From arm's length to love-hate

THE INTELLIGENCE—POLICY RELATIONSHIP*

Hans Heymann, Jr.

> If we in intelligence were one day given three wishes, they would be to know everything, to be believed when we spoke, and in such a way to exercise an influence to the good in the matter of policy. But absent the Good Fairy, we sometimes get the order of our unarticulated wishes mixed. Often we feel the desire to influence policy and perhaps just stop wishing there. This is too bad, because to wish simply for influence can, and upon occasion does, get intelligence to the place where it can have no influence whatever. By striving too hard in this direction, intelligence may come to seem just another policy voice, and an unwanted one at that.
>
> Sherman Kent **

In the catechism of the intelligence officer, the thesis that intelligence is and should be strictly separate from policy is taken as axiomatic. It is as hallowed in the theology of intelligence as the doctrine of the separation of church and state is in the US Constitution. For much of our early history we tended to view intelligence somewhat self-righteously as objective, disinterested, and dispassionate, and to regard policy somewhat disdainfully as slanted, adulterated, and politicized. And we strove mightily to maintain the much-touted arm's length relationship with policy, believing that proximity to policy would corrupt the independence of our intelligence judgments. Indeed, legend has it that members of the Board of National Estimates of the 1950s and 1960s systematically discouraged analysts and estimators from going downtown to have lunch with policymakers, for fear that such exposure would make them policy advocates and tempt them to serve power rather than truth.

Whatever the validity of this legend, such strictures were quite in keeping with the traditional view of a proper intelligence-policy relationship. By enforcing this kind of rigorous separation, the old Board no doubt hoped to protect the policy neutrality of intelligence; what it did, of course, was to impose a splendid isolation upon intelligence that assured its eventual policy irrelevance. The vanishing applause for its product coming from the policy side caused intelligence to reexamine its assumptions, and a new, unconventional wisdom came to be heard. Its message was that our faith in the arm's length relationship was misplaced, that no such relationship really ever existed, and that close ties between intelligence and policy are not only inevitable, but essential if the policymaker's needs are to be served.

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* Adapted from a presentation at the "Conference on Intelligence: Policy and Process" at the United States Air Force Academy, Colorado Springs, June 1984.

** "Estimates and Influence," originally presented in London, September 1966, subsequently published in *Foreign Service Journal*, XLVI, (April 1969).

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A new way of thinking about intelligence and policy began to emerge, seeing the two communities as awkwardly entangled and intertwined in what might be described as a competitive and often conflicting symbiotic relationship. Thomas Hughes put it most aptly, when he spoke of the relationship "as a two-way search: of intelligence in search of some policy to influence and of policy in search of some intelligence for support." * Suddenly, *out* is the comforting illusion that intelligence stands outside of and above the policy fray; that it can load its analytic and estimative ammunition on its wagon and let the wagon roll down in the general direction of the battle without worrying where it will come to rest, whether the ammunition is of the right caliber and how it will be used—to say nothing of whether someone might shoot it back. And *in* is the less comfortable notion that intelligence, if it is to be at all relevant to policy, is very much a participant in the battle; that it must be attuned to the strategy and tactics being pursued; and that it is by no means invulnerable to being seesawed and whiplashed in the sociopolitical tug of war known as the policymaking process.

How this process unfolds in the real world and the intricate ways in which intelligence interacts with it have, within the past decade, been the subject of some first-rate analytic writing. Three contributions to this intelligence-foreign policy literature are particularly worthy of note:

1. One is the observation, vividly illustrated by Thomas Hughes,** that the intelligence community is no more a unitary actor than the policy community; that it should be seen, rather, as a hydra-headed agglomoration of competing institutions often at odds with each other, and not necessarily in predictable patterns. Observing the budgetary, organizational, and substantive struggles within this community, Hughes notes that

> the cross-cutting complexities were striking: position disputes within agencies, alliances shifting with issues, personal strayings from organizational loyalties, hierarchical differences between superiors and subordinates, horizontal rather than vertical affinities, and much *ad hoc* reaching for sustenance somewhere outside. Thus, while the struggles within the intelligence community sometimes mirrored simultaneous struggles in the larger policy community, they did so by no means invariably and never symmetrically.

It should not be astonishing, therefore, to find that policymakers perceive the intelligence process with as much ambivalence and suspicion as intelligence makers perceive the policy process and that the interactions among them tend to be contentious and rivalrous. To quote again from Hughes:

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* Tom Hughes deserves great credit for being the first, and surely most articulate iconoclast toppling the old conventional wisdom. His two Farewell Lectures as departing Director of the Bureau of Intelligence and Research of the Department of State in July 1969 contain the above quotation. The Lectures were subsequently reprinted in Thomas L. Hughes, *The Fate of Facts in a World of Men—Foreign Policy and Intelligence-Making* (New York: Foreign Policy Association, Headline Series No. 233, December 1976).

** Thomas L. Hughes, "The Power to Speak and the Power to Listen" in Thomas M. Frank and others, eds., *Secrecy and Foreign Policy* (New York: Oxford University Press 1974), p. 15.

> Viewed from above by the ranking policymakers, the intelligence community often seemed cumbersome, expensive, loquatious, probing, querulous, and at times axe-grinding. Viewed from below by the intelligence experts, the policy community often seemed determined to ignore evidence plainly before it—or (even worse) to mistake the intelligence managers for the experts. Viewed from in between at the intelligence-policy interface, it looked like controlled chaos—and not surprisingly, for here was where means and ends were brokered, jurisdictional rivalries compromised, contentious controversies delineated.*

2. Another is the thesis, persuasively argued by Richard Betts,** that intelligence failures, so-called, are more often than not policy failures; or to put it more gently, that it is usually impossible to disentangle intelligence failures from policy failures, since (intelligence) analysis and (policy) decisions are interactive rather than sequential processes. Betts sees the intelligence role as seeking "to extract certainty from uncertainty and to facilitate coherent decision in an incoherent environment." In seeking to reduce uncertainty, intelligence is often forced to extrapolate from evidence that is riddled with ambiguities. Inability to resolve these ambiguities leads to intelligence products that oversimplify reality and fail to alert the policy consumers of these products to the dangers that lurk within the ambiguities. Critical mistakes are consequently made by policymakers who, faced with ambiguities, will substitute wishful thinking and their own premises and preconceptions for the assessments of professional analysts. As Betts puts it:

> Because it is the job of decision-makers to decide, they cannot react to ambiguity by deferring judgment. . . . When a welter of fragmentary evidence offers support to various interpretations, ambiguity is exploited by wishfulness. The greater the ambiguity, the greater the impact of preconceptions.***

3. A third example is the recent revelation by a former Chief of Israeli Military Intelligence and Advisor to the Israeli Prime Minister, Yehoshafat Harkabi,**** that the tensioned and ambivalent relationship between intelligence and policy is not a uniquely American phenomenon.

These dilemmas and foibles of the intelligence-policy interface are hardly novel or startling to seasoned intelligence practitioners, especially those senior officers charged with "brokering" the intelligence-policy relationship—the communicators and interactors who reside in the twilight zone between intelligence and policy. For them, this is familiar terrain. As managers and stimulators of intelligence production, they know with what difficulty a crisp, lucid analytic product is extracted from a dissentious community; as participants in

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* Idem, p.19

** Richard K. Betts, "Analysis, War and Decision: Why Intelligence Failures are Inevitable," *World Politics*, XXXI (October 1978)

*** Idem, p. 70

**** Yehoshafat Harkabi, "The Intelligence-Policymaker Tangle," in *The Jerusalem Quarterly*, Number 30, Winter 1984. (The article was reprinted in the Summer 1984 issue of *Studies in Intelligence*, Volume 28, Number 2.)

the interagency policy process, they observe with what ease that product can be selectively utilized, tendentiously summarized, or subtly denigrated. But for these privileged practitioners who move readily from the world of analysis to the world of action, familiarity with policy does not breed contempt. Rather, an appreciation of the murky and frenetic policy environment tends to evoke a certain sympathy for the policymakers' plight.

Such knowledgeable, involved practitioners, however, represent only a very small fraction of the intelligence population. The vast majority of that population—collectors, operators and analysts—is essentially isolated from the hurly-burly of the policy process. The intelligence services at large, therefore, are often mystified and frustrated by the policymakers' perennial unhappiness with their product. Given this puzzlement, it seems worthwhile to try to delve a little more deeply into the reasons for the unhappiness.

The View from the Bridge

It should be clear from what has been said that policy does not speak with a single voice. Policies have multiple authors. The numerous players who take part in policy formulation differ in temperament, education and experience, as well as in personal and institutional loyalties. Their attitudes toward intelligence, therefore, and their propensity to accept or reject its assessments will also vary widely. Nevertheless, although generalizations are always hazardous, we can discern some common attributes and concerns of policymakers, especially the "national security principals" *—the key players at the highest levels of government—that predispose them to react to intelligence offerings in predictable ways.

First, it is well to remember that the key decision makers are political leaders who have risen to their positions by being decisive, aggressive, and self-confident rather than reflective, introspective, and self-doubting. They attribute their success at least in part to their tried and proven ways of thinking, their simplified models and paradigms that explain to them what makes the world go 'round. They often regard themselves as their own best analysts and hence tend to be distrustful of the untested and often counterintuitive judgments of the intelligence professionals.

Second, they have a strong vested interest in the success of their policies and will, therefore, be disproportionately receptive to intelligence that "supports" these policies. They bear the burdens of great responsibility and find themselves perpetually embattled with a host of critics, competitors, and opponents, all eagerly looking for chinks in their armor. They thrive on optimists and boosters, but encounter mostly alarmists and carping critics.

Festooned in this way, and operating in so hostile an environment, these highest level consumers of intelligence can hardly be blamed for responding to its product with something less than boundless enthusiasm. In fact, it can be documented that every President since Eisenhower, and virtually every Secretary of State since Acheson, has expressed dissatisfaction and irritation with

* They include, at a minimum, the President, Vice President, National Security Advisor, Secretary of State, and Secretary of Defense.

intelligence analysis, either in his memoirs or in public or semipublic statements. The best-remembered and widely quoted expostulation was reported to have been delivered by Lyndon Johnson to his Director of Central Intelligence at a White House dinner:

> Policymaking is like milking a fat cow. You see the milk coming out, you press more and the milk bubbles and flows, and just as the bucket is full, the cow with its tail whips the bucket and all is spilled. That's what CIA does to policymaking.*

Is intelligence at fault for creating this unhappiness? Should it alter its ways to court greater popularity? Or is the problem integral and endemic to the intelligence-policy relationship? The answers to these questions may become clearer as we look at some of the concrete ways in which the frictions arise.

Why Policy Resents Intelligence: Five Ways to be Unpopular

Presidents and their senior advisors will be unhappy with intelligence when it is not supportive of their policies. They will feel particularly frustrated when:

1. *Intelligence fails to reduce uncertainty—*

Policymakers operate under a burden of pervasive uncertainty, much of it threatening the viability of their policies. They are forever hopeful that someone will relieve them of some of this uncertainty, and so they look to intelligence for what common sense tells them should be reserved to augury and divination. Forecasting, to be sure, is the life's blood of the intelligence estimator. But there is a world of difference between a forecast (an analytic judgment resting on carefully defined assumptions) and an oracular prophecy (secured by divine inspiration). Unfortunately, much of what is expected of intelligence by policymakers lies in this latter realm.

A good example is the perennial complaint that intelligence failed to predict a coup d'etat—a coercive regime change or palace uprising—but, of course, a coup is typically a conspiratorial act that depends for its success on preservation of absolute secrecy. If intelligence gets wind of such an event, it means that secrecy has been compromised and the coup is almost certain to fail.

Intelligence forecasting is actually done quite respectably by the community, and can be of real value to the thoughtful policy analyst. When it stays within its legitimate bounds of identifying and illuminating alternative outcomes, assigning subjective probabilities to them, and exploring their possible implications for US policy, the decision maker is well served. But he will rarely think so. For such a forecast, rather than narrowing uncertainty, will make him aware of the full range of uncertainty he faces and make his calculations harder rather than easier. Indeed, much intelligence estimation is and must be

* Henry Brandon, *The Retreat of American Power* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1973), p. 103.

of this nature. Precisely because it seeks to reflect complex reality, its product often renders the harassed decision maker's life more difficult.

2. *Intelligence restricts their options—*

Every new administration comes into office with a national security agenda of its own, bent upon putting its mark on the nation's foreign policy. It believes that a significant shift in that policy is both desirable and possible. It will encounter a foreign policy bureaucracy (including intelligence) that believes it is neither. Intelligence professionals will greet the administration's new policy initiatives with cogent analyses showing how vigorously allies will oppose these new policies, how resolutely neutrals will pervert them to their own ends, and how effectively adversaries will blunt them. At every step, it will appear to the policy leaders that intelligence fights them, seeks to fence them in, and, indeed, helps them fail.

And the pattern persists. As the policy leadership begins to face unexpected foreign challenges, its quick responses will often be met with more intelligence assessments that seem to be saying "it didn't work" or "it will almost certainly not succeed." The decision makers will conclude that intelligence not only constricts their room for maneuver, but also arms their political opponents. Worst of all, it constantly and annoyingly reminds them of their limited capacity to influence events. No matter how well the interaction may serve the interests of sound policy, there is no question that it builds tension between the two sides.

In these encounters, we should acknowledge that intelligence does not always "know better." There are times when intelligence is unaware that stated objectives are not the *real* objectives of policy, and will leave out of its analysis elements of the picture that may be important to the decision makers. Presidents paint upon a canvas far broader than the particular segments on which intelligence tends to focus. Its assessments, therefore, may be quite valid for those segments, but may miss broader considerations that Presidents care about.

A vivid example is provided by the Carter Administration's proposal to impose sanctions—including a grain embargo—on the USSR, in response to the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The stated objective was to penalize the offender by imposing political and economic costs on him. When intelligence was asked to assess the potential impact of the sanctions package, it responded with a judgment, the thrust of which was that the sanctions package would not be an effective instrument. Absent solid participation by our allies, sanctions would do no serious damage to the Soviet economy nor impair the leadership's objectives in any significant way. Not surprisingly, President Carter gave the assessment a rather frigid reception, but its negative judgments turned out not to be a decisive factor in his calculus. From the President's perspective, the sanctions package was just right. He considered a highly visible response to Afghanistan as imperative, but it had to be low-risk. A military undertaking was ruled out as far too hazardous. Inaction was ruled out, because it would be read in the rest of the world as a signal of US irresolution and condonement. The sanctions, though unsatisfying in terms of direct effects, would convey a strong signal of disapprobation and censure, without engendering worrisome

consequences. It would satisfy the popular need to express the nation's sense of outrage and would portray the President as willing to take the political heat of angering an important domestic constituency—the farmers—for the sake of a foreign issue of principle.

It goes almost without saying that intelligence could not then, and cannot ever, be expected to take such considerations into account.

3. *Intelligence undercuts their policies—*

Administrations have often found intelligence analyses appearing at times and in ways unhelpful to the pursuit of policies on which they had embarked. This can happen in two ways: (1) Through a genuine and protracted divergence of intelligence judgments from publicly stated Administration views of a given situation, and (2) Through fortuity or inadvertence. An example of the first phenomenon was provided by the stubborn independence displayed by the intelligence community in the early phases of the Vietnam escalation in 1964-65, when its national estimates consistently offered up a far more pessimistic assessment of North Vietnamese staying power than was reflected in the Johnson Administration's public assertions. While this divergence between intelligence and policy did not become public knowledge until the appearance of the Pentagon Papers in 1971, the mid-1960s intelligence performance evoked considerable disquiet and chagrin among policy insiders at the time.

The days of such protracted differences of view between intelligence and policy are probably over. In the intelligence-policy environment of the 1980s, it seems highly unlikely that a divergence of assessment could be sustained for very long. Congressional oversight and its intimate access to intelligence analysis would bring any significant disparities quickly to the surface and thus cause them to be resolved.

The other cause, policy-undercutting by fortuity and inadvertence, is more likely to survive, as it is a matter of human frailty. Sometimes it is merely a question of miserable timing—as in the classic case of the intelligence reassessment of North Korean military forces that credited them with substantially greater capabilities than had been previously appreciated. The estimate was fine, but it just happened to "hit the street" within a week of President Carter's announcement of his controversial decision to begin withdrawal of US forces from South Korea. A pure coincidence, but it caused understandable consternation.

At other times it is a matter of inattention—as in the so-called discovery of the Soviet brigade in Cuba which, it turned out later, had been there, in one form or another, all along, but had simply been lost sight of. Issues of this kind, seemingly unimportant, can suddenly escalate into heated public controversy and make life difficult for the policy leaders. However minor the transgression, they will regard intelligence less fondly.

4. *Intelligence provokes public controversy—*

From time to time, routine differences within the community over how to interpret ambiguous intelligence evidence turns into heated, and perhaps even acrimonious debate. When the competing interpretations clearly affect impor-

tant policy issues, the internal controversy can easily spill out into the public arena. In the 1950s and 1960s, when what transpired in the world of intelligence remained largely opaque, such disputes could be easily contained within the Executive Branch. In more recent times, with the progressive "opening up" of intelligence through the Congress and the media, and through its more visible involvement with policy, a disputation within the community is soon drawn into and exploited by the public debate, often in ways that make life more difficult for the national security policymaker.

Examples of policy-relevant debates that have been stimulated or intensified by intelligence controversy come quickly to mind:

— Whether the Tupolev Backfire bomber is an intermediate-range or an intercontinental-capable bomber;

— Whether extensive Soviet civil defense preparations add up to enhanced "survivability" for Soviet society;

— How significantly Western technology contributes to the growth of the Soviet economy and its military power;

— Whether Western calculations of Soviet military spending adequately reflect the real size and burden of Soviet defense;

— To what extent the Soviet natural gas pipeline will aggravate Western Europe's dependence on imported energy.

This brief sampling is probably sufficient to suggest that the issues in dispute often bear on strategic, budgetary, arms control, or economic policy decisions important to an Administration's overall strategy. To the extent that intelligence controversy helps arm the opposition in such disputes, its contribution is not exactly appreciated.

5. *Intelligence fails to persuade*—

Ever since John F. Kennedy's *tour de force* in unveiling photographic intelligence on the presence of Soviet missiles in Cuba to a hushed UN audience, successive administrations have sought to emulate that feat. Though the results have been mixed at best, hope springs eternal that a release of intelligence findings or a public display of exotic evidence will enlighten an uninformed or misinformed public, win over a cynical journalist, or convince a skeptical congressman. At one time limited to an occasional State Department White Paper and a private briefing here and there, the intelligence product now finds its way into the public domain through more and more channels and in ever greater volume—most of it, of course, at the instigation and under the aegis of the policy community. It moves through such vehicles as press conferences, media briefings and backgrounders, testimony on the Hill, formal Reports to Congress, and official glossy publications.

In a general way, this sea change in public access to intelligence has undoubtedly had its beneficial impact on public understanding of often complex and murky situations. It is far more questionable, however, whether intelligence can be used effectively as an instrument of public persuasion; whether the marshalling of intelligence evidence on one side or another of a

sharply debated issue ever succeeds in gaining solid converts. In a tactical situation, say, when a heated debate moves toward a crucial vote, a well-focused, lucid intelligence briefing can often sway a wavering agnostic and stiffen an irresolute supporter. But the record suggests that the conversion will not stick, that the gnawing doubts soon return.

Reasons for this phenomenon are not hard to find:

— Time was when public disclosure of intelligence was a rare and notable event that summoned up an aura of mystery and miracle, endowing the product with uncommon authority. That is no more. As disclosure became ever more routine, the gloss wore off, and an inevitable "debasement of the currency" set in.

— Intelligence assessments, when lifted out of their context, fuzzed and diluted ("sanitized") to protect sources and methods, lose much of their authenticity. To the intelligence professional who has built his mosaic from a welter of carefully evaluated raw data, often accumulated over years, the evidence may be totally compelling. To a public audience, coming to the issue cold and exposed only to the sanitized version, the evidence will often seem ambiguous and the judgments inadequately supported.

— Intelligence evidence is brought into public play often in situations of deep controversy, where the contention usually is not over observable facts, but over points of principle. The physical things that intelligence is best at recording are often not much help in settling points of principle. Central America offers a good example: Divergent views of that threat center on the conceptual question of whether the revolutionary situation in El Salvador is fundamentally endogenous, i.e., rooted in and fueled by internal, historic forces, or exogenous, i.e., externally stimulated and sustained. That conceptual issue cannot be resolved by displays of intelligence evidence, however persuasive, that Soviet arms do indeed flow through Nicaraguan ports to the Salvadoran rebels.

— The impact that intelligence can have on public perceptions is further constrained by the understandable tendency of people to reject bad news—what social psychologists used to call "cognitive dissonance." Many of the issues on which intelligence is brought to bear publicly do indeed have unhappy implications. Acceptance of the bad news means having to draw costly, risky, or generally unsettling consequences. A classic example is the case of "Yellow Rain," the discovery of lethal toxins being used under Soviet tutelage in Southeast Asia and Afghanistan. In spite of the overwhelming weight of confirmatory evidence accumulated over eight years, extensively published, briefed and shared worldwide, the findings continue to be challenged and contested, sometimes with offerings of bizarre scientific counter-explanations that defy common sense. The extreme reluctance to accept the evidence at face value cannot be attributed simply to the fact that intelligence can never meet the rigorous laboratory standards for evidence that scientists like to insist upon. The explanation for the

> continued questioning must surely lie in the unpleasantness of the implications, insofar as they seem to raise doubts about the viability of arms control agreements.

In sum, for all the reasons enumerated above, policy leaders are bound to develop a rather ambivalent view of the support they can hope to get from their intelligence community. From what has been said, it should be clear that the resulting "love-hate" relationship is endemic to the situation and that there is not much that intelligence can do, or should do, to alter it. Indeed, a greater effort to "serve policy well" could lead to even greater ambivalence and discord on the part of those we seek to serve. Which takes us back to Sherman Kent's admonition in the leitmotif at the beginning of this paper:

> By striving too hard in this direction, intelligence may come to seem just another policy voice, and an unwanted one at that.

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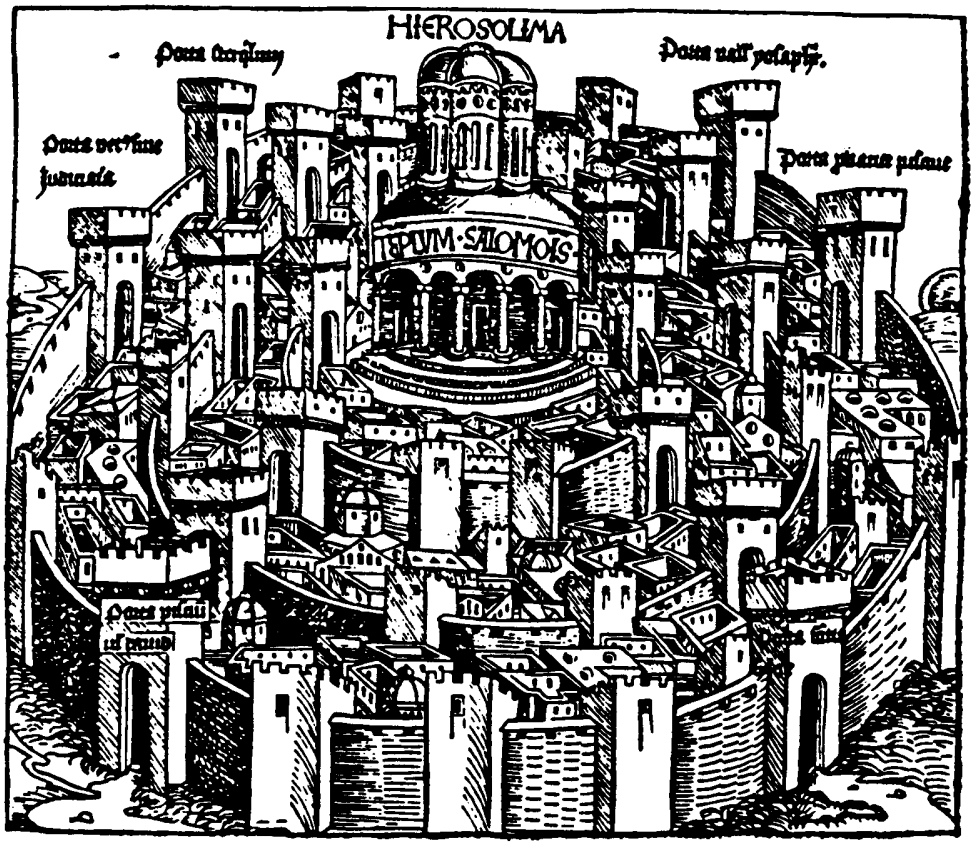

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excellent article.
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The Intelligence-Policymaker Tangle

Yehoshafat Harkabi

The publication of the Kahan Commission report, with its indictment of the IDF Intelligence Chief, reopened the debate on the relationship between the Intelligence services and their clientele, the policymakers. The formal description of how Intelligence supplies the policymakers with information and evaluations as a basis for molding policy is simplistic and incomplete. The relations between these echelons are complex and tension-ridden, as is evident when one looks beyond formal hierarchical structures and processes at the influence of informal relations on the workings of administrative bodies.

The study of the functioning of Intelligence services, which has greatly developed in recent years, does not focus only on how the Intelligence service produces its reports – information gathering and analysis. It also deals with the crucial area where the usefulness of the service is put to trial; namely, the transmittal of the Intelligence service's product to the policymaking bodies, the 'interface' between Intelligence and policy.

Intelligence is not an autonomous operation whose *raison d'être* lies in itself. Intelligence activities depend on having a clientele to serve. However, its clients are not necessarily receptive to Intelligence, for what they often look for is not so much data on the basis of which to shape policy but rather support for pre-formed political and ideological conceptions. The Intelligence service finds

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itself in difficult straits, for it is aware that many of its efforts will not be utilized or appreciated, and the use made of its assessments and reports will differ from its expectations. Matters get worse the more ideologically motivated is the regime, for then policy is made more on the basis of ideological inputs than on the basis of Intelligence reportings on reality, which to the extent that they contradict the ideology may be discarded, and the Intelligence service ends up frustrated.

Policy can be judged according to the extent of its 'sensitivity' to Intelligence – will it change if a certain evaluation requires such a change? As a concrete example, what Intelligence reporting could induce a change in Israel's present policy on Judea and Samaria? Does the rigidity of a political position make it impervious to Intelligence? An ideological regime may revel in exotic covert Intelligence operations, encourage them, and still keep Intelligence evaluations at arm's length. Nor is there simple transitivity between the quality of the Intelligence and the quality of policy. Good Intelligence is no guarantee of good policy and vice versa. Even if Intelligence portrayed reality correctly and its evaluations were accepted, policy also includes other components, such as goals, objectives, and assumptions about causal relations between policy and outcomes, which are not necessarily Intelligence products.

Policymakers too have their legitimate complaints against Intelligence, claiming that it supplies them with a motley catchall collection of information, containing everything but what is needed at the time; or that it expresses itself in equivocal and reserved language that leaves them perplexed; or still worse, that its evaluations are not reliable and excessively opinionated.

The Intelligence service should enter the policymaking process twice: first, by providing data and assessments of the situation, which will contribute to the shaping of policy; and secondly, after the policy has been formulated, Intelligence should also evaluate the likely reactions of adversaries and third parties to that policy and its success or failure. However, it often happens that statesmen refrain from seeking the Intelligence service's opinion on this, for basic reasons. For by making such a request of the Intelligence they elevate it to the position of judging their policy. Thus a tangle is created whereby the Intelligence arm which is a subordinate body, becomes an arbiter, a kind of supervisor over its masters. What is more, the statesmen may harbor suspicions that the Intelligence services may cite the difficulties and weaknesses of their policy. Not fortuitously has the Intelligence service been dubbed 'negativistic', a discouraging factor, for it may tend more to point to drawbacks than call attention to opportunities. Hence, Kissinger stigmatized the Intelligence service for pushing towards 'immobilism'.

The Intelligence service itself will not volunteer for the role of

policy-monitoring, fearing that it may mar its relations with its superiors, the policymakers, and may cause it to collide with conceptions sacred to them, or with their dreams. For example, once the idea of getting the Phalanges into action in Beirut became a desire, almost an obsession, among the Israeli policy-makers, a presentation of the hazards of such a policy placed the Intelligence in an uncomfortable position. Similarly, it may be supposed that an organization like the KGB would be inhibited from presenting evaluations that clash with Marxism and with Soviet policy. The Intelligence service, therefore, will not volunteer to serve as a traffic signal light flashing red and green alternately to the advancing policy carriage.

There is an exaggerated tendency to present the Intelligence service as if it were an institution for the sounding of tocsins. The Intelligence service is primarily an institution for the provision of information which is meant to lead to knowledge and understanding, and is not merely a warning mechanism. The principal line of defense against surprises is 'understanding', not 'warning'. Warning is in order in times of emergency and before the onset of calamity - but those are few and far between. And if indeed the Intelligence service is expected to warn about impending dangers stemming from an action initiated by the *enemy*, it is hard to expect that it also be an institution that warns against the injurious outcomes of our own policy, or our home-made surprises. That is an important difference, which it seems, the Kahan Commission was not alive to. Certainly the Intelligence service would do well were it itself, on its own, to point out the probable consequences of policy, but it is advisable that the chiefs-of-state understand the Intelligence's reluctance to become overseers, august or meek, on their policy and address it with explicit queries, as an invitation for the Intelligence's intervention. People are not aware of how complicated and difficult is the Intelligence service's work of collecting, analyzing and evaluating information. The Intelligence service will not willingly seek out additional troubles for itself. It is not sheer squeamishness.

In short, the Intelligence service is an institution more for the giving of answers than for sounding warnings, especially about our policy. It is the task of the leaders to put questions to it, and if they do not ask, let it not be said that they assumed that the service would inform them of its own accord. True, since the Intelligence service provides reports on an ongoing routine basis, the impression might be formed that it offers its opinions on every relevant issue automatically. That is an error, and it would have been helpful to Israeli policymaking had the Kahan Commission been alert to it and drawn attention to these aspects.

It may be argued that the Intelligence service does not fully discharge its duty by providing the policymakers with information and assessments, and that precisely because its product may be

critical for policy, the service must see to it that its reports are properly understood. However, the Intelligence service will refrain from testing whether the policymakers have properly understood the material that has been passed on to it, that it will shrink from taking the role of a pedantic teacher correcting misunderstandings on the part of the policymakers. Indeed, a pretension on the part of the Intelligence service to be the policymakers' 'mentor' is liable to be counterproductive.

It may come to pass that senior Intelligence functionaries may differ with the policymakers' policy. Their critical stance *vis-à-vis* the adopted policy may be based on an evaluation of the historical trend, yet they may not be able to adduce factual proof for their position. In most instances, the error of the policy line emerges in a clearly decisive way only in the long range, for the feedback circuit in such matters is slow. In the short range a mistaken policy line does not necessarily entail outcomes that refute it. It may then appear to the policymakers that their course is succeeding, and that the facts abet it. Hence, the Intelligence service cannot use such facts to validate its criticism of policy, for in a confrontation with the policymakers it can avail itself only of facts whose message is clear and evident; and thus its assessments of long-range trends may not, in such cases, be serviceable for it. The Intelligence criticism of policy may then appear as arbitrary and irksome, even as stemming from lack of sympathy towards the policymakers themselves. Thus, here too, the Intelligence service may choose to withhold counsel. Later, when the error of the policy becomes clear, there will be those who will protest that the Intelligence service should have warned in time about the mistaken policy, and an inquiry commission may even find the service culpable.

The Intelligence service is aware that it treads on precarious ground and is liable to be singled out for blame in any error, since in every political or military decision there is an assumption on the situation or a component of knowledge, the lack of which can be imputed to Intelligence. For instance, a commander can decide to outflank and attack from the left, not because the Intelligence service advised him to do so. Were decisions based only on Intelligence data, decisions and policy would simply 'follow' from it and there would be no need for policymakers. If his attack fails, the commander can shift the blame to Intelligence by contending that it did not warn him that the left flank was strong and could not be crushed. Any military action can fail, either because our troops were not good or because the enemy's troops were. There is no institutionalized body whose job is to evaluate our troops, and thus it is easy to transfer the blame for a military failure to Intelligence, which, as it were, slighted the enemy's ability. The Intelligence service has been frequently described as the staff's 'whipping boy'. Thus, the Intelligence service is usually a frightened institution.

In many fields a human error of evaluation or judgement is

considered as extenuating circumstances; however, it is the fate of Intelligence that its error of evaluation is always enshrined in its bill of indictment. Whereas the popular saying has it that 'to err is human', an almost superhuman perfection is expected of Intelligence. We are living among our own people with no problems of accession to knowledge and still are stunned by domestic political developments. But if Intelligence does not successfully forecast a political denouement in a foreign country, brows are wrinkled: how is that possible? What inefficiency!

After the Intelligence service has failed in reporting on some information or evaluation, it is likely to take out insurance for itself by way of enlarging the quantity of its reports and including everything in them, so that it may not be found wanting in reporting. It will then flood the policymakers with Intelligence reports. However, over-reporting may be detrimental for the Intelligence service influence as important items may be lost in the multitude of the less important and trivial ones. True, what will eventually prove important does not always immediately catch the eye. The statesmen may be able to defend themselves against overabundance of Intelligence reporting, by employing an aide to sift and summarize the material for them. Such an aide fills the role of 'Intelligence waiter' who marks for his superior what is worth his attention. What is significant in the eyes of the 'Intelligence waiter' and the Intelligence service is not necessarily identical. Despite the vital role such an assistant fulfils for his master, such an intermediary arrangement may also complicate things, for the Intelligence service does not know what information has reached the policymakers, of what they are aware and of what not. Furthermore, statesmen may tend to look or rather browse over Intelligence material, often at the end of an exhausting day when they are fatigued or half drowsy.

Presumably, it is good that the chief of the Intelligence service be on close terms with the policymakers and have their trust. However, such bosom companionship too has its drawbacks. True, the more he is a part of the inner Byzantine court that develops as a matter of course around state chiefs, the greater is his influence; however, he then also loses perspective and his independent critical vision, and gradually succumbs to the conceptions of the policymakers. He is then unable to detach himself from festivities of policymaking just like the other self-gratified members of the court who bask in their connections with power. Thomas Hughes urged that Intelligence should give the policymakers 'utmost support with utmost reservation'. That surely is no simple combination.

In its reports the Intelligence service must differentiate between statements of fact and evaluations concerning the future, which are always a matter of conjecture. It is an error to present an evaluation of future trends as if they were facts. The desire of the

Intelligence people to present a clearcut unqualified opinion is commendable, but it may mislead them to present their hypotheses about the future developments as if they were foregone conclusions and final judgements not to be disputed. In reporting evaluations one should not transcend the amount of certitude the data warrants, and even the probable should not be offered as the absolutely certain. The Intelligence service should not be inhibited from making the policymakers privy to the uncertainties of evaluation, especially regarding future important developments, tendencies and intentions. The more the service does that, the more the policymakers will understand the quandaries and limitations of the Intelligence services and will not nurture expectations that cannot be met and which in the end may be counterproductive for both policy and Intelligence.

The Intelligence service is judged according to the final quality or significance of its output – its reports. The words of our Sages in *Pirkei Avot*, 'according to the pains so is the reward', do not apply to Intelligence. The toils involved in obtaining the information on which the reports are based have low visibility, and the Intelligence service is prevented from talking about them or from recounting its woes. But without information collection, there is no Intelligence evaluation. In fact, in Intelligence most of the efforts in manpower and resources go to information collection. If those efforts, and the efforts to extract evaluations from the information are not appreciated, feelings of bitterness will develop in the service, as if the policymakers, and even the country as a whole, are ungrateful. These feelings swell when the Intelligence people compare the sophistication and advanced methods employed in collection of the information and the production of Intelligence against the cavalier fashion or improvisation with which policy decisions are many a time reached.

The Intelligence service is represented to the policymakers by its director. He participates (if invited) in meetings or caucuses at which important decisions are made. However, as an individual he cannot provide an exhaustive representation of, or reflect the knowledge and wisdom that has accumulated in his institution. However broadminded and gifted he may be, it is one of the tragic ironies of Intelligence that its chief may constitute a 'bottleneck' who detracts from the quality of his service, thus unwittingly deflating its value and its impact. The consumer of Intelligence must understand that and therefore pay heed to the institutional reports and not only to what comes directly from its chief's mouth.

Intelligence services in our world cost a great deal of money. The Israeli public has no idea how costly this service is. However, to the extent that the policymakers are not aware of how the Intelligence can be useful, and what its limitations are, and do not direct it and ask it questions expressly, the utility of Intelligence is partial and resources are wasted. The great outlays for Intelligence are

justifiable only if the policy based on its information is of high quality. An unrealistic policy, whether autarkic or autistic, has no need for Intelligence and the Intelligence service cannot help it. Intelligence efforts are worthwhile only where they contribute to the shaping of a wise policy.

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The Major Problem of the Intelligence Community[1]

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Graham Allison

What is the Major Problem of the Intelligence Community?

An observer of the work of the Select Committee, the Church Committee that preceded it, and the product of the effort embodied in S2284 finds a clear answer to this question: The major problem of the Intelligence Community is the problem of abuse. I believe this answer is incorrect.

Recognizing the real problem of abuse and the vital importance of restoring public confidence in lawful intelligence, I believe nonetheless that the larger problem of the Intelligence Community is the problem of *performance*—performance in producing the Intelligence Community's primary product: analyses and estimates that provide a comprehensive base of evidence and reasoned judgment for decisionmaking. The performance of the Intelligence Community is poor: poor on average as compared to the best examples produced within the Community; poor in comparison to the best analyses produced outside; and poor in comparison to reasonable expectations.

Is the Problem of Poor Performance of the Intelligence Community a Matter of Real Importance to the United States?

As Senators, every day you confront government agencies and programs that perform poorly—job training programs, OSHA, LEAA, the managers of the US economy. One is reminded of the Italians' assessment of the latest crisis in Italian politics: critical, but not serious. Is the poor performance of the Intelligence Community in producing analyses and estimates a matter of serious importance to the United States? I believe the clear answer is *yes*.

[1] This article is excerpted from testimony given by Dr. Allison to the Select Committee on Intelligence of the US Senate on 31 March 1980. Dr. Allison heads the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard.

What Difference Can Intelligence Analyses and Estimates Make?

Let me answer by offering three examples in capsule form: the Cuban missile crisis, the oil price increases of 1973-74, and Iran today—the first a striking success, the second a dismal failure, the third presently unfolding.

Most of you will recall the Cuban missile crisis of 1962—the only real nuclear confrontation we have ever had, a crisis in which President Kennedy estimated the chances of nuclear war to have been one in three.

The crisis began when Chairman Khrushchev attempted to sneak strategic offensive missiles into Cuba, while assuring President Kennedy both publicly and privately that he would do no such thing. In a great intelligence coup, the US Intelligence Community discovered the Soviet initiative early in the process of construction, before the missile sites were completed or the strategic missiles operational. Because of this intelligence success, President Kennedy had a week to consider carefully the US response—a week in which the United States knew that the Soviet Union was taking an action that would bring the world to the nuclear brink, but in which the Soviet Union did not know that we knew.

This interval proved essential for the strategy President Kennedy adopted for forcing Soviet withdrawal. Because the Soviet missile construction was not complete and the missiles not yet operational, the United States had an option that would not have been available two weeks later. That option was to blockade naval shipments of further Soviet missiles and related materials to Cuba. Had the missiles not been discovered until two weeks later, a naval blockade would have amounted to no more than locking the barn door after the horse was gone.

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How in this instance was a first-class intelligence performance achieved? A US U-2 aircraft, equipped with a camera of extraordinary capacity flew over an area identified by other intelligence sources as suspect. This U-2 took photographs that CIA analysts could interpret, on the basis of years of experience, as incontestible evidence of Soviet strategic missile bases. Consider the ingredients:

- *Technical capacity*: The capacity of both the aircraft and the camera go beyond the prevailing technical frontiers. In addition, their capabilities were not widely known outside a small circle—for example, not known in the Senate or press or Soviet Union—and thus not taken into account by the Soviets responsible for constructing the missile sites.

- *Complementary intelligence sources:* The United States received reports from human sources of an ally with whom it had a formal liaison relationship—American agents having been decimated in the Bay of Pigs fiasco.

  A high-level spy in the Soviet Union, Col. Oleg Penkovskiy, provided the United States vital information on Soviet strategic forces that proved invaluable to US analysts interpreting Soviet activity in Cuba. (Penkovskiy was arrested by the Soviet Union in the middle of the crisis, on 22 October 1962, and shot shortly thereafter.)

- *Expert analysis*: CIA analysts had decades of experience sifting evidence of Soviet capabilities and intentions, and particularly in interpreting photos and encrypted messages that to most people would have been noise, but to them signaled Soviet missiles in Cuba.

I could go on, since as you may have gathered, I am an aficionado of this event. What I have said here is contained in even more detail in my study of the missile crisis, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*.

I cannot leave this success story without offering my judgment, for whatever it is worth, that at present, if an analogous situation occurred, the US Intelligence Community would fail to discover the Soviet missiles. The Intelligence Community would fail because of the current level of effort vis-a-vis the problem; the general publicity about intelligence sources and methods; the chill that five years of revelations have put on foreign agents and potential agents; the deterioration in relations with foreign intelligence agencies caused by their perception that the US Government can no longer keep secrets and that their secrets may be shared with hundreds of legislators; the new conservatism of Intelligence Community employees encouraged by an environment of uncertainty about the ground rules and their fear of jeopardy to post hoc exposure of what may come to be classified as an abuse; and the general sluggishness that has resulted from the introduction of hundreds of lawyers and a regulatory regime for intelligence activities. As a friend of mine in the DDO says, the most active agents in the DDO are the lawyers!

My judgment that the Intelligence Community today would fail to discover the missiles is a complex counterfactual, since it is difficult to say what would constitute an analogous situation. Let me restate my judgment more precisely: If the events of the last five years and their impact on the Intelligence Community had occurred in the five years preceding 1962, it is my view that the US Intelligence Community would not have discovered the Soviet strategic missiles in Cuba before they became operational.

A second example of the importance of intelligence analyses and estimates can be briefer, since it is a page from the Committee's own book. Your study, "U.S. Intelligence Analysis and the Oil Issue 1973-74," is one of a number of excellent reviews prepared by your Subcommittee on Intelligence Collection, Production, and Quality. The study focuses on three related issues: the position of Saudi Arabia, the stability of OPEC prices, and the impact of these prices on the international economy. It asks three questions:

- How well did the US Intelligence Community recognize Saudi Arabia's shift from a comfortable relationship with the United States to the vanguard of Arab states calling for the use of oil as a political weapon against the United States?

- After the 400-percent increase in oil prices in October 1973, how well did the Intelligence Community gauge the ability of OPEC to maintain oil prices at $11 per barrel through 1974 and beyond?

- How well did the Intelligence Community address the issue of the effects of OPEC actions on the international economy?

The Select Committee's study concludes, and I quote: "The performance of specialized public sources (including *Petroleum Intelligence Weekly*, the *London Financial Times*, and *The Wall Street Journal*) on the three issues addressed in the study equaled or excelled that of the Intelligence Community."

Of what importance might better answers to these questions have been to the US Government? In 1974, OPEC proposed that oil prices be indexed at the then current $11 per barrel. The United States and its allies rejected this offer out of hand, presumably on the expectation that this oligopoly's artificial prices could not be maintained. Better analysis might also have identified opportunities for US leverage to weaken OPEC or prevent further price increases.

A final illustration of the importance of intelligence analyses and estimates is Iran today. I raise this issue speculatively, and only because I have no official involvement in it and no special knowledge of it beyond what I read in the newspapers.

What would *you* want to know today as a basis for intelligent US policy toward Iran?

- About the Ayatollah Khomeini's health?
- About the nature of relations among the Ayatollah, President Bani-Sadr, and the militants at the US Embassy?
- About the composition of the militants, and particularly their relations with other groups, including foreign intelligence groups?
- About the state of the Iranian military forces, particularly who controls which tanks and planes and in what state of readiness?
- About the stock and flow of various essentials—water, kerosene, food, spare parts—to the population of Tehran and other areas?
- About the basic logistical systems and infrastructure, for example, public health?
- About procedures for succession when Ayatollah Khomeini dies?
- About how to read Iranian rhetoric, for example, the role played by Islamic traditions of martyrdom?

For each of these questions and many others, it is essential to ask: *What* would *who* have had to do *when* in order for the US Intelligence Community to be in a position to offer reliable answers to these questions today?

Stand back, if you will for a minute, and think about the problem operationally. Suppose you or I were responsible as Director of Central Intelligence for providing an adequate basis for intelligent decisions in the current Iranian crisis. To make an intelligent choice about sanctions, President Carter needs to know, for example, what impact sanctions will have on whom. Specifically, how will each package of sanctions affect the balance of power within the Revolutionary Council?

If this were your job, how would you produce an answer? Are you prepared to place your bets on the basis of what you read in the newspapers? What else would you like to provide the President, and how would you get it? Suppose, just to speculate, I told you an agent might be able to place a listening device in the Revolutionary Council's meeting room? Or suppose a member of the Revolutionary Council were prepared to give his best judgment on these questions, for some consideration. What would those be worth? If you were the agent selected to go to Iran today to try to put the bug in the Revolutionary Council's meeting room, or if you were the friend to whom the member of the Council was prepared to talk, what assurances would you want about the secrecy that would surround your action?

I apologize for pounding my point. But I believe the doctrinal debate about such issues as "prior notice" and "full access" has often lost touch altogether with the operational requirements you or I would insist on to do jobs we know the nation needs done.

Let me conclude this point with two final questions:

- What has this Committee done to encourage or discourage the acquisition of capabilities that are needed for Iran today?
- What is it now doing to encourage or discourage preparation for an analogous crisis five years hence?

What is Required for the Production of First-Class Intelligence Analyses and Estimates?

Obviously there are no simple answers or quick fixes. First-class intelligence requires an effective, vigorous, high-morale organization consisting of thousands of dedicated, competent intelligence professionals prepared to take risks on behalf of their country. After a period like the last five years, it will require at least five more years to build such an organization—assuming a full commitment to the task and full support from the administration and Congress.

First-class intelligence analyses and estimates emerge as the final product of a subtle process that includes four key ingredients—mission, collection, analysis, and presentation.

- A clear organizational *mission*. Congress should make the production of first-class intelligence the primary mission of the Intelligence Community. The central goal of the Intelligence Community is the production of relevant, authoritative analyses and estimates: products embodying deep understanding, applying the most powerful tools of analysis, and exploiting all collectible information. It is to this standard that the Intelligence Community should be held accountable.

- Vigorous *collection*. Current technical collection is innovative, inventive, competitive, duplicative, expensive, wasteful, and remarkable, sometimes to the point of being magical. In contrast, human intelligence collection, which is a much harder task, has shrunk dramatically over the last five years in response to budget cuts and reductions in numbers of slots, the chill of which I spoke earlier, and a deemphasis of clandestine activity. I believe the most important human intelligence comes from individuals with decades of experience in a country, individuals who have a deep understanding of developments in their country which they are prepared to share. I believe the United States has steadily reduced its assets of this sort.

- Powerful *analysis*. The Intelligence Community behaves as if it believed that analysis is not really important, that is, that analytic effort can add little of real value to the finished intelligence product, beyond packaging collection for consumers. (This practice has not been adversely affected by recent events.) For years there has been no regular process of evaluating performance by criteria of accuracy of prediction or quality of analysis, there has been no structured competition in analysis, there has been no career track for expert analysts, little investment in human capital, little research and development. Devising a plan of action for a significant improvement in intelligence analysis would not be impossible. It would involve demonstrating the possibility of more authoritative and useful analyses and estimates; harnessing more of the nation's talent outside the Intelligence Community to the task; developing a personnel system to support and nurture analysts; reducing layering; and promoting research and development. I should add that I believe some steps have been taken in some of these directions under Admiral Turner.

- *Presentation*. Analyses and estimates must be presented in ways relevant to decisionmakers' needs and in forms they will use. The Intelligence Community has never given sufficient attention to either.

Building an organization capable of first-class analyses and estimates requires a framework of authority, demands, and support. In spite of the present Director of Central Intelligence's best efforts, neither the administration nor Congress has provided steady demands or support for a first-class intelligence product.

The above article is Unclassified.