

Keeping the Edge: Managing Defense for the Future

Reviewed by Richard L. Russell

Intelligence in Recent Public Literature

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315 pages.

This edited volume by Ashton Carter and John White was written under the auspices of the Preventive Defense Project, a joint Harvard-Stanford program to examine pressing issues of national defense in the post-Cold War world. The book "seeks to prescribe remedies for some of the organizational and managerial deficiencies of the national security establishment" (p. ix). It was written by a distinguished, bipartisan group of past and present policy makers and scholars. The theme governing the book is that while American military forces or the "point of the spear" is "sharp and hard," the "rest of the national security establishment is deficient or broken" (p. 2).

The book examines a broad swath of issues that are of interest to those in and around the Pentagon. These issues include joint operations, asymmetric threats, recruitment, training and retention, and the technological revolutions in business and the military. Two chapters will be of particular interest to intelligence professionals. Robert Hermann, a

former member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board, contributed a chapter "Keeping the Edge in Intelligence" and John Deutch, Arnold Kanter, and Brent Scowcroft collectively produced a chapter "Strengthening the National Security Interagency Process."

Hermann argues that the military's demand for intelligence is increasing. He notes that while the IC is doing a better job with collection systems in meeting the needs of operational commanders, there is a shortfall in the analysis of the information. The imbalance is due, in part, by bureaucratic factors: "The collection systems are championed by major collection providers such as the NRO, the Air Force, and the Navy, while the champions of analysis wield much less bureaucratic power" (p. 107).

He questions the ability of the IC to provide the expert analysis required for national security decision-making, however. During the Cold War much information was secret, but the post-Cold War world has an abundance of information available in the public domain. The United States needs to have access to the most knowledgeable scholars—with the requisite expertise needed to gauge the future trajectories of Russia, China, India, Indonesia, and other foreign societies—and to give them incentives to help the United States make the best estimates. Hermann judges that "The organizations dedicated and staffed to address our Cold War adversaries are not likely to be the best ones for these purposes" (p. 108).

To redress shortcomings in analytic expertise, Hermann recommends that the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) establish a National Assessment Center (NAC) "to be the preeminent center for the US government's analysis of selected issues whose assessment depends on the best possible information from all sources, open as well as classified ... The premium will be on expertise in the subject domain, scholarship, and the credibility of professional reputation" (p. 115). The NAC would be staffed with about 100 to 200 people from the private sector contracted to work for months or years on specific problems. In some cases, the NAC would contract projects to universities or private analytic institutions. The NAC's analytic tasks would be assigned by the National Security Council and its reports written for the President, the cabinet, and primary staff. The day-to-day demands of intelligence would continue to be met by CIA's Directorate for Intelligence (p. 115).

On the collection side, Hermann argues that the collection agencies—NRO, CMO, and NIMA—should be consolidated under NSA to serve as the focal point for sensors, processing, reporting, and dissemination. The

consolidation would improve the coherence and quality of the products that have been coming out of separate agencies (p. 111). In this framework, the NRO would take over systems engineering and project management functions for the consolidated intelligence collection agency (p. 113). Hermann argues that the consolidation would make possible the elimination of duplicate sets of management, overhead, and infrastructure in the four agencies (p. 114). Indeed, such reductions would be needed to avoid creating a colossal institution that would be bureaucratically hide-bound and too sluggish to respond to the post-Cold War world.

Deutch, Kanter, and Scowcroft in a discussion about strengthening that the interagency decision-making process, make several points pertinent to the IC. They argue that the fragmentation of responsibilities for collecting, analyzing, and distributing intelligence means that policymakers do not always receive adequate and timely information, leaving them ill-prepared to deal with threats such as information warfare, the use of chemical and biological weapons, infrastructure vulnerability, and peacekeeping (p. 270). They note that "Up to now, the intelligence community has dealt with the new threats by forming Intelligence Community Centers that bring together representatives from all the intelligence agencies. Existing Centers address terrorism, proliferation, and narcotics and crime. However, the Centers have had limited success, because the Director of Central Intelligence lacks the authority to require participation by intelligence agencies in the Center activities and to set collection priorities for all intelligence agencies on these subjects" (p. 279). They reiterate a longstanding call to bolster the DCI's authority over the IC. That call, however, may strike some readers as disingenuous because under DCI Deutch's tenure CIA surrendered considerable autonomy and power to DOD with the creation of NIMA as a combat support agency.

The book is primarily directed toward a DOD audience and only touches lightly on the major issues facing the IC in the coming years. Nevertheless, the volume does provide important glimpses into the thinking of influential individuals who are likely to have—in some shape or form—a bearing on the IC reforms, particularly now that President Bush has ordered DCI Tenet to reexamine the ends and means of the IC.

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