

**Strategic Analysis in Support of International Policy Making:
Case Studies in Achieving Analytical Relevance**

Thomas Juneau, ed. (Rowman & Littlefield, 2017), 256 pp., index.

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The US Intelligence Community has long struggled with the definition of strategic analysis, the best way to do it, and its value to policymakers. As such, it would be easy to get excited about *Strategic Analysis in Support of International Policy Making: Case Studies in Achieving Analytical Relevance*, edited by Thomas Juneau, because the title promises insight on these vexing issues. Unfortunately, however, the content does not make good on the title's promise.

The challenge implicit in tackling the subject of strategic analysis is evident early on in this book. Juneau argues in the preface that the major goal of strategic analysis is "to help clients develop policies and programs that will advance the national interest" (xii) While this is certainly true for strategic analysis, such a broad statement applies to almost all intelligence analysis. Close readers may wonder why Juneau asserts that strategic analysis is different from policymaking, as well. That distinction is in the DNA of most intelligence analysts, particularly those who recall Sherman Kent's point that "intelligence is not the formulator of objectives; it is not the drafter of policy; it is not the maker of plans . . . its job is to see the doers are well informed."^a When analysts provide "opportunity analysis," it is intended mainly to alert policymakers to pathways for achieving existing policy goals.

As a whole, the collected essays reduce strategic analysis to different analytic techniques, vice a specific kind of analytic product. Intelligence professionals should not ignore the work, however, because the collection of essays spans various academic, government, and private organizations and the analytic techniques they use or teach. The book also clearly shows the wide range of voices that compete for policymakers' attention and the opportunity to inform policy decisions.

Juneau has assembled an impressive cadre of authors for *Strategic Analysis in Support of International Policy*

a. Sherman Kent, *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy* (Princeton University Press, 1949).

Making: Case Studies in Achieving Analytical Relevance, which is another reason not to overlook the work. These include Gregory F. Treverton, former National Intelligence Council chairman; Jeremy Ghez, professor of Economics and International Affairs at HEC Paris; Tom King, formerly the head of the Persian Gulf Division of the US State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR); Paul Dickson, a strategic analyst with Canada's Department of National Defense; Rex Brynen, professor of political science at McGill University; Mathew Burrows, a former Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and State Department official; Kamran Bokhari, formerly Stratfor's lead analyst on Middle Eastern and South Asian Affairs; and Tim Walton, an associate professor of intelligence analysis at James Madison University, among others.

In the book's lead chapter, Ghez and Treverton make the oft-heard argument that strategic analysis is designed to give policymakers a broader context, to go beyond current headlines, to make long-term forecasts, and to help policymakers consider a longer time horizon. For them, the strategic analytic product is supposed to deliver relevant and actionable analysis and tackle issues that are highly uncertain, long-term, and extremely complex. (15) The four-step approach to strategic analysis they offer, interestingly, is reminiscent of Sherman Kent's outline for basic intelligence, which emphasizes identifying analytic building blocks before going beyond what is known. Their approach starts with understanding current dynamics, identifying key assumptions, testing those assumptions, and re-examining opportunities to shape the future. (8–9) They favor horizon scanning and using historical analysis and analogies as techniques for strategic analysis, but offer little criticism of the flaws or costs and benefits of these approaches. Ghez and Treverton, like others, warn of the dangers of single point-predictions. Ghez and Treverton do not, unfortunately, address problems of macro assumptions, great uncertainty, and analytic accuracy in the kinds of stand-back, think pieces they view as strategic analysis.

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Brynen's chapter, "Here (Very Likely) Be Dragons: The Challenges of Strategic Forecasting," offers a reminder of how uncertainty complicates the analyst's job. He argues that analytic forecasting (which is how he sees strategic analysis) is an integral part of intelligence analysis and may be arguing against Ghez and Teverton. Brynen indirectly asserts that the US Intelligence Community often gets blamed for failing to make single point predictions—highlighting failures to predict the Cuban Missile Crisis, the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the 1979 Iranian Revolution, and the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the United States. He underscores the importance of tracking forecasting accuracy, an issue gaining traction these days. He highlights how team- or crowd-forecasting (versus individual forecasting) and the use of subjective numerical probabilities improve accuracy. To support his position, Brynen draws on a key study from the Intelligence Assessment Secretariat of Canada's Privy Council Office that shows how useful subjective numerical probabilities can be for analytic coordination and argumentation.

Chapters by Burrows, King, Bokhari, and Frederic Charillion offer insight into the analytic techniques and approaches used by government organizations and private think tanks. For example, in the chapter on the NIC's *Global Trends* publication, Burrows sees trend analysis as synonymous with strategic analysis. Echoing some elements from crowd forecasting, he credits the NIC's thirst for diverse views as essential to the NIC's trend analysis program and joins the chorus of intelligence critics who complain about the volume of current and tactical analysis the IC produces. To his credit, Burrows sets himself apart by being honest about *Global Trends'* analysis, writing that the NIC's analysis consistently underestimated the rate of change in their assessments. (82)

King highlights a very different approach to strategic analysis that is practiced at the Department of State's INR. In contrast to the NIC's trend analysis and diverse views, INR greatly values "individual expertise and longevity" on an account. (96) King points out that INR's strategic analysis focuses on broad, long-range issues. However, he does not address how INR guards against expertise bias—an unfortunate occupational hazard confronting many who focus on specific issues for many years and leading to analytic arrogance.

Bokhari highlights the approach taken by Stratfor, a private think tank, and its formula for analysis. Bokhari

relates Stratfor's history and the development of its analytic methodology, which Stratfor argued produced strategic analysis. Like Burrows, Bokhari is intellectually honest in pointing out that the rigid methodology Stratfor used missed some key events, like the Arab Spring. Nonetheless, he touts the think tank's geopolitical framework as the reason for getting many calls "right." Charillion, a professor of political science at Université d'Auvergne in France, tells the story of efforts to create a "think tank" within the French Defense Ministry. His chapter adds an interesting international bent to the problem of analysis and depicts some of the universal problems associated with developing analytic approaches.

Several chapters in *Strategic Analysis in Support of International Policy Making: Case Studies in Achieving Analytical Relevance* focus on the nexus between academia and intelligence analysis. Walton's contribution, for example, walks the reader through James Madison University's intelligence analysis program, highlighting its training on structured analytic techniques, briefing, and writing. He echoes others' points that strategic analysis involves the future, but is also quick to assert the importance of assessing vulnerabilities, risks, organizations, networks, systems, and opportunities. (41) Walton stresses that structured analytic techniques—such as Outside-in, Red Teaming, and Devil's Advocacy—are key aspects of the JMU program and emphasizes their value in producing strategic analysis. The chapter by Trine Villumsen Berling and Brooke A. Smith-Windsor, "The NATO Defense College: Navigating Between Critical Analysis, Strategic Education, and Partnerships," offers a nuanced review of the college, where focusing on substantive issues are very much in the fore.

Dickson's chapter on US operations in Afghanistan provides a substantive rather than programmatic case study, in which he reviews intelligence and operational challenges and details changes in US command structure and mission. This led to a renewed focus on qualitative analysis rather than on measures of effectiveness and enemy combatant behavioral changes. He traces an analytic unit's struggle to inform national security policymakers by using Red Teaming to offer the enemy's perspective; in so doing, he makes the case that Red Teaming is a kind of strategic analysis.

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does not advance the discussion of the definition of strategic analysis, the best way to do it, or its value to policymakers. Analytic techniques can be applied to a wide range of problems, of varying time horizons, and for a plethora of consumers, and can be used in a wide range of analytic products. As such, analytic techniques should not be confused with—or substituted for—particular analytic

products, such as strategic analysis. The value of this collection of essays is the insight it provides into the many government, private, and academic organizations that are all vying for policymaker attention. The IC should not overlook the growth of information and analytic sources policymakers have at their disposal.



