

# The Agency and the Future

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*Time, Change, and Intelligence.*

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The Central Intelligence Agency is twenty-two years old—old enough for Parkinson's law to have gone into operation and for its original missions to lose some of their crispness and relevance to the needs of the country and of its policy-makers.

It is clear that the world in which we operate today is strikingly different from that of the Second World War and the Korean war. The Soviet Union, China, and International Communism are much changed, and the threats and problems they pose are different from those of the late forties and early fifties. The character and dimensions of war have changed dramatically, as have the political uses of military power. A whole crowd of new nations has elbowed its way into international politics, an endeavor in which the great powers have been most cooperative. The world of science and technology has expanded vastly during this period, spreading affluence and expectation of greater affluence around the world, and making possible interaction—psychological, social, economic, and political—among countries on an entirely new scale.

Responsible Agency officers have, over the years, had reason to ask themselves whether we were not too often chasing Communists in situations where new forms of revolution were the problem, or concerning ourselves with the question of stability in countries in which change was inevitable and, in fact, desirable. Many thoughtful officers have asked themselves and their colleagues whether, indeed, the

Agency has not been too busy fighting the last war and performing missions that were conceived in its aftermath to comprehend that our opponents, and indeed we ourselves, have changed out of all recognition.

The answers to these questions, important though it is that they be asked, are not gloomy. The Agency has changed almost continuously from the time of its inception and has taken on new areas of responsibility in response to the changes in the world situation as well as to technical developments that opened up new means of collecting and evaluating intelligence. One of the most dramatic areas of change has been that of intelligence on strategic weapons and in the whole field of science and technology. Not quite so dramatic, but equally important as an indicator of the Agency's capacity to respond to new interests and needs of the policy-maker, has been the development of resources for collecting and evaluating intelligence on the Afro-Asian countries and Latin America. The Office of Economic Research was originally charged with economic research on Communist countries; for some time it has taken the rest of the world into its purview. The Office of Current Intelligence has put itself in a position to deal with developments in every country of the world and to consider the pertinence to American interest of social and economic change in these countries, as well as questions of Communist influence and political stability. National Intelligence Estimates have dealt with matters outside the context of great power confrontation with increasing frequency. Whereas in the early years of the Agency a substantial proportion of NIEs tended to be on the subject of Communist prospects in this or that country, or on the question of the chances for survival of the regime in power, more and more estimates deal with such matters as "The Potential for Revolution in Latin America" (NIE 80/90-1-69) and "Black Africa's Prospects for Modernization" (NIE 60/70-1-69).

Equally impressive has been the resourcefulness of the Agency in finding ways of doing its business more efficiently. The vast improvements in scientific means of collection of intelligence and in the evaluation of such intelligence are notable. The establishment of the Office of Computer Services, the use of computers to handle specialized problems throughout the Agency, and the assignment of a senior officer to study the long range prospects for the use of automatic data processing in the evaluation of intelligence, demonstrate a readiness to change and alertness to opportunity for useful change.

Before we over-indulge in self-congratulation, however, it might be useful to use the old question-asking technique again. The question this time is what kind of situation we are likely to have to operate in during the next twenty-one years and whether we might not need to think about ways in which to extend our capacity for flexibility and inventiveness. It may be that the proven disposition of the Agency to respond to new opportunities, even the systematic review by the Plans, Programs and Budgeting machinery of the relevance and effectiveness of our present efforts and projection of programs into the future, will prove inadequate to the conditions of the next generation.

Seeing the future as wildly different from the present, full of wonders and terrors, bearing little resemblance to the solid and known world of the present, seems to be the natural tendency of those who these days try to look more than a year or two ahead. It is wise for one who contemplates the future to remind himself that one of the clearest lessons of history is the continuity of human ideas and institutions, the way in which change evolves out of that which already exists. It is also well to remind one's self that there has been a considerable amount of change in our own lifetime, not to mention that of the elders who have seen the world modified by the motor car, electronic communications, the airplane, antibiotics, nuclear fission, and space flight, to give an incomplete list. Like all older generations they have asked themselves, what the world is coming to, but they—most of them—have adjusted nicely, thank you, and are basically more like their parents than unlike.

Still and all, there is something different about the future today. It probably always seemed to be rushing at one; today it seems to be rushing at an accelerating pace. Younger and younger people are asking what the world is coming to. The imminence of the year 2,000, magic millennial figure, probably has something to do with it. Still, there must be more reason than that for the tremendous growth of active interest in looking ahead. A European society for the study of the future—with Ford Foundation money—called "Futuribles," has been at work for some years now. The American Academy of Arts and Sciences has set up a Commission on the Year 2,000 with an impressive array of talent among its membership. One of its members, Herman Kahn of the Hudson Institute, a "think tank" that usually concerns itself with strategic, weapons and the like, and a colleague, Anthony Wiener, have written a widely read book entitled *The Year 2,000, An Inquiry ...* New books on the shape of the future appear at frequent intervals. There is somewhere an Institute for the Future. Studies of current situations and problems

projected ten and twenty years ahead are now commonplace in government and in the many foundations and research organizations. At every learned society convention that met at the turn of the year, papers on the future, usually with a warning of impending disaster, filled a large part of the program.

Is all this interest and activity different in kind from the work of Edward Bellamy, who wrote *Looking Backward* in 1887, or H. G. Wells, who wrote *The War of the Worlds* in 1889? Perhaps not. Perhaps it is just a contemporary manifestation of the same natural human curiosity about what is around the corner. Each man must judge for himself. It is possible to argue impressively that the basic dimensions of change are much as they have been. One has only to try to sketch out what Herman Kahn ` calls a "surprise free" picture of the world a generation hence to provide one's self plentiful food for thought. A "surprise free" world is, of course, —one arrived at by projecting present trends. Each individual would choose different trends and find that he expected them to develop differently than his neighbor, but it is striking that it is quite difficult to carry out the exercise without positing a world very different from that in which we live today.

Just as a sample: it could be argued that people in their thirties today can look forward with some assurance to a world with twice the present population, with real time communications—with access to vast stores of information—which are likely not only to change the role of information in human life but to give those in command of the central machinery a kind of control over individuals never before exercised by anyone, a world in which the problems before the decision-makers in many countries are of such technical complexity as to make real public participation in their resolution impossible, and in which the majority of the world's people will not have real, i.e. productive, jobs to keep them occupied and out of mischief.

It is not the purpose of this paper to try to sketch out a scenario or scenarios for the future. What we want to do here is talk about what change is likely to mean to intelligence, and content ourselves with a "surprise free" projection rather than go into all the most likely alternatives and permutations.

In the military field, generally speaking, circumstances seem less likely to change in ways affecting in our present methods of collecting and analyzing intelligence than in other fields. Weapons seem likely to

become more sophisticated and complex and to be developed for use in areas hitherto inviolate—the sea bed and outer space, but the problems for intelligence seem likely to remain essentially the same. The biggest change in the nature of the problem of military intelligence would come about in the event of the achievement of firm disarmament or arms limitation agreements among the larger powers. The problems of inspection and monitoring of development and test programs would become of paramount importance in such a situation. Whether disarmament or arms limitation becomes a reality or not, intelligence on the acquisition of sophisticated weapons by small countries, particularly the less stable and balanced small countries and those involved in bitter feuds, seem likely to become both more important and more difficult to acquire.

Recent experience has made it abundantly clear to intelligence officers that the traditional methods of collecting and presenting intelligence on conventional land warfare are of limited validity in situations like that in Vietnam. The order of battle concept has been very difficult to apply meaningfully where organized combat units have played only one of several complementary roles. Collection and presentation of meaningful statistics on manpower gains and losses and assessments of enemy capabilities have evaded traditional methods and concepts. The impact of the Vietnam war on concepts of resistance and rebellion all over the world seems certain to be tremendous in coming years. The emergence of new patterns of rebellion among youth and student groups and in situations where the racial issue is important seems likely to give rise to new forms of insurgency that will require a major effort on the part of intelligence, first to comprehend what is going on in various revolutionary situations and then to develop means of collecting useful intelligence.

Another problem of military and defense-related intelligence that seems likely to demand more attention is that of anticipating and detecting methods of taking advantage of the complexities of advanced societies to provoke breakdowns of essential services or otherwise bring about chaotic situations. Interference with water supplies, the development of transmission of power, communications—including computer banks of records, personnel data, programs for use by the national automatic data system in the event of specific emergency situations, and the like—all provide kinds of opportunities for bringing a society to a standstill that did not exist when individuals and communities operated in a relatively independent fashion.

Scientific and technical not directly related to military intelligence is probably also likely to have a relatively easy problem of adjustment in a rapidly changing situation. S and T personnel and resources are already focused on the future and on areas likely to be of continuing intelligence interest. It is intelligence with a focus on human beings and their institutions that is likely to face the most difficult problems, both with respect to determining what they should be collecting and how they should go about making what they collect meaningful to the decision makers.

In a world of unprecedentedly rapid change the essential mission of intelligence will remain the same: to tell the policymaker what is going on in the world and to warn him of specific threats to the safety and the interests of the United States. Performance of this mission requires, among other things, an agreed concept of the general pattern of international relations and its implications for the welfare of the United States. Even the most modest piece of intelligence collection depends upon some kind of judgment as to what is of interest to the intelligence community, and ultimately to its customers. Many changes have been made in the simplistic concept of the Cold War once so widely used to determine what was relevant to the intelligence mission. One of the most important tasks that faces us now is that of adjusting our overall understanding of the world situation to take into account the effects of the major engines of change: population, communications, technology in general, and the breakdown of traditional social and political institutions.

One of the most important and difficult tasks of the intelligence analyst, as of the political analyst, has always been that of determining the real goals and priorities of foreign nations. Whether the leaders of a nation were willing to sacrifice domestic goals for military has in the past been generally determinable by examination of indicators as to what they were spending in each field. As lead times for the development and deployment of weapons systems have stretched out, however, and as government involvement in long-range domestic development has increased, it has become both easier and more difficult to determine the direction in which a given nation is going. On the one hand, the intelligence officer can see what another nation is doing in certain areas long before the activity in question produces an end result in its military capability or in its wealth and stability. On the other, as commitments become more complicated and longer-range, it will be increasingly difficult to determine just what their eventual consequence will be.

As in the past, one of the main questions before the intelligence officer will be that of the intentions of another country's leadership.

Determining what another country's intentions are has always depended heavily upon understanding its governmental system as well as upon understanding the men who control it. One of the big problems for the intelligence officer over the next decade or two seems likely to be to comprehend changes in other political systems. All the newly independent countries in the period since World War II have gone through complicated, and usually agonizing, searches for forms of government suitable to their new situation. Intelligence officers like everybody else, have had a hard time understanding what was going on, politically, in Uganda, in Syria, and in Burma, for example. The problem has usually been approached by watching the man or men who seemed to wield authority, a method which would have been less satisfactory if what was happening in most of these countries—not China or India, of course—had been more important to the US.

Without making the estimate that it will be so, it seems worthwhile to consider that over the next generation it may be the advanced nations and, in particular, the large and important nations that will be going through changes which will make it most difficult for the intelligence officer concerned with overall political analysis and estimates to determine what is going on and, indeed, who is in charge.

All the advanced nations are faced with problems that are the consequence of population growth and the advance of technology; problems which manifest themselves in urban crises, the breakdown of transportation and other services in the face of escalating demand, and pollution of the environment. These problems tend to confront governments with unprecedented requirements for investment of resources. All produce and are, in turn, stimulated by dissatisfactions, antagonisms, and demands that have, or develop, a strong political content and lead to aggressive action, eventually in some cases to rebellion, against the powers that be—the establishment.

All these factors have the effect of eroding the system—the social, economic, and political. Another factor, not noted above, is the role of technology, which is changing the lives of ordinary people at an unprecedented rate, with the ultimate effect of making the rules and inhibitions that once governed the conduct of most people seem less and less relevant. Perhaps the most important contribution of technology—including that of economic organization—has been to

remove from over the heads of many people the once controlling certainty in their lives: the knowledge that their survival depended on their willingness to work—usually to work according to the rules of the system. Today, in every advanced country in the world, more and more people—mostly youths—are indicating that if given a choice between a job with its material rewards, but also with its obligations and disciplines, and an uninhibited, undisciplined life supported by handouts from society or parents, they will choose the latter—for a time, at least.

All governments in advanced nations face the problems of internal crises plus the breakdown of traditional attitudes and institutions. Democratic governments face still another kind of crisis which challenges the basic assumptions on which their system depends. The most advanced nations are already at a point at which it is extremely difficult even to keep up the appearance of free public discussion of many of the issues which face the policy-makers. This is particularly true where highly sophisticated technology is involved, as in decisions with respect to transportation systems, use of natural resources, and acceptance of public responsibility for the welfare of the individual. The essence of the point being made here is that many governments are likely in the next several years to face problems which cannot be solved by the political methods of the past. Some will improvise for a long time; others may carry out quiet revolutions among the elite which will change the nature and the uses of power as much as democratic forms changed the absolutisms which they succeeded.

One thing that makes the concentration of power in the hands of small elite groups seem a likely development in some countries over the next decade or two is the fact that the instruments by which such an elite might exercise its control lie readily at hand.

As the machinery of life gets more and more complicated and centralized, opportunities for central control are multiplied. It can be argued that it is easier to control a closely knit urban community than a dispersed rural society, though history records many despotisms holding sway over peasant societies and failing to subdue the citizens of urbanized societies. Quite clearly, the kind of government a people has depends upon a great many factors, most of them rooted in the past. Nevertheless, it seems worthwhile for the intelligence officer with an interest in the future to ponder the implications for government of the following:



(a) Centralized, interlinked, computerized banks containing all (repeat all) information in the country's libraries, government records (including intelligence, FBI, and police files), credit records, financial records, etc.

(b) A system whereby all funds, personal and corporate, are kept in a central, or inter-linked system, of repositories. Personal income would be paid into individual accounts by computer and drawn out by presentation of a credit cum identity card, cum passport, or, more likely, by pressing the thumb—with its unique print—against a sensitive plate.

A host of other science-fiction horrors could be postulated for the computerized world of twenty years, or less, from now. (For one, computer consoles could provide employment at home for a large part of the working population—which would mean that no one would know whether he was really working or simply being kept out of mischief. ... ) For our purposes the two developments sketched out above—computerized records and computerized money—carry enough implications to make the point that government may soon have means of control of the population quite unlike anything that has existed in the past.

First, let us look at a few of the implications of computerized storage and retrieval of information. Such a facility will, indeed, make it possible for junior to do his homework without reference to books, his mother to do her family budget with astonishing ease and accuracy (maybe), and father to check the "facts" on almost anything. The question is, what does it do for the people who control the selection, organization, and content of the information banks, as well as access to it, once stored? In the first place, everyone will have to have a security clearance rating his level of access—in itself a means of exercising control over the individual citizen. There is also the matter of access to credit and business information, a possible source of influence and profit.

Centralized personal records—scholastic, medical, credit policy, security, etc.—on each and every person also suggests possibilities for the exercise of controls over individuals of a sort never before possible. If you have to present your thumbprint every time you buy something—in order to assure that the proper sum is deducted from your central account—you will be querying the computer for a record of your personal file. What an opportunity for a solicitous, or venal, or sadistic, or managing government authority to tell the computer that certain individuals mustn't have cigarettes, alcohol, certain drugs or books, or go

to certain places.

A proper reaction to all this is that it is farfetched—admittedly—and that human beings would never put up with this sort of thing. Maybe. On the other hand, we are talking about a new dimension of relations between men and society, and between the individual and those in charge. For the intelligence officer to understand and interpret what goes on in other nations, hostile or friendly, he must be prepared to anticipate the temptations that confront their governors and to spot the indicators if they do decide to try something outlandish.

Not at all outlandish is the prospect that Communist dictatorships and some of the authoritarian rulers in the less developed countries of Africa and Asia, will try to exploit the new ways of controlling and manipulating their people. It goes without saying that changes in the governmental system in Communist nations will be a matter of continuing concern to intelligence analysts. As in the past those countries seem likely to lag behind the more advanced countries of Europe and North America in their response to many of the major stimulants to change in the contemporary world. It is difficult, however, to contemplate the Communist states retaining their past degree of immunity to the outside world, particularly to the world that one projects on a surprise free trend over the next generation.

The intelligence analyst who is primarily concerned with the less developed countries can probably look forward to as exciting and demanding a time over the next several years as his colleagues who are assigned to the advanced countries. Most of the new states have gone through a post-independence period in which the veterans of the fight for independence, most of them still much under the cultural and political influence of their former "imperialist" mentors, have tried and generally failed to realize the promises they believed were implicit in the fact of independence. Most have gone through a period of planned "development" in which they used up reserves left over from the colonial period, plus the generous foreign aid available from East and West during the period of their most active competition. Many of these new countries seem to be returning to the obscurity from whence they came. Many have accepted a less important place on the world stage than they thought their due when they became independent. There are reasons for believing that the Afro-Asian and Latin American world will be less important in world affairs and demand less of intelligence officers in the next decade or so than it has since World War II.

The Great Powers may, of course, be less concerned in the years ahead about instability and change in the Afro-Asian and Latin American states than they have been. It seems highly unlikely, however, that they can long consider it possible to remain indifferent to turmoil or human suffering on a large scale in places like India, Egypt, or Brazil. Afro-Asia and Latin America in general show no signs of greater stability over the coming years than they have in the past. With the accumulation of conventional weapons and the spread of sophisticated weapons, security problems are likely to continue to be of major importance to the intelligence officer concerned with these areas.

The development and application of technology seems likely to have a great influence on the future of the less developed countries. In many of them, technological backwardness has made local products—even when made with local materials and cheap local labor—more expensive than imported mass-produced products, dependence upon which not only creates critical balance of payments problems but also unemployment and the decline of local crafts and skills. In other ways technology and the worldwide spread of investment and enterprise by the larger companies in the more advanced countries links the economies of many less advanced states to the world economy. Whatever the scenario, the less developed states seem likely to be more a part of the world, its problems and its changes, than they have in the past and to require adjustments and new perceptions on the part of the intelligence analyst who would explain it to the policy-maker.

The traditional bureaucratic response to the kinds of challenges noted here would be to create an Office of Population Research, then, perhaps an Office of Revolutionary Intelligence. With two such important new offices in existence, the next step would naturally be a Directorate of Long-Range Intelligence. Fortunately, we have generally been able to resist such devices and the Agency has avoided much tinkering with the division, direction, and organization of effort. The central importance of the man with the yellow pad—his quality, his preparation and training, his support—has been and should continue to be the main emphasis in the Agency's approach to its job.

But is the average intelligence officer, in present circumstances, able to do his day to day job and to prepare for the future as well? In many areas, given the support he gets from administration and planners, he probably is. This is particularly true of officers who are concerned with keeping up with the technology which will enable them to do present

jobs faster and more efficient. It is also true of officers in Scientific and Technical areas where the emphasis is naturally on development and change. It is in the areas where intelligence is primarily concerned with men, their motives, and the consequences of their actions that the outlook seems less assured. If we can't solve these problems by setting up an Office of Development Research, or the like, what should we do?

This article proposes no solution, only a suggestion, and it is, indeed, the classic non-solution: a committee. The most important requirement here, it is submitted, is a heightened consciousness on the part of Agency officers of the impending problems for intelligence imposed by rapid, world-wide change. More discussion, more thought, more analysis, more attention to the problem of understanding the processes of change and their implications for intelligence cannot but be desirable for an Agency whose purpose in being is to tell the US Government not just what has happened and is happening, but what is likely to happen. A seminar run by the Office of Training, a Committee on the Future intended to coordinate and direct debate and discussion, these and other activities designed to concentrate our minds on what is surely going to be a bigger and bigger problem for the Agency would certainly be worth a try.

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