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No Cloaks, No Daggers: The Historiography of British Military Intelligence

The history of military intelligence has now become almost inextricably bound up with that of intelligence generally. This is perhaps inevitable. As Sir Kenneth Strong, Eisenhower's wartime intelligence chief, put it:

Intelligence is indivisible. No area of activity – politics, economics, military affairs, science and technology – can be treated as a subject apart and treated in isolation.¹

Although he was making a point about the necessity of centralised intelligence management, he captures the field's inherent complexity and interdependence. In recent decades the submergence of military intelligence can also be attributed to the higher profile of 'civilian' intelligence, especially of collection agencies, within Western popular culture. In Britain the public automatically associate the MI prefix with the Security Service and Secret Intelligence Service even though both organisations have long ceased to be closely connected to the military. But it is not for this chapter to analyse British intelligence history as a whole. Instead it will attempt to disentangle the historiography of British military intelligence from the whole, and in so doing will try to suggest why it now has low profile. The chapter will also offer a survey of the literature in the hope that this may be helpful to new scholars of the subject. This body of work has been focused upon the pre-1945 period, and so that date has been adopted as a *de facto* cut-off point.²

¹ Kenneth Strong, *Men of Intelligence* (London: Cassell, 1970), 168.

² According to the Institute of Historical Research's registers, between 1972 and 2009 there were 50 British and Irish history doctorates completed with 'intelligence' in their title. From this sample, 42 have been completed since 1990, 35 were pre-1945, 23 had a military intelligence focus and, of those, 16 dealt with British military intelligence: <http://www.history.ac.uk/history-online/theses> accessed 27 June 2011. From 1986 to 2010 the leading academic journal *Intelligence & National Security (INS)* published 123 articles on military intelligence history; 59 had a British focus and, of these, 47 were pre-1945: <http://www.tandf.co.uk/journals/titles/02684527.asp> accessed 1 July 2011 & 27 June 2012. Military intelligence history delineated by inclusion of military, naval/navy, army, air, defence/defense, a named military organisation or leader, or a single battle/campaign in title and relating to events at least ten years prior to publication date.

The chapter draws the overall conclusion that to get 'better', studies of British military intelligence will probably need to get 'duller'.

The first challenge facing the academic historian of military intelligence is to define the parameters of the subject. The second challenge is to position their activity in relation to the broader fields of military history and intelligence studies.³ Definitional debates can often generate more heat than light, but in this case it is important to try to peg out what falls inside military intelligence and what does not. Because it was agreed presumably by consensus as far back as 1981, NATO's definition of intelligence is a useful start point:

intelligence / renseignement | Int. INTEL | The product resulting from the processing of information concerning foreign nations, hostile or potentially hostile forces or elements, or areas of actual or potential operations. The term is also applied to the activity which results in the product and to the organizations engaged in such activity.⁴

Laid down at a time when that organisation had a very clear military purpose in defending against a Soviet threat, the focus is external, the potential targets are defined by their intent, and there is an overt link to operational activity. Taking this as a primary focus also allows the filtering out of the cognate areas of security intelligence, counter-intelligence, deception and special operations. This conceptualisation is helpful in providing a general context, but it does not discriminate between military intelligence and broader 'civilian' intelligence.

Delineating military intelligence by its producer is the obvious solution. Intelligence produced by people in military uniforms may be consumed mainly by those who also wear them, but the difficulty is that this relationship is not an exclusive one. What the military collect and analyse may be of interest to many others. Things may be further confused if a country's wider intelligence services are subordinated to their military command structures. The alternative would therefore seem to lie in defining military intelligence by its consumers, with all intelligence that might be used by those in uniform

³ The validity of 'intelligence studies' as a distinct academic entity might be challenged. The author has listened to John Ferris doing so on more than one occasion. But for the purposes of this chapter its existence is assumed, although it is acknowledged that it may be more of a bureaucratic/academic construct than an intellectual/academic one.

⁴ AAP-6, 'NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions' (2010) <http://www.nato.int/docu/stanag/aap006/aap-6-2010.pdf> accessed 4 July 2011.

being labelled as military intelligence. This is better but is still problematic as the net could then be thrown so widely as to become meaningless. The solution would therefore seem to lie in accepting, first, that its boundaries are always going to be blurred and, second, that military intelligence is not an absolute but is conditional upon the wider military context. In simple terms, what the people in uniform want or need will vary continually and may include material that at other times would be given the more civilianised labels of 'political', 'technical', or 'economic'. To take an historical example, intelligence on the political stance of the Vichy French regime and its influence upon the behaviour of their forces would have been of considerable significance during the preparations for Operation Torch, the Allied invasion of North Africa in November 1942. But eighteen months later, within the context of the invasion of Normandy, it would have been of marginal significance at best because of the very different geographical, military and political circumstances of that operation. These boundaries of military intelligence are perhaps more porous at the top than at the bottom. At the higher levels of strategy the use of the military as an instrument should be integrated closely with other aspects of a state's power and so there will be greater overlapping of intelligence interests. Moving down to the operational and tactical levels, military organisations and their internal intelligence providers theoretically have more independence to conduct their business. This dichotomy also contributes to the overshadowing of military intelligence, with intelligence studies as a discipline defaulting naturally towards the study of the higher levels where the military become just part of the general mix rather than a discrete entity.⁵ But this does not preclude serious historical examination of military intelligence matters at these higher levels. For example, Peter Jackson's excellent book on French intelligence in the 1930s began as a PhD thesis with a military title.⁶

The rest of this chapter explores the historiography of British military intelligence by examining primarily the body of scholarly literature that currently exists. It also concentrates on the 'modern' period of the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries as this is

⁵ Although very different in their tone and content, the following are notable for the prominence they give to military intelligence: Michael Herman, *Intelligence Power in Peace and War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Mark Urban, *UK Eyes Alpha: The Inside Story of British Intelligence* (London: Faber, 1996).

⁶ Peter Jackson, 'French Military Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1936-1939', PhD (1995) Cambridge; Peter Jackson, *France and the Nazi Menace: Intelligence and Policy Making, 1933-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000).

the point at which a formalised intelligence function can be discerned within military organisations.⁷ After pausing to examine the relationship between intelligence and military history, the chapter examines general surveys of military intelligence history. It then explores the specific histories of British military intelligence using the four 'P's of people, policy, process, and product as a checklist to understand their relative focus and merits.

Intelligence and Military History

Intelligence was not missing completely from the history of warfare before Christopher Andrew and others proclaimed its significance in the 1980s.⁸ For example, the index of Cruttwell's *History of the Great War* shows that half a century earlier one former intelligence analyst had managed to make reference to intelligence and/or espionage over 30 times in 600 pages.⁹ To be fair, he referred mostly to general perceptions rather than any meaningful discussion of intelligence systems, methods or reporting, but their scale and existence is still noticeable.¹⁰ Taking another snap-shot, this time from the 1970s, Brian Bond's *France and Belgium, 1939-1940* contained a detailed discussion of

⁷ For examples of military intelligence in ancient history, see: Arther Ferrill, 'Roman Military Intelligence' in Keith Neilson & BJC McKercher (eds.) *Go Spy the Land: Military Intelligence in History* (Westport: Praeger, 1992), 17-30; Rose Mary Sheldon, *Intelligence Activities in Ancient Rome: Trust in the Gods but Verify* (London: Frank Cass, 2005), Chapter 9, 'Roman Military Intelligence', pp164-174. For the early modern period: Gunther Rothenberg, 'Military Intelligence Gathering in the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century, 1740-1792' in Neilson & McKercher (eds.) *Go Spy the Land*, 99-114; Barbara Donagan, *War in England, 1642-1649* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 99-114.

⁸ The usual datum points are: Christopher Andrew & David Dilks (eds.), *The Missing Dimension: Governments and Intelligence Communities in the Twentieth Century* (London: MacMillan, 1984); Christopher Andrew, *Secret Service: The Making of the British Intelligence Community* (London: Heinemann, 1985); and the establishment of INS in 1986. A similar point was made by Keith Jeffery in relation to the revelation of the 'Ultra Secret' in 1974: Keith Jeffery, 'Intelligence and Military History: A British Perspective' in David Charters, Marc Milner & J Brent Wilson (eds.), *Military History and the Military Profession* (Westport: Praeger, 1992), 105. See also his general discussion of the relationship between intelligence studies and military history.

⁹ CRMF Cruttwell, *A History of the Great War, 1914-1918* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1936); Cruttwell served in MI2(e) at the War Office in 1918.

¹⁰ The exceptions to this are: French intelligence very poor due to inferiority in aeroplanes; Russian messages sent in clear; captured order; Allied air superiority prevents German reconnaissance; failure to anticipate Ottoman crossing of the Sinai; sacking of Charteris; Allied propaganda against German Army, *Ibid.*, 17, 45, 80, 259, 351, 499 & 530.

Allied intelligence and military decision-making with regard to the Mechelen Incident.¹¹ But again, his writing did not stray too far into judgements about the workings of the intelligence machinery. Instead it focused on how commanders used the picture they had been given; his key intelligence point being that:

It is of course only too easy after a military disaster ... to select those scattered items of intelligence which, if correctly pieced together in good time, would have enabled the defender to parry the blow.¹²

The growth of intelligence studies since then has, arguably, allowed military historians to provide a less forgiving perspective.¹³ In their landmark work on military effectiveness, Allan Millett and Williamson Murray placed intelligence systems alongside logistics and communications as key determinants of operational-level effectiveness.¹⁴ Therefore just as the quality of an army's supply system or its radio network can be unpacked, analysed and judged, so too must its intelligence feed. Such enquiries might present specific methodological challenges, particularly with regard to sources and context, but they cannot be avoided if that military organisation is to be truly understood. In this conception, intelligence provision is not some centralised or civilianised *deus ex machina* but an integrated part of the military system. Within military organisations, products such as daily intelligence summaries mount up at multiple levels at an alarming rate. This can present the researcher with a mountain of textual material to wade through in order to understand the nature of the intelligence picture at any particular moment. Such painstaking jigsaw work is not for the faint-hearted, but can be very rewarding. Similarly, careful analysis of operational documentation can pick up the 'echo' of the intelligence picture even when the latter has not survived intact.

¹¹ In January 1940 the Belgians captured, near Mechelen, a set of German invasion plans from a downed aircraft and passed the details on to the Allies: Brian Bond, *France and Belgium, 1939-1940* (London: Davis Poynter, 1975), 78-81.

¹² *Ibid.*, 80.

¹³ See also the frequent appearance of intelligence in: Eliot Cohen & John Gooch, *Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War* (New York: Free Press, 1990).

¹⁴ 'Do military organizations have the capability to support their operational practices with the required intelligence, supply, communications, medical and transportation systems?': Allan Millett, Williamson Murray & Kenneth Watman, 'The Effectiveness of Military Organizations' in Allan Millett & Williamson Murray (eds.), *Military Effectiveness, Volume 1: The First World War* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), 16.

It has helped that from the 1980s onwards academic military history has become more sophisticated, moving away from its traditional ‘drum and trumpet’ roots.¹⁵ But the question then arises as to whether historical examinations of military intelligence grew simply because of better academic military history or because of the emergence of ‘intelligence studies’? The answer would seem to be that the two have to some extent been symbiotic, with intelligence studies providing, in its simplest terms, something for military historians to lean against. The existence of basic concepts and ongoing debates about matters such as intelligence failures or even just the intelligence cycle is helpful in framing historical work. For the mainstream of intelligence studies the existence of military historians doing intelligence work adds diversity to their community and can provide robust case studies of previous intelligence practice. A rough parallel might be drawn here with the development of the medical humanities and their enrichment of military history. For example, Mark Harrison’s award-winning studies of military medicine in the British Army during the First and Second World Wars, or the burgeoning literature on military mental health.¹⁶ Mischievously, it might also be argued that military intelligence history simply constitutes intelligence studies at its least glamorous. As Gerard de Groot put it when explaining why he shifted from studying Field Marshal Haig’s intelligence feed to studying the man himself: ‘Before long I discovered that [military] intelligence has very little to do with cloaks and daggers, being mostly about boring reports and endless statistics’.¹⁷

Histories of Military Intelligence

Academic military historians can be simultaneously gladdened and saddened by the popular military history market.¹⁸ In Britain, the proliferation of war documentaries on

¹⁵ Michael Howard, ‘Military History and the History of War’ in Williamson Murray & Richard Hart Sinnreich (eds.), *The Past as Prologue: The Importance of History to the Military Profession* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 12-20.

¹⁶ Mark Harrison, *Medicine and Victory: British Military Medicine in the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Mark Harrison, *The Medical War: British Military Medicine in the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). Both have won the Society for Army Historical Research’s prestigious Templer Medal Book Prize.

¹⁷ Gerard De Groot, *Douglas Haig, 1861-1928* (London: Unwin Hyman, 1988), ix.

¹⁸ For a measured discussion of the popular military history market, see: Jeremy Black, *Rethinking Military History* (London: Routledge, 2004), 39. For the long view, see: Tim Travers, ‘The Development of British Military Historical Writing and Thought from the Eighteenth Century to the Present’ in Charters et al (eds.), *Military History and the Military Profession*, 23-44.

digital television channels, the large military history sections of high street bookshops, and the popularity of conflict-based computer games testify to the public's fascination with the subject.¹⁹ Although such a high-profile might be envied, there is always the nagging concern that popular military history is still too wedded to old-fashioned genres which thereby devalues the overall currency of the field. It is difficult to see how this can be changed. Indeed, its commercial success may be the very thing that makes it impossible for popular military history to break itself away from its well-worn subjects and favoured modes of expression. Military intelligence history is certainly not exempt from this context; in fact, the public's fascination with spies, spooks and secret agents means that a similar dichotomy has always existed between academic and popular writings on intelligence matters.²⁰

Looking for popular surveys focused upon British military intelligence one is struck immediately by their scarcity.²¹ The 'best fit' for this requirement is probably Peter Gudgin's *Military Intelligence: The British Story* which was published in 1989 and again in 1999.²² The first part of the book is a synthesis of key secondary texts which provides a potted history of intelligence in the British Army. This is followed by thematic chapters on intelligence functions, sources, espionage and counter-intelligence, and electronic warfare developments. The focus is inconsistent as the latter sections drift away from its ostensibly British and military focus. In the last decade the two most prominent works of popular military intelligence history have been John Hughes-Wilson's *Military Intelligence Blunders and Cover-ups* (1999) and John Keegan's *Intelligence in War* (2003).²³ Both books adopt a case-study approach which includes British examples, as

¹⁹ For the context of history and heritage, see: Jerome de Groot, *Consuming History: Historians and Heritage in Contemporary Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 2009).

²⁰ For an exploration of the wider relationship between intelligence and the media, see: Robert Dover & Michael Goodman (eds.), *Spinning Intelligence: Why Intelligence Needs the Media, Why the Media Needs Intelligence* (London: Hurst, 2009).

²¹ Jock Haswell, *British Military Intelligence* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1973) is to a great extent a history of the Intelligence Corps – it even has their cap badge on its dust jacket – and so it is examined in the next section.

²² Peter Gudgin, *Military Intelligence: The British Story* (London: Arms & Armour, 1989 & Stroud: Sutton, 1999). A former wartime tank officer, Gudgin's other publications are on armoured warfare.

²³ John Hughes-Wilson, *Military Intelligence Blunders and Cover-ups* (London: Robinson, 1999 & 2004); John Keegan, *Intelligence in War: Knowledge of the Enemy from Napoleon to Al-Qaeda* (London:

well as addressing intelligence in war from a general perspective.²⁴ Although lively reads that are forthright in their judgements, they both rely on a very limited range of sources.²⁵ More useful as scholarly entry points to the subject are recent encyclopaedia entries by Hugh Bicheno and Joe Maiolo.²⁶ Bicheno skims across similar ground to Hughes-Wilson and Keegan and cites many of the same examples, but he does it in fewer words. Maiolo's piece is much more helpful as he signposts many of the milestone publications in military intelligence history before summarising the evolution of the literature and debates on key issues, such as the contribution of signals intelligence during the Second World War. Similarly, although dated both Jonathan House's military intelligence research guide and Keith Robbins' bibliography of British history contain some pointers to important older books.²⁷ Also, Wesley Wark's 1988 summation of the British intelligence historiography still repays attention.²⁸

Shifting towards more scholarly surveys of intelligence, the military dimension is also present. Still a landmark in the historical study of British intelligence, Christopher Andrew's *Secret Service* has a strong military flavour, particularly in his discussion of

Hutchinson, 2003). Keegan is a former Sandhurst academic and defence editor of the *Daily Telegraph*. Hughes-Wilson is a former Intelligence Corps officer and associate editor of *Eye-Spy* magazine.

²⁴ Hughes-Wilson: Barbarossa, 1941; Pearl Harbour, 1941; Singapore, 1942; Dieppe, 1942; D-Day, 1944; Tet, 1968; Falklands, 1982; Kuwait, 1990-1991; World Trade Center/Pentagon, 2001. Keegan: Nile, 1798; Shenandoah Valley, 1862; *Emden/Coronel/Falklands*, 1914; Atlantic, 1939-1945; Crete, 1941; Midway, 1942; V-weapons, 1943-1944.

²⁵ Hughes-Wilson includes a handful of primary documents in his bibliography, but he relies on a small number of popular secondary sources for each of his case studies. Keegan provides footnotes and draws upon some academic sources, but they are still fairly limited in their scope. See the following reviews of Keegan: Joseph Mazzafro, *INS*, Vol.19 (4) 2004, 734-737; MJ Barber, *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol.5 (1) 2004, 57-58. Hughes-Wilson's intelligence survey *The Puppet Masters: Spies, Traitors and the Real Forces behind World Events* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2004) has better supporting references and includes some discussion of military intelligence developments.

²⁶ Hugh Bicheno, 'Intelligence, Military', in Richard Holmes (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Military History* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 447-448; Joe Maiolo, 'Intelligence' in Charles Messenger (ed.) *Reader's Guide to Military History* (London: Fitzroy Dearborn, 2001), 259-261.

²⁷ Jonathan House, *Military Intelligence, 1870-1991: A Research Guide* (Westport: Greenwood, 1993); Keith Robbins, *Bibliography of British History, 1914-1989* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 351, 363 & 381.

²⁸ Wesley Wark, 'Intelligence since 1900' in Gerald Jordan (ed.), *British Military History: A Supplement to Robin Higham's Guide to the Sources* (New York: Garland, 1988), 503-523.

what he calls the ‘Victorian Prologue’ and, of course, the two world wars.²⁹ Andrew also argues the War Office made the ‘the first hesitant steps towards the creation of a professional intelligence community’.³⁰ Jeffrey Richelson’s survey, *A Century of Spies*, makes a similar journey to Andrew’s but with a wider international and chronological focus.³¹ Again, his wartime chapters have the most to say about developments in military intelligence and include a number of famous British examples. More recently the National Archives have published *British Intelligence: Secrets, Spies and Sources* in order to ‘highlight [their] rich and diverse collection of intelligence records’.³² Its chapters on military, naval and air intelligence fulfil this primary purpose but they are more a miscellany than a coherent account of developments in each of these fields.

Augmenting these general surveys, we now have a specific literature on military intelligence as a discrete field of study. To a great extent responsibility for this can be attributed to the late Michael Handel and his erstwhile collaborator, John Ferris, who has continued to work in this specific field. This is not to argue that relevant work did not exist before their work in the early 1990s,³³ but in approaching intelligence from an overtly strategic perspective they have provided – and in Ferris’ case, continue to provide – its military form with some strong theoretical and evidential foundations.³⁴ The first

²⁹ Andrew, *Secret Service*, 7-15, 20-33, 86-173, 448-486. The haphazard nature of historical writings on British intelligence before *Secret Service* is perhaps illustrated by two contrasting contributions to a 1984 volume ostensibly about intelligence before the two world wars. One is a useful survey of pre-1914 policy-making but has almost nothing to say about intelligence matters; the other surveys the pre-1939 intelligence community and discusses the utility of its products: Paul Kennedy, ‘Great Britain before 1914’ & Donald Cameron Watt, ‘British Intelligence and the Coming of the Second World War in Europe’ in Ernest May (ed.), *Knowing One’s Enemies: Intelligence Assessment before the Two World Wars* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984), 172-204, 237-270.

³⁰ Andrew, *Secret Service*, 7.

³¹ Jeffrey Richelson, *A Century of Spies: Intelligence in the Twentieth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995).

³² Stephen Twigge, Edward Hampshire & Graham Macklin, *British Intelligence: Secrets, Spies and Sources* (Richmond: National Archives, 2008), 15.

³³ For example, Strong’s *Men of Intelligence* was sub-titled ‘a study of the roles and decisions of chiefs of intelligence from World War I to the present day’ [1970] and examined the interaction between intelligence officers and their commanders.

³⁴ For Handel and Ferris’ academic careers, see: Richard Betts & Thomas Mahnken (eds.) *Paradoxes of Strategic Intelligence: Essays in Honor of Michael Handel* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), viii-x; John Ferris, *Intelligence and Strategy: Selected Essays* (London: Routledge, 2005), 1-7. Ferris’ extensive body of work is

key datum point is the 1990 special issue of *Intelligence & National Security* which contained a very lengthy introduction by Handel which examined military intelligence within a Clausewitzian framework as well as surveying a number of examples.³⁵ Five years later Handel and Ferris published a lengthy article entitled 'Clausewitz, Intelligence, Uncertainty and the Art of Command in Modern War'.³⁶ Taking forward their theory and history themes, they set out an important framework for the 'evolution of the role of intelligence in military operations and war'.³⁷ This posited three phases to the development of military intelligence starting from 1800 with the second phase delineated by 1914 and 1945. By examining various aspects of military intelligence practice across these periods and linking them to parallel developments in command and communications, they provided a very useful model for understanding both the past and present.³⁸

Histories of British Military Intelligence

Categorising intelligence histories is not wholly straightforward. Although what follows has adopted a necessarily conventional and chronological structure, it is helpful to pause

included, where relevant, in the next section. Because of the parameters set out at the start of this chapter, his excellent work on security, deception and non-military intelligence have been omitted.

³⁵ Michael Handel, 'Intelligence and Military Operations', *INS*, Vol.5 (2) 1990, 1-95 & Michael Handel (ed.), *Intelligence and Military Operations* (London: Frank Cass, 1990), 1-95. The origins of the special issue/volume lay in a series of conferences on intelligence and military operations held at the US Army War College in the late 1980s. An earlier special issue had focused on leaders and intelligence: *INS*, Vol.3 (3) 1988 & Michael Handel (ed.) *Leaders and Intelligence* (London: Frank Cass, 1989). This collection included Harold Deutsch, 'Commanding Generals and the uses of Intelligence'.

³⁶ John Ferris & Michael Handel, 'Clausewitz, intelligence, uncertainty and the art of command in military operations', *INS* Vol. 10 (1) 1995, 1-58; Ferris, *Intelligence and Strategy*, 239-287. See also: Michael Handel, 'Intelligence in Historical Perspective' in Keith Neilson & BJC McKercher (eds.), *Go Spy the Land: Military Intelligence in History* (Westport: Praeger, 1992), 179-192.

³⁷ Commander's interest in intelligence; organization; scope and range; sources and reliability; problems; the balance of intelligence; solutions to problems and better use: Ferris, *Intelligence and Strategy*, 281.

³⁸ More recently, see Ferris' forewords to Stephen Harris, *British Military Intelligence in the Crimean War, 1854-1856* (London: Frank Cass, 1999) and Brad Gladman, *Intelligence and Anglo-American Air Support in World War Two: The Western Desert and Tunisia, 1940-43* (London: Palgrave, 2009). Respectively these provide further reflections on Nineteenth Century military intelligence and command & control in the two World Wars. See also his elegant summation of intelligence more generally: John Ferris, 'Intelligence' in Robert Boyce & Joseph Maiolo (eds.), *The Origins of World War Two: The Debate Continues* (London: Palgrave, 2003), 308-310.

and reflect upon alternate typologies. Two varieties of military intelligence history can perhaps be labelled; those that are organisation-focused and those that are target-focused. However, they should be seen more as opposite ends of a continuum rather than totally separate categories. Organisation-focused histories are perhaps more common and tend to dwell upon the more inward-looking aspects of people, policy, and process. This is not to say that they are unimportant, just that they often provide only a necessary foundation for later work.³⁹ An obvious example would be Thomas Fergusson's study of British Army intelligence in the late Nineteenth Century.⁴⁰ Target-focused histories are generally more outward-looking and privilege the intelligence product and the interactions with consumers. Within the normal academic 'rules of engagement', those studies which tend towards this end of the spectrum are arguably stronger because they connect intelligence history more closely to its wider context. A classic British example from this category would be Wesley Wark's *The Ultimate Enemy*.⁴¹ However, it should be noted that a necessary precondition for such a study is a mature military historiography within which the intelligence history can thrive. If the strategic and operational histories are immature, the intelligence historian will struggle to shape their own work to fit with its contours and controversies. This relative immaturity of the academic literature, rather than difficulties with the intelligence sources, may help to explain the relative paucity of post-1945 histories of military intelligence.

Within the British context, it is also important to note the long tradition of regimental history as a particular flavour of military history. Despite their parochial focus and often celebratory purpose, these sources need to be taken seriously, particularly as, within their security restrictions, they often have interesting things to say about post-1945 developments. The Royal Navy and Royal Air Force have long had intelligence-related branches,⁴² but it is the Army's Intelligence Corps, with a continuous 'tribal' identity since 1940, which has been the direct or indirect subject of histories since the early

³⁹ A similar point is made in: Jeffery, 'Intelligence and Military History' in Charters et al (eds.), *Military History and the Military Profession*, 110.

⁴⁰ Thomas Fergusson, *British Military Intelligence, 1870-1914: The Development of a Modern Intelligence Organization* (Frederick: University Publications of America, 1984).

⁴¹ Wesley Wark, *The Ultimate Enemy: British Intelligence and Nazi Germany, 1933-1939* (London: IB Tauris, 1985).

⁴² For an accessible survey of RAF photographic intelligence, see: Roy Conyers Nesbit, *Eyes of the RAF: A History of Photo-Reconnaissance* (Stroud: Sutton, 1996).

1970s. The first was Brian Parritt's *The Intelligencers* which surveyed his corps' antecedents from the Seventeenth Century to 1914.⁴³ This was followed shortly afterwards by Jock Haswell's *British Military Intelligence* which had a great deal to say about the corps. Written by a former infantry officer and popular military historian it provided a readable account of the wider intelligence context, organisational development, and individual contributions. Twenty years later the Sandhurst academic and part-time Intelligence Corps officer Anthony Clayton produced a fully-referenced official history which covered much of the same ground.⁴⁴ As works of history, all three books wrestle with the fact that the modern Intelligence Corps and its predecessors have always had a wide variety of tasks; from those engaged in strategic collection or special operations who have simply worn their badge as a 'flag of convenience' in wartime, to more conventional intelligence sections operating in support of frontline commanders. This necessitates a patchwork approach to the subject matter. These histories also labour under what might be termed a 'neglect complex'; a consistent theme summed up by Parritt's opening line: 'The British Army has never liked or wanted professional intelligence officers'. From an organisational perspective this piece of folklore may be useful, but from an external viewpoint the pace of intelligence professionalisation cannot be reduced to the vagaries of hierarchical prejudices.⁴⁵ Hopefully future histories will place the Intelligence Corps in a broader and more measured context.

Starting our general survey with histories of pre-1914 British military intelligence, one notes their relatively small number but also their improving scholarly quality.⁴⁶ This is illustrated neatly by studies of intelligence support to the Duke of Wellington. Forty years ago there was only Haswell's popular history, ten years ago came Mark Urban's study of code-breaking in the Peninsular War, and more recently we have the emergence

⁴³ Brian Parritt, *The Intelligencers: The Story of British Military Intelligence up to 1914* (Ashford: Intelligence Corps Association, 1971 & 1983). It has recently been re-published with some brief additional sections: Brian Parritt, *The Intelligencers: British Military Intelligence from the Middle Ages to 1929* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2011). His military career culminated as Director of the Intelligence Corps.

⁴⁴ Anthony Clayton, *Forearmed: A History of the Intelligence Corps* (London: Brassey's, 1993).

⁴⁵ A similar 'no one loved/loves us' world-view can be discerned in the histories of army education: ACT White, *The Story of Army Education 1643-1963* (London: George Harrap, 1963); Leslie Wayper, *Mars and Minerva: A History of Army Education* (Winchester: Royal Army Educational Corps Association, 2004).

⁴⁶ Although it diverts unnecessarily into matters of domestic security intelligence, a short and accessible survey of the period can be found in: Stephen Wade, *Spies in the Empire: Victorian Military Intelligence* (London: Anthem Press, 2007).

of academic work in the field.⁴⁷ Moving forward to the mid-Nineteenth Century, there is Stephen Harris' fascinating study of intelligence in the Crimea.⁴⁸ The colonial campaigns of the second half of the century have attracted some attention but in light of their contemporary resonance their relative neglect is perplexing.⁴⁹ Organisational developments at home and in the field are captured quite comprehensively in Fergusson's previously mentioned *British Military Intelligence*,⁵⁰ and for the period immediately prior to 1914, Matthew Seligmann's painstaking reconstruction of the work of Britain's military attachés in Germany.⁵¹

The First World War period is blessed with a greater range of work. The most prominent single volume history is Occleshaw's *Armour Against Fate* (1989). Derived from a doctoral thesis, it sought to examine the Army's intelligence efforts across the globe between 1914 and 1918.⁵² As contemporary reviewers noted, it was ambitious and informative but also idiosyncratic and eclectic in its focus.⁵³ Two decades on, it can be

⁴⁷ Jock Haswell, *The First Respectable Spy: The Life and Times of Colquhoun Grant, Wellington's Head of Intelligence* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1969); Mark Urban, *The Man who Broke Napoleon's Codes: The Story of George Scovell* (London: Faber & Faber, 2001); Mark Romans, 'Professionalism and the Development of Military Intelligence in Wellington's Army, 1809-14', PhD (2005) Southampton; Huw Davies, 'British Intelligence in the Peninsular War', PhD (2006) Exeter; Huw Davies, 'Integration of Strategic and Operational Intelligence during the Peninsular War', *INS*, Vol. 21 (2) 2006, 202-223.

⁴⁸ Harris, *British Military Intelligence*.

⁴⁹ Stephen Manning, 'Learning the Trade: The Use and Misuse of Intelligence during the British Colonial Campaigns of the 1870s', *INS*, Vol. 22 (5), 2007, 644-660; Edward Spiers, 'Intelligence and Command in Britain's Small Colonial Wars of the 1890s', *INS*, Vol. 22 (5) 2007, 661-681. Adopting a broader chronological focus but also useful for military intelligence in India is: Robert Johnson, *Spying for Empire: The Great Game in Central and South Asia, 1757-1947* (London: Greenhill, 2006).

⁵⁰ For additional context, see: Christopher Brice, 'The Military Career of General Sir Henry Brackenbury, 1856-1904: The Thinking Man's Soldier', PhD (2009) De Montfort, 168-207; William Beaver, *Under Every Leaf: How Britain Played the Greater Game from Afghanistan to Africa* (London: Biteback, 2012).

⁵¹ Matthew Seligmann, *Spies in Uniform: British Military & Naval Intelligence on the Eve of the First World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); Matthew Seligmann (ed.), *Naval Intelligence from Germany: The Reports of the British Naval Attachés in Berlin, 1906-1914* (Aldershot: Ashgate for the Navy Records Society, 2007).

⁵² Michael Occleshaw, 'British Military Intelligence during the First World War', PhD (1984) Keele. For related work at this time, see: David French, 'Sir John French's Secret Service on the Western Front, 1914-15', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 7 (40) 1984, 423-440.

⁵³ Keith Jeffery, 'Sources of Confusion', *Times Literary Supplement*, 10-16 November 1989, 1232; Ian Beckett, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol.68, 1990, 220.

judged perhaps as typical of that ‘first wave’ of intelligence histories; it sought to do too much, it relied too heavily on private papers, and it also tried to tap into a popular market for spy stories. But it still remains, to some extent, a military intelligence equivalent of Andrew’s *Secret Service*. Since Occleshaw, our understanding of the Army’s intelligence work has been expanded in a number of directions through more tightly focused studies. John Ferris has, with his customary thoroughness, examined signals intelligence while Dan Jenkins has subjected the British Expeditionary Force’s Canadian Corps to very close scrutiny.⁵⁴ The author must put modesty aside and mention his own work on the Western Front.⁵⁵ The Middle Eastern theatres of operation have also proved fruitful areas for research. We now have some understanding of intelligence matters in Mesopotamia and the Dardanelles,⁵⁶ but the most notable work is Yigal Sheffy’s outstanding study of military intelligence in Palestine.⁵⁷ By integrating all the intelligence sources with a nuanced discussion of organisational development and the operational decision-making, Sheffy sets a high benchmark for future works of military intelligence history. Polly Mohs’ more recent study of the Arab Revolt is also informative, but has an odd introduction that betrays some ignorance of military intelligence developments elsewhere.⁵⁸ Naval intelligence between 1914 and 1918 is, unsurprisingly, dominated by the story of their codebreakers and such studies have had a long

⁵⁴ John Ferris, ‘The British Army and signals intelligence in the field during the First World War’, *INS*, Vol. 3 (4) 1988, 23-48; John Ferris (ed.) *The British Army and Signals Intelligence during the First World War* (Stroud: Allan Sutton for the Army Records Society, 1992); Dan Jenkins, ‘The Other Side of the Hill: Combat Intelligence in the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918’, *Canadian Military History*, Vol.10(2) 2001, 7-26; Dan Jenkins, ‘Winning Trench Warfare: Battlefield Intelligence in the Canadian Corps, 1914-1918’, PhD (1999) Carleton.

⁵⁵ Jim Beach, ‘British Intelligence and the German Army, 1914-1918’, PhD (2005) London; Jim Beach, ‘British Intelligence and German Tanks, 1916-1918’, *War in History*, Vol.14 (4) 2007.

⁵⁶ Peter Morris, ‘Intelligence and its Interpretation: Mesopotamia, 1914-1916’ in Christopher Andrew & Jeremy Noakes (eds.), *Intelligence and International Relations* (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1987), 77-101; Richard Popplewell, ‘British Intelligence in Mesopotamia 1914-16’, *INS*, Vol. 5 (2) 1990, 139-172; Peter Chasseaud & Peter Doyle, *Grasping Gallipoli: Terrain, Maps and Failure at the Dardanelles, 1915* (Staplehurst: Spellmount, 2005). Andrew Syk, ‘Command and the Mesopotamia Expeditionary Force, 1915-1918’, DPhil (2009) Oxford, 92-129.

⁵⁷ Yigal Sheffy, *British Military Intelligence in the Palestine Campaign, 1914-1918* (London: Frank Cass, 1998).

⁵⁸ Polly Mohs, *Military Intelligence and the Arab Revolt: The First Modern Intelligence War* (London: Routledge, 2008), 4-5.

pedigree.⁵⁹ The key book is still Patrick Beesly's *Room 40* published thirty years ago,⁶⁰ but in recent years our understanding has been advanced greatly by Nicholas Black's study of the naval staff which helps to put Room 40 in a better context, and by Jason Hines' re-examination of intelligence and the Battle of Jutland.⁶¹ Until recently the air dimension was poorly served beyond John Ferris' study of British air defence, but now we have Terrence Finnegan's exhaustive treatment of Allied air photography.⁶² The immediate post-war period is notable for developments in our understanding of intelligence during the Irish War of Independence. Although the general context was sketched in long ago,⁶³ more recent studies of lower-level activities have given a much better flavour of intelligence at the sharp end of a brutal guerrilla conflict.⁶⁴

⁵⁹ William James, *The Eyes of the Navy: A Biographical Study of Admiral Sir Reginald Hall* (London: Methuen, 1955); Robert Grant, *U-Boat Intelligence, 1914-1918* (London: Putnam, 1969). See also: David Ramsay, "*Blinker*" Hall, *Spymaster: The Man who brought America into World War I* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2009).

⁶⁰ Patrick Beesly, *Room 40: British Naval Intelligence, 1914-18* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1982). For a more recent narrative drawing upon National Archives material, see: Paul Gannon, *Inside Room 40: The Codebreakers of World War 1* (Hersham: Ian Allan, 2010).

⁶¹ Nicholas Black, *The British Naval Staff in the First World War* (Woodbridge: Boydell, 2009); Jason Hines, 'Sins of Omission and Commission: A Reassessment of the Role of Intelligence in the Battle of Jutland', *Journal of Military History*, Vol. 72 (2008), 1117-1153.

⁶² John Ferris, 'Airbandit': C3I and Strategic Air Defence during the First Battle of Britain, 1915-18', in Michael Dockrill & David French (eds.) *Strategy and Intelligence: British Policy during the First World War* (London: Hambledon, 1996), 23-66; Terrence Finnegan, *Shooting the Front: Allied Aerial Reconnaissance and Photographic Interpretation on the Western Front – World War I* (Washington DC: National Defense Intelligence College Press, 2006); Terrence Finnegan, *Shooting the Front: Allied Aerial Reconnaissance in the First World War* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2011).

⁶³ Eunan O'Halpin, 'British Intelligence in Ireland, 1914-1921' in Andrew & Dilks (eds.) *Missing Dimension*, 54-77. For an even broader context, see: Keith Jeffery, 'British Military Intelligence following World War I' in KG Robertson, *British and American Approaches to Intelligence* (London: MacMillan, 1987), 55-84.

⁶⁴ Peter Hart, *The IRA and its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork, 1916-1923* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) 293-315; Peter Hart, *British Intelligence in Ireland, 1920-21: The Final Reports* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2002), 1-16; John Borgonovo, *Spies, Informers and the 'Anti-Sinn Féin Society': The Intelligence War in Cork City, 1920-1921* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007); John O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick: The Republican Campaign for Independence in Limerick, 1913-1921* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010), 168-186; William Sheehan, *A Hard Local War: The British Army and the Guerrilla War in Cork, 1919-1921* (Stroud: Spellmount, 2011), 70-90.

The Second World War and the years preceding it are now overshadowed by *Ultra*, as the signals intelligence output from Bletchley Park and its satellites was known.⁶⁵ Pushing aside the large and ever-growing popular literature,⁶⁶ the core foundations for this field are primarily the dense volumes of Sir Harry Hinsley's official history of British intelligence, which seek to give 'an account of the influence of British intelligence on strategy and operations'.⁶⁷ Although other forms of collection do appear, signals intelligence is the dominant feature.⁶⁸ It is also worth noting that, despite its majesty, the history is quite clear about its structural limitations. As well as limited coverage of the war in the Far East, Hinsley notes that:

While the archives are generally adequate for reconstructing the influence of intelligence in Whitehall, there is practically no record of how and to what extent intelligence influenced the individual decisions of the operational commands. It has usually been possible to reconstruct what intelligence they had at their disposal at any time. What they made of it under operational conditions, and in circumstances in which it was inevitably incomplete, is on all but a few occasions a matter of surmise.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ For pre-war military intelligence, see: Wesley Wark, 'Baltic Myths and Submarine bogeys: British Naval Intelligence and Nazi Germany 1933-1939', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 6 (1) 1983, 60-81; Wesley Wark, 'British Military and Economic Intelligence: Assessments of Nazi Germany before the Second World War' in Andrew & Dilks (eds.) *Missing Dimension*, 78-100; Wesley Wark, *The Ultimate Enemy*; Wesley Wark, 'In search of a suitable Japan: British Naval Intelligence in the Pacific before the Second World War', *INS*, Vol. 1 (2) 1986, pp189-211; J Paul Harris, 'British Military Intelligence and the rise of German Mechanized Forces, 1929-40', *INS*, Vol. 6 (2) 1991, 395-417; T Harrison Place, 'British Perceptions of the Tactics of the German Army, 1938-40', *INS*, Vol. 9 (3) 1994, 495-519; Joseph Maiolo, 'I believe the Hun is cheating': British Admiralty Technical Intelligence and the German Navy, 1936-39', *INS*, Vol. 11 (1) 1996, 32-58; Joseph Maiolo, 'Deception and Intelligence Failure: Anglo-German Preparations for U-boat Warfare in the 1930s', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 22 (4) 1999, 55-76.

⁶⁶ Within British popular culture it could be argued that Bletchley Park has become a very strong heritage 'brand'. The reasons for this development lie well beyond the scope of this article but, of the more popular works, the following are useful entry-points: Michael Smith, *Station X: The Codebreakers of Bletchley Park* (London: MacMillan, 1998); Hugh Sebag-Montefiore, *Enigma: The Battle for the Code* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2000).

⁶⁷ FH Hinsley, *British Intelligence in the Second World War*, Vols.1-3 (London: HMSO, 1979, 1981, 1984), Vol.1, 1939-1941; Vol.2, 1941-1943; Vol.3(1) 1943-1944; Vol.3(2) 1944-1945.

⁶⁸ For a survey of a different collection technique, see: Kent Fedorowich, 'Axis Prisoners of War as Sources for British Military Intelligence, 1939-42', *INS*, Vol. 14 (2) 1999, 156-178.

⁶⁹ Hinsley, *British Intelligence*, Vol.1, x.

So the official history was far from being the final word. Indeed, even before it was fully published it was being supplemented by the work of Ralph Bennett, a mediaeval historian who – like Hinsley – had worked at Bletchley Park. In a series of studies focused on *Ultra* in specific campaigns he unpacked the flow of the intelligence product and its impact in considerable detail.⁷⁰ As Ferris noted in his assessment of *Ultra and Mediterranean Strategy*, ‘future students [of *Ultra*] would do well to adopt the model of Bennett’s method’.⁷¹ This point might also be applied to any history of operational intelligence.

The effect of intelligence on the British war at sea, especially the Battle of the Atlantic, is one of the more developed areas of scholarship. Patrick Beesly’s early work helped to set out the organisational foundations,⁷² and this was followed with case studies of specific famous engagements.⁷³ More recently the focus has shifted to less well-known aspects of the conflict and a desire to understand the impact of intelligence across the campaign as a whole.⁷⁴ Within this trend, Jock Gardner’s 1999 book *Decoding History* was a significant milestone as it sought to assess the true significance of *Ultra*. In drawing what he describes himself as a rather ‘downbeat conclusion’ he offers a useful corrective to

⁷⁰ Ralph Bennett, *Ultra in the West: The Normandy Campaign of 1944-45* (London: Hutchinson, 1979); Ralph Bennett, *Ultra and Mediterranean Strategy* (New York: Morrow, 1989); Ralph Bennett, ‘Intelligence and Strategy: Some Observations on the War in the Mediterranean 1941-45’, *INS*, Vol. 5 (2) 1990, 444-464; Ralph Bennett, *Behind the Battle: Intelligence in the War with Germany, 1939-1945* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1994; Pimlico, 1999); Ralph Bennett, *Intelligence Investigations: How Ultra Changed History* (London: Frank Cass, 1996).

⁷¹ John Ferris, ‘Ralph Bennett and the Study of Ultra’, *INS*, Vol.6 (2) 1991, 484.

⁷² Patrick Beesly, *Very Special Intelligence: The Story of the Admiralty’s Operational Intelligence Centre* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1977; Greenhill, 2000); Patrick Beesly, *Very Special Admiral: The Life of Admiral JH Godfrey CB* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1980). See also: Ralph Erskine, ‘U-boats, Homing Signals and HFDF’, *INS*, Vol. 2 (2) 1987, 324-330.

⁷³ Donald Steury, ‘Naval Intelligence, the Atlantic Campaign and the Sinking of the *Bismarck*: A Study in the Integration of Intelligence into the Conduct of Naval Warfare’, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 22(2) 1987, 209-233; Patrick Beesly, ‘Convoy PQ 17: A Study of Intelligence and Decision-making’, *INS*, Vol. 5 (2) 1990, 292-322.

⁷⁴ Christina Goulter, ‘The Role of Intelligence in Coastal Command’s Anti-Shipping Campaign, 1940-45’, *INS*, Vol. 5 (1) 1990, 84-109; David Syrett (ed.) *The Battle of the Atlantic and Signals Intelligence: U-boat Situations and Trends, 1941-1945* (Aldershot: Ashgate for the Navy Records Society, 1998); David Syrett ‘Communications Intelligence and the Battle for Convoy OG 71, 15-23 August 1941’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 24 (3) 2001, 86-106.

many of the wilder claims made about its contribution.⁷⁵ Moving to the exploits of the British Army, Bennett's body of work has been augmented admirably by Ferris' exploration of signals intelligence developments in North Africa.⁷⁶ Within the same theatre, Brad Gladman's book *Intelligence and Anglo-American Air Support* provides an excellent example of how intelligence, when integrated with the study of command and control, can bring fresh insights to a well-known campaign.⁷⁷ Similarly, Kevin Jones' work on the Eighth Army in Italy shows what can be achieved when intelligence below the theatre level of command is unpacked fully.⁷⁸ For the Far East the contributions of Ferris, Anthony Best and Douglas Ford have generated a strong academic literature.⁷⁹ Richard Aldrich's *Intelligence and the War Against Japan* is focused upon higher level relationships, but his discussion of Singapore and the development of signals intelligence are pertinent.⁸⁰ The air war has some coverage, notably of the Battle of Britain and, more recently, explorations of intelligence and the strategic bombing campaign.⁸¹ Finally, the

⁷⁵ WJR Gardner, *Decoding History: The Battle of the Atlantic and Ultra* (London: MacMillan, 1999).

⁷⁶ John Ferris, 'The British Army, Signals and Security in the Desert Campaign, 1940-42', *INS*, Vol. 5 (2) 1990, 255-291; John Ferris, 'The 'usual source': Signals Intelligence and Planning for the Eighth Army 'Crusader' Offensive, 1941', *INS*, Vol. 14 (1) 1999 and in David Alvarez (ed.), *Allied and Axis Signals Intelligence in World War II* (London: Frank Cass, 1999), 84-118.

⁷⁷ See also: Brad Gladman, 'Air Power and Intelligence in the Western Desert Campaign, 1940-43', *INS*, Vol. 13 (4) 1998, 144-162.

⁷⁸ Kevin Jones, 'Intelligence and Command at the Operational-level of War: the British Eighth Army's experience during the Italian Campaign in the Second World War, 1943-5', PhD (2005) London; Kevin Jones, 'A Curb on Ambition: Intelligence and the Planning of Eighth Army's Liri Valley Offensive, May 1944', *INS*, Vol. 22 (5) 2007, 745-766.

⁷⁹ John Ferris, 'Worthy of a Better Enemy?': The British Estimate of the Imperial Japanese Army, 1919-41, and the Fall of Singapore', *Canadian Journal of History / Annales canadiennes d'histoire*, Vol.28 (2) 1993, 224-256; Anthony Best, 'This probably over-valued military power': British Intelligence and Whitehall's Perception of Japan, 1939-41', *INS*, Vol. 12 (3) 1997, 67-94; Douglas Ford, 'A Conquerable Yet Resilient Foe': British Perceptions of the Imperial Japanese Army's Tactics on the India-Burma Front, September 1942 to Summer 1944', *INS*, Vol.18 (1) 2003, 65-90; Douglas Ford, 'Planning for an Unpredictable War: British Intelligence Assessments and the War against Japan, 1937-45', *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol. 27 (1) 2004, 136-167; Douglas Ford, 'British Intelligence on Japanese Army Morale During the Pacific War: Logical Analysis or Racial Stereotyping?', *Journal of Military History*, Vol.69 (2) 2005, 439-474; Douglas Ford, *Britain's Secret War Against Japan, 1937-1945* (London: Routledge, 2006).

⁸⁰ Richard Aldrich, *Intelligence and the War Against Japan: Britain, America and the Politics of Secret Service* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

⁸¹ Sebastian Cox, 'A Comparative Analysis of RAF and Luftwaffe Intelligence in the Battle of Britain, 1940', *INS*, Vol. 5 (2) 1990, 425-443; Samir Puri, 'The Role of Intelligence in deciding the Battle of Britain', *INS*,

contribution of air photography has emerged from the shadows, particularly the work of the Allied Central Interpretation Unit at Medmenham.⁸²

Reflections

This chapter set out to excise pre-1945 British military intelligence from the general body of intelligence literature and subject it to close examination. The most obvious conclusion is that the literature remains unbalanced chronologically because of the greater volume of material related to the Second World War. In the British case one could argue that the national intelligence community reached maturity between 1939 and 1945 and so this focus is wholly justified. This is probably true, but in the military sphere we still do not know enough about the journey up to that point. The archipelagos of case studies before 1939 need to become better connected. This does not necessarily demand that the gaps between them are ‘filled in’ as the archival survival of sources would probably not allow that.⁸³ But we do need some carefully focused studies that explore some of our fundamental assumptions about organisational development and the integration of intelligence within the British military. Like archaeologists, we need to ‘dig across’ the lines delineated by Handel and Ferris to test their boundaries. Looking forward from 1945 the maturing of the wider military history should provide a solid context for military intelligence studies. Looping back, exploration of military intelligence in the ‘irregular’ campaigns at the end of empire perhaps also demands a much better understanding of such work during the period of empire itself.

Thematically, we perhaps also need to re-visit our assumptions across the four ‘P’s. Because of the survival of private papers and a fair number of memoirs we may think we understand the ‘people’ dimension. However, given that these sources are ultimately self-selecting, are we seeing just ‘personalities’ rather than truly understanding the more

Vol. 21 (3) 2006, 416-439; Robert Ehlers, *Targeting the Reich: Air Intelligence and the Allied Bombing Campaigns* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2009); John Stubbington, *Kept in the Dark: The Denial to Bomber Command of vital Ultra and other Intelligence Information during World War II* (Barnsley: Pen & Sword, 2010).

⁸² ‘Operation Crossbow’, first broadcasted on the BBC, 15 May 2011. Taylor Downing, *Spies in the Sky: The Secret Battle for Aerial Intelligence during World War II* (London: Little Brown, 2011).

⁸³ For example, much of the War Office’s intelligence archive was destroyed by the *Luftwaffe*: Matthew Seligmann, ‘Hors de Combat? The Management, Mismanagement and Mutilation of the War Office Archive’, *Journal of the Society for Army Historical Research*, Vol. 84, 2006, 52-58.

prosaic dimension of ‘personnel’? Grappling with the latter would require painstaking collation of data from service records to create something that would pass muster in social history circles. Similarly, we are probably confident that we have a good fix on ‘policy’ and ‘process’; but again, is the picture we have a partial and overly formal one determined by the more accessible high-level documentary sources? Do we know enough about the informal workings of the intelligence system and, more importantly, its interaction with consumers at the lower levels? But it is in the sphere of the military intelligence ‘product’ that the greatest work is probably required. Where people, policy, and process are available as foundations, target-focused histories ought to become the default setting. Only by carefully analysing the intelligence output can its resultant picture can be compared to the operational context. Then, by understanding the connections and disconnections, the impact of intelligence on the wider military system can be properly understood. The advent of tools such as Geographic Information Systems (GIS) within the humanities will surely help this process.

Twenty years ago Christopher Andrew declared that ‘most of the history of military intelligence has still to be written’.⁸⁴ Although progress has been made, his statement remains largely correct. Furthermore military intelligence history, particularly in its British manifestation, is unlikely to regain the high profile it had in the early days of academic intelligence studies. But as it nudges forward incrementally it can still make a significant contribution, particularly to the development of wider military history. As Keith Jeffery put it, also twenty years ago, ‘the real impact ... will not necessarily be in specialist texts, but in general accounts’.⁸⁵ It is inevitable that the cloak and dagger connotations will always linger, and the popular end of the market will always trade upon them, but perhaps the true measure of success will be when this small sub-field is viewed as being just as dull-but-worthy as military logistics.

⁸⁴ Christopher Andrew, ‘The Nature of Military Intelligence’ in Neilson & McKercher (eds.) *Go Spy the Land*, 13.

⁸⁵ Jeffery, ‘Intelligence and Military History’ in Charters et al (eds.), *Military History and the Military Profession*, 115.