

Impact case study (REF3b)

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| <p>Institution: University of Leicester</p> |
| <p>Unit of Assessment: UoA21 Politics and International Studies</p> |
| <p>Title of case study: Intelligence and Security: Improving professional standards for intelligence analysts and informing policy and public debate</p> |
| <p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>This research has influenced professional standards, guidelines and training in intelligence in the wake of the intelligence failure that contributed to the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Specifically, the research has been used to inform new professional standards and guidelines for UK intelligence analysts and has informed guidance and thinking related to professional training at the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Beyond this, it has also informed public and policy debate on broader security issues, including those arising from the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) and development of a UK National Security Strategy.</p> |
| <p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Professor Mark Phythian joined the Unit in 2007. His research at the University of Leicester has been in the field of intelligence and security; specifically, focusing on intelligence failure and the analytical traps that can lead to failure (1-4), the question of ethics and intelligence (5), and issues arising from the SDSR and the defence-intelligence nexus (6, 7).</p> <p>His research findings argue for a more nuanced understanding of the nature of intelligence ‘failure’, particularly in the context of pre-war intelligence into Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction programmes within the US and UK intelligence communities. Simplistic notions encourage the search for failure at a single point in the intelligence cycle, and the assumption that they are mono-causal. However, Phythian’s analysis of intelligence ‘failure’ suggests that it is far more complex and the reasons more likely to be multi-causal, overlapping and mutually reinforcing (2, 4). It also suggests that failure can also have a structural dimension (1) and has highlighted the need for a more nuanced understanding of the role of policymakers in such ‘failures’ and of the meaning and likelihood of politicisation as a contributory factor (2, 4).</p> <p>Avoidance of failure is closely linked to the question of analytical effectiveness. Phythian’s research has identified approaches for ensuring this effectiveness and therefore avoiding analytical traps (3). Effective discussion of the relationship between ethics and intelligence requires the articulation of a framework through which it can be advanced. Research at Leicester has focused on developing this in a manner that can inform intelligence training, engaging in debate with intelligence practitioners as part of this process (5). It has identified the source of the ethics-intelligence tension, and proposed an understanding of the relationship between ethics and law in this area. It has challenged the wisdom of rooting approaches to intelligence ethics in an extension of “just war” principles (5).</p> <p>His research has also provided a critique of the understanding of ‘strategy’ underpinning the SDSR (6, 7). It has made the case that the SDSR heralds a new form of bureaucratic governance in the UK (7). It has also highlighted the extent to which the contemporary relationship between the Ministry of Defence and industry is dysfunctional, arguing that the historic link that existed between UK defence procurement and UK-based defence manufacturing has now been broken and pointing to the consequent risks.</p> <p>In 2012, the National Academy of Social Sciences made Phythian an Academician, a title conferred on those who have made a significant contribution to the social sciences, in recognition of his leading role in establishing a social science framework for the study of intelligence.</p> |

3. References to the research

1. *Intelligence in an Insecure World* (2nd ed., Cambridge, Polity Press, 2012), with Peter Gill.
2. 'Political Interference in the Intelligence Process: The Case of Iraqi WMD', in Robert Dover & Michael S. Goodman (eds.), *Learning from the Secret Past: Cases in British Intelligence History* (Washington, DC, Georgetown University Press, 2011), pp.101-32 and 'Locating Failure: US Pre-war Intelligence on Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction', in John Owens & John Dumbrell (eds.), *America's 'War' on Terror: New Dimension in United States Government and National Security* (Lanham, MD, Lexington Books, 2008), pp.185-208.
3. 'Intelligence Analysis Today and Tomorrow', *Security Challenges*, Vol.5 No.1, Summer 2009, pp.69-85.
4. *Intelligence and National Security Policymaking on Iraq: British and American Perspectives* Manchester, Manchester University Press/College Station, Texas A & M University Press, 2008), edited with James P. Pfiffner.
5. 'The Ethics-Intelligence Tension: Sources and Bypassing Strategies', *International Journal of Intelligence Ethics*, Vol.3 No.2 2013, pp.12-36 and 'Ethics and Intelligence: A Debate', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol.26 No.1, 2013, pp.38-63, with Sir David Omand.
6. 'Lost Over Libya: The Strategic Defence and Security Review – An Obituary', *Defence Studies*, Vol.11 No. 3, 2011, pp.420-44, with Robert Dover.
7. 'The Politics of the Strategic Defence and Security Review: Centralisation and Cuts', *The Political Quarterly*, Vol.83 No.1, 2012, pp.163-71, with Robert Dover.

4. Details of the impact

With international focus on the intelligence failure that prefigured the Iraq invasion, Professor Mark Phythian has been instrumental in forging relationships between intelligence professionals and academia, aimed at reducing the risk of such a failure happening again. His major development was recognising the valuable contribution that insights drawn from social science could bring to the field. He has developed academic, analytical approaches to understanding past failures and evaluating the challenges faced by intelligence agencies.

Two senior officials, one then working within the UK Cabinet Office, the other for the US Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), have testified to the impact of Phythian's work.

Paul Rimmer was the UK's Director of Central Intelligence Assessment and Deputy Professional Head of Intelligence Analysis at the Joint Intelligence Organisation within Whitehall until November 2012 when he was appointed Chief of Staff (Policy and Finance) at the Ministry of Defence. In this role he was responsible for professional standards and practice amongst intelligence analysts in the Assessments Staff and, as Deputy Chair of the Joint Intelligence Committee, also for Defence Intelligence, the Joint Terrorism Analysis Centre and FCO Research Analysts.

He wrote that Phythian's research has "made a valuable contribution, in particular to the debate about the politicisation of intelligence ... I have drawn on it in my own work and advice to staff ... In particular it has influenced professional standards, guidelines *and* training; the research findings are used in the conduct of professional work or practice; practitioner debate has been informed or stimulated by research findings; and research has challenged conventional wisdom, stimulating debate among stakeholders. It will continue to be a source of reference that we will draw on in future training and guidance" (A).

[text removed for publication]. He wrote that Phythian's work: "has provoked a lively debate in both

the law enforcement and intelligence communities. Your research and presentation made a valuable contribution, in particular to the debate about the role of ethics in intelligence operations” (B). He added that Phythian’s publications in the *International Journal* (5) “will continue to be a source of reference in future training and guidance” both inside and outside the United States.

Numerous practitioner engagement activities have provided routes to impact and encouraged the intelligence services to integrate Phythian’s social science approach into their guidelines, standards and critical thinking. For example, he has spoken in recent years at the ‘Australia’s Strategic Futures’ Conference, organised by the Australian Defence Science and Technology Organisation (subsequently published as 3), at similar events in Canada and Turkey, and at the International Intelligence Ethics Association (IIEA) conference at Nuffield College, Oxford. In 2010, Phythian presented his research at a seminar held at the Cabinet Office in Whitehall chaired by Paul Rimmer. A revised version of his presentation was subsequently published (2).

Phythian was also commissioned to prepare a 6,500-word report on lessons from the Scott Inquiry into arms-to-Iraq, which was disseminated to defence intelligence staff within the Ministry of Defence in 2013 (C). He has been interviewed as an expert on the ethics-intelligence relationship for a report on counter-terrorism and ethics produced by RAND Europe, commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of Safety and Justice.

Phythian has also engaged with practitioners by commissioning book chapters from serving or former intelligence professionals across several edited works published during the current REF census period. Phythian makes a point of aiming his own published work at both academic and practitioner-focused audiences. In addition, his published work has been reviewed in the CIA’s in-house journal, *Studies in Intelligence*.

Phythian’s work has also been used on broader security issues. The Strategic Defence and Security Review (SDSR) was a major review of the UK’s defence posture commissioned by the newly-formed coalition government in 2010. Phythian’s research into issues arising from the SDSR underpinned a submission to the House of Commons Defence Committee in 2012 which was cited at various points in its 2013 report into *Defence Acquisition* (D, see paras. 155, 157 and 191) and informed its key recommendation (D, see paras. 191 and 198, E).

Phythian has also provided expert opinion for the BBC, and appeared in print and broadcast media in the UK and internationally, including BBC Radio 4’s *Correspondent* programme in 2011 (F).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

- a. Letter from UK’s Director of Central Intelligence Assessment dated 2nd April 2012.
- b. [text removed for publication]
- c. ‘Intelligence and Defence and Dual-Use Exports to Iraq in the 1980s: Lessons from the Scott Inquiry’, 6,500 word report commissioned for the MoD February 2013.
- d. House of Commons Defence Committee, *Defence Acquisition* (HC 9, Seventh Report of Session 2012-13, 5 February 2013),
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmdfence/9/9.pdf>.
- e. House of Commons Defence Committee, *Defence Acquisition: Written Evidence*,
<http://www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201213/cmselect/cmdfence/9/9vw01.htm>.
- f. Emails dated 13 July 2012 and 12 December 2012 from Executive Producer, BBC Radio 4 *Document* programme.