

# Intelligence Practices in High-Trust Societies

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Scandinavian Exceptionalism?

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## Chapter 8

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### Intelligence Education for the Future

What Kind of Future is the Scandinavian  
Intelligence Community Prepared For?

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## 8 Intelligence Education for the Future

### What Kind of Future is the Scandinavian Intelligence Community Prepared For?

*Karen Lund Petersen and Kira Vrist Rønn*

#### Introduction

“What do experienced analysts [...] need to know?” asked Goodman and Omand in their 2008 article, which is one of the most referenced accounts on how and what kind of knowledge is conveyed by intelligence teaching (p. 1).

While Goodman and Omand approached this question by setting out what future students of intelligence *should* learn about history, legal structures, and methods, this chapter takes a slightly different approach, asking what kind of future students of intelligence are *actually* preparing for. By studying how intelligence is taught at universities and colleges in Scandinavia, the chapter explores how curricula and study plans entail both similar and dissimilar assumptions about the methods and means necessary to combat future threats, and about the nature of new and old threats. As stated in one of the Scandinavian study programmes: “Intelligence analysis attempts to assess what will happen in the future” (Doc. 2). But how is this future envisioned, and how is it addressed, evaluated, and assessed?

These questions naturally relate to the broader question of the extent to which intelligence agencies are prepared for new and different futures. Are we teaching the right things? Are we preparing the students in the best way possible?

The first British degree programme on intelligence was launched in the 1990s (Goodman, 2006). Prior to this, intelligence was taught via stand-alone academic courses at universities, as part of either history or political science programmes (ibid.). The changes to and institutionalization of degree programmes in the US and the UK must be understood against a backdrop of increasing public interest in intelligence work (see also Rudner, 2009), as well as the subsequent drive for greater professionalization within the intelligence communities (Gentry, 2016; Omand, 2012; Goodman, 2006). Before the institutionalization of intelligence education, intelligence professionals were mainly taught on an informal basis, characterized by “on-the-job training” and “learning by doing” (Dylan et al., 2017). The rapid rise of educational programmes has since helped to establish intelligence as a distinct professional identity.

Aside from the intelligence programme at Lund University (which dates from 1990), Scandinavian university courses and programmes on intelligence are just a few years old.

This chapter seeks to define what is considered required knowledge in the curricula and study plans for 11 Scandinavian intelligence programmes, in order to evaluate how intelligence education contributes to the management of future threats. This is, to our knowledge, the first review of educational programmes on intelligence in Scandinavia, and the first study to evaluate how the selection of methods and content frames the possibilities for managing new threats.

The chapter starts by evaluating the methods, theories, and empirical cases included in the course plans. It shows how critical thinking has dominated the Scandinavian understanding of intelligence methods and how historical cases of intelligence failures are by far the most common way of modelling the future of Scandinavian intelligence. Secondly, we assess the strong influence of Anglo-American writings and scholars on Scandinavian teaching. In conclusion, we discuss the extent to which Scandinavian students are prepared for a future that is both uncertain and increasingly complex.

### **Background and methodology**

A range of challenges seem particularly pertinent for the intelligence agencies' ability to prepare for the future. One is the complexity of future threats; another is the dependency on a wide range of actors (both states and non-state actors) in relation to managing these threats. First, today's threat picture is characterized by numerous different threats and risks, ranging from conventional war to cybersecurity, through terrorism and pandemics, to nuclear threats (Bigo, 2019; Aldrich et al., 2018). As our recent past has taught us, assessing the future threat environment, and whether future threats will be technological, geopolitical, driven by private actors, etc., is a highly complex process involving great uncertainty (Treverton, 2014) (see also Larsson, Chapter 9 in this volume for a discussion on the increasing importance of and reliance on next technologies in intelligence practices). The only thing we know for certain is that the Western intelligence community must prepare for many different future threats.

The management of these complex threats calls for a redefinition of the relationship between the services and the community in which they operate, and greater inclusion of a multiplicity of civil stakeholders (business, civil organizations, and citizens) in the management of threats to national security. Some degree of openness and responsiveness to a legitimate public sphere have always been democratic virtues and have simultaneously been fundamental underlying principles for the intelligence profession. However, within the past 10–20 years, we have witnessed an increasing need to engage and delegate responsibility to civil society in intelligence work in order to effectively manage threats. The management of many new threats (cyber-security, terrorism,

radicalization) requires communication and collaboration with civil society and private businesses, which can contribute by providing input and helping define threats to society (Bigo, 2019; Petersen et al., 2019). The increased inclusion of civil society in the daily work of intelligence services makes more pertinent the need to identify and understand potential new uncertain futures, based on context-specific societal norms and values. This will help to improve communication vis-à-vis the public, set up effective partnerships with the private sector, design reporting systems, improve the legitimacy of surveillance methods, etc.

In order to estimate the current state of intelligence education, we use these two challenges as yardsticks for evaluating the extent to which Scandinavian intelligence students are prepared for the future. Intelligence is inherently about assessing possible futures and therefore, imaginaries about the futures can be identified in the teaching material and learning goals of intelligence educations. We base our analysis on 11 study plans and syllabuses from universities, university colleges, and police and military academies in Scandinavia: four from Denmark (DE), five from Norway (NO) and two from Sweden (SW) (see Table 8.1). These 11 programmes and courses differ in scope, size, and target audience, and do not exhaustively reflect the entirety of intelligence education in Scandinavia. However, they provide a good overview of the general focus and the choices made when selecting the curriculum and the themes for the teaching.<sup>1</sup>

We are conscious that the study plans do not necessarily reflect what actually takes place in the classrooms and that, by focusing on the study plans, we might lose sight of the details of these important interactions. However, most importantly for this study, the plans and the literature reflect the core ideals connected to teaching intelligence.

We have conducted a thematic analysis (Attride-Sterling, 2002), entailing an open and inductive coding of the study planes, in order to identify where the emphasis lies and how future threats are approached and envisioned.

In the following two sections, the study plans are presented in detail, with specific attention to how the future is envisioned in current intelligence education in Scandinavia. We have clustered the main topics reflected in the study plans into two main themes: the role of method and the choice of empirical cases covered in the courses and programmes.

### **Emphasizing critical thinking and intelligence failures**

One of the main findings of our study is that the teaching of intelligence in Scandinavia is characterized by an overwhelming focus on analytical methods, bias, and historical cases. In particular, the so-called function approach is very prominent in the curricula of at least 9 out of the 11 study plans. In the function approach, the focus is on the process of conducting intelligence (mainly along the intelligence circle), with a strong emphasis on the tools and mental processes that are instrumental to intelligence practice (Goodman et al., 2008).

Table 8.1 Intelligence study programmes and courses included in the study

<i>Doc. 1</i>	<i>Doc. 2</i>	<i>Doc. 3</i>	<i>Doc. 4</i>	<i>Doc. 5</i>	<i>Doc. 6</i>	<i>Doc. 7</i>	<i>Doc. 8</i>	<i>Doc. 9</i>	<i>Doc. 10</i>	<i>Doc. 11</i>
<i>Basic Intelligence, Norwegian Police</i>	<i>Intelligence Analysis, Norwegian Police</i>	<i>Intelligence management, Norwegian Police</i>	<i>Bachelor's Program in Intelligence and Language, Norwegian Defence University College</i>	<i>Inter-agency Intelligence Course, Royal Danish Defence College</i>	<i>Further Education in Intelligence, Norwegian Police University College</i>	<i>Intelligence course at the master's program in Security Risk Management, University of Copenhagen</i>	<i>Introduction to intelligence studies at the master's program in Intelligence and Cyber Studies, University of Southern Denmark</i>	<i>Intelligence Analysis, University College Copenhagen</i>	<i>Study program in Intelligence analysis, University of Lund.</i>	<i>Intelligence Studies, Swedish Defence University</i>

Within such functionalist thinking, the purpose of teaching is to improve the student's methodological skills and techniques, in order to improve and optimize their ability to collect, select, and analyse information. In other words, this form of teaching focuses on the *craft* of producing intelligence reports for certain customers, and as such reinforces the image of intelligence as a trade-craft.<sup>2</sup> This functional predominance is not only found in the study plans of police and military academies in Scandinavia – as one might expect, due to the applied nature of such teaching activities – but also accounts for much of the literature used in college and university programmes.

A strong emphasis on the function approach is evident in the choice of both methods and empirical cases. First, almost all programmes and courses have a strong methodological emphasis on cognitive psychology, which reflects the urge to mitigate individual biases in intelligence practices. Second, when choosing empirical material, cases involving intelligence failure seem to be the “go to”. Certain (American and British) versions of the past therefore become the standard by which present and future conduct are evaluated.<sup>3</sup> We will present these themes below and discuss the future envisioned when teaching intelligence, as well as the potential implications thereof.

#### ***On method: the cognitive turn in intelligence***

One noteworthy element in almost all of the Scandinavian intelligence courses is the emphasis on personal skills related to critical thinking. Critical thinking consists of competences that minimize the influence of cognitive shortcomings (e.g. implicit biases) on the intelligence process. Such competences are particularly relevant when conducting intelligence analysis, but also when collecting intelligence, i.e., when filing out intelligence-collection plans (Doc. 5). This is evident, for example, in learning goals such as “mastering a systemic approach to complex intelligence issues, for example cognitive shortcomings when conducting intelligence analysis”, and furthermore “the ability to assess potential cognitive biases and other factors influencing the intelligence process and products” (Doc. 5, our translation).

Several intelligence scholars have addressed cognitive biases and critical thinking. Generally speaking, cognitive biases are understood as “[...] mistakes in reasoning or other cognitive processes, produced by information-processing rules that the brain uses to make decisions” (Whitesmith, 2018, p. 225).

Most of the courses include teaching on specific structured analytical techniques (SAT), such as weighted ranking and Analysis of Competing Hypothesis (ACH) (Docs. 2, 5, 6, and 9).<sup>4</sup> ACH stands out as the most prevalent structured analytical technique associated with teaching intelligence in Scandinavia. It primarily encourages the identification of mutually exclusive hypotheses, based on existing evidence that is either consistent or inconsistent with, or not applicable to each of the chosen hypotheses, in order to identify the most likely one (Heuer, 1999, p. 95ff.).

Interestingly, critical thinking has become a unique trademark for teaching intelligence. Ever since the turn of the millennium and the publication of Heuer's iconic book *The Psychology of Intelligence* (1999), intelligence studies have undergone a *cognitive turn*.

There are potentially many reasons for this overemphasis on cognitive psychology in intelligence studies. Generally speaking, we have seen an overwhelming societal interest in cognitive shortcomings. One example of this is Daniel Kahneman's popular bestseller *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, which introduced his two modes of thinking and reasoning (system I and system II) and has influenced a range of professions besides intelligence such as police work (Kahneman, 2012) (see also the Introduction to this volume).

Aside from this general societal awareness and interest in cognitive biases, the main argument for accentuating the need for critical thinking when educating intelligence professionals is often grounded in the intelligence agencies' core objective, i.e., ensuring national security. Whitesmith, for example, states that "[...] the potential costs of failing to achieve an absolute standard of truth in intelligence are arguably much higher than in many other areas of intellectual enquiry". Furthermore, she argues that "[...] cognitive biases stand as a significant causal factor for intelligence failures" (Whitesmith, 2018, p. 225). As such, the potential urgency and importance of the judgements and decisions made constitute the core argument for the emphasis on critical thinking in intelligence teaching. The Scandinavian way of teaching intelligence, which adopts the assumed importance of critical thinking, therefore reproduces this logic. This is despite the lack of evidence showing that such teaching will in fact decrease the risk of future intelligence failures (Mandel et al., 2023; Dhimi et al., 2019, p. 1080; Whitesmith, 2018; Artner et al., 2016).

An interesting question, then, is what kind of future is envisioned in the function approach to teaching intelligence, when emphasizing cognitive psychology. First and foremost, the cognitive turn in intelligence results in an individualized approach to the intelligence profession, in which the focus is on improving the reasoning skills of each intelligence professional. Despite the emphasis on collective pitfalls such as groupthink, the focus on cognition ultimately addresses the mindsets of individual intelligence professionals, rather than viewing intelligence in a broader societal context (see also the Introduction). It does not explicitly express a specific vision of the future. However, the emphasis on upgrading the reasoning skills of each intelligence professional reflects a core understanding of the feasibility of refining knowledge about specific topics of interest, in order to approach "the truth". This is also reflected in the quote above, about striving for an "absolute standard of truth in intelligence" (Whitesmith, 2018, p. 225). The emphasis on cognition thereby reflects the rationale that if the intelligence professionals become conscious of their own biases, and can mitigate their influence, they will be able to provide the best – understood as objective, neutral, and truthful – advice to the decision-makers, thereby enabling them to respond to the analysed threat picture (see also Rønn, 2022). In this way, the weight on minimizing the influence of

cognitive bias reflects the ambition of controlling future threats via structured and critical thinking. The future is thus perceived as both knowable and controllable – as if it is possible to not only predict the one true future but also manage that future in the present. The cognitive turn in intelligence therefore feeds into the commonplace perception of intelligence work as a process of rational refinement, in which the predominant activity of intelligence practice consists of solving intelligence puzzles, rather than dealing with complex threats arising from wicked problems (Rønn, 2016; Treverton, 2014). In other words, risks and threats are instead assumed to be tangible, measurable, and manageable.<sup>5</sup> Finally, critical thinking in the intelligence process does not necessarily equal reflective intelligence practices, where the individual intelligence professional is able to reflect and be critical towards her own practices (see also Shakoor, Chapter 10 in this volume).

### ***On empirical cases: learning from past intelligence failures***

The second way in which the function approach is predominant in Scandinavian intelligence teaching is the tendency of these programmes and courses to focus on well-known mid-20th-century geopolitical struggles. In particular, the strong focus on failure embeds a certain interpretation of history in the teaching of intelligence.

Intelligence failures and the politicization of intelligence are topics that recur in many Scandinavian courses and programmes (Docs. 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 11). Typically, such failures are assigned an entire course day or a full course within the intelligence programmes. This emphasis on intelligence failures when teaching future intelligence professionals reinforces the role of failure as a *norm creator* in a professional bureaucratic culture. As described above, intelligence failures are also closely connected to critical thinking, since cognitive shortcomings are assumed to be the cause of so many intelligence failures (Whitesmith, 2018). This is evident, for example, in Doc. 4, in which one of the learning goals of the sub-course “Intelligence failures and warning” is: “to obtain knowledge about various phenomena which can lead to intelligence failures and strategic surprises such as collection failures, analytical failures” (Doc. 4).

Especially in the US, intelligence failures have served as a stepping stone for bureaucratic reforms. In teaching, failures are used as examples to improve future governance. The teaching, therefore, highlights a variety of potential failures, such as insufficient “source validation” and “intelligence communication” (e.g. the Second Gulf War), “inter-agency corporation” (e.g. Pearl Harbour and 9/11), the role of public mass mobilization (the Arab Spring), and juridical and parliamentary control (the Vietnam war, the Snowden revelations) (see Friedmann, 2012; Betts, 2007).

This use of failures raises at least two central questions. First, what are the paradigmatic cases that characterize intelligence classes in Scandinavia? Second, what does the emphasis on failure tell us about the ways in which the future is envisioned when teaching intelligence in Scandinavia?



The Scandinavian study programmes draw, in particular, on the most recent cases of intelligence failures, e.g. 9/11 (2001) and the Iraq biological weapons (2003) (Docs. 4, 7, 8, and 9). While most intelligence scholars tend to perceive intelligence failures as inevitable (Betts, 2007; Heuer, 1999), there still exists a strong belief in the importance of considering past intelligence failures when developing future intelligence practices. Some courses explicitly state that knowledge of intelligence failures, e.g. connected to either intelligence organizations, intelligence collection, or intelligence analysis, or to decision-making based on intelligence products, could minimize the risk of both failures and strategic surprises in the future (Doc. 4). While intelligence practices are considered notoriously opaque, and information about them is difficult to obtain, intelligence scandals and failures are one of the few ways to gain insight into the secret world of intelligence. Both *The 9/11 Commission Report* and Lord Butler's *Review of Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction* constitute paradigmatic readings in intelligence courses (e.g. docs. 7 & 8). Access (and the lack thereof) might be one explanation for the emphasis on failures in intelligence studies in general. But what is the added value of teaching intelligence failures? Intelligence failures are seen as similar to pathological reactions within intelligence communities, which seems to suggest that awareness and the illumination of past events when teaching intelligence constitute perfect remedies for future intelligence failures and strategic surprises.

In other words, failures are metaphors that help to create a narrative about the proximity between an American past and the future governance of intelligence in Scandinavia. They are metaphors to the extent that they claim to transfer meaning and learning from one context to another, and from one historical period to another. Historical metaphors therefore work to "objectify ideas and themes", because, as the American historian Phillip Stambovsky argues, "metaphorical imagery communicates meaning with all the dramatic force and economy of a visual depiction" (1988, p. 128). Historical examples of intelligence failures instil strong images of the past; images that work to reinforce meaning, which reflects the perception that intelligence professionals can use these images to improve their practice of tradecraft, and therefore learn from them (on an almost 1:1 basis) when anticipating the future. In this way, intelligence failures serve to stabilize the relation between past experiences and expectations for the future.

Accordingly, 9/11, the Second Gulf War, etc. are "master frames" for understanding and governing organizational change, and for instilling the idea that some intelligence failures can be avoided by increasing knowledge of past dysfunction, e.g. in the intelligence consumer/producer relationship (Doc. 4). In this vision, the professional skills are associated with those related to identifying patterns in past intelligence practices and attempting to observe the similarities between then, now, and the anticipated future. However, the interpretation of practical value lies solely with the teacher or author – i.e., the one evaluating the authority (and thus usefulness) of the case in relation to the present (see Treverton, 2008).

While historical cases can work as norm creators in teaching, by serving to establish sound bureaucratic norms of communication and control, an excessive emphasis on this aspect entails a risk of undermining another highly valued quality in intelligence practice – namely, imagination of new and different futures (cf. *The 9/11 Commission Report*).

### *Intelligence in the image of an Anglo-American past*

As de Graff highlights in his seminal work on intelligence studies, “[...] much academic writing has been produced by a community of Anglo-Saxon intelligence scholars who often assume that the processes and structures are like natural events that happen the same way everywhere” (de Graff and Nyce, 2016). Similarly, we show that Scandinavian intelligence teaching has a one-sided focus on British and American scholarly literature. Before delving into the reasons for the “absence” of Scandinavian society in the teaching materials, we will first say a few words about the so-called classics of Scandinavian intelligence teaching.

### *Teaching the “classics”*

The syllabus of the Scandinavian intelligence courses reflects the predominance of UK and US authors, with heavy use of texts by influential intelligence scholars such as Robert M. Clark (2020), Mark Lowenthal (2002), Richards J. Heuer Jr., and Randolph H. Pherson (2011) (Docs. 4, 5, 6, 7, and 9). In particular, the work of Heuer and Pherson is highly prominent in the teaching of critical thinking in intelligence programmes in Scandinavia. Heuer’s *The Psychology of Intelligence* and the co-authored book *Structured Analytical Techniques for Intelligence Analysis* (SAT) are mandatory texts for prospective intelligence professionals, including in Scandinavia. Hence, as argued above, the emphasis is on critical thinking when teaching intelligence originates in American intelligence literature. This suggests that there is little difference between the Scandinavian way of teaching intelligence and the American (and British) way. Scandinavia has blindly adopted the American scholarly tradition, which is somewhat surprising from the perspective of the study of international politics, where we normally talk about a distinctly European approach (Wæver, 1998).

Although some of the intelligence courses address Scandinavian-centric topics, such as national legislation and national oversight bodies (e.g. Docs. 4 and 6), and some of the courses include teaching on legitimacy and trust (Doc. 9), which are characteristic features of Scandinavian societies, the courses appear generic and similar to courses taught in any other Western country. The syllabus and course descriptions therefore offer a picture of an American and British discipline and a profession defined by these values. On top of this, the description of the geopolitical situation is seen primarily from a US perspective and is largely driven by examples taken from World War II and the Cold War – periods defined by bipolarity and the US dominance of the West. We will unfold these points below.

*Where is Scandinavia?*

The fact that modern intelligence arose out of the 20th century's institutional structures might, in fact, be a good explanation for the current methodological and historical emphasis on states, state bureaucracy, and the US-dominated geopolitical situation. However, in an era of globalization, rapid developments in the field of information and communications technology, and the rise of new threats and new geopolitical challenges, one needs to ask whether this framing of history can (still) guide us to the future. In fact, an improved and increasing openness to new and different futures could become essential to the success of future intelligence analysis. So, why are questions about Scandinavian politics, society, and culture (e.g. national history, democracy, and civic engagement) largely absent from course descriptions and literature?

We see at least three explanations for why the Scandinavian context and norms are absent from intelligence teaching. First, the emphasis on the similarities (rather than the differences) between Scandinavian practices and those of the US and the UK might be historically based. These practices were established early in the Cold War, in connection with the UK/US project of developing a Western alliance. The historical patterns and similar geopolitical visions are one reason why we see so many similarities in governance structures and functional set-ups in intelligence services across the West, and therefore also a similar focus in the teaching of intelligence. In this way, intelligence professionals might also expect an Anglo-American approach to teaching intelligence, since this is considered mandatory in order to become a "real" intelligence professional and to participate in the international intelligence community. Furthermore, a benefit of this shared approach to teaching intelligence might be recognizability between intelligence practitioners and a joint community of practices, where trust and cooperation can easily grow (see also Ördén, Chapter 3 in this volume). Finally, a shared syllabus when teaching intelligence across countries might also reflect an "imitative logic" mainly from the perspective of the smaller states such as the Scandinavian, which could serve to legitimize them – exactly by reusing the conduct, mindsets, and teaching material of their bigger allies (see also Diderichsen, Chapter 2 in this volume).

A second explanation for the absence of Scandinavian social, political, and cultural norms might be that educators and managers simply assume that contextual knowledge already exists amongst students of intelligence, i.e., that the student, prior to their studies of intelligence, has received formal national education at university, or in the military or police. Accordingly, the teaching of and education in political, social, and cultural norms, which are crucial for the running of these services, are externalized to others (universities, colleges, and other schools) (with some exceptions in the study plans, Docs. 4 and 8).

A third powerful explanation has to do with the predominant belief in intelligence as tradecraft. In this line of thought, the ability to identify new threat patterns and solutions is linked to personal development and experiences with practice. In other words, knowledge is created not in the classroom, but in

relation to how it is used in a lifelong perspective. It was Sherman Kent who first formulated this craftsperson-oriented understanding of intelligence, asserting that there is simply “something” (knowledge and competencies) that exceeds classroom teaching and cannot be taught (Kent, 1966). Similarly, in their paper on intelligence teaching, Goodman and Omand (2008) write, regarding the experience needed to refine the ability to select the right hypothesis for testing: “For experienced analysts, however, what will make the difference are the instincts” (p. 11). Since Sherman Kent founded intelligence studies in the late 1940s, the individual virtues and intuition of the intelligence practitioner have been viewed as the cornerstones of the intelligence profession (de Graaff, 2019). As such, when describing the characteristics of a good anticipator, Kent writes: “The only answer lies in picking a man who already knows a good deal about the substantive area in which he is supposed to ask questions, and who has an inquiring mind [...]” (Kent, 1966, p. 160). Despite the fact that several intelligence scholars have argued for new approaches to intelligence – for a move away from the “canonical intelligence cycle” and towards an era of embracing increased uncertainty and complex societal structures (Agrell et al., 2015, p. 189) – Kent’s legacy might help explain the predominance of the functional, context-neutral approach in the design of teaching activities for intelligence professionals, including in Scandinavia. According to his logic, the ability to see new solutions would be linked to the personal development of the individual intelligence practitioner, rather than something that can be specifically addressed in teaching activities. Along these lines, the authoritative knowledge involved in teaching intelligence in Scandinavia becomes, as in most other places, process- rather than topic-oriented and ahistorical rather than aligned with specific societal values, norms, and attributes that reflect the context and time of the intelligence practice.

### **Conclusion and ways ahead**

How can we prepare future intelligence officers to best meet reality and navigate against the background of an uncertain future? How can or should students of intelligence utilize their knowledge to help create better solutions to our common problems? In hindsight, we might be able to pass judgement on solutions that proved to be right in the past and thereby agree on the meaning of knowledge. However, if we take a step back and accept that these important decisions, too, were made in conditions of uncertainty, then what is *right for the future* becomes harder to see.

This chapter has pointed to two future challenges for which intelligence scholars must be prepared: future uncertainty and complexity; and a future in which there is a pressing need to engage both the general public and the private sector.

The first part of our analysis reveals how most teaching on intelligence prepares students for a future that is quite the opposite of complex and uncertain: namely, it is both knowable and controllable. This vision of the future is emphasized in the teaching of tools and methods for intelligence analysis,

which accentuates the need to avoid cognitive biases. Treating “future threats” as predictable, and therefore avoidable and controllable, creates “unrealistic expectations” of intelligence agencies’ capabilities (Rønn, 2016; Treverton, 2014). By clinging onto a conception of risks and threats as tangible and knowable, and not recognizing the uncertainty of the future, we might easily end up believing in the possibility of controlling the uncontrollable.

Additionally, when history is used as part of intelligence teaching, it perpetuates the most dominant and powerful historical discourses on threats and security, often with a focus on intelligence failures and geopolitical threats of the near past. However, in the Scandinavian setting, the focus of the teaching is not on local intelligence failures, but on Anglo-American geopolitical history and experiences. The limits of such a focus are obvious, given recent changes in the geopolitical landscape: both the uncertainty surrounding the US presidential office, the increasing power of China, the Russian invasion of Ukraine, and the EU’s apparent consolidation have made it clear that the geopolitical landscape and the balance of power are changing. In this geopolitical environment, Scandinavia faces new uncertainties that differ from those experienced during the Cold War.

Recent studies of political risk can provide some answers to the challenge of predictability – and thus our understanding of the limits thereof. Within the discipline of risk analysis, much attention has been directed to the question of how best to cope with new complexities and uncertainty. Recent studies of resilience, scenario-building, precautionary planning, and black swans are some examples of work that is highly relevant to intelligence (see, e.g. Goodwin et al., 2010; Makridakis et al., 2009; Koppenjan et al., 2004).

In the second part, we showed how the future is largely portrayed via the lens of an Anglo-American past. In other words, teaching activities in Scandinavia draw heavily on Anglo-American intelligence literature and a mainstream, Anglo-American history of intelligence failures, and tend to leave out the particularities of local and national cultures.

Here, the importance of understanding social norms and societal institutions (religious beliefs, bureaucratic and legal traditions, security culture, etc.) cannot be underestimated. Not only do intelligence professionals depend on such institutions for democratic legitimacy, but these institutions are also essential for identifying and understanding the effectiveness and effects of new solutions and innovations, e.g. partnerships, information-sharing, communication, and awareness programmes (Petersen, 2019; Petersen and Tjalve, 2015). Without a deep understanding of the legal and political culture, as well as social institutions, we risk losing the legitimacy and effectiveness of the measures taken towards internal societal groups who are asked to contribute to efforts related to, e.g. cyber-security, terrorism, and radicalization.

Finally, there is a crucial question regarding the role intelligence studies should play in the teaching of intelligence. Generally, there is a strong narrative within intelligence studies regarding “the gap” between theory and practice.

Teachers of intelligence are often either still working in or used to work in the intelligence services, which can potentially bridge the gap between theory and practice. However, this can also serve to reinforce a hierarchy between practical knowledge and scholarly research. Interestingly, intelligence studies have previously (roughly) been viewed as a bifurcated discipline, with an applied branch aimed at supporting intelligence practices (studies *for* intelligence), and another, more critical and distanced branch (studies *on* intelligence) (Shakoor, 2022; de Graaff, 2019; Gill and Phythian, 2012). Until recently, most of the publications within intelligence studies have adhered to the first branch, with an emphasis on supporting and developing actual intelligence practices. This past focus might partly explain the functional and tool-oriented focus in intelligence teaching. Recently, however, intelligence scholars such as de Graaff have argued for the need to distance intelligence studies from the practices of intelligence (de Graaff, 2019). Intelligence practitioners should look for not only publications from scholars who seek to solve problems, and therefore provide studies *for* intelligence, but also works that highlight studies *on* intelligence. This tendency to rely on the echo chambers of one's supporters could be part of the explanation for the lack of development within the teaching of intelligence. Perhaps we should dismiss this divide between studies *for* and studies *on* intelligence and widen the perspective of today's teaching to also include current societal developments.

## Notes

- 1 Both authors have been affiliated (in one way or another) with many of these courses and programmes, as programme managers, coordinators, lecturers, etc. Hence, much of the criticism raised in this chapter stems from our own direct experience of intelligence education in Scandinavia and is therefore also to a large degree a self-criticism.
- 2 The predominance of the function approach is well in line with a general image of the discipline of intelligence studies, which has been characterized by a functional and instrumental predominance, where the main aim is to provide hands-on, profession-enhancing, and "relevant research" (Jaffel and Larsson, 2022).
- 3 While we see these tendencies as reflecting the emphasis on instrumental and functional tools, we also see them as expressions of increasing professionalism in the context of intelligence.
- 4 This selection is very similar to what is taught in the UK and the US. As Whitesmith stresses, "ACH (Analysis of Competing Hypothesis) is the principal method recommended by both the US and UK intelligence communities for mitigating cognitive biases in intelligence analysis" (Whitesmith, 2018: 226). The emphasis is on ACH as a method for conducting intelligence analysis and for teaching future intelligence professionals how to reduce the risk of, in particular, confirmation bias, which is considered one explanation for a range of intelligence failures (e.g. WMD in Iraq).
- 5 While leading scholars on risk analysis are generally concerned with how to understand an uncertain future and unknowable threats (i.e. the late modern risk society), uncertainty seems to play a minor role in Scandinavian intelligence teaching (as per, e.g. Furedi, 2009; Baumann 2006; Beck, 1992; Giddens, 1991).

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