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Brian Stewart, Samantha Newbury. *Why Spy?: On the Art of Intelligence.* London: Hurst & Co., 2015. xx + 216 pp. $29.95, cloth, ISBN 978-1-84904-513-1.

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Commissioned by Margaret Sankey (Air University)

The advent of intelligence studies as an academic discipline has spawned a plethora of books dealing with the various aspects of intelligence work. As the late Brian Stewart, the author of *Why Spy,* notes, the discipline "is still in its infancy … and we have some way to go before lay people and professionals alike are adequately educated about the strengths, weaknesses, potential and limitations of intelligence and the lessons of history" (pp. xviii-xix). By focusing on the wider issues of intelligence, he hopes to illuminate the complexities of intelligence work while drawing on lessons of the past to bring attention to the shortcomings of the endeavor. Drawing on his own long and distinguished career as a British intelligence officer, Stewart discusses, often in anecdotal form, intelligence topics ranging from its collection to the assessment of raw information and the uses, misuses, and abuses of intelligence. He insists that it is especially important to look beyond the simple phrase "intelligence failure" and "identify the responsible culprits who may well be policy makers or military commanders, rather than intelligence officers" (pp. xix-xx). Ultimately, he writes, *Why Spy* "addresses the fundamental question of why intelligence is important" (p. 6).

Reflective of Stewart's own expertise about East Asia as the result of his training and experience, *Why Spy* begins with an examination of the role of intelligence in the Malayan civil war, the Vietnam War, and assessments of the affairs of the People's Republic of China. The lessons he provides for the readers are clear regarding the Malayan situation and Vietnam: overreliance on a single source of information can inhibit the effectiveness of intelligence gathering and assessment; mirror imaging, underestimating the will of an opponent, placing too much faith in technology, and a lack of historical knowledge can mask the dangers of entering into an asymmetrical war. As for making assessments about China, Stewart explains the benefits of language training (he was fluent in Chinese) and cultural understanding, combined with a willingness to travel throughout the country. This enabled him to pick up a great deal of information and to make a number of accurate predictions about Chinese policy. Most of all, as he writes, these activities "are illustrations of how much can be achieved without secret sources" (p. 46). He goes on to point out what he identifies as "a central problem about assessment. Analysts are easily and constantly influenced by the priorities of their own cultures. They find it hard to remember that other countries have different priorities."

Students and faculty in academic programs for intelligence studies or national security studies are likely to find the chapters in the second

section of the book particularly instructive. Chapter 4 offers an interesting comparison of the American and British intelligence organizations. Stewart notes the importance of a university education toward the end of the chapter, and while noting the value of academic programs in intelligence studies, he also emphasizes the importance of historical knowledge: "Without the opportunity to study the lessons of history in some depth … the intelligence officer cannot reasonably be expected to avoid errors already made by others" (p. 63).

However, chapters 6, on assessment, and 7, about moral dilemmas, are especially instructive. Stewart focuses on the problems that mirror imaging and groupthink present in the assessment (or analytical) process. As he notes, mirror imaging "is as significant a cause of mis-assessment as any form of fallacious thinking. If the assessors are highly educated Western liberals, they will need to be particularly conscious of the dangers inherent in assuming that the foreigner has the same views on ethics, laws and so on" (p. 93). It is therefore essential, he argues, that "the dangers of mirror imaging are burnt into their minds" (p. 93). Equally problematic is groupthink. Placing too much confidence in numbers that show one side has a clear advantage over another, wishful thinking, and assumptions that an adversary is better equipped or in possession of a superior intelligence operation can also lead to faulty analysis. Therefore, Stewart argues, awareness of how mirror imaging or groupthink can impact analytical products is paramount. Admittedly, he notes, the human mind is mysterious and capable of overnight change. And the toughest problem of all may be convincing the consumer of intelligence that the world can be a nasty place and not everyone yearns "for democracy and all the trappings of a modern state…. But there is less excuse for intelligence officers, and the intelligence community as a whole must try hard not fall into such common traps" (p. 98).

The following three chapters apply the lessons of the previous two. Stewart briefly examines the intelligence failures around the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Bay of Pigs "disaster," the Cuban Missile Crisis, and the erroneous claims that Iraq was stockpiling WMD. The successful Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, Stewart argues, reflected the failure of American military intelligence and what passed for an intelligence community then to take the Japanese military threat seriously. However, another significant problem was "the common tendency of operational staff to look down on the backroom intelligence staff" (p. 131). This is a reminder, Stewart points out, that "it is not only the intelligence staff who need to be good at their jobs, but the consumers of intelligence too" (p. 131).

As for Cuba, the author notes that both cases illustrate the challenge of validating intelligence provided by exiles; the failure at the Bay of Pigs made American intelligence less confident in the information provided by its sources in Cuba. On the other hand, the failed invasion led both the Cubans and Soviets to become overconfident, which, in turn contributed to the crisis. Intelligence failures around the Bay of Pigs included an assumption that the ineffectiveness of Castro's intelligence would guarantee total surprise. Moreover, the Americans failed to take into account the fact that the informants feeding intelligence to the United States had nothing to lose if the invasion failed.

American intelligence was aware of the growing Soviet presence in Cuba in the weeks leading up to the missile crisis, Stewart writes, but human intelligence about the installation of medium-range ballistic missiles was ignored or discounted. Stewart attributes this partly to wishful thinking and mirror imaging. American intelligence doubted the Soviets would be overly aggressive in Cuba or take overly provocative actions there, as the US would be reluctant to take similar actions that close to the borders of the USSR. Stewart notes

that the Cubans and Soviets also made errors in assuming the missiles would not be discovered until they were in place and in believing the US was willing to invade Cuba. “Intelligence on intentions was lacking throughout,” he observes (p. 139).

The chapter on Iraq looks at the issues from the British perspective rather than the American. The reputation of British intelligence, he admits, “was not enhanced by the Iraq affair” (p. 142). As did the Americans, the British justified war with Iraq on erroneous claims that the nation had developed a WMD capability. Stewart devotes most of the chapter to the Butler Review, which examined the intelligence research and assessment process related to the decision to go to war with Iraq, noting its conclusions about the weakness of the intelligences and offering a critique of the review process itself.

The final chapters offer insights into those clandestine activities that are not part of the intelligence gathering or assessment process: special and deception operations, and assassination. These chapters discuss and explain, briefly, the nature of these kinds of operations and the reasons for them. In the case of assassinations, Stewart states that Britain’s intelligence services “are no more trained to assassinate than they are to torture” (p. 176). He does note the changing attitudes in the democracies toward targeting individuals for political or security reasons since 2001, despite the legal, practical, and moral considerations; however, he makes no further comment about this issue.

Samantha Newberry, PhD, who provided direction, editing, and the development of his manuscript, ably assisted Stewart in the writing of this book. A lecturer in contemporary intelligence at the University of Salford, Newberry, brought an academic perspective to *Why Spy* and clarified a number of historical episodes and terms that younger readers might have found unfamiliar, along with sound arguments in support of Stewart’s observations and commentary. She emphasizes, however, that the object was not to produce a co-authored book. In this the duo was generally successful.

Nonetheless, readers would have benefited from more historical perspective in those chapters that discuss Stewart’s own experiences and his assessments of the intelligence failures he identifies. A paragraph or two summarizing the historical background would have been useful, especially for younger readers whose knowledge of these events may be sketchy at best. This is particularly true in regard to the chapter on Malaya, a topic few American readers—and possibly British readers—are likely to be familiar with. Given the writers’ comments on the importance of historical knowledge, it is surprising that more attention was not given to this detail.

Another flaw can be found in the brevity of the final chapters and their discussion of non-intelligence gathering operations. All of the book’s chapters are relatively brief, but these seem to have been written almost in passing, and, while informative, could have been more substantive. Somewhat surprising is the lack of commentary about the moral and ethical aspects of targeting individuals, especially since Newberry teaches a graduate course in intelligence ethics. Despite Newberry’s statement that the book was not to be co-authored, more than a general statement about the changing attitudes of the democracies regarding this issue would have been welcome.

The meat of the book is contained in the middle chapters about assessment and the moral dilemmas that center on intelligence gathering. Stewart largely ignores the myriad analytical methods, which have been the subject of a large body of literature, and directs the reader’s attention to the pitfalls that affect intelligence analysis. His discussions of mirror imaging, groupthink, and wishful thinking offer a striking reminder about how these elements can ensnare even the most seasoned analysts and undermine their ob-

jectivity. Stewart reminds the reader of the importance of knowing history and understanding other cultures as a defense against them.

Perhaps the most important chapter is the one on moral dilemmas, and it may be here where Newberry's expertise in intelligence ethics shines through. While there is a brief examination of the use of blackmail, drugs, and sex, as well as intelligence oversight, the dominant topic is interrogation. The chapter notes the differing views regarding the use of pressure or torture in extracting information and provides historical examples that suggest "results can vary enormously according to the character of the prisoner" (p. 105). The authors note there has been more debate about interrogation techniques in the United States than in the UK, probably due to the controversies that centered on the methods used by the CIA in its detention and interrogation programs. Stewart concludes however, that the study of interrogation techniques has shown little progress and that more research is required to determine which techniques are effective. There is much food for thought in this chapter.

Part memoir, part critique, *Why Spy* offers insights into the profession and art of intelligence gathering and assessment and the moral and ethical issues that students of this subject, and lay persons as well, would do well to read. The observations of a British intelligence professional, with a distinguished career of more than fifty years, provide the reader with an entrée into a world that few know about, let alone understand.