BACKGROUND

The intelligence community today is doing far better than most critics recognized. It has transformed itself from working primarily on the strategic threats posed by the Soviet Union to providing the policy makers a wide range of information on such diverse subjects as nuclear proliferation and the world environment. There has been a fundamental change in the subjects addressed by the intelligence community, the information needed to attack these issues and the customer" access to critical information without using the intelligence system. But there is some ways to go.

Only a few years ago, U.S. intelligence owned much of the business. Photographic satellites, communications intercepts, and clandestine sources were proprietary. The analysis of the information collected and the dissemination of that information was directly under the control of the intelligence organizations—classification limited distribution and access. Nearly 50 years of experience had turned the US concerns about the Soviet threat into a huge industry with an enormous infrastructure and vast amount of expertise.

THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY TODAY

Times have changed. Classified information is still important. On some issues it is the primary source. But classified information is not the be all, end all that it was during the cold war. There is no single enemy. Russia is judged to be far less threatening. Much of the work on this former enemy now consists of political and economic analysis. Most of the organizations and much of the expertise on Russian weapons and military capabilities have been cut. (This reallocation of resources has been too drastic—Russia still possesses the largest arsenal of weapons of mass destruction.)

A new set of problems that depend less on secretly acquired information has come to the fore. Law enforcement, narcotics, the environment, regional politics, religious fundamentalism, and even treaty activity are just a few of the subjects where analysts are as dependent upon open source as they are on classified information. In addition the large number of issues now important to the U.S. policy maker has spread the expertise very thin.

Perhaps the most significant change facing the intelligence community is the availability of the vast amount of information to its customers. Advances in technology have made the transmission of information a major business area. Anyone can put themselves on the Internet and get direct access to an endless stream of information. Policy makers are bombarded by information that at times is difficult to distinguish from what they receive from the intelligence analyst.

A somewhat different problem faces the policy makers who address national security issues. An interagency system that included the State Department, the Defense Department, the CIA (representing the full intelligence community) and a few other departments and agencies depending on the subject being addressed, managed the policy

process. Today, some of the key foreign policy issues center on organizations that have not previously played in this process. A striking example is the biological warfare threat. Nearly all of the expertise in this area is in the public sector or in the national laboratories. CDC, state disease centers, pharmaceutical companies, microbiologists at universities are the core of this issue.

Expertise has declined in the intelligence community. It is not that people are less qualified. But cuts in the work force have been accompanied by an increasingly large number of issues that need to be followed. Technological changes and a revolution in information have strained the system. Look at any key area—the Middle East, Russia, China—and the most striking observation is how few analysts cover major problems. During the cold war there were experts on nearly every area of interest. The system was organized to assess even the most esoteric technical development in the Soviet Union. Most of these experts are gone or have moved to cover other problems.

WELL, WHAT SHOULD WE DO?

It is not the end of history for intelligence. It is the beginning of a new set of challenges. A key may be to bring collection and analysis into some better harmony. At present the US has a collection capability (just in the technical area) that exceeds the ability of analysts to interpret the information. *Even though many of the current issues are not life threatening, the demands to support policymakers have increased. The analyst corps needs to be strengthened, not cut further.*

Support to the warfighter needs to be reexamined. The U.S. military is driving collection and analysis with a vengeance. Defense has an insatiable appetite and can ingest any and all information in the pursuit of contingency planning. But its focus tends to be short term and the availability of information often seems more important than understanding the implications of that information. We seem to have forgotten that our purpose is to well enough informed to use means other than military force to obtain our policy objectives.

Given the nature of problems facing the intelligence community it is likely that the analyst corps needs to change significantly. Over the past 50 years most of the experts on the Soviet Union were inside the intelligence organizations. A large number of the analysts and managers in CIA were recruited from organizations that worked on US weapons systems. They knew the other experts in their area and in some cases were recognized as the premier experts. Given the diversity of problems now facing intelligence analysts and the complexity of the information on each and every subject, it is difficult to develop experts on every problem. *The key may be to make analysts a referent for their particular issue. The objective would be to have the intelligence analyst know who were the key experts, where the most critical information rested, and how to organize technical collection.* The role of the intelligence analyst would then be to take this information and place it in a policy context. Information specialists and research assistants that know how to mine the Internet may be as valuable as the experienced country analyst.

5 September 1997 'The Virtual Intelligence Community': Lunchtime Panel with Andrews and Kerr.

HAS THE COMMUNITY A FUTURE?

Michael Herman

My question today about the Open Source revolution is whether it leaves the intelligence community with a future. Lord Macaulay the nineteenth century British historian pronounced that 'nothing is so useless as a general maxim'; and I suggest that all said at this session should be taken with that caveat. Yet one of the admirable features of Chinese civilization is its veneration for the wisdom of the aged. Perhaps my more or less constant engagement with intelligence since 1947 can help me to complement, even if in a superannuated way, the perspective offered by my distinguished but still youthful British colleague today.

It would be easy to answer my question as an old man: that there is nothing new about Open Sources and their importance. The Victorian military intelligence departments, from which our present communities are predominantly derived, depended largely on open sources (military attachés, foreign newspapers, gazetteers and railway timetables) rather than covert ones. The Allied bombing campaign in the Second World War used German newspapers to cull much of its current intelligence on the German economy. In the Cold War the Soviet Union, secretive though it was, produced extensive unclassified military doctrinal literature which had the potential to provide insight into Soviet concepts if properly handled; the first thing I was able to write on retirement was a plea for better intelligence attention to this material, hitherto studied mainly by a tiny British group at the Sandhurst military academy. And one of the causes of the American intelligence failure over the Argentine invasion of the Falklands was insufficient analysis of the Junta's public pronouncements and the supporting press and broadcast comment. (I call it an 'American failure' deliberately, though history records it as a British one; it was, after all, in the continent which Britain tacitly or explicitly regards as the United States' intelligence backyard). So it could be argued that the problem of integrating open sources into intelligence has always existed; they are simply being reinvented today.

But it would be anachronistic to do so. The power and variety of the new Open Sources, and their revolutionary character, needs no elaboration at this conference. Intelligence has its two overlapping and interrelated elements - single-source covert collection

and all-source analysis and assessment - and I have argued elsewhere that the Open Source Revolution calls for some re-balancing of resources between these two elements: a re-balancing between single- and all-source investments, and hence between covert and overt collection and exploitation. I have argued not for a spectacular redeployment of resources, but for fine-tuning between the two, particularly in the national esteem in which they are held and the cultivation of talent in them that makes the real differences between good and bad performance.

This is a genuine need. At least in Britain, the wartime codebreaking successes of Bletchley Park have to some extent obscured the apparently less glamorous all-source analysis that was needed to exploit them. The need is probably an article of faith for Open Source specialists, but it gets some reinforcement from the changing character of international relations and intelligence's role in them. Of course the world is still full of violence and of deeply secretive targets that need covert intelligence collection to illuminate them; armed forces need intelligence support, actual and potential; governments require warning on even wider canvases than before. But for the United States, as well as for smaller powers, state action is increasingly collaborative and coalition-like. The UN and other international bodies loom far larger than before. Widespread international persuasion increases at all levels, at the expense of action unilaterally or by exclusive groups of close allies.

Linked with this is the tendency for one of the so-called secret sources - imagery, from satellites, UAVs and aircraft - to be accorded somewhat greater legitimacy and rather less source protection than formerly. William Colby and Stansfield Turner in their different ways both adumbrated the concept that some intelligence of this kind would develop as an international good. Just possibly this idea has some resonance with the new British Government's search for an ethical foreign policy. Thus these aspects of the traditional intelligence area reinforce the effect of the new Open Sources in making intelligence as a whole a somewhat more open, less opaque part of the national machinery in an increasingly transparent world.

That is not a very controversial forecast about Open Sources. But will they go further and alter the basic character of intelligence as we know it, replacing the twentieth century intelligence paradigm by some rather different, twenty-first century institutions and communities? After all, government's main information analyst is always will be the decision-taker and his staff, and part of the information revolution is to make

information sources more user-friendly for them. Information managers may therefore take over from specialist intelligence staff. A military paradox is that information warfare, by becoming central to combat, may cease to be the province of supporting specialists; the teeth arms may become the information warriors, freed from dependence on an intelligence tail. With these possibilities, what will the intelligence community look like in thirty years time?

One can of course play the definitional game: what do we mean by intelligence, and when does it become something different? The game of trying to identify intelligence's essence is worth playing. A leading world authority on comparative religion argues that religions have seven dimensions that distinguish them from secular movements and beliefs; I would encourage the academics to develop a similar intelligence template to distinguish intelligence from other information and forecasting across the whole sweep of world history and culture. But not here. We are stuck with the practical, circular definition; government intelligence is the institutions that have that name. So what can be predicted for this community?

In many ways the formal structures of the British and American communities have remained surprisingly unchanged over the last half century. Yet within them there has been continuous fluctuation and evolution - for example in the role of CIA's Directorate of Intelligence and, I suspect, in adaptation of the stately British routine of the JIC to keep up with the increasing pace of foreign affairs. Moreover there are constantly varying international and domestic influences. The British JIC system is the origin of the English-speaking concept of the intelligence community and of national intelligence assessment, in the United States as elsewhere; while for its part the CIA and its evolution has been widely imitated in Western-oriented states throughout the world. Yet intelligence is equally influenced by its domestic settings. The British JIC reflects the Westminster model of Cabinet government and the closely-knit official culture of what has been called the supporting 'Whitehall village'; the American system on the other hand has been forged by the needs of Presidential government.

Intelligence is also continuously competing with other expert institutions. Jack Davis has achieved his place in the pantheon of 'intelligence studies' by describing intelligence's nichemanship, its search for 'comparative advantage' in the market-place of meeting government's needs. Information-gathering and analysis institutions sometimes accommodate competition from others, as in the way the British Foreign Office accommodates itself to the JIC by being a major influence

within it, sometimes perhaps dominating it. The very idea of competition in government upsets the British psyche, though it is part of the American dynamic. But I am sure that Davis's observation reflects a basic truth about intelligence's place as part of an unstable continuum of government organizations, each with fuzzy and shifting boundaries, each bound up with the bigger life-cycles of governments and their needs. I am repeatedly struck by the uncanny way in which the British Government Statistical Service evolved in almost exactly the same timescale as institutionalized British intelligence, with exactly the same stimulus in two World Wars. To fight effectively, one had not only to know the enemy and his national resources but also to develop some way of knowing one's own (and incidentally, to achieve agreed transatlantic statistics as a basis for agreed strategy, just as the same had to be done for agreed UK-US intelligence assessments of the enemy).

To this picture should be added the main characteristic of information everywhere - not just in intelligence - as a revolutionary influence, changing organizations unpredictably as if with an autonomous power of its own, sapping their will to resist change or even control it. Put all these factors together and one can conclude that it is futile to predict the community's future in any precise way. I would expect the Open Source Revolution to combine with Information Warfare to shift intelligence-policy boundaries, perhaps to eliminate some of them altogether. I am surprised that, at least in Britain, that there has not been a bigger move to depend on analysis in the private sector; though ideologically the time for this has probably passed. Yet I envisage intelligence continuing as a coherent national community of some kind. One prop is the continued need for covert collection and source protection, and the secrecy that goes with them. Another prop, linked with the first, is the professional ethic of intelligence objectivity, with the same durability and institutional effects as the professional ethics of statisticians and others. But all this is guesswork.

Guesswork, too, is speculating on the future shape of intelligence as an <u>international</u> community, with its many common features and its extensive exchanges of material and assessments. Possibly the mergers between intelligence and national decision-takers (if they happen) will make intelligence evolve in more distinctive national forms, with less international commonality than now. But I would personally expect the commonalities to continue, even increase. The challenge of Open Sources is an international on, to which we may see increasingly similar national responses. Will Open Sources and openness to Western influence eventually lead Russian intelligence to evolve on the Western all-source pattern,

though there is no sign of it yet? And what of the Chinese and Japanese systems? These are not trivial questions for the future.

What conclusions and recommendations are to be drawn from this discussion? Intelligence's concepts of process and organization have always been torn between rather tight military ones on the one hand and the much looser ones of most modern management writing on the other. On the whole it has inclined to the former, as in the doctrine of the intelligence cycle. Contrary to the military approach, I would tend to argue against much effort to reorganize systematically at a macro level to accommodate Open Sources and their techniques. I am not instinctively sympathetic with redrawing community structures on the backs of envelopes, as in some of the suggestions in Britain that the Security Service (MI5) should be merged with the SIS (MI6). In my view the correct response to the Open Source Revolution is to have a climate of looser organization in which the Open Sources can be allowed to let rip, with institutions following where Open Source synergy with traditional intelligence leads.

But that is to talk like a fashionable organizational anarchist. In reality communities need to seek organizational improvements in practical, pragmatic ways. The British are rather good as pragmatists; their weakness is that they rarely do anything except react to the latest intelligence disasters. The Americans are better at trying to look ahead and avoid failures - one of the legacies of the Cold War is that America really cares about intelligence - but somehow the national energy that goes into considering intelligence reform does not produce commensurate results (though, if I may say so as a foreigner, it seems to me that the Brown Commission made some sensible, feet-on-the-ground recommendations).

But intelligence also needs the academics and the visionaries; and also, perhaps, the old practitioners of a reflective bent. This conference seems an object lesson in mixing this cocktail. From it emerges in my view one of the more important precepts for considering the intelligence's future. It is right for it to be a distinctive professional discipline, and to have academic studies geared to it. But its ideas must not be narrow or in-bred, insulated by the necessities of secrecy. It must see itself as part of the information society; one of government's sources of information, forecasts and wisdom; with a respected but not exclusive position among the knowledge institutions on which government relies in its 24-hour-a-day battle - for order out of chaos, for survival out of cock-up.

Open Source Intelligence: CONFERENCE Proceedings, 1997 Volume IV 6th International Conference & Exhibit Global Security & Global - Link Page

Previous	Presidents, Secret Intelligence and Open Sources: Past Experience and Future Priorities
Next	International Trade and Commerce: Search Strategies for Intelligence Production

Return to Electronic Index Page