

Robert Dover, Michael S. Goodman and Claudia Hillebrand (Eds.). *Routledge Companion to Intelligence Studies*. Abingdon, Oxon and New York: Routledge, 2014

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Reviewed by Kenneth A. Duncan

According to Sherman Kent, the term “intelligence” can be applied to three distinct phenomena: the information obtained through clandestine means, which is relevant to formulating and implementing a government’s national security policy; the activities required to gather and interpret this information; and the organisations responsible for its collection, analysis, and dissemination as well as for implementing covert actions. Add the requirement for effective oversight of its activities and you have a tall order for any companion to intelligence studies to cover. Routledge’s volume is divided into five parts which: 1) explain the evolution of intelligence studies; 2) present discussions of abstract approaches to intelligence; 3) outline historical approaches to intelligence; 4) describe systems of intelligence; and 5) provide an overview of contemporary challenges.

In its first section, Loch Johnson’s ‘Introduction,’ provides a most useful overview of the history and development of intelligence studies albeit from an academic perspective. He identifies both the strengths and weaknesses of intelligence’s effect on policymaking as well as its distortion by policymakers.

The second section’s chapters on ‘The Cycle of Intelligence’ and ‘Strategists and Intelligence’ provide a useful understanding of this most complex field and highlight its limitations, as when R. Gerald Hughes cites Paul Pillar’s observation that for policymakers intelligence is irrelevant (p. 53). Other contributions of note are Michael Warner’s ‘The State of Play’ and Jennifer Sims’ ‘The Theory and Philosophy of Intelligence.’ Since covert action is considered an important element of intelligence, it is a great pity that Sims’ view that it should be understood not as intelligence but as secret policy is confined to a footnote (p. 49-n.5) and that she was not able to expand on this thought-provoking view in her article.

The third section, ‘Historical Approaches to Intelligence,’ gives largely historical descriptions of the various forms of intelligence collection. What is missing from most, apart from Len Scott’s ‘Human Intelligence,’ is a discussion of their underlying issues. For example, Stevyn Gibson’s ‘Open Source Intelligence’ rightly points out that “the availability of more information in the public sphere may confer a quantitative rise, but does not infer any similar qualitative improvement” (p. 129), but his discussion omits the troubling corollary question of what Osint (Open Source Intelligence) should be in its finished form. In other words, should it be disseminated as a single source of information, as NSA does with its Sigint (Signals Intelligence) reporting, or should Osint analysts also draw on all-source intelligence in order to assess open source accuracy?

I found the fourth section, 'Systems of Intelligence,' both the strongest in terms of overall quality and in usefulness. Michael Goodman's 'The United Kingdom' was outstanding for its discussion of the UK's collegial system as it related to intelligence issues such as Iraq WMD. (p. 142). My only quibble was that Reginald Brope's discussion of Russian intelligence organisations omitted military intelligence, the GRU. The countries selected offered a comprehensive survey of the world's great intelligence organizations, although an article on one of the Middle East's services, besides the Israeli example, would have made it even better.

The section on 'Contemporary Challenges' presented discussions of many of the most pressing issues facing 21st century intelligence organizations. However, no work is perfect and I found several of the articles ('Energy and Food Security' in particular) were not essentially about intelligence at all. Of more concern were issues not covered by this section, although to be fair some were referenced in other parts of the volume. The first of these was the absence of any reference to, let alone discussion of, interagency centers at CIA as attempted by the US intelligence community to create single points of reference and to enhance interagency cooperation in those issues which involve multiple agencies from intelligence, law enforcement, and the military, namely terrorism, narcotic trafficking and international organized crime, and weapons of mass destruction. Similarly absent was a discussion of interagency centers in many countries, most notably the US and UK, for dissemination of intelligence to law enforcement and local authorities or of international interagency centers, such as Atlantic Base, for enhancing international cooperation. A second area of omission was the growing competition between covert action, international law enforcement, and military special forces in areas such as assassination, control of drone assets, and covert renditions. Lastly was the omission of the controversy over use of intelligence by policymakers, particularly with regard to Iraq's possible WMD capability, as a source of support for their decisions rather than an aid in reaching those decisions in the first place.

In a topic as large, complex, and controversial as intelligence it is inevitable that there will be some lacunae, but in spite of this I believe the editors and authors of this companion should be congratulated on a work that will be of immense value to anyone seeking a broad understanding of intelligence today. It deserves to be on shelves of every academic library.

About the reviewer: Kenneth A. Duncan is a former Chairman of the Director of Central Intelligence's Interagency Committee on Terrorism.