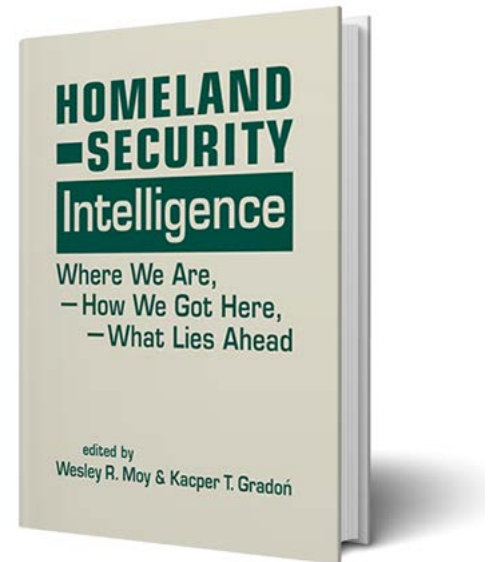# intelligence in public media

Homeland-Security Intelligence: Where We Are, How We Got Here, What Lies Ahead
Reviewed by Michael J. Ard

Social scientist Charles Lindblom declared in his 1959 classic article "The Science of 'Muddling Through'" that "the mosaic of public policy" comes about less by theory and more by pragmatic trial-and-error. Faced with limited information and conflicting values to solve complex problems, policymakers move cautiously and focus on limited gains.[a]

Our efforts at domestic intelligence seem to follow this pattern. This volume, *Homeland-Security Intelligence*, is a timely and informative collection of essays on various aspects of our oft-overlooked and underappreciated domestic intelligence enterprise. As its co-editor Wesley Moy correctly puts it, the homeland security enterprise is "a massive, complex and loosely connected collection of agencies and activities." (3) Lindblom would have appre-

ciated its continual effort at "muddling through," a process well-described in these chapters.

Some key domestic security institutions assumed new responsibilities after unique emergencies. They balanced overlapping objectives and competing values, including civil rights and liberties, and partisan political priorities. The Department of Homeland Security, although created to focus on terrorism, evolved to support the Federal Bureau of Investigation, traditionally the lead on domestic terrorism. Besides these principal institutions, much domestic intelligence work also occurs outside the formal Intelligence Community in the 18,000 police forces across the country.

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a. Charles E. Lindblom, "The Science of "Muddling Through,"" *Public Administration Review* 19, No. 2 (Spring, 1959), 79–88.

This important work is challenged, as the book notes, because the public attitude toward domestic intelligence is ambivalent at best and hostile at worst. If something bad happens, the public wonders where the intelligence was. But when things are quiet, it wants intelligence to be curtailed.

Shifting and ever-expanding priorities further complicate the domestic intelligence mission. As former DHS Undersecretary Brian Murphy ably tells us here, shortly after DHS got off the ground, Hurricane Katrina changed its focus from counterterrorism to disaster relief. Meanwhile, its mission also extended to public safety, border and immigration, critical infrastructure (with a mere 16 sectors!), and economic security.

But DHS's own analytic capability hasn't always matched the task. The late LTG Patrick Hughes, who held senior positions in DHS and defense intelligence, stated that DHS intelligence is "fraught with challenges" and often carries "emotional baggage." Intelligence reporting can hit the wrong political chord, as with a report in 2009 on the militia movement that sparked widespread criticism. Hughes argued the best DHS can do is "synthesize and analyze" reporting, not collect intelligence. Another issue, as New Jersey State Police veteran William Toms writes, is that DHS remains focused on prevention, not the long-term effects. In a later chapter, geospatial intelligence expert Jack O'Connor also asserts that DHS analysis tends to be "event driven." (231)

Hughes's essay asks, how to form a true "homeland security information network"? But such a network exists: the 80 fusion centers that operate nationwide under DHS's informal oversight to share information at the state, municipal, and tribal level. Over the course of 10 years, $1 billion of DHS money was directed through FEMA to the fusion centers. Often the critical goal of intelligence-sharing failed because intelligence collection must be separated from law enforcement criminal cases. (70) In 2012, the Senate Homeland Security Committee deemed this spending to largely have been wasted. Despite this damning verdict, the centers have kept going. More analysis on why the fusion centers never fulfilled their initial

promise would have added a valuable non-federal perspective to this volume.

In his chapter, co-editor Moy shifts the focus to "third order" threats. The National Strategy for Homeland Security has not been updated since 2007, but the threat horizon has significantly changed. Now, more policymakers focus on climate change, cyber-attacks, and infectious diseases. "Domestic violent extremists" also have risen to more prominence, and 200,000 incidents of human trafficking are reported annually. (109) Moy argues the third-order effects of these ever-increasing threats are poorly understood, and we lack a sound methodology to predict them. (122)

Cyber security remains a vexing problem. Hector Santiago raises the issue of cyber-security metrics—just what are they? Can we tell if we are winning or losing? (135) He sees the rise of ChatGPT and other large language model platforms as potentially deleterious to intelligence reporting itself. Deep fakes endanger human-intelligence reporting and other reliable information by creating an alternative reality. It would have been appropriate here to delve into the real jurisdiction problems of the domestic security enterprise's cyber intelligence efforts and how the DHS and FBI divide the terrain and complement civilian efforts. Also, this reviewer would have welcomed Santiago's assessment on the DHS's Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency contribution to securing US elections.

Traditional institutions like the FBI have sometimes struggled to keep up with the emerging threat picture. Former FBI Special Agent David Brock noted after 9/11 the priority in the FBI was to "fill the box" with information, an unaccustomed role. The FBI wrestled with the technology and coping with new threats, e.g, botching its anthrax investigation in 2001. Today, more issues have emerged beyond its traditional areas of expertise, such as China's penetration of critical infrastructure. Despite it all, the FBI has been successful in containing the domestic terrorism threat.

In his sobering chapter on biodefense, Hamza Tariq Chaudry offers little comfort that we are prepared for a serious incident. Since 2001, the US government

spent $60 billion, much of it on the National Institute for Allergic and Infectious Diseases, which failed to predict or contain the COVID-19 pandemic. (169) Moreover, responsibilities for biodefense are spread across several agencies. (170) The government preaches a "whole-of-society" approach to tackling these problems, with little clarity and guidance on how that is to be implemented.

Considering other threat challenges, information specialist Sabrina Spieleder describes how the European Union handles disinformation, as complex and maddening a challenge there as it is here. The DHS's failed Disinformation Governance Board illustrates how the value of greater security competes with American conceptions of civil liberties. (189) Spieleder stresses the need for broader cooperation and, again, stresses more vague "whole-of-society" approaches. Still, it is unclear that such European solutions would work in the legal and cultural information environment of the United States.

Rounding out the collection picture, Jack O'Connor explains how geospatial intelligence has assumed a greater role in disaster management and especially the use of commercial, "small-sat" technology. However, its implementation is limited because of a lack of public trust. (223) Co-editor Kacper Gradón discusses law enforcement intelligence and its many uses, but he doesn't address "intelligence-led policing" and its continued relevance. He claims that law enforcement agencies are more prone to sharing information, but that might be an optimistic reading of current US practices.

To close the volume, Professor Erik Dahl of the Naval Postgraduate School asks, how do we avoid more domestic intelligence failures? DHS was criticized for not using the appropriate tools and methods to deal with riots in Portland, Oregon, in 2020; Dahl argues the backlash may have influenced the inadequate response to violence at the Capitol on January 6, 2021. Dahl believes the domestic agencies often fight the last war: focusing too much on the radical jihadist threat, which peaked in 2009 (if not earlier), while ignoring the domestic extremist threat.

As we have found to our detriment, intelligence doesn't divide neatly between international and domestic. Foreign influence operations, cybercrimes, terrorist groups, and drug traffickers have foreign origins but operate in the United States. Yet the domestic intelligence enterprise must take these matters head on. As Moy states, "We can't withdraw from the homeland." (8) Dahl believes the solution is not to "go small" on domestic intelligence, and Gradón urges that we overcome the false choice between the two security "systems," foreign and domestic. These are sensible recommendations.

Homeland-Security Intelligence offers a range of insights useful for decisionmakers, intelligence practitioners, and scholars alike. That said, readers may ask whether it suffers somewhat from timing. Lindblom's observation that governments tend to muddle through usually holds true. Yet rapid change within parts of the national security enterprise, including DHS, in 2025 challenges the pattern that it comes only after external shocks to the system like 9/11. Moy and Gradón have done a service in compiling this book, but a sequel may well be necessary sooner than expected.■