

LOCH K. JOHNSON, EDITOR

Essentials of Strategic Intelligence



PRAEGER SECURITY INTERNATIONAL TEXTBOOK

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Loch K. Johnson, Editor

Praeger Security International Textbook



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Preface

Loch K. Johnson

IN 2007, PRAEGER SECURITY INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHED A LANDMARK in the study of intelligence: a five-volume work, entitled *Strategic Intelligence*, which presented a comprehensive array of articles on espionage activities written by top scholars from around the world. Thirty years before, one would have been hard-pressed to find enough good articles on the subject to fill two volumes, let alone five. In those three decades since 1975, however, the study of intelligence had grown considerably and allowed such an ambitious compilation of original essays. Today, several first-rate professional journals exist in the field, including the premier publications *Intelligence and National Security* (published in the United Kingdom), *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* (the United States), and *Studies in Intelligence* (the Central Intelligence Agency, in both a classified and an unclassified form). In just the past ten years, bulging anthologies on the general topic of “strategic intelligence” have appeared, along with various “handbooks” on intelligence, a more specialized work on “intelligence and ethics,” and, in 2014, a richly textured “companion to intelligence studies”—not to mention a tidal wave of books and articles on one aspect or another of this subject. (See Chapter One that follows this preface for specific citations.)

To bring greater focus to this wide literature, the volume offered here gathers together and updates several of the key articles published initially in the Praeger Security International five-volume series. For this new single volume, the chapters include revisions of the earlier work to take into account more recent intelligence issues. Here in one place, designed specifically for classroom use, are 21 core articles on strategic intelligence by some of the leading researchers in the field.

The Rise of Intelligence Studies as an Academic Discipline

The recent flowering of research on intelligence has been an academic phenomenon. Except in times of scandal (Watergate in 1973, CIA domestic spying in 1974, the Iran-*contra* affair in 1987), one could find in this earlier era relatively little media coverage of intelligence activities, so tightly held were these operations by the United States and other governments. Now, fueled by terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the erroneous prediction in 2002 that Iraq was developing and stockpiling weapons of mass destruction (WMD), and the latest controversy involving massive “metadata” collection on American citizens by the National Security Agency (NSA), hardly a week goes by without several reports on intelligence in the *New York Times* and other leading media outlets. These days, even America’s top literary magazines, the *Atlantic Monthly* and the *New Yorker*, visit the subject with some regularity.

Moreover, an Intelligence Studies Group has been founded within the American Political Science Association as a forum for the presentation of papers and panel discussions on the subject of intelligence at the APSA’s annual convention; and within the International Studies Association, an Intelligence Studies Section offers some 20 panels on intelligence topics each year at the ISA’s annual meeting. Professional associations of intelligence scholars have formed in the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, Australia, New Zealand, and elsewhere. Further, courses on intelligence have proliferated across the United States, the British Commonwealth, and in Europe, with evidence that this topic is catching on as an academic pursuit in other regions of the world as well. Clearly, intelligence studies has come of age.

A Roadmap to This Anthology

As with the earlier five-volume work, the chapters in this book display a breadth of inquiry. Presented here are empirical studies, historical treatments, theoretical frameworks, memoirs, case studies, legal analyses, comparative essays, and ethical assessments. The authors come from the ranks of academe, the intelligence agencies, think tanks, the world of diplomacy, and the legal world; and they represent a wide range of scholarly disciplines, including history, international affairs, law, political science, public policy studies, and strategic studies. The end result of this mix is a landscape illuminated by a variety of methods and appreciations—a research trove that examines the key aspects of modern-day intelligence, all condensed into one volume.

Understanding the Hidden Side of Government

The book is organized according to the major topics of study in the field. The first section, entitled “Understanding the Hidden Side of Government,” introduces the reader to the “state of the discipline,” beginning with a bibliographic essay by the editor and continuing with an examination of specific approaches scholars have adopted in their inquiries into this especially difficult discipline, where doors are often shut against outsiders.

In the bibliographic essay that opens the volume, I indicate how the literature on intelligence has mushroomed over the past 40 years. Some of this literature is unreliable, but much of it is of high quality. Amy B. Zegart follows my chapter with an important caveat: the literature may be more voluminous these days, but intelligence studies as an academic field has yet to be accepted as a central part of national security scholarship. The mainstream journals of history, international affairs, and political science still regard the study of intelligence as a marginal pursuit. As Zegart points out, there is a major disconnect between academic scholarship and those who make decisions and rely on intelligence in Washington, London, Berlin, and other capitals around the world. Rounding out this introduction, in Chapter Three, Michael Warner looks at methodologies scholars have used to study intelligence.

The Intelligence Cycle

In the second section, entitled “The Intelligence Cycle,” the book shifts from a broad overview of intelligence to a more detailed examination of its core mission: the collection, analysis, and dissemination to policymakers of information gathered from around the world. The National Security Act of 1947, which created America’s modern intelligence establishment, made it clear that this mission would be the primary duty of the intelligence agencies. As stated by Allen Dulles—the most famous director of Central Intelligence, or DCI (America’s top intelligence official, until this title changed to director of National Intelligence or DNI in 2004)—the intelligence agencies were expected “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.”¹ The collection and interpretation of information, through espionage and from the public record (open-source intelligence), would be the main responsibility of America’s secret agencies.

At the heart of this mission lies the so-called intelligence cycle. Professional intelligence officers define the cycle as “the process by which

information is acquired, converted into intelligence, and made available to policymakers.”² The cycle has five phases: planning and direction, collection, processing, production and analysis, and dissemination. Former CIA officer Arthur S. Hulnick notes in Chapter Four, however, that the idea of a “cycle” fails to capture the complexity of how intelligence is actually collected, assessed, and distributed by intelligence officers. Despite its abstract, theoretical nature, the concept of an intelligence cycle does nevertheless provide an overview of the key steps involved as information moves from the field where it is collected to the high councils of government where decisions are made.

Chapter Five in this section leads the reader into the world of the “ints,” that is, the specialized “intelligences” (methods or tradecraft) used by intelligence officers to collect information. One important method is gathering information through the use of human agents (“assets”) guided by case or “operational” officers working overseas for the CIA or the Defense Department—the topic of human intelligence, or HUMINT, presented by Frederick P. Hitz, a former CIA inspector general.

Other chapters in this volume discuss the method of signals intelligence, or SIGINT, a generic term used to describe the interception and analysis of telephone calls and other communications intelligence, as well as electronic emissions—everything from wiretapping telephones to studying the particles emitted by missiles in test flights. Sometimes these methods can be abused, as when they are used to spy on Americans without proper judicial warrants. SIGINT collection became a topic of national debate in 2013–2014, stirred by revelations by an inside government leaker (Edward J. Snowden, who fled to Russia) that the NSA had adopted “metadata” programs within the United States to collect information about the communications contacts of American citizens. Several authors examine this scandal later in the book.

A further “int” of significance is IMINT, or imagery intelligence, often known by the acronym GEOINT (geospatial-intelligence). In simple terms, IMINT or GEOINT refer chiefly to photographs taken by surveillance satellites and reconnaissance airplanes, either piloted or unpiloted. The interception of telephone conversations (SIGINT) can be revealing, but as the old saying goes, a picture can be worth a thousand words. Measurement and signature intelligence (MASINT) provides yet another method for learning about the activities of America’s adversaries overseas. Here the focus is primarily on the weapons capabilities of a foreign nation or terrorist organization, which can be clandestinely examined through the use of technical procedures. One MASINT approach is to secretly place a form of litmus-paper near the target to determine, say, if a factory is producing aspirin or sarin nerve gas.

Not all the information needed by policymakers is acquired through HUMINT, SIGINT, GEOINT, or MASINT; indeed, the overwhelming majority—sometimes as much as 95 percent of the information that appears in classified government reports—is already in the public domain. This open-source intelligence (OSINT) must be sorted through, organized, and integrated with the secretly gained information. The ultimate objective of all the ints is to provide a nation's leaders with a “decision advantage” in world affairs—a motto inscribed on the walls of the DNI's headquarters in northern Virginia. One of the most difficult challenges in the complex process of collection, analysis, and dissemination of information comes in the final step: at the intersection between intelligence professionals and policymakers—two groups of individuals who often have sharply different training, aspirations, and cultures. Jack Davis, a seasoned CIA analyst, sheds light in Chapter Six on the heart and soul of the intelligence trade: the analysis or interpretation of information gathered through a synergistic combination of all of the ints. He also probes the sometimes turbulent relationship between intelligence officers and the policymakers they serve, the vital intelligence producer–consumer linkage that is further explored by James J. Wirtz in Chapter Seven. In hopes of extracting lessons on intelligence collection and analysis from recent intelligence disasters, British scholar Peter Gill dissects in Chapter Eight the failures associated with the 9/11 attacks and the poor judgments made by intelligence and policy officials about alleged Iraqi WMD.

Covert Action

The third section, entitled “Covert Action,” enters an especially controversial compartment of intelligence: the means by which the United States attempts not just to gather and analyze information from around the world—hard enough—but to manipulate global events through secret activities in the advancement of America's best interests. An ambiguous passage of the National Security Act of 1947 charged the National Security Council (NSC), the group of bosses—the president, vice president, secretary of defense, and secretary of state—in charge of the sixteen U.S. secret agencies (see Appendix), to “perform such other functions and duties related to intelligence [over and beyond collection-and-analysis] affecting the national security as the National Security Council may from time to time direct.”³ The phrase “other functions and duties” left the door ajar for launching the CIA (and more recently the Pentagon) on a wide range of covert actions around the world.

Covert action (CA), sometimes referred to as the “quiet option,” is based on the supposition that this secret approach to foreign affairs is likely to be

less noisy and obtrusive than sending in the Marines. Sometimes professional practitioners also refer to covert action as the “third option,” a foreign policy alternative situated somewhere between diplomacy, on the one hand, and open warfare, on the other hand. As former Secretary of State and National Security Adviser Henry Kissinger once put it, “We need an intelligence community that, in certain complicated situations, can defend the American national interest in the gray areas where military operations are not suitable and diplomacy cannot operate.”⁴ Still others prefer the euphemism “special activities” to describe covert action. Whatever the variation in terminology, the goal of covert action remains constant: to influence events overseas, secretly, in support of American foreign policy.

Covert action operations are often grouped according to four broad categories: propaganda, political, economic, and paramilitary (PM) activities. An example of a propaganda operation was the CIA’s use of Radio Free Europe during the Cold War to transmit anti-communist themes into nations behind the Iron Curtain. An illustration of a political covert action during the Cold War was the CIA’s clandestine funneling of funds to the anti-communist Christian Democratic Party in Italy. An economic example: the CIA attempted to destroy electric power stations in Nicaragua during the 1980s as a means of undermining the Marxist-oriented Sandinista regime in that Central American nation. PM operations can include everything from assassination plots against foreign heads of state or terrorist leaders to arming and guiding pro-American insurgent armies in one country or another. Little wonder this has been a controversial subject.

Gregory F. Treverton introduces the reader to the ins and outs of covert action in the first entry of this section (Chapter Nine). His essay is followed by William J. Daugherty’s look at political and economic examples of covert action (Chapter Ten); Jennifer D. Kibbe’s exploration of the Defense Department’s entry into this domain (Chapter Eleven); Judge James E. Baker’s legal analysis of covert action (Chapter Twelve); and, winding up this section, former diplomat John D. Stempel’s contrast between America’s use of covert action and diplomatic initiatives (Chapter Thirteen).

Counterintelligence

A third intelligence mission—after collection-and-analysis and covert action—is counterintelligence (CI) and its associated activity, counterterrorism (CT). They are the focus in Part IV of the book, entitled “Counterintelligence.” Like covert action, CI went without specific mention in the National Security Act of 1947. By the early 1950s, however, it had

similarly achieved a status of importance as an intelligence mission. Counterintelligence specialists soon waged nothing less than a secret war against antagonistic intelligence services (especially the Soviet foreign intelligence and military intelligence services, the KGB and the GRU, respectively); and after the end of the Cold War in 1991, CT specialists would focus on efforts to block terrorists who target the United States and its allies. Explaining why the missions of counterintelligence and counterterrorism evolved, a CI expert has pointed out that “in the absence of an effective U.S. counterintelligence program, [adversaries of democracy] function in what is largely a benign environment.”⁵

The practice of counterintelligence consists of two matching halves: security and counterespionage. Security is the passive or defensive side of CI, involving such methods as background investigations, fences, sentries, alarms, badges, watchdogs, cybersecurity, and polygraphs (lie detection machines). Counterespionage (CE) is the offensive or aggressive side of CI. The most effective CE operation is the infiltration of an American agent or “mole” into the enemy camp, whether a hostile intelligence service or a terrorist cell—a ploy called a penetration. Thus, the practice of security is, according to one of America’s top counterintelligence experts, “All that concerns perimeter defense, badges, knowing everything you have to know about your own people,” whereas the CE side “involves knowing all about intelligence services—hostile intelligence services: their people, their installations, their methods, and their operations.”⁶

Stan A. Taylor addresses these issues in the first essay in this part of the book (Chapter Fourteen). Then, in Chapter Fifteen, Athan Theoharis lays out the various challenges involved in keeping the United States free of foreign spies and terrorists. In the next two essays (Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen), Richard L. Russell and Jennifer Sims discuss the ups and downs of trying to establish an effective U.S. counterterrorism response, an objective complicated by the fragmentation of authority and widely differing cultures among America’s intelligence agencies.

Intelligence and Accountability

The chapters in Part V, entitled “Intelligence and Accountability,” stem from a concern that secret power might be misused by those in high office. This danger was underscored in 1975 when Congress discovered that U.S. secret agencies were guilty of spying against law-abiding American citizens; and again in 1987 during the Iran-*contra* affair, when some elements of the intelligence community violated the public trust by ignoring intelligence laws related to covert actions in Iran and Nicaragua.

The United States has been one of the few nations in the world to conduct an ongoing experiment in bringing democratic accountability to secret government activities. Democracy and spying don't mix together well. Secrecy runs counter to democratic openness, while at the same time openness possesses a threat to the success of espionage operations. Democracies need intelligence agencies to acquire information that may protect citizens, but these same citizens must be concerned about the possibility that secret agencies may be used against them for political objectives by unethical leaders. Until 1975, the nation's remedy for the tension between intelligence gathering and democracy was to place trust in the intelligence agencies and hope for the best. Elected officials treated the secret services as exceptional organizations, immune from the checks and balances envisioned by the framers of the Constitution. Lawmakers were content with this arrangement because if an intelligence operation went awry (like the CIA's paramilitary invasion of Cuba in 1961), they could duck responsibility. When James R. Schlesinger, DCI in 1973, attempted to inform John Stennis (D, Mississippi, a key member of the Senate Armed Services Committee) about an approaching CIA operation, the senator stopped him short: "No, no, my boy, don't tell me. Just go ahead and do it, but I don't want to know."⁷

This attitude on Capitol Hill—overlook rather than oversight—underwent a dramatic turnabout in December of 1974, however, when the *New York Times* reported on allegations of CIA spying at home and questionable covert actions in Chile. Congress might have waved aside the revelations about Chile as just another Cold War necessity in the struggle against regimes leaning toward Moscow, but spying on American citizens—voters—was another matter altogether. In January 1975, President Gerald R. Ford created a presidential Commission on CIA Activities within the United States (the Rockefeller Commission, led by his vice president, Nelson Rockefeller). Later that month, the Senate established a select committee to investigate intelligence activities. The committee was headed by Frank Church, a Democrat from Idaho, and became known as the Church Committee (I served as Church's assistant). A counterpart House committee, led by Representative Otis Pike, a Democrat from New York, began a separate investigation the following month.

These panels found many more improprieties than they had expected. Not only had the CIA engaged in domestic spying in violation of its charter (Operation CHAOS), so had the FBI and several military intelligence units. Furthermore, the FBI had carried out secret operations, known collectively as COINTELPRO, against thousands of civil rights activists, as well as members of the Ku Klux Klan and Vietnam War dissenters. The objective

was to make the lives of these individuals miserable by disrupting their marriages and employment. The Bureau even attempted to blackmail Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., America's top civil rights leader, into committing suicide. Church Committee investigators also discovered CIA assassination plots against foreign leaders, along with efforts to topple President Salvador Allende of Chile—even though he had been democratically elected.

These revelations convinced lawmakers that the time had come to bring accountability into the dark recesses of America's government. Congress established intelligence oversight committees in both chambers—the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence (SSCI) in 1976 and the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI) in 1977. Further, with the Intelligence Oversight Act of 1980, lawmakers required advanced (*ante facto*, as opposed to *ex post facto*) reports on all secret intelligence operations so that Congress could evaluate the clandestine initiatives *before* they were implemented. The new committees pored over intelligence budgets, held regular hearings (mostly in closed session to protect spy sources and methods), and seriously examined the performance of America's intelligence agencies. The committees even enjoyed subpoena powers that allowed them to demand testimony from executive branch officials and other witnesses. No other nation has ever so thoroughly applied democratic principles to its secret services, although a number of foreign capitals are now beginning to follow the leadership of the United States in the direction of greater intelligence supervision.

Since 1975, this effort toward greater intelligence accountability in the United States has evolved in fits and starts. Sometimes lawmakers have insisted on close supervision of the secret agencies, as when they enacted the Oversight Act of 1980 with its stringent prior reporting requirements for covert operations, or when a series of laws in the 1980s (the Boland Amendments, named after their chief sponsor, Edward P. Boland, a Democrat from Massachusetts and the first HPSCI chair) sought to end covert actions in Nicaragua. At other times, members of Congress have loosened the reins of accountability—for example, repealing in 1985 a prohibition against covert action in Angola. On still other occasions, Congress has concentrated less on legislative restrictions than on helping the intelligence agencies improve their security and performance, as with the Intelligence Identities Act of 1982 that prohibited exposing the names of undercover intelligence officers.

The Iran-*contra* scandal of 1987 produced a major setback to this new oversight, as the Reagan administration bypassed most of the accountability rules and statutes in its conduct of a covert war in Nicaragua

against the will of Congress as expressed in the Boland Amendments. The scandal was an alert to lawmakers. They responded by enacting the Intelligence Oversight Act of 1991, which further tightened intelligence supervision by clarifying reporting requirements and defining “covert action” in greater detail. Lawmakers also set up a more rigorous Office of Inspector General (IG) in the CIA, confirmed by and accountable to Congress.

This pulling and tugging has continued, most recently over whether President George W. Bush violated the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) of 1978 by conducting warrantless wiretaps as part of the war against terrorism in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks. The FIS legislation required warrants; but the White House claimed (when the secret operation leaked to the *New York Times* in 2005) that the law had become too cumbersome and, besides, the president had inherent authority—so claimed the second Bush administration—to conduct the war against terrorism as the White House saw fit. In 2006 and 2008, lawmakers approved a diluted set of restrictions related to the NSA’s gathering of intelligence inside the United States. In 2013, however, the public began to react against the bulk collection of metadata on the communications practices of American citizens, and in 2014, a full-fledged national debate on the subject began to unfold. The NSA hoped through its metadata programs to ferret out terrorists by a collection dragnet thrown over the entire United States. Critics viewed this approach as anathema to democratic principles and ineffectual as well, while NSA officials maintained that massive surveillance of this kind (a form of “big data”) was a useful tool for catching terrorists inside the United States.⁸

This debate aside for the moment (several authors address the issue in this volume), one thing is certain: the intelligence agencies in the United States are now very much a part of the nation’s system of checks and balances. Americans want and deserve both civil liberties and a secure defense against threats; therefore, the search continues for an appropriate mix of liberty and security, democracy and intelligence effectiveness—precisely the topic of this section in the book.

The set of chapters on intelligence accountability are introduced with an essay (Chapter Eighteen) by David M. Barrett, the foremost authority on the history of accountability in the early years of modern U.S. intelligence (1947 to 1963). Next, Glenn Hastedt takes the reader into the counterterrorism thicket in Washington, DC, revealing how politics and America’s avant-garde experiment in accountability influence both counterintelligence and counterterrorism (Chapter Nineteen). The premier scholarly expert on the National Security Agency, Matthew M. Aid, reviews the problems and the

benefits associated with SIGINT and reveals the dilemmas of accountability posed by this super-secret agency (Chapter Twenty). Lastly, Mark Phythian brings the book to a close with a chapter on the British experience with intelligence accountability (Chapter Twenty-One).

Here, then, is what the reader will find in this comprehensive look at strategic intelligence. The contributors and the editor hope the book will help educate the public about the importance of intelligence activities, as well as stimulate scholars around the world to join this vital field of scholarship. I am pleased to acknowledge my gratitude to Steve Catalano, the editor at ABC-CLIO who helped nurture the project forward from conception to completion; to Leena S. Johnson for her indispensable encouragement and support; to the authors of these essays for their outstanding scholarship and their cooperation in keeping the publishing train running on time; and to the teams at BookComp, Inc. and ABC-CLIO for all their help.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Harry Howe Ransom (1922–2014), mentor, friend, and leader on the road toward advancing the scholarly study of strategic intelligence.

Notes

1. Quoted by Sen. Frank Church (D, Idaho), in *Congressional Record* (January 27, 1976), p. 1165.
2. *Fact Book on Intelligence* (Washington, DC: CIA Office of Public Affairs, April 1983), p. 17.
3. National Security Act of 1947, signed on July 26, 1947 (P.L. 97-222; 50 U.S.C. 403, Sec. 102).
4. Comment, *Evening News*, NBC (January 13, 1978).
5. My interview with an FBI counterintelligence specialist, Washington, DC (May 16, 1975).
6. My interview with Raymond Rocca, CIA/CI specialist, Washington, DC (November 23, 1975).
7. My interview with James R. Schlesinger, Washington, DC (June 16, 1994).
8. For a flavor of the debate, see Loch K. Johnson, "Restoring the Balance: Privacy, Security and the NSA," *World Politics Review* (November 2013), pp. 10–15; and General Michael V. Hayden (a former NSA and CIA director), "Beyond Snowden: An NSA Reality Check," *World Affairs Journal* (January–February 2014): <http://www.worldaffairsjournal.org>.

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