

THE PAST IS THE KEY TO FUTURE OF SECURITY INTELLIGENCE?

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This paper asks the research question: what are the key developments that influenced the intelligence community since 1939 and how these developments may influence the intelligence community in the next 25 years? While the paper draws upon intelligence-focused and qualitative-based secondary sources, nearly all of the reviewed works are based on primarily-sourced materials and more or less shows that the past is the key to the future of intelligence operations. In contrast, the present piece, though in a non-chronological approach, contends that while this may well be the case, the future of intelligence would be influenced more by the present than the past. This is due to two key reasons. First, intelligence historiography is incomplete until certain Cold War operational records are declassified. This is compounded by the absence of comprehensive intelligence history exists for the period between the world wars (Wheeler, 2013, p.76). Second, humans and their ingenious nature are ever evolving as shown by terrorists' adaptability to intelligence techies' techniques.

Keywords: Intelligence history; intelligence future; strategic intelligence; intelligence development

1. Introduction

Because intelligence “wars” have being won based on information that merely stated the physical location of opposition forces (Kahn, 2001, p.80), intelligence operators have being known to deliver result based on minimal or unsubstantiated information. Intelligence assessments in the late 1930s were often unreliable despite that many agencies were more precise in determining the resources and population of opposition forces, but less so in conducting intelligence coups (Wheeler, 2013, p.76). Within this context, the temporal frame of aforementioned research question had been and will be characterised by intelligence power-play considering that decision-makers are more often than not unprivileged in precise prediction of events that would impact future intelligence environment. Yet, political elites must map future strategies based on the uneven performance of intelligence. Unpacking

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this paper's research question is never an easy task despite that it is historiography-relevant, policy-crucial, and serves a critical exercise on the consequences of intelligence activities as well as introductory guide to security and intelligence matters in relation to key domestic and international events.

Decision-makers sometimes refute certain past precedents that are clearly dangerous, and fail to recognise that public demand for more transparent intelligence process and accountability is a way for ordinary people to participate in the so-called citizen intelligence. Currently, the power to collect sensitive information is still not concentrated in the hands of the public and, rightly so, probably never will because intelligence business is not an ordinary undertaking so much so the State is better resourced and legitimately authorised (not applicable to all cases) to conduct intelligence activities such as information collection. Historically, physical and electronic surveillance, undercover operators, confidential informants, public records (for example tax, deeds, and property), and newspaper reports (which includes Internet sources in today's environment) were the most common forms of information collection. Against this background, the obligation to respect the public's right to privacy and civil liberties is a keenly deliberated issue from the commencement of intelligence operation to its conclusion. Concern about unethical or illegal activities of some agencies in the 1970–80s led to regulations supporting lawful intelligence gathering (Petersen, 2005, p.6). In corollary, the ultimate aim of intelligence action is to protect public interests which mean protection of that of the State and vice versa.

However, the dark world of intelligence shows that this logic is not as straightforward as it proposes. For one, intelligence has not always been as "ubiquitous" as it is today (Kahn, 2001, p.80) and so its evolvement should be seen as both historical and "biological" (Kahn, 2001, p.79; Richardson & Bynner, 1984, p.522–523). Furthermore, engagement with historically-themed literature is beneficial (Hughes, 2008, p.842) because intelligence bends future politico-military action to its will (Sayle, 2008, p.115). Therefore, intelligence is an evolving practice and the 20th century turbulent experience must be considered as a passing phase in an ongoing transformation of its purposes, institutions, methods and roles (Agrell, 2012). Despite the merits of these perspectives, the following sections shows that the future of intelligence would be influenced more by the present than the past.

2. Dimensions of intelligence

In the context of the current intelligence climate, how much intelligence is being politically recycled and circulated adds an entirely new element of dimension for the intelligence concept because it is a reflection of a past which in turn constitute the key to the future of intelligence. This perspective has been widely acknowledged among practitioners, international political actors and intelligence scholars. But first of all, there is a need to clarify what is being recycled and disseminated as intelligence. By recycling, I mean historical lessons are used to analyse current threats or future events. It would be counterproductive to solely rely on history in predicting future because intelligence actions within the next 25 years will be politicised and remarkably different from what the world has so far experienced. Recognising that the global society itself has changed in

ways that was impossible to forecast, the current state of intelligence is a painstaking but necessary evolving process of maturity that entails a wide array of information sources, activities and actors. All of these and others inherently impose conditions on intelligence. Accordingly, the intelligence concept, its associated activities and communities must be flexible or contrarily would not only be akin to fishing in the dark but risk becoming relics in the present environment.

At higher levels of intelligence action targeting sensitive and complex issues such as military capability and possession of nuclear materials, Drexel Godfrey (1978) suggests that emphasis should be on the old-fashioned method of diplomatic dialogue. At first glance, Godfrey's suggestion seems a fool's errand because those States that are blessed with military and nuclear power considers these national security jewels and jealously shields such secrets from outsiders. Decision-makers are always reluctant to share information about these national treasures. Yet, Godfrey's advice is precisely the policy being followed in the case of ongoing Iran nuclear dialogues. The UN Security Council permanent members and Germany (P5+1) is close to reaching comprehensive deal with Iran over the latter's desire to go nuclear (Sanger & Gordon, 2015; Email Communication¹). Collaboration and not competition would be the new name of the game among intelligence players in the future. Immediately after WWII, members of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN), in collaboration with Western intelligence agencies, maintained their skirmish against USSR. The mutually beneficial unofficial alliance protected Nazi sympathisers from being prosecuted for atrocity crimes not to mention that the ex-criminals were officially eased into academic and research positions at America's top universities. In return, intelligence agencies were rewarded with prized information about USSR.

Of course, Iranian nuclear scientists will not be accorded similar privilege at American nuclear establishments, not after the September 11, 2001 terror attacks (henceforth 9/11) lessons anyway. But there are other paths to collaborative intelligence and Tehran-P5+1 diplomatic dialogue is just one of them. The diplomatic deal is already yielding results. In a reflection of how the diplomatic dialogue could promote wider relations between Iran and the U.S., Iranian national television in an unprecedented airtime, presented live broadcast of President Barack Obama's nuclear speech in April 2015. In particular, the phrasing of the interim but comprehensive Iran nuclear accord allows for expert inspection of Iran's nuclear programme as deemed necessary. Although this is only an interim step and that the intelligence antics burrows deep into the details of its interpretation as a sustained operational reality of a transforming Middle East, we must remember that nuclear specificities are still regarded as belonging to the intelligence more than politics realm.

Notably, the root of this accord goes further back in time and somewhat indicates a rare consequence of bipartisan effort in the U.S. While George Bush's administration instigated the sanction regime on Tehran, it should not be too much of a surprise that President Obama's administration eventually ratified tougher sanctions proposed by the Republican caucus given that concerns were raised about Washington's lacklustre approach to Iran policy early in Obama's presidency.

¹ Arms Control Association (ACA). (2015, March 29). The P5+1 and Iran nuclear talks alert. Email communication.

The easing of economic sanctions on the basis of recognition as a respected member of the international order may lead to Iran's integration into inter-nation intelligence community. A number of theorists would agree with this assertion. With its preoccupation with power politics, security competition and warfare among great powers, realism has been an enduring paradigm in International Relations. Recognising realism prioritisation of State interests, it is useful to highlight the relative (dis)advantages of realism through the case of Iran's nuclear agenda. For John Mearsheimer, realism is both classical and structural and these to a considerable extent helped theorists in unpacking affairs among States. Classical realists will argue that Iran's desire to go nuclear is simply due to the essence of human nature – the quest for maximised happiness as well as the real interactions among States. In other words, becoming a nuclear power parallels elevated status in international affairs. Structural realism is well placed in explaining Iran's quest for nuclear arsenal because the priority aim of any State is survival in a fiercely competitive and largely insecure world. We should of course ponder the meaning of State survival. While this is largely seen from economic perspective and human insatiable need for material wealth, structural realists will maintain that a State must have reliable military and power projection capabilities for survivability.

In combination, these variants of realism would also be tempted to explain Iran's nuclear agenda as a foreign policy option in the ways it created collaboration on the basis of projected opportunities and security threats. Essentially, both strands are not only threading the path of power politics but rightly so in terms of alliances. The nuclear accord has, hopefully, effectively stalled Iran's need for nuclear weapon. A key disadvantage is that it would be difficult for realism to explain the specificities of the interpretations of the accord because nuclear collaboration falls more within secret intelligence than political domain. In saying so, the coming years will confirm or refute this disadvantage. That is, whether Iran keeps to the specifics of the accord would become another test for realism explanatory power as well as the idea of intelligence community.

In itself, intelligence community is taken to include intelligence professionals in government, industry, and academia and has the ability to yield actionable knowledge which may enhance the probability that decision-makers will make the best judgement in any current circumstances. Despite its ability to reduce uncertainty by reducing the element of surprise (Brown & Dowden, 1986, p.1–2; Muller, 2009; Scott & Hughes, 2006), intelligence means different things to different actors. In operational truism, intelligence and information may be interchangeably misused. As such, it is sometimes a misnomer to construe intelligence as information considering that these two concepts, though interwoven in collection process, have distinguishing characteristics. Let us consider for instance two common examples.

Drawing upon the United Kingdom's National Intelligence Model (NIM) which functions on a domestic basis to promote crime reduction and criminal control with a view to enhance community safety (NCIS, 2000, p.8), Marilyn Petersen cites some scenarios about how NIM concept might function when adapted to U.S. circumstances. Two of these "crime watch programs" which are largely "preventive measures" (Petersen, 2002, p.5) are illustrated as follows:

- A county sheriff's office prioritised narcotics control and developed strategies accordingly. The office closed down open-air drug markets and engaged in community-based drug awareness programmes to assist prevention of drug use.

- A vehicle licensing agency prioritised vehicle insurance fraud as a top area for enforcement. The agency identified communities with high insurance claims for staged accidents and mounted a public education campaign (Petersen, 2005, p.10).

In the first scenario, one may argue that the county sheriff's office prioritised narcotics problems but acted without clear compliance with the intelligence cycle model. In contrast, the second scenario not only prioritised the concern about fake insurance claims but particularly *identified* specific communities affected by the problem. Prior to identification, information must have been thoroughly analysed before particular policy actions. So the second scenario acted on intelligence in comparison to the first case which reacted based on information that may not necessarily be intelligence. My argument is that information should not be seen as intelligence except in exceptional circumstances – which may even end up being a situation of clutching at straws. For instance, government inquiries later uncovered how Western intelligence agencies struggled over the case of Iraq and weapons of mass destruction (WMD). Unlike the United Nations Special Commission (UNSCOM) fact finding mission in Iraq, Western agencies failed to conduct credible data or information collection which should have been further analysed before being shared among relevant agencies (on a need to know basis) as processed intelligence. Consequently, the information (guised as intelligence) furnished by especially U.S. intelligence was pathetically unfounded, thin and ethically challenged.

On the one hand, the WMD case and Petersen's scenarios appropriately describe intelligence as evaluated information and distinguish collected information from intelligence – which is not only nearly impossible without sufficient investigation but what is finally produced from data collection, evaluation and multilevel analyses. On the other, analysis entails detailed contemplation that results in policy recommendations. Petersen (2005) argues that for data to be useful, it must be analysed by trained human intelligence (HUMINT) operators, rather than relying on computer assisted analysis. Of course, various computer software can compile large amounts of data as easily accessible information but this is merely collected and collated data which remains to be analysed by HUMINT professionals.

For Paul Pillar, intelligence is mainly about strategic evaluation with potentials for tactical assessment and warning being rather limited, especially within the context of non-State but inter-nation actors such as the Islamic State (Pillar, 2006). While Pillar's argument is due in part to the complexities of operational intelligence such as long-range planning and evaluation of multiple but similar targets, McDowell (1998, p.12-13) explains that "operational intelligence" is concerned mainly with identifying, detecting, targeting, and disrupting threatening conditions. In comparison, Michael Heazle's *Why the Strategic/Tactical Distinction Matters* further clarifies this topic. Heazle describes tactical assessment as being not only short-term and limited in terms of interpretive assessment – as opposed to definitive claims – but also deals with specific claims about existential point of interests and nature of probable consequences or definitive evaluation of the issue in question (2010, p.294).

The contrast between *strategic* and *tactical* intelligence is oftentimes misinterpreted despite that the final outcome of processed information directly impacts intelligence.

Tactical intelligence directs immediate action resulting in the immediacy of contribution to success of specific missions whereas strategic intelligence entails “big-picture” issues such as planning and manpower allocation (Harris & Godfrey, 1971, p.2) and thus its longer-term specifics involvement and exploration of wider scope solutions. In a U.S. joint military command context (which now includes analytical contributions from the CIA, NSA, FBI, and so on), the overall performance of tactical intelligence analysis is uneven. William Odom argues that tactical intelligence has varied greatly, from very poor during the military operations in Korea and Vietnam to exceptional in recent missions – after a rocky start in Afghanistan, tactical intelligence produced spectacular results – although most of such intelligence “is not ‘time sensitive’ support” (Odom, 2008, p.330-323). Odom would recognise that the nuclear diplomatic dialogue is a strategic venture with the hope that it will endure more than coming 25 years.

3. Key developments in intelligence

This section examines some of the key developments in intelligence since 1939. Because the scope of this paper does not permit a systematic examination of all necessary developments, only those that are deemed fundamental to answering the research question are considered and they are by no means exhaustive. But the selected events guarantees that this piece is not completely in the dark given that any investigation such as the present study should adopt a certain approach. That is, the analysis must explore the reasons (in the form of security threats) and mechanisms for the establishment of intelligence agencies, including the key developments that such institutionalisation have produced, is producing, and would produce – within forthcoming 25 years – on intelligence consumers vis-à-vis decision-makers. Such balanced assessment (Lackman, 1987; Madeira, 2003; and Siddiqi, 2004 demonstrates) would extend knowledge which may be beneficial to intelligence operators and political actors.

Evaluation may begin by highlighting the state of intelligence services in the 1920s, followed by close examination of the successes and failures of both Axis Powers and Western intelligence agencies during the Second World War (WWII). In this context, Kent Fedorowich’s *Axis prisoners of war as sources for British military intelligence, 1939–42* (1999) offers insightful analyses but suffers a pitfall similar just as many works that portrayed WWII intelligence as one neatly defined between Western alliance, Axis Powers and neutral States (for instance Switzerland and Vatican). For instance, consequent to the emergence of WWII in Europe, a Nazi sympathiser lobby group vigorously competed with their U.S.-friendly peer in relation to China’s foreign policy (Glang, 2014, p.7). Also, the 1940-1991 periods, from a juridical and historical point of view, comprised a distinct framework for research (Sužiedelis, 2014, p.2). Against this background, the International Commission for the Evaluation of the Crimes of the Nazi and Soviet Occupation Regimes in Lithuania (n.d., para. 4) emphasised that as a principle and practical matter, research on Nazi and Soviet aggression would be studied separately in order to unambiguously discriminate between the crimes committed by these occupation regimes and to “avoid” superficial analogies and evaluation.

A discourse exploring the present paper's research question should emphasise Cold War secret intelligence especially Western views about the Soviet threat, nuclear arms competition, defector accounts, and "Cuban Missile" crisis (McKercher, 2011, p.335; Renshon, 2009, p.315). Peter Hennessy extends this argument in that the new cannot be comprehended without the old. This signifies the Cold War phenomenon which groomed the decision-makers who were in command in world's leading intelligence agencies during 9/11, the invasion of Iraq and the inquests which ensued (Hennessy, 2005, p.16). But pre-Cold War tensions between WWII allies – the former Soviet Union (USSR), Britain and the U.S. can hardly be discounted. One of the indicative antecedent events leading to the Cold war was the defection of Igor Gouzenko, a cipher operator in the Soviet Embassy in Ottawa, to Canadian intelligence authorities in September 1945 (McKnight, 1994, p.13). Gouzenko's revelations about Soviet subversive and espionage activities in several States heralded substantive structural reform in the form of Canadian modern era security intelligence (Knight, 2005, p.4). As should be expected, the USSR was perceived as the main threat to the U.S. and Britain – "world's oldest top flight intelligence nation" (Hennessy, 2005, p.17). Another important focus is the sudden end of the Cold War. Two of the numerous useful works in this area includes Paul Hirst's (1991) explanations on the collapse of Soviet Communism and Marjolein Derous' (2014) counterview that Communism is well and alive. The emerging religious-based terrorism, such as 9/11 and attempts by terrorists to gain access to WMD or, at least, weapons grade materials are the current and perhaps the most salient intelligence issues.

Subsequent to the end of WWII, the resumption of what appeared to be pre-war status quo was short-lived due to a number of factors which included the Anglosphere concerns that were aligned with the rise of USSR. History shows that the relationship between Anglosphere States facilitated an appreciable degree of intelligence-based collective security but this alliance was counterbalanced by the idea of collective threat that emanated from Nazi Germany-Japan collaboration and "Sino-German clandestine relation" (Glang, 2014, p.1). In contemporary intelligence environment, Russia appears less threatening given the reduced risk of invasion due in part to proliferating collective responsibility idea. But in the wake of Russia's military adventurism into Crimea and thus the destabilisation of Ukraine neighbourhood, the threatening status that USSR once enjoyed is being heightened and revisited. This would not make any less today's Sino-Russia unofficial alliance which could just as easily replace the threat that USSR represented to the interests of UK-U.S. duo.

The phenomenal rising of China, however, seems to present serious challenges Western intelligence interests. Key among these is cyber attack allegations against China, including the concern that Beijing occupies an enviable economic position in the world. The implication of the latter is a surge in economic intelligence activities especially among these four global actors. Within a democratic context, parliamentary oversight is a focus gaining increasing attention among scholars. This should be expected because just over seven decades ago, democracy is not widely practiced as it is today and chances are its proliferation will be sustained. Either way we look at it, whether from a democratic perspective, the future of intelligence rests to a certain degree with decision-makers.

To that end, one cannot help but argue colonisation era as crucial to history of intelligence. It has been urged by Jost Dülffer (2008) and Marc Frey (2008) that decolonisation which peaked around 1960 involved more than a transfer of political power because it was an aspect of a multifaceted disengagement from cultural and socio-economic transformation that occurred on a wide spatial scale. Without doubt, colonisation (aside from its numerous disadvantages) significantly assisted the development of education levels in colonised States. But my view is that colonisation is more about economic interest than development and political ideology, which implies the significance of economic intelligence. Some scholars suspected that vast numbers of sensitive colonial documents were classified and sent back to Britain during the last days of colonial rule (Exeter, 2013). Philip Murphy emphasises that it is highly unlikely that documentary intelligence concerning the role of intelligence in British decolonisation will be declassified. Otherwise would undoubtedly cause historians to revise their fundamental assumptions about the forces that shaped decolonisation process (Murphy, 2002, p.132).

Although decolonisation signifies another intelligence historiography gap (Anderson, 2011, p.708; Hack, 1999, p.124), historical inquiry nevertheless continues to deliver “surprising insights” and “new perspectives” (Kunkel, 2008) whereas cultural theories and indigenous studies have developed in most of the subfields of the social sciences with varying degrees of success over the last several decades (Davies, 2004). Michelle Carey argues that cultural studies over-reliance on indigeneity perpetuates the very “colonialist” logics indigenous research should endeavour to overcome (Carey, 2015, para. 1). In spite of the developments in colonial research, future studies should bridge the lacuna concerning decolonisation – intelligence nexus. Manjeet Pardesi would support this view based on his observation that intelligence custodian occupied an important position in the colonial State despite that they are not part of the elite colonial service class, at least not in any formal capacity (Pardesi, 2008). Intelligence operators were not only availed of opportunities to source and manage information about indigenous actors, but also to influence political participation and counter rebellions against colonial wishes.

4. Conclusion

This essay explores the key developments that influenced the intelligence community since 1939 and how these may influence the intelligence community in the next 25 years. The investigation indicates that intelligence history is certainly significant to its operationalisation in the future. However, the past, in contrast to the present, may not really be a competitive profile for gauging the future. A common strength among the reviewed works is the distinct characterisation of intelligence institutions and involved actors. This strength simultaneously highlights the weakness of these studies in that much of the events described occurred over five decades ago, with the exception of recent issues such as 9/11. While some works (such as Bamford, 1983; 2001; West, 1986) offers useful details on the Cold War *puzzle* period, the role of signals intelligence (SIGINT) in the field of nuclear energy is “difficult to assess” with any credibility (Bukharin, 2004, p.664). The eventual declassification and public release of SIGINT decrypts and “operational records”

(Best, 2002, p.96) for the Cold War missing puzzle will substantially reshaped intelligence historiography (Aldrich, 2002, p.144). Importantly, how the intelligence field will unravel in coming years rests, to a certain extent, on the missing intelligence which would change orthodox historical interpretations (Best, 2002, p.98). To this end, it is no secret that British intelligence assisted New Zealand, Australia and South Africa in building up their “counter-subversion capabilities” (Murphy, 2002, p.137). These counter-intelligence actions, however, yields to counter-terrorism as a prioritised focus in the latter part of the 20th century and, since 9/11, the singularly most important intelligence focus.

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