

Geo-Time and Intelligence

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Suggests more systematic coping with the simultaneously diverse states of activity and quiescence around the world.

Chronomaniac

" ... It often seems that in today's conditions both government and public are too often the captives of the spot-news report, the daily headline, the minute-to-minute news bulletin ..." ¹

The concept of geo-time, briefly sketched below together with some of its possible repercussions on intelligence, was stimulated partially by the writer's recent browsing in the literature of geopolitics. (That subject, after being discredited by pseudo-scientific treatment at the hands of the Nazis and others, may be in for some rethinking and rehabilitation: a recent article in the Department of State *Bulletin* by the Department's Geographer appears to take a much saner approach to it.) Other stimuli have been the writer's experience as a former analyst and part-time night duty officer and the increasingly manifest desire on the part of intelligence consumers for what amounts to "instant analysis" -- in quantity and depth.

Time Zones and Timing

Geo-time is simply the notion that there exist, superimposed on the geopolitical relationships of land and water masses to each other and of both to problems of national strategy, two equally obvious world physical relationships of which little account seems to have been taken: (1) roughly half the earth's surface being in darkness and the other half in daylight at any given moment; and (2) the phenomena of the seasons and of the polar "long day" and "long night" produced by the tilt of the earth's axis. Although many individuals and organizations in intelligence, as well as in the defense establishment generally and to some extent in other agencies dealing with foreign affairs, habitually take these relationships into their daily calculations for technical if for no other reasons, I have the impression that no consciously coordinated effort has yet been made to think through the many implications and possible applications of this concept in various fields. Hoping that such a comprehensive effort may be undertaken by those competent to do so, I shall confine myself here to an introductory consideration of the impact of geo-time on an activity with which I am familiar, intelligence analysis, merely noting a few other possible implications.

First a word on the real and practical importance of: geo-time. Historically, men have long been familiar with the "night watch" concept, which in much more sophisticated form has necessarily been adopted by intelligence as well as military organizations. In some fields, particularly military, the day-night and seasonal factors are crucial in questions relating to attack and defense. It is superfluous to point out that the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor could not have been better timed to catch our forces off balance. Making use of complications arising from the overlaying of the day-night and seasonal factors by varying social customs around the globe, the concept has been successfully employed in such limited time zones as western Europe for timing critical communiques or ultimata so as to take greatest advantage of another power's press deadlines or long weekends and holiday slackness. Even within the comparatively small time region covered by the continental United States, there has been recent debate whether televising election results from the east coast affects the late vote in the far west. All these observations suggest reasons for systematically applying geo-time in intelligence, now that a "collapse of space" has been produced by modern communications.

Analysis and Reporting

So far as intelligence analysis is concerned -- and to some extent the reporting of raw intelligence and the operations which produce such reports -- I submit that our system of virtually instantaneous transmission and rapid dissemination of information from all quarters of the globe and from all sources including the press deserves re-examination in the light of geo-time both in Washington and in the field. The hour of day or night at which a given message arrives, and the season of its arrival in this north temperate zone, almost inevitably affect the quality as well as the timeliness of the analysis, particularly of the "instant" variety. The main reason is the customary disparity between analytical resources available during the normal working day and those readily available after office hours, while the intelligence material now flows in as steadily by night as by day. I am aware of recent efforts to tighten the night watch and increase round-the-clock analysis and production capability throughout the community, but I am inclined to doubt that these efforts are nearly as far-reaching as what a detailed study of the impact of geo-time might lead to.

Simply to illustrate the problem in its crudest form, the day-night factor without reference to seasons or social customs, the two tables on page 22 juxtapose Washington and field times, highlighting (1) the most disadvantageous hours for analysis and production capabilities in Washington, and (2) the most disadvantageous times, depending on locality, for collection and reporting in the field. The calculations are based only on the schematic division of the globe into 24 equal time zones; to be truly useful they would have to take account of latitude, season, arbitrary local time, and local customs. The nature of the activities generating the information reports would also be a factor, since some are obviously best conducted by night and others by day. The crudeness of these tables should not, however, obscure their implications; it simply reflects the writer's lack of specific area knowledge covering all points of intelligence interest and his not having the skill and leisure to pursue this matter as far as it seems to warrant.

Aside from the implications of each table separately, a comparison of the two suggests that Washington is particularly at a disadvantage in terms of its own staffing during the optimum field reporting times in most of the areas which are currently most troublesome and are likely to be so in the foreseeable future. A case could also be made for the

existence of doubly critical periods when the bracketed areas of Table II heavily overlap Table I regional times, showing Washington and field capabilities to be in balance because both are poor.

A review of the implications of geo-time might suggest further changes not only in staffing for after-hours intelligence analysis and production but in the two-way flow of communications between Washington and the field. This might improve coordination and direction of the field in administrative as well as operational matters. The conscious and complete adaptation of the geo-time concept to a variety of political as well as military tactics might also be considered; e.g., major pronouncements affecting foreign governments might be timed less with an eye to the convenience of the domestic press than, say, to precipitating an atmosphere of crisis, if that is desirable, at an hour which would most disadvantage analysis and reaction in a particular foreign capital.

ASSUMED CRITICAL PERIOD IN WASHINGTON

(Underlined hours are p.m.)

Time in selected regions	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Washington.....																
West Europe & W. Africa.....	<u>10-12</u>	<u>11-1</u>	<u>12-2</u>	1-3	2-4	3-5	4-6	5-7	6-8	7-9	8-10	9-11	10-12	11-1	12-2	
Middle East, & E. Africa.....	<u>12-3</u>	1-4	2-5	3-6	4-7	5-8	6-9	7-10	8-11	9-12	<u>10-1</u>	<u>11-2</u>	<u>12-3</u>	<u>1-4</u>	<u>2-5</u>	
Moscow region.....	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11	11-12	<u>12-1</u>	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2-3</u>	<u>3-4</u>	
South Asia.....	3-5	4-6	5-7	8-10	9-11	10-12	11-1	12-2	<u>1-3</u>	<u>2-4</u>	<u>3-5</u>	<u>4-6</u>	<u>5-7</u>	<u>6-8</u>	<u>7-9</u>	
Peking & Western S.E. Asia.....	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2-3</u>	<u>3-4</u>	<u>4-5</u>	<u>5-6</u>	<u>6-7</u>	<u>7-8</u>	<u>8-9</u>	
Eastern S.E. Asia & Japan.....	7-9	8-10	9-11	10-12	11-1	12-2	1-3	2-4	3-5	4-6	5-7	6-8	7-9	8-10	9-11	

Latin America..... (Present no great problem; Western half has same range as continental U.S. and Eastern half is at most 2 hours earlier.)

The regional times are those during which field reporting would most disadvantage analysis and dissemination in Washington.

TABLE II
ASSUMED CRITICAL PERIODS IN FIELD DURING NORMAL PERIOD IN WASHINGTON

(Underlined hours are p.m.)

Time in selected regions	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6
Washington.....											
West Europe & W. Africa.....	12-2	1-4	2-6	3-5	<u>4-6</u>	<u>5-7</u>	<u>6-8</u>	<u>7-9</u>	<u>8-10</u>	<u>9-11</u>	<u>10-12</u>
Middle East, & E. Africa.....	<u>2-5</u>	<u>3-6</u>	<u>4-7</u>	<u>5-8</u>	<u>6-9</u>	<u>7-10</u>	<u>8-11</u>	<u>9-12</u>	<u>10-1</u>	<u>11-2</u>	<u>12-3</u>
Moscow region.....	<u>3-6</u>	<u>4-5</u>	<u>5-6</u>	<u>6-7</u>	<u>7-8</u>	<u>8-9</u>	<u>9-10</u>	<u>10-11</u>	<u>11-12</u>	<u>12-1</u>	<u>1-2</u>
South Asia.....	<u>3-7</u>	<u>4-5</u>	<u>5-7</u>	<u>6-11</u>	<u>7-11</u>	<u>10-12</u>	<u>11-1</u>	<u>12-2</u>	<u>1-3</u>	<u>2-4</u>	<u>3-5</u>
Peking & Western S.E. Asia.....	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>
Eastern S.E. Asia & Japan.....	<u>5-11</u>	<u>6-12</u>	<u>7-2</u>	<u>8-2</u>	<u>9-3</u>	<u>10-4</u>	<u>11-5</u>	<u>12-6</u>	<u>1-7</u>	<u>2-8</u>	<u>3-9</u>

Latin America..... (Japan presents no great problem; see Table I.)

ASSUMED CRITICAL PERIOD IN WASHINGTON

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Washington.....																
West Europe & W. Africa.....	<u>10-12</u>	<u>11-1</u>	<u>12-2</u>	1-3	2-4	3-5	4-6	5-7	6-8	7-9	8-10	9-11	10-12	11-1	12-2	
Middle East, & E. Africa.....	<u>12-3</u>	1-4	2-5	3-6	4-7	5-8	6-9	7-10	8-11	9-12	10-1	11-2	12-3	<u>1-4</u>	<u>2-5</u>	
Moscow region.....	1-2	2-3	3-4	4-5	5-6	6-7	7-8	8-9	9-10	10-11	11-12	12-1	<u>1-2</u>	<u>2-3</u>	<u>3-4</u>	<u>4-5</u>
South Asia.....	3-5	4-6	5-7	8-10	9-11	10-12	11-1	12-2	<u>1-3</u>	<u>2-4</u>	<u>3-5</u>	<u>4-6</u>	<u>5-7</u>	<u>6-8</u>	<u>7-9</u>	<u>8-10</u>
Friking & Western S.E. Asia.....	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>	<u>7</u>	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>
Eastern S.E. Asia & Japan.....	7-9	8-10	9-11	10-12	11-1	12-2	1-3	2-4	3-5	4-6	5-7	6-8	7-9	8-10	9-11	
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Washington.....											
West Europe & W. Africa.....	12-2	1-4	2-6	3-5	<u>4-6</u>	<u>5-7</u>	<u>6-8</u>	<u>7-9</u>	<u>8-10</u>	<u>9-11</u>	<u>10-12</u>
Middle East, & E. Africa.....	<u>2-5</u>	<u>3-6</u>	<u>4-7</u>	<u>5-8</u>	<u>6-9</u>	<u>7-10</u>	<u>8-11</u>	<u>9-12</u>	<u>10-1</u>	<u>11-2</u>	<u>12-3</u>
Moscow region.....	<u>3-6</u>	<u>4-5</u>	<u>5-6</u>	<u>6-7</u>	<u>7-8</u>	<u>8-9</u>	<u>9-10</u>	<u>10-11</u>	<u>11-12</u>	<u>12-1</u>	<u>1-2</u>
South Asia.....	<u>3-7</u>	<u>4-5</u>	<u>5-7</u>	<u>6-11</u>	<u>7-11</u>	<u>10-12</u>	<u>11-1</u>	<u>12-2</u>	<u>1-3</u>	<u>2-4</u>	<u>3-5</u>
Friking & Western S.E. Asia.....	<u>8</u>	<u>9</u>	<u>10</u>	<u>11</u>	<u>12</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u>	<u>3</u>	<u>4</u>	<u>5</u>	<u>6</u>
Eastern S.E. Asia & Japan.....	<u>9-11</u>	<u>10-12</u>	<u>11-2</u>	<u>12-2</u>	1-3	2-4	3-5	4-6	5-7	6-8	7-9
Latin America.....	(Japan presents no great problem; see Table I.)										

The bracketed times are those during which the field is at most disadvantage in meeting Washington demands.

If nothing else, as a friend of the writer has pointed out, some alteration in our present staffing pattern might at least relieve the parking situation.

1 Robert J. Manning, former Assistant Secretary for Public Affairs, in the Department of State Bulletin, July 30, 1962.

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