

Escaping from American intelligence: culture, ethnocentrism and the Anglosphere

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American intelligence continues to privilege strategic analysis for policy-makers. The core of the American intelligence system remains the National Intelligence Estimate process, the legacy of Sherman Kent, the 'Founding Father' of the analytical profession.¹ In support of this process, vast technical resources are deployed in collecting secret material that is not available from open sources or from diplomatic reporting, and then subjecting it to elaborate analysis. The priority accorded to this activity is symbolized by the veneration of the President's Daily Brief, a top-level intelligence summary that is described by Bob Woodward as 'the most restricted document in Washington',² and by the White House itself as 'the most highly sensitized classified document in the government'. George Tenet, one of the longest-serving directors of Central Intelligence, has insisted that President's Daily Briefs from his period of office were so important that none would ever be declassified and released for public inspection.³

Yet veneration is often mixed with exasperation. Since the turn of the century, American intelligence has been widely perceived to have underperformed. The headline examples of this alleged failure are the 9/11 attacks and Iraqi WMD—but we might also include indifferent intelligence support for the military effort in Afghanistan.⁴ Retired practitioners and seasoned academic commentators alike believe the intelligence machine to be in trouble. Ardent pessimists such as Richard Betts, attributing current disappointments to unrealistic expectations, have counselled that policy-makers should simply revise their expectation downwards.⁵ Others, including Amy Zegart, believe meaningful reform is possible and have attributed recent difficulties to a kind of institutional arteriosclerosis that obstructs substantial change. Gregory Treverton also favours structural change but

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¹ Harold P. Ford, 'A tribute to Sherman Kent', *Studies in Intelligence* 24: 3, 1980, p. 3.

² Bob Woodward, *Bush at war: inside the Bush White House* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), p. 235.

³ Walter Pincus, 'Under Bush, the briefing gets briefer', *Washington Post*, 24 May 2002, p. A33.

⁴ On weak performance in Afghanistan, see esp. Matthew M. Aid, *Intel wars: the secret history of the fight against terror* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2012), pp. 25, 65–8, 71.

⁵ Richard Betts takes a self-confessedly 'tragic view' of intelligence failure: R. K. Betts, *Enemies of intelligence: knowledge and power in American security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), p. 13.

focuses on the domestic sphere. Robert Jervis, the doyen of intelligence experts, argues that if analysts had only deployed good political science methods they would at least have avoided some of their more lamentable recent errors.⁶

All of these distinguished commentators are pathologists of the strategic intelligence process. As yet we have failed to step back to ask the wider questions about America's intelligence culture. Is the continued focus on strategic intelligence for policy appropriate for the twenty-first century? A glance at our daily newspapers should quickly disabuse us of the notion that intelligence officers remain a special variant of academic researcher. The agencies know this instinctively because of the changing nature of their workaday experience, but the intellectual frame of reference in which intelligence studies operates remains one attuned to the support of high policy. Certainly there is still a place for strategic intelligence analysis. However, even here new security challenges predominate, among them migration, pandemics, energy security and global financial instability. Some are asking whether think-tanks, private sector intelligence providers or academics would not do this work just as well at a lower cost.

In the real world, four modes of intelligence now predominate. None of them is about strategic intelligence. The lead activity is a kind of globalized counter-terrorism enforcement operation which involves elaborate cooperation with new partners—mostly the internal security agencies of small states in the global South. It includes the vast effort being poured into security sector reform to boost the capabilities of friends and allies overseas. This activity is largely operational and has called into question both the traditional intelligence cycle and the division between foreign and domestic intelligence activity. Not far behind is intelligence support on the ground for major wars in Iraq and Afghanistan (and, more recently, interventions in Somalia and Libya) which has increasingly seen national intelligence assets deployed to support tactical activities. A third area is covert action and disruption, something which the UK's Secret Intelligence Service (MI6) politely calls 'event-shaping'. Finally, we have a resurgence of counter-intelligence against state-based opponents, both on the street and in cyberspace. Yet current Anglo-American notions of intelligence are not attuned to these sorts of activities, discussion of which induces at best a degree of confusion and at worst a degree of moral panic. Arguably, other states handle these things more elegantly.⁷

Prisoners of the Anglosphere

There is now a sizeable literature about intelligence for policy. While only a small proportion of this might be said to lie in the realm of high theory, much of it is quite conceptual, including the extensive work around the vexed idea of 'intel-

⁶ Amy Zegart, *Spying blind: the CIA, the FBI, and the origins of 9/11* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); G. Treverton, *Intelligence for an age of terror* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Robert Jervis, *Why intelligence fails: lessons from the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

⁷ Stevyn D. Gibson, 'Future roles of the UK intelligence system', *Review of International Studies* 35: 4, 2009, pp. 920–2.

ligence failure'. The majority of this conceptual writing is strongly focused on the United States and its English-speaking allies. While this work is sophisticated, it has been produced by a community of Anglo-Saxon scholars who often presume that they are describing intelligence in universally applicable terms. Indeed, much academic writing on intelligence tends to view the subject as an adjunct to American foreign policy-making, locating the focus of the debate firmly within Washington's Beltway.⁸

The predominance of American approaches in international security more generally has been widely discussed, and in some quarters much lamented. In reality, this state of affairs is hardly surprising, given the genealogical interplay of writing on international security with the complexities of nuclear strategy during the first three decades of the Cold War.⁹ By contrast, the predominance of the American paradigm in the field of intelligence is more of a puzzle, given that most states in the world have a substantial tradition of intelligence and internal security organizations, or else clandestine activity. Even Iceland, with a population of just 316,000, has an intelligence service. Moreover, many non-state entities, including banks, oil companies and terrorist organizations, have long maintained significant intelligence capabilities. Given that intelligence entities are so ubiquitous, the conundrum is why the conceptualization of intelligence remains narrowly derived from the experiences of the United States, the United Kingdom and some of their closest collaborators—often referred to as the 'UKUSA' partners or the 'Five Eyes' alliance.¹⁰ In this article we ask: what are the causes and consequences of this persistent Anglo-Saxon myopia? Moreover, would a more global approach allow intelligence studies to escape the Anglosphere and to realize the true potential of intelligence?

Michael Herman was the first to reflect on 'Anglo-Saxon' intelligence. In a landmark study facilitated by Chatham House, he noted that only Anglo-Saxon countries have used the term 'intelligence community' and so the very idea is synonymous with a western outlook. Herman has observed that there is a particular mentality that accompanies Anglo-Saxon approaches, including the development of a national estimative process and the concept of conducting strategic assessments of countries as a whole.¹¹ Thus the English-speaking world shares 'common dynamics and problems', and while there are clear differences between London and

⁸ It is often asserted that intelligence studies as an academic subject is 'undertheorized', and it is certainly unevenly theorized. On intelligence and undertheorization, see James Der Derian, 'Anti-diplomacy, intelligence theory and International Relations', *Intelligence and National Security* 8: 3, 1993, pp. 29–51; Christopher Andrew, 'Intelligence, International Relations and "under-theorisation"', *Intelligence and National Security* 20: 1, 2004, pp. 29–31; Adam Svendsen, 'Connecting intelligence and theory: intelligence liaison and International Relations', *Intelligence and National Security* 24: 5, 2009, pp. 700–2.

⁹ Barry Buzan and Lene Hansen, *The evolution of international security studies* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Amitav Acharya and Barry Buzan, eds, *Non-western International Relations theory: perspectives on and beyond Asia* (London: Routledge, 2009); Pinar Bilgin, 'The "western-centrism" of security studies: "blind spot" or constitutive practice?', *Security Dialogue* 41: 6, 2010, pp. 615–22; Ole Wæver, 'The sociology of a not so international discipline: American and European developments in International Relations', *International Organization* 52: 4, 1998, pp. 687–727.

¹⁰ 'UKUSA' was a signals intelligence agreement signed after the Second World War. The classic account of this Anglo-Saxon network is Jeffrey Richelson and Desmond Ball, *The ties that bind: intelligence cooperation between the UKUSA countries, the UK, the USA, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand* (Boston, MA: Allen & Unwin, 1985).

¹¹ Michael Herman, *Intelligence in peace and war* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 4, 24, 35. Herman also ponders how far 'Anglo-Saxon' means 'western' and whether Israeli intelligence fits this model.

Washington, nevertheless the production of highly refined intelligence briefs for policy is paramount. In both communities ‘word-smithing ... ranks high in the intelligence culture’.¹²

This article contends that the West is increasingly constrained by an ethnocentric conception of intelligence that is predominantly Anglo-Saxon.¹³ Moreover, this concept bears little relationship to mainstream intelligence activity around the world. Several deleterious consequences flow from this. First, in an era when intelligence is changing fast and unprecedented demands have been made on practitioners, we have an impoverished view of what new forms our own intelligence might take. Second, we have not fully appreciated the full consequences of a shift of intelligence focus from things to people. We might call this new challenge ‘intelligence among the people’—an extension of the term used by General Sir Rupert Smith to denote a new paradigm of warfighting in which ‘all the people, anywhere, are the battlefield’. People are the ‘objectives to be won’; yet we remain largely technocratic and so we are behind the curve in the people business.¹⁴ Third, since the earliest years of the present century, Anglo-Saxon countries have made unprecedented efforts to encourage security sector reform by supporting expansion and change among the intelligence and security services of the global South. Yet the prevailing tendency to export advice based largely on our own models may be mistaken.¹⁵

At first glance, assertions about an intelligence monoculture may seem counter-intuitive. The literature produced by American scholars and their Anglo-Saxon nebula is certainly rich with complex debates focused on the causes of intelligence failure.¹⁶ Scholars have argued over the relative merits of human intelligence, technical intelligence and open sources. They have contrasted problems related to perception and cognition with those arising from organizational weaknesses. They have considered the extent to which intelligence should be receptive to the whims of the decision-maker, or else cloistered to achieve academic objectivity. Yet perceived from a distance, these debates follow a familiar pattern. They are largely about improving strategic machinery for foreign intelligence, since the very concept of domestic security intelligence is intrinsically problematic in the United States. Efforts to improve intelligence tend to focus on better training for analysts or else organizational tinkering. Organizational reform usually means getting even bigger. The Office of the Director of National Intelligence, created in

¹² Herman, *Intelligence in peace and war*, p. 107. See also Michael Herman, *Intelligence services in the information age* (London: Frank Cass, 2001).

¹³ William Graham Sumner, who held the first chair in sociology at Yale, coined the term ‘ethnocentrism’ in 1906 and defined it as ‘seeing things as though the group to which one belongs is the centre of everything, all other groups being classified and rated in relation to it’: William Graham Sumner, *Folkways: a study of the sociological importance of usages, manners, customs, mores, and morals* (Boston, MA: Ginn, 1906).

¹⁴ Rupert Smith’s concept emphasizes deterritoriality: Rupert Smith, *The utility of force: the art of war in the modern world* (New York: Penguin, 2005), pp. 3–5.

¹⁵ Peter Wilson, ‘The contribution of intelligence services to security sector reform’, *Conflict, Security and Development* 5: 1, 2005, pp. 87–107.

¹⁶ On the ‘Anglosphere’, see Srdjan Vucetica, ‘Anglobal governance?’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 23: 3, 2010, pp. 455–74; J. C. Bennett, *The Anglosphere challenge: why the English-speaking nations will lead the way in the 21st century* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

April 2005 to coordinate the bloated US system, has itself amassed a staff of 4,000.¹⁷

The American intelligence behemoth now spends close to US\$80 billion a year.¹⁸ Some 854,000 people, many of them provided by some 2,000 private companies, are reported to hold top-secret clearances allowing them to see high-grade intelligence product. No one is really sure how much this sprawling enterprise costs or how many people it employs.¹⁹ Certainly the benefits derived from intelligence do not appear to be commensurate with the scale of American spending in this area. Arguably we need to ask different questions—and, above all, more comparative questions—about the nature of intelligence and what it can deliver.²⁰ What is French intelligence culture, and why has Paris suffered no large-scale terrorist attacks since the mid-1990s, despite its large ethnic populations drawn from troubled regions in the Middle East and North Africa? Why have the British and the Spanish fared relatively poorly by comparison on counterterrorism intelligence? What is the nature of Chinese intelligence culture, and does this help us to explain why China seems to have proved adept at aggressive intelligence collection in cyberspace? Why are the small intelligence services of countries like Indonesia, Jordan and South Africa highly regarded among professionals, and how do they conceptualize their activity?

The idea of ‘intelligence among the people’ is uncomfortable. One of the reasons why outdated notions of intelligence persist in the West is because they seem hygienic. For the Anglosphere, with its satellites hovering 200 miles or so above the earth, the ideal forms of intelligence are clean, uncontroversial and focused on foreigners. Such dispositions provoke few conflicts between national security imperatives and core values. Meanwhile, the dystopian obverse has long been the ‘counter-intelligence state’, typified by countries such as the former East Germany. Indeed, the Russian tradition has been to celebrate the ‘Chekists’ as guardians of the people against both internal and external enemies.²¹ This alternative security universe is now all but extinct; but many former Soviet states, including Putin’s Russia, have witnessed the emergence of a more complex state–private kleptocracy with security agencies at its centre.²²

More broadly, across many of the countries of the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America, a case could be made for a general typology of intelligence that is more focused on regime security and covert action. Perhaps this post-colonial conception of intelligence, focused on what we might call the ‘globalized world of domestic security’, is the emerging model. Moreover, the inconvenient truth

¹⁷ Marc Ambinder, ‘The intelligence community had 14 chances to connect the dots’, *The Atlantic*, 19 May 2010.

¹⁸ This is thought to include US\$53 billion on civilian intelligence and US\$27 billion on military intelligence. The scale of American intelligence spending is a vexed subject and many would suggest the real cost is higher. See Ellen Nakashima, ‘Control of intelligence budget will shift’, *Washington Post*, 3 Nov. 2010.

¹⁹ Dana Priest and William Arkin, ‘A hidden world, growing beyond control’, *Washington Post*, 19 July 2010.

²⁰ Few studies of intelligence are comparative. An exception is Richard K. Betts, *Surprise attack: lessons for defense planning* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1983).

²¹ Julie Fedor, *Russia and the cult of state security: the Chekist tradition, from Lenin to Putin* (London: Routledge, 2011); Christopher Andrew and Julie Elkner, ‘Stalin and foreign intelligence’, *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 4: 1, 2003, pp. 69–94.

²² Andrei Soldatov and Irina Borogan, *The new nobility: the restoration of Russia’s security state and the enduring legacy of the KGB* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2010). See also Julie Anderson, ‘The Chekist takeover of the Russian state’, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counter-Intelligence* 19: 2, 2006, pp. 237–88.

is that the intelligence services of semi-authoritarian countries are precisely those upon which the West has been most dependent for cooperation against terrorism since 2001. Either way, with the advent of the 'Arab Spring', these are issues to which we will have to devote more attention. How we conceive of security sector reform in this context is a fundamental challenge.

Comparing diverse intelligence cultures in search of new models is likely to be difficult. While we have basic descriptive accounts of the more obscure national intelligence services, these are often little more than verbal wiring diagrams. We lack meaningful analysis of the majority of the world's intelligence communities or their underlying conceptions of what intelligence means.²³ Above all, we lack alternative models of how intelligence might relate to individual human beings and notions of community. This article seeks to take a first step towards filling these gaps by using the concept of strategic culture to consider why an outdated idea of intelligence developed by the United States and its UKUSA partners remains pre-eminent. Our explanation also draws on the notion of ethnocentrism first outlined by Jack Snyder and later developed by Ken Booth. It explores in outline the possible sources of a reconceptualization of intelligence, including the approaches adopted by China and South Africa.²⁴

Intelligence culture and ethnocentrism

Culture is rightly viewed as a slippery concept. Nevertheless, the notion of strategic cultures commands wide consensus, and if states have strategic cultures then they most likely also have related intelligence cultures.²⁵ Some of the first explorations of strategic culture were offered by Jack Snyder in 1977. In attempting to understand how Moscow thought about nuclear weapons, he suggested that we might consider how the total sum of ideas, conditioned behaviours and historic patterns of thought affected a national strategic community. The implication was that a nation's sense of its own politico-military experience over time was important. For Snyder, strategic culture also conjured up the dangers of ethnocentrism—a feeling of 'group centrality and superiority' that contributed to a lack of intellectual challenge and could potentially result in imprisonment inside one's own culture.²⁶ Despite these intriguing ruminations, Snyder eventually came to cast doubt on the value of cultural explanations, insisting that cause and effect were so distant that it would be difficult for political scientists to demonstrate any linkage in a rigorous way.²⁷

²³ An extensive survey is provided by S. Farson, P. Gill, M. Phythian and S. Shpiro, eds, *PSI handbook of global security and intelligence: national approaches*, vol. 1: *The Americas and Asia*; vol. 2: *Europe, the Middle East and South Africa* (Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2008).

²⁴ Richard J. Aldrich, 'Beyond the vigilant state: globalisation and intelligence', *Review of International Studies* 35: 4, 2009, pp. 889–902.

²⁵ Raymond Williams famously defined culture as one of the three most complex words in the English language: *Keywords: a vocabulary of culture and society* (London: Collins, 1983), pp. 87, 90.

²⁶ Jack Snyder, *The Soviet strategic culture: implications for limited operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1977), pp. 8–9.

²⁷ Jack Snyder, 'The concept of strategic culture: caveat emptor', in Carl G. Jacobsen, ed., *Strategic power: USA/ USSR* (New York: St Martin's Press; London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1990), pp. 3–9.

Ken Booth was less anxious about deploying the concept of strategic culture.²⁸ In a classic monograph penned in 1979, he related both strategic culture and ethnocentrism to the problem of 'groupthink', with its subliminal tendencies towards bureaucratic consensus. He argued that while ethnocentrism does not automatically lead to groupthink, it increases the likelihood that groupthink will occur, with the desire for consensus overriding realistic appraisals of alternative ideas and courses of action.²⁹ Booth asserted that ethnocentrism and groupthink work in tandem to produce stereotyped images of the 'outgroups' and a tendency for collective judgements to be self-confirming and therefore riskier than would otherwise be the case.³⁰ Intriguingly, although much of what Booth argued had an obvious importance for intelligence analysis and strategic assessments, the thrust of the debate over culture in international security has ignored intelligence and has instead focused on action and reaction cycles. Typically, Colin Gray describes strategic culture as modes of thought that relate to *behavioural patterns* with respect to the use of force which derive from national historical experience.³¹ Accordingly, these notions have become caught up in a complex methodological debate about how far it is possible to use ideas of culture in the context of strategy.³²

Booth was actually deploying the notion of intelligence and culture in two senses, one of them specific and one of them more general. In the specific sense, some of these issues about the impact of culture upon perception had already been raised by figures such as Robert Jervis.³³ Indeed, as early as 1976 Anthony Marc Lewis, who had run a foreign area studies programme within the CIA, argued that internal Vietnam War case-studies showed conclusively that 'hidden cultural assumptions crippled the CIA's ability to perform its advisory functions'.³⁴ Over the next decade, the revered area studies specialist Adda Bozeman became an evangelist for 'cultural understanding' as a prerequisite for both improved intelligence assessment and strategic thinking.³⁵ Bozeman also argued that shared beliefs, assumptions and modes of behaviour, derived from common experiences, accepted narratives and historical traditions, influence collective decisions in the security realm.³⁶ Since then, numerous in-service training programmes

²⁸ See Booth's reply to Snyder in Ken Booth, 'The concept of strategic culture affirmed', in Jacobsen, ed., *Strategic power*. The most important discussion of ethnocentrism in the security context remains Ken Booth, *Strategy and ethnocentrism* (London: Croom Helm, 1979). The same year marked the appearance of Edward Said's cultural analysis of ethnocentrism, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1979).

²⁹ The classic statement of groupthink is Irving L. Janis, *Victims of groupthink* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1972), pp. 3–4.

³⁰ Booth, *Strategy and ethnocentrism*, pp. 104–7.

³¹ Colin S. Gray, 'National style in strategy: the American example', *International Security* 6: 2, 1981, pp. 21–2.

³² Alastair Iain Johnston, 'Thinking about strategic culture', *International Security* 19: 4, 1995, pp. 36–43; Colin S. Gray, 'Strategic culture as context: the first generation of theory strikes back', *Review of International Studies* 25: 1, 1999, pp. 49–69; Alastair Iain Johnston, 'Strategic cultures revisited: reply to Colin Gray', *Review of International Studies* 25: 3, 1999, pp. 519–23.

³³ Robert Jervis, *Perception and misperception in international politics* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 8, 136, 151.

³⁴ Anthony Marc Lewis, 'The blind spot of US foreign intelligence', *Journal of Communication* 26: 1, 1976, pp. 44–55.

³⁵ Adda Bozeman, 'Political intelligence in non-western societies: suggestions for comparative research', in Roy Godson, ed., *Comparing foreign intelligence: the US, the USSR, the UK and the Third World* (Washington DC: Pergamon/Brassey's, 1988).

³⁶ Adda Bozeman, *Politics and culture in international history* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1960).

for intelligence analysts have sought to address the problem of cultural confinement.³⁷ The importance of cultural awareness and ‘tribal’ intelligence has also been periodically rediscovered in the context of counter-insurgency, although academic anthropologists are understandably unnerved by the eager embrace of the intelligence community.³⁸

Importantly, Booth was also using the idea of strategic culture in a more general sense to capture the idea of a world-view—what we might call a fundamental cognitive orientation. Culture constrains how we think our intelligence institutions relate to a globalizing world, what tasks we think they should perform and what we think intelligence might be.³⁹ In this wider sense, we are all potentially prisoners in the ethnocentric dungeon. Moreover, while there is an emerging consensus that we need to take account of culture in the study of national security policy, it has not yet had much impact in the realm of national intelligence communities.⁴⁰ Philip Davies is one of the few academics who have deployed the idea of culture in the context of intelligence, comparing the British and American analytical systems.⁴¹ Arguably, the idea of culture has the potential to take us further in the realm of intelligence, explaining the role of institutionalized norms and values that countries associate with their intelligence communities, together with their place in the national psyche.⁴² Escaping the cycle of pessimism, can we perhaps become conscious and strategic users of culture to achieve our intelligence goals?⁴³

The predominance of American intelligence culture

Why do we think like Americans when we think about intelligence? The reasons are potentially complex and have much to do with military technology. Certainly, no country has harnessed the power of information on the battlefield more successfully than the United States. Over more than a century, the challenge of increasing strategic mobility and the attendant possibility of surprise attack has resulted in a demand by states for elaborate warning systems. During the Second World War, the collection of intelligence on an industrial scale through radio monitoring and code-breaking at locations such as Bletchley Park and Arlington was a typically technocratic Anglo-American response to the challenges presented

³⁷ Ethnocentrism in analysis is explicitly addressed in Robert Johnston, *Analytic culture in the US intelligence community: an ethnographic study* (Washington DC: Center for the Study of Intelligence, 2005), pp. 73–84.

³⁸ Isabelle Duyvesteyn, ‘Hearts and minds, cultural awareness and good intelligence: the blue-print for successful counter-insurgency’, special issue of *Intelligence and National Security* 26: 4, 2011, pp. 445–59; John Kelly, Beatrice Jauregui, Sean Mitchell and Jeremy Walton, *Anthropology and global counterinsurgency* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010).

³⁹ Culture is rarely deployed in this sense in discussions of intelligence, but see J. M. Bonthous, ‘Understanding intelligence across cultures’, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 7: 3, 1994, pp. 7–34.

⁴⁰ See e.g. Ronald L. Jepperson, Alexander Wendt and Peter J. Katzenstein, ‘Norms, identity, and culture in national security’, in Peter J. Katzenstein, ed., *The culture of national security: norms and identity in world politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), pp. 33–75.

⁴¹ Davies deploys an organizational view of intelligence culture: see Philip Davies, ‘Intelligence culture and intelligence failure in Britain and the United States’, *Cambridge Review of International Affairs* 17: 3, 2004, pp. 495–520.

⁴² Michael Kackman, *Citizen spy: television, espionage, and Cold War culture* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2005).

⁴³ Jeffrey S. Lantis, ‘Strategic culture and national security policy’, *International Studies Review* 4: 3, 2002, pp. 87–113.

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by new modes of warfare.⁴⁴ The advent of nuclear weapons served only to accentuate concerns about strategic surprise. Moreover, the arrival of ballistic missiles and satellites in the late 1950s helped to conjure up a complex world in which intelligence, targeting and decision-making were interlinked more closely than ever before. More recently, the close association of battlefield surveillance with the idea of a 'revolution in military affairs' has further underscored the nexus between intelligence, information dominance and military power. Partly because the Pentagon 'owns' a large share of the American intelligence community, intelligence and strategic weaponry have become closely intertwined within America's rise to global dominance.⁴⁵

Paradoxically, American ideas have also flourished because of Washington's relative innocence in the realm of intelligence. At the outset of the Second World War, Washington lacked a central intelligence machine for producing national assessments. It was forced to raid the East Coast universities for intellectual talent to create analytical centres developed by the Office of Strategic Services, the forerunner of the CIA. These academics then returned to their university classrooms, taking the idea of centralized intelligence in their knapsacks. The result was a precocious interaction between intelligence agencies and universities, typified by Sherman Kent, European historian and also the bookish creator of the National Intelligence Estimates system.⁴⁶ As early as 1958, the United States could claim four sophisticated texts on national intelligence estimates, while the rest of the world had produced almost nothing.⁴⁷

No less important to America's dominance of the idea of intelligence has been a remarkably open attitude to secrecy. Alongside a vigorous intellectual interest in intelligence, we have also witnessed a unique American public debate about the place of intelligence in American foreign policy, stretching over more than half a century. All this reflected the first amendment to the US Constitution which, despite significant caveats, has facilitated a uniquely open approach to the discussion of intelligence in the American broadsheet press. This applies not only to intelligence, but also to other security subjects which many states regard as taboo. It remains unusual for US journalists to face legal action for writing about intelligence, and it remains easier for most foreign journalists to cover US intelligence than to discuss the secret agencies of their own countries.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Bill McSweeney, *Security, identity and interests: a sociology of international relations* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), p. 39; Brice F. Harris, *America, technology and strategic culture: a Clausewitzian assessment* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 30–5.

⁴⁵ Robert L. Paarlberg, 'Knowledge as power: science, military dominance, and US security', *International Security* 29: 1, 2004, pp. 122–51.

⁴⁶ Robin W. Winks, *Cloak and gown: scholars in the secret war, 1939–1961* (New York: William Morrow, 1987); B. M. Katz, *Foreign intelligence: research and analysis in the Office of Strategic Services, 1942–1945* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989).

⁴⁷ Sherman Kent, *Strategic intelligence for American world policy* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949); Harry Howe Ransom, *Central intelligence and national security* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1958); Roger Hilsman, *Strategic intelligence and national decisions* (Glencoe, IL: Free Press, 1956); Washington Platt, *Strategic intelligence production* (New York: Praeger, 1957).

⁴⁸ This point remains contentious: more recently, the US authorities have chosen to pursue their inside sources vigorously. See Gabriel Schoenfeld, *Necessary secrets: national security, the media, and the rule of law* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010).

The American public debate over intelligence has been intensified by covert action. Although covert action has historically been a small part of the CIA's portfolio, nevertheless episodes such as the Bay of Pigs, the Iran–Contra affair or, more recently, the killing of Osama bin Laden, have become entwined with mainstream debates about the nature of American foreign policy. Covert action contains within it a unique ability to evoke wider philosophical tensions between interventionism and isolationism, between presidential foreign policy and congressional control—even between national security imperatives and America's core values. Paradoxically, for the United States, secret activity is often a public symbol of prevailing attitudes to American involvement in world affairs. Typically, when Ronald Reagan was campaigning for office, one of his high-profile election promises was to 'unleash the CIA'.⁴⁹ In short, the very idea of an intelligence agency, and of the CIA in particular, has gradually become symbolic of wider issues in American national security in a way that is quite different from how the idea is perceived in other countries.⁵⁰

The American intelligence community has responded to revelation with counter-revelation. Acerbic public criticism of intelligence—and of covert action in particular—has prompted a forward strategy of public engagement by the American authorities in an effort to explain their activities. As early as the 1980s, the CIA began to promote 'Intelligence Studies' as an academic discipline by sponsoring conferences, promoting university teaching of the subject and declassifying documents for scholars as part of a deliberate effort to aid public understanding. The CIA now hosts a respected Center for the Study of Intelligence and publishes a journal in which scholars are pleased to be published. Remarkably, the CIA has made some four million declassified documents available on an open access database at the US National Archives. As a result of this relative openness to intellectual enquiry, scholars in other countries have often chosen to study the US intelligence community in preference to their own. Accordingly, the intelligence community of the United States, together with its immediate allies, boasts a public profile and an accompanying literature that has no parallel in scale or depth.⁵¹

The effort made by the American intelligence community in the realm of public understanding can only be welcomed. It has helped to spawn an academic industry with its own conferences, journals and degree courses; and the UK intelligence community has begun to follow in its wake. Yet there is a downside to this process, for it has also had the unintended effect of promoting a monoculture in which—just as Snyder and Booth suggested—there is an absence of intellectual challenge. Arguably, in a globalized world, in which we see ever more diverse and exotic combinations and patterns of cooperation between intelligence partners,

⁴⁹ Floyd Paseman, *A spy's journey: a CIA memoir* (St Paul, MN: Zenith, 2009), p. 261.

⁵⁰ The Bay of Pigs episode unleashed a wave of books about the CIA. See Andrew Tully, *CIA: the inside story* (New York: Morrow, 1962); Allen Dulles, *The craft of intelligence* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1963); David Wise and Thomas B. Ross, *The invisible government* (New York: Random House, 1964).

⁵¹ Stephen H. Campbell, 'A survey of the US market for intelligence education', *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 24: 2, 2011, pp. 307–37.

the prevailing Anglo-Saxon ideas of intelligence stand in some need of revision. Current conceptions of intelligence—often focused on an outdated strategic intelligence cycle—are restricting our understanding of the complex global intelligence ecosystem which is now emerging.⁵²

Intelligence as information: China and ‘netspionage’

Is it possible to step outside the Anglosphere and to think about doing things differently? Precisely because culturally derived notions of intelligence are ambient, they are likely to be hard to challenge. Nevertheless, it is worth asking how other major powers conceive of their intelligence effort, how this relates to their national strategies and what they prioritize. China is the epitome of a rising power, yet for Beijing the strategic intelligence process to support policy-making is remarkably unimportant, while intelligence to implement policy means rather more. Mao Tse-tung was always sceptical about the value of intelligence and explained this to Kissinger: ‘When your President issues an order, and you want information on certain questions, then the intelligence reports come as so many snowflakes. We also have our intelligence service and it’s the same with them. They do not work well.’⁵³ Mao’s observations reflect the fact that the senior Chinese decision-makers tend to emphasize the strategic intentions of their opponents, and spend less time attempting to measure their capabilities or doing net assessments. Their self-conception is largely defensive and focuses on the perceived thwarting of China’s legitimate ambitions. This is a long-term trend in Chinese foreign policy, currently reflected in the increasing role that foreign policy think-tanks have come to play not only in policy-making but also in intelligence analysis.⁵⁴

The boundary between centres of intelligence analysis and think-tanks in China is notably thin. The core of China’s national security community in Beijing is focused upon think-tanks and other research entities with strong links to state institutions. PLA2, the military intelligence wing of the Chinese Army, works closely with a group of research bodies that analyse intelligence, undertake open source research and exchange, and conduct outward-facing roles. A good example is the China Institute for International Strategic Studies, which is headed by the senior military officers who also manage overseas military intelligence. The rapid expansion and acceleration of Beijing’s national security think-tanks, and their ability to interact freely with overseas scholars, is fascinating. On the one hand, these entities are genuinely fulfilling the role of think-tanks, yet on the other their ties to the Chinese intelligence community are substantial. They appear to embody the advantages of both secrecy and relative openness.⁵⁵

⁵² Philip H. J. Davies, ‘Twilight of Britain’s Joint Intelligence Committee?’, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 24: 3, 2011, pp. 427–46.

⁵³ Mao added: ‘Your CIA is no good for major events,’ and Kissinger replied ‘That’s absolutely true. That’s been our experience.’ Memo of conversation, 17 Feb. 1973, Beijing, <http://www.gwu.edu/~nsarchiv/NSAEBB/NSAEBB90/dubious-10b.pdf>, p. 20, accessed 20 Feb. 2012.

⁵⁴ David Shambaugh, ‘China’s international relations think tanks: evolving structure and process’, *China Quarterly* 171, 2002, pp. 575–96.

⁵⁵ Bates Gill and James Mulvenon, ‘Chinese military-related think tanks and research institutions’, *China*

This in turn reflects the fact that, traditionally, the Chinese vocabulary has not distinguished between ‘intelligence’ and ‘information’. Accordingly, China’s agencies operate differently from other espionage organizations by collecting large quantities of open material. They employ businessmen, academics or students who will be in their host countries only for short periods, rather than spending years cultivating a few high-level foreign sources or double agents. Where long-term espionage is conducted, the agents are often ethnically Chinese but well integrated into the society of the target country. The culture of Chinese espionage also reflects ‘Guanxi’—the custom of employing personal networks for influence. Western counter-intelligence agencies find the traditional Chinese ‘human wave’ technique of collection bewildering. This is not so much because of the numbers of people involved as because their activities focus on the painstaking collection of many pieces of ‘grey’ technical literature which may be sensitive rather than secret. This challenges western conceptions of what spying is. We know from recent defectors that some Chinese embassies abroad were discouraged from engaging in what we might call classical espionage operations. At the same time there was an increasing distinction made between espionage *per se* and what was politely described as ‘general research’.⁵⁶ Other defectors have suggested that China’s informant network in Australia numbered approximately 1,000 people.⁵⁷

The conception of intelligence as information offers China notable advantages in an era characterized by the expansion of cyber-operations. The growth of Chinese ‘netespionage’ is a good example of the widespread effort to acquire foreign military technology and scientific information. In order to fulfil its long-term military development goals, China plunders western technology using a network of scientific, academic and business contacts together with a sizeable programme of cyber-hacking.⁵⁸ In 2011, leaked State Department cables appear to have confirmed what some experts have been muttering for several years: that China is now ahead of the United States in the shadowy world of backdoor computer access. It appears that China has been able to access terabytes of secret information, ranging from passwords for a State Department database to designs for nuclear weapons.⁵⁹ This computer-based espionage is especially interesting because much of it appears to be carried out by networks of private hackers on behalf of, or alongside, government ministries. The ability of Chinese espionage to use privateers and to absorb the product seamlessly into its own industrial process reflects China’s national economic complexion, with its mixture of free-market and state corporatism.⁶⁰

Quarterly 171, 2002, pp. 618–24.

⁵⁶ Xiong Zhen, *Yidui waijiaoguan fufu de zuji* [The footprints of a diplomat couple] (Nanjing: Jiangsu Renmin Chubanshe, 1995), pp. 195–6, quoted in David M. Lampton, *The making of Chinese foreign and security policy in the era of reform* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2001), p. 414.

⁵⁷ Mark Magnier, ‘Defection spotlights Chinese way of spying’, *Los Angeles Times*, 15 July 2005.

⁵⁸ Nigel Inkster, ‘China in cyberspace’, *Survival* 52: 4, 2010, pp. 55–66. See also Aid, *Intel wars*, pp. 220–2.

⁵⁹ John Leyden, ‘Leaked US cables finger Chinese army hackers for cyber-spying’, *The Register*, 18 April 2011.

⁶⁰ Evidence by Rafal A. Rohozinski (SecDev), in ‘2009 Report to Congress of the US–China Economic and Security Review Commission’, 111th Congress, First Session, Nov. 2009, pp. 177–8, http://www.uscc.gov/annual_report/2009/annual_report_full_09.pdf, accessed 19 July 2012.

China's cyber-espionage programme certainly has a strategic purpose, but it is not 'strategic intelligence' as we understand it. In a recent hearing of the House Judiciary Committee, FBI Director Robert S. Mueller stated that 'China is stealing our secrets in an effort to leap ahead in terms of its military technology, but also the economic capability of China. It is a substantial threat.' By mining vast amounts of public data and accumulating information a drop at a time, China can map even the West's secret programmes in outline. The Chinese intelligence philosophy that underpins this approach emphasizes that 'there are no walls that completely block the wind'.⁶¹ Once access to computer networks has been gained, the hackers often implant software that logs keystrokes or else control programs which will permit access to further information. One of the most recent waves of computer attacks to be analysed is known as 'Ghost Net' and has included the recording of sound and video over embedded microphones and webcams. 'Ghost Net' successfully accessed some State Department computers. Nevertheless, the primary purpose of Chinese intelligence remains the acceleration of economic growth, rather than classical interstate espionage. China's intelligence targets are focused on a long-term goal pursued over decades and designed to exploit fundamental weaknesses in the security infrastructures of the West.⁶²

Meanwhile, China attaches a high priority to its own information security—and indeed, its cryptographic security is famously difficult to penetrate. Beijing has poured resources into counter-intelligence, a field which the West has sorely neglected since 2001. China probably spends more money on internal security than external security, and while some would see this as oppressive, the Chinese would argue that it is less provocative than a pre-emptive strategy that seeks to address threats beyond its borders.⁶³ It is also worth noting that the conception of human security in Chinese translates not as *ren de anquan* or the security of the individual human being, but as *renlei de anquan* or the security of humankind. The collective idea of the group interest being more important than the individual is significant, not least because it is suggestive of China's recent history as a constitutive part of its strategic culture.⁶⁴

China's own internal security policy is changing. Over several decades it has moved from a strategy of widespread security prosecutions to one of deterrence, with less than 0.5 per cent of court actions now focusing upon counter-revolutionary activity.⁶⁵ This is not to suggest that the West should emulate China

⁶¹ David Wise, *Tiger trap: America's secret spy-war with China* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 2011), pp. 241–3.

⁶² Joel Brenner, *America the vulnerable: new technology and the next threat to national security* (New York: Penguin 2011); Brian Grow, 'In cyberspy vs. cyberspy, China has the edge', Reuters, 14 April 2011, <http://www.reuters.com/article/2011/04/14/us-china-usa-cyberespionage-idUSTRE73D24220110414>, accessed 19 July 2012.

⁶³ Jon Schiller, *Cyber attacks & protection: civilization depends on Internet & email* (New York: CreateSpace, 2010), p. 72.

⁶⁴ The authors are indebted to Shaun Breslin for elucidation on these points. See also Shaun Breslin, 'Comparative theory, China, and the future of East Asian regionalism(s)', *Review of International Studies* 36: 3, 2010, pp. 709–30.

⁶⁵ Sophia Woodman and Yu Ping, "'Killing the chicken to frighten the monkeys": the use of state security in the control of the freedom of expression in China', in S. Coliver, P. Hoffman, J. Fitzpatrick and S. Bowen, eds, *Secrecy and liberty: national security, freedom of expression and access to information* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1999), pp. 223–49.

and begin a campaign of wholesale computer espionage against commercial targets or praetorian security policing. However, China's radically different definition of what its security priorities are, what intelligence is and how it might benefit the national purpose is worth reflecting upon. Moreover, China's mixture of state and private activity is beguiling. Despite the predominance of state political control, its ability to harness private providers of intelligence and its ability to disseminate the product to corporate users are impressive.⁶⁶

Intelligence and security sector reform: South Africa

The private laments of CIA officers for the decline of the 'Mukhabarat', the feared security services of the Middle East, sit uncomfortably with the West's public rhetoric concerning democratization and security sector reform.⁶⁷ Approaches to cooperation with such services oscillate between two extremes. At one end is the utopian view that engagement with such services is beyond the pale and that western intelligence cooperation should be limited to the Anglosphere, together with the agencies of a few other hygienic countries such as Switzerland and Norway. At the other is the view taken by some former CIA practitioners that the hard-nosed services that once characterized Egypt, Libya and Jordan, and are still in place in countries like Saudi Arabia, are admirable because they brook no restriction and that we must become more like them.⁶⁸ Neither attitude constitutes a sensible approach to intelligence across the global South.

Partnerships with tough services have provided the United States with much of its security intelligence since the end of the Cold War. Indeed, many of these relationships are much older. The United States is one of the few countries in the developed world with the resources to sustain truly global intelligence-gathering operations. However, its focus on technocratic intelligence to support policy and large-scale military operations has led to a historic neglect of human espionage. Recently retired intelligence officers have revealed that the CIA still has few non-official cover officers and relatively few long-term penetrations overseas. Culturally, the CIA remains a curious foreign intelligence service with most of its staff based in Washington trapped behind byzantine layers of management.⁶⁹ Meanwhile, the CIA's increased drone operations over Pakistan and the Arab peninsula are perhaps symbolic of this technocratic approach, constituting an activity that is carried out *above* rather than *among* the people.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ 'China's secret media—Chinese whispers', *The Economist*, 17 June 2010.

⁶⁷ Egypt's General Intelligence Service, like China's Ministry of State Security, combines both internal and external functions: see Owen L. Sirrs, *A history of the Egyptian intelligence service: a history of the Mukhabarat, 1910–2009* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

⁶⁸ Charlotte Higgins, 'Arab spring has created "intelligence disaster", warns former CIA boss: Michael Scheuer says rendition should be brought back as lack of intelligence has left UK and US unable to monitor militants', *Guardian*, 28 Aug. 2011. Also authors' confidential interviews, Washington DC, 7–9 Sept. 2011.

⁶⁹ Ishmael Jones, *The human factor: inside the CIA's dysfunctional intelligence culture* (Washington DC: Encounter Books, 2010), pp. 298–306.

⁷⁰ Trevor McCrisken, 'Ten years on: Obama's war on terrorism in rhetoric and practice', *International Affairs* 87: 4, July 2011, pp. 793–6.

Escaping from American intelligence

The American approach to intelligence in the global South has been transactional to some degree, with the United States tending to trade other security commodities with exotic allies in return for human intelligence provided by services that are the veteran agent runners in remote regions. As a result, Washington has the recurrent problem of depending too heavily on information obtained through liaison with foreign services rather than taking the time and making the effort to develop its own sources. Across the Mediterranean, the Middle East and North Africa, the intelligence services of Morocco, Tunisia, Jordan, Egypt, France and Israel have filled the gap. More recently the CIA has developed a close relationship with the intelligence services of Sudan, despite the fact that Sudan is itself on the State Department list of state sponsors of terrorism.⁷¹

The 'Mukhabarat' are now melting away with the arrival of the 'Arab Spring'. The Egyptian and Libyan intelligence services are in disarray, and even those elements still in business have been dismayed by America's public disavowal of authoritarian leaders. Jordan's long-feared security chief has been removed by the King as a gesture in the direction of democratization. Perhaps the 'Arab Spring' will succeed where endless blue-ribbon panels of intelligence reformers have failed—forcing the United States to reappraise how it conducts intelligence business across a vast swathe of the global South.⁷² If we are indeed entering a new period of democratic transitions, it is worth considering some of the recent unsung successes of intelligence and security sector reform. Although the public tend to perceive intelligence in these countries through the one-dimensional medium of press stories about general thuggery, in reality there have also been some substantive achievements here. The West has exported good governance to countries as far afield as Romania and Indonesia, not just in the narrow area of intelligence oversight, but also in the wider domain of security practices, resilience and counterterrorism legislation. Arguably, this should be a two-way street; and there are things that we might consider importing from countries that boast radically different intelligence cultures from our own.⁷³

The South African intelligence story is redolent with references to culture. In the 1990s the post-apartheid government declared that change was 'not only a matter of organisational restructuring'; it was also about seeking to 'establish a new culture of intelligence', indeed even a new 'philosophy of intelligence'.⁷⁴ Moreover, this story tells us much about the perils and promise of intelligence during democratic transitions. Transitions are periods of fragility and often require an increased rather than reduced intelligence capacity; yet this must be reconciled with democratic oversight, public confidence and an anticipation that

⁷¹ Jeff Stein, 'CIA training Sudan's spies as Obama officials fight over policy', *Washington Post*, 30 Aug. 2010. The authors are indebted to Paul Williams for this point.

⁷² David Ignatius, 'Jordan's ace of spies', *Washington Post*, 13 Dec. 2009.

⁷³ The authors are indebted to Kent Roach for this point. See also Hans Born and Aidan Wills, 'International intelligence co-operation and accountability: formidable challenges and imperfect solutions', in Hans Born, Ian Leigh and Aidan Wills, eds, *International intelligence cooperation and accountability* (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 277–309.

⁷⁴ Kevin O'Brien, *The South African intelligence services: from apartheid to democracy, 1948–2005* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 201.

intelligence should now support the rule of law. In the 1990s, the narrow state security focus of South African intelligence was broadened to encompass criminal targets as a result of concerns about poverty, unequal distribution of resources and even unemployment. Indeed, some African states have proved to be admirably creative in redefining the mission of intelligence communities in socio-economic terms, in the expectation that helping to support human security will help to rehabilitate those services whose past reputations were less than enviable. This was a conscious change of style in the direction of community ownership and has delivered some successes.⁷⁵

Intelligence services in emerging democracies certainly require clear mandates provided by legislation, and also central coordination, together with both judicial oversight and parliamentary accountability. However, in transitional or fragile states these mechanisms are often imperfect and need to work in tandem with a free press, civil society and traditional community networks to provide checks and balances.⁷⁶ Increasingly, informal mechanisms operate as the cutting edge of intelligence oversight, with the more formal mechanisms tending to follow along in their wake examining abuses uncovered by others. As such, intelligence and security sector reform in itself is unlikely to work without the wider context of democratic transition. Equally, major structural change represents the best opportunities for intelligence reform and for seeking to combine intelligence effectiveness with new conventions focused on ethical behaviour. David Omand has emphasized the importance of achieving public confidence in the intelligence community in a world of increasing respect for human rights and concern for personal privacy.⁷⁷

Intelligence and security services have much that is positive to contribute to new democracies. Visible reform of the intelligence services is an important symbol of regime change, and is a crucial element of transition if populations are to offer wholehearted support to new state structures. Yet in numerous cases, in eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa, the retention of former intelligence officials from the old regime has caused difficulties. These can manifest themselves in the creation of old factions within the principal intelligence services and in the creation of parallel intelligence organs. South Africa is a valuable case-study precisely because all has not gone well. It is important to point out the difficulty of forming new intelligence services and conducting intelligence when such services are comprised of people who were former enemies. In fact, what we have seen is an effort to combine two very different intelligence ‘cultures’ into one community that then had to carry out its mandate using systems and processes that were in many cases imported from ‘outside’. Nevertheless, a hybrid system is working and evolving.⁷⁸

⁷⁵ Sandy Africa, *The transformation of the South African security sector* (Geneva: Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, DCAF, 2011).

⁷⁶ On the press and intelligence oversight, see Michael S. Goodman and Robert Dover, eds, *Spinning intelligence: why intelligence needs the media, why the media needs intelligence* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009).

⁷⁷ Sir David Omand, ‘Can we have the pleasure of the grin without seeing the cat? Must the effectiveness of secret agencies inevitably fade on exposure to the light?’, *Intelligence and National Security* 23: 5, 2008, pp. 593–607.

⁷⁸ Peter Wilson, ‘The contribution of intelligence services to security sector reform’, *Conflict, Security and*

South Africa is often held up as an example of the application of external models of intelligence accountability drawn from the Anglosphere. In fact, sensitivity to local requirements has been combined with selective policy transfer in the area of oversight and accountability, producing a hybrid model that is locally grounded and yet aspires to meet international expectations and norms.⁷⁹ Intelligence oversight in South Africa incorporates both formal and informal mechanisms, creating a robust system that has served as a reference point for other countries in the region as they have puzzled over matters of democratic governance and international intelligence cooperation.⁸⁰ In South Africa, and also in Kenya and Ghana, there is now a considerable body of law placing the intelligence services on the statute books and regulating their powers and behaviour. The systems for supervision and oversight are improving and there are clear lines of budgetary control.⁸¹ Perhaps the most impressive aspect of intelligence development in Africa is the creation of the Committee of Intelligence and Security Services of Africa (CISSA) in 2004. Proposed by the Angolan Foreign Intelligence Service, this group encourages cooperation between different African services with a focus on countering mercenary activity and terrorism. CISSA works increasingly closely with the African Union's Peace and Security Council on current conflicts in the region and seeks to radiate out common conventions and professional practice—not unlike cognate bodies within Europe.⁸²

What we see emerging in sub-Saharan Africa is not just a middle way but perhaps some genuine hybridity. Laurie Nathan has rightly criticized the polarized debate over the nature of the relationship between the constitution and the intelligence services, a battle between 'intelligence exceptionalism' and 'strict constitutionalism'. It is obvious that during a democratic transition effectiveness will be measured in terms of adherence to democratic principles, practices and ideals, but it should also be borne in mind that there are alternative roads to be followed by countries moving towards good governance and democracy. What is acceptable operationally and the bounds within which intelligence services are allowed to operate are a product of the values, beliefs and interests of the society in which they function.⁸³

Security sector reform is often viewed as part of state-building by the international community, a kind of externally driven social engineering project. Instead, we need to view transitional states as hybrid political orders with the potential

Development 5: 1, 2005, pp. 87–107; Greg Hannah, Kevin O'Brien and Andrew Rathmell, *Intelligence and security legislation for security sector reform* (Cambridge: RAND Europe, 2005).

⁷⁹ Kenneth R. Dombroski, 'Reforming intelligence: South Africa after apartheid', *Journal of Democracy* 17: 3, 2006, pp. 43–57.

⁸⁰ Laurie Nathan, 'Exploring the domestic intelligence mandate: the case of South Africa', in Sandy Africa and Johnny Kwadjo, eds, *Changing intelligence dynamics in Africa* (Birmingham: University of Birmingham, 2009), pp. 195–210; Annette Seegers, 'The new security in democratic South Africa: a cautionary tale', *Conflict, Security and Development* 10: 2, 2010, pp. 263–85.

⁸¹ Africa and Kwadjo, eds, *Changing intelligence dynamics in Africa*, pp. 24–6.

⁸² Sandra Africa, 'Governing intelligence in the South African transition and possible implications for Africa', in Gavin Cawthra, ed., *African security governance: emerging issues* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2009), pp. 57–77.

⁸³ Laurie Nathan, 'Intelligence bound: the South African constitution and intelligence services', *International Affairs* 86: 1, Jan. 2010, p. 12.

to generate new options for security. The set of expectations placed on formal constitutional mechanisms for intelligence accountability in developing countries is probably too great at present, while community values such as trust are undervalued. Moreover, wholesale introduction of external systems risks losing the vernacular approaches that deliver the most effective routes to 'intelligence among the people'. We need to combine state mechanisms and customary institutions together with new elements of citizenship and civil society in networks of security which are embedded in local societal structures.⁸⁴ It has been suggested that we are moving towards 'postmodern intelligence', but a case might also be advanced for the notion of post-colonial intelligence.⁸⁵ Such a model might offer genuine hybridity, challenging western ways of thinking, delivering good governance but also strong regime security at a time of state fragility.⁸⁶

More importantly, there is something here for us to learn about public trust and confidence. In our own societies, intelligence is no longer the preserve of a few obscure agencies. Intelligence, security and resilience activities now suffuse all areas of government, even local government. Large corporate enterprises, including the banks, airlines and telecommunications companies, are all consumers of intelligence and increasingly important producers of intelligence. Even individual citizens are exhorted to be 'alert, not alarmed' and to report what they see. The boundaries between intelligence and information, between state and citizen, are dissolving amid a new kind of knowledge-intensive security. Intelligence in the Twitter age will not be owned by government, and in what has already become a much more inclusive environment, confidence and trust will be crucial. If security sector reform is about increased public confidence and trust in the security agencies, then the Anglosphere needs security sector reform no less than the transitional states. Certainly some African services understand the importance of cultivating public trust rather better than we do in the West.⁸⁷

Conclusion

George Smiley, the celebrated central character of John le Carré's spy fiction, was wearily suspicious of intelligence reformism. Smiley recalled many 'spurious cults' during his government service and noted: 'Each new fashion had been hailed as a panacea.'⁸⁸ Smiley was alluding to the multifarious cults of bureaucratic reformism that overtook all the OECD countries, eventually manifesting themselves as the 'New Public Management'. A variant of this reformism afflicted the world of

⁸⁴ V. Boege, A. Brown, K. Clements and A. Nolan, 'Building peace and political community in hybrid political orders', *International Peacekeeping* 16: 5, 2009, pp. 599–615.

⁸⁵ Andrew Rathmell, 'Towards postmodern intelligence', *Intelligence and National Security* 17: 3, 2002, pp. 87–104; Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the subaltern speak?', in Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg, eds, *Marxism and interpretation of culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), pp. 271–313.

⁸⁶ Bob Hoogenboom, *The governance of policing and security: ironies, myths and paradoxes* (London: Palgrave, 2010), pp. 3–5; Takayuki Yokota-Murakami, 'Espionage as a strategy of literary and cultural politics', *Neohelicon* 37: 2, 2010, pp. 449–55.

⁸⁷ OECD Development Assistance Committee, *Training module on security system reform and governance* (Paris: OECD, 2007), p. 17.

⁸⁸ John le Carré, *Smiley's people* (New York: Knopf, 1980), pp. 161–2.

intelligence, with its emphasis on semi-privatization, strong automation, flat hierarchies and user choice.⁸⁹ Yet the cult of management has proved unequal to the challenge of reforming intelligence precisely because the core problems are cultural rather than bureaucratic. Paradoxically, the bureaucracy has become worse, compounded perhaps by the complexity and disaggregation that market-inspired reforms introduced. It is remarkable how many recent memoirs by CIA field officers—often figures who have departed government service in a state of disillusionment—identify problems of corporate vacuity, endless bureaucratic reordering and elaborate process as the key enemies of good intelligence. Collectively, their writing is testimony to the deleterious consequences of a bureaucratic personality which increasingly stifles individual creativity and initiative.⁹⁰

Our current thinking about intelligence is enmeshed within a set of self-limiting ideas about what intelligence might be. We are destined to revisit time-worn debates about an elaborate technical and analytical process that are increasingly irrelevant to our national purposes. Discussions about issues of organizational reform or problems of perception and cognition seem far removed from the real business of intelligence services in the twenty-first century. Politicians and academic writers on intelligence have made things worse. Even more than managers, they have an appetite for bureaucratic tinkering and have found themselves mired in the tar-pits of intelligence reformism. Precisely because the United States and its English-speaking allies preside over an intelligence apparatus of fabulous size and complexity, change is difficult. Meanwhile, other countries are ahead of the curve in terms of attuning their communities to the complex demands of global uncertainty or generating civic trust.

Culture is partly about difference, and each intelligence community has its own unique interface with national strategy. Appreciating the importance of associated norms and values is central to understanding how they function. Our comprehension of what intelligence culture might be will have value only when it is derived from close observation of real behaviour and when we have enough substantive data to undertake meaningful comparisons. Understanding the culture of intelligence beyond the Anglosphere is now a priority if we are to realize our own potential.⁹¹ Meanwhile, US intelligence agencies continue to flounder—not so much because of self-interested bureaucrats who resist change, but more because we find it hard to imagine what meaningful alternatives might look like.

If we are to do things differently we will need new approaches. The danger is that attempts to incorporate ‘culture’ into our calculations open up the chasm of discourse analysis and the linguistic paradigms that have engulfed some areas of social science in Europe. Nevertheless, if we are to compare intelligence cultures we need something that moves beyond materialist ideas of causality offered by the

⁸⁹ Christopher Hood and Guy Peters, ‘The middle aging of New Public Management: into the age of paradox?’, *Journal of Public Administration Research Theory* 14: 3, 2004, pp. 267–82. See also Christopher Hood, ‘A public management for all seasons’, *Public Administration* 69: 1, 1991, pp. 3–6.

⁹⁰ Steven M. Neuse, ‘Bureaucratic malaise in the modern spy novel: Deighton, Greene, and le Carré’, *Public Administration* 60: 3, 1982, pp. 293–306.

⁹¹ Edgar H. Schein, ‘Culture: the missing concept in organization studies’, *Administrative Science Quarterly* 41: 2, 1996, pp. 229–40.

more traditional approaches within Political Science and International Relations. We could do worse than consider the work of Pierre Bourdieu and his idea of 'habitus', which is in essence a more sophisticated version of the concept of socialization that allows for the interplay of material and ideational factors.⁹² Bourdieu's focus is precisely the problem of what leads to an unconscious acceptance of particular ideas and an exclusion of others.⁹³ Equally, one could imagine this subject being approached through learning theory, which emphasizes the importance of formative historical experiences in shaping the mentality of bureaucratic communities over extended periods of time.⁹⁴

Bourdieu also points out that the paradox of globalization is at the core of many of these concerns.⁹⁵ Why, he asks, has the nation-state been so keen to accelerate processes detrimental to state sovereignty? In the realm of intelligence and security this has manifested itself most clearly in the corrosion of the Anglospheric distinction between foreign intelligence services that observe things abroad and domestic security services that watch people at home. The collapse of this Westphalian boundary between foreign and domestic intelligence—and the need for close cooperation on transnational targets—is a further reason to prioritize intelligence multiculturalism. Globalization prompts us to export our belief in civil society, but we must also be prepared to learn afresh how to conduct intelligence among the people.⁹⁶

Can we escape from the Anglosphere? Change and improvement are not impossible. The South African story—a narrative of hybridity—shows us that intelligence cultures are far from immutable. It also suggests that challenging security situations can be addressed by intelligence and security services without the abandonment of our core values. However, first of all we will need to know more about how others think about intelligence; and then we will need to rethink our own assumptions about what intelligence ought to be. We should not expect instant results. Precisely because our habits of thought about the nature of intelligence are culturally determined, they are deeply ingrained and hard to challenge. It is unlikely that the United States and its Anglo-Saxon allies will learn to think differently about intelligence in the short term, partly because our agencies tend to be cautious and conservative. Meanwhile, we will continue to live within a set of alternatives and analogies mostly drawn from our own experiences. Garret Jones, a long-serving CIA intelligence officer, has put this rather well: 'If you liked the past, you are going to love the future.'⁹⁷

⁹² Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: a social critique of the judgment of taste* (London: Routledge, 1984), pp. 141, 471.

⁹³ Peter Jackson, 'Pierre Bourdieu, the "cultural turn" and the practice of international history', *Review of International Studies* 34: 1, 2008, pp. 155–81; Frédéric Mérand, 'Pierre Bourdieu and the birth of European defense', *Security Studies* 19: 2, 2010, pp. 342–74.

⁹⁴ Dan Reiter, 'Learning, realism, and alliances: the weight of the shadow of the past', *World Politics* 46: 4, 1994, pp. 490–526. See also Yuen Foong Khong, *Analogies at war: Korea, Munich, Dien Bien Phu, and the Vietnam decisions of 1965* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992).

⁹⁵ Pierre Bourdieu's essay 'Against the policy of depoliticization', in his collection *Firing back: against the tyranny of the market 2* (New York: New Press, 2001), pp. 49–50.

⁹⁶ See esp. Simon Chesterman, *One nation under surveillance: a new social contract to defend freedom without sacrificing liberty* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 32–44.

⁹⁷ Garret Jones, 'It's a cultural thing: thoughts on a troubled CIA', part one, *Orbis* 50: 1, 2006, pp. 23–40.