POLITICS AND FORENSIC

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ABSTRACT

The relationship between politics and forensic science (specifically including language through forensic linguistics) operates as a critical intersection where law, state control, science, and public communication meet.

When analyzing this relationship it is generally divided into two main domains: Institutional Politics in Forensics (how governments control science) and Forensic Linguistics in Political Speech (how language is analyzed as evidence of political power).

KEYWORDS-Poilitics, forensic, science, public,

INTRODUCTION

1. Institutional Politics and Forensic Science

Most forensic service providers worldwide operate within government structures, making them inherently tied to state politics.

- Resource Control: Political bodies dictate the budgets, policy frameworks, and structural capacities of forensic labs.
- Policy vs. Science: Political decisions can sometimes overrule scientific objectivity. For example, legislative priorities may heavily favor police and prosecutors, pushing forensic labs into a transactional, passive role rather than treating them as independent scientific bodies.
- Systemic Loopholes: Changes in national criminal laws (such as new statutory bills) redefine what counts as valid forensic evidence, directly impacting how investigations are conducted.

2. Forensic Linguistics in Politics[1,2,3]

Forensic Linguistics is the scientific study of language applied to forensics, law, and crime investigations. When applied to the political sphere, it investigates language as physical evidence of power, deception, or manipulation.

Using frameworks like Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), forensic analysis evaluates political text and speech through several layers:

Linguistic Element	Application in Political Forensics
Ideological Framing	Identifying hidden motives, bias, or political alignments behind public statements.
Speech Acts & Criminalization	Determining if a politician's statement constitutes an illegal act (e.g., hate speech, incitement to violence, defamation, or slander).
Selective Policing	Analyzing how ruling elites selectively interpret or weaponize language

	laws to suppress political opponents.
Author Identification	Using stylistic markers (idiolect) to verify the true origin of leaked government documents or anonymous political threats.

3. Key English Terminology to Know

If you are studying this field in the English language, these foundational technical terms are highly essential:

- Forensic Linguistics: The application of linguistic knowledge to a legal or criminal context.
- Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): A methodology that examines how social power relations, dominance, and inequality are practiced or resisted through text and speech.
- Idiolect: An individual's unique and distinctive use of language, which forensic scientists use as a "linguistic fingerprint" to identify authors.
- Asymmetric Politics: The power imbalance where political and administrative state structures dictate how independent scientific entities operate.

The vast majority of forensic service providers are governmental and operate in a political environment. Politics can, for better or worse, overrule science when it comes to operational decisions (policy, financial, perceptual). Therefore, forensic service providers may be subject to adverse outcomes because of political decisions.[4,5,6]

DISCUSSION

As agents of the state, governmental forensic service providers are dependent on their jurisdictional clients (police, prosecutors) for their raison d'être. In this context, dependence means that one entity (the dominant one) can expand and be (more or less) self-sustaining while others (the dependent ones) can do this only as a reflection of that expansion. This subsidiary expansion can have a positive or negative outcome for the dependent entity. Dependence means an asymmetrical power relationship between the two, with the subordinate entity having little or no ability to grow, change, or expand; without significant change, the subordinate is relegated to economic and political dependence [1]. "In essence, if the rules of the game are biased against you, then you have two choices: to continue to play by the rules and thus continue to be exploited or to rewrite the rules in a way that does not leave you at an unfair disadvantage" Intelligence analysis and reporting does not comply with traditional quality assurance demanded by accreditation,

●A reticence among forensic scientists to disseminate 'soft' information or preliminary reports for fear it will be used against them in court,

●Forensic laboratories lack awareness about the needs of partners in policing,

●Many forensic agencies lack IT systems that are fit for intelligence purposes, mostly connectivity and integration.[7,8,9]

Election forensics are methods used to determine if election results are statistically normal or statistically abnormal, which can indicate electoral fraud.[1] It uses statistical tools to determine if observed election results differ from normally occurring patterns.[2] These tools can be relatively simple, such as looking at the frequency of integers and using 2nd-Digit Benford's law,[3] or can be more complex and involve machine learning techniques.

RESULTS

Relative to other methods of monitoring election security, such as in-person monitoring of polling places and parallel vote tabulation, election forensics has advantages and disadvantages.

Election forensics is considered advantageous in that data is objective, rather than subject to interpretation. It also allows votes from all contests and localities to be systematically analyzed, with statistical conclusions about the likelihood of fraud.[2] Disadvantages of election forensics include its inability to actually detect fraud, just data anomalies that may or may not be indicative of such. Election forensics expert Walter Mebane has noted that various election forensics methods might actually flag non-fraudulent behaviour like tactical voting as fraud.[13] Further some experts believe that 2nd-Digit Benford's Law and other methods are useless for analyzing elections.[10,11,12]

This can be addressed by combining election forensics with in-person monitoring. Another disadvantage is its complexity, requiring advanced knowledge of statistics and significant computing power. Additionally, the best results require a high level of detail, ideally comprehensive data from the polling place regarding voter turnout, vote counts for all issues and candidates, and valid ballots. Broad, national-level summaries have limited utility.
Solving crimes requires information, and the sooner investigators get that information, the more effective it is. In law enforcement, “forensic intelligence” describes using forensic data early in an investigation, when that information can accelerate the process of solving the case. It also means using data across cases to understand crime trends and identify links between cases, such as serial crimes. The forensic results might not be confirmed and ready for court yet, but they are a powerful tool for making connections between evidence, suspects, cases, and sites of crime. That information can guide law enforcement away from dead ends and toward meaningful leads.

The key to forensic intelligence is making data actionable as quickly as possible, so results leave the laboratory fast enough to steer law enforcement’s actions. For example, early DNA results can eliminate suspects before officers spend time investigating them, and early ballistics data can connect a linked series of crimes using the same weapon. Forensic data can also reveal patterns to help officers disrupt ongoing crimes and prevent new ones, instead of responding only to crimes that have already happened. For example, field testing samples of drugs seized by patrol officers can reveal new drugs arriving in an area before they become widespread.
Forensic intelligence works best when it is part of a system. Links between evidence and cases do not just appear randomly. Investigators uncover those links when they have systems in place to gather and compare information from a wide range of sources — including forensic laboratory results but also police incident reports and even public health data. The systems for sharing information can be as complex as new statewide intelligence centers or as simple as weekly meetings between stakeholders (see the sidebar “Forensic Intelligence in Practice”).

To help law enforcement agencies build and refine a forensic intelligence system that fits their needs and resources, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) has created a framework for the essential pieces of a working forensic intelligence operation. The NIJ framework has five pillars: Organization, Process, Technology, Capabilities and Resources, and Information Sharing
To implement a forensic intelligence system, law enforcement agencies do not have to completely change their current intelligence analysis or investigation processes. They need to reexamine how they collect information for their cases and how they communicate with their partners, specifically their forensic laboratory components. For law enforcement agencies interested in implementing forensic intelligence, here are some starting points:[13,14,15]

Talk to your forensic laboratory about the resources they need to get results more often and more quickly. Evidence does not become intelligence until the laboratory can analyze it. Without a fast pipeline of information from forensic analysts to investigators, no forensic intelligence effort can get off the ground. But forensic laboratories have limited time, money, and equipment. They need to know what law enforcement's priorities are so they can match those priorities as closely as possible in their own work.

Create clear goals before launching the program. Measurable goals are the only way to track whether a program is doing what it is supposed to do. If an agency wants to increase its case clearance rates but those rates stay the same after the start of a forensic intelligence program then the agency knows that it needs to modify the program. Law enforcement should also make sure to define and track the goals of its partners, too. For example, the manager of a forensic laboratory might want to track whether sending data to law enforcement earlier can decrease the amount of testing requests for their case. The long-term success of a forensic intelligence program depends on aligning law enforcement's goals with the goals of forensic laboratories and other partners who contribute to the program.

Forensic intelligence is a group effort, and training should reflect that. Forensic intelligence can be a big change from the way agencies traditionally do business. In order for all the partners to start sharing information with each other more quickly, everyone will have to learn their new role in the process and start relying on new people. The best way to establish trust in this new way of operating is to train everyone in this new system together. Otherwise, if training in forensic intelligence keeps the old divisions between different agencies, new lines of communication will be too weak to succeed.[16,17,18]

More than eight out of ten Americans believe that DNA evidence is completely reliable or very reliable, and nearly seven in ten think the same about fingerprint evidence.[1] Faith in the validity of forensic evidence is echoed in pop culture, where crime television and film present the evidence as almost infallible in a courtroom. Average Americans determine whether criminal defendants are guilty or innocent, and this perception leaks into our legal system and directly impacts those at risk of losing their liberty. Juries, responsible for deciding the fate of criminal defendants, may be presented with forensic evidence analyzed by a subjective "expert," and falsely assume the expert used scientific methods to reach their conclusion. The jury may believe they are hearing highly credible proof, but many forensic fields have no industry-wide standards on how to analyze evidence. Although there have been attempts to reform the scientific standards surrounding forensic evidence, the science behind these attempts have become politicized, slowing necessary progress.

In 2009, the National Academic of Sciences (NAS) issued a Congressionally mandated report on the status of forensic science ("NAS Report" or "Report").[2] Legal professionals, forensics experts, scientists, and engineers made up the committee that produced the 328-page-report. The Report called into question the validity of forensic evidence, detailing the shortcomings and failures of the science behind it.[3] It also called for sweeping reform:

The forensic science system, encompassing both research and practice, has serious problems that can only be addressed by a national commitment to overhaul the current structure that supports the forensic science community in this country. This can only be done with effective leadership at the highest levels of both federal and state governments, pursuant to national standards, and with a significant infusion of federal funds.[4]

The NAS Report also highlighted that, despite the shortcomings of forensic science, the judicial system has been "utterly ineffective" at addressing the problem.[5]

In 2016, the President's Council of Advisors on Science and Technology ("PCAST") issued a report ("PCAST Report") in response to President Obama's request that they investigate potential steps the scientific community could take to ensure the validity of forensic evidence in the legal system. The PCAST Report investigated the methods used for comparing DNA samples, including bitemarks, latent fingerprints, firearm marks, footwear, and hair. It found that some types of forensic evidence, such as bitemark analysis, fell so far beneath the scientific standards of foundational validity that the Council advised against devoting significant resources to reform them.[6] This is of particular importance because early research indicates that juries are convinced by statements that bitemark analysis experts make on the record.[7] Although frequently used phrases by the experts such as "positively match," or "consistent with" may hint at a scientific basis for the analysis, they are subjective conclusions made by individuals.[8]

The PCAST Report thus recommended the scientific community conduct additional research to make scientific methods more accurate and standardize methodology. The Council also advised the legal community on how to properly handle experts in the courtroom and how to instruct the jury to consider the limitations of forensic methods. To fund and expand the programming needed to make these changes possible, the PCAST Report also called for governmental action.

On January 13, 2021, two days before President Trump left office, the Department of Justice released a statement rejecting the scientific principles and values expressed in the PCAST Report.[9] The Department of Justice's position was not based on real science, and it valued the interests of prosecutors above scientific evaluation.[10] In order to reform the use of forensic evidence and the criminal justice system at large, the government needs to dedicate resources to making forensic evidence more reliable and follow the recommendations of the PCAST Report. In the meantime, the legal community should be ready to question the use of forensic evidence in the courtroom. Judges, who typically scrutinize forensic evidence at a higher standard in civil trials,[11] need to be aware of the limitations of forensic evidence as they are used against criminal defendants.[17,18,19]
India is at the crossroads of dynamic growth and evolving societal challenges, making the field of public policy increasingly crucial. While traditionally associated with governance and administration, public policy now extends its reach to diverse sectors, including forensic science. This article explores the exciting avenues within public policy for students of forensic science in India and emphasizes the role of specialized learning through platforms like IMPRI's online courses.Optimize Ops

Understanding the Intersection
Forensic science, primarily recognized for its role in criminal investigations, holds untapped potential in shaping public policies. From contributing to evidence-based policymaking in criminal justice to addressing issues related to forensic technologies, forensic science professionals can play a pivotal role in creating effective and impactful policies.

Key Areas of Impact

Criminal Justice Policy: Forensic science students can actively engage in shaping policies related to criminal justice. Their expertise in areas like forensic investigations, evidence analysis, and crime scene management positions them as valuable contributors to the development of policies that enhance the efficiency and fairness of the criminal justice system.
Forensic Technologies and Policies: As technology continues to advance, the integration of forensic technologies becomes a critical aspect of policymaking. Students in forensic science can specialize in advocating for policies that regulate the ethical use of emerging forensic technologies, ensuring a balance between innovation and privacy concerns.
Policy Advocacy for Victims' Rights: Forensic science professionals can champion policies focused on strengthening the rights of crime victims. This involves advocating for victim-centric approaches in legal proceedings, ensuring the proper use of forensic evidence, and promoting policies that prioritize the well-being of those affected by crime.
Cybersecurity and Digital Forensics Policy: With the rise of cybercrime, forensic science students can delve into policymaking related to cybersecurity and digital forensics. Crafting policies that address the challenges posed by cyber threats and safeguard digital evidence is a critical aspect of enhancing national security.
IMPRI Online Courses: Tailored Learning for Forensic Science Professionals
IMPRI (Impact and Policy Research Institute) offers a range of online courses designed to equip aspiring policy professionals, including those from forensic science backgrounds. These courses provide a unique opportunity for forensic science students to gain specialized knowledge in public policy. Some relevant courses include:India Governance Regime

Forensic Science and Policy Integration: This course delves into the integration of forensic science into policymaking processes. It covers the role of forensic evidence in legal frameworks and explores ways to enhance the impact of forensic science on public policies.
Ethics in Forensic Technologies and Policy: Focusing on the ethical considerations surrounding forensic technologies, this course is essential for forensic science professionals aiming to contribute to the development of ethical policies governing the use of advanced forensic tools.
Criminal Justice Reforms and Forensic Contributions: Addressing the intersection of forensic science and criminal justice reforms, this course provides insights into how forensic professionals can actively participate in shaping policies for a fair and effective legal system.
Digital Forensics Policy and Cybersecurity: With a growing emphasis on digital forensics, this course explores the policy dimensions of cybersecurity and digital investigations. It equips forensic science students to engage in the formulation of policies addressing cyber threats.
Navigating a Career Path
For forensic science students aspiring to pursue careers in public policy, strategic steps are crucial:Policy Research Institute[19]

Interdisciplinary Knowledge: Acquire a solid understanding of public policy concepts alongside your forensic science expertise. This interdisciplinary knowledge will be invaluable in navigating the complexities of policymaking.
Networking and Collaboration: Engage with professionals in both forensic science and public policy domains. Attend relevant conferences, workshops, and seminars to build connections that can open doors to collaborative opportunities.

Internships and Practical Exposure: Seek internships or projects that provide hands-on experience in the intersection of forensic science and public policy. Practical exposure enhances your skills and makes you more competitive in the job market.
Continuous Learning: Stay updated on developments in both forensic science and public policy. Platforms like IMPRI offer continuous learning opportunities through online courses, ensuring you stay abreast of emerging trends.
A career in public policy awaits forensic science students who are eager to contribute their expertise to address societal challenges. The synergy between forensic science and policymaking is a promising avenue for those seeking to make a meaningful impact beyond traditional forensic roles. The IMPRI online courses mentioned provide a tailored and accessible pathway for forensic science professionals to enhance their knowledge and skills, paving the way for a rewarding career at the intersection of science and policy in India.

CONCLUSIONS

The vast majority of forensic service providers are governmental and operate in a political environment. Politics can, for better or worse, overrule science when it comes to operational decisions (policy, financial, perceptual). Therefore, forensic service providers may be subject to adverse outcomes because of political decisions. As agents of the state, governmental forensic service providers are dependent on their jurisdictional clients (police, prosecutors)for their raison d'etre. In this context, dependence means that one entity (the dominant one) can expand and be (more or less) self-sustaining while others (the dependent ones) can do this only as a reflection of that expansion. This subsidiary expansion can have a positive or negative outcome for the dependent entity. Depen-dence means an asymmetrical power relationship between the two, with the subordinate entity having little or no ability to grow, change, or expand; without significant change, the subordi-nate is relegated to economic and political dependence [1]. "In essence, if the rules of the game are biased against you, then you have two choices: to continue to play by the rules and thus continue to be exploited or to rewrite the rules in a way that does not leave you at an unfair disadvantage"[20]

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