

Interviewer:

Hello. Today is the first of April, 2019, and we are here in the West Point Center for Oral History with Michael Goodman, Professor of Intelligence and International Affairs at Kings College, London, Department of War Studies. Welcome, Mike.

Michael Goodman:

Thank you.

Interviewer:

Before we get started, can you please spell your last name for the transcriber?

Michael Goodman:

G-O-O-D-M-A-N.

Interviewer:

That is correct.

Michael Goodman:

Thank you.

Interviewer:

Okay. So in addition to being a traditional academic with traditional academic responsibilities in terms of teaching, research, etc., you are also the office historian of the British Joint Intelligence Committee.

Michael Goodman:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

Which I think weâ€™ll refer to the JIC, â€™cause itâ€™s a mouthful, for short in this interview. And so really Iâ€™d like to dig into, before we get into the JIC, what does it mean to be an official historian, or to do official history?

Michael Goodman:

Mm-hmm. Well, the official history program was set up just over a hundred years ago, when the Boer War took place. And the government and the military thought we need to have people learning the lessons of what has happened. So they created an official history program, had some retired Generals, I think, writing it in what they hoped would be a very small pamphlet for future wars. It turned out to be four volumes. And it kind of existed for a hundred years after that, post-Second World War, though, as a peacetime series, and my JIC history has become an evolution of various other intelligence histories.

Interviewer:

And how do you be selected to become an official historian?

Michael Goodman:

Oh, itâ€™s like a Masonic secret club, really, you get a funny knock on the door - no. They asked several people - for my particular, I donâ€™t know for others - they asked several people to be, to come for an interview to prepare how they might approach a history of the JIC, and then those in to be processed, I managed to get the job.

Interviewer:

But arguably, a history of war -

Michael Goodman:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

The Boer War, in the original case, is quite a different animal than a history of an intelligence bureaucracy.

What are the sort of special issues that might arise when dealing with the history of an ultimately secret -

Michael Goodman:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

Organization, or at least an organization involved in the secret business of intelligence?

Michael Goodman:

So I think one of the reasons I might have been asked to apply for it was because I, for my Ph.D., which looked at British intelligence and American intelligence on the Soviet nuclear weapons program. A lot of JIC stuff had been released. They were trying to declassify it with a 30-year rule, as it were, so every 30 years they release another year's worth of papers. So the kind of bare bones of what the JIC had done was reasonably well known, and even from the outside, it was never seen to be a secret organization like the agencies, you know. Along with the government produced a booklet looking at what are the different organizations working for the war effort, and the JIC was in there, so it was never secret in the same way. And I've now forgotten what your question was.

Interviewer:

Well, just - I think you've answered it in terms of secret intel - a history of a secret intelligence organization. But the various agencies, to just spell them out, might be Security Service, MI5, Secret Intelligence Service, MI6, Defense Intelligence from the military perspective, and they're feeding the JIC and also being tasked by the JIC. So even if the JIC isn't secret, the work flow or the work products, especially because they're advising Cabinet -

Michael Goodman:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Might be considered more sensitive than a strict military history.

Michael Goodman:

Yeah, absolutely, and almost all of the papers from the very outset were Top Secret, you know, and some higher than that. And there's not - the way that the papers are stored and the type of papers that are produced, there's a nice sort of delineation between those which were Top Secret or Secret, and those which were more sensitive, and so the sort of less sensitive ones have been declassified over time. But versions went to, you know, allies, went to NATO, so there were various different kind of classification levels of papers.

Interviewer:

So the sort of open government initiatives, and it sounds like you struck things at the right time, sort of in the right place, in addition to your eminent credentials.

Michael Goodman:

Clearly.

Interviewer:

But how do you then - what's to say - would someone not just say, "Well, they should just declassify it if they're going to do it anyway -"

Michael Goodman:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

"And academics can make what they will of it?"

Michael Goodman:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

What is the sort of role, then, of the in-house official process?

Michael Goodman:

So the official historian I think has - the idea is twofold, really. One is that you have someone who is trusted by the academic community, has established academic bona fides, you know, and so in theory at least will be trusted to provide an objective account, and given access to, unrestricted access to archives. And the other one is that this is the first writing of history, in a sense, you know, this is the first time that someone gets to see all of the material, write about it. And the idea is not strictly speaking that they choose topics where there is lots of material withheld. But part of the intention is, here is a subject which would be impossible to write about comprehensively from the outside, and so you give an

academic access and allow him to write it up.

Interviewer:

Does the fact that you are an established academic - what does that do to critics, if they then say, "Well, you know, he's come inside?" Because we should just talk for a second about the fact that you did have to be, we would say "cleared," you might say, developed vetting or positive vetting. You've been - you hold a British clearance.

Michael Goodman:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

But you're also an outside academic. So how does that dialectic work itself out in the production of history?

Michael Goodman:

I supposed the simple fact is, and there's a contract when I began, is that everything I write has to be security cleared before it then becomes publicly available. So the first volume, for instance, had a, you know, quite a long-winded review process, partly for historic accuracy, but also for sensitivity. But it's very clear in the contract that I signed and other official historians sign, and the judgments are mine and then as long as I can support them historically, you know, even if they're negative, they show the government up in a bad light, or whatever, if there is historical evidence to support it, then they cannot stop that being published. So the redactions are all on security grounds rather than kind of political views, I suppose.

Interviewer:

Right. Well, you've joined a fairly elite club, I would say, with Professor Keith Jeffery having done the official history of MI6, Sir Lawrence Freedman, the Falklands War, and particularly with Professor Christopher Andrew with Security Service, MI5.

Michael Goodman:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

But in his, he sort of chafes at the term "official history," because he thinks that it might have the imprimatur of the Service's judgments instead of his own.

Michael Goodman:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

And so when he talks about it, he talks about "authorized history." Is that a distinction that's important from your perspective, or is it sort of angels on the head of a pin?

Michael Goodman:

I don't think it's that important. I mean, I think there's some differences. When he wrote his, as an authorized historian, he became a member of the Service, you know, and that has implications. I was never formally a member of the JIC, as someone might consider themselves to be, but I had access to all of the material, and I think you can see in some histories - and other countries have similar programs. I mean, America does not, but Canada does, to some extent. There are some histories where people are only allowed to see the files which then could be released, whereas mine was you see everything, you write it up, and then we decide what can and can't be released.

Interviewer:

Is that, then, a sense where you as a historian, even though you can't release everything, you have confidence in your judgments -

Michael Goodman:

Absolutely.

Interviewer:

To tell an outside critic that, you know, if there were to be other information declassified or even retained, it wouldn't really matter, because you've seen it and it doesn't change your judgments as a historian?

Michael Goodman:

Yeah, and I think thatâ€™s one of the fundamental roles of an official historian, is that here is, you know, you almost say, â€œLook, trust me. I have the bona fides of an academic historian, and I have actually seen all of the material, and therefore you can trust my judgment.â€ But of course, it doesnâ€™t always work like that. I remember going to one conference several years back, and you know, one slightly conspiratorial student saying, â€œWhy should I trust you? You know, youâ€™ve kind of sold your soul to the government. Youâ€™ve joined the dark side, and so we canâ€™t trust you anymore, canâ€™t trust your judgments.â€

Interviewer:

Right. I think thatâ€™s - yeah, Iâ€™m surprised you only got one student. I think that would sort of come up -

Michael Goodman:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

On a rather routine basis. Yeah. Letâ€™s sort of move on to - well, I guess but before we move on, one final question like on this sort of line might be, you know, you mentioned that Canada does it, and the U.K. does it, has done it.

Michael Goodman:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

You know the Americans donâ€™t do official history in the same way, and if they do do one, they donâ€™t release it.

Michael Goodman:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

So you know, our way has not kind of caught on, and maybe your way has not kind of caught on.

Michael Goodman:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

Where the rubber meets the road, there are other histories of the JIC, I mean, notably Percy Cradock, maybe, who is, was he the chair -

Michael Goodman:

He was the former Chairman, yeah.

Interviewer:

Former Chair, so again, you have sort of insiders writing it. Has there ever been an outside history of the JIC done, that is not by a former member of it or someone security cleared like yourself?

Michael Goodman:

I mean, Cradockâ€™s one. He was a former Chairman from the mid-â€™80s to the early â€™90s, but his history was a much earlier period. So although he wrote about it knowing how the system worked, it was a very different era that he wrote about to when he was Chair. I mean, other people have looked at different elements. You know, some people have looked at the JIC in the Colonies. Other people have looked at very specific aspects, whether itâ€™s economic intelligence, defense intelligence, scientific intelligence. So the records have been used quite extensively, I think, but thereâ€™s a decent chunk that have not been released, and so people have not seen everything.

Interviewer:

Well, maybe this is skipping ahead too much, but are there - I mean, thatâ€™s the real trick with intelligence history, right? When new files are declassified, how does that update our understanding?

Michael Goodman:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Was there anything in your book that stood out to you, either JIC in the Colonies, or JIC and the special relationship, or other aspects where it - new files gave us new perspectives? And if so, what might that be?

Michael Goodman:

I mean, I think the general - by and large, where the material has been released, and it now is available up until sort of early to mid-â€™80s, although it gets a bit patchier from the mid-â€™60s onwards - by and large, the general story is well known. But the kind of specificities and the particular bits are not always that well known. But I think the general story is known. And I think the reason why the JIC is interesting is this is we can see what the Prime Ministers did, we can see what policy-making did, and this is the intelligence that underlay those decisions, in theory, at least.

Interviewer:

Well, and this, I think, is why intelligence history is called â€™the missing dimension,â€™ right? Because we sort of think, well, you know, these statesmen or these Members of Cabinet or whomever, they get up in the morning just sort of with some knowledge of the world, right?

Michael Goodman:

Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer:

And we donâ€™t actually ever understand where is that knowledge from? It comes from the Intelligence Services.

Michael Goodman:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

Can you shed any light, maybe, on that, on that process that, you know, how the JIC might inform policy?

Michael Goodman:

Yeah. So I think that - so I can explain what the JIC is for a couple of minutes, and where the JIC, I think, is a very interesting organization. You know, itâ€™s a committee. It has historically the heads of the intelligence agencies as members, coming weekly to meetings, and it has the senior-most officials in policy-making diplomacy. In other words, from the Ministry of Defense, Foreign Office. What it does not have is anyone political. It has no one that comes in and out with government as it changes every few years, so the idea is this is a sort of Civil Service view, merging intelligence, military, policy agreeing on a paper, and one of the key elements is this issue of consensus. Before a paper goes up to the prime minister, every single one of those departments, represented by a leading official, has to agree to what it says. So the theory, at least, is, you know, when a paper goes to the Prime Minister, he or she knows everyone in the Civil Service has agreed to that paperâ€™s views.

Interviewer:

We should talk more about the consensus view. Thatâ€™s sort of distinctly British, at least from an American perspective. But how can you ever get people really to agree on something when youâ€™ve got so many different perspectives?

Michael Goodman:

Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer:

Is it the case that itâ€™s watered down, because you have to kind of go to the lowest common denominator?

Michael Goodman:

Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer:

In the U.S., you would take a footnote and say, â€™Well, you donâ€™t agree? Hereâ€™s your spot to take a footnote.â€™

Michael Goodman:

We choose an invention that has come in more recently, but historically, consensus or nothing, essentially, and there was that risk, and when people like Sherman Kent, who the CIA's sort of strategic intelligence process, he looked at the JIC model and he did not like it, because of that common denominator question. You know, if you couldn't get agreement, it became more and more vague. The way that it was often dealt with unofficially was you had a very clever person from the Foreign Office to draft their way out of complications, but often that meant that the Foreign Office's view is the one that sort of carried the day. And you can see this in a number of examples, you know. The Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the Minister of Defense thought that the Russians might be on the verge of an invasion. The Foreign Office, for other reasons, felt they were not, and it was that view that held sway.

Interviewer:

Is that because the JIC Chairman is often from the Foreign Office, or always, or statutorily, or?

Michael Goodman:

From 1940 all the way up to 1983, post-Falkland, they always came from the Foreign Office, and from the mid-60s, so did the Chief of the Assessments Office - in other words, the individual responsible for the drafting process was a Foreign Office person.

Interviewer:

But is that a clever way of saying Foreign Office because Foreign Office oversees MI6, or is it literally that the diplomat vote, so to say, the diplomat's voice happened to be first among equals?

Michael Goodman:

It was Foreign Office as in diplomats, yeah, and they were very, very important, I think, because they had the knowledge of what was going on perhaps more than anyone else. But it was a sort of sense they could interpret it for policy makers in a better way. One of the changes post the invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982 was that the Chairman should not come from a Department, but be centrally appointed - i.e., come from the Cabin Office, and it just happened that the next few were all Foreign Office people who had retired and came right through the Foreign Office.

Interviewer:

Would that lead to some consternation, though, from let's say the military or others, where, "Okay, we're changing the rules, but actually it's the same perspective," and so in effect, maybe nothing really changes?

Michael Goodman:

Well, certainly back then, but I mean, more recently, the last 20 years or so, the people have come from a whole variety of departments, from Defense, Foreign Office, and the intelligence world, so it's much more varied. Certainly the view in the first 20 years, when the JIC was a subcommittee of the Chiefs of Staff Committee, then it had much more of a military focus. The military role was far more sort of prominent in the system. But historically, the Deputy Chairman has always come from Defense Intelligence, and the Chief of Defense Intelligence has always been a three-star military officer, so the military role has always been quite prominent, even if the actual focus of the assessments has moved more and more towards political topics.

Interviewer:

When was the JIC itself founded or established?

Michael Goodman:

Summer of 1936.

Interviewer:

And what was the sort of impetus for that, you know, for this bureaucratic shuffling?

Michael Goodman:

Yeah. It came from two people. One of them was an ex-Royal Marine who is Cabinet

Secretary, which is the most senior Civil Service job - you know, head of the Civil Service, most senior Civil Servant. He had set up the Cabinet system of government we have in World War I, and he liked this idea of collective decision-making consensus. And his view - and he was supported by the Director of Military Intelligence - was mid-1930s, you know, war is in a - the world is in a dangerous place. There's Hitler on one side of Europe, there's Stalin on another, Mussolini on another, and his view was, "We need to get the best possible intelligence for military planning." There's duplication of effort going on. What's the best way to do that? Come up with some kind of committee that can bring all the different bits together. And what's interesting, I think, is that, you know, that was approved, the JIC was created, but the pre-war JIC was very much a military committee - the three heads of the Services Intelligence branches were members. MI6-SIS was not a member until 1940. MI5 was not a member until 1940. So it was intelligence, but in a very military conception, I suppose.

Interviewer:

And maybe even if they were members, at the time, both Kell and Cumming, I guess, were both military anyway, so -

Michael Goodman:

Yeah, Cumming -

Interviewer:

The military perspective might not have changed that much.

Michael Goodman:

Oh, absolutely. I mean, Cumming had died much earlier, but his successors all were Admirals, so, and Kell was an Army Captain, so it was very much a military committee. Where it was a real or not - and the first three Chairmen in the pre-war period were all military, and the view was that was good. They were Army people. In 1939, they decided that the Foreign Office had to chair it, partly because they wanted it to be objective, and partly because they did not want the Navy to get in control. So the idea of having a Foreign Office Chairman seemed to be the way to go.

Interviewer:

Is it the sense that - you mentioned policy, and you have no one from government in it, so how does the government then have - the elected bit of government - how do they then have confidence that the policy is in fact being melded in the way that they would want, if it's ultimately civil servants that are underneath?

Michael Goodman:

Well, I mean it's a broader question about why does the policy elite, I suppose, support the Civil Service and agree with them? You know, the view is always - so the way that it would work is someone would write a paper on whatever the topic might be. That paper would go around everyone within Central Government who is an expert on that topic, which in practice is, you know, a relative small handful of people. It would be debated, it would be agreed, and then go up to the JIC and these very senior people to sort of read it and approve it, and then it would go out to government. So the idea is that when it got to the Prime Minister, not only had it been agreed through by all of these different departments that were represented around the JIC table, but actually with the policy experts and all the intelligence experts and military experts in Whitehall would also have seen it.

Interviewer:

You've been over, I think, a couple defining characteristics of the JIC, in terms of how it's made up, consensus, and actual policy. Are there other defining characteristics that are notable here?

Michael Goodman:

I think the two are the consensus and the committee approach, more broadly. I think the other area which is very often ignored is the role of personalities on this, and you can very much see this in the way in which different Chairmen who've chaired the Committee - you know, some of them have been very clear that their view is the right view and they

want everyone to agree. Others are there to sort of marshal opinions and see what's discussed, and then approach the consensus. But the role of personalities is hugely important in this, and the way in which some departments are much more vocal and able to get their views across I think is quite important.

Interviewer:

Well, a lot of bureaucratic sort of infighting also has to do with money and budgets and that sort of thing. Does the JIC consider - when they task, for instance, right? If I'm correct, the JIC has the power to task the Intelligence Services.

Michael Goodman:

Historically, yes. Pre-2010, when our National Security Council was created, the JIC was the organization that set the sort of annual requirements for the intelligence community, but also had almost a review process, looking how well retrospectively have those targets been met. One of I think its most important post-Second World War roles is to campaign on behalf of the Intelligence Services for, you know, more money, more resources, more personnel, 'cause you went from the situation in World War II almost complete coverage of the Germans, to the Soviet Union, where you had almost no coverage whatsoever.

Interviewer:

Well, we should come back to that transition, for sure. But just on the money thing, you know, there's - Colin Powell famously said, you know, 'Don't show me your strategy, show me your budget, and I'll tell you your strategy.' How does the - how do you task without having control of the resources?

Michael Goodman:

Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer:

Because then an agency would say, 'Well, if you want coverage on this or that, I need to either shift money around or have more money.' Does the JIC have any sort of - or did, I guess - the JIC have any sort of role in that, or was it simply, 'Hey, these are the requirements that we need serviced?'

Michael Goodman:

It changes a bit over time. It depends on when you're referring to. The three agencies, the money comes from a single pot of money that goes to the intelligence community. Defense Intelligence, which is part of the Military Defense, gets their money separately. Other bits of the system get their money from elsewhere. Historically speaking, the JIC was not involved with the money. At some points, it was a committee of other people, of which the JIC Chairman was a member, that discussed that. At other points, it was an Intelligence Coordinator post that was created in the late '60s that had budgetary control. But the point is that it's very much intermingled with the prioritization process.

Interviewer:

So it is reflected, then, in -

Michael Goodman:

It is reflected, and the JIC was the sort of senior committee, in some senses, where the JIC Chairman could campaign on behalf of the intelligence community for more money.

Interviewer:

But now you also have an Intelligence and Security Coordinator.

Michael Goodman:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

How does that fold in, if at all?

Michael Goodman:

Yeah. So there were big sorts of reforms in 1968, and one of those reforms was to create the role of Intelligence Coordinator, and they have various functions. One of them was for budgets, one of them is to ensure the assessment process was on the right topics at the right times. That person is the sort of Prime Minister's de facto person on intelligence,



and so if odd topics came up, often the Intelligence Coordinators have to go and look at those. It's chopped and changed over time - I mean, it hasn't ever really gone away. You could argue that the National Security Advisor role we now have is the modern sort of interpretation of that post.

Interviewer:

You mentioned Russia, and you know, the coverage from war to - World War II to sort of the early Cold War. Can you talk about the JIC's role - and certainly things got missed.

Michael Goodman:

Yeah, yeah.

Interviewer:

Or were at least sort of seen only in, you know, due time.

Michael Goodman:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

What did that look like, the transition, for the JIC?

Michael Goodman:

Yeah. So towards, midway through the Second World War, from about '43 onwards, when it became, you know, reasonably clear, I think, to many in the military that the Allies were going to win, the focus began to be what will the post-war world look like? And one of the things they were very, very keen to avoid was a repeat of post-World War I. You know, the war is over, the guns are silent, let's dissolve our intelligence system, or at least reduce it very significantly, because where's the next fight? And so they were very, very clear that there would be future threats, and what might it look like? So from '43 onwards, there was huge amounts of planning that went on, in the military, in the Foreign Office, in the intelligence community, with the JIC, saying, "Who is the next threat?" And the military, on the one hand, said, "We think Russia is going to be the next threat. We need to plan for a future hostile Russia." And the Foreign Office said, "Russia is our wartime ally. If we plan for a future hostile Russia, we will create this foe, and so we should not go for it."

And these were two very polar extremes, which the JIC did not really get involved in discussing. Where it did get involved was trying to argue for a post-war intelligence machinery, so about six months before the end of the war, its Chairman, who's a very able Foreign Office diplomat, produced a paper saying, "What we need is a centralized intelligence machinery. In the post-war world, Britain will be militarily, you know, destroyed, its economy will be destroyed. It still has these global commitments. How can we tackle those? It's intelligence. It's the force multiplier we need to keep our position at the top table, as it were." And so the intelligence efforts were really bolstered in the post-war period, but very, very quickly it became clear that the Russians were the coming new enemy on the block. Sadly, by '47 it was very, very clear that that was the case.

Interviewer:

But intelligence isn't one of these things that you can sort of turn on and off, right? I mean, you have to lay the groundwork from human intelligence, technical intelligence, allies, liaison, etc. Did that sort of bickering set the British intelligence effort against the Soviet Union back a little bit?

Michael Goodman:

It certainly did. I mean, it's hard to prove it demonstrably, but you know, they were Foreign Office guidance saying that SIS could not collect intelligence within the Soviet Union - it could not base itself in the Soviet Union for a period of time. So it probably took till '47, '48, when it was very clear that the Russians would become the threat, for the JIC to really start campaigning, saying, "Look, we need more money for technical efforts. We need to have more political appetite to undertake operations and log it on behalf of the intelligence community." And it took five years, probably, before it began to see results. And I think - I mean I don't - it's very hard to, I suppose, appreciate how you move from one war to another. The German threats, the amount of intelligence from the

Enigma program, from human Officers, really gave them a very comprehensive view of what the Germans were up to. Compare it to the Soviet Union, where you had almost nothing. It's such a contrast.

And I think it's quite amazing that the sort of political level did not lose faith in the intelligence community, actually.

Interviewer:

But you've - well, on the topic of Russia, early Soviet Union, we could sort of fold in your previous book, 2007, *Spying on the Nuclear Bear*, which discussed the Anglo-American intelligence efforts to collect scientific intelligence on the Soviet Union. So you wrote that before you wrote *Pointed* as the official historian of the JIC.

Michael Goodman:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

I suppose it would've been wonderful to rummage through the JIC's files -

Michael Goodman:

It was so good.

Interviewer:

When you were doing the research for *Spying on the Nuclear Bear*.

Michael Goodman:

Yeah, and one of my great finds, actually, was because we share so much with the Americans, and because often your review processes are a bit different to ours. There was a JIC Subcommittee on Nuclear Weapons, which existed for a six-year period, which was entirely classified in the U.K. - I mean it was only back when I was writing this - which was entirely unclassified in the U.S. So one of the great things was finding these, you know, British JIC papers which had been shared with the Americans that were available in College Park in Maryland.

Interviewer:

We should put a pin in that, though, and then I - because, you know, you've mentioned a couple times, either the things are declassified or they're withheld.

Michael Goodman:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

And as a historian, you're probably well placed to understand, you know, what's out there and what's not, but you don't make the decisions -

Michael Goodman:

Absolutely.

Interviewer:

On what's declassified and what's withheld. So who are these arbiters who make a decision on what can be withheld, and what - I meant, broadly, they always say "sources and methods."

Michael Goodman:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

But what does that mean, and how does the interface with the weeders, they're called in British context - how does that interface with the historian who says, "Look, you know, this is obvious, it's a known fact," whatever the case is?

Michael Goodman:

I mean, every government department has them. They often tend to be retired people that come back, and they review the material, and they have a sort of set of guidelines, I suppose, and each person's responsible for their own Department in clearing it. How it works in practice is a bit varied, and it's one of the great, you know, lessons for any trainee historian, is that you go and look in as many different files as you can, because often you'll find a Foreign Office paper in a Ministry of Defense file, or a British paper in

the American archives, or whatever.

Interviewer:

And the American Archives is probably particularly fun, because then you can take it back and say, "Well, it's out, I'm using it."

Michael Goodman:

It's out - yeah, absolutely. You know, there's some good stuff that has been released in the Ronald Reagan Presidential Library from JIC material from the Falklands War, which certainly when I looked at it some years back, had not yet been released in the U.K. So you know, the historian has to look, I think, in a variety of places to find material.

Interviewer:

That probably is the great takeaway.

Michael Goodman:

Mm-hmm.

Interviewer:

But let's go back to Spying on the Nuclear Bear. What was your - I mean, what are your sort of key findings from that?

Michael Goodman:

Yeah. So it covered the period '45 to '57 - I mean, in practice, it began a bit earlier and went on a bit later - '45 to '57 was the period in which essentially the U.K. and U.S. did not share technical intelligence, did not share technical atomic-related information.

Interviewer:

McMahon.

Michael Goodman:

McMahon Act in '46 severed that sort of technical link across the Atlantic, and it was only resumed in 1958, once Britain had detonated hydrogen bombs and could sort of show they could compete. But the intelligence relationship was a really interesting one, because you had this scenario where the wartime American effort, which Britain very much thought they were a part of and should have access to the information, and the post-war American nuclear program, which proceeded very, very rapidly, was far in advance of the Russian one, and the Russian one was far in advance of the British one. So you had this scenario where British analysts were trying to account what the Russians were up to on the basis that they didn't really understand the science of what they were seeing. And so there was very close relations between the U.K. and the U.S. on the analytical front, but equally so on the - I mean, it became very, very scientific as soon as the Russians began to test atomic devices from August '49. Becomes sniffing operations, when you flew planes, collected samples, got them from various other places.

Became hugely important, because you could work backwards to say, well, what are these different chemical elements in this, and what does this tell us about the device?

Interviewer:

Well, you should just sort of foot-stomp what sniffing or sniffer flights -

Michael Goodman:

Sniffer flights is aeroplanes with specially constructed tanks on them with filters, to essentially fly wherever the radioactive clouds might be. And of course, as devices got bigger, these clouds traversed the earth. Britain routinely flew them from Scotland, for instance. America flew them from Japan. Britain flew flights from Australia, depending on where it was. From the mid-'60s, Norway became - mid-'50s, Norway became very important for these things - and it was collecting samples. It was - you know, when you fly through these clouds and the bits get trapped on a filter, you can reverse-engineer, to some extent, what you have seen and what that tells you.

Interviewer:

But are these flights over the Soviet Union proper, or over Eastern Europe, or they trace the borders?

Michael Goodman:

Those were the reconnaissance flights - they were a bit different. I mean, the Russians

tested their devices firstly in Kazakhstan, and then on an island called Novaya Zemlya, sort of near to Norway and up towards the Arctic, and so there were important locations these flights were flown from, depending where the tests were. They were supported by seismic monitoring and various other things.

Interviewer:

Did they fly over Kazakhstan itself, or did they have to steer out?

Michael Goodman:

Well, certainly, some did, and there are memoirs. There's a memoir by the chap who set up the Skunk Works, or was involved with that, and we know from people like Gary Powers and other flyers that they did overfly some of the test sites, the missile test sites in Kazakhstan. So they certainly did, but I think that was slightly later on. That was really from the sort of mid-â€˜50s onwards.

Interviewer:

But the sort of truncation of your book in â€˜57, when I guess with the McMahon Act that prohibited atomic collaboration was rescinded, maybe, or -

Michael Goodman:

Mm-hmm, yeah, in â€˜58.

Interviewer:

So I mean this sort of I think hints at some of the undulations in what we call the special intelligence relationship as part of the larger rubric of the special political relationship with, you know, the U.S. and the U.K. Do you want to maybe just sort of take the longer view on this special relationship? The McMahon Act obviously sort of may be one of the darkest days of it.

Michael Goodman:

Yeah, but there were clever ways -

Interviewer:

What does that look like?

Michael Goodman:

There were clever ways to circumvent it, and there were various agreements throughout that period. You know, the McMahon Act was â€˜46-â€˜58. There was a technical agreement in 1948, there was an agreement between Eisenhower and Churchill in 1953, so there were various ways to get around it. But I think the broader intelligence relationship is an interesting one, and I've looked at this quite a lot, and I think what's interesting is you see during the war Britain really considered itself to be the major intelligence power. You know, it had history on its side, it had experience, and the Americans were the new kids on the block, and you see this in a variety of ways during the war, the way in which lots of Americans from a variety of different intelligence roles came over to London and learned how to do it. And then you see it really from â€˜47 and the CIA's creation on was that pendulum swinging across the Atlantic, you know. By 1950, the Americans were in charge. They have more money, more resources, more personnel, and Britain was very keen to kind of keep the flow of information going.

Interviewer:

Although things - when, for instance, maybe during the Heath and Nixon -

Michael Goodman:

Yeah. Yeah.

Interviewer:

You know, there's another bad undulation, lots of hurt feelings over Vietnam, and the sense that, you know, the British sort of left the Americans to their own devices in Vietnam.

Michael Goodman:

Which I think it may pose interesting questions, and it's something which I have gone through historical work and archival work. You have to think where does the power in all of this lay, you know? How much - and I don't know the answer to this - but how much does that intelligence relationship between the U.K. and the U.S. persist, regardless of who

is in the White House or Downing Street? Regardless of whether there's a political falling out over Britain's lack of support for the Vietnam War, whether it's the fact that Kissinger gets annoyed that we're trying to get a bit cozier to Europe in the early '70s than to him? You can see it in 1950 with Truman, who gets very upset over that Britain recognizes Mao's Communist China, and didn't tell him in advance. There are definite kind of slight political fallings-out - Suez, another one - but the intelligence relationship sort of withstands those, and I think it's a really interesting fact about how the political level almost does or does not interfere with the intelligence level.

Interviewer:

No, I think that's true. It almost seems that, you know, there's even when there's stormy seas up top, the day to day machinery of intelligence liaison sort of carries on -

Michael Goodman:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

You know, sort of under the water. No, I think that's a fair point. Let's sort of update things a little bit. It seemed that - I won't accuse the Foreign Office of this, but the U.S. State Department, sort of represented by Francis Fukuyama's writings about The End of History - in the early 1990s, it seemed like the Soviet Union was not only gone, but that we could then be friends - joint patrols in the Balkans, all that kind of thing. But at the intelligence level, the skepticism remained, and it sort of seems that in the rear-view mirror that skepticism was warranted, with Putin in charge and doing lots of creative things in Britain and in the United States. Do you want to maybe just talk about some of the updated view of Russia in a contemporary perspective?

Michael Goodman:

Yeah, and I think you can see this, because from 1994 on, there's a parliamentary oversight body called the Intelligence and Security Committee, which sort of oversees budgets to some extent, and oversees what the agencies are up to to some extent, looks kind of at cross-community issues. It produces an annual report, and in those annual reports there's a declassified version which will often give you a sense of the threat. How do the different bits of the intelligence community focus on the threat? And if you look at some of the recent ones of those, while they don't give you the percentages of efforts, you can very clearly see that for the Foreign Intelligence Agencies, Russia is the preeminent threat. It's perhaps not how that's felt domestically - Jihadist terrorism is still obviously a very big thing, cyber is growing as a concern - but from a foreign collection perspective, Russia remains very prominent.

Interviewer:

Well, going back to the 1970s, Operation Foot, and the idea that there's just too many Soviet diplomats or Russians to keep track of, and -

Michael Goodman:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Military Officers, and they just have to go.

Michael Goodman:

Yeah, and various former Director Generals of the Security Services made public statements talking about how the number of Russian intelligence officers in London has now surpassed Cold War levels, so there's very definite concerns. And you know, the poisoning of Litvinenko, the poisoning of Skripal, shows you that that threat is still there, to a great extent.

Interviewer:

Does that ever get put in the sort of international relations, international affairs, idea that, 'œOops, it looks like this threat hasn't gone away? Or did it go away, and there were reforms, and then Vladimir Putin simply decided, 'œNo, I'm going to take it the other way? I mean, we saw the assassination of - is it Bulgarian, dissident, Georgi -

Michael Goodman:

Markov. Yeah.

Interviewer:

Markov. In the, was it mid-late 1970s. And then again, Alexander Litvinenko poisoned over high tea with Polonium 310, hairless, gaunt, in the hospital dying slowly.

Michael Goodman:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

And then again, with Skripal, who didn't die, but I don't think we've seen anything of him.

Michael Goodman:

No.

Interviewer:

His daughter recovered, but we haven't seen anything of him, in March 2018. Does this tell us something about the enduring nature of Russian intelligence, or that maybe it's time for another Operation Foot to kick everybody out? What does it suggest?

Michael Goodman:

Yeah, and post-Skripal, of course, we did kick lots of diplomats out, and so did lots of other countries around the world kicked out Russian diplomats. I suppose there's two ways to think about it. I mean, one is that the Russian tradition in history of targeting enemies of the state - they have a very long tradition there, back to the 1930s, probably before, where a Soviet defector, or some kind of political agitator would be based abroad and making a loud noise. Trotsky, the ice pick in the back of the head in Mexico in 1940, Krivitsky in New York, I think it was, certainly a hotel in the United States - there's a whole history of this, and so in many ways, the leopard has not changed its spots. But you could argue, though, those are Russians targeting Russians, even if they are defectors and they've been given citizenship. That's different, I suppose, to what we saw in the Cold War - very large-scale efforts to recruit people to the Russian cause.

And there's a huge number of examples in the U.K., there's a huge number of examples in the U.S. of where this has taken place. I don't know that we have any examples from more recently, but I don't think the Russians really change how they do these things, and they have a different view of intelligence. They're very, very happy to play the long game, and you can see the way in which they use illegals, where they might be quiet for 20 years before they're activated, as some evidence of that.

Interviewer:

Yeah. No, I think they are playing the long game, but then again, their policy structure doesn't change as rapidly as they do in democracies, and so their service can just be set up for longer-term bets.

Michael Goodman:

Absolutely.

Interviewer:

Whereas I think it's harder for us in the West -

Michael Goodman:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

To make those longer-term bets. No, I mean maybe while we're talking about Russian intelligence and Soviet intelligence, and of course the Anglo-American relationship, and nuclear intelligence, atomic intelligence, these things are all wrapped up in the Cambridge Five. Did the JIC have anything to say about the Cambridge Five? I mean, the sort of -

Michael Goodman:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

The classic intelligence failure, or counter-intelligence failure?

Michael Goodman:

It didn't, which is in some ways surprising. I mean, the 1950s JIC, when a lot of these people were identified, it had - there were sort of two committees. There was the one with all the Chiefs and the Directors that met every week. There was a second one which looked at issues of security, and that was things like publication of books, documents being left on trains. Very, very rarely did it do damage assessments of people who had passed secrets. Now, one example, there was a Defense official called Frank Bossard, in the early '60s, I think, and they spent a lot of time looking at him and what he might have provided. So they did not provide damage assessments, and quite why they didn't, I'm not sure. Probably because it was sort of beyond their remit, I suppose. The focus was producing assessments - it was almost always on overseas topics. It was not saying, "This defector, how much damage have they caused?" Cause that would've been done by an individual agency.

Interviewer:

No, the British machinery of intelligence is sort of well-studied but not well-understood, and very interesting. Do you want to just talk for a second about - so Russians sort of notably assassinating, as you say, other Russians, but on British territory. But now also you've mentioned cyber and cyberpower, and with the Brexit vote, which now seems to still be on track to leave in some capacity, there seems to be some evidence that the Russians -

Michael Goodman:

Yeah.

Interviewer:

Consistent with their longer-term efforts to break apart NATO or the E.U. or sort of the West generally, how do we see the Russian hand or Russian cyber-actor in that?

Michael Goodman:

Well, I mean again, I think the historical lessons and the long view are important. One of the JIC's very early conclusions was the Russians will do absolutely all they can to subvert British society somehow. Back then, of course, it was through propaganda and various other things. The modern incarnation of that is cyber, and so you see with the Brexit vote, there's now I think fairly good evidence, fairly conclusive evidence, that the Russians had huge numbers of Twitter accounts sending out messages. But importantly, while they may have had more of a focus on the leave campaign, they were promoting both arguments, and I think there's very clear sense of what they were trying to do is just sow confusion within society. Which probably they didn't need to do, 'cause that was already happening, but. But just sow dissent, 'cause a fuss, be a pain in the backside.

Interviewer:

No, it's very blunt, but I think also very well-supported by at least the U.S. intelligence community's assessment of January 2017, which said, "Yes, there's - not only to sow confusion, though, but they actually had a preferred policy outcome in mind, and I think on your side, they also had a policy outcome in mind. I suppose, you know, one of the other bits where cyber - and I think if we consider broadening that out to information - when the Russians tried to assassinate Skripal, through the ubiquitous closed television systems in the U.K., from trains and buses and hotels and airports and - it was actually unraveled. Although the perpetrators did flee and get back to Russia safely, their trail was unraveled by CCTV investigation relatively quickly.

You sort of just can't get away with what you used to be able to, because there's this information record. How does that change things, as an intelligence historian looking forward?

Michael Goodman:

Well, I think it's frightening. I mean, I already dread the kind of 1990s when, or probably the 2000s, when material is not really on paper but is on computers, and who knows how many e-mails there'll be on a certain subject? I think it's bewildering. I mean, I think on the specifics of the Skripal one, you can see a British investigative company called

Bellingcat, which discovered a lot of this information, not from the CCTV aspects. But once those two individuals were identified and the Russians declared who they were, and they had false names - and Bellingcat was very, very good at being able to use information that was publicly available to find out their real names, and to track them down, and to find out other bits of information. Which does pose real problems, of course - how, in the modern era, do you conduct a HUMANS operation, when there's biometric scanning at airports, when it's very hard to exist without leaving a digital footprint? I think it's tremendously challenging.

Interviewer:

Yeah. No, I think that's - I think it is a challenge, but I guess also, for intelligence historians, how are we going to go back into the documentary record, when there are millions and millions and millions and millions of e-mails being generated across government every day, right? How do you - how are future generations of historians going to mine, well, this e-mail sent from this person to this person in 2010?

Michael Goodman:

Yeah, yeah, which is the key thing.

Interviewer:

Is that even captured anywhere? I mean, there's -

Michael Goodman:

I don't know that it is. I mean, I think British government departments have - there's a policy on what you are supposed to keep and what you are supposed - you don't have to keep. I don't know the specifics. I don't know how it's maintained. But I think the volume of material, like everything in life, is completely frightening.

Interviewer:

Let's then end on I think British intelligence in the long view, the Intelligence Services recently, I guess, what, 110 years ago, were established in the Secret Service Bureau, Security Service Bureau?

Michael Goodman:

Secret Service Bureau.

Interviewer:

So okay, so we've got 110 years. As a historian, what do you - what does that make you declare or suspect about British intelligence in the long view?

Michael Goodman:

Well, I think it has a good history. I mean, I think it has far more successes than it doesn't. Perhaps the greatest test of how well it has done is the fact that lots of these agencies have existed for a very, very long time. At no point, I think, has a Prime Minister or any senior member of government said, "Why do we have all these intelligence agencies? Why do we give them all of this money?" I think that those are accepted facts, which clearly is a testament how well the agencies do and have done. I think the other way to look at it is, if you look at the organizations in the U.K., most of them have long historical roots, and they existed at a time for a particular purpose. So, for instance, Secret Service Bureau, October 1909, very quickly became a foreign branch and a domestic branch - what would become SIS and MI5 - and that made lots of sense, and it made lots of sense throughout most of the Cold War.

But when you then think about modern threats - you know, the globalized world, the way that people move in and out of countries very, very, very freely - does that still make sense? And I'm not advocating that they should be changed, 'cause I think they do a very different role and have different sorts of people that work for them, but if you had a blank piece of paper in 2018 - 2019, and you were saying, "How should we construct an intelligence community?" I don't necessarily think it would look the way we have it today, but it has historical links.

Interviewer:

Well, I lied. I want to ask you one more question, because we're at West Point, and



you know, weâ€™re a college, and we have history majors or social science majors, weâ€™ve got defense and strategic studies majors. If they were considering going on for further study in history or international studies or war studies, and -

Michael Goodman:

Yeah. They should come to Kings College London.

Interviewer:

We have one right now, as a matter of fact -

Michael Goodman:

Very good.

Interviewer:

On a scholarship there. How do we - what would you tell them about the promise and the pitfalls of intelligence history or intelligence studies, if you want to define it that way, as a sort of broader sub-field, as opposed to diplomatic history or military history or cultural history or any of the other lines of inquiry?

Michael Goodman:

I would say two things, I think. One is, intelligence studies as a discipline, as the books and everything are still written, people get very much fixated on spy stories, which are great fun to read and all the rest of it, but a lot of them miss out the â€œso whatâ€ question. You know, person X was a spy, they had all these derring-do operations, but what did it actually achieve? So I think one thing which is often missed out is the â€œso whatâ€ question - you know, what did it provide? I think the other element of that is then if you conceive of the intelligence hard core and whether you like it or not, and thereâ€™s criticisms, etc. - but if you conceive of the way that that material moves through government, and you see at the top-end level, this is intelligence that is being provided for military decision-makers, political decision-makers, itâ€™s that relationship between the two worlds. How does a policy-maker receive, use, ignore, validate intelligence?

What is the role of intelligence in policy-making? So in some ways, the question is the â€œso whatâ€ question, you know. What value is derived from intelligence? And itâ€™s very, very difficult to answer - itâ€™s probably the most difficult question there is when youâ€™re looking at this academically. But it doesnâ€™t mean that you should ignore it.

Interviewer:

Well, I think anyone whoâ€™s reading the transcript or watching this interview will be utterly inspired to transform into an intelligence historian, and change course to investigate that â€œso what.â€ Professor Michael Goodman, of Kings College London, Department of War Studies, thanks for your time today.

Michael Goodman:

Thank you very much.