

## *Historical Dictionary of Chinese Intelligence*

I.C. Smith and Nigel West. Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 359 pp., index.

### **Reviewed by Peter Mattis**

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Inasmuch as the best analytic books on Chinese intelligence were written more than a decade ago,<sup>1</sup> and as concerns about Chinese intelligence activity aimed at the United States and other countries have grown with the exposure of a great many Chinese spies and the explosion of computer network exploitation attributed to the Chinese, any new, English-language production on the subject is of intense interest. Thus, the collaboration of former FBI counterintelligence specialist I.C. Smith and the prolific intelligence historian Nigel West in producing the *Historical Dictionary of Chinese Intelligence* would seem to be a welcome development. Unfortunately, the dictionary is incomplete, often misleading, and ultimately it provides a shaky foundation for building understanding of the challenge.

The book contains three parts: a chronology of Chinese intelligence, an analytic introduction to Chinese intelligence operations, and the lengthy dictionary, ostensibly of Chinese intelligence-related matters: countries, organizations, personalities, cyberintrusion sets, and events. The entries are usefully cross-referenced and, with few exceptions, well organized. On its technical merits, the book makes a lot of material readily accessible. The book's strongest element is its comprehensive coverage of economic espionage cases, even if the authors mistakenly attribute many of them to the Chinese intelligence services.<sup>2</sup> I.C. Smith's background with the FBI helps in the way in which individual cases are followed and gives readers a sense of the breadth of Chinese efforts to acquire foreign technologies.

Regrettably, too many substantive mistakes make the entries difficult to take at face value. Without supporting citations, the book is merely an index rather than the authoritative source one might wish for.

This reviewer is also left without a clear sense of how Smith and West decided what to include in the dictionary. The lengthy chronology is emblematic of this. There one finds Puyi named emperor of China in 1908, (xxi) but there is no entry for the creation of the first Chinese communist intelligence service in 1927.<sup>3</sup> Readers will be distracted by entries, among others, on Richard Sorge; (246–47) Uzbekistan; (278) a People's Liberation Army (PLA) Air Force entry that does not mention its intelligence capabilities but has an extended blow-by-blow of cross-Strait dogfights; (209–13) and a “Chinese Naval Strength” entry—not listed as PLA Navy (60–62)—which counts ships but does not address the service's intelligence department.

The PLA's services do warrant coverage, given the Chinese effort to transform them into “informatized” forces,<sup>4</sup> but the failure to include the Second Artillery (missile forces) is baffling. Many of China's most important new weapons, e.g., the long-range DH-10 land attack cruise missile and the DF-21D antiship ballistic missile, as well as its growing arsenal of short-range ballistic missiles, require high-fidelity intelligence for targeting and bomb damage assessment.

This weakness becomes even more apparent in the way Smith and West handle China's intelligence personalities. Only two of the four ministers of state security are listed—Xu Yongyue, (1998–2007, pp. 296–97) and Geng Huichang (2007–present, p. 100)—and these entries are incomplete even by the standards of English-language sources.<sup>5</sup> Omitted are the first minister of state security, Ling Yun (1983–85), whose only references are misspelled, (38, 301), and the long-serving Jia Chunwang (1985–1998), who oversaw the Ministry of State Security (MSS) expansion to nationwide coverage but is only mentioned as Xu's predecessor. (296)

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The personalities of the Second Department of the PLA General Staff Department (2PLA), the principal military intelligence service, receive even less coverage—for example, current PLA Deputy Chief of Staff for Intelligence Ma Xiaotian (recently promoted to command of the PLA Air Force);<sup>6</sup> recent 2PLA directors Yang Hui and Chen Youyi;<sup>7</sup> and former 2PLA director Chen Xiaogong,<sup>8</sup> who advised President Hu Jintao, all go unmentioned. Probably the most important figure in Chinese intelligence in the last two decades, Xiong Guangkai, gets only an out-of-date mention as head of the China Institute for International Strategic Studies (CISS). (55)<sup>9</sup> Smith and West's choices on historical figures in Chinese intelligence have some curious omissions (e.g., Chen Geng, Qian Zhuangfei, and Wang Dongxing)<sup>10</sup> and give short shrift to others who played important roles from the 1920s on, e.g., Li Kenong; (153) however, they add useful entries on important figures less well-known outside China, such as Xiong Xianghui, who was a senior intelligence officer and diplomat. (293–94)

While it would be unfair to criticize those without Chinese-language skills for failing to draw on the growing number of Chinese publications on the subject, the authors do not use the rich sinology literature in English where it would inform their analysis. The accounting of the research institutes connected to the intelligence service is error-prone and incomplete, for example, connecting the MSS bureau, known as the China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations (CICIR), to the 2PLA (229). 2PLA, however, controls CISS and probably the China Foundation for International Strategic Studies. The former received short treatment, while the latter was omitted entirely. Moreover, the authors call CICIR a cover organization—its analysts will admit their affiliation and CICIR is as it presents itself—and imply it serves as the analytic bureau for all mainland intelligence, not just the MSS (56).<sup>11</sup> These mistakes could easily have been avoided by consulting either a special issue of *The China Quarterly* published in 2002 or a RAND study from 1998 on the military's role in the making of Chinese foreign policy.<sup>12</sup>

Where it is fair to criticize Smith and West for their lack of Chinese-language research is their sweeping assertion of Chinese concepts of intelligence: “In the Chinese language, there is no real distinction between

‘intelligence’ and ‘information’ in common usage.” (220). This may be technically true in the narrowest sense; however, in Chinese, “intelligence” implies action-related information. Qian Xuesen, another well-covered historical figure, (219–20) described intelligence as “activating knowledge” (*jihuo de zhishi*).<sup>13</sup> But it goes much further than that. China's equivalent of the Oxford English Dictionary, *Cihai*, carried an entry for “intelligence” as early as 1915: “wartime reports on the adversary's condition” (*zhanshi guanyu diqing zhi baogao*). More recently, the Academy of Military Science—the PLA's highest-level research organization that supports senior policymaking<sup>14</sup>—most authoritatively stated all forms of intelligence “are to satisfy the needs of a particular domain, using various means to obtain and disseminate the knowledge.” “Particular domain” means decisionmaking in competitive situations, like war or defense planning, requiring intelligence to be targeted, timely, and accurate as well as continuously adjusting to circumstances while trying to get out ahead of events.<sup>15</sup> The word “intelligence” in Chinese clearly is more distinct from “information” than the authors assert. This mistaken assertion, however, underpins Smith and West's belief that Chinese intelligence operates in a fundamentally different way than do their Western and Russian counterparts. (3–11) While intelligence operations with distinguishing Chinese characteristics no doubt exist, the *Historical Dictionary of Chinese Intelligence* simply declares they exist and does not attempt to make Smith and West's case for the perspective or explaining possible differences.

Intelligence, whether in China or the United States, is about filling in knowledge gaps for better decision making. More than 30 years ago, China had few interests abroad and less need for the advantage classified or protected information confers, but that has changed—as has the role of the Chinese party-state. Today, the changing scope of Beijing's foreign policy and national interests is likely to be driving a comparable shift in Chinese intelligence operations. Historical research should provide a reliable baseline for analysts to assess this evolution. The *Historical Dictionary of Chinese Intelligence* might have filled this need. Instead, it ignores these changes and preserves mistaken impressions of China as monolithic and its intelligence services as omnipresent.<sup>16</sup>



**Readings:**

1. Nicholas Eftimiades, *Chinese Intelligence Operations* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1994); Howard DeVore, *China's Intelligence and Internal Security Forces* (Coulsdon, UK: Jane's Information Group, 1999).
2. China's theft of foreign technologies takes many forms, ranging from the intelligence services to research institutes to companies and criminal entrepreneurs. The most systematic research to come to grips with China's economic espionage, the Cox Committee, concluded, "Those unfamiliar with Chinese intelligence practices often conclude that, because intelligence services conduct clandestine operations, all clandestine operations are directed by intelligence agencies. In the case of [China], this is not always the rule." See, *The Cox Report: The Unanimous and Bipartisan Report of the House Select Committee on U.S. National Security and Military Commercial Concerns with the People's Republic of China* (Washington, DC: Regnery Publishing, 1999), 52–53.
3. This fact could have been found in several of the books listed in the bibliography, including John Byron and Robert Pack, *The Claws of the Dragon: Kang Sheng—the Evil Genius Behind Mao and His Legacy of Terror in People's China* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992), 93–94; Yu Maochun, *OSS in China: Prelude to Cold War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 33–35.
4. Dennis Blasko, *The Chinese Army Today: Tradition and Transformation for the 21st Century*, 2nd Edition (New York: Routledge, 2012), 5–7, 16–17; Tai Ming Cheung, *Fortifying China: The Struggle to Build a Modern Defense Economy* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2008), 242–45; and *China's National Defense in 2004* (Beijing: State Council Information Office, People's Republic of China, 2004), 14.
5. Cheng Li, *China's Leaders: The New Generation* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2001), 222–23, 235; Peter Mattis, "Assessing the Foreign Policy Influence of the Ministry of State Security," *Jamestown Foundation China Brief* 11, no. 1, 14 January 2011.
6. James Mulvenon, "The 'Dawn of Heaven'?—A New Player in Sino-U.S. Mil-Mil," *China Leadership Monitor* 24 (Spring 2008), available online at < <http://www.hoover.org/publications/china-leadership-monitor/article/5627>>.
7. Choi Chi-yuk, "Central Asia Expert to Head PLA Intelligence—Well-Educated Specialist is Familiar with Region Next to Xinjiang and Is Not a Known Princeling," *South China Morning Post*, 12 January 2012.
8. James Mulvenon, "Chen Xiaogong: A Political Biography," *China Leadership Monitor* 22 (Fall 2007), available online at < <http://www.hoover.org/publications/china-leadership-monitor/article/5857>>.
9. A career intelligence officer and defense attaché, General Xiong served as 2PLA director (1988–92) and deputy chief of the General Staff with the intelligence portfolio (1996–2005). He also headed CIISS from 1997 to 2009/2010, giving him influence beyond his retirement. More importantly, Xiong was close to then-President Jiang Zemin, judging by his attempt to elevate the general to minister of state security in 1998. See, "Xiong Guangkai," *China Vitae* [http://www.chinavitae.com/biography/Xiong\\_Guangkai/career](http://www.chinavitae.com/biography/Xiong_Guangkai/career); Willy Wo-Lap Lam, "Surprise Elevation for Conservative Patriarch's Protégé Given Security Post," *South China Morning Post*, March 17, 1998. For two English-language sources on Xiong's tenure at CIISS, see, "Putting China's Best Face Forward," *People's Daily Online* [English], 13 September 2010, available at <<http://english.peopledaily.com.cn/90001/90776/90883/7137778.html>> and "PLA pushes forward military contacts with foreign countries all-roundly," *PLA Daily* [English], December 23, 2009, available at <[http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2009-12/23/content\\_4100388.htm](http://eng.chinamil.com.cn/news-channels/china-military-news/2009-12/23/content_4100388.htm)>.
10. Frederick Wakeman, *Policing Shanghai, 1927–1937* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), 132–61; Parris Chang, "The Rise of Wang Tung-hsing: Head of China's Security Apparatus," *The China Quarterly* 73 (March 1978): 122–37.
11. 2PLA has three or four of its own analytic bureaus, depending on which source is used. See, Eftimiades, *Chinese Intelligence Operations*, 78–84, 86; Kan Zhongguo, "Intelligence Agencies Exist in Great Numbers, Spies Are Present Everywhere; China's Major Intelligence Departments Fully Exposed," *Chien Shao* (Hong Kong), 1 January 2006; DeVore, *China's Intelligence and Internal Security Forces*, Section 4-2.
12. *China Quarterly* 171 (September 2002) special issue includes essays covering the entirety of China's think tank landscape, including those belonging to the military and intelligence apparatus. The relevant articles were authored by leading analysts of China's national security and foreign policymaking: Bates Gill, Bonnie Glaser, James Mulvenon, Phillip Saunders, David Shambaugh, and Murray Scot Tanner. See, also, Michael Swaine, *The Role of the Chinese Military in National Security Policymaking* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 1998); Tai Ming Cheung, "The Impact

of Research Institutes in the Post-Mao Period on Peking's Foreign Policy-Making" in *Issues and Studies* 23, No. 7 (July 1987), 81–101; David Shambaugh, "China's National Security Research Bureaucracy" in *The China Quarterly* 110 (June 1987), 276–304.

13. Ke Ping, "Dangdai qingbao xue lilun tixi de jiangou" [The Construct of the Theoretical System of Contemporary Information Science] in *Qingbao Xuebao* [Journal of the China Society for Scientific and Technical Information] 23, no. 3 (June 2004), 383.

14. Bates Gill and James Mulvenon, "China's Military-Related Think Tanks and Research Institutions" in *China Quarterly* 171 (2002): 617–24.

15. Zhang Shaojun, chief editor, Zhang Shaojun, et al., *Junshi Qingbao Xue* [The Science of Military Intelligence] (Beijing: Junshi kexue chubanshe [Academy of Military Science Press], 2001), 6, 10–12.

16. Peter Mattis, "Assessing Western Perspectives on Chinese Intelligence" in *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 25, no. 4 (December 2012): 678–699; Peter Mattis, "China's Misunderstood Spies" in *The Diplomat*, 31 October 2011; Peter Mattis, "Shriver Case Highlights Traditional Chinese Espionage," *Jamestown Foundation China Brief* 10, issue 22, 5 November 2010.

