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Human Aspects in Intelligence Education

Abstract

Midway through the second decade of the twenty-first century, it has become increasingly apparent that the majority of Americans are relatively ignorant of international affairs and lacking in foreign language proficiency. For the emergent academic discipline of intelligence studies, this represents a serious challenge. All too often policy decisions, particularly in American foreign policy, have been driven by assumptions, especially in regard to cultures and societies with which Americans have had little familiarity. Therefore, the twenty-first century intelligence studies curriculum would be well served by educating students in global affairs and foreign languages as well as in the core skills related to analysis and collection.

Introduction

When Theodore Roosevelt became president in September 1901, following the assassination of William McKinley, among the issues he inherited were Sino-American relations and the challenge of determining how to implement and defend the Open Door Policy, which had been enunciated by Secretary of State John Hay. One of our most knowledgeable presidents in regard to international relations, Roosevelt's China policy was inhibited by a general lack of American interests in China, a limited presence in East Asia, and the general lack of knowledge about China and the conditions within that tottering empire. Like most Americans who had given any thought to China, Roosevelt's responses to the international rivalries in that part of the world were colored by his perceptions and stereotyped viewpoints about that country. His advisers and diplomatic personnel, and many Americans, shared TR's views in general.

A comment from the American consul in Fuzhou, China illustrates one viewpoint. During consideration of federal legislation for the exclusion of Chinese laborers from emigrating to the United States in 1902, Samuel L. Gracey argued for the admission of Chinese house servants, observing that they "make the best domestic servants on earth."¹ Sarah Pike Conger, wife of the American Minister to China, offered a more sympathetic viewpoint:

"As I am here and watch, I do not wonder that the Chinese hate the foreigner. The foreigner is frequently exacting and severe in this Empire, which is not his own. He often treats the Chinese as if they were dogs and have no rights whatever – no wonder that they growl and sometimes bite."²

Mrs. Conger's views about attitudes toward China and its people were in the minority, however. The general attitudes toward China in the early twentieth century were far less considerate. Americans (and the West in general) tended to view the Chinese with contempt. China was seen as weak, backward, a civilization in decline, overly conservative and lacking in respect for supposedly "superior" Western ways. Elements of fear regarding China could also be detected, usually in those arguments opposing the immigration of Chinese laborers. These expressions included a vague dread of a so-called "yellow peril," unfair competition posed by Chinese laborers willing to work for lower wages than American workers, the threat of subjecting women to sexual slavery, and the emergence of opium dens in those places where Chinese settled. The solution to these problems was, of course, paternalistic. The keys to China's salvation lay in Western-style modernization, education, and the spread of Christianity.³

¹ Gracey to Pierce, March 24, 1902, United States, Department of State, *Despatches from United States Consuls (Fuzhou)*, Washington D.C., National Archives, 1946.

² Conger, Sarah Pike, *Letters from China: With Particular Reference to the Empress Dowager and the Women of China* (Chicago: A.C. McClurg and Company, 1909), p. 49.

³ Moore, Gregory, *Defining and Defending the Open Door Policy: Theodore Roosevelt and China, 1901-1909* (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2015), 33-48.

Therefore, these attitudes played a large part in determining how America's Chinese policy would be conducted. China was perceived as the "sick old man" of Asia, and, in dealing with the international rivalries regarding China, American policy was conducted almost as if China did not exist. Chinese concerns about their country's security or interests were rarely given consideration. Moreover, the general lack of any understanding of the realities of the internal situation in China, where the Qing Dynasty was on its last legs and a serious debate about China's future was underway, often led to policy decisions based more on assumptions than knowledge.⁴ Roosevelt was determined to treat the Chinese fairly and justly, but it was clear that he was the one who would decide what was "fair and just." And his determination to establish a balance of power between Russia and Japan, rivals for influence over and control of Manchuria, the homeland of the Qing Dynasty, led him to set aside Chinese security and other concerns.⁵

So, why begin this article with a history lesson? For one thing, the results of this approach to Sino-American relations have all too often been ignored by today's policymakers, meaning that assumptions, as much as knowledge, can drive American foreign policy decisions. Is the same true of intelligence analysis? *Theodore Roosevelt did not have the benefit of assessments from the intelligence community - Barack Obama does have that benefit.* Roosevelt relied on reports from American diplomats, contacts among foreign diplomatic personnel, journalists and friends for information about international affairs. Obama has an extensive intelligence community to rely upon.

There is far greater expertise regarding the non-Western world in today's intelligence community – yet the U.S. still struggles to develop workable policies to deal with the non-Western world. Therefore, as we prepare the next generation of intelligence analysts, it is essential that we pay as much attention to the development of their international knowledge, especially of the non-Western world, as we do to their education in writing, oral communications, research, computer skills, and other tools needed for them to become successful intelligence professionals. In a world that is becoming increasingly interconnected and interdependent, policy decisions, especially in the global arena, have to be based on the best intelligence available, in order to make decisions that are knowledge based and not assumptive.

Assumptions have impacted the making of American foreign policy in the past, often negatively. The assumptions of the Theodore Roosevelt administration's China policy continued to influence Sino-American relations for some time afterward. Suppose Woodrow Wilson had consulted with the Allied Powers more closely after the U.S. had entered World War I, rather than assume that even they would see the efficacy of his Fourteen Points? To what extent did American assumptions that Japan was unlikely to attack the United States make Pearl Harbor vulnerable to the surprise attack of December 7, 1941? No less an authority than the late George F. Kennan has noted how American assumptions about Soviet designs for world domination included the idea that

⁴ Ibid,199-212.

⁵ Ibid.

Ho Chi Minh and the North Vietnamese were puppets of Moscow, which contributed to the decision to escalate the Vietnam conflict in order to prevent the creation of a communist state there.⁶

Kennan also comments on what he calls the “curious American tendency to search, at all times, for a single external center of evil, to which all our troubles can be attributed, rather than to recognize that there might be multiple sources of resistance to our purposes and undertakings.”⁷ Such assumptions, as Kennan noted, are dangerous and they have contributed to decisions that have led to foreign policy decisions that have been costly both in terms of blood and treasure. Yet, all too often, assumptions have contributed to and sometimes driven foreign policy decisions. Since intelligence is one of the drivers of foreign policy decision-making, it is essential that the intelligence presented to those responsible for making and implementing foreign policy (and domestic policy as well) be based on knowledge and not assumptions based on a lack of understanding of the societies and cultures with which we are dealing.

One of the most fundamental premises of democracy is an informed citizenry. Yet, as a whole, Americans have become woefully ignorant of the world outside of the United States, and this creates serious issues for the nation. Knowledge of global affairs has become essential not only for intelligence analysts and collectors, but also for a broad range of professional opportunities as well as meaningful participation in the national and global community. One study comparing the knowledge of international affairs information between Swiss and American citizens revealed a gap of almost 30 points between the Swiss and Americans, demonstrating a serious lack of familiarity about international affairs in the United States.⁸ According to another study, many Americans between the ages of eighteen and twenty-four think that the Amazon River is in Africa, believe the U.S. fought the Soviet Union in World War II, think Darfur is in Asia, and estimate the American population as ranging between one and two billion. About a third of young Americans vote, less than that read a newspaper, and even fewer speak a foreign language or travel abroad.⁹

Also concerning is the woeful performance of high school students in subject areas including economics, geography, and U.S. history, as well as in core subjects such as writing, reading, math, and science. Compared with students in other countries, with the exception of reading, American high schools students do poorly, particularly in math, science and problem-solving.¹⁰

⁶ Kennan, George F., *American Diplomacy: Sixtieth Anniversary Expanded Edition* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2012), 162.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 162-3.

⁸ Shanto Iyengar et al., “Dark Areas of Ignorance’ Revisited: Comparing International Affairs Knowledge in Switzerland and the United States,” *Communication Research* 3:36 (June, 2009) 341-358; see also, Loch K. Johnson, *American Foreign Policy and the Challenges of World Leadership: Power, Principle and the Constitution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 473-474.

⁹ Chris Harth, “Adaptive Education for our Emergent Global Era,” Global Studies Foundation, November 2007, available at: <http://www.globalstudiesfoundation.org/ShowContents.cfm?CategoryID=68>; Johnson, *American Foreign Policy*, 473.

¹⁰ Harth, “Adaptive Education.”

These are serious concerns. One of the expectations of an informed citizenry in a democracy is citizen engagement. Successful citizen engagement, one scholar has observed,

“requires a deep understanding of history, understanding international relations, and effective means of communicating perspectives derived from facts. The kinds of issues that are pertinent to the future of America’s role in the world also require citizens to challenge assumptions, challenge politically driven narratives, and insist that their leaders use facts to inform policy.”¹¹

Those of us who teach in and administer intelligence studies program have a special obligation to produce students who reflect these competencies.

Calls for improved education, especially in regard to the need to understand other peoples and cultures, have been increasing among educators. One educator has gone so far as to declare that this is one of several imperatives that must be addressed if higher education is to remain relevant. “Our whole culture must become less ethnocentric, less patronizing, less ignorant of others, less Manichaeian in judging other cultures, and more at home with the rest of the world.”¹² The former Senator from Hawaii, Daniel Akaka, has said, “Americans need to be open to the world; we need to be able to see the world through the eyes of others if we are going to understand how to resolve the complex problems we face.”¹³ Another publication states:

“Because the boundaries between international and domestic problems have become increasingly porous, the very demands of government and citizenship now require knowledge of international topics *and the ability to communicate with and understand people from other cultures*.¹⁴ Elected representatives and voters will be able to make informed decisions about such issues as trade, health epidemics, environmental conservation, energy use, immigration, and especially global stability only if they are educated to understand the global determinants and consequences of those issues and decisions. The exercise of democratic citizenship domestically calls for citizens to understand the connections between local and global affairs and the complex systems of interdependencies that embed the U.S. economy in a globalized world economy.”¹⁵

Educating our students in the methods of intelligence analysis and the workings of the intelligence community is an important aspect of their preparation for careers in the IC. But a focus on international affairs, especially non-Western cultures, is equally

¹¹ Kay, Sean, *America’s Search for Security: The Triumph of Realism and the Return of Idealism* (Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield, 2014), 292-293.

¹² “Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World,” MLA Ad Hoc Committee on Foreign Languages Report, Modern Language Association, May 2007, available at: http://www.mla.org/pdf/forlang_news_pdf.pdf.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ My italics.

¹⁵ O’Connell and Norwood (eds.), *International Education and Foreign Languages: Keys to Securing America’s Future* (Washington, D.C., The National Academies Press, 2007), 40.

important! Intelligence studies should emphasize education about non-Western cultures and international affairs as well as in analytical techniques in order to prepare for an emerging security environment that will create new challenges in the twenty-first century.

Of equal importance is foreign language training. Numerous studies have demonstrated the benefits of learning a second language. Among these are correlations with higher scores on standardized tests, improvements in cognitive abilities, and a more positive attitude toward native speakers of that language.¹⁶ However, in the United States a certain reluctance to study a foreign language, despite efforts to promote language study in the nation's primary and secondary schools, remains. Nonetheless, the number of Americans who can speak a second language is far below the percentage of persons in other countries who can speak English. Many international business programs in the United State do not require foreign language study, and the U.S. Diplomatic Corps does not require fluency in a foreign language.¹⁷ Recent studies indicate that overall enrollment in foreign language coursework is declining in American colleges and universities for the first time in nearly twenty years. This may be due to a preference for "career ready" majors, a decline in enrollments in the humanities, and possibly a sense that an underlying foundation in the liberal arts, with a stress on critical thinking, may be falling by the wayside. In addition, many institutions of higher learning have shut down language programs. The decline in language study includes such critical languages as Arabic and Russian, although Chinese has continued to see some growth but at a slower pace.¹⁸

Nonetheless, foreign language study is a necessary component of the college and university curriculum. The Secretary of Education, Arne Duncan, has noted:

"For too long, Americans have relied on other countries to speak our language. But we won't be able to do that in the increasingly complex and interconnected world. To prosper economically and to improve relations with other countries, Americans need to read, speak and understand other languages. It's absolutely essential for the citizens of the United States to become fluent in other languages—and schools, colleges and universities must include producing bilingual students as a central part of their mission."¹⁹

Secretary Duncan noted the efforts of the CIA to increase the number of analysts with foreign language proficiency, and emphasized the fact that more than half of Europeans speak more than one language and that China may soon have the largest English-

¹⁶ American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages, "What the Research Shows," available at: <http://www.actfl.org/advocacy/what-the-research-shows>.

¹⁷ Johnson, *American Foreign Policy*, 474.

¹⁸ Colleen Flaherty, "Not Such a Small World After All," *Inside Higher Ed*, February 11, 2015, available at: <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2015/02/11/mla-report-shows-declines-enrollment-most-foreign-languages>.

¹⁹ "Education and the Language Gap," Secretary Arne Duncan's Remarks at the Foreign Language Summit, December 8, 2010, available at: <http://www.ed.gov/news/speeches/education-and-language-gap-secretary-arne-duncans-remarks-foreign-language-summit>.

speaking population in the world.²⁰ Any failure on the part of intelligence studies programs to meet the challenge presented by the lack of foreign language studies in the United States may severely handicap the quality of intelligence analysis in the future. And, while the Intelligence Community can expend the resources to train new hires in foreign languages, it makes more sense to bring in employees who have already demonstrated some proficiency in a foreign language. Even if they require further study, they will already have a bilingual foundation upon which to build.

The opportunity to participate in a NATO strategic study project has served as a welcome reminder for me of the importance of understanding and interacting successfully with the non-Western world, the need for bilingual skills, and the significance of educating our students about global affairs. The findings from this project served to reinforce, for me anyway, the growing need to educate our students about international affairs and unfamiliar cultures, and to teach them a foreign language and make them more aware of the factors that may affect, influence or threaten the security environment both nationally and internationally.

For some time, NATO has been conducting strategic and futures studies as the alliance transitions from the twentieth to the twenty-first century.²¹ In the fall of 2011, the NATO HUMINT Center of Excellence in Romania began a strategic study called “Human Aspects in the Operational Environment.” I was invited to join the project in the spring of 2012, and served as a panel leader and member of the editorial team. Drawing on the experiences of NATO in Afghanistan and Iraq, the goal of the study was to prepare to deal with future crises that might occur outside of NATO’s normal operating territory and the possibility that the missions might be non-Article Five crisis response situations.²² The need to improve operational capabilities in unfamiliar cultures through relationship building, key leader engagement, and effective communications in order to build local support for potential missions in these areas was a critical focus of the study. Besides improving capabilities in this regard, it was also deemed necessary to identify future trends that could affect the international security environment in order to prepare strategies for dealing with them.

The strategic study identified seven potential trend shapers that could impact the twenty-first century. They were:

1. *Competing ideologies and worldviews*: These included terrorism, geopolitical issues, WMD proliferation and ideological clashes. It was noted that the movement away from the likelihood of a superpower conflict would lead to more complex interactions of state and non-state actors. Ideological conflicts, in

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ See for example, *The Multiple Futures Project* (2009), available at: <http://www.act.nato.int/nato-multiple-futures-project-documents>; *NATO Strategic Concept* (2010), available at: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_56626.htm; and *Strategic Foresight Analysis* (2013), available at: <http://www.act.nato.int/futures-ws-1>.

²² Article 5 of the NATO Charter states that an attack on any NATO member is considered to be an attack on all of them.

particular, might trigger potential friction in the process of international decision-making.

2. *Resource allocation:* The increasing competition for natural resources, food, water and critical minerals is likely to become an increasing source of conflict.
3. *Globalization:* The influence of increasing economic integration on the international balance of power, linked to competing ideologies or worldviews due to the elevation of some and marginalization of others, may create tensions between individual and group identities.
4. *Complexity, uncertainty and unpredictability:* These factors are likely to produce a security environment that is complex, unpredictable, and filled with uncertainty. They may pose a serious challenge to the solidarity of an alliance, especially one bound by a shared unity of ideas and values – the security environment could be subject to unforeseeable political, social, technological or military developments.
5. *Demographics:* The impact of world population growth may produce social effects such as population expansion, aging or decline in developed countries, while younger populations in developing countries can lead to social fracturing, increased urbanization, a greater gap between rich and poor, as well as greater levels of poverty, unemployment and migration. All of these are potential triggers for conflict.
6. *Technology and Innovation:* Technological innovation is increasing at an exponential pace. This escalating diffusion and access to modern technology empowers both individuals and non-state actors. The potential proliferation of WMD, lasers, nano-technologies, and other technologies will increasingly impact the security environment. Finally, an increased dependency on computer networking, combined with access to the latest technology, will increase the threat of computer hacking.
7. *Environmental constraints:* These include the impact of climate change, the effects of increasing water shortages, and growing energy needs. The developing world is most likely to be affected by these anticipated events, thus enhancing the potential for increasing tensions and instability.

Although the trends listed above have the potential to affect the global community as a whole, the non-Western world in particular is likely to be greatly impacted by them. Each of these predicted developments represents a source of current or future conflict that could involve the United States and its NATO allies, along with other friends around the world. Effective intelligence analysis will require every effort to understand these trends and the consequences they may have for non-Western societies in particular. At present, the strategic environment, which now involves state and non-state actors, is extremely dynamic, complex and adaptive. The experiences in Afghanistan, Iraq and other parts of the world serve to demonstrate the importance of

detailed knowledge about unfamiliar cultures and how this awareness can be useful in the process of accomplishing tasks in non-Western environments. Simply put, the more that is known about non-Western societies, the more that the process and quality of decision-making will improve and the reliance upon assumptions that can lead to serious problems and potentially jeopardize relations with that part of the world will be reduced. And educating our students in this regard should be an essential component of any intelligence studies program.

Of course, awareness of all aspects of the human environment is not a guarantee of success in negotiations, peacekeeping missions, humanitarian missions or cooperation in terms of economic or political development. However, it is certain that a lack of it will eventually undermine relations with non-Western nations and may lead to unintended consequences that can result in self-defeating or failed policies. Actors in countries or regions where different cultural norms and traditions exist can fall into the trap of oversimplifying conceptions, opinions or images and applying them as generalizations to the population as a whole. Similar pitfalls may face intelligence analysts tasked with responsibilities relating to non-Western states or societies. Failing to identify and exploit common values of different cultures may cause certain stereotypes to become simplistic, false and negative connotations as a result.²³

Another important lesson to take from this project is the recognition of the increasing forces of globalization and the absolute necessity of educating our students in languages and awareness about international affairs. Therefore, what is needed in the twenty-first century is an intelligence studies curriculum that prepares students not only for the research, analytical and communications skills necessary for effective collection and analysis, but also a more comprehensive approach to the gathering and analysis of intelligence. The intelligence studies curriculum for the twenty-first century should account for the trends mentioned above as well as include coursework about non-Western history, political, religious and social movements, culture and languages. The curriculum should also be flexible and adaptable to a complex and changing world environment – subject to resources and faculty expertise. Failure to adequately prepare students in intelligence studies can result in a continuation of the situation described by Major General Michael T. Flynn:

“Ignorant of local economics and landowners, hazy about who the powerbrokers are and how they might be influenced, incurious about the correlations between various development projects and the levels of cooperation among villagers, and disengaged from people in the best position to find answers – whether aid workers or Afghan soldiers – U.S. intelligence officers and analysts can do little

²³ “Human Aspects of the Operational Environment: Final Report,” NATO HUMINT Center of Excellence, Oradea, Romania, 2013; *Human Aspects in NATO Military Operations*. NATO HUMINT Center of Excellence, Oradea, Romania, 2014, available at: <http://www.natohcoe.org/e-library/>.

but shrug in response to high level decision-makers seeking the knowledge, analysis, and information they need to wage a successful counterinsurgency.”²⁴

Conclusion

As a young and emerging academic discipline, intelligence studies is ideally poised to take a leading role in educating college and university students about international affairs, non-Western cultures and future trends. The need for effective research, critical thinking abilities and communication skills is as important as ever. Equally, if not more important, are the reduction of parochial attitudes and a much greater awareness of global issues and understanding of cultures that are unfamiliar to most Americans. Foreign language study is of equal importance, if for no other reason than to demonstrate that a candidate for a position in intelligence work has the capacity to master a foreign language in order to enhance his or her attractiveness to potential employers. However, there are strong indications that students who study a foreign language do well academically and that they develop a greater appreciation for different cultures.

However, the nature of intelligence studies programs in this country will dictate the manner in which these issues are addressed. Not all intelligence studies programs are degree programs, whether undergraduate or graduate level; some are minors, others are academic concentrations or certificate programs. Nonetheless, there are recommended standards and outcomes for these programs, no matter what form they may take. The International Association for Intelligence Education (IAFIE) has published a set of general outcomes for intelligence education, which are as follows:

- Employ knowledge of mathematics and science.
- Identify, describe and critically evaluate applicable intelligence technologies.
- Demonstrate the ability to professionally speak, read and orally comprehend a foreign language—as applicable.*
- Identify professional ethics and how they apply to the intelligence field.
- Develop general professional written and oral reports and presentations.
- Demonstrate the ability to work collaboratively in diverse groups.
- Demonstrate intelligence knowledge, skills and abilities in a non-academic setting through an internship, cooperative or supervised experience.
- Evaluate intelligence issues or challenges through either a capstone practicum or undergraduate thesis.
- Appraise contemporary and emergent threats, challenges and issues to business, law enforcement, homeland security, national security and regional studies spheres—as applicable.*

²⁴ Major General Michael T. Flynn, Matt Pottinger, and Paul D. Batchelor, “Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan,” Center for a New American Security, January 2010, available at: http://online.wsj.com/public/resources/documents/AfghanistanMGFlynn_Jan2010.pdf.

- Explain application of intelligence strategies and operations to business, law enforcement, homeland security, national security and regional studies issues—as applicable.*

Following these outcomes, the standards clarify the applicability aspect noted in the asterisked items:

“*In addition to the intelligence education undergraduate general outcomes (above) and core area outcomes, intelligence curricula should also include substantive and theoretical instruction in the student’s intended career field. This should include courses, as applicable, in foreign languages and the areas of business, law enforcement, homeland security, national security and regional studies, as applicable to the student’s intended career field. For example, students planning careers in regional studies should have instruction in history, geography, economics, politics, cultures, foreign policy and security issues and foreign languages applicable to the region of student interest.”²⁵

IAFIE’s support for instruction in foreign languages and other areas such as foreign policy and other issues “applicable to the region of student interest” is duly noted. While I support these outcomes in principle, I would argue, however, that they should include *required* coursework in international affairs, non-Western cultures and foreign languages – areas in which most Americans are deficient. These topics are far too important to be treated as electives – they should be required coursework in all undergraduate intelligence studies programs. Therefore, I would propose these changes to the general outcomes: (1) remove the phrase “as applicable” from outcome number three, (2) add a new outcome calling for the ability to demonstrate a fundamental knowledge of international affairs (which can include American foreign policy), and (3) a new outcome requiring demonstration of a fundamental knowledge of at least one non-Western nation, society or culture.

It is unreasonable to expect that students earning an undergraduate degree in intelligence studies will be experts in these subjects, or fluent in a foreign language. But a commitment to educating our students in these areas will strengthen the skills and expand the knowledge they have to offer to prospective employers. And it is equally unreasonable to expect every intelligence studies program to approach the education of their students in the same way. For one thing, these programs are dependent upon the resources available to them and the expertise of their respective faculties. Large research institutions will have an advantage over smaller, private institutions in this regard, but smaller institutions that approach the challenges of educating intelligence studies students creatively can still find ways to instruct them in these areas. One approach might be to partner with area community colleges to provide instruction in those subjects where that institution has the resources or faculty expertise lacking in the four-year institution.

²⁵ IAFIE program outcomes available at: <http://www.iafie.org/?page=IntelEd>.

Among the strengths of intelligence studies programs are their interdisciplinary or multidisciplinary nature, a strong liberal arts component, and the relevance of the discipline from an employment standpoint. Employers actively seek applicants with strong critical thinking and communications skills, and intelligence studies programs are ideally suited to produce them. The matriculation of students who have mastered analytical and research techniques, who have an understanding of the workings of the intelligence community, who can perform well independently or in teams and who have a desire to serve as intelligence professionals will benefit the intelligence community greatly. But an understanding of international affairs, some foreign language skills and knowledge and appreciation of non-Western cultures are just as important and will remain so for the foreseeable future – and will benefit the intelligence community just as much, if not more so. Let us be certain as we prepare the next generation of intelligence professionals that these subjects are given the important place in their education that they deserve.