The Intelligence Function

Issues in Crime and Justice

CJ 4610 – PA 5315

Professor James J. Drylie

Week 6
Intelligence Politicization

- Occurs when intelligence analysis is skewed
  - Deliberately
  - Inadvertently
    - To give policymakers the results they want

- Politicization a fundamental violation of the commitment of intelligence professionals to provide policymakers with honest
  - Answers
  - Estimates
Sherman Kent

- Cautioned analysts about the problem of getting too close to policymakers.
  - They would be inevitably influenced by political agendas.
  - Must maintain their objectivity.
  - Kent’s views on the dangers of politicization are still evident today.
The fine line

- Too much analytical detachment
- Too little interaction between analysts and policy makers
- Virtually guarantees that the finished intelligence will fail to address the current issues facing policymakers.
- The intelligence manager must ensure that the analyst understands their role in the process.
Sources of Politicization

Scholars generally list three ways in which finished intelligence can be corrupted:

- Analysts can be directly pressured to emphasize findings that support policies and preferences or ignore issues that can cause embarrassment.
- Policymakers clearly express views about what they want to hear, and what they don’t.
- Skew estimates for personal advancement.
Intelligence is Politics

- Politicization is a charge that is often leveled when the estimate supports one position over another.
- The estimates themselves are inherently credible.
- It is the person(s) who oppose the findings that are adverse to their political position will attack the objectivity of the process.
The Politicization of Intelligence

- Knowledge can convey political power
- Politics is about power
- Past presidential elections have involved debates on intelligence
  - Policy
  - Operations
    - 1976 Carter – Ford
    - 1980 Reagan – Carter
    - 1984 Reagan – Mondale
The CIA

- Was designed to policy neutral.
- Comprised of experts providing information relevant to policy, not advice.
- The CIA had a very strong cultural trait that was common to all CIA analysts
  - A deep sensitivity to the dangers of politicization.
What is politicization?

- A term that has many meanings
- The primary meaning for our purposes
  - When an agency or issue has become politicized it has become a point of contention between organized political groupings
    - Political parties
    - This can be categorized as partisan politicization
  - With competing ideologies or preferred values enter into role definitions or policy choices.
A Political Timeline and the CIA

- A dominant concept in establishing the CIA was a detachment from partisan politics.
- The first directors of the CIA were military professionals
  - Normally assumed to be detached from partisan politics.
- The Cold War – 1947
  - A consensus war
  - Considered the optimum for intelligence agencies
  - They flourish when a wartime spirit prevails.
  - When the consensus fades the intelligence
- **Allen Dulles**
  - First civilian was appointed by Eisenhower
  - Not seen as a patronage appointment
  - Reappointed by Kennedy
  - Bay of Pigs was on his watch
  - Kennedy’s confidence was shattered

- **President Johnson**
  - Followed Kennedy’s formula of seeking a demonstrated administrator
  - William Raborn, first appointment, replaced after 1 year
  - Richard Helms was first professional intelligence officer
- Richard Nixon sought to replace Helms, Kissinger advised against it.
- Helms was replaced in 1973 with James Schlesinger, an economics professor.
- Considered to be the most puritanical of CIA Directors.
- Replaced by William Colby.

- William Colby
- Another career intelligence officer
- Headed “operation Phoenix”
  - Program of assassinations of Viet Cong leaders
  - Confirmation process had 10% voting against
By 1967 there was a controversy involving the intelligence picture in Vietnam. The CIA estimates of troop strength differed from the military picture. General William Westmorland rejected CIA estimates:

- Considered them inflated
- An over-representation of insurgent groups
Cooking the books

- CBS alleged that Westmorland’s command suppressed and altered critical intel
- The general sued for libel
- The trial concluded with no clear winner
- The consensus was that the military was playing to politics on the home front.

Main points:
- Question of how to count the enemy
- The war was not a consensus war
The Soviets

- Estimates of Soviet military strength was another testament of the confluence of ideology, politics, and intelligence estimates.
- The CIA was created from the ethical desire for neutrality in the intelligence process.
- The problem was that intelligence often times limits the policy options of decision makers.
- Facts tend to interfere with policy.
George Bush and the A-Team

- Appointed by Ford in 1975
- Developed a new technique for analysis based on competition
- Two analytic groups
  - A Team
    - Normal CIA analytic group
  - B
    - Outsiders with a right-wing ideology
- Competition was less than healthy
- The A-Team often took extreme views in an attempt to match the extremism of the B-Team
- The B-Team was often frustrated by this game of chess
  - B-Team payback, leak the info to the press
Failure in Iran

- In 1978 President Carter had been informed that the Shah of Iran was secure in his position.
- By 1979 the regime was overthrown by a revolution.
- The US assessment of Iran was a failure that signified politicization at its worst.
  - The collection and an analysis of information was inadequate.
  - The power of the religious opposition was underestimated.
US policy in the Gulf Region was anchored in the survival of the Shah’s regime.

There was a deliberate US policy of no contact with opposition elements in fear of antagonizing the Shah.

CIA covert operations had put the Shah in power in the 1950s.

The analytic branch failed to provide policy-free information.

- A critical oversight was the failure to ID the rise of Islamic fundamentalism.
The Consumer-Producer Relationship

- Consumers
  - Policymakers
- Producers
  - Intelligence operatives
  - Intelligence analysts
  - Intelligence managers
- The assumption is that they both speak the same language – not so.
The Assumption

- Do the consumer and the producer support one or the other?
  - How is support defined?
    - The consumer sees a shared and active interest, and in some cases advocacy for policy initiatives.
    - The producer, as a rule, does not advocate policy.
  - The dichotomy
    - Producers and consumers live in a “we/they” world
    - Producers are career officers
    - Consumers are viewed as transients
    - Consumers expectations may be contrary to acceptable professional standards
The Consumer

- The consumer actually helps to set the agenda for intelligence collection.
- The problem is they also have priorities and preferences.
  - A review of presidential preferences
    - Carter’s cancellation of U-2 flights over Cuba
    - The acquiescence to the Shah
- What I don’t know can hurt me
  - Politically
- Shooting the messenger
- **Consumer as analyst**
  - Overconfidence in personal ability
  - Tendency to think they know more than others

- **The omniscient Oz**

- **Absence of feedback**
  - Consumers are viewed as black holes where everything goes in, but nothing comes back out.
  - Two-way street
    - Producers are often content with the status quo.
The Producers

- The Intelligence Butcher
  - Current intel done in short, sharp chops.
  - A snap shot approach

- The Intelligence Baker
  - Long-term
  - Prolonged melding and blending of information

- Current Intel
  - Today
    - The dominant form
    - Very now oriented
- **Uncertainty**
  - Providing uncertain information is problematic
    - Hampers decision makers
    - Producers will cover all bases
      - Too much noise

- **Hesitancy to change estimates**
  - Producers do not want to be wrong, but recognize fallibility
  - Fearful of losing credibility with consumers
  - Prepare the consumer for change and it may be more readily accepted.
Jaded or naïve
- Most producers will appear jaded over naïveté
- Problem is that this places the producer in a position that pits arguments over what happened and spending time to make up for lost ground.

Time restrictions
- Too little time for too much information
- Do not overlook or ignore nondevelopments
- Periodically visit back-burner issues

Lack of self-analysis
- Review institutional behaviors
Policy Guidance

- Intelligence does not occur in a vacuum
- Agencies must have guidance
  - This comes from the policy makers
  - It is the job of the policy makers to give direction
  - The National Security Council was created under the National Security Act of 1947 for this purpose.
  - The wrench in all of this is the turnover of policy makers.
What needs to be done

- The NSC needs to be institutionalized
- Presently subject to change with each new administration and/or issue
- The NSC should be setting policy guidelines for the various intel agencies