

## Intelligence in Public Literature

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### **Intelligence Elsewhere: Spies and Espionage Outside the Anglosphere**

Philip H.J. Davies and Kristian C. Gustafson (eds.). (Georgetown University Press, 2013), 313 pp., bibliography, index.

#### **Reviewed by Charles Heard**

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Academics in intelligence studies are, it would seem, a somewhat diffident sort. They spend what appears to the outsider an excessive amount of time outlining (or railing against) the tangency of their area of interest, admitting that the formal study of intelligence lacks one or another quality,<sup>a</sup> and discussing the pros and cons of their field's recency.<sup>b</sup> It is small wonder then that readers, practitioners especially, often take them at their word and decline to spend a great deal of time on the work that intelligence-focused academics have produced.

For that reason alone, there is a certain satisfaction to be taken in *Intelligence Elsewhere*, a remarkably ambitious, edited collection of essays on the intelligence activities and organizations of a dozen countries or regions of the world. *Intelligence Elsewhere* opens with the now seemingly mandatory description of intelligence as “the missing dimension of history,” dispenses with the discipline's alleged flaws on page 1, and leaves any further abjection behind.

The resulting pages span four millennia and as many continents to leave readers with a long look at what moves organizations to seek secret information, and how they go about it, in parts of the world rarely scrutinized in the field's Anglo-American mainstream. A book containing assessments both of ancient China and contemporary Ghana between its covers is not exactly the work of the self-effacing.

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a. Loch K. Johnson and Allison M. Shelton, “Thoughts on the State of Intelligence Studies: A Survey Report,” *Intelligence and National Security* 28, no. 1 (2013): 109–120.

b. For example, Cristian Barna, “From Profession to Discipline: The Development of Romanian Intelligence Studies,” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 27, no. 4 (2014): 772–784; Gustavo Diaz Matey, “The Development of Intelligence Studies in Spain,” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 23, no. 4 (2010): 748–765; Eric Denécé and Gérald Arboit, “Intelligence Studies in France,” *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* 23, no. 4 (2010): 725–747.

Editors Davies and Gustafson set out *Intelligence Elsewhere's* remit in an introductory chapter: to examine the comparative role of culture in intelligence, whose common requirements make the field “especially well suited” for comparative assessment (7). The book then divides into two larger sections. The first contains four studies of what might be called the “deep history” of intelligence in ancient China, India, the Byzantine Empire (here a stalking horse for Russia), and the Islamic world. The book's second section has chapters on contemporary intelligence issues in Pakistan, Iran, Indonesia, Japan, Ghana, Argentina, Sweden, and Finland. A brief concluding chapter notes the power of tradition—in the long sense of national or civilizational history, and in the narrower sense of organizational norms—as a factor in decisionmaking and innovation.

It is not hyperbole to say that books like *Intelligence Elsewhere* represent the future of intelligence studies as an academic discipline—and as importantly from this journal's perspective, the promise of an intelligence studies literature that can provide insight to practitioners.<sup>c</sup> *Elsewhere* wears its social science lightly, in a short chapter by Stephen Welch that covers the competing definitions of political culture. It is explicitly comparative, avoiding the all-too-common problem of drawing conclusions about “unique” or “universal” factors from the single case or the single intelligence service. And most of the essays make use of vernacular source material, some to great effect—Lauri Holmstrom's look at Finland's Security Police, one of few works on Finnish intelligence in English and one of even fewer, if any, to use Supo's own official history, stands out in this regard (265–284).

The best part of the book is its second section, which examines the cultural and political contexts in which sev-

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c. On the lack of influence, see for example comments by William Nolte and Mark Lowenthal in Johnson and Shelton, above, page 110.

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eral nations grapple with what kind of intelligence each needs and how each nation's institutions of intelligence should be set up and overseen to increase (or decrease) their chances of success—whether in operations, in influencing decisionmaking, or in adapting to changing national priorities. Finland's Supo and Sweden's technical service FRA are both described as reevaluating their orientation and mission priorities in the post-Cold War world, but each moves in a slightly different direction, for reasons of history, economic and security interest, and—yes, probably—strategic culture (239–263). Chapters on Iran and Japan both show how a predetermined political orientation—privileging ideological Shi'ism, in the first case, and privileging political consensus over intelligence-informed decisionmaking, in the second—affect what intelligence services focus on and how well (141–156 and 181–198).<sup>a</sup> The three chapters on security sector reform in Ghana, Argentina, and Indonesia all serve in their own ways to bolster the case that the main model of reform probably is too tightly tied to the East European experience on which it is based (157–180, 199–218, and 219–238). The only part of this section that seems derivative is the chapter on Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence Directorate (ISI), best described as a rather cursory look at the public controversies over that organization's activities, disappointingly studded with citations from British and American newspapers and current-affairs magazines (115–140).

Like any edited volume, *Elsewhere* has its highs and lows, and not everything makes good on the project. The first section, with its look at intelligence activities and traditions, in some cases thousands of years old, is more suggestive than it is persuasive. Even in the better chapters the analytic linkages to contemporary concerns are gossamer-thin. The chapter on Byzantine intelligence structures draws plausible but loose parallels between the attitude of the Byzantine emperor—perpetually ensnared in schemes and overseeing the resulting constant stream

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a. A similar look at distortions in Japanese politics as applied to intelligence issues is Brad Williams, "Explaining the Absence of a Japanese Central Intelligence Agency: Alliance Politics, Sectionalism, and Antimilitarism," *Journal of East Asian Studies* 13, no. 1 (January–April 2013): 137–164.

of investigation and counterinvestigation—and that of his historical descendants ruling Imperial, Soviet, and modern-day Russia (67–88). The chapter on Arab and Islamic intelligence practice shows that clandestinity and intelligence collection are deeply rooted in Arab and Islamic history as Muhammad and his followers fought to survive their new religion's earliest days (89–112).

Other chapters do not even suggest connections to the present. The discussion of historical Chinese military texts makes no effort at all to draw or even hint at a link to contemporary Chinese practice or lingering influences (29–48). It does show quite convincingly that military leaders there for centuries believed intelligence and subversion were key to warfighting—though it is hard to imagine a competent general, Chinese or armchair, who would believe otherwise. And the chapter on India recites approvingly and at length the intelligence advice in Kautilya's 4th century BCE work *Arthashastra*, before admitting, almost sheepishly, on the final page that the text was lost for a millennium until the early 20th century, and that the author does not know the literature (a portion of which has been reviewed in this journal in recent years) on contemporary Indian intelligence institutions well enough to draw any possible cultural reflections (49–66).<sup>b</sup>

Truly comparative work on the role of intelligence in governance has generally proved elusive—no doubt for lack of information, not disinterest—but this volume shows that the proliferation of official histories, study groups, and other source material may make it a fertile time to set aside the (always somewhat false) inferiority complex and push the discipline's boundaries. Whatever its blemishes, *Intelligence Elsewhere* is a book to welcome for readers of intelligence literature, and hopefully one that spawns imitators of all stripes in coming years.

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b. The more appropriate cultural linkage in the subcontinent probably is British imperial structures, which Davies notes in the book's concluding chapter. See Philip Murphy, "Creating a Commonwealth Intelligence Culture: The View from Central Africa 1945–1965," *Intelligence and National Security* 17/3 (Summer 2002): 131–162, and in the Indian context, Christopher Bayly, *Empire and Information: Intelligence Gathering and Social Communication in India, 1780–1870* (Cambridge University Press, 2000).

