
The Need for a Perception-Based Model for Comparing Intelligence Communities: An Historical Case Study

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PART I: INTRODUCTION OF THE PROBLEM

The growing field of comparative intelligence studies has provided many criteria for evaluating and comparing the intelligence communities (IC's) and policies of both similar and dissimilar nations, but in this new field it is important to note that no accepted standards for comparison currently exist yet. Of those that do exist, some concentrate on the communities' relative ages (and implied maturity or lack thereof), others concentrate on simple success/failure ratios, still others concentrate on organizational styles, and many focus on the communities' preferred areas of concentration (i.e. the favored types of intelligence collection). Each strategy has its own army of staunch supporters, and so far every one is applicable in one circumstance or another, which is the primary reason for the lack of an acceptable standard.

However, in all the criteria mentioned (and many others not mentioned), there is one common thread - that the criteria are based on an idea of absolute, quantifiable truth. That truth may not be easily discovered, but the assumption is that if one knew enough about the organization or community in question, there would be one correct, demonstrable answer that would be obvious to any observers. To be sure, it is much easier to compare two items by quantifiable criteria, but when one is dealing with human beings (and groups of human beings), not everything is obvious to the untrained eye.

The field of psychology centers on the idea that one can deduce the unobservable workings of a person's mind from the observable aspects of that person's actions, and that knowledge of these underlying thought processes will allow the psychologist to notice patterns and predict behavior to a degree not possible if only the actions themselves are observed. Therefore, any scheme for comparing intelligence communities that does not take into account the reasons and beliefs that cause the people in these communities to behave the way they do is inherently incomplete, especially when one considers that these people

are by definition working with incomplete information, and so their perceptions of the world around them are shaping their analyses of the data on a basic level.

To demonstrate the need for psychology-based criteria for comparing intelligence communities, three wartime IC's that share many characteristics in common will be compared using the objective criteria mentioned above and then compared using a two-part perception-based criterion: 1) the absolute strength of the enemy relative to the community (as best as it can be estimated); and 2) the perceived strength of the enemy by the community, based upon analysis of its statements. The difference between these two ideas of the strength differential, or "what they are up against," should illuminate the role that perception plays in intelligence. To keep as many cultural variables the same as possible, the three communities are from the same nation, the United States, at different points in its history: the American Revolution, World War II, and the Persian Gulf War.

The microcosm of wartime intelligence was also chosen to minimize confounding outside factors, although in the case of the Persian Gulf War these factors do play a role, because the United States was not on a complete wartime footing even during the height of the war. These three wars provide the analysis with three different strength differentials: in the American Revolution, the enemy was stronger; in World War II, the enemies were relatively equal in strength; and in the Persian Gulf War, the enemy was weaker.

PART II: OBJECTIVE COMPARISONS OF THE COMMUNITIES SUMMARY OF INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITIES

Before these intelligence communities can be effectively compared, it is first necessary to briefly summarize their respective compositions. In the American Revolution, due to its lack of communications technology, there was little centralized authority. Each

general, as a rule, ran his own intelligence operations, although General Washington, being the Commander-in-Chief, had access to several major operations, and, although Washington generally acted as his own spymaster, his chief assistant in that area was Benjamin Tallmadge. The Second Continental Congress established a Committee for Secret Correspondence in 1775, which quickly took on intelligence gathering duties, and this is considered the first official intelligence agency in the United States. Other than that, most widespread intelligence networks were based on the earlier networks set up by groups such as the Sons of Liberty, a group of patriots who were assembled to fight the Stamp Act and who were responsible for many of the historically recognizable acts of rebellion, such as the Boston Tea Party.

Similarly, World War II US intelligence was equally disorganized in many ways. Until the Cold War, the United States had never seen the need for a peacetime military or intelligence community, and so at the beginning of WWII there were very few established intelligence agencies. The military branches had their intelligence functions, the State department had a minor diplomatic intelligence function, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) had counterintelligence capabilities, but there was no centralized authority for intelligence. To assist in intelligence matters, President Roosevelt appointed Col. William "Wild Bill" Donovan, a decorated WWI veteran, to a new post called Coordinator of Information (COI), which was responsible for intelligence collection and propaganda efforts. This position would be dissolved after the US entry into WWII, though, and Col. Donovan would go on to head the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), which would ultimately serve as the precursor to the modern Central Intelligence Agency (CIA).

While it is necessary to bring non-historians up to speed on historical US intelligence efforts, the same is not applicable to the Persian Gulf War intelligence community. The US IC was much as it is today, with the CIA and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) operating as the primary all-source intelligence agencies, in addition to the National Security Agency (NSA), which handled Signals Intelligence, and the intelligence branches of the military forces. The chief difference to note before continuing was that during the Gulf War the National Imagery and Mapping Agency (NIMA) did not yet exist, and its imagery and mapping functions were carried out by the Defense Mapping Agency (DMA), the Central Imagery Office (CIO), the Defense Dissemination Program Office (DDPO), and the National Photographic Interpretation Center (NPIC) as well as the imagery exploitation and dissemination elements of DIA, the National Reconnaissance Office (NRO), the Defense Airborne Reconnaissance Office (DARO) and the CIA.¹

EXPERIENCE AND MATURITY

As can be inferred from the brief histories above, in both the American Revolution and World War II, the United States had a relatively immature IC. The former, in fact, was more established at the onset of wartime than the latter. As historian John Bakeless stated:

The Revolution is unique among American wars because, for the only time in American history, our Army began hostilities with a well-organized intelligence service already in operation.²

The Sons of Liberty were not the only group to set up an unofficial resistance network. Another notable group, called the Mechanics, was led by Paul Revere in pre-war Boston. This group generally performed basic observation functions, walking around Boston in pairs, about thirty at a time, to report what they saw of General Gage's (the senior British General in the region) forces. It was this network that provided the vital intelligence of the British attack that led to Paul Revere's famous ride.

However, pre-Revolutionary US intelligence knowledge was not solely comprised of these private groups. It is important to remember that until the decision to declare independence was made, many of the military officers who would lead the rebellion, Washington chief among them, were officers in the British colonial army, and so learned the British style of espionage that had been around since Queen Elizabeth I. A key example of this knowledge is from Washington's personal history, where his belief in the power of good intelligence can be traced to his campaigns in the French and Indian War. It is true that no official national intelligence apparatus existed at the beginning of the American Revolution, but the speed with which extremely prolific intelligence networks were set up lends credence to the theory that the necessary intelligence knowledge was quite mature.

In contrast, the World War II US IC was anything but mature. In addition to the US habit of dismantling anything military or intelligence-related at the end of a war, the United States was suffering the double crisis of the Great Depression and an isolationist phase. To make matters worse, in 1929, Secretary of State Henry Stimson closed down a very successful State Department cryptography program known as the "Black Chamber" with the oft-quoted words, "Gentlemen do not read each other's mail." Thanks to these contributing factors, Dean Acheson, Assistant Secretary of State in 1941, observed that

the Foreign Service establishment collected intelligence abroad with the same techniques John Quincy Adams

used in Russia or Benjamin Franklin used in France, only differing in employing the typewriter and telegraph to transmit reports.³

The War Department, which then contained the Army and Navy Departments, was not much better off, although they had kept a cryptography program running on a shoestring budget, which was the sole reason that the Signals Intelligence Service (SIS) of the Army Signals Corps was able to crack the Japanese diplomatic cipher codenamed PURPLE in August 1940 (the decrypts were collectively codenamed MAGIC). Such Signals Intelligence (SIGINT) was the only area where the United States intelligence community was experienced at the beginning of hostilities, though, and although the intelligence by the end of the war would be first-rate, thanks in no small part to the newly-born OSS, as of 1939 the Director of Naval Intelligence (DNI), Rear Admiral Walter S. Anderson, remarked that “a real undercover foreign intelligence service, equipped and able to carry on espionage, counterespionage, etc. does not exist.”⁴

As opposed to the prior two examples, the US intelligence community in 1990 was extremely experienced and mature, having been operating for 40+ years against the Soviet Union and having participated in both the Korean and Vietnam Wars as well as numerous military activities. Not much else can be said about the Persian Gulf IC, except to mention that it was sometimes its very maturity that led to some ingrained tendencies that unduly complicated the wartime effort. The CIA in particular was guilty of including so many conditions and competing hypotheses in its intelligence estimates, so as to avoid being wrong, that the military commanders occasionally found them almost useless because they did not tell them anything on which they could act.

SUCCESS AND FAILURE

Perhaps the easiest way to compare intelligence communities is by their success rates. It is fairly straightforward and easily documentable, although often hard-to-find in open source literature, due to the obvious fact that intelligence agencies generally like their successes and failures to remain secret. However, due to the openness of US intelligence, as well as the fact that two out of the three IC's in question are historical and therefore not as secret, this somewhat prickly comparison is made easier.

All three of these communities share an ultimate success – the United States won each of these wars. However, these great victories aside, they all had their fair share of operational successes and failures. In the case of the American Revolution, for example, the Americans had an

agent in the Cabinet levels in London (whose name has not yet come to light),⁵ but they also had a British agent infiltrated into their highest ranks in Dr. Benjamin Church, a member of several of the patriots' secret councils and Washington's Director General of Hospitals (although they did catch him, so that can be considered a partial success). Perhaps the most well-known failure was the case of Nathan Hale, who was sent into New York on “one of the worst-prepared intelligence missions in history,”⁶ given no training and no cover, and was soon executed by the British for espionage.

The military intelligence was generally first-rate, though, especially where Washington was concerned, and it was due chiefly to his strategic deception of General Clinton that he was able to defeat Cornwallis at Yorktown and secure the British surrender. By manipulating Clinton's own intelligence service, Washington allowed documents (which he himself wrote) to fall into many enemy hands in many different locations, so as to reinforce themselves, all of which suggested that he was planning an all-out attack on New York. Clinton reinforced New York and so was unprepared when Washington's army turned south and advanced to face Cornwallis at Yorktown, and he was too far away to send aid in time to the besieged British forces.

Similarly, the performance in World War II of US intelligence was generally more successful than not. As Anthony Cave Brown, a biographer of William Donovan, put it:

After the birth of OSS, Donovan was launching operations every hour on the hour throughout the world, and while his defeats were spectacular and Byzantine, many of the operations were successful, and some of them would rank with the greatest exploits of human daring and bravery in the history of the United States and of World War II.⁷

The military intelligence was equally successful, especially in the SIGINT field, and expert cryptographic work on the Japanese military ciphers (after PURPLE had been decrypted) often was the direct cause of US victories, as in the case of the Battle of Midway, where it was only this intelligence that allowed Admiral Nimitz to anticipate the Japanese trap and turn the tide. A similar spectacular intelligence victory was in April, 1943, when an intercepted Japanese signal included the complete itinerary for an inspection tour that Admiral Isoroku Yamamoto, the Japanese commander-in-chief, would be taking, thereby allowing the US forces to shoot down his plane without the Japanese knowing what happened. The US compromise of Japanese military ciphers was so great that

[b]y early 1943, . . . naval cryptanalysts had mastered the JN25 [Japanese naval cipher] system so thoroughly that they were able to decrypt all its variants almost without interruption for the remainder of the war.⁸

The US intelligence successes were not all SIGINT, though, nor were they all in the Pacific War. Perhaps the greatest strategic victory of all was the joint US/British deception of Germany as to the location of the D-Day invasion, where the plan was a twist on Washington's technique, except that instead of corroborating information, the allies distributed confusing information so that German intelligence would have trouble separating the wheat from the chaff. In fact,

of over 250 agent reports received by German intelligence prior to D-Day concerning the invasion, only one disclosed the correct time and place – and even this one had been deliberately planted by Allied intelligence on an Abwehr [German military intelligence] agent.⁹

The Persian Gulf War, due in no small part to the maturity of the intelligence community, contrasts with the two previous wars in that it was witness to almost zero tactical failures and was virtually a complete success. The US had been able to understand most of Iraq's coded communications from the beginning of the crisis and the Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System (JSTARS), still in development when Operation Desert Shield began, provided commanders with near real-time information in all weather conditions. The only failures were in overestimating the strength of the opposing forces and in interagency and interservice cohesion and dissemination. In short, General Powell summed it up nicely:

No combat commander has ever had as full and complete a view of his adversary as did our field commander. Intelligence support to Operations Desert Shield and Desert Storm was a success story.¹⁰

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, COHESION, AND OVERSIGHT

Many comparison criteria focus on the organizational structure of the intelligence communities in question. Is it centralized or decentralized? Does it have a high or low degree of cohesion between the individual agencies? Is there a strong or weak oversight process to ensure accountability? As none of these criteria absolutely require technological advancement, they are ideal for comparing IC's of differing technology levels, and so are entirely appropriate in this case.

The intelligence apparatus of the American Revolution was at once extremely decentralized and extremely centralized. Each general had his own intelligence operations and often did not know of the existence of other operations, but at the same time the national intelligence authority, General Washington, at once served as "one of the history's most accomplished practitioners and users of intelligence philosophy,"¹¹ He often wrote the deception letters on his own, he personally interrogated several suspected spies, including Dr. Church's lover, and he retained personal control over many agent nets and their product. However, there were still some major drawbacks to the overall decentralization, made even worse by the lack of communications technology. Not only did generals not know of each other's operations, sometimes they acted at cross-purposes because of this lack of knowledge. One of the most famous examples of this lack of cohesion was between Robert Morris, a member of the Committee for Secret Correspondence, and George Washington.

Working with American sympathizers on Bermuda, Morris engineered a highly successful "smash and grab" raid on the Royal gunpowder magazine in the colony. But, he neglected to tell General Washington of the mission. Washington, learning independently of the powder supply, launched his own raid. By the time his men arrived in Bermuda, the gunpowder was long gone and the Americans ran into a hornet's nest of British ships.¹²

Similarly, there was very little outside oversight over Washington's intelligence apparatus, but this was due to more factors than the simple decentralization. This lack of oversight was a direct result of the extreme emphasis that Washington put on secrecy, with which the Congress agreed, to the point that Washington was allowed to omit the names of the agents he was paying when he was filing with Congress for fund with which to pay them. This emphasis on secrecy was culturally based in the case of the American Revolution. As Thomas Powers states:

Weak and few in the beginning, the fledgling patriots depended upon caution for the time required to ripen their cause, and the first law of caution is secrecy. The American cause was born in secrecy in the coffeehouses of Boston, it was nurtured in secrecy by the Committee of Correspondence, it was pressed by citizens disguised as Indians who dumped tea in Boston harbor, it armed in secret with caches of gunpowder in Lexington and Concord, kept secret watch for the British who marched out to seize that gunpowder. So it continued throughout the whole history of the Revolution.¹³

So far the World War II US intelligence community has closely paralleled its American Revolution predecessor,

despite a gap in time of 165 years and five wars. Its organizational structure is no different, except that it is actually more decentralized than before. Bernard Norling aptly described it as:

Some forty different agencies, all of them involved in intelligence gathering in some way, [who] defended their turf from the threat of encroachment with remarkable imagination and . . . tenacity.¹⁴

When a reporter asked Roosevelt in 1938, "Which one of these organizations is primarily responsible," even he sounded confused when he replied, "They all are, within limits."¹⁵ When OSS was entered into the equation, it was already up against the fiercest kind of domestic opposition. Former Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) William Casey painted a vivid picture of an embattled OSS in a 1986 speech, when he observed:

Everyone in Washington was trying to walk off with a slice of Donovan's franchise. J. Edgar Hoover resented a rival and fought for as much intelligence turf as he could get. He ended up in charge of secret intelligence operations in Latin America, an area from which OSS was totally secluded. Nelson Rockefeller hacked out an exclusive franchise to report and analyze political and economic intelligence there, as well as conduct propaganda. Byron Price headed the Office of Censorship; Lowell Millet the Division of Information of the Office of Emergency Management. Playwright Robert Sherwood edgily divided his time between writing FDR's speeches and running the Foreign Information Service under Donovan, while he was bucking for an independent information franchise. Archibald McLeish had the Office of Facts and Figures. It seemed as if anyone with access to Roosevelt could get a charter for himself.¹⁶

***The WWII intelligence community
suffered setbacks because of its lack of
cohesion.***

Just like its ancestor, the WWII intelligence community suffered serious setbacks because of its decentralization and lack of cohesion. Almost exactly paralleling Washington's adventure in Bermuda is a case brought about because the OSS was not informed that the Japanese military cipher had been broken by naval intelligence, and so they sent a team into the Japanese embassy in Portugal to steal a copy of the enemy's codebook. Upon discovering the theft, the

Japanese promptly changed their ciphers, which set the SIGINT process significantly back.¹⁷ Despite this setback, OSS was still denied access to both MAGIC and ULTRA (the decryptions of German communications) for the entire war.

One would expect that with as much bureaucratic infighting as went on in the WWII intelligence community, there would be some measure of oversight to keep the agencies in line. Oddly enough, though, it seems that the agencies were left pretty much alone except when their competition caused a serious headache in Washington. The Army and Navy were even allowed to split the work (and the credit) of the MAGIC program by the Army decrypting any traffic received on an even day and the Navy decrypting anything received on an odd day. In addition, the traffic was delivered to the President by his naval aide in even months and his military aid in odd months.

This odd arrangement was allowed to persist until 1942, when it was finally abandoned, but it was very indicative of Roosevelt's lack of enthusiasm in enforcing interservice cooperation (he once told Donovan, then COI, "You have got to work this out yourself with the Attorney General and [Assistant Secretary of State] Berle to the satisfaction of all three,"¹⁸ when Donovan asked for his help in fending off J. Edgar Hoover's attempts mentioned above to cut into his franchise). Lack of oversight, though, did work to Donovan's favor in several circumstances, because he was given free reign in his choice of techniques and procured an almost unlimited budget, most of it unvouchered, directly from the President, much like Washington before him.

The modern intelligence community, as it existed in 1991, is definitely more centralized than the two predecessors discussed here, but it is still a roughly decentralized community. Even though the Director of Central Intelligence is ostensibly over the entire community, the exact power dynamics of that position and the Secretary of Defense, in whose department many of the intelligence agencies lie, are constantly in flux and are still debated today. As entire dissertations have been written on the power structure and organization of the intelligence community, it is not necessary to rehash them here, especially since many of the subtleties did not play much of a role in the actual military intelligence collected and processed during the Persian Gulf War.¹⁹

What is relevant is the institutional cohesion in the collection and dissemination of actual wartime intelligence, which surprisingly was higher between the civilian and military agencies than it was within the military itself. There was a huge demand on the battlefield for Imagery Intelligence (IMINT), but during the course of the war it

was discovered that only a third of the Secondary Imagery Dissemination Systems (SIDS) deployed in-theater could transmit to each other. According to Congressional testimony from a Central Command (CENTCOM) intelligence officer:

Intel data could be passed in real-time or near real-time (from Washington) to J-2 [military Directorate for Intelligence] in-theater, but because of a lack of common imagery data dissemination systems, the component commands as well as forward-deployed units could not always gain timely access to such imagery. The Navy had their own systems, which could not interface with the Army's systems, which could not interface with the Marines', which could not always receive data from J-2²⁰

The military's answer to this problem was to deliver imagery by courier, a time-honored technique used in much the same way in Washington's day, some 215 years earlier. Just to show that some things never change, the Persian Gulf War was also witness to a modern incarnation of Washington's Bermuda and Donovan's Portugal, when the Pentagon reported to the media that six Iraqi helicopters had flown across the Kuwaiti border into Saudi Arabia, and that the pilots had defected. When the Saudi government denied the report, it was discovered that this story had been part of a propaganda effort aimed at Iraq, and that someone unaware of the program took it as truth. According to the source of this story, "They were broadcasting propaganda into Kuwait to demoralize Iraqi troops, and it backfired. We psy-opped ourselves."²¹

As any intelligence scholar is eminently aware, oversight of the US intelligence community has been quite active since the Pike and Church Commissions in the 1970's. It is therefore not necessary to go into any great detail about the oversight process during the Persian Gulf War, except to note that its extreme level of activity serves to set it completely apart from the other two historical intelligence communities. George Washington faced little or no oversight from Congress, the WWII IC faced some oversight, generally on the issue of Pearl Harbor, but not until after the completion of the war. On the complete other end of the spectrum, not only were hearings scheduled within months of Operation Desert Storm to investigate the success or failure of intelligence in the war (the above testimony was from one such hearing), but the Senate and House Intelligence Committees were already engaged in hearings in the middle of the bombing campaign and a full two weeks before the beginning of the ground attack.

In the case of the House Intelligence Committee, the hearings were already quite confrontational and were characterized by Chairman Dave McCurdy's (D-OK) "stated determination to force intelligence agents to testify on detailed activities,"²² despite the security risks inherent in testifying in front of an entire committee and its staff while operations are still underway. This "overzealousness,"²³ while not characteristic of the entire oversight apparatus, is in character for the post-Church Commission Congress, and it paints a stark contrast to the other two intelligence communities being compared.

PREFERRED MEANS OF COLLECTION

One of the most common criteria for comparing intelligence communities is by their preferred means of intelligence collection. The vast majority of intelligence collection can be divided into three chief categories, Human Intelligence (HUMINT), Signals Intelligence (SIGINT), and Imagery Intelligence (IMINT),²⁴ and, as the following analysis demonstrates, these three categories are ubiquitous across time and space and are therefore perfect for comparisons of intelligence communities of different technologies:

In Washington's day, human intelligence – then as now – included the use of spied and counterspied, reconnaissance troops, and the interrogation of prisoners. Signals intelligence, today the intercept of electronic communications and other emissions, had its 18th century antecedents in the waylaying of dispatches and in the extensive use of codes and cyphers and their "breaking" through rudimentary cryptanalysis. Nathan Hale had no camera, but he was to rue the "imagery" he carried in his stockings.²⁵

Because of the limited technology of the time, the lines between HUMINT and the other intelligence categories was blurred during the American Revolution, because everything was done by human agents, from intercepting letters to sketching defense structures. There was no question of General Washington's focus on HUMINT, though, as he was responsible for setting up more spy rings in more cities than any other commander on either side. According to former DCI Allen Dulles' landmark work *The Craft of Intelligence*:

The actual collection of information against British headquarters in New York and Philadelphia seems to have been carried out by countless private citizens, tradesmen, booksellers, tavernkeepers and the like, who had daily contact with British officers, befriended

them, listened to their conversations, masquerading as Tories in order to gain their confidence.²⁶

In addition to this infiltration and information gathering, he also made a critical distinction, still recognized today, between *covert* and *overt* intelligence collection when he said that "single men in the night will be more likely to ascertain facts than the best glasses in the day."²⁷

While Washington's main emphasis was on HUMINT, he was also an avid user of SIGINT and IMINT, at least as they were defined in his time. His intelligence networks were quite successful at intercepting enemy messages, and he was constantly answering the modern question of "read, jam, or edit" that plagues modern SIGINT specialists. He definitely preferred the third option, and it was by his prolific editing of enemy documents before sending them on their way to their original targets that he was able to pull off most of his deception operations. His use of ciphers and cryptanalysis was also quite extensive, and some of the ciphers of the time are still unsolved by modern cryptanalysts, based as they were on books.

In the cryptanalysis arena, the theft of the Royal Navy signal code by James Rivington (a member of Washington's Culper spy ring in New York)²⁸ and the decryption of captured dispatches between Generals Cornwallis and Clinton by Boston schoolteacher James Lovell (recognized today as the father of American cryptanalysis)²⁹ are recognized as key components to Washington's victory at Yorktown. He was even aware of the battlefield utility of IMINT, beyond the simple sketching of defenses, and insisted that Congress grant him authority and funds to hire a qualified civilian geographer to accompany the Army in the field and provide mapping services and terrain information.³⁰

The WWII IC was almost exactly between the extremes of the American Revolution reliance on HUMINT and the Persian Gulf War preference for SIGINT and IMINT.

As befits an intelligence community placed in the middle of a historical continuum, the WWII IC was almost exactly between the extremes of the American Revolution reliance on HUMINT and the Persian Gulf War preference for SIGINT and IMINT. Due to the previously mentioned decentralization of the community, generally these categories of intelligence were handled by different agencies, with the OSS handling most of the HUMINT and the War Department handling most of the SIGINT and IMINT. In the case of the former,

[f]ollowing the Allied landing at Normandy in June 1944, the OSS dispatched over 200 spies into Nazi Germany. The London office of the Secret Intelligence Branch (SI), under the leadership of the late DIA director William J. Casey, organized and dispatched over 100 missions from September 1944 through April 1945. Agents recruited from the ranks of church dissidents, Spanish civil war veterans, political refugees, and underground labor groups throughout occupied Europe gathered military intelligence critically important to the advance of the Allied armies, leading to the surrender of Germany on 8 May 1945.³¹

This, coupled with the knowledge that "Wild Bill" Donovan would send agents anywhere to accomplish anything, describes the HUMINT situation better than any detailed case-by-case summary.

While the OSS agents were traveling the world collecting intelligence and conducting Psychological Warfare (known as Morale Operations), the military intelligence services were active in both the interception and decryption aspects of SIGINT (since the MAGIC program has already been discussed under "Successes and Failures," there is no need to go into it again).³² Unfortunately, the intelligence community of the time often fell prey to one of the key drawbacks of truly "magic" SIGINT, that of overstating the significance of the intelligence received. While being able to intercept Japanese radio traffic was a great boon to the US war effort, sometimes it

led many American officials erroneously to believe that they could practically read the minds of the Japanese governmental authorities, thus rendering tried and true military intelligence methods of estimating the situation largely unnecessary.³³

IMINT was similarly handled by the military, but due to the lack of advanced technology, it consisted primarily of airborne reconnaissance photography.

In the Persian Gulf War, however, IMINT would dominate the field, thanks to the technological marvels of radar, satellite imagery, and high-speed connections that could transmit images at near real-time directly to the field commanders. By July 1990, four KH-11 ("keyhole") satellites and a Lacrosse radar satellite were focused on the Iraq-Kuwait border, more IMINT technology than had ever been previously devoted to a single target.³⁴ Ever cognizant of the fact that a key component of IMINT is skilled interpretation, the military established the Joint Imagery Production Complex (JIPC) in Saudi Arabia at the end of

1990 to address this need. According to Gen. James R. Clapper, Director of NIMA:

The JPIC provided the theater-controlled reconnaissance elements with hard-copy photographic reproduction support, while its multi-service, multi-national staff also performed photo interpretation and database support activities. In the course of the crisis, these personnel were responsible for producing and disseminating over 50,000 photographic products drawn from more than 1 million feet of film that passed through an adjoining laboratory.³⁵

There was a severe imbalance in favor of IMINT.

Even though there was a severe imbalance in favor of IMINT during the Persian Gulf War, that is not to say that the other categories were completely absent. In the SIGINT arena,

Satellites and ground stations routinely soak up all conversations made over microwave telephone links and military radio. Computers at GCHQ [British signals intelligence] at Cheltenham and the National Security Agency at Fort Meade in Maryland then try to break the codes and translate the conversations From the start of the crisis, the allies have been able to understand most of Iraq's coded communications.³⁶

In addition to monitoring Iraqi military communications, President Bush seems to have also used the NSA to decrypt and monitor the reactions of Middle Eastern leaders to the crisis.³⁷ As always, HUMINT was used to fill in the gaps in knowledge not covered by SIGINT or IMINT. In this case, the primary use of HUMINT was to assist in the targeting process. According to the Department of Defense's Final Report to Congress, HUMINT use was described as follows:

Sources detailed the locations of bunkers underneath key facilities, including the Iraqi Air Force headquarters, which was composed of several main buildings and five underground bunkers, and the Iraqi practice of stringing coaxial communications cable under bridges rather than under the river beds in Baghdad and southern Iraq. This information was the deciding factor in the decision to target key bridges in Baghdad. Sources identified the communications center in Baghdad; less than 12 hours later, this facility was destroyed.³⁸

PART III: PERCEPTION-BASED COMPARISON OF THE COMMUNITIES

WHAT IS "INSTITUTIONAL CHARACTER"?

Before any comparison of intelligence community perceptions can be undertaken, it is first necessary to establish that there is, in fact, such a thing as an "Institutional Character" that accurately represents the views, beliefs, and perceptions of the intelligence community as a whole. Much work in this field has already been done, although it was not so much geared towards defining an "Institutional Character" as to proving the existence of the concept of a national character, variously called national characteristics, national psychology, or the national mind.³⁹ However, if one can prove the existence of a national character, then it is easy to prove by inductive reasoning that any group of people, be it a nation or an organization, possesses a similar type of character.

National character is most simply defined as a *consistent pattern of national behavior*, which is an emergent property based on the aggregate character of the people and the influence of the leadership.⁴⁰ In other words:

For the purposes of this discussion the national character may be called courageous or trustworthy if the pattern of behavior of a given nation indicates that it acts in this way over a wide range of circumstances. It may then be said with justification: "*H* nation has acted in a highly trustworthy manner in the pertinent past. It probably will continue to act in a trustworthy manner for the foreseeable future – unless we can find some reason to make us think otherwise."⁴¹

*Evidence is not practical, mind-set forms
the basis for interpretation.*

With regard to intelligence communities, the people that comprise the community are already in possession of a mind-set which allows them to deal with incomplete and ambiguous information, which is generally all that they have. According to Jack Davis, an expert in analytic tradecraft, "in circumstances where rigorous testing of assumptions and weighing of evidence is not practical, mind-set forms the basis for interpretation of how things work."⁴² Davis goes on to quote Klaus Knorr, one of the first intelligence scholars to address this concept:

It must be understood that the formulation of such a set by an intelligence service is both inevitable and

indispensable. It is inevitable that, in doing their job, professionals will more or less deliberately build up the set. And it is indispensable because the set is a most valuable tool in performing timely, coherent, articulate and, on a probability basis, accurate intelligence. Without it, the current stream of information would be unmanageable and often paralyzingly ambiguous.⁴³

Couple this idea of mind-set with the extensive psychological research demonstrating that personal impressions tend to persist even after the evidence that created those impressions is fully discredited,⁴⁴ and the concept of an "Institutional Character" for an intelligence community meets all the requirements set forth by Platt for national character. If it can be said that most of the analysts in an intelligence community share a particular mind-set, then the assumptions built into that mind-set will persist, even in the face of contrary evidence, and will lead to a consistent pattern of institutional behavior across a range of circumstances circumscribed only by the scope of the mind-set and the intelligence target to which it applies (generally a group, country, or region). Because the intelligence provided by the community also shapes the beliefs and behavior of the policy makers, the institutional mind-set can also influence the national mind-set, which can influence the national character, so in the case of intelligence communities, these two concepts are actually intertwined.

THE PERILS OF CONFIDENCE

As a rule, people tend to believe in an inflated concept of how much they influence the actions of others. This phenomenon generally stems from the fact that an individual will be intimately familiar with his/her efforts at influence, but not so familiar with outside factors. This behavior has been repeatedly proven by psychological tests in which individuals consistently perceived their own actions as the cause of their successes but believed that their failures were due to factors beyond their control.⁴⁵ Similarly, governments, following the above concept of institutional character, often fall prey to the same weakness. If the government in question believes that it is powerful, then it will generally become overconfident in what it can achieve with regard to an enemy. Any successes made against the target country will only serve to reinforce this overconfidence, and failures will be written off, according to both the above tests as well as those prior that demonstrated the persistence of personal impressions. Contrarily, governments that believe that they are weaker than the enemy will blame their failures on the superior enemy rather than on any internal problems of their own, and the failures will reinforce their belief that they are weaker, while successes will be written off.

Because the analysts that comprise the intelligence community generally share the same mind-set as is represented in the institutional character (since the institutional character is nothing but an aggregation of its members' mind-sets, such a statement is logically proven), analysts who are institutionally indoctrinated into a pattern of overconfidence or underconfidence will pass this belief into their analyses, which will then represent a slightly warped view of reality. These analyses in turn may be used as assumed truth by subsequent analysts, who will add their own indoctrinated biases into their analyses, thereby skewing it even further. Ultimately, the final analysis may be used by decision makers, which can result in a policy and a government-wide institutional set of beliefs that bears no resemblance to the actual state of affairs.

To further complicate matters, in a confrontational situation such as war in which the enemy is perceived to be superior, the effects of fear on behavior and mind-set must also be accounted for. Janice Gross Stein, a political psychologist, states that "[f]ear and anxiety in particular interrupt cognitive processes and can culminate in distorted processes of defensive avoidance and hypervigilance,"⁴⁶ while Roy Godson, an intelligence scholar, makes a very similar claim about governments:

By and large, the greater the perceived threat, the more support there was for intelligence and the more interest in bolstering covert action and counterintelligence.⁴⁷

Either way, a perception of weakness compared to an enemy will cause a government to focus its efforts defensively rather than offensively, which will perpetuate the assumption that the enemy is superior because it needs to be defended against.

ABSOLUTE STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS

Now that the need for a perception-based criterion for comparison has been established, a sample comparison can be made of the intelligence communities previously discussed. These IC's were chosen because they represent the three possibilities of absolute, objective strength differentials. As historian G. J. A. O'Toole put it:

The intelligence history of the [American] Revolution, like its military history, is a case of talented and dedicated amateurs going up against the experienced professionals of a major world power, and winning.⁴⁸

The patriots were up against an effective secret service that had been around for 200 years. Only a third of the colonists were committed to the cause of rebellion, and

another third would have probably taken arms on behalf of the British if circumstances permitted. To top it all off, the British military was far superior in strength. Streeter Bass, a CIA historian, tells of Washington's thoughts while he is waiting for General Howe to attack New York:

What were Howe's *intentions*? He didn't worry about his *capabilities*; it was all too evident that Howe had the capacity to do just about anything he wanted. His brother's fleet controlled the rivers, his own army – well-trained and equipped – outnumbered the Americans . . . by more than two to one.⁴⁹

While the American Revolution was the setting for a very unequal pairing of opponents, World War II was more of a competition between peers, although as time progressed the competition with Germany became extremely one-sided. Even though the analysis is of the time before the United States entered the war, the following gives a good representation of the rough equality of the sides:

[U]ntil the autumn of 1941 – for the first two years of the war – the intelligence bodies on both sides achieved roughly equal success or failure. To illustrate the point by reference only to SIGINT, the most valuable and prolific of all the sources, British success in breaking the cypher used by the Germans in the April 1940 invasion of Norway and in reading the Luftwaffe's communications from May 1940 was balanced by the fact that the Germans read between 30 and 50 percent of British naval traffic in the North Sea and the Atlantic during 1940, and a considerable amount of the French Army's traffic from the outbreak of war to the fall of France.⁵⁰

In addition to a military that brought Europe to its knees, Germany had first-rate intelligence on ship traffic from all over the globe, which allowed them to sink merchant ships at an alarming rate with their U-boats, almost strangling the British.⁵¹ On the Pacific front, the Japanese had the military power to hold most of the Pacific and make the US forces pay heavily for any incursions. The Japanese intelligence community was also very active, as can be seen from the following account:

During this period, [1940-41] the Japs suddenly established a huge soybean plantation in Colombia. The first hint that something was amiss was a hunter's chance discovery that the "farm" was entirely surrounded by a charged electric wire fence. The second hint came when a surveyor accidentally broke his instrument while working near one of the "farm" gates, and a 15-cent-a-day Jap field laborer came over, and after a short conversation, proceeded to repair the

delicate mechanism. The surveyor was so astonished that he tested the Jap laborer by hinting that he was confronted with an extremely difficult theoretical problem, which the Jap promptly solved. This certainly was no average 15-cent-a-day field laborer, and the surveyor reported the episode to authorities. An air survey of the "farm" revealed several score buildings, all arranged in a perfect pattern, and finally, upon raiding the "farm," 80 per cent of the structures were found, not housing workers, but stacked with ammunition, guns, flares, etc. And this plantation was but a few hours' easy flight from the Panama Canal.⁵²

Lastly, as proof that even the mainland was not safe, espionage cases in mainland America jumped from 250 in 1938 to more than 1600 in 1939.⁵³

The Persian Gulf War serves as an example of a war in which the US is far superior to its enemy. The US military and intelligence community were designed to combat the Soviet Union, and they were arrayed against a small Middle Eastern country with an over-extended logistics system, a limited air offensive capability, and ineffective foreign intelligence.⁵⁴ The entire ground war took only 100 hours. Even the Iraqis knew they were outmatched.

As a captured Iraqi officer put it, "We had a great appreciation of your intelligence system; we knew from our experience in the Iranian War that at all times you could see us during day and night and knew where we were on the ground. If we communicated, you could hear us and target us On the other hand, as we looked at our intelligence system, we had no idea where you were on the ground, we had no intelligence system capabilities to see what your dispositions were, and we had no way to monitor your communications. We knew you were going to attack only when you overran our front-line positions"⁵⁵

THE EFFECT OF PERCEIVED STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS

Even though these three wars were categorized by different absolute strength differentials, such was not necessarily the case with perceived strength differentials. In the case of the American Revolution, the patriots knew that they were inferior in brute strength, which is why General Washington sought to level the playing field with deception. Much as would be predicted by the model of perceived weakness, he chose to focus on counterintelligence and covert action in his battlefield tactics. "There is one evil that I dread," wrote General Washington of the British, "and that is, their spies."⁵⁶ His obsession with secrecy was a direct result of this dread, and

such an obsession would have been disastrous for him in an environment with a more aggressive oversight apparatus, but thankfully his intelligence community, as it was, included the Congress, and so the oversight establishment shared the institutional character.

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In the case of the World War II intelligence community, the actual peers were perceived as superior enemies. Even before the war began, worries began to spread in the United States about the military secret services “of the most up to date pattern” that were being established in other nations. A 1941 book about intelligence operations included an account of a British spy who infiltrated German intelligence, and during his mission:

Richter could well conclude that the Nazis had nothing much to learn in the gentle art of espionage As far as he could see, the Nazi neglected nothing.⁵⁷

Even by 1944, when there was significant evidence that German intelligence was in shambles,

the military brass at the Supreme Headquarters of the Allied Expeditionary Force (SHAEF) in London held little hope of accomplishing anything of consequence in terms of military intelligence in Germany.⁵⁸

This persistence in believing in a superior enemy despite is just as would be predicted, because the belief of the unstoppable German war machine had been reinforced so many times at the beginning of the war. In the words of historian Waldo Heinrichs:

One must remember that as of the spring of 1941 the Wehrmacht was awesome. Hitler had struck down his enemies one by one, swiftly and completely. He had never made a mistake.⁵⁹

Similarly, Japan had succeeded in dealing a very harsh surprise blow to the United States intelligence community at Pearl Harbor, and the fact that they had managed to do such a thing had overinflated the perception of their intelligence capability, although not to the extent of Germany's. The illogical beliefs brought on by a misplaced perception of an enemy's intelligence superiority can best be exemplified by a comment by General John De Witt, the commander of the West Defense Command, when he was calling for the internment of Japanese-Americans in

California. “The very fact that no sabotage has taken place to date . . . is a disturbing and confirming indication that such action will be taken.”⁶⁰ Perhaps more disturbing than this statement is the fact that it seemed to convince President Roosevelt of the threat of Japanese-Americans.

The final intelligence community in this study, that of the Persian Gulf War, does not neatly fit into a perception of strength or weakness. It was never believed by anyone in the administration or the intelligence community that Iraq was anything close to a military or intelligence peer, but it was believed that they were more of a threat than they actually turned out to be. Overestimates included:

a probable overcounting of Iraqi soldiers deployed in the Kuwaiti theater of operations when ground combat began, perhaps by as much as 50 percent; an overestimation of the threat posed by Iraqi chemical weapons and battlefield fortifications; an overestimation of the likelihood of terrorist attacks by Iraqi sympathizers; [and] the unanticipated flight of nearly 140 of Iraq's finest combat aircraft to Iran.⁶¹

These mistakes, some officials said, may have contributed to the lightning success of the ground offensive by suggesting the need for a large military offensive able to swiftly overrun the enemy.⁶² However, the overall perception of US superiority did lead to some of the predicted overconfidence problems, most glaring of which was the complete lack of HUMINT assets inside Iraq that could speak to Hussein's intentions or tactics, because the US intelligence community underestimated Iraq's counterintelligence capabilities.

CONCLUSIONS

Since the intelligence communities being compared were chosen deliberately for their cultural similarities, being as they are from different points in one culture's history, it was very easy to compare them in such a way as to highlight the differences when they did occur. Comparison of these three communities, each with a different level of technology, did demonstrate that actual technology does not always make a significant difference in intelligence success as long as both sides have comparable technology. However, when one side has significantly greater technology than the other, then a marked success differential will appear between the two intelligence communities. In a similar vein, the extremes of the American Revolution and the Persian Gulf War demonstrated that while an intelligence community can concentrate on any form of collection it chooses, it will have the greatest amount of success and the least amount of gaps in its knowledge if it integrates them all into the final product.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

While there is a very clear need for a perception-based model for comparing intelligence communities, this particular model does possess a few weaknesses. First of all, it is very difficult to ascertain the beliefs and assumptions of an intelligence community in a friendly nation, let alone a hostile one. Research for this paper was easy for the two historical communities, but there is very little open source material on the modern community that sheds any light on any manner of institutional character.

Also, in communities with extreme decentralization, such as the World War II IC, there is not always a single institutional character. Platt addressed this problem with regard to nations that contained a variety of very diverse groups, and his solution was to determine a character for each group (much like the proposed institutional character), even though it complicates matters.⁶³ This approach would actually be more useful for evaluating the World War II era, as the intelligence community really had two different characters – OSS and military.

Lastly, this model is best used if there is a large span of time over which to establish the institutional character. Wars, or even negotiations, that span years are perfect, but extremely short time frames, such as was the case with the Persian Gulf War, are more prone to error because the institutional character is based on a much smaller data set. A more rapid method of determining institutional character with an acceptable degree of accuracy might resolve this difficulty, but it may prove to be irresolvable.

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Notes

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