

"There is no phase of the intelligence business which is more important than the proper relationship between intelligence itself and the people who use its product. Oddly enough, this relationship, which one would expect to establish itself automatically, does not do this. It is established as a result of a great deal of persistent conscious effort, and is likely to disappear when the effort is relaxed."

□ (b)(2)
(b)(3)

-Sherman Kent, Strategic Intelligence For American World Policy (1949)

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INTELLIGENCE AND POLICY-THE ON-GOING DEBATE

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The United States today is operating in a world where its foreign policies are increasingly being tested by its adversaries and seriously questioned by its allies. Traditionally accepted patterns of international relationships and behavior are shifting in unexpected and often violent ways. It is against such a backdrop of instability and change that policy makers must formulate effective foreign policy. And it is the intelligence producers who must be able to provide these policy makers with the kinds of relevant and timely analysis needed to devise their policy options, to reach critical decisions and to implement the final policy mandates.

In assessing the impact of intelligence analysis on the policy review and decision process, we have found that the relationship between intelligence producers and their policy-making consumers is indeed highly significant. Yet, as Richard K. Betts of the Brookings Institution has recently pointed out, "the increased importance of intelligence has not been matched by increased understanding of what it is or how it can and should be used to improve government decisions."

A review of the existing literature-both of classified and unclassified-has uncovered a serious lack of formal guidance or doctrine in this area. It appears that the intelligence producer/ consumer relationship is often based on institutional tradition or on personal experiences which are difficult to generalize. Writers concerned with the intelligence process have asked: How closely can intelligence producers work with policy makers and still maintain their objectivity? What limitations must be placed on Sherman Kent's "persistent conscious efforts" in order to prevent accusations of intelligence bias?

· Richard K. Betts, "Intelligence and Policy." Statement to the Subcommittee on International Security and Scientific Affairs of the Committee on Foreign Affairs, U.S. House of Representatives on January 28, 1980, p. 2.

I. AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Theoretical concern, as expressed in the literature, focuses on the degree to which intelligence producers should interact with their consumers in order to receive guidance from policy planners without compromising either objectivity or integrity of judgment. Most early commentators posited what might be labeled the "traditionalist" approach—a strict adherence to the tenet of separation. Advocates of this theory claimed that the intelligence analyst must remain distantly aloof from policy interests or face the danger of becoming just another participant in the policy debate. Three of the earliest spokesmen for this position were adamant on this point:

- Experience has shown the only kind of a system for us to have is a centralized, impartial, independent agency reporting directly to the President . . . intelligence must be independent of the people it serves so that the material it obtains will not be slanted or distorted by the views of the people directing operations.

Major General William J. Donovan, 1 May 1946 (*Vital Speeches, Vol. XII, No. 14, p. 248*).

- . . . for the proper judging of the situation in any foreign country it is important that information should be processed by an agency whose duty it is to weigh facts, and to draw conclusions from those facts without having either the facts or the conclusions warped by the inevitable and even proper prejudices of the men whose duty it is to determine policy and who, having once determined a policy, are too likely to be blind to any facts which might tend to prove the policy to be faulty. The Central Intelligence Agency should have nothing to do with policy. It should try to get at the facts on which others must determine policy

From the Memorandum Respecting Section 202 (Central Intelligence Agency) of the Bill to Provide for a National Defense Establishment, submitted by Allen W. Dulles, 25 April 1947.

- The role of intelligence is to winnow extraneous data from the vital facts and to set the facts in proper perspective thereby providing a factual basis for high-level policy decisions . . . the Central Intelligence Agency does not make policy . . . the Agency is comparable to a battery of searchlights peering out to sea—trying to pierce the fog which surrounds other countries and areas of the world. The intelligence product, however, may be considered as a giant jigsaw puzzle, into which we are continually trying to fit the pieces.

Rear Admiral Roscoe H. Hillenkoetter, USN, Director, Central Intelligence Agency (*Army Information Digest, Vol. 3, No. 11, November 1948, p. 4*).

Even Sherman Kent, an acknowledged "founding father" of our intelligence structure, wrote: "Intelligence is not the formulator of objectives; it is not the drafter of policy; it is not the maker of plans; it is not the carrier out of operations. Intelligence is ancillary to these; to use the dreadful cliché, it performs a service function." • (1949)

• Sherman Kent, Strategic Intelligence For American World Policy- Hamden, Connecticut: Archon Books, 1965 edition, p. 182.

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Policy makers and the public they represented were also concerned lest the proposed peacetime intelligence community take on the negative aspects of an American secret police. The traditionalist blueprint provided assurance that the intelligence producers would not become major spokesmen in the policy-making departments of the government, but would remain instead a living compendium of facts devoted and subservient to the support of policy makers.

THE TRADITIONALIST VIEW

The traditionalists viewed the policy process as a prescribed sequence of events into which the intelligence producer fed a major but isolated input-descriptive factual background-aid collected "secrets." It was up to the policy makers themselves to draw implications from this information and to assemble a range of options based on them. The traditionalists argued that the intelligence producer should initiate no direct interaction with his consumers, but rather should respond to requests for data and analysis.

Dissatisfaction with the traditionalist theory and the intelligence produce-consumer relationship in practice gave rise to another theoretical delineation--that of the "activist." The theory advocates a closer working relationship between intelligence producers and consumers through the development of a two-way flow of information and feedback. Dialogue is the key concept in this framework, not componential soliloquy.

Sherman Kent was the first of the early intelligence commentators to suggest the need for a conceptual re-evaluation. Like the traditionalists, he saw the intelligence process as a careful division of labor, but for him the relationship was becoming more and more unbalanced in practice. He argued that unless an intelligence organization knew why it was at work, what use its product was going to serve and what sorts of policy actions were being contemplated with what sorts of available resources, intelligence analysis would suffer. Without guidance from the consumer, the intelligence organization would have "difficulty in shaping itself along lines of greatest utility for the consumer ... being constantly in danger of collecting the wrong information and not collecting the right." Without some direct communication with intelligence analysts, the consumer, through ignorance, "may ask for something the organization is not set up to deliver, or he may ask for so wide a range of information that the totality of resources of the organization would be fully deployed for months, or he may ask for something which though procurable is not worth the effort." · ·

Kent realized that if intelligence analysis was not to become an "apologist" for policy plans and objectives, its objectivity would have to be protected. He argued, however, that this protection could be taken too far, likening the problem to that of piling armor on a medieval knight until the man inside was absolutely safe but completely useless. Of the two dangers for intelligence analysis-being too far from its consumers or too close-Kent concluded that the greater danger was in being too distant. He advised intelligence producers actively to sell their product, routinely to appraise consumer reaction to it and constantly to be aware of new consumer problems.

Despite this break from the rigid maxims of the traditionalist theory, Sherman Kent still viewed the problem in organizational terms, and argued against having intelligence under the administration control of its consumers in plans and operations.

- Sherman Kent, p. 167.
- Sherman Kent, p. 167.



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Intelligence, he felt, might risk losing in integrity and objectivity what was gained in guidance. Kent also implied that impetus for having intelligence analysis go beyond the factual description and interpretative background needed for a basic understanding of the policy problem must come from the policy makers. The job of the intelligence producers was to stand behind policy makers "with the book opened at the right page; to call their attention to the stubborn fact they may be neglecting, and-at their request-to analyze alternative courses without indicating choice." He warned, however, that removing intelligence from the day-to-day departmental business might have an adverse effect on the applicability of its product.

Kent explained that there were a number of reasons why intelligence producers and consumers would have difficulty in achieving an effective relationship:

- Organization in a rigorous staff pattern, with strong loyalties along vertical lines, tended to increase institutional inertia.
- The offense taken by some consumers at the doubts held by their counterparts in intelligence concerning their ability to overcome subjective judgments served to stultify a more free give-and-take between them.
- An uneasy feeling on the part of some consumers that the separate existence of an intelligence organization was somehow an "insult" to their own mental capabilities, as if someone were saying, "Now don't worry Your thinking is being done for you. We've arranged to relieve you of all thinking by giving you an external brain. We call it Intelligence. Whenever you want to know something, just go ask Intelligence." · ·
- Security precautions taken by both intelligence consumers and producers encourage a certain amount of mutual wariness and reticence to volunteer information. When "security" was rigidly applied by the producers to protect sources and methods, the consumers had to accept the validity of their findings on faith. When this rule was applied by the consumers to protect "state secrets," the production of irrelevant analysis was often the result.
- Consumers were reluctant to undertake risky policy ventures based on the word of those who "did not carry the weight of operative responsibility." · · ·

THE ACTIVIST SCHOOL

By advocating the development of a two-way dialogue between intelligence producers and consumers, Kent attempted to fit the existing traditionalist theory to the relationship in practice. However, it was Roger Hilsman, in his book *Strategic Intelligence and National Decisions (1956)*, who took the argument one step further and pointed to the need for a more thorough theoretical change.

The major portion of Hilsman's book is devoted to outlining the basic attitudes and assumptions of the traditionalist framework:

- The function of intelligence analysis is to fulfill the need of policy makers for background, history and description of the general situation by providing factual statements without prejudice.

· Sherman Kent. p. 182.

·· Sherman Kent. p. 189.

··· Sherman Kent, pp. 193-194

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- The intelligence analysts should be attuned to catching the odd fact or the "freak" statistic, but policy makers should find the meaning in these for United States policy alternatives. The idea behind this strict division of labor was that only an independent intelligence organization could be objective and could provide "all" the facts which someone involved in the formulation of policy might intentionally or unintentionally miss.
- Most intelligence producers and consumers accepted the traditional jig-saw puzzle analogy in which the process of intelligence analysis is just a question of assembling facts in their proper relationship to each other. This function was to be performed prior to, rather than during or after, the formulation of policy. The credibility of new information would then be tested by the ease with which it "fit" into the emerging picture.

In all his interviews with various policy, intelligence and academic people, Hilsman discovered only four who openly advocated a role for intelligence which radically differed from the traditionalist view. These people stressed the following points:

- Intelligence analysts should be encouraged to examine how information acquired on policy problems shapes or affects the courses of action open to the United States. Policy makers would still have the responsibility of choice.
- Intelligence analysts should examine policy situations continually by providing background facts *before* decisions are made, a range of possible options and the effects of each from an unprejudiced point of view *during* the decision process, and a monitoring of reactions *after* a policy decision has been reached.
- Intelligence should not collect and process information indiscriminately, but should instead provide studies on specific foreign policy problems and the effects such policies might have. Being objective is a question of "maintaining a mental discipline, not a mental vacuum."
- Some sort of feedback mechanism between producer and consumer is needed to counteract feelings of isolation on the part of intelligence analysts, many of whom never know what happens to their reports.

Despite the trend towards traditionalism, Hilsman, in his last chapter, argued that an effective evaluation and weighing of collected intelligence could not be done except in the process of analyzing the policy problem itself. Although Hilsman felt that intelligence producers must "orient themselves frankly and consciously toward policy and action ... adapting tools expressly to the needs of policy," he suspected that the inertia of large organizations and the persistent mind-set of individuals would present obstacles to a more meaningful division of labor. Hilsman believed that while a producer/consumer doctrine or theory may not necessarily describe the relationship as it exists in practice, the theory or doctrine does exert an influence on how it is practiced. He argued that such an influence had not always been good and that the time had come for a more careful look at the existing intelligence theory.

Hilsman was critical of the jig-saw puzzle analogy, because it illustrated the blind faith in facts underlying the traditionalist theory. As a guide for the intelligence process this analogy was severely limiting, since Hilsman argued that the process of analysis

• Roger Hilsman. *Strategic Intelligence and National Decisions*. The Free Press, Glencoe, Illinois_ 1956, p. 118

•• Roger Hilsman. p. 183.



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required more than a mere assembling of puzzle pieces. After reviewing Hilsman's book, one analyst summed up the situation:

First there are collectors, to whom every fact is a piece in some puzzle; and because there are so many facts, the hapless collector has to assume that all are of equal value, and he gathers them indiscriminately. Then there are the processors and stores, who need a large staff simply to determine what puzzle each piece belongs to. Then the analysts, so swamped with facts that they must be divided up into edge pieces, sky pieces, cloud pieces, and faces. Atop them all, then, are the "big picture" men, who integrate the sub-puzzles, joining the fence to the house, the tree to the sky, until the puzzle is complete. The implication is obvious that, if everyone does his job, life will turn out to be fully consistent, entirely knowable, and perfectly rectangular.

THE DEBATE CONTINUES

In the early 1960s, the role of intelligence in policy making was again the subject of debate. Outlining succinctly the position of the traditionalist, Jack Zlotnick, in his book *National Intelligence* (1964), wrote: "Their (the intelligence representatives to the NSC and other forums dealing with national policy) role is to provide the required intelligence, which will serve as an important but not the sole ingredient in decision making; it is for the representatives of the operating departments to recommend policy. The reason for this meticulous drawing of the line . . . is the need to keep intelligence unbiased and free from the appearance of special pleading." . . . Unlike the earlier traditionalist thinkers, however, Zlotnick felt that this "hands-off policy" injunction could and should be relaxed if doing so permitted more effective policy making. He cited two examples:

- It would be proper for intelligence analysts to examine the probable effects in foreign countries of alternative U.S. policies.
- Intelligence analysts should be permitted to evaluate the results of policy decisions already made. In these cases, Zlotnick thought that the intelligence community might "find itself with a heavy responsibility for decisions to revise or reinforce past policies, despite the theoretical apartheid between intelligence support and policy making." . . .

On the other side of the debate, Benno Wasserman, in a 1960 *Political Studies* article ("The Failure of Intelligence Prediction"), presented his views on the implicit doctrine of separation as found by Roger Hilsman. To him, such a separation erected dangerous barriers between the policy and intelligence functions- "the former being charged with the active role of making decisions, free from the strictures of intelligence; the latter with the passive (or unbiased) role of collecting information divorced from policy considerations." * The result was often to be found in policies not being based on the best available knowledge and in intelligence analysts' producing information irrelevant to policy makers' real problems. Like Hilsman before him, Wasserman concluded that "for policy and intelligence to function as efficiently as possible there should be the maximum interaction between them." **

. . . Jack Zlotnick, *National Intelligence*, Industrial College of the Armed Forces, Washington, D.C.

1964, pp. 9-10.

... Jack Zlotnick, p. 10

* Benno Wasserman. "The Failure of Intelligence Prediction,' *Political Studies, Vol. VIII*, Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1960, p. 161.

** Benno Wasserman, p. 165.

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Wasserman recommended that policy makers should reveal their contemplated decisions to intelligence analysts, who would then estimate the likely consequences of these proposed actions before the final formulation of policy was complete and set. According to Wasserman, it was this "critical character" of the Policy/ intelligence framework which provided the sort of evaluation needed for a sound prediction.

As the intelligence community developed over the next decade, experience with the policy process began to soften the strict independence advocated by the traditionalists:

- Intelligence analysts began to realize that analysis written without reference to policy concerns might be irrelevant. They sought to develop personal contacts with their consumers in order to become more aware of the preferences and peculiar mind-sets which affected the policy makers receptivity to intelligence.
- Policy makers increasingly sought intelligence advice, often on an informal basis. Consumers were encouraged to communicate their needs more specifically and to assess the intelligence product more rigorously as to its responsiveness to those needs.
- Intelligence failures forced analysts to re-examine their methods and-inevitably-their relationship with policy makers.

THE MURPHY COMMISSION

Still, the doctrinal debate was not settled. In the Murphy Commission's study, published in June 1975, for example, the traditionalist and activist views again surfaced. William J. Barnds argued that the intelligence analyst cannot be cut off from the policy process lest his analysis become an isolated intellectual exercise carried out in a vacuum. Further, the milieu in which intelligence producers and consumers must operate cannot be readily divided into two mutually exclusive spheres. Additionally, coordinated guidance must be given not only to the producers of finished intelligence, but to the collectors of information as well. According to Barnds, this involves the intelligence producer in the role of a middle-man, since analysis must:

- communicate requirements for collection in a regular and systematic manner without allowing the procedure to become "a purely mechanical process divorced from the shifting concerns of the producers" and their consumers, and
- transmit to consumers a finished product that is not only accurate but also useful by providing policy makers with judgments and the implications of such judgments on the situation in the world at present, what it has been in the past and what it may be in the future.

Despite inherent tensions and friction in the relationship, Barnds argued that policy makers must keep the appropriate parts of the intelligence community informed of significant policy matters coming up for decision. Policy makers must also learn where and how to tap into the intelligence apparatus in order to ask the right questions of the right people. This requires a continuous flow-formal and informal communication and feedback between producers and consumers.

John W. Huizenga, on the other hand, wrote in response to Barnds that distance from the policy making process as a weakness of intelligence is ill-founded. He argued that intelligence has been "deliberately

and for good reason organizationally struc-

· William J. Barnds. "Intelligence Functions," Commission on the Organization of the Government for the Conduct of Foreign Policy, Volume 7, June 1975, p. 14.



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ture to be *separate*." • He believed that the "alleged" difference between the traditional view of the intelligence/ policy relationship and an "apparently newer view which argues for a close embrace and continuous impact" • • is a false problem. In his view there should exist a natural tension between the two components "for if intelligence does its job well, i.e., with as much objectivity as possible, it will present a picture of the external world more intractable" • • • than policy makers would have it. For intelligence analysis to provide effective support, he argued, there must be *both* a functional separation *and* a continuous, two-way dialogue. In his words, "the effect of overemphasizing the latter and downplaying the former, which is now in vogue, is to risk turning intelligence into a pliant team-player." * Should this happen, and intelligence hesitate either to be the messenger of bad news or to undertake analyses which may appear to question the underlying assumptions of policy makers, then it ceases to do its job.

It is hardly surprising that the debate over the intelligence /policy relationship continues, given the complex nature of the interaction between the two. As Barnds has pointed out, neither "intelligence" nor "policy making" exist in disembodied form but are instead represented by the work of individuals supported and constrained by the institutions which employ them. Major-General Sir Kenneth Strong, a senior official in the British intelligence system, summed up the debate as follows:

"The generally accepted view that it is the duty of the Intelligence officer to "give just the facts, please" has little relevance in a modern governmental structure. In the first place, the facts are often such that the policy makers are unable to interpret them without expert advice. Secondly, and obviously, the choice of facts is critical, and the Intelligence officer's decision as to which facts are relevant and which should be presented to the policy makers is often the major initial step in the decision process. This choice between the trivial and sensational, between the unpleasant and pleasing, is by no means as easy as it may appear. Intelligence officers are human, too, and the temptations to prepare a logical story or to serve personal prejudices cannot be overlooked, especially in areas where the facts themselves are often in some doubt and the interpretation of them is as much a matter of opinion as of logic. . . . On the other hand, there is a frequent temptation for policy makers to use preconceived judgments or political requirements."

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• John W. Huizenga, "Comments on Intelligence and Policy Making in an Institutional Context (Barnds)," Murphy Commission, p. 41.

• John W. Huizenga, p. 42.

• • • John W. Huizenga, p. 42.

* John W. Huizenga, p. 42.

** Major-General Sir Kenneth Strong, *Men of Intelligence*, St. Martin's Press, New York, 1972, p. 140.

(The above article is unclassified.)