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BRINGING THE 'SOCIAL' IN FROM THE COLD: TOWARDS A SOCIAL HISTORY OF AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE

Dr Christopher Richard Moran
University of Warwick
christopher.moran@warwick.ac.uk

&

Dr Andrew Hammond
International Spy Museum/Wilson Center
ahammond@spymuseum.org

Abstract

The subject of American intelligence has traditionally been studied by people who would identify themselves as diplomatic historians, International Relations scholars, or a combination of both. As a result, the history of American intelligence is a rather 'top down' history. It is a history of Beltway politics, NSC meetings, and the private interactions between intelligence chiefs and policymakers. It is the history of major operations rather than of the everyday. It is a history of landmark documents rather than the workaday. Yet, the history of American intelligence is also the history of social relationships, social structures, and social hierarchies. The aim of this article, as an Introduction to the following Special Issue, is to sketch what a 'social' history of American intelligence would look like. In short, this article asks: how would a social historian write the history of American intelligence?

Introduction

The rationale behind this Special Issue is to start a conversation about what a social history of American intelligence would look like. The subject of American intelligence – encompassing agencies like the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), National Security Agency (NSA) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) – has traditionally been studied by people who would identify themselves as diplomatic historians, scholars of International Relations, or a species of academic that sits at the intersection of these two fields. The gold-standard for many scholars of the US secret state is to present at the annual meeting of the Society for Historians of American Foreign Relations (SHAFR) or, better still, to publish in the society's official journal, the prestigious *Diplomatic History*. This reflects that fact that the history of American intelligence is a rather 'top down' history. It is a history that foregrounds elites and the interactions between presidents, national security advisers and councils, secretaries of state, and intelligence leaders. It is a history concerned with discussing major operations and dissecting high-profile intelligence successes and failures, rather than with examining the daily grind. Methodologically, it is a history that has grown out of research in declassified government records, located in the National Archives at College Park, Maryland, plus the private papers of senior intelligence officers. A case in point would be the publication *Spy Chiefs*, which one of us co-edited while another contributed a chapter (Moran, Stout, Iordanou, and Maddrell 2018).

Recently, thoughts have been given to what a cultural history of American intelligence would look like, with a proliferation of studies about memoirs, films, novels and the press (Aldrich 2015; Moran 2016; Willmetts 2017). In his thought-provoking 2012 book *The Covert Sphere*, Timothy Melley (2012) looked at how understandings of the CIA have been shaped in part by the Agency's efforts to publicise 'spectacles of secrecy' about itself and its operations. In 2019, in a valuable historiographical stocktake, Simon Willmetts posited that Intelligence Studies was in the midst of a 'cultural turn' (Willmetts 2019). Conversations are also taking place about what a global history of American intelligence might look like, asking questions such as: what has been the impact of US covert operations overseas and how do local actors, say, in Asia, Africa and Latin America view agencies like the CIA? Using Indian sources, Paul McGarr has written about how anti-American sentiment became widespread in Indian political discourse when it was revealed, in 1967, that the Agency had funded certain educational institutions and cultural bodies in the country (McGarr 2014). In 2019 James Lockhart published a path-breaking transatlantic history of CIA intervention in Chile, using regional sources together with records from Washington to unpack how the covert action was experienced by everyday Chileans and across the Southern Cone more widely (Lockhart 2019). In 2020, Daniela Richterova and Natalia Telepneva edited a special issue of *International History Review* looking at secret intelligence battles in the Global South (Richterova and Telepneva 2020).

Conspicuous by their absence, however, are what might be considered social or grassroots histories of American intelligence, written from what may be termed, however imperfectly, a 'bottom up' approach. With the exception of work on the cultural Cold War, exploring the secret links developed by the CIA with various citizen groups in a bid to win hearts and minds, the subject of intelligence has rarely been studied through a social lens (Laville and Wilford 2002; Paget 2015). Articles on American intelligence have seldom penetrated the major journals of social history. Founded in 1952 by members of the Communist Party Historians Group including Eric Hobsbawm and E.P. Thompson, *Past and Present*, the preeminent journal of social history, has never published an article on either the CIA or the FBI. In the pages of the *Annales*, *Journal of Social History*, *Cultural and Social History*, *Social History*, or *History Workshop Journal*, one looks in vain for the alphabet soup of acronymic agencies that make up the vast, sprawling, US intelligence community. This condition is surprising since it has long been known that agencies, on both sides of the Atlantic, amassed hundreds of records on key social historians and sociologists, concerned about their involvement in radical politics. In the United Kingdom, Hobsbawm and Thompson were subjected to sweeping surveillance for decades as Security Service (MI5) officers tapped their phones, intercepted their correspondence, and monitored their contacts with friends and family (Norton-Taylor 2014). In the United States, the FBI under Director J. Edgar Hoover placed many of the country's most prominent sociologists under surveillance, in an anti-intellectual campaign described by one writer as 'stalking the sociological imagination' (Keen 1999).

How do we account for this absence of social histories of American intelligence? Part of the answer lies with the disciplinary make up of Intelligence Studies. Born in the 1980s, in response to calls from the likes of Christopher Andrew and David Dilks, who described intelligence as the 'missing dimension' of International Relations, the academic study of intelligence has been dominated to this point by scholars who have moved across from Diplomatic History (Andrew and Dilks 1984). Indeed, on the conference circuit, one leading scholar of intelligence, Richard Aldrich, regularly refers to intelligence scholars as 'refugees' from Diplomatic History. As they jumped disciplinary ship and

established their new field of enquiry, these scholars brought with them the tastes and techniques of Diplomatic History, including an interest in the weighty matters of statecraft, wars, and foreign relations, and a methodological preference for studying declassified records, predominantly from the perspective of elites. In recent years, as the pace of declassification of previously highly secret documents has intensified following the end of the Cold War, so increasingly has this way of *doing* Intelligence Studies become entrenched. As a result, most would likely view as trivial the type of things that many traditional social historians examine: places like villages, townships, and parishes; activities like eating, sleeping, and drinking; and artefacts like domestic furnishings, clothes, and heirlooms.

A second explanation is that social history, at least within the academy, is not as vibrant today as during its heyday. Arriving after 1945 as an oppositional force to top-down political history, which said little about the great mass of humanity other than the fact that they were pawns on the chess-boards of great men, social history was a necessary corrective to the historiographic record for a world that had emerged from a war more 'total' than anything experienced before. The Second World War was a global conflagration that engaged entire *societies* and *social* systems. In a post-war world beset by a new Cold War – a conflict as much about competing visions for the future of society as anything else – social history as a mode of analysis grew in stature. In 1971, Hobsbawm famously professed that it was a 'good moment to be a social historian' (Hobsbawm 1971, 43). By the end of the decade social history topics were more popular among doctoral candidates than those in any other sub-field; in fact, in 1979 almost as many dissertations were conducted in social history than in political, economic and diplomatic history combined (Anon. 1979; Mayer 1985).

As social history peaked, however, criticisms emerged. In 1979, in a blistering attack, Tony Judt overturned Hobsbawm's verdict by controversially declaring that it was a 'bad time to be a social historian' (Welskopp 2010, 228). Calling it a 'clown in regal purple', Judt suggested that social history had borrowed so much from sociology and political science, especially these disciplines' penchant for statistical techniques, that it had lost 'touch with the past' and become too much like a social science, if not actually *become* a social science. By the 1980s, social history was being challenged on several fronts. From one direction came conservative historiographers like Gertrude Himmelfarb who suggested that social history had become so methodologically permissive – adopting 'so many techniques and approaches' – that it confirmed Carl Becker's famous dictum, 'Everyman his own historian' (Himmelfarb 1987, 15). From another direction came the challenge of post-modernism and various 'cultural' and 'linguistic' turns, which rejected the material, economic, and class-based foundations of the discipline (Eley 2004).

If Judt's essay was a warning that social history's stock was overvalued and about to fall at the hands of aggressive new competitors within the academy, then Stuart Hall's 1979 essay 'The Great Moving Right Show' – one of the first to use the term 'Thatcherism' – was an indicator of the exogenous shock it was about to receive in terms of the broader socioeconomic and geopolitical framework within which it operated. 'We have so far...failed to find strategies capable of mobilizing social forces strong enough in depth to turn its flank', lamented Hall in response to what he perceived as the failure of the Left to combat the politics of the New Right (Hall 1979, 272). By the end of the 1980s, nonetheless, it was the Left that had seen its flank turned. Indeed, to push Hall's analogy further, it was more akin to a double envelopment. One flank crumbled through deindustrialisation and the slow death of the unionized blue-collar working class, while the other was outmanoeuvred by the electoral successes of Margaret Thatcher and

Ronald Reagan and the subsequent collapse of the Soviet Union. As a result, the ideology and language of class, plus the project of the Left more generally, lost credibility, at least within the dominant political cultures of the West. Thatcher even opined, sneeringly, that there was and never had been any such thing as ‘society’ (Cartledge 2002, 20). While this was not quite Gamelin’s ‘Inferiority of numbers, inferiority of equipment, inferiority of method’ (Horne 1969, 459), by the 1990s social history did seem like a once powerful column no longer on the march. In a trenchant mid-decade essay, published in the journal *Social History* no less, Patrick Joyce proclaimed the ‘End of Social History’, dismissing its ability to critique capitalism in an era of globalization (Joyce 1995; Welskopp 2010, 229).

By failing to consider the ‘social historical’ dimensions of American intelligence, the field has been standing still for some time. Whenever a new book or article is published, it tends to focus on the same events and high-level personalities. For the reader, the experience is like watching repeated viewings of the same film, albeit from a different seat in the cinema. In this introductory article, we would like to sketch out some of the possible ways in which the academic study of American intelligence could be enriched by social history.

It is time to bring the “social” in from the cold. We are grateful to the editors of the *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* for allowing us to have this debate in their journal. We are not confident that the conversation could have been initiated in either social history or intelligence journals. Although social history has come far since George Macaulay Trevelyan’s withering remark that social history is ‘history with the politics left out’ (Trevelyan 1924), it remains a discipline that can be indifferent to the business of government and agencies of state; social history journals reflect this. Meanwhile, with their editorial boards dominated by diplomatic historians and former senior national security officials, the mainstream periodicals of Intelligence Studies would likely cringe at the first mention of class struggle or Karl Marx. We hope that the contributions in this Special Issue can help to change this condition, and get both disciplines sailing in each other’s respective sea lanes.

What is Social History?

It is first necessary to think more deeply about what social history *is*. This is not straightforward. Social history is not a single or homogenous movement; as Raphael Samuel has written, it ‘has had a long career, and covers an ensemble of different writings’ (Tosh 2000, 109). Like so much in the humanities and social sciences there are those who have a tunnel-visioned, adamant view on what it should be, and other practitioners who are perfectly content for it to be a fluid or umbrella term for a whole range of different approaches and goals. As Geoffrey Eley and Thomas Welskopp have shown, in different countries, it has grown from different roots in different directions (Eley 1989, 313; Welskopp 2010, 229-33). In the United Kingdom, it emerged predominantly out of Labour History, which at the time was strongly Marxist, and focused on dialectical materialism and class struggle. Of particular interest to early British social historians was the Industrial Revolution, the rise of the class system, and the puzzle of why, despite the existence of a highly-organised labour movement, the United Kingdom had not witnessed the class consciousness anticipated by Marxist theory (Welskopp 2010, 231). In the United States, social history grew out of the populism of the New Left, a conglomerate of movements, convenient coalitions and breakaway factions that defined themselves against dogmatic Marxism and attacked (in the phrase of William Appleman Williams) the “open door” imperialism, masquerading as benign

liberal internationalism, that had led the US into the disastrous and socially-divisive war in Vietnam (Del Pero 2006, 40). Whereas social history in the United Kingdom foregrounded blue-collar workers and their struggles within the strictures of a society obsessed by class, its variant in the United States campaigned for a wider range of identities and social justice issues, including civil rights, feminism, and abortion. Moreover, unlike their British counterparts, US social historians tended to be more quantitative in their approach, using computers to carry out statistical analyses of migration patterns and social mobility, for example (Welskopp 2010, 231-232). In Germany, social history developed as a distinctly non-Marxist – even anti-Marxist – pursuit, to avoid any association with the GDR. Indeed, many German social historians eschewed the word ‘society’ for what they perceived as its Marxist-Leninist connotations. Moreover, as it sought to achieve a foothold within the academy, social history in Germany had to fight a particularly strong rear-guard action from an old-fashioned academic establishment unwilling to abandon the study of great men (Welskopp 2010, 232-233). In France, meanwhile, the Annales School would become well-known for their focus on the *longue durée*, the ‘constant repetition’ of environmental factors and the ‘slow perceptible rhythms’ of social history, as opposed to political history and the lives of great men, ‘surface disturbances, crests of foam that the tides of history carry on their backs’ (Braudel 1995 [1949], 20-21).

Alongside these different traditions of social history, there are definitional considerations worth pondering too. If political history is about ‘power’ and economic history about ‘money’, what is the cement that holds the various centrifugal elements of social history together? ‘Class’ would merely be one reading, and one that would not reflect the diversity of work that has been carried out in social history’s name over more than half a century, in different intellectual contexts, on opposite sides of the Atlantic. ‘Class’, nonetheless, does get at something of the *essence* of social history, in that it tends to focus on *social relationships* and to carefully analyse them at both the inter- and intra-group levels – between men and women, middle-class women and working-class women, working-class women and working-class women of colour, and so forth (to ‘class’, then, can be added other major sociological categories such as gender and race). How do these groups relate to political structures and the economic system? How do their cultural practices relate to those of dominant and subordinate groups? What role do institutions play in the social hierarchy? How do the constituent parts of society fit together? At its best, then, social history is a powerful tool to sift through, prise apart and better understand how those who came before us – social animals one and all – experienced the human condition.

Sometimes referred to as ‘History from Below’ or ‘History from the Bottom Up’, social history, in its most basic formulation, was about moving away from elites – heads of government, high public officials, industrialists, military commanders and senior bureaucrats – and interpretations of the world through their belief systems, to explore instead the mass of people whose existence and experiences have been neglected, scorned or taken for granted (Sharpe 1991, 26). In the words of E.P. Thompson, in a deservedly oft-quoted phrase from his landmark work *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963), it was an attempt to ‘rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the “obsolete” hand-loom weaver, the “utopian” artisan, and even the deluded follower of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of posterity’ (Thompson 1963, 12-13). Social history was not simply about identifying ordinary people in the past, but reconstructing the framework of their daily lives, in order to provide a richer synthesis of historical understanding: their families, friends and foes; their quarrels and alliances; their possessions and losses; their births, deaths and rites of passage

(Stearns 1980). It was about showing that the great mass of humanity are more important to history than suggested by Edmund Burke, the high priest of conservatism, who described them in a denigrating appellation as the 'Swinish Multitude' that was beyond efforts to civilise them (Bartel 1969, 4). For these reasons, central to social history was a democratic agenda, to give history back to the people and to carve a new path by re-studying familiar historical events through their eyes (Black and Macrauld 1997, 111). As Jim Sharpe has written, it was 'corrective to top person's history, to show that the battle of Waterloo involved a Private Wheeler as well as the Duke of Wellington' (Sharpe 1991, 33).

While much of the early energies of social history were expended on addressing the privates, corporals, and sergeants who had been most neglected by previous generations of historians, it quickly moved to look at junior, field and even general officers. Indeed, there were totalising pretensions to social history in that any individual, group or institution upon whom the historian might study would invariably be part of a larger social organism: whether *vertically*, in the sense of the various parts of the social hierarchy (from the social milieu of a cotton-picking private who grew up in poverty in north-eastern Texas, Audie Murphy, to that of the patrician commander-in-chief who attended an elite prep school and the Ivy League, Franklin Delano Roosevelt); *horizontally*, in the sense of linking together various parts of the social body, *a* to *b*, *a* and *b* to *c* and so on (an enlisted WWII infantryman to the crowded tenements of the Lower East Side, the infantryman and the tenements to immigration policy, immigration policy to the socioeconomic system); and *diachronically*, in the sense that the U.S. Army in World War II was part of a broader evolution (the U.S. Army in World War I, the U.S. Army in the nineteenth century, the American Revolution, Pre- and Post-Contact America).

'Social history', Hobsbawm argued, 'can never be another specialization like economic or other hyphenated histories because its subject matter cannot be isolated'. One could define certain human activities as 'economic' or 'intellectual' and then study them historically, but 'the social or societal aspects of man's being cannot be separated from the other aspects of his being, except at the cost of tautology or extreme trivialization'. 'The intellectual historian', he underlined, 'may (at his risk) pay no attention to economics, the economic historian to Shakespeare, but the social historian who neglects either will not get very far' (Hobsbawm 1971, 24-25). In other words, if history is the most ambitious of subjects, in that everything has one, then social history is history at its most ambitious, in that everything is social.

In this sense, while social history was clearly at odds with the increasingly modest claims proffered by a later cohort of historians who harboured an 'incredulity towards metanarratives' (Lyotard 1984, xxiii), it was likewise undercut by prevailing secular trends towards increasing specialisation and an unwillingness to generalise beyond time, space, place and the micro-world of one's area of expertise. This is the dilemma that the historical profession is stuck on the horns of as it moves deeper into a new millennium: 'the arrogance of surveying the whole' versus 'the timidity of inspecting the parts' (Comay 1968, 111-119); the grandiosity of the universal versus the bashfulness of the particular; speaking for at the risk of speaking over, versus being spoken for by refusing to speak up. How, in sum, should we breathe life into the past – for we must never fool ourselves into thinking that we can ever avoid doing so – ontologically, epistemologically and methodologically?

Operationalising the 'Social' in Intelligence History

As scholars begin to think about the social dimensions of American intelligence – moving from the upstairs to the downstairs of international relations – we suggest, firstly, that they need to be open-minded and think in the broadest possible terms. Part of the beauty of our present juncture is that we can take advantage of the Peace of Westphalia, without having to go through the agony of the Thirty Years War. Intelligence history's *Sonderweg* means that we approach many of the key debates with a degree of hindsight; now that our discipline is established and has a rate of reproduction that will allow for its continued viability and growth (in terms of early career researchers coming through the university turnstiles to replace the retiring professoriate), we can start to think about how the field might mature yet further and accept some of the developments that have taken place within the profession and across the human sciences. We can examine class *and* race, *and* gender, *and* sexuality; we can examine social beings, social formations and social systems as multi-faceted phenomena and avoid the twin traps of essentialism and reductionism.

Secondly, intelligence scholars must not obsess with venturing onto the bloody historiographic terrain that was so vociferously fought over by social and cultural historians. The social and cultural 'turns' have happened, and it is essential that we avoid reductive "x is superior to y" type arguments. Now is not the time to plot a radically new course on the naval chart, but rather to keep an even keel while sailing towards the following interrogative horizon: *how might the social help us better understand the world of intelligence and espionage?* For that must be our North Star. Whereas old social history tended to be worn as a badge of pride and for some as a marker of political orientation, as Peter Stearns has written, 'this singular identity has softened over time, and many historians in the early 21st century "do" social history as part of a larger commitment' – a geographic region, a time period or, as in our case, a field (Stearn 2017).

Thirdly, intelligence scholars must not agonise over seeking to define, once and for all, what is meant by the terms 'social' or 'social history'. The search for fixed clear-cut definitions of keywords such as 'power', 'culture' and 'social' has proved to be a humanistic and social scientific El Dorado from which many a hardy adventurer has failed to return, since such terms are created and redefined as the historical contexts in which they are used change (Williams 1985). By avoiding definitional disputes, intelligence scholars can largely bypass the civil wars waged by social historians and social theorists. For example, the 'social history lite' versus 'total social history' debates that pitted community history, antiquarianism, and pastimes against an attempt to subordinate the complexity and contingency of the past into some kind of all-encompassing teleological straightjacket. Or, the structuralism versus humanism debates that reached its apogee with the work of Louis Althusser, which saw an elision of the very marginalised people E.P. Thompson had sought to rescue (Thompson 1978; Althusser 2005). By refusing to dwell on definitions, they can also avoid being pigeonholed into either the 'history from below' camp, which might feature a restrictive commitment to just marginalized groups, or the 'history from above' camp, which might approach elites exclusively through the lens of an outdated conception of social class.

Instead, intelligence scholars can be pragmatic – as per our question above, *how might the social help us better understand the world of intelligence and espionage?* – and ecumenical. Some scholars may wish to immerse themselves in definitional debates, while others may pursue more applied work. Some may engage with social theory, while others may be more empirically minded. Some may concentrate on 'celebrated' intelligence officers, like daring covert operators, while others may focus on the 'uncelebrated', such as the analysts who spend their career poring over imagery intelligence. As one of the deans of social history in the United States pointed out when

the field was in the first flushes of youth there, ‘there is no more need for unduly rigorous or abstract definitions in this field of history than in any other’ (Stearns 1967, 3) (it is possible, after all, to take a pleasurable drive through along the Blue Ridge Parkway without fully understanding the intricacies of thermodynamics or the internal combustion engine).

Just as within and between faiths there are different schools of thought, so in social history; thus, we are loath to be too prescriptive. But that is not to say that we lack areas of overlap or commonalities that we can draw out. As such, we offer a syncretic and porous entry into the state of the social art:

(1) The social stresses the relational: the roles, statuses, divisions of labour, and institutions that we negotiate as individuals and as a collectivities. *Homo academicus* is one fascinating example in this regard (Bourdieu 1988), enmeshed as it is within a complex mosaic of power, patronage, and political-economy, but so too – as we all intuitively know, and many practitioners actually know – is *Homo intelligenticus*. All of the available evidence we have points to the immutability of hierarchy, formally or informally, in human history. So, while there is perhaps a grain of truth to the joke that if you put three Englishmen on a desert island within half an hour they will have invented a class structure, let us ask what hierarchies exist – socioeconomically, culturally, educationally and so forth – within American intelligence? How does the world of intelligence map onto American society? Is it a mirror reflection or is it something else? Who are the ‘in’ groups and who are the ‘out’ groups and how has this changed over time? How well reflected in the upper echelons of intelligence are the Ivy League, the Public Ivies or UC graduates? How does this compare to other important institutions in American life such as politics, the media or the professoriate? How have agencies responded to developments in terms of race, gender and sexuality that have taken place since 1945 and do these transformations translate into changes in their social composition or personnel policies?

(2) Social history typically examines the past through the prism of larger social categories such as ‘race’, ‘gender’, ‘religion’, ‘ethnicity’ and ‘class’, and accordingly it would be unwise to disaggregate them. Thus, if a political history of New York City starts at City Hall, and an economic history on Wall Street, then a social history might begin at 125th Street in Harlem (‘race’), the Stonewall Inn in Greenwich Village (‘sexuality’), the Muslim Center of New York in Queens (‘religion’), or at one of the social clubs that still pepper former Italian enclaves in Brooklyn (‘ethnicity’). Point (2) practically always refers back to (1) though, in that these larger categories are considered relationally and therefore socially. For example, one might walk up Park Avenue from Midtown through the Upper East Side and over the Harlem River to pick it up again in the South Bronx, thereby making the switch from the richest congressional district in the country (the 12th) to the poorest (the 15th) (‘class’). More recent social history, meanwhile, has examined the ways in which these social categories combine and overlap concurrently with one another, through processes of intersectionality.

(3) Social history can be conducted at any degree of magnification. Surveying the work that has been done under its auspices, the scope has shifted upwards from the sociological categories mentioned earlier to the social evolution of entire continents over centuries. It has also shifted downwards to look at the social world of a single individual in a single place in a single year. All of this is to say that in social history *n* can equal one, one hundred or one hundred million. Point (3) also almost always refers back to (1): for example, the history of intelligence officer Kermit Roosevelt Jr in Iran in 1953 is a *social*

history and therefore one that attempts to examine his social relationships, his social life and his location within the social structure.

(4) Social history is all-encompassing in that it can be applied to any individual or collectivity regardless of hierarchy. While its roots were a reaction to top-down history, and while much work conducted in the field continues to work from a bottom-up perspective, that does not mean that elites are somehow bracketed off from the social world (City Hall and Wall Street have their own fascinating social histories after all). Elites, lest we forget, are a *social* grouping who can *only* come into being in relation to non-elites. Thus, if traditional political history focused on elites, and traditional social history focused on non-elites, we are calling for a blended history that tells the story of American intelligence in the round. In this sense, we could even say that we are Palmerstonian in the historiographical wars: we have no perpetual friends and no perpetual enemies, we have only one abiding interest – to better understand the world of intelligence and espionage.

(5) There is no pre-determined link between social history and political orientation. One could write a right-leaning history of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) that focused on working-class recruits, or a left-leaning history of the organisation that concentrated on bluebloods and Yale's infamous Skull and Bones society: or vice versa. Generally speaking, more social historians have leaned left than to the right, but social history need not be socialist any more than political history need be elitist. We are not suggesting, therefore, that scholars of American intelligence go looking for the swollen ranks of the disaffected proletariat, labouring under the plutocratic yoke of transnational corporate interests – although if one locates this, we are all ears; rather, we ask that they explicitly confront the *social* nature of US intelligence.

(6) Social history does not mean dispensing with the political. We must not fall into the trap of what Hobsbawm calls 'residual history', which is a history trivialised by the exclusion of politics (Hobsbawm 1959). This goes back to points (4) and (5): we should not think 'political history = elites', 'social history = non-elites'. Instead, these types of history should be thought of as filters that highlight certain details at the expense of others *regardless* of where one looks in the social structure. If the 'political' is blue and the 'social' red, one may even write a fully magenta 'socio-political' history of American intelligence (just as the classical political economists used to consider the 'economic' *and* the 'political' before the *Methodenstreit*). Hobsbawm's point about economic and intellectual historians needing to – at some level – consider the 'social', also seems true with regards to the 'political'. Could one write a history of Shakespeare without mentioning the 'political' in the context of his own life (the Spanish Armada, the Union of the Crowns, the Gunpowder Plot) or the various settings within which his plays have been performed (*Macbeth* under Oliver Cromwell or Charles II, *Timon of Athens* in Cold War America or the Soviet Union, *Othello* in apartheid Pretoria)? So, while the 'political' and the 'social' cannot explain Shakespeare or US intelligence in toto, any attempt to *fully* explain them is clearly lacking by their absence. Accordingly, let us take our subject as seriously as scholars of the bard take theirs, and let us ensure that the character of 'American intelligence' is as fully wrought as anything that sprung from the dramatist's pen.

(7) Social history, almost by definition, addresses questions of structure and agency. A key motivation for studying the 'ordinary' people of American intelligence is not to tell their stories for the sake of it, but to reveal a hidden world of labouring men and women who are active agents in intelligence processes and decision-making. A rewarding social history of American intelligence would tell the story of human agency: it would look at forgotten voices whose silent work has enabled and, on occasion, resisted

the larger objectives of policymaking communities. Among intelligence organisations, there is a myriad of people who might be rescued from the ‘enormous condescension of posterity’. Today, the CIA has jobs in 6 categories – Analysis, Clandestine, Targeting, STEM, Enterprise and Support, and Foreign Language – encompassing hundreds of roles: from cyber threat analysts, digital targeters, and cartographers, to foreign language instructors, psychiatrists, security guards, polygraph examiners, protective agents, and sign language interpreters. All of these jobs feed into the work of an organisation of nearly 22,000 employees. Multiply this functional differentiation across all seventeen US intelligence agencies, and then tie that into a diverse society of 330 million people, spread out across six time zones, occupying almost 10 million square kilometres, and it easily becomes a task that could keep a team of scholars busy until the tricentennial. As the Chicago School discovered at the turn of the twentieth century, the dynamic young country known as the United States of America proved to be quite the sociological laboratory to apply and refine the insights they took from old-world classical theorists like Marx, Durkheim and Weber.

(8) The social should not be considered ‘soft’ to some erroneous idea of what constitutes ‘hard’. Intelligence scholars must not think of political history as ‘hard’ and social history as its soft underbelly. The social is no mere curio in the historian’s locker, akin to a Moe Berg baseball card or that fading sepia-toned photograph of grandma in her Sunday best looking like Ava Gardner. As such, we should avoid any temptation to trivialise it (just as examining spy fiction in Intelligence Studies might tempt some to take ‘culture’ less seriously). The social has profound implications for human life at both the individual and collective level. We can, for example, estimate life expectancy based on zip code, region or nationality with a high degree of probability; so too can we predict relative degrees of physical and mental health, income, level of education, and so forth. How, we might ask, does the distribution of wealth and power in U.S. society map onto American intelligence? Concomitantly, how has American intelligence affected this distribution? What mediating role has the social structure played in the recruitment of intelligence personnel? Are the upper echelons of intelligence relatively porous or closed? Is there an intelligence ‘type’ or ‘types’ and if so, what are they? What sub-cultures exist within the world of intelligence? Are agencies a conservative force or a driver of change and innovation? What generalisations can we draw out when we compare the civilian intelligence agencies with the military ones and does this tell us anything about civil-military relations? Thus, in our understanding, the ‘social’ is not so much a location, but a dimension that can be found in every conceivable form of human life and explicitly confronted.

(9) Social history broadens the questions we might ask and the evidentiary base from which to do so. Methodologically, then, there is much that scholars of American intelligence can learn from social history. From the beginning, social historians realised that government archives are not ‘neutral storehouses of the past’ in which history is preserved whole and uncorrupted, and where historians can visit to enjoy ‘direct transmissions from a vanished time’ (Eley 2005, 169). Government archives, rather, are incomplete, fractured and depend upon the decision-making of the very authorities that created them in the first place: namely, the state. Accordingly, ‘the very power structure worked as a great recording machine shaping the past in its own image’ (Thompson 2000, 4). With regards to the smoke-and-mirrors field of intelligence, this problem is magnified. As Geoffrey Eley puts it, ‘Through archives, the past is damaged and spoiled as much as preserved’ (Eley 2005, 169).

In response, social historians utilise materials ‘whose very usefulness as historical evidence lies in the fact that its compilers were not deliberately and consciously recording

for posterity' (Sharpe 1991, 30). Thinking creatively, they have shown the value of whole categories of previously neglected records: court depositions and parish registers as evidence of sociability; household inventories as indicators of kinship and family structure; wills and probate material as a measure of religiosity; not to mention photographs, diaries, biographies, material and visual culture, and the built environment. By imaginatively broadening the concept of 'evidence' beyond archives that are managed by the state, the social historian, to quote Hobsbawm, ensures that he 'finds only what he is looking for, not what is awaiting for him' (Hobsbawm 1998, 205).

This broadening of what constitutes 'evidence' beyond government records will help with the analytic double movement of looking at the social history of intelligence elites as well as the rank-and-file. From personal experience, we would contend that the private papers of intelligence officers are often of limited value for the types of questions that intelligence scholars have traditionally asked - top-down diplomatic history questions. However, for the questions that intelligence scholars have *not* been asking - bottom-up social history questions - they hold fascinating material. For example, rather than using the 600 boxes of William Casey papers at the Hoover Institution to look (in vain) for juicy details about Iran-Contra or Operation Cyclone, one might comb through his letters, diaries and memorabilia to draw together the worlds of the law, business, and politics in post-war America. Similarly, instead of rummaging through the Richard Helms papers at Georgetown University in a (futile) bid to find 'smoking guns' about Watergate or CIA intervention in Chile, one would be better served by looking at files pertaining to his ties with the close-knit 'Georgetown Set' of diplomats, journalists, and spies, thereby contributing to our understanding of how intelligence elites rubbed shoulders with other social elites in American life in an exercise of "salonismo" - a form of government by invitation (Herken 2014, 7). With regards to the second part of the double movement, we might utilise qualitative data analysis software like NVIVO to undertake content analysis of open-source material, such as intelligence memoirs or press material, to identify the social background of largely unknown low-ranked CIA employees.

(10) Oral history is one of the most powerful tools in the social historian's toolbox. Oral evidence is as old as the idea of history itself (older than the Parthenon in fact, which was finished in 438BCE, whereas Herodotus' *The Histories* - based on oral testimony - was written in 440BCE). As a modern practice and theory, nonetheless, oral history grew alongside and out of the shift from political history to social history. Like social history, it set out to rescue from obscurity the lives of different 'history makers', or in the words of one of its earliest exponents, Studs Terkel, to 'celebrate the lives of the uncelebrated' (Terkel 1972). Also, like social history, it was often seen as a 'calling'. This was given additional impetus by the democratising aspect of 'the interview': for the researcher could take a recorder, sit face-to-face across from another person, and ask questions regardless of social status, gender, race or even level of literacy.

There are many methodologies that social historians have adopted that we do not have more time to explore, but we are giving oral history additional emphasis due to the unique opportunities that this approach offers to scholars of American intelligence. It allows the researcher to avoid the declassification dependency that stems from conducting research exclusively in so-called 'history supermarkets', which have been processed by the state (Aldrich 2002). Importantly, oral history fleshes out the humanity of its subjects. This is something, we venture, that is sorely needed with regards to the world of intelligence. When scholars write about intelligence agencies, there is a tendency to either condone or condemn, to lionize or demonize, to politicize but rarely to *socialize* - to see historical actors as mothers and fathers, daughters and sons, or colleagues and friends. Oral history, then, not only gives us access to new information vis-à-vis our charge,

but also allows us to ask productive questions to see the subject in a new humanised light (Hammond, 2015).

Intelligence and the Everyday

Central to the work of social historians – and one element that could be fruitful to scholars of American intelligence – is the idea of the ‘everyday’. For a long time, studies of the everyday had a penny-stock reputation; they were seen as quite removed from the political domain and were typically produced by non-professional historians in the style of local history volumes, interested only in documenting daily life (Eley 1989). Hans-Ulrich Wehler, the creator of the ‘Bielefeld School’ of historical social science, famously described the everyday as nothing more than the ‘millet gruel’ to the main diet of history (Trentman 2013, 398). From the mid-1970s, however, studies of ordinary experience – be it *Alltagsgeschichte* in Germany, *Microstoria* in Italy, or *Vie Privée* or *Vie Quotidienne* in France – have come to define much social history. Instead of being a mere description of quotidianity, histories of everyday life are about discovering the links between the basic experiences of ordinary people and the larger political and power dynamics that exist within society. The French Marxist philosopher Henri Lefebvre boldly stated that everyday life is the foundation upon which all ‘higher activities’ of human behaviour are based. He called it the ‘connective tissue’ of all conceivable human thoughts and actions. Rather than a footnote or mere scenery, it is, he argued, ‘profoundly related to all activities...it is their meeting place, their bond, their common ground’ (Lefebvre 1947, 97).

The everyday lives of intelligence officers and the ‘micro-worlds’ they inhabit offer potential rich pickings for scholars of American intelligence. In giving new actors more prominent roles on the historiographical stage, this approach has the potential to show us that people other than presidents and spy chiefs make a difference. In the annals of American intelligence, there are doubtless countless stories of significant human agency in a variety of absolutely fascinating micro-historical settings, from streets, neighbourhoods, and alleyways, to bars, recreational spaces, and safe houses. In recounting these stories, scholars of American intelligence can ask a host of significant questions, taking their cue from social history. Do spies have any rituals or superstitions? What interaction do they have with their family? Do they try to learn local cultures and folklore? An exciting subset of social history in recent years has been to think about emotions and to engage with disciplines like anthropology, neuroscience and psychology to piece together ‘what it felt like to be there’ and to ask how those feelings connected to particular routines and bodily practices (Boddice 2018). Intelligence work abroad – especially in an undercover capacity – entails a range of emotions and it would be fascinating to explore how these emotions impacted on the success or failure of the mission. It would also be interesting to look at the personal and psychological toll that is experienced by officers who work in the intelligence trenches at headquarters rather than overseas.

As renowned social historian John Brewer has written, in filtering our analysis through the lens of the everyday, with its emphasis on the close-up, the small-scale, and the down-to-earth, it magnifies the human factor, creating a great deal more empathy and connectedness to people in the past (Brewer 2019, 89). It is only within the space of everyday drudgeries and happiness that we can comprehend historical figures as actors with feelings, beliefs, and agency. In short, it helps to turn ordinary people from passive objects to active subjects of history and – paraphrasing Alf Ludtke – it sharpens our sights

for history's participants and the multiple contours of their lived experience (Tosh 2000, 126).

American intelligence agencies are themselves aware of the importance of the everyday. The CIA has an honor and merit program for 'everyday achievements'. Distinct from Valor Awards such as the Distinguished Intelligence Cross or the Intelligence Star, which are given for acts of heroism, everyday awards are designed for workers lower down the organisational flowchart but who have executed their duties in a significant way. The CIA hands out 'Longevity Awards', with a bronze emblem representing 15 years of service, and a silver emblem, 25. It issues 'Superior Performance Awards' specifically for blue-collar, semiskilled workers. It even has awards for people who work in the Mail and Courier Branch. According to an internal study of the CIA's honor and merit program, between 1954 and 1968 some 26.6% of awards were given for career contributions, rather than special achievements (Document 1). This figure is particularly noteworthy when we consider that the period in question is commonly known as the 'golden age' of CIA covert action – a time, so historians have argued, when the Agency was apparently doing more action than analysis, more swashbuckling than swotting (Jeffreys-Jones 1989). Within American intelligence, it is clear that there exists what Annales historian Fernand Braudel calls a virtually inertial 'realm of routine' – the so-called 'groundfloor of history' – that needs to be uncovered (Braudel 1982). 'Punching the clock', the 'daily grind' and the 'nine to five' are just as much a part of the history of intelligence as the 'out of the ordinary', the 'irregular' and the 'spectacular' – in many ways, they are more so.

In the best sense of the term, then, a social history of American intelligence would involve bringing the field down off of its political history pedestal, to uncover the commonplace, the regular and even the grubby. 'What the hell do you think spies are?' asked a jaded, misanthropic Alec Leamas in the film adaptation of John le Carré's *The Spy Who Came in From the Cold*, 'Moral philosophers measuring everything they do against the word of God or Karl Marx?' 'They're not!' he continues, 'They're just a bunch of seedy squalid bastards like me: little men, drunkards...hen-pecked husbands, civil servants playing cowboys and Indians to brighten their rotten little lives' (Ritt 1965). In an interview accompanying the film's release, le Carré, himself an ex-MI6 officer, explained that he wanted 'to use the bureaucratic experience as a civil servant and try to translate that into the spy world, to use the atmosphere and the idiom of *everyday* [emphasis added], so that I could perhaps write for once, not the literature of escapism, but the literature of involvement' (Le Carré 1965a). In his follow-up novel, *The Looking Glass War*, le Carré provided an even deeper dive into the maddening bureaucracy of intelligence. Once a thriving division of British intelligence, the "Department" is shown to be ripped apart by rampant careerism and pretty squabbles. Within its decaying walls, employees 'draft projects which were never submitted, bicker gently among themselves about leave, duty rosters and the quality of their official furniture' (Le Carré 1965b). In short, it is an organisation driven as much by a sense of inferiority towards its sibling services and its own bygone glory days, as by any competition with a terrifying communist adversary.

If anyone thinks all of this is simply the product of le Carré's vivid literary imagination, consider the words of former Canadian intelligence officer, Ted Hoffman, who wrote, in 2001, that le Carré's fiction 'is typical [of the] uneventful day of the average intelligence officer' (Hoffman 2001, 83). This is not to say that scholars of American intelligence should reject what we might call the 'martini school of intelligence history'; but rather that they should also have the courage to embrace the 'stale beer school'. Moreover, we would encourage them to acknowledge that just as for every fighter jet in

the sky there is a vast infrastructure that helps to put it there, so for every heroic operations officer like Tony Mendez (of *Argo* fame), there is a large supporting network that, too, was part of history.

The everyday is valuable because it sheds a light on nostalgia among certain social groups. By studying everyday pursuits like folk stories, fairy tales and songs, English social historians have showed that many communities in the nineteenth century were unhappy with the incessant beating of the hammers that heralded industrial change (Laslett 1965). By continuing these traditions, even as their picturesque cottages were being disrupted by the growing urban sprawls, people in the past demonstrated their sense of loss and disenchantment. Thinking about nostalgia in the context of American intelligence could offer some interesting insights. Throughout the history of American intelligence, we might ask: who has experienced nostalgia, what have they felt nostalgic about, and what did this nostalgia achieve?

Known as the CIA's 'Time of Troubles' (Fischer 2013), the 1970s might equally be described as the Agency's 'Decade of Nostalgia', characterised by a sentimental longing for 'how things once were'. During this time, the CIA was chastised by the U.S. Congress for historic activities that were deemed beyond its chartered responsibilities. As allegations surfaced that the Agency had spied on anti-war activists, planned assassinations of foreign leaders, and used foundations as fronts, CIA officers were dragged to Capitol Hill to testify, in an unprecedented spectacle of transparency. At the end of the investigations, the Senate and the House formed permanent committees to monitor the intelligence community, ending decades of casual oversight that had seen the CIA operate with impunity, especially in the realm of covert action. While some at Langley, like Director William Colby, embraced the reforms and looked forward to putting the 'bad old days' behind them, others longed for a return to the past, fetishizing the halcyon period when the Agency could operate free from public scrutiny. Among other forms, this 'yearning for yesterday' was expressed in a spate of memoirs by CIA loyalists (Moran 2016). The CIA also built a Memorial Wall at its headquarters to commemorate officers who had died heroically in the line of duty. By the 1980s, it could be argued that these nostalgic efforts had impacted the organization. Headed by William Casey, a former spy with the OSS, the CIA during this time returned to some of its freewheeling days, keeping Congress at arm's length and running major covert actions in Afghanistan and Central America. A social historian of American intelligence might ask: what role did nostalgia play in this reversal?

Conclusion

Speaking at the International Spy Museum in 2018 to promote his latest book *The Secret World*, which ranged across time and space to provide the first global history of the subject, doyen of the field Christopher Andrew observed:

Many people in the room are old enough to remember as I do, the absolutely staggering discovery by social historians that 50% of the human race, not merely were women, but always had been women...if one looks back at the kind of history that was written half a century ago, they were left out. The idea that anyone could write about any part of political history or International Relations, as I have said, leaving out intelligence is equally absurd...[it is] somewhat embarrassing for some of the people who teach them [students of political history and international relations] for the past 50 years not noticing that intelligence was there. (Andrew 2018)

We would like to make an analogous move to Andrew's. Just as he encouraged scholars to consider the role that intelligence might play in political history and International Relations, so we would like to encourage scholars to consider the role that the social might play in the history of American intelligence. Andrew was of course being tongue in cheek when he referred to social historians' 'absolutely staggering discovery', but he was correct in the sense that if one looked back 50 years ago women *had* been left out of the historical record; part of our exhortation, therefore, comes from our desire for the field of intelligence not to be found similarly wanting with respect to the social. Andrew first made his clarion call for intelligence to no longer be the 'missing dimension' in 1984 (Andrew and Dilks 1984). Let us make sure, then, that in years to come no intelligence scholar looks back and makes a similarly staggering discovery that the 'social' had been there all along.

Bringing the social in from the cold, to be sure, is overdue in Intelligence Studies. As fun as it is, it is frustrating that we have to turn to spy fiction authors, like le Carré, to give our students a sense of the everyday experience of intelligence and espionage. Military historians such as John Keegan have been analysing war from the front lines as opposed to the general's telescope since as far as back as the 1970s, while journals such as *Armed Forces & Society* and the *Journal of Political & Military Sociology* have long had lively dialogues that reflect their respective titles. Scholars of International Relations, meanwhile, have been thinking about the 'social' for nearly as long. Robert W. Cox examined 'Social Forces, States and World Order' in 1981, John Hobson introduced a research agenda for historical sociology and international relations in 1998, and Alexander Wendt set out his *Social Theory of International Politics* in 1999 (Cox 1981; Hobson 1998; Wendt 1999). We might even say that social history is to political history as Keegan's *The Face of Battle* is to his *Mask of Command*, as Alexander Wendt is to Kenneth Waltz, and as Intelligence Studies is to diplomatic history/International Relations. One without the other is only ever part of the story. Let us use the 'social' to open up the world of intelligence so that we may understand it better. Nothing more, nothing less. Let us comprehend *homo intelligenticus* in all its forms, the political, economic, cultural, global, *and* the social. In sum, let us dispense with an abbreviated understanding of our field so that we might examine it with all of the depth and complexity that it deserves.

The articles in this special issue speak to many of the ideas raised in this introduction. In the first article, Melissa Graves argues that because the effectiveness of the FBI relies as much on the work of field agents as the strategic direction of headquarters, it is essential to employ both top-down and bottom-up approaches. To make her case, Graves delves into the Bureau's landmark investigation of the Watergate scandal, which, despite being hampered by shoddy and politicised leadership from the top, was successful because of the tenacity of the agents who worked the case. The next article, by Richard Aldrich, surveys the career of Ben Bradlee, the editor who famously steered the *Washington Post's* exposure of Watergate, to explore the fascinating social relations that existed between the American media and the CIA when the Cold War was at its chilliest. Using a social historian's diet of private papers and biographies, Aldrich continues the work of Gregg Herken (Herken, 2014) in revealing how vital questions about national security were settled less in the grey offices of the Pentagon, CIA and State Department, and more in the cosy salons of Georgetown where members of the elite fraternised over cocktails and supper. Meanwhile, Damien Van Puyvelde laments the condition that, in existing studies of the CIA, women and black employees typically appear like extras on a film set, fleeting, passive and in the background. Blazing a trail,

he argues that such employees have long been part of the Agency's workforce, albeit only in recent times would it be accurate to describe the CIA as a true equal opportunities' employer.

Next, David Gioe and Joseph Hatfield examine breaches of national security information by insiders. They compare and contrast the treachery of the Cambridge Five, 'externally-controlled' insider threats, with what they argue is a new 'digital generation' of 'self-tasked' insider threats, best exemplified by Edward Snowden. Gioe and Hatfield develop a novel framework to assess the 'damage' caused by these respective breaches, which, they underline, always take place within a social context: for example, five graduates of one of the world's most storied institutions, guaranteed to cut-a-figure in British life by virtue of their elite alma mater, versus a drop-out from the rather more prosaic Anne Arundel Community College, an awkward kid who found his voice in the online chatroom rather than the college quad. Finally, Pauline Blistène uses the TV series *Rubicon* to examine how fiction might help us to understand the social history of American intelligence. With echoes of less flashy 1970s' conspiracy thrillers like *Three Days of the Condor*, *Rubicon* was a commercial failure, the public seemingly still more attuned to the martini school of spy fiction like *Homeland* and *24* than the stale beer one. Nonetheless, Blistène argues, *Rubicon*'s focus on the everyman intelligence analyst, rumpled and drowning in paper, allows viewers to vicariously experience the *ordinary* reality of everyday life for most intelligence professionals. In time, it is hoped, dramas such as this will help to move the current cultural imaginary of intelligence beyond the tired cliché of the daring secret agent.

The contributions in this volume - of the FBI from the 'bottom-up', the social milieux of Washington D.C., the social composition of the CIA, the social context of the early Cold War compared to that of the digital generation, and a TV series that looks at the 'everyday life' of intelligence analysts - collectively open up some of the themes we have explored in this introduction. The history of American intelligence, nonetheless, must ultimately be reflective of the richness and diversity of American society itself. In that sense, there is still much work to be done: but in the words of the spymaster Control to the beleaguered Alec Leamas - 'one can't be out in the cold all the time' (Le Carré 1963, 14).

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