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Training Intelligence Producers and Consumers for the Future: The Dutch Approach

Bob de Graaff

Introduction

Ambition and Effort

As one of the founders of the Netherlands Intelligence Studies Association in 1991, and as one of the first academics in the Netherlands who considered intelligence studies a serious academic discipline it had been my longtime ambition to give intelligence studies an established position at one of the Dutch universities. So, when Utrecht University offered me a so-called profiling chair, intended to develop a new academic discipline within the domain of history, and informed me that I could pick any topic I would like, it did not take long for me to label my chair as “Intelligence and security studies.” This position being a three-days-a-week job, the Netherlands Defense Academy (NLDA) offered me almost simultaneously a two-days-a-week chair in the same field. The latter resulted from the wish of the Dutch Military Intelligence and Security Service (Militaire Inlichtingen- en Veiligheidsdienst, MIVD) to establish intelligence studies as an academic master. After the failure to create a combined master in intelligence at the Utrecht University and the NLDA, the Commander of the Netherlands Army issued in early 2012 a requirement order for the Netherlands Defense Academy to have a master in intelligence studies up and running by the beginning of 2013.

This was quite a tall order for several reasons. Firstly, every academic master study in the Netherlands has to be accredited by the Netherlands-Flemish Accreditation Organization (NVAO) before it can start, a process that often takes two years and even so is a process with an uncertain outcome. Secondly, after a proliferation of master studies the Dutch universities had just previously agreed to reduce the number of master studies. Establishing a new one was rowing against the tide. Thirdly, the NLDA was not a full-grown university yet. Just a few months prior to the Commander’s requirement order, it had its bachelor program accredited, a process that took almost ten years. And finally, being part of the Ministry of Defense, which was hit hardest of all ministries by the governments austerity measures, the NLDA had to cut back its staff by 25 percent. Creating a new activity with a downsized staff demanded some creative thinking.

However, with a military can-do mentality which contrasted pleasantly with the tardiness of academic decision-making at regular universities the NLDA decided to make an effort to achieve an even greater objective. In order to use this window of opportunity, which might be closed for long time in the future, it was decided to develop a master in military strategic studies as an umbrella over three different tracks, viz war studies, military management and logistics, and intelligence and security. The whole development stage took only three months, so that by the end of June 2012 the concept of the program could be sent abroad to reviewers in North America for external validation, one for each of the tracks. They sent in positive comments, which led to elaboration of a few items in the program, but were no hindrance for the next stage: the internal validation by reviewers from Western Europe, again one for each track, an independent chairman and staff from the Netherlands-Flemish Accreditation Organization (NVAO). Their main comments were that the program was tasking both students and staff too heavily, but these were comments that could be easily addressed, just as suggestions for a different build-up of the courses and the examinations. Through this

accreditation of the master program the NLDA has now in essence become a full fledged university comparable with civilian universities in the Netherlands.

Consequently, a pilot started in February, which accomodated only Defense personnel. From September onwards there will be an annual influx of students, which ideally should consist of students who for 75 percent will be recruited out of Defense personnel (both military and civilians) and for 25 percent from other sectors. Not only professionals from outside the sphere of Defense, but also bachelor students at civilian universities have already indicated their interest in following this mastertrack, so that this initiative has become another step on the road to full acceptance in the Netherlands for intelligence as a legitimate field of study.

Structure

The structure of the program is as follows:

Thesis 15 ECTS		
Research seminar 5 ECTS		
Electives (5 ECTS each)		
Defense Information, Innovation & Knowledge		
War, the Military & Media	Dynamics of Military Innovation	Cybersecurity/warfare
Decisionmaking in Crisis & War	Comparative Security & Defense Policies	Constabulary Operations
Tracks		
Military Management & Logistics (25 ECTS)	War Studies (25 ECTS)	Intelligence & Security (25 ECTS)
Elective	Elective	Elective
Strategic Military Asset Management	International Law of Military Operations	International Intelligence Cooperation
Military Leadership & Human Resource Management	Coercive Diplomacy	Methods & Analytic Concepts in Intelligence
Strategizing & Organizing	Insurgency & Counterinsurgency	Intelligence & Its Environment
Defense Economics & Performance Management	Peacekeeping & Statebuilding	Intelligence Organizations & Their Cultures
Core Courses (5 ECTS each)		

Thesis 15 ECTS		
War, Defense & Society	War & Warfare in the (post)modern World	Contemporary Security & Strategy

The master study starts with three compulsory core courses, each counting for five ECTS,¹ which have to be taken by students of all three tracks:

- War, Defense and Society
- War and Warfare in the (Post)Modern World
- Contemporary Security and Strategy.
- At the end of their study the students write a thesis (Fifteen ECTS), preceded by a course in research design (Five ECTS).

In this paper I will focus on the intelligence track, its structure and the reasons for setting the track up the way we did.

The intelligence track is made up of five courses of five ECTS each:

- Intelligence organizations & their cultures
- Intelligence and its environment
- Methods and analytic concepts in intelligence
- International intelligence cooperation
- An elective, e.g.
 - Cybersecurity/warfare
 - Constabulary operations
 - Comparative security and defense policies
 - Decisionmaking in crisis & war.

Considerations Behind the Program

1. There were several considerations that led to this program
2. The master should be accessible for both military and civilian students who have achieved a bachelor in one of the relevant studies, such as war studies, political science, international relations, history and so on, as well as for officers who are mid-career and will from now on be required to have a master's degree before moving on to their next rank.
3. The intelligence track should be of an academic nature aiming at reflection and critical thinking about functions, concepts and contexts of intelligence, qualities that are needed by individuals in a learning organization; it should not be a 'how to' -, skill-driven training course.
4. The intelligence track should focus on current developments and needs and on possible future scenarios in the world of intelligence.
5. The intelligence track should not only be intended for (future) intelligence producers, but also for (future) intelligence consumers.

¹ ECTS = European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System. One ECTS accounts for twenty-eight hours of study.

6. Ideally, this intelligence track should become a track to be followed by personnel from all Dutch intelligence and security services and qualified police officers.
7. Even more so, it should offer the opportunity to be transformed into a common Dutch-Belgian intelligence academy.

Consequences for the Program

Currently, there is a backlog among MIVD-personnel regarding academic training. This meant that there was so much interest in the program that not everybody who was willing to follow the studies could be allowed to start immediately, because otherwise the primary processes of the MIVD would have been seriously disrupted. It will take several years before we will have caught up with this backlog. However, at a certain point in time this will have been realized. From then on, the master will still accommodate those officers for whom the study will be a career opportunity, beside those who have accomplished a bachelor study and will flow in immediately from the college benches. Therefore this master, which is actually a one-year program, that normally would consist of forty-two weeks of forty hours of study (which equals 60 ECTS = 1680 hours) is spread out over two years, during which classes are concentrated on Fridays, taking eight so-called contact hours and leaving twelve hours for selfstudy a week. This is felt to impinge as little as possible on office hours and at the same time to prevent an overburdening of the student who tries to combine his master study with his job accomplishments with.

The mix of students with different backgrounds and different degrees and kinds of employment asks for special didactical arrangements and qualities. During the classes there will be less frontal top-down teaching than usual in academic studies. Classes will be strongly interactive, allowing for debates, in-class consignments, role-playing, guest lectures by experts, and so on. Although the course is meant to be reflective the teaching staff will be partly drawn from qualified intelligence personnel in order to relate as much as possible to practices and terminology known among the students.

Having students who have already have a career in intelligence as well as students who are relatively new to this field made it necessary to develop a deficiency pre-master course for the latter, requiring them to study introductory literature, which will be tested by both exam questions and essays. Thus a certain commonality of understanding will be achieved at the start of the mastertrack.

Another consequence from having professionally employed students is that their employer may have certain requirements regarding the topic of the students' master thesis. In the case of the students who are employees of the MIVD there may be a tension between the sources that are available to the students at their office and the material that is allowed to be published in the public domain. As an academic institute the NLDA can only assess papers and theses based on open sources. This may imply that students working for the MIVD will write two versions of their thesis, one that will be brought up for academic assessment and one that will live up to the requirements of the employer. Conversely, students who do not work for an intelligence service may like to get access to material that has not yet been declassified as they start their research or they may want to participate in an intelligence environment for the purposes of their research. It has therefore been decided that at the end of their first year of study students and the MIVD will meet each other for a thesis market, where interests of students and requirements of the MIVD can be matched, whereafter there will be enough time left to vet non-intelligence personnel in order to give them access.

A Study of Intelligence

The master is expressly intended to give intelligence personnel a chance to step back from the daily working processes and to reflect upon these processes, upon their temporal, contextual and cultural boundedness and on possible futures that lie ahead. The aim of the course is to develop in students the capacity for double-loop learning regarding the functions and working methods of intelligence. On completion of the course they should be able to reflect independently on the functionality of intelligence (both as information and as organizational activity) and secrecy in different time frames and in diverse cultural settings.

Although part of the student population belongs to the realm of the practitioners the intelligence track is thus not meant as a study *for* intelligence, but rather as a study *of* intelligence. Even so, the student will be trained to translate between practice and reflection.

One of the reasons for this decision to emphasize the more theoretical aspects was that the ministry of Defense has already its own training institute for teaching analytical methods and skills, and so does the Dutch Civil Intelligence and Security Agency (AIVD). There is no need to copy the work of these institutes, which are closer to the operational methods of the services.

As the Dutch educational system makes a much stricter division between universities and higher professional or vocational education than for instance the American system does, this emphasis on reflection falls clearly into line with Dutch academic traditions. It is also part of the mission and ambition of the NLDA, which is to provide thinking soldiers at the bachelor level and officer scholars at the master's level.

In this paper it is of course impossible to elaborate extensively on the reflective approach in the program, but a brief overview of some of the questions that are addressed in the different intelligence track courses may be sufficient:

From the course on Intelligence organizations & their cultures:

- Are we moving towards a more open society or towards a world persistently invested with secrets?
- Does secrecy necessarily constitute a component of intelligence?
- Does secrecy lead to more politicization of intelligence than openness does? Or is it just the other way round?
- Have the scales tipped too far into the direction of intelligence sharing?
- Do the costs of shielding information become prohibitive?
- Should intelligence agencies aim for reduction of uncertainty or for management or even exploitation of uncertainty?
- Is it possible for bureaucracies to gather intelligence on networks or does it take networks to gather intelligence on networks?

From the course on Intelligence & its environment:

- What is the difference intelligence makes in the decision-making process?
- Are intelligence organizations worth the money they cost?

- What constitutes good quality in intelligence? How do intelligence organizations adapt to changing task and value environments? Or even better: do they?
- How are intelligence organizations and their working processes shaped by past experiences?
- Could intelligence agencies become obsolete?
- How many so-called intelligence revolutions have occurred and do we need another one?
- Can politicization of intelligence be prevented?

From the course on Methods and analytic concepts in intelligence:

- What are the relative advantages of respectively formal, positivist methodology on the one hand and intuition, constructivism or post-positivism on the other?
- What are the implications of the way we define the intelligence process (solving puzzles, addressing mysteries, handling dilemmas, sense-making, creating (counter)narratives) for the methodologies used?
- What are the implications of the emergence of non-state actors for the methodology used by intelligence agencies? Does it favour the use of certain methodology, such as social network analysis?
- What constitutes centrality and cohesiveness in networks?

From the course on International intelligence cooperation:

- Does the special UK-USA intelligence relationship hamper closer intelligence collaboration within the European Union?
- Does open sources intelligence hold a promise for closer international intelligence cooperation?
- Does NATO intelligence analysis provide an example for UN intelligence analysis?
- How to create intelligence cooperation among coalitions of the willing, e.g. by creating communities of interest?
- What is the role played by human rights considerations in intelligence liaison?
- How to create oversight over international intelligence cooperation?

A Study of Current and Future Developments

Whereas many intelligence courses elsewhere are taught within universities' history departments and although I myself, being the coordinator of the intelligence track, am a trained historian, the emphasis in the intelligence track, as well as in the master as a whole, is on the post-Cold War world. Of course the major historical developments in the field of intelligence are touched upon (cf. the question: 'How many so-called intelligence revolutions have occurred?' above), the historical roots of intelligence organizations and the historical determination of their working methods are taught, but the main aim remains creating awareness among the students of current concepts and contexts defining the intelligence world and preparing the students for the future. If the intelligence community has to get rid of its Cold War 'anchors' and maybe even reinvent itself in order to adapt to the changed circumstances, the cutting through of the chains may as well start at the stage of education.

The Producer-Consumer Nexus

From the very beginning the master was not only meant for intelligence producers but for intelligence consumers as well. It is the understanding of the MIVD that an improved knowledge of what intelligence is about will enhance the readiness of policy- and decisionmakers to accept intelligence products. The MIVD has already started an intensive program to induce intelligence consumers to formulate their intelligence requirements much more clearly than has been the case in the past. At the moment this is still restricted to the question of what types of information intelligence consumers would like to receive about different targets in the near future. This endeavour is the outcome of the need to create greater efficiency and to enhance both intelligence consumers' and intelligence producers' satisfaction regarding the usability of the products. This exercise works two ways: the producers have to show the results they are asked for, but at the same time the consumers will have to prove that they make use of the intelligence.

It is expected that this process is only the beginning of a much more intensive dialogue between intelligence producers and consumers. A trend is becoming visible whereby intelligence producers are not only the gatherers and providers of factual knowledge, but become sense-makers and narrative creators adding meaning to facts. Another trend is that in a world that is overloaded with information intelligence services will increasingly be asked to authenticate information.

In both trends the traditional support function of intelligence, whereby intelligence officials hand over their information and leave the room before the actual decisions are made will make place for a situation in which intelligence officials and decision-makers are gathered around the table or involved in an ongoing iterative process of redefining problems and dilemmas. In order to improve the dissemination of intelligence both in a traditional support setting and a new exchange setting students should be made aware of the different rationales that guide the intelligence professional and the decision-maker. Consequently, intelligence dissemination is taught as a two-way process in stead of the one way street view from the point of intelligence producers that one often finds in intelligence text books.

A possible issue that springs from the enhanced role of intelligence producers as sense-makers is that the public at large may not be ready yet to accept the fact that intelligence officials exchange their support function for a function that brings them more or less at an equal footing as decision-makers. This is one of the reasons why it is not even excluded that students of the intelligence track may have academic jobs or journalism as a prospect, since they will shape the opinions and expectations of the general public regarding intelligence on the road to such a new intelligence paradigm.² Consequently, one of the items addressed in the track is expectation management by intelligence and security agencies. It should be noted that even with this expansion of the professional field for which the master may prepare, it remains explicitly oriented toward intelligence functions of the government, the course is not intended for business or corporate intelligence.

Standardization

Over the past there has been a keen interest in the possibility of getting a master's degree in intelligence among different types of officials in the Netherlands. The growing need for academization that has characterized the training of military officers over the past fifteen

² Cf. R. Arcos, 'Academics as Strategic Stakeholders of Intelligence Organizations: A View from Spain', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 26 (2013): 333.

years has been noticed among the police force as well. This is especially true in the field of intelligence, where there is a clamour for intelligence led policing, while simultaneously there is an understanding that traditional law and order functions differ very much from intelligence tasks. A clear knowledge of how intelligence works or should work is all the more necessary since there has always been a great fear of mixing police and intelligence functions in the Netherlands since the Second World War.

An effort is also being undertaken to interest the AIVD for this program, which although initiated by the MIVD, should be able to attract AIVD-officials both as students and as teaching staff.

Internationalization

Both being small countries confronted with budgetary reductions, especially in the field of Defense, there is a growing talk of Defense cooperation between the Netherlands and Belgium. It is generally understood that cooperation at the operational level would greatly benefit from common training and education. It is hoped for that this cooperation in the field of the military can be expanded to the field of intelligence education, which would be a great challenge in the light of the different cultures in both the intelligence and the academic worlds of the Netherlands and Belgium. From September onward the courses will be taught in English, so that military personnel from other allied nations may join as well (Interest has already been shown by the German armed forces). But I myself, being a so-called NetherBelg, i.e. a Dutchman working in the Netherlands, but living in Belgium, may be the right person to stand at the beginning of this unfolding history.

More generally, it is to be expected that whenever the Netherlands armed forces will operate abroad, they will do so in constantly changing international compositions. This makes it necessary to give students an idea about different national intelligence cultures as they exist, not only among opponents, but also among friendly troops or nations whose cooperation is sought. Comparison between intelligence organizations is an essential part of the course on “Intelligence organizations and their culture” and attention to collaboration is given in the course on “International intelligence cooperation.”

Much less than in the time of the Cold War can it be expected that intelligence cooperation can be based on a simple exchange of bits of information according to the rules of *quid pro quo*. Intelligence relations with e.g. Pakistan or Georgia are of a different nature from those with the UK or Germany. Furthermore, threats like terrorism and cyberattacks in whatever form demand much more international collaboration than the fight against espionage ever did. New international and transnational organizations, such as the UN in peacekeeping and peace enforcing operations or the European Union, develop their own intelligence centers where nationals of different states collaborate. The students should learn what the conditions are for international intelligence cooperation beyond the all too simple idea of *quid pro quo*. Theories about trust, institution building or relative cost advantage are taught to be applied in specific contexts.

Conclusion

Participating in the International Association for Intelligence Education (IAFIE) is another effort at internationalization, through which I hope our students will ultimately profit. I hope to learn from the much-respected experience gathered in the association and maybe every

now and then chip in experiences from the Low Countries, that lie at the intersection of the Atlantic world and continental Europe.

Annex. The Intelligence Track Courses Outlines

Intelligence Organizations and Their Cultures

WEEK	SUBJECT
1	Secrecy and uncertainty
2	Whose secrets?
3	Intelligence and secrecy: what is new?
4	National cultures of intelligence and secrecy, part I: US Intelligence
5	National cultures of intelligence and secrecy, part II: A European culture or European cultures?
6	National cultures of intelligence and secrecy, part III: The Middle East, Asia and Africa
7	Intelligence reform or intelligence revolution?
8	The other revolutions: Technology, information and revolution in military affairs (RMA)
9	The future of intelligence and secrecy
10	Final Exam

Intelligence and its Environment

WEEK	SUBJECT
1	Intelligence and its environment
2	Intelligence organizations adapting to their environments
3	Intelligence and its past
4	Intelligence and its consumers
5	Intelligence failures and intelligence costs
6	Oversight and accountability
7	Intelligence and law
8	Intelligence and ethics
9	No seminar
10	Research paper due

Methods and Analytic Concepts in Intelligence

WEEK	SUBJECT
1	Intelligence Theory
2	Intelligence Sensemaking
3	SNA in intelligence and Social Science
4	Social Network data I
5	Social Network data II
6	Centrality and Prestige
7	Cohesive subgroups

8	Affiliations and overlappings
9	Presentation
10	Research paper due

International Intelligence Cooperation

WEEK	SUBJECT
1	Foreign Liaison
2	UKUSA or Five Eyes
3	NATO
4	The European Union
5	UN Peacekeeping
6	Coalitions of the Willing
7	Communities of Interest
8	The ethics of intelligence co-operation
9	No seminar
10	Research paper due