



BOOK REVIEWS

Ford, Harold P. *Estimative Intelligence: The Purposes and Problems of National Intelligence Estimating*. New York: University Press of America, 1993.

In the world of strategic intelligence no issue is more important than predicting the most likely course of events, especially those that will impact on national security. In the jargon of intelligence this is often called the process of “estimation,” and in the United States this process involves critical elements at the very top of the US Intelligence community. Few writers on intelligence have more familiarity with this process than Harold P. Ford, a veteran US intelligence officer and early practitioner of intelligence estimating.

Ford’s book is an outgrowth of a handbook written for the Defense Intelligence College (now the Joint Military Intelligence College) in Washington. In it, Ford sets out to explain why estimates are written and how the process of creating them works. In that sense his book is good history and an accurate depiction of America’s intelligence bureaucracy in action. It does not, however, explain much about how an intelligence officer might go about actually predicting the future, a serious omission in a handbook of this sort.

Ford begins with Pearl Harbor, a seminal event in US intelligence history and one that has shaped thinking about intelligence in general and estimates in particular, ever since that day in 1941 that still lives “in infamy.” In fact, the creators of the Central Intelligence Agency hoped to establish a system that would permit no more Pearl Harbors. Their failure to do so says a great deal about the difficulties of *estimative intelligence*.

Early in the book Ford creates a Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE) on Pearl Harbor — to show what might have been written if the US had actually had a CIA in 1941. While some historians now argue that Pearl Harbor was a failure in the collection of data and not a failure of analysis, Ford’s SNIE shows how judgments might have been made that would at least have caused American forces to move to a higher state of alert in 1941. But, there is no way to tell if such an SNIE would have actually prevented a surprise.

The book moves on to describe the history of the US estimates organization, from the Research and Analysis arm of the Office of Strategic Services in World War II to the Office of National Estimates in the early days of the Cold War. Ford mentions only in passing the “College of Cardinals,” General Donovan’s name for the group of estimators in the OSS. This reliance on “wise men” to judge the future led to the creation of the Board of National Estimates in the CIA. The “wise men” proved to be of limited wisdom in failing to anticipate the North Korean attack on the South in 1950 or the emplacement of nuclear missiles in Cuba in 1962.

Ford completes his bureaucratic history by explaining the shift from the Board of National Estimates (at the end joined by a woman, but not without some fuss within the CIA) to the present system of the National Intelligence Council. This is an accurate explanation by someone who was in the middle of the events he describes.

Much of Ford's book focuses not only on creating and coordinating National Estimates within the intelligence system, but on the critical process of delivering the judgements to policy makers. Ford picks up many of the comments that astute observers, such as Richard K. Betts and Robert M. Gates, the former Director of Central Intelligence, have made about this aspect of estimating, and Ford includes in an annex articles each has written on the subject. Ford's inclusion of the Gates piece is particularly ironic, in that Ford actually testified against the confirmation of Gates at the DCI's confirmation hearings in 1991.

Ford concludes his book with a discussion of what the estimates process might look like in the future, especially as new systems for electronic delivery of intelligence become more feasible. Until now, electronic delivery has been hampered by concerns about security as well as the limited computer literacy of policy consumers. Clearly this is beginning to change as a new generation of intelligence consumers, trained in youth on video games, comes to Washington.

Despite his insights and his experience, Ford fails to explain the greatest problem in intelligence. The difficulty lies not only in predicting the future, in a world of many variables, incomplete data, and intentional deception, but in convincing policy makers that the prediction is valid. Intelligence estimators have tried a variety of methodologies, from the "seat-of-the-pants" reasoning to complex mathematical models. Ford mentions these strategies but spends little time discussing them.

Throughout the Cold War the track record of intelligence estimating, at least in US intelligence, was admirable but unheralded, since historians only seemed to remember Pearl Harbor and other failures. Perhaps we fail to remember success because we do not learn about the content of an estimate unless there is a crisis. With a new emphasis on release of historical documents from the CIA, some of these successes may become known and the thinking of estimators more familiar.

And perhaps there is a more fundamental flaw. It may be that the concept described by Ford — that wise analysts, given good data, can predict the future with consistency — is just impossible. Certainly the estimators will be successful in their predictions a great deal of the time, but policy makers won't know how accurate their predictions are until after the events. In hindsight, it's easy to see where estimators might have gone wrong.

Through the ages policy makers have sought ways to know the future, from examining the entrails of goats to the modern system explained in

bureaucratic detail by Hal Ford. Ford's handbook may very well be the bible of an old religion. Policy makers may have to accept the fact that all intelligence estimators can really hope to do is to give them guidelines or scenarios to support policy discussion, and not the predictions they so badly want and expect from intelligence.

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Stiller, Werner. *Beyond the Wall: Memoirs of an East and West German Spy*. McLean, VA: Brassey's (US), 1992.

Werner Stiller is not unlike Winston Smith. The main difference, of course, is that George Orwell's character existed only in 1984. In his book, *Beyond the Wall: Memoirs of an East and West German Spy*, (translated and annotated by Jefferson Adams) Stiller tells of his days as an agent in the East German Ministry for State Security (the *Stasi*) where he was responsible for the recruitment of Western agents, particularly those involved in scientific research. Stiller traces his life from the time of his recruitment as a student at the Karl Marx University of Leipzig, to his escape to the West in 1979. Underlying his account is the ideological struggle that he faced. Like Smith, Stiller found himself surrounded by a ubiquitous party that affected virtually every aspect of his life. It was primarily the disillusionment with the party, the increasing realization that the *Stasi* existed to protect those in power and not the community, that led Stiller to pursue contact with the West German Secret Service. Stiller embodies the essence of the Cold War.

Beyond the Wall offers both the general reader and the intelligence scholar insight into the inner workings of the East German Secret Service. Although certain details had to be omitted for the sake of the security of those involved, Stiller nonetheless explains a wide spectrum of issues, ranging from the techniques of transmitting messages to the West, to the *Stasi*'s international role in the Cold War. With regards to this role, Stiller evokes the tension of the Cold War and confirms the West's fears. Among other aspects, he discusses the fact that détente was simply another stage of war for East Germany, and that the West German anti-nuclear movement was penetrated in an effort to influence public opinion and threaten the fundamental political stability of West Germany.

However, one must be cautious about Stiller's anti-Communist stance. During the course of the book, the reader realizes that Stiller was not only disillusioned with the Communist regime, but crusaded against it: wanting to defect to the West and deal a crucial blow to the stability of the party. Due to his disenchantment, he paints a dismal picture of the German Democratic Republic. Whether it is the state of workers' housing in Halle, or the level of scientific research at the Dresden Technical University, Stiller is highly critical. As Stiller relies solely