# Intelligence Studies, Intelligence Analysis, and Multidisciplinary Learning

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There is ongoing multidisciplinary research in intelligence studies that could be of use for this survey. Intelligence studies is the study of intelligence as a function of government, frequently but not exclusively associated with political science and history. The intelligence analysis specialty within intelligence studies focuses on describing, explaining, and evaluating intelligence analysis as a function of government. Some of these ideas have direct relevance to issues addressed in this survey, including building analytic skills sets, strategies and techniques for avoiding errors and biases in decision making, decision support for national security initiatives, building coordination and improving communication, and support systems in the workplace. A review of writings on intelligence analysis will show that there is a substantial literature developed on these subjects thus far.

In terms of emerging research and recent advances and accomplishments: there is an ongoing research project evaluating (in part) the degree to which other fields can help practitioners to improve its practice and outcomes. The underlying premise is that since the practice of intelligence analysis is inherently interdisciplinary--relying upon knowledge and processes drawn from a wide range of fields and disciplines and subsequently adapted for the unique requirements of analyzing intelligence to support national security decision making--research on best practices in other fields may provide knowledge and insight regarding how to improve intelligence analysis as well. The research agenda started with a focused exploration of what can be learned by comparing intelligence analysis to medical diagnosis, and extended from there.[1]

In 2012, a conference organized by Brunel University's Centre for Intelligence and Security Studies was held to engage in a cross-disciplinary discussion about the value of learning from other fields to improve both the understanding and the practice of intelligence analysis.[2] As the conference materials specified: "Professionals in other fields… also face many similar challenges to those that exist in intelligence analysis, including: difficulties acquiring information from a wide variety of sources, vetting and evaluating the information that is acquired, deriving understanding and meaning from that information, impact of deadlines, editing, and other production processes on accuracy of analysis and assessment, problems in dissemination and distribution to consumers or customers, managing relationship between producer and consumer (role, responsibility, independence & objectivity), developing professional infrastructure (recruit, select, train, & develop personnel; code of ethics), and overcoming impact of changing technology and alternative information distribution systems. How do practitioners in various non-intelligence fields overcome these kinds of challenges? How are their challenges similar to or different from those that exist in the intelligence arena? What can be learned from the comparison?" To answer these questions, conference speakers compared

[1] Marrin, Stephen, and Jonathan Clemente. "Improving Intelligence Analysis by Looking to the Medical Profession." *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 18, no. 4 (2005–2006): 707–729; Marrin, Stephen, and Jonathan Clemente. "Modelling an Intelligence Analysis Profession on Medicine." *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence* 19, no. 4 (2006–2007): 642–665.

[2] Brunel University Conference. *Understanding and Improving Intelligence Analysis: Learning from Other Disciplines*. London: Brunel University, 2012.

intelligence analysis processes to: information processing, digital forensics, futures methodology, legal reasoning, professional journal publishing, professional magicians, social sciences (Bayesian analysis), historiography, biblical and theological studies, neuroscience, decision science, government statistics, economics, journalism, and political marketing.

In 2013, a workshop organized by University of Mississippi's Center for Intelligence and Security Studies compared intelligence analysis to: causal qualitative analysis, legal history and reasoning, intelligence/policy relations, neuropsychology, library science, civil engineering, criminal enterprise, acting and improvisation, literary theory, speculative fiction, literary studies, multidisciplinary methodology, and complexity and creativity.[3]

Also in 2013, a workshop was organized at the International Studies Association conference -- through its Intelligence Studies Section—where intelligence analysis was compared to: philosophy, the social sciences, history, cognitive psychology, data mining, and complex adaptive systems theory.[4] As a downstream product of this workshop, the journal Intelligence and National Security just published a special issue on the subject of understanding and improving intelligence analysis by learning from other disciplines--comparing intelligence analysis to qualitative social research, the use of case studies, computational social science, history, organizations and social learning, medicine, policy analysis, and the sociology of science--with the content of each of the articles available at the citation below.[5]

The abstract for the overview article reads as follows: "Intelligence organizations acquire, evaluate, assess, and disseminate information to support national security and foreign policy decision-making. It is part of a government's efforts to get as close to complete information as possible about both the operating environment as well as other actors. The methodologies employed by intelligence analysts are similar to yet different from those used in many other academic disciplines and professional fields. This discussion about methodology—a form of comparative applied epistemology—can be used to better understand intelligence analysis as a function of government and improve the performance of intelligence analysts."[6]

In terms of future opportunities: as the content of the 2012 and 2013 conferences and workshops shows, there are a good number of researchers working on a number of interesting ideas in this space. Organizing a paper-based conference modeled on the 2005 International Conference on Intelligence Analysis (sponsored by ADCI for Analysis and Production) could elicit a much wider range of ideas to consider in terms of improving intelligence analysis, relying upon the knowledge developed in the social and behavioral sciences.

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[3] University of Mississippi Workshop. *Understanding and Improving Intelligence Analysis: Learning from Other Disciplines*. Oxford: University of Mississippi, 2013.

[4] International Studies Association Workshop. *Intelligence Analysis, the Social Sciences, and History: Understanding and Explaining International Actors and Outcomes*. San Francisco, CA: International Studies Association Conference, 2013.

[5] Abstracts for articles published in the special issue of Intelligence and National Security on the subject of Understanding and Improving Intelligence Analysis by Learning from Other Disciplines (Volume 32, Issue 5, 2017) available at the following link: http://www.tandfonline.com/toc/fint20/32/5

[6] Stephen Marrin (2017) Understanding and improving intelligence analysis by learning from other disciplines, Intelligence and National Security, 32:5, 539-547