

October 27, 2024

Adapting Intelligence Studies and Education for a Rapidly Changing Global Landscape

September 17, 2024 Webinar

On September 17, the School of Continuing Studies (SCS) at Georgetown University and the Institute for the Research of Methodology of Intelligence (IRMI) held a joint webinar, which aimed to assess both the current and future state of intelligence studies by evaluating the impact of recent strategic surprises such as the war in Ukraine (2022) and the October 7 surprise attack on Israel (2023). This evaluation focused on identifying key lessons learned from these events and understanding how they should reshape the discipline of intelligence studies in response to the evolving global challenges.

Another key objective was to assess the current state of intelligence education. This involved reflecting on educational programs, curricula, methodologies, and approaches, as well as identifying gaps and areas for improvement to better prepare future intelligence professionals and experts for a rapidly changing environment.

This webinar was the first step toward establishing an ongoing collaboration between SCS and IRMI, with more joint activities planned throughout the upcoming year. The goal of this collaboration is to encourage interdisciplinary cooperation between intelligence professionals, academics, and other stakeholders. It also aims to promote interdisciplinary approaches to addressing complex global challenges and enhancing the effectiveness of intelligence efforts.

Agenda

1000 – Opening remarks – Dr. Frederic Lemieux and Brigadier General (ret.) Yossi Kuperwasser

First Session: Navigating the Evolving Landscape of Intelligence Studies

1010 – Lessons from the War in Ukraine – Dr. Frederic Lemieux

1025 – Debate: Lessons from the October 7 Attack – Brig. Gen. (ret.) Yossi Kuperwasser and Brig. Gen. (Res.) Itai Brun

1045 – First session open discussion

Second Session: Advancing Intelligence Education: Preparing for Future Challenges

1130 – Adapting Intelligence Education to Rapidly Changing Global Environments – Dr. Barry Zulauf

1145 – Intelligence Studies in Israel – Current State of Play - Dr. Ofer Guterman

1200 – Diversity in Intelligence Education – Dr. Shadi Abouzeid

1215 – Second session open discussion and concluding remarks

Summary

Lessons from the War in Ukraine – Dr. Frederic Lemieux

1. **The global intelligence landscape is becoming increasingly complicated**, with collaborations between state actors and non-state entities being the main driver in creating a complex and unpredictable global environment.
2. **In the Russo-Ukrainian war, all sides made severe miscalculations.** Russia anticipated a swift victory, underestimated Ukraine's resilience, and did not expect the West's united support of Ukraine. Meanwhile, the West overestimated the Russian military and the effectiveness of sanctions, and did not anticipate Ukraine's high demand for resources and weapons.
3. These miscalculations highlight **broader implications**, suggesting that military intelligence organizations need to evolve into intelligence networks with a more holistic approach. Moreover, limitations of economic and military aid must be considered and integrated into adaptable strategies, and there is a need for continuous preparedness for long-term conflicts.
4. There are also some **tactical lessons for modern warfare**, mainly the importance of the use of OSINT, drones, cyber warfare, and electronic warfare, which have all played crucial roles in the Russo-Ukrainian war. These tools have transformed intelligence gathering, real-time assessments, and warfare strategies.

5. **Intelligence education must be adapted** to modern challenges by incorporating lessons from recent conflicts to prepare future intelligence professionals for complex global threats.

Lessons from October 7 – Brig. Gen. (ret.) Yossi Kuperwasser and Brig. Gen. (Res.) Itai Brun

1. Behind the intelligence failure of October 7 lies, among other reasons, **not only a failure of imagination, but also a gap of imagination**. Despite having information, Israeli intelligence could not conceive such a large-scale attack because of a conception that Hamas was weak and deterred by Israel's perceived military superiority. Meanwhile, Hamas and the "axis of resistance" developed a sense of competence, which enabled them to imagine and execute the October 7 terror attack. So, by "gap of imagination," Brig. Gen. (Res.) Brun refers to the gap between Israel's inability to imagine said scenario, while its enemies could imagine it.
2. The **Israeli intelligence community's sense of superiority contributed to its failure**, a characteristic that is also evident in previous failures. Based on its cyber capabilities, Israeli intelligence personnel assumed they had full transparency of the enemy and disregarded the possibility of surprises.
3. **Uncertainty can exist even when a lot of information is available**. Uncertainty in intelligence work was previously attributed to a lack of information. The digital age led to a flood of information, creating a false sense of certainty. As the October 7 failure demonstrates, uncertainty still exists due to misinterpretation, misconception, biases, and more.
4. **The integration of the operational, strategic, and tactical intelligence** functions is not the problem, and therefore, their separation is not the solution. Instead, a better allocation of resources is needed, as well as better analysis across all levels of intelligence.

First Session Open Discussion

On the topic of cultural shifts as a cause for intelligence failures, one suggested that Israeli intelligence may have failed to anticipate the October 7 attack due to **shifts in Hamas's cultural norms and identity** stemming from a change in Hamas's self-perception of its capabilities, and causing less rational thinking. However, a counter-argument was raised, suggesting that while there may have been a shift in leadership within Hamas, **the reasoning for the attack was still grounded in realism**, with Hamas's belief they could achieve their political objectives despite

potential risks. It was also stressed that Hamas executed the attack based on its **subjective understanding of reality**, regardless of whether those beliefs aligned with reality, and Israeli intelligence did not adequately consider Hamas's perception of the truth.

On the topic of the usefulness of Structured Analysis Techniques (SATs) in preventing the October 7 failure, it was argued that while SATs and similar methods can be valuable in overcoming cognitive biases, **their effectiveness is highly dependent on the organizational culture**. If a culture assumes it is superior and understands reality, it undermines the use of these tools. Instead, intelligence analysts must **recognize and address the gap between their perceptions and actual reality**. This will enhance SATs' efficiency in utilizing analytic techniques to limit cognitive biases and enhance the accuracy of intelligence assessments.

Adapting Intelligence Education to Rapidly Changing Global Environments – Dr. Barry Zulauf

1. Intelligence is **evolving from merely being a profession to an academic discipline** with its own methodology, vocabulary, and techniques. However, a few things are still needed: broader academic literature, the development of unique niches, a unifying professional organization, a standardized curriculum for academic intelligence programs, and a certification process for intelligence personnel.
2. In intelligence education, there should be **a mix of academic and practitioner faculty** to provide students with both theoretical knowledge and practical skills. This integration is vital for preparing students to meet the needs of the intelligence community.
3. Intelligence education should **embrace new technologies**, such as AI. Instead of fearing and rejecting these technologies, intelligence professionals should leverage them to enhance analytical capabilities.
4. Academic settings have a unique value in **training to be contrarian thinkers**. Unlike government agencies, which encourage conformity, universities foster debate and critical thinking, which are essential for intelligence work and for challenging established viewpoints.

Intelligence Studies in Israel – Current State of Play – Dr. Ofer Guterman

1. The events of October 7 further highlighted the necessity for a more robust academic foundation of intelligence education and training in Israel as part of building intelligence

professionalism. This gives a boost to the **ongoing effort to academize intelligence studies in Israel**, led by IRMI in recent years.

2. **The objectives of this endeavor** are to strengthen intelligence studies in Israeli academia and to academize intelligence education and training within the Israeli intelligence community. The efforts include the formation of academic teaching programs, the foundation of an academic association (The Israeli Forum for Intelligence Studies), and the development of an integrative strategy for academizing intelligence training and intelligence R&D (doctrine and technology).
3. **Challenges** facing this national effort include a cultural reluctance of the Israeli intelligence community to incorporate academic perspectives, a belief in self-sufficiency, and insufficient funding.
4. It is essential to **foster lifelong learning in the intelligence community**, including integrating academic standards into various professional training programs in a way that aligns with evolving intelligence needs.

Diversity in Intelligence Education – Dr. Shadi Abouzeid

1. **A diverse workforce is essential** for building public trust and improving mission success. Diverse perspectives contribute to better global threat assessments and can prevent failures.
2. The ODNI's Demographic reports measure diversity across various agencies and show that progress has been made in increasing representation. However, **significant gaps remain**, particularly in the retention of minority staff, who tend to resign within their first year.
3. In measuring diversity, intelligence agencies focus primarily on output metrics, **emphasizing numbers rather than evaluating the outcomes and benefits** that diversity brings, such as enhancing performance and decision-making.
4. A strategic, operational, and tactical **framework for evaluating diversity outcomes** was suggested. This framework suggests analyzing failures and encouraging leaders to reflect on whether diverse perspectives were considered in decision-making processes. This approach can help identify barriers to diversity and promote an inclusive culture that values varied viewpoints, ultimately leading to more effective outcomes.

Second Session Open Discussion

On the topic of gender diversity in intelligence organizations, the **significant underrepresentation of women in higher echelons of the Israeli intelligence community** was highlighted and linked to failures like the October 7 attack, as women's voices and observations were often ignored. However, while the lack of gender diversity is problematic, it was re-emphasized that when a woman is promoted, she often feels pressured to conform to male-dominated behaviors, which **undermines the benefits of diversity**. Therefore, it is essential to promote diversity in numbers but also ensure, through outcomes, that diverse perspectives exist.

On the tension between standardization and cultural context in intelligence education, it was emphasized that while academic intelligence education can have common global principles, professional training cannot be fully standardized globally and will differ across agencies and cultures. Moreover, standardization of intelligence education can help **develop a shared culture of intelligence** that promotes objectivity and the ability to deliver difficult truths to leadership, which is crucial for effective decision-making.