesis and academics represent episteme or science, two types of knowledge which should not be confused. At the same time both analysts and academics would do well to recognize that realities as such do not exist but that it is images and narratives of reality that matter and that those are the results of power positions. Such a recognition fits in better with action-oriented constructivism than with the so-called reality-oriented positivism. Time for both the intelligence world and intelligence studies to say goodbye to the latter.

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