

## **The Kill Chain: Epistemologies and Ethics in the Securitized Academy**

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**ABSTRACT.** In the light of terrorism threats worldwide, universities have become increasingly conscious of and committed to enhancing the security of campuses, the safety of staff and students, and the protection of academic knowledge. By such processes, universities have become partners, conscious or otherwise, in a wider process of securitization. This has involved the academy in engagements with legal authorities, as well as security and intelligence agencies. But there is though nothing new about such interactions; indeed, universities have long been conscious and unconscious partners with security and intelligence agencies, and such engagements extend far beyond counterterrorism. Indeed, a plethora of recent articles have popularized and to some degree maintained the glamorous allure of such a relationship (Golden, 2017; Reisz, 2018), typically conjuring an air of intrigue, conspiracy and mystery about it. However, little serious attention has been given to the ethical implications of such engagements for universities and academics. Drawing (though not uncritically) on securitization theory (Bagge Laustsen & Wæver, 2000; Buzan, Weaver, & de Wilde, 1997; Buzan & Hansen, 2009), the article demonstrates how the securitized university has become part of what military theorists call ‘the kill chain.’ Exemplifying four academic ethical principles that can guide university engagements with the security and intelligence agencies, namely, academic standards, academic freedom, academic engagement, and professional conduct, the article defines the securitized university as an interface of the epistemological and the ethical: that is, in new models of warfare where intellectual capital is a feature of university relations with security and intelligence agencies as well as the military the Academy knowledge gathering and dissemination of that knowledge confronts through the kill chain new moral ground.

**Keywords:** university; security; intelligence agency; ethics; knowledge

### **Introduction**

In November 2018, Matthew Hedges, a thirty-one-year-old doctoral student in Security Studies from the University of Durham, is sentenced to life imprisonment for spying in the UAE, occupying headlines across the world until he is official

pardoned and return to the United Kingdom (Wintour & Batty, 2018). From Egypt in the early months of January 2016 comes the story of the death of Giulio Regeni, a 28-year-old Italian PhD researcher at the University of Cambridge, whose field work was on labour movements in Egypt after the Arab Spring. His autopsy revealed evidence of torture prior to death (Michaelson, Stephen & Kirchgaessner, 2016). The same year, Turkish democracy faced a military coup d'état. The presidential response was not only an intense scrutiny of the armed front to the failed uprising, but also the purging of dissent in civic life, particularly of those in society who could articulate such dissatisfaction, including journalists, reporters, writers, and, critically, educators: teachers, students, college and university lecturers and professors (Varol, 2017).

This article examines university roles in relation to a powerful and globally integrated network of security and intelligence agencies responsible for ensuring societal and political stability through the gathering of intelligence. To many outside the security and intelligence world, either academics or members of the intelligence community, the connection between university and the security and intelligence agencies may seem remote, arcane, a fond memory of the bookish George Smiley and, in a world of hybrid warfare, an artefact of the strange nostalgia many of a certain generation feel for the Cold War. Yet, notably though not exclusively in the light of terrorism threats worldwide, universities have become increasingly conscious of and committed to enhancing the security of campuses, the safety of staff and students, and the protection of academic knowledge, particularly security-sensitive research. By such processes, universities have become partners, consciously or unconsciously, in a wider process of securitization that engages with legal authorities, as well as security and intelligence agencies.

Across the Asia-Pacific, Europe and the United States, counterterrorism has burgeoned, as a defence against risk and a battleground for ideas, and with the emergence of new security measures come new threat narratives to justify them (Croft & Moore, 2010; Glazzard, 2017; Rychnovska, 2014). And this has involved a bewildering array of counter-extremism measures worldwide, impacting not only schools and universities, but also permeating many aspects of public policy (EAS, 2015; Ghosh, Manuel, Chan, Dilimulati, & Babaei, 2016). But there is though nothing new about such interactions. Universities have long been conscious and unconscious partners with security and intelligence agencies, and such engagements extend far beyond counterterrorism. A plethora of recent articles popular articles have popularized and to some degree maintained the glamorous allure of such a relationship, as in Reisz's (2018) "Following the Footprints of Spies on Campus" or Golden's (2017) "The Science of Spying: How the CIA Secretly Recruits Academics." However, little serious academic attention has been given to the ethical implications of such engagements for universities and academics. Drawing on securitization theory (Bagge Laustsen, & Wæver 2000; Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1997; Buzan & Hansen, 2009), the article

demonstrates how the securitized university has become part of what military theorists call “the kill chain.” The term “the kill chain” may seem on the surface itself extreme, and it is designed less to be inherently polemical than consciously provoking of thought and debate around the new contexts in which universities as still the major creators and disseminators of new and applied knowledge find themselves in, particularly through nascent security agendas and new models of warfare. Exemplifying four academic ethical principles that can guide university engagements with the security and intelligence agencies, namely, academic standards, academic freedom, academic engagement, and professional conduct, the article defines the securitized university as an interface of the epistemological and the ethical.

### **The Kill Chain**

In “Scholars and Spies: A Disastrous Combination,” LeVine (2012) urges the academic community “to create a clear firewall between itself and the military and intelligence communities.” Highlighting US Intelligence Community/Academy collaborations, he determines that such relations raise many ethical issues in the application of academic knowledge to military engagement. Putting aside overt collaborations between universities and the security forces, LeVine alerts us to the dangers of subtler, covert, even coerced collaborations that use university personnel as cover for the clandestine collection of knowledge:

at least such scholars, directly embedded with the military in the field, do not ... pretend to be independent and outside military control. But to have scholars literally spying on the people they’re studying, and in a way that puts their findings directly into the “kill chain” and thus can lead to the deaths of these subjects without any internationally accepted legal standard or judicial review, is in fact deplorable. (LeVine, 2012, n. p.)

The kill chain is a military concept that has been adopted by computer security. The military kill chain is commonly determined by the F2T2EA (find, fix, track, target, engage, and assess) acronym: find the target, fix their location (F2), track the quarry, target a weapon to achieve goals (T2), engage or apply the weapon to the quarry (E) and assess or evaluate the attack, including the implications for security and intelligence (A). The integrated process is defined as a chain because any break in the sequence can disrupt the intended military objectives. The model has direct battlefield applications across the army, navy and airforce, including high technology uses for advanced weapons systems such as satellite and prospective space warfare. A similar chain metaphor was developed by Lockheed Martin as a model for detecting, disrupting and preventing cyber- and other attacks, and has been widely adopted and critiqued by the computer security community. In both civilian and military contexts, the F2T2EA kill chain is dependent on intelligence gathering, in large measure due to the increasing complexity of all-

source intelligence gathering (Benitez, 2017; Lowenthal & Clark, 2016). The five disciplines of intelligence collection are: Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) Human Intelligence (HUMINT); Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT); Measurement and Signature Intelligence (MASINT): each present increasing evidence of collaborations with expertise drawn from civilian as well as military-oriented sources (Gearon, 2019).

Just as the Cold War heightened concerns about the infiltration of universities by foreign spies to steal secret atomic and nuclear research, in an era of global terrorism a similar concern persists about security-sensitive research and those who have access to such knowledge that, in the wrong hands, might harm national military or economic interests, or impact on public safety, or even cause death and destruction. Just as in the Atomic Age, when the stealing of nuclear secrets was no mere McCarthyite paranoia – the 1950s Klaus Fuchs trial demonstrated this by showing the secrets of the Manhattan Project to develop the first atomic bomb had long been given to Stalin by a USSR spy-scientist – so too today, in an era of terrorism and counterterrorism, the desire to protect open access to universities and through publication and other forms of dissemination to share the global proliferation of knowledge across borders still poses security risks for the national, and arguably the international, community (Gearon, 2019a).

More sanguine assessments of university relations with the security and intelligence agencies do exist. Nicolas Dirks, for example, lauds the early and ongoing synergy of spies and scholars immediately prior to the formation of the CIA:

When Franklin D. Roosevelt recruited William J. (Wild Bill) Donovan in 1941 to be his first coordinator of information, Donovan established the Research and Analysis Branch in Washington, D.C., and started hiring top academics. The fledgling office was reborn as a key unit of the Office of Strategic Services, itself established a few months after Pearl Harbour. As the United States joined the Allied war effort, Donovan hired several senior, and a great many younger, academics, principally from the Ivy League, to coordinate the collection, sorting, and analysis of material relevant to the war. Although academics were initially recruited by discipline (like history, anthropology, geography, economics, politics), Donovan's 'dean' of the OSS, the Harvard historian William L. Langer, soon recognized the need for area-specific interdisciplinary teams. (Dirks, 2012, n. p.)

According to Dirks, this incident points to “the agency’s [the OSS, later the CIA’s] most enduring influence – on the nature and conduct of research and teaching in the post-war university.” Indeed, former Harvard Dean of Arts and Sciences, McGeorge Bundy, suggested that in its early days the OSS appeared as “half cops-and-robbers and half faculty meeting.” Robin W. Winks’ (1987) *Cloak and Gown* remains the most authoritative historical account of the dependence of the CIA on the Ivy League universities.

Read the accounts of official and unofficial accounts of agencies such as MI5 or MI6, or the FBI and the CIA, and university personnel make regular appearances, but what Winks shows is how systematically universities and the security and intelligence agencies were connected from their formation (Andrew, 2010; Weiner, 2012). Whatever our academic and ethical assessment of the rights and wrongs of this connection – and much of the contemporary concern of liberal academics results from their having to engage directly with counterterrorism legislation – this history of interconnectedness is a present-day reality. Yet it is the knowledgeable (academics) as much as their knowledge that interests the security and intelligence agencies (Lowenthal & Clark, 2016). Ethical issues thus arise relating both to how directly or indirectly knowledge will be applied to military engagements, and how closely academics will be connected with the military using their knowledge.

There are thus multiple historical examples – some that we know about; many that we presume we do not for reasons of operational secrecy – of the covert collection of intelligence information under the guise of academic activity, often during wartime, such as the covert uses of anthropology from the Vietnam War to the war in Iraq (Price, 2004; Wakin, 2015). And the ongoing collection of such information is evinced by open source materials from the UK and US Intelligence Agencies (for the UK, see DSTL [2020]; GCHQ [2018]; MI5 [2020]; MI6 [2020]; for the US, see CIA [2020]; FBI [2020]). The current climate of international terrorism has served to highlight this historical interconnectedness – though it can seem that it is a new and acute problem. Beginning with some critical historical contexts in the formation of the CIA and detailing progressive developments to the present, this article examines the role of universities in this ongoing drama of securitisation. Using ‘the kill chain’ metaphor to delineate these new contexts in which the academic creation and dissemination of new and applied knowledge has become embroiled in nascent security agendas and new models of warfare, such developments are, it is argued, evidence of the securitization of universities. Such moves raise fundamental issues for the Academy – not all of which of course can be identified or resolved in a single article – which are as ethical as they are epistemological.

## **Knowledge: Enemies and Epistemologies**

In 1955, it was Sherman Kent, a former Yale History Professor with a new role in the CIA, who established the interconnection of academia and the military by calling for an intelligence “literature”: “Intelligence today is not merely a profession, but like most professions it has taken on the aspects of a discipline. It has developed a recognised methodology; it has developed a vocabulary; it has developed a body of theory and doctrine; it has elaborated and refined its techniques. It now has a large professional following. What it lacks is a literature” (CIA, 1955). As Philip Davies (2002) has argued, “Virtually all intelligence theory could be considered a footnote to Kent.” Kent’s desire for intelligence to be “a

broad-based analytical discipline” established “the precedent for most subsequent debate” and was embodied by the maxim “intelligence is knowledge” (Davies 2002). Knowledge was seen to form the bedrock of the ‘intelligence collection cycle’ (Goldman, 2009; Johnson, 2018; Johnson & Patterson, 2015; Omand & Phythian, 2013; 2018; Phythian, 2015).

Lowenthal and Clark’s (2016) *The Five Disciplines of Intelligence Collection* represents the fulfilment of Kent’s desire. Intelligence gathering is now systematically divided into “five disciplines (or sources): Open Source Intelligence (OSINT), Human Intelligence (HUMINT), Signals Intelligence (SIGINT), Geospatial Intelligence (GEOINT), and Measurements and Signature Intelligence (MASINT)” (Lowenthal & Clark, 2018). Each discipline of intelligence collection has, they write, its own “unique origin and history” (p. 1). The security use of these intelligence sources are part of what is known as the Intelligence Cycle, or, as referred to sometimes in the US, the TCPED process, which comprises tasking, collection, processing, exploitation, and dissemination (Lowenthal & Clark, 2016, p. 1). As methods of data collection in both the private and public security sectors have developed and known threats have intensified, so too has the interest of the security and intelligence agencies in universities grown. This has not gone uncriticised, in particular, as a result of revelations by Julian Assange and Edward Snowden of illicit intelligence collection (Harding, 2014). But no systematic mapping has been made of the epistemological relations that govern the connection between universities and security and intelligence agencies, as seen most clearly in the literature on global terrorism, which is permeated by covert – as well as overt – security and intelligence connections (Technopolis, 2015; Tilley, Bouhana & Braithwaite, 2014).

When Allen Dulles, the former Director of the CIA, wrote *The Craft of Intelligence*, he outlined a history of American intelligence, unclassified aspects of tradecraft, and counterintelligence in the Cold War. Under Dulles’ directorship, there were defined parameters of enmity, in particular, between the CIA and KGB. As the 1975 Church Committee would note, there was covert CIA action in decolonised African nations, clandestine engagement with Latin American dictatorships, proxy wars in Vietnam, in Cambodia, Laos, and Thailand too (Johnson, 2018). This might seem distant from the university campus. Yet, in each of these territories, academics played a role: in the US, in academic and student protests against the Vietnam War, shootings at the Kent State University campus, and mass demonstrations in Washington (Grace, 2016; Means 2016; Simpson, 2016); in Latin America, as the source of perceived or actual agitation (Brysk, 1994; Cleary, 1997; Davila, Mainwaring & Pérez-Liñán, 2013; O’Donnell, Schmitter & Whitehead, Skidmore, 1988); across 1960s Europe, with Paris ‘68 at its epicentre, in condemnations of state security and military interventions from the Sorbonne to Saigon, manifest on the streets in student protest spearheaded by radical public intellectuals (Bourg, 2017; Feenberg, 2011; Klimke, 2011; Vinen, 2016). And from Kent State to contemporary responses to counter-terrorism,

campuses have remained central to securitisation: from the student-led protests of Tiananmen Square (Cunningham, 2010; Ogden, Hartford, Sullivan & Zweig, 1992; Shen, 1998) to the Arab Spring and its current resurgence (Smith, 2016), and the global demands from Cambridge to Cape Town for decolonisation of campus and curriculum (Bhambra, Gebriel & Nişancıoğlu, 2018; Kwoba, Chantiluke & Athinangamso Nkopo, 2018; Lyster, 2016).

Such intellectual movements are as much about violence as about voice, and have increasingly taken a legislative turn, with governments justifying measures to counter extremism – in the UK that which runs counter to “fundamental British values” – as a matter of national security. Consolidated by the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CTSA, 2015), now involving obligations for all public bodies, the UK Government’s Counter Terrorism programme is intended to counter not only terrorist violence but also ideological extremism. This impacts all aspects of university governance, including teaching, research and administration. Witness here, too, parallel policy impacts on public policy across the European Union with the European Agenda on Security (EAS, 2015) and, in the United States, the role of Homeland Security and its formalised liaison roles of the CIA and FBI across the American university system (CIA, 2018; FBI, 2011, 2015). In America, as Johnson (2018) has detailed at length the historical involvement of the FBI in all aspects of campus life became apparent with the 1975 Church Committee and involved surveillance of radical counter-cultural forces across universities through the 1960s and beyond. This included sometime violent and fatal state interventions such as Kent State University in 1970 (Gearon, 2019c). In Europe the security agendas now prevalent in public policy might have been motivated by increased incidents of terrorism post-9/11 but they now, as the EAS highlights are “cross-sectional”: “[G]iven the increasing nexus between different types of security threats, policy and action on the ground must be fully coordinated amongst all relevant EU agencies, in the area of Justice and Home Affairs and beyond” (EAS 2015:4; see also Gearon, 2019b). Educational incursions of policy to counter-extremism in schools and universities, elaborated extensively by Ghosh et al. (2016) are thus only part of wider international securitizing agenda within and between states and directly impact universities worldwide.

If intelligence is “knowledge of the enemy,” the proliferation of extremism as an issue of security has meant deeper penetration into all arenas of public life. Campus responses to extremism have thus often been to set political limits to debate to protect minorities not from the majority. Yet student bodies (in the UK at least) regard such measures as the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015 (CTSA, 2015) as repressive rather than protective (Glees, 2015; NUS, 2015). If security was centre stage on the Cold War campus, today historical precedent perpetuates. The CTSA 2015 thus provides unprecedented levels of responsibilities on public bodies, including schools and universities, to contribute to counter-terrorism efforts. But this includes the necessity to promote “fundamental British values” (Richardson, 2015). Such initiatives, which combine security agendas with

the promotion of contested national values, are commonly perceived as threatening academic freedom in universities, as the Russel Group of UK universities commented in consultation on the CTSA:

Enabling free debate within the law is a key function which universities perform in our democratic society. Imposing restrictions on non-violent extremism or radical views would risk limiting freedom of speech on campus and may potentially drive those with radical views off campus and ‘underground’, where those views cannot be challenged in an open environment. Closing down challenge and debate could foster extremism and dissent within communities ... Clarification is needed concerning how universities will be expected to place limits on free speech which in itself does not risk breaking the law; otherwise universities may be open to legal challenge. The intention to include non-violent extremism within the scope of Prevent work in universities is a particular problem as it conflicts with the obligation to protect free speech. (Russell Group, 2015)

Such concerns about the threats of new security structures to traditional academic freedoms are referenced widely now in a range, too, of UK university policy guidance on role and response of the university in the light of these new responsibilities in areas (in addition to freedom of speech) as diverse as use of security sensitive research and the presence of external speakers on campus (UUK, 2011; 2012; 2013; 2016). The responsibilities of universities to report on suspicious or threatening behaviour of staff or students instigated by the CTSA 2015 has raised the spectre too of surveillance. These matters thus raise issues of basic academic liberty, the ethics of epistemological licence, that is, it is now not only what we know but of what we speak, and ultimately to what we think. It is a matter not only of States’ security but states of mind. To a great extent this is not new – the involvement of covert security and intelligence agency involvement at all levels of the arts, humanities and literature in the promotion of democratic values has now in this regard been well documented, extending considerably beyond what came to be known as (and on both sides of) the Cultural Cold War (Gearon, 2019d; Risso, 2014; Stonor Saunders, 2013). The historic engagement of for example the CIA in the arts raises under new counter terrorism regimes issues worthy of consideration by the whole Academy (Gearon & Wynne-Davies, 2019).

In the practicalities of knowledge-gathering by the security and intelligence agencies new security contexts thus means that intelligence gathering today is far more extensive than in any past context of conflict. Imagining the unimaginable in terms of risk and threat – environmental catastrophe; mass scale chemical, bacteriological, radiological and or nuclear (CBRN); future wars over food and water as much as territory and ideology – has become part of the landscape of the new security climate in which threats are (for example in the environment) are transnational. The correlation between intelligence and knowledge of the enemy retains its past associations with known opponents but the enemy has diversified beyond the traditional confrontation of armies or opposed states. Post-Cold War



military and security personnel here raise the term of “hybrid” or “nonlinear” war. Here is one authoritative definition:

The term “hybrid war” (military institutions use the term “hybrid threat”) connotes the use of conventional military force supported by irregular and cyber warfare tactics. In practical application, the Russian concept of “nonlinear conflict” is an example of hybrid warfare strategy (Ball, 2018, n. p.)

In effect this has meant major shifts in intelligence gathering and in the epistemological complexity of intelligence gathering., including the widening and deepening of dependencies on academic expertise, and far transcending traditional images of spy-craft and espionage. Why? Because the sources of knowledge required to combat threat or perceived from sources beyond the conventionally military have inexorably multiplied. Take, for illustration, Ball’s useful further elaboration of nonlinear warfare:

Linear conflicts are defined by a sequential progression of a planned strategy by opposing sides, whereas nonlinear conflict is the simultaneous deployment of multiple, complementary military and non-military warfare tactics. A nonlinear war is fought when a state employs conventional and irregular military forces in conjunction with psychological, economic, political, and cyber assaults. Confusion and disorder ensue when weaponized information exacerbates the perception of insecurity in the populace as political, social, and cultural identities are pitted against one another (Ball, 2018, n. p.)

It is here where academic expertise becomes a critical adjunct to the conventionally military. War in a nonlinear context here pervades, too, the general populace. The kill chain metaphor, extreme perhaps and consciously provocative, is framed here to make readers think about these new critical security dimensions of epistemic power as an adjunct of warfare reconceived.

### **Access All Areas: Academic Ethics**

The focus of this short article is however universities and academic knowledge framed as having at least potentially a role in the reconceptualization of modern warfare, where knowledge gathering and dissemination raises intense ethical issues of concern. How such security knowledge gathering is justified in ethical terms – especially when it is either covert and or clandestine – has barely been addressed in the security and intelligence literature hoped and anticipated for by Kent. With changing notions of warfare and new models of university collaboration with security and intelligence agencies, this is changing. An analysis and review of the literature on the ethics of such interfaces can be found in Omand and Phythian (2018) or Gearon and Parsons (2019). The pervasiveness of knowledge gathering

between universities and security and intelligence agencies is more widely the source of a burgeoning literature, and the nascent formation of a sub-discipline of universities, security and intelligence studies (Gearon, 2019).

I have elsewhere detailed how and why security and intelligence relations with the Academy are problematic: in large measure this can be summarised concisely by issues of openness and transparency, and or their converse, opacity and secrecy. To understand the basics here security and intelligence services have, as seems obvious, acted secretly, clandestinely, covertly; with increasing public and political pressures for the security and intelligence services to be accountable has meant an increasing degree of overt operations, including campus liaison and recruitment – the FBI and the CIA are entirely open about such campus activity (CIA, 2018; FBI, 2018); the most authoritative treatment of intelligence community accountability is written by a former member of what was known as the 1975 Church Committee (Johnson, 2018).

The covert-overt is a fascinating blurring of the edges between what the agencies called avowed (or publicly acknowledged or acknowledgeable) and secret, clandestine and the covert. It is widely evidenced by Golden's (2018) account of the CIA on campus, an engagement with universities that marks cultural, economic and scientific knowledge exchange across all security and intelligence agencies from Russia to China. In a collaboration with Major Scott Parsons of US Military Intelligence, our threefold model we represent diagrammatically in operational terms thus:

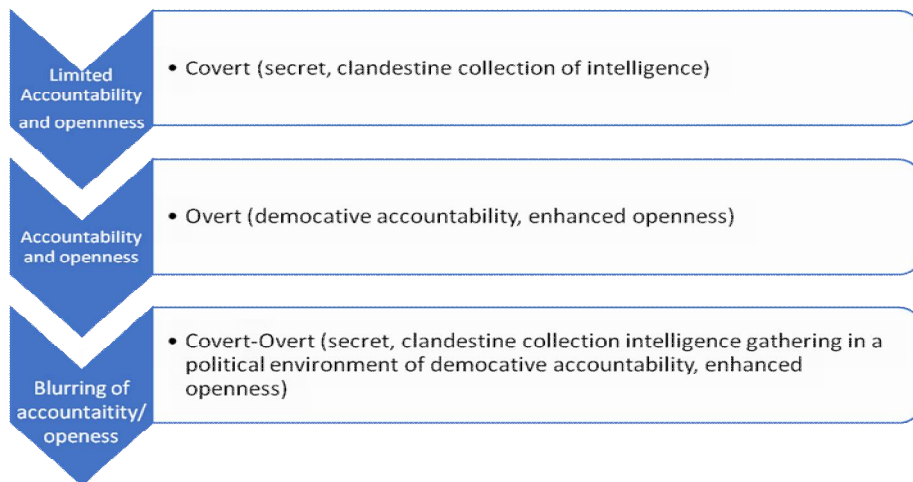


Figure 1. The CIA on campus (Gearon & Parsons, 2020)

These new variants on established historical patterns of interaction between universities and the security and intelligence agencies raises raise old ethical dilemmas for universities simply in new form. It has been suggested that the ethical dilemmas can be determined along a cyclical, interrelated model where security and intelligence engagement with universities can be seen as bringing a variation

on an ethical theme rather than something new, *sui generis*, though each of the following are security and intelligence agency specific.

A critical framing for academic research ethics has thus been suggested as having four categories: academic standards; academic freedom; academic engagement; professional conduct. Within each category stated binary oppositions are suggestive of potential dilemmas and dichotomies, but are not intended to preclude hybrid models of complexity:

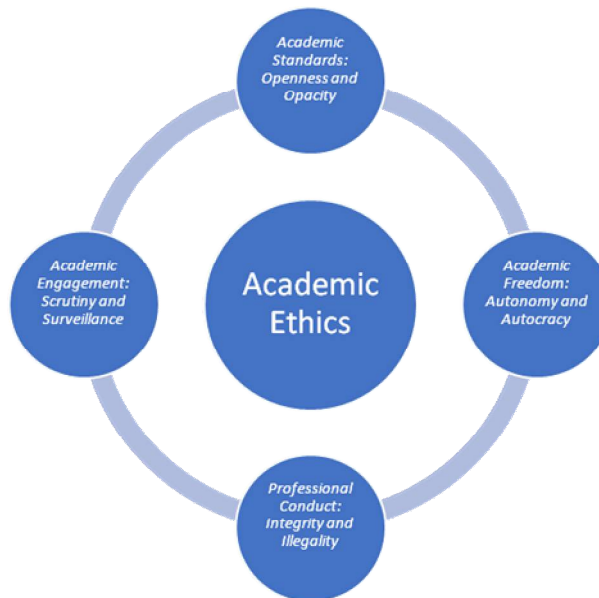


Figure 2. The complexity of academic ethics (Gearon & Parsons, 2018)

This framework, discussed in detail elsewhere, is presented here as a question that put epistemology and the gathering of knowledge at the heart of ethics in all areas of university relations with the security and intelligence agencies. The evident tensions are found in the stated binaries of each of the four ethical principles: in academic standards, between openness and opacity, or the transparency with which knowledge is gathered, a difficulty when one institutional nexus is committed to openness and peer review and by necessity the other is dependent on operational secrecy; in academic freedom a tension between autonomy and autocracy, where governmental directed diktat is necessarily held in sway by scholarly commitments to independence of thought and judgement; in academic engagement tensions between scrutiny and surveillance, where quality assurance measures and safety can, as with recent objections to UK counterterrorism legislation by universities, elide into objections about staff needing to ‘spy’ on students, or even the converse (for, respectively, the more and less sceptical, see the trenchantly opposing views of Durodie [2016] and Glees [2015]); in professional conduct a matter of managing the borderlines between Integrity and Illegality, a rarer but perhaps less exceptional

than we know of a straying into the grey areas of tradecraft, deception, larceny, theft, even, if the ends justify the means, and never to be avowed extrajudicial torture and killing (Weiner, 2012).

None of this is fanciful or farfetched. Researchers engaged in ethically sensitive investigations we have seen but also with the young or the vulnerable in schools, prisons, or the like, frequently face dilemmas when confronted with ethical commitments to confidentiality in the face of criminal disclosures. Those investigating security matters directly – again as with the Hedges and Giulio cases – face particular dangers. Sometimes security moves by the agencies are more overt. Palys & Lowman (2012), for instance, narrate the cause of how the FBI, prompted by the British Security Services, requested confidential information from a renowned Massachusetts university group who had been investigating the life histories of those engaged in the Troubles in Northern Ireland, where court subpoenas trumped researcher commitments to confidentiality and forced the release of taped and transcribed disclosures from interviewees assured of confidentiality.

### **Existential Threat: The Securitized Academy**

If in the current counter terrorist climate security seems ever more pervasive to – for many liberal academics invasive of – public life, universities are at a little explored epicentre of a knowledge exchange replete with ethical dilemmas. Technology has simply facilitated a systematisation of what has been historically commonplace. Gordon Corera's (2016) *Intercept: The Secret History of Computers and Spies* is probably the most authoritative and generally accessible volume of historical overview on the security and intelligence use of technology. Such developments have also provided intensified rather than new questions over civil liberties and security in the light of global cyber wars (see, for example, Fred Kaplan's *Dark Territory: The Secret History of Cyber War* [2017] on the minutiae of cybersecurity). The plethora of new legislation on data handling for the public and private sector will continue to impact universities, both in relation to knowledge storage and data collection, or the practicalities of the epistemologies and ethics.

However, whether we look at university-military collaboration in the origins of code-breaking or the development of radar, the use of chemical or bacteriological defences and weaponry, and critically the science of the atom bomb and nuclear weaponry, collaborations of this sort are nothing new. Indeed, security and intelligence advances as the historical literature rightly informs us could not have been undertaken without the military-security-academic nexus (Kelly & Rhodes, 2011). The development of the atom bomb was as Baggott suggests the 'first war of physics.' Fiction and popular journalism are often here louder voices than those inside the Academy, take for example the collaboration of the thriller writer and journalist Robert Harris and television presenter Jeremy Paxman's *A Higher Form*

*of Killing: The Secret History of Chemical and Biological Warfare* (2002). In the latter terms, a mere hour's drive from my own University of Oxford is the world's most renowned bacteriological and chemical warfare defence centre at Porton Down, now known more innocuously as the DSTL or Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL, 2020), which offers outreach to academics across a range of social as well as physical and life sciences.

These are the hard edges of what Le Vine had called the kill chain. They are far from abstractions. There are important and critical questions raised here, and academics take very divided views, with debate often being skewed around issues of freedom of expression, academic freedom and surveillance, and security-sensitive research. In all these regards recent counter terrorism legislation the world over has directly impacted both research and policy cultures in higher education (Gearon, 2019).

The issues of security and intelligence collaborations with universities are about more than terrorism and counterterrorism. Scientists have always been engaged with securitisation, as in the United States with the FAS (Federation of American Scientists, originally the Federation of Atomic Scientists), founded in 1945. Today, the FAS provides a "science-based analysis of and solutions to protect against catastrophic threats to national and international security." It "works to reduce the spread and number of nuclear weapons, prevent nuclear and radiological terrorism, promote high standards for nuclear energy's safety and security, illuminate government secrecy practices, as well as prevent the use of biological and chemical weapons," driven by "the belief that scientists, engineers, and other technically trained people have the ethical obligation to ensure that the technological fruits of their intellect and labour are applied to the benefit of humankind." FAS policy focusses on the Government Secrecy Project and Nuclear Information Project. FAS staff and adjunct fellows comprise academics with expertise in "aeronautical engineering, biology, biochemistry, chemistry, environmental science, law, nuclear engineering, physics, and political science." Its Board of Sponsors includes in excess of over 60 Nobel laureates and other influential figures from the scientific and international communities (FAS, 2018). The Rand Corporation (2020) in the United States represents another major and sustained body of such research-driven evidence of and for academic and security/intelligence collaborations, just as in the UK do Government bodies such as the Defence Science and Technology Laboratory (DSTL, 2020) reflect the increasingly overt efforts at outreach to cross-disciplinary academic communities.

The current expansion of security into all aspects of public policy was influentially defined in the same period by a group of Danish theorists who came to be known as the Copenhagen School as a "securitization." The Copenhagen School provided for non-security and intelligence specialists, as well as specialists in politics and international relations a new security agenda that gave the field a now familiar lexicon. Detailing the expansion of security concerns here from its traditional home in the military, to political, societal, economic, and environmental

domains (Bagge Laustsen & Wæver, 2000; Buzan, Waever, & de Wilde, 1997; Buzan & Hansen, 2009; also Albert & Buzan, 2011; Buzan & Hansen, 2009; Dunn Cavelty, & Balzacq, 2016); prior to 9/11, Bagge Laustsen & Wæver's (2000) sixth domain, of religion, seemed to be and remains prescient. Van Munster's (2016) accessible review of the relevant literature in security and intelligence studies provides a useful introductory guide to this enduring and seemingly ever more relevant notion of security.

If from the start, the Copenhagen School faced and still face multiple charges in terms of both theoretical generalisation and empirical validation, the prevalence of counter terrorism security agendas today across all aspects of public policy would seem to provide some intuitive sense that these securitization scholars had the foresight to observe and predict something important. They themselves have been wary in particular of the risks of seeing security everywhere and thus potentially undermining its analytic effectiveness. Their main move is well explained by Taureck (2006), stressing securitization theory's methodological capacities. She follows Buzan (1998) in highlighting that it is the critical notion of existential threat that justifies the attribution of a securitization label, thus here an existential threat means: 'If we do not tackle this problem, everything else will be irrelevant (because we will not be here or will not be free to deal with it in our own way)' (Buzan et al., 1998, p. 24). New legislative regimes of counter terrorism impact universities with obligations here under the rule of law and they are indeed justified as part of an ingrained threat narrative and, given the risks are life threatening, the notional concept of the securitized Academy seems justifiable.

The Scholars at Risk network, with founding charter aimed at the protection of academics, has long brought to public awareness the fact of dissenting intellectuals' insecurity in the face of illiberal regimes (SAR, 2020). To review the history of twentieth century totalitarianism is however to recognise the current repressions as a variant episode of intellectual history: all political supremacy necessitates ideological suppression. This is always integrated with (cultural, educational, intellectual) ideological assertion; that is, an epistemology. It is for good reason that in the pursuit of total power knowledge is both suspect & sacrosanct (Friedrich & Brzezinski, 1967). In Germany, as we know, the book burnings of 10 May 1933 prefaced something worse. Heinrich Heine had presaged in his 1821 play *Almansor*, the burning of pages precedes always the burning of people. The processes of sorting these volumes is however often neglected, yet in plain view professors and students in every university town across Germany, the heartland of European Enlightenment, selected books in the manner of an invidious Aryan peer review. In Stalin's Russia, methods of collectivisation, industrialisation and militarisation were applied to all intellectual life; Zhdanov addressing the inaugural 1934 congress of the Union of Soviet Writers presented the dictator's vision that all artists were to be 'engineers of the human soul' (Garrard & Garrard, 1990). In Mao's China, the physical starvation of the Great Famine preceded an intellectual famine of the Cultural Revolution (Dikötter, 2017a, 2017b). There are

numerous instances here too where Western intellectual “fellow travellers” in both Stalin’s Russia and Mao’s China countenanced the suffering of others (often from a position of personal comfort) as means to a justifiable utopian end (Caute, 1988; Wolin, 2017). Such uses of cultural influence are thus historic as well as contemporary, and they are important instances for showing how security needs to be interpreted as covering a broad spectrum of influence for intention of protecting vested political interests (Gearon, 2019a).

Despite, then, what securitization theory argues on the expansion of security beyond military domains, security has *always* meant control of intellectuals as much as command of infantry. First published in German in 1832, Von Clausewitz in his classic study *On War* wrote here, however, of the ‘friction of war’ (‘the only conception which, in a general way, corresponds to that which distinguishes real war from war on paper’), that knowledge of war as an idea is different from its actuality on the field of battle, but wherein awareness of other fields of knowledge is ever a part:

every war is rich in particular facts; while, at the same time, each is an unexplored sea, full of rocks, which the general may have a suspicion of, but which he has never seen with his eye, and round which, moreover, he must steer in the night. If a contrary wind also springs up, that is, if any great accidental event declares itself adverse to him, then the most consummate skill, presence of mind and energy, are required; whilst to those who only look on from a distance, all seems to proceed with the utmost ease. The knowledge of this friction is a chief part of that so often talked of, experience in war. (von Clausewitz, 1873, n. p.)

A century later, Goebbels, the mastermind of German propaganda, addressed a packed stadium on 18 February 1943, and articulated a tacit integration of the principals of knowledge and experience by drawing in the entire German population, as it faced defeat in WWII, to participation in “total war,” recordings of which speech are widely now available (Goebbels, 1943). If thus we read Arendt (2004), totalitarianism was a political phenomenon incubated by colonialism and imperialism – and Arendt’s powerful argument was that the western victors in this war were as culpable that empires of oppression that preceded Nazism were natural precursors to it. These themselves are not uncontentious propositions. But the proposition of this intended to be thought-provoking and discussion-heightening article is to suggest that war and killing are not separate from the province the ideologies and knowledge cultures that permit its inculcation. As postcolonial critics remind us colonialism is at heart a cultural domination (Said, 1994). The germ of genocide can be seen spread even in the pages of English fiction, as Sven Lindqvist (2002) powerfully makes plain when he draws from a four-word phrase of the trader Kurtz in *Heart of Darkness*: “Exterminate all the brutes.” If Eric Hobsbawm (2004) had defined the “short twentieth century,” 1914–1991, as the “age of extremes,” before 9/11 changed the geopolitics of extremism into a sort of theology, Isaiah Berlin (2002) had long before seen the autocratic impulse in

liberalism as much as totalitarianism, so had Friedrich Hayek (2001); J. L. Talmon (1961) had seen in the French Revolution all the signs of later history evident, as had the contemporaneous Burke (1792). Karl Popper (2011) famously went back to the Greeks and saw the anti-Academician movement in Plato; and was not the death of Socrates an act of the Athenian State in a move justified as a protection of its future security and that of its youth? It is almost a truism to state, as Foucault (1970; 1972; 1977; 2009; 2010) often had, that knowledge is always and everywhere a matter of power and thus of action and theory of action, or ethics. There is a wide literature, naturally, on all of this, and Pertti Alasuutari (2018) reviews this well, developing in so doing an important notion of “authority as epistemic power.” A major neglected element in many such analyses has remained the operational and institutional contacts between universities and the security and intelligence agencies, concretising what is often a too abstractedly conceived correlation between knowledge and power.

## Conclusion

While intelligence gathering remains focused on avowed state threats, rogue states, state sponsored terror, of necessity new post-Cold War and post-9/11 geopolitical complexities have shifted dramatically the epistemological centre of gravity from a relatively definable game of prediction between two major players to an epistemological focus beyond avowed enemies potentially now to an accessing of all areas. Now, arguably, everyone is a potential player, and everything a source of potential epistemological interest to the security and intelligence agencies.

Despite any claims to “the death of expertise,” what Nichols (2016) calls the “campaign against established knowledge” – that is, the diffusion of expertise beyond elite centres of learning and research – universities remain the global player in the generation and dissemination of knowledge. And as such, as Golden (2017) has demonstrated of the spy-scholar nexus – showing the shared epistemological interest between scholars and spies – no university departments or faculties are exempt from security and intelligence interest. This is not merely a question of epistemology, of knowledge, but of knowledge-bearers – elusive moves say between CIA and the student campus (Zwerling, 2011) – and as such about ethics that centre on the activity of knowledge gathering, academic standards, academic freedom, academic engagement, and professional conduct.

Lyotard’s (1984) *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* might here in some ways be prescient. Lyotard might not have expected that his epistemological pronouncements on the end of the grand narrative would have (as yet untrammelled) security applications. Yet it is thus. The ending of epistemological grand narratives of power by the hybridity of expertise has meant both a diffusion of focus and an exponential expansion of security and intelligence agencies’ interests in knowledge.



These are not arcane considerations. If we take cognisance of securitization theory they are matters of existential threat, of life and death. Individual and tragic cases are however but a fraction of a broader canvass of conflict. We have seen this in the cases from student and professorial participations in protest movements the world over, and again often with injury, loss of liberty and life. Suggestions made by LeVine about the kill chain do not, when we take this broader picture, seem that extraordinary.

Fictive accounts of such matters may hold more direct emotional impact or at least supplement the analysis presented. Thus, in the well-known film *Good Will Hunting*, when Will (Matt Damon), his analytic genius now recognised, has his mentor proposing a move from Harvard to the world's most powerful data-gathering agencies, the United States' National Security Agency or NSA. Here Will responds to the question: "Why shouldn't I work for the N.S.A.?"

Why shouldn't I work for the N.S.A.? That's a tough one, but I'll take a shot. Say I'm working at N.S.A., and somebody puts a code on my desk, something nobody else can break. Maybe I take a shot at it and maybe I break it. And I'm real happy with myself, cause I did my job well. But maybe that code was the location of some rebel army... in North Africa or the Middle East. Once they have that location, they bomb the village where the rebels were hiding and fifteen hundred people I never met, never had no problem with, get killed.... (*"Good Will Hunting* NSA monologue," 1998)

The ethical frame presented here is designed to formulate a pragmatic schema for consideration in cases where university personnel undertake scholarship and research confront matters of security and intelligence. In theoretical terms it has been the intention here to highlight the interconnectedness between ethics, epistemologies and existential threat across the securitized academy.

It has not been the intention here to "stand on the fence," but rather to highlight what sides of the fence there are. Rather, then, the intension has been to show in outline at least what these divides are. It may particularly give renewed reflection on the idea of the culture of knowledge to which we belong, to reflect on the implications of our knowledge construction and dissemination, to reflect on security and intelligence in broad and encompassing but direct terms. Perhaps, above all, one of the prospective impacts of this largely theoretical framing might be to reflect on what we as academics might contribute or oppose in the uses of the knowledge we possess in the protection of those factors of current history we cherish and wish to protect from threat, and those elements of the modern world we would see challenged and opposed. In all, then, to see anew the academics' critical role in these inevitable conflicts that are as endemic to any field of knowledge as they are on any field of battle.

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