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Miscalculation, Surprise and American Intelligence after the Cold War

American intelligence analysts noted, during the early fall of 1962, that Soviet strategic inferiority created an incentive for the Kremlin to place nuclear weapons close to America's shores. But those analysts also concluded that the Soviets would not deploy missiles in Cuba because that same strategic inferiority made such a gambit too risky. As the history of the Cuban missile crisis demonstrates, however, the intelligence community was only partially correct in its estimate of Soviet behavior.

Analysts accurately assessed the risks involved in this Soviet initiative, but they underestimated the willingness of Nikita Khrushchev to up the ante after his bluff — Sputnik diplomacy — had been called. Indeed, the irony of the situation, according to Raymond L. Garthoff,* did not escape members of the intelligence community following the denouement of the crisis. Focusing on analysts' ex ante identification of the risks involved in the Soviet deployment of missiles in Cuba, one senior analyst noted that it was Khrushchev, not the American intelligence community, who had erred by ignoring the dangers of such a provocative enterprise.[1]

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Even though the American intelligence community foiled the Soviet effort to covertly deploy nuclear delivery systems in Cuba, the story related by Garthoff is representative of a phenomenon common to instances of surprise. More often than not, victims of surprise have remarked before the event that the opponent would be gravely mistaken to launch an attack. Prior to Pearl Harbor, for example, Admiral Husband Kimmel, commander of the United States's Pacific Fleet on 7 December 1941, predicted that an attack on Hawaii would be "national suicide" for the Japanese, a prediction that nearly came to pass by the end of World War II.[2] Before the 1968 Tet offensive, Americans also believed that it would be foolish for the Viet Cong to stand up to American firepower by launching a sustained attack. The communists achieved their political objectives during the Tet attacks by producing a shift in public and elite attitudes toward American involvement in the Vietnam war but, as military analysts anticipated, the Viet Cong were virtually annihilated during the campaign.[3] Moreover, Americans are not the only ones who have noted that an adversary would make a serious mistake by attacking. On the eve of the Yom Kippur War, according to Eliot Cohen and John Gooch, Israeli analysts estimated that an Egyptian attack would be foolhardy because of overwhelming Israeli military superiority. Despite the fact that Egypt's political position improved in the aftermath of the war, Israel, as anticipated by its intelligence analysts, overcame the setbacks fostered by surprise and inflicted a crushing military defeat on the Egyptians.[4]

The fact that countries sometimes fall victim to surprise attack because they fail to anticipate their opponents' mistakes has been recognized by scholars interested in failures of intelligence.[5] Indeed, the daunting task of identifying not only the opponent's initiatives, but also the opponent's miscalculations, creates a problem for intelligence analysts that is extraordinarily difficult to overcome. Past studies have focused on the difficulties faced by intelligence analysts in anticipating their opponent's mistakes and convincing senior political and military decisionmakers that an adversary is about to undertake an irrational or unsound action. Here, however, the influence of miscalculation on the occurrence of surprise is examined from a somewhat different perspective.

CHALLENGES TO THE NEW WORLD ORDER

Given the relationship between the failure to anticipate an opponent's mistakes and falling victim to surprise, the consequences of this phenomenon for the American intelligence community must be explored now that the traditional United States focus on the Soviet military threat to Western Europe appears less appropriate. In the aftermath of the Cold War, the challenge to the Bush administration's vision of a "New World Order" — evidenced by Operation Desert Storm — could continue to emanate from the Third World. This shift in

the focus of U.S. foreign and defense policy toward the "periphery" represents a significant change in the potential adversaries and issues that have preoccupied Americans over the last forty years. Fundamental questions are raised about how the intelligence community, which was designed to meet the Soviet threat, will cope with developments in the Third World.

The American intelligence community faces the new challenge of anticipating the mistakes made by Third World nations. Nations often miscalculate significantly when deciding to launch surprise initiatives. The increased possibility of American involvement in Third World military contingencies could exacerbate the task of anticipating the mistakes made by adversaries. A recent example of how mistakes made by Third World leaders can influence their decision to base their initiatives on surprise is the apparent miscalculation made by Iraq's Saddam Hussein in his decision to seize Kuwait, a decision which led to a direct confrontation with the United States under the aegis of the United Nations.

SURPRISE AND MISCALCULATION

As the writings of Sun Tzu demonstrate, military analysts have long focused on the benefits derived from launching surprise attacks. Indeed, a variety of ideas have been advanced to explain why surprise has a detrimental impact on the opponent. Sun Tzu, for example, seems to suggest that surprise, and psychological warfare in general, can paralyze an opponent by destroying the enemy commander's "conception of reality," thereby wrecking well-laid plans.[6] More recently, scholars have focused on the "force multiplier" effect produced by surprise attack. Michael Handel, for instance, suggests that surprise allows one side "to take the initiative by concentrating superior forces at the time and place of its choosing, thereby improving the likelihood of achieving a decisive victory."[7] In contrast, Edward Luttwak notes that surprise temporarily suspends the paradoxical nature of warfare, the strategic interaction between combatants that ultimately governs the outcome of a conflict. Once surprised, the ability of the victim to respond to the attacker's initiative is reduced drastically. Under these circumstances, according to Luttwak, warfare becomes less of a strategic situation, in which participants must tailor their initiatives to meet their opponent's likely response, and more of an exercise in administration.[8]

The effort to achieve surprise, however, is not without its drawbacks. To achieve surprise, nations must cloak their intentions and capabilities in secrecy. Yet, secrecy often impedes the military preparations needed to launch an attack: actions taken to maximize the scope and intensity of an initiative can warn an opponent of what is about to occur.[9] Deceptive efforts can consume vast resources, resources that could be put to better use in the main attack. Because of

these drawbacks, and the fact that policymakers can never be sure in advance that their operations actually will surprise their opponent, initiatives that depend on the element of surprise are extremely risky military endeavors. But, because of the paradoxical nature of warfare, the risk inherent in basing a military operation on the element of surprise can be viewed in a positive light. The greater the risk inherent in an initiative, according to Handel, "the less likely it seems [from the opponent's perspective], and the less risky it actually becomes. Thus, the greater the risk, the smaller it becomes."[10]

Even after accounting for the paradoxical nature of warfare, the effort to achieve surprise is not without its costs. Despite this fact, policymakers contemplating military action generally view the task of gaining surprise as well worth the effort because of the force multiplier effect surprise yields. Because of the risks involved in launching a surprise attack, however, states that face weaker opponents generally avoid military operations that depend on the element of surprise. In a sense, nations facing weaker antagonists enjoy the luxury of launching more predictable operations, for example, an attrition strategy, to achieve their objectives.[11] Conversely, nations facing stronger opponents must seek force multipliers whenever possible. As a result, military actions that require the element of surprise are more attractive to states when they face stronger opponents.[12]

The relationship between miscalculation and surprise becomes apparent when one considers that it is the weaker antagonist in a conflict that is most attracted to the benefits and least deterred by the drawbacks inherent in attaining surprise. The weaker combatant, because of its inferior position, enjoys less of a margin for error than its stronger opponent. This reduced margin for error increases the possibility of significant miscalculation. The fact that the weaker participant in the conflict is drawn to operations dependent upon surprise simply exacerbates this situation. Even though there are infinite ways miscalculation can occur under these circumstances, three types of mistakes are common when states attempt to achieve surprise over stronger opponents.

First, in launching a surprise attack, the weaker side can miscalculate the relative advantage (the force multiplier effect) provided by catching its victim unaware. In other words, even though surprise provides an advantage, the advantage is not enough to overwhelm the opponent. Germany's Ardennes offensive in 1944, for example, surprised the Allies and initially led to substantial German gains. Yet, in the final analysis, the Allies possessed such an overwhelming advantage that they were able to stop the German offensive. Paradoxically, this miscalculation, which ultimately doomed Germany's attack to failure, was largely responsible for the surprise achieved during the offensive. From the Allied perspective, it made more military "sense" for the Germans to

husband their resources in a coordinated defense of their homeland than to risk limited resources in a dangerous gamble.[13]

Second, miscalculation sometimes resembles a "preferred strategy." Surprise is incorporated into plans to secure battlefield victories, but the attainment of political objectives depends less on the success of the surprise attack and more on the victim's overall response to hostilities. Pearl Harbor is an obvious case in point.[14] The Japanese government estimated that Americans would not be willing to pay the price in blood and treasure to resist Japan's efforts to increase its "co-prosperity sphere," a reasonable prediction given the dire threat posed to Europe and the United States by the Nazi menace. But, to succeed, the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor had to incorporate the element of surprise. By surprising the United States with a successful attack, however, the Japanese changed the political mood in the United States. Isolationist sentiments vanished as the destruction of Japan became a widely shared priority among Americans. In this case, the surprise needed to guarantee battlefield success eliminated the possibility that Japan would be able to attain its political objectives. By arousing the United States, a country that had to remain at least relatively tolerant of the expansion of the co-prosperity sphere, the Japanese success at Pearl Harbor doomed Japan's war effort to failure.

Third, miscalculation can be produced when statesmen and officers from divergent cultural backgrounds, reflected in their military styles and strategies, become embroiled in a conflict. This type of miscalculation occurs in a relative sense. It usually emerges when one or both sides engage in mirror imaging: the projection of one side's values, strategies, or political objectives and constraints on the opponent.[15] Instead of estimating the opponent's behavior in terms of the opponent's approach to warfare, estimates are based on the approach to conflict embraced by the individuals conducting the analysis.

The North Vietnamese decision to launch the Tet offensive, for example, illustrates how the communists projected their own values and theories to predict the behavior of the South Vietnamese population during the offensive. The communists misinterpreted anti-American sentiment in South Vietnam as evidence of support for their cause, leading the North Vietnamese to expect that the southern population would launch a revolt against the Saigon regime in support of the Tet offensive. The communists interpreted domestic unrest in South Vietnam through their own analytical lens of People's War, which incorporated the idea that the "struggle" against imperialism would culminate in a general uprising (*Khoi Nghia*). This misinterpretation of public opinion constitutes the major communist miscalculation during the Tet offensive. But, because American intelligence analysts did not fully understand the role played by a general uprising in the Vietnamese communists' conception of People's War, they discounted as propaganda communist calls to the people of South Vietnam

to revolt against the government. In effect, the communists miscalculated by projecting their concepts and values on the people of South Vietnam and the Americans miscalculated by projecting their concepts and values in their interpretation of the communist effort to instigate a general uprising.[16]

All told, the relationship between miscalculation and the decision of one side in a conflict to surprise a stronger antagonist provides evidence that further supports the existing analytical consensus among those interested in the study of intelligence failure. Although this consensus has been criticized, analysts have concluded that failures of intelligence are more or less inevitable. The difficulty in anticipating the "rational" actions of an opponent pales in comparison to the problems inherent in identifying the miscalculations that could be at the heart of an adversary's decision to launch a surprise attack. Even if these mistakes are identified, it simply might be too much to ask of senior commanders to base their plans on the premise that the opponent is about to undertake a reckless gamble. As General Phillip B. Davidson, Jr., the officer in charge of American military intelligence in Vietnam, noted in the aftermath of the Tet offensive, "Even had I known exactly what was to take place, it was so preposterous that I probably would have been unable to sell it to anybody."[17] In effect, the relationship between miscalculation, the decision to launch a surprise attack, and the fact that surprise is rarely a decisive event in the overall context of a conflict, constitutes at least one factor contributing to a pattern in the history of war: the inevitability of intelligence failure. Whether or not this pattern will fade with the end of the Cold War is a question that merits attention.[18]

SURPRISE AFTER THE COLD WAR

Now that the United States is less preoccupied with events along the European central front, what does the apparent shift in American attention toward the "periphery" imply for intelligence analysts? From a systemic perspective, the end of the Cold War could increase the problems faced by analysts as the focus on the Soviet Union and the bi-polar character of international relations begins to wane. Instead of concentrating the majority of intelligence resources against one adversary, the number of potential adversaries faced by the United States could proliferate either in a relative or an absolute sense.[19]

To state that the Cold War represented the "best of all worlds" would be an exaggeration, but bipolarity did offer important advantages to the American intelligence community. In the past, analysts enjoyed the luxury of focusing on a single adversary, the USSR. The concentration of advanced collection methods, analytical resources, and even popular interest allowed the intelligence community to monitor events in the Soviet Union in exquisite detail. The procurement of technical collection systems to track Soviet military

developments was virtually guaranteed by bipartisan agreement on the need to verify arms control treaties. Moreover, the longevity of the Cold War and the relative stability produced by bipolarity over time created a degree of predictability in Soviet-American relations. As Stephen Van Evera recently noted: "The later Cold War saw fewer crises largely because the rules of the game and the boundaries of the two superpowers' spheres of influence were more clearly worked out after 1962."[20]

The relative simplicity of a bipolar world is reflected also in the problems that *did not* preoccupy intelligence analysts. For example, the intelligence community did not have to estimate the potential danger of shifting alliances or, for that matter, spend much energy determining whether the Soviets would react to major changes in the strategic balance. Most importantly, surprise was not a predominant phenomenon in Soviet-American relations. As the military balance between the superpowers reached parity, the drawbacks, not the benefits, inherent in incorporating the element of surprise into military initiatives probably became increasingly salient to policymakers on both sides of the Iron Curtain. In an age of mutual assured destruction, when neither side could be meaningfully characterized as weaker than the other, the force multiplier effect provided by surprise was insufficient to tip the military balance to one side's advantage.

In effect, by the end of the Cold War, there were few incentives for the superpowers to surprise each other with their initiatives. That policymakers in Washington or Moscow would make the types of miscalculations that often form the bases of decisions to launch surprise attacks was also unlikely. The transparency engendered by high technology and constant vigilance, combined with decades of diplomatic interaction, helped statesmen on both sides in the Cold War to become familiar with the culture, military doctrines, and operating procedures of their opponent.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, however, the relatively benign situation facing the American intelligence community is likely to change in three important respects. First, the number of potential threats facing the United States could proliferate, raising organizational and theoretical problems for analysts. From an organizational perspective, the Cold War created a de facto hierarchy among intelligence requirements; now, analysts will have to base this hierarchy on their estimates alone without a Cold War framework to serve as a guide. Not only will shifting estimates produce changes in these hierarchies, but it also is likely that analysts will be unable to rank order threats in the future. Under these circumstances, intelligence officials could face pressures to curtail certain activities — needed to sustain expertise in one area — to bolster the resources devoted to monitoring events in areas that are of current interest to policymakers.

From a theoretical perspective, the attempt to meet a larger number of intelligence requirements could reduce the intensity of the intelligence effort

directed at a particular country or region. In other words, even though the intelligence community monitored events in the USSR in extraordinary detail, it would appear unlikely that analysts could similarly monitor events in two countries simultaneously. If breadth of knowledge comes to replace depth of knowledge in intelligence estimates, possibly the degree of expertise and information about certain nations could fall below a critical level, thereby increasing the likelihood of intelligence failure.

Second, the differences in the perspective of Soviet and American policy-makers, created by their divergent historical, ideological, and cultural circumstances, pale in comparison to the gulf that sometimes exists between Western statesmen and Third World elites. In this type of situation, mirror-imaging becomes more likely as analysts attempt to overcome a lack of expertise or data (produced by organizational shortcomings) by substituting Western values or concepts for missing, or incomprehensible, information. Moreover, the consequences of mirror-imaging become more profound for the simple reason that Western values or concepts are unlikely to generate significant insights into the intentions of potential opponents. But the existence of this cultural gulf complicates the task faced by analysts in at least one other important respect. Ethnocentrism cuts both ways. Third World policymakers are also likely to engage in mirror-imaging, employing their own values and concepts to interpret American intentions. Indeed, because they often lack large intelligence organizations committed to providing independent analyses, the mirror-imaging done by Third World statesmen could be based simply on personal experience.[21] If this occurs, policymakers in the Third World will be more likely to miscalculate. American analysts will find it difficult to anticipate the national mistakes produced as statesmen project their individual biases on the United States.

Third, unlike the USSR, Third World nations would be at a significant military disadvantage vis-à-vis the United States. As a result, they will have a strong incentive to incorporate surprise into their initiatives. Third World nations are more likely to seek the force multiplier effect produced by surprise in planning military operations against the United States or its friends in the "periphery." In effect, the proliferation of the number of potential adversaries, the increasing cultural gulf between American analysts and policymakers in the Third World, and the probability that Third World adversaries will be attracted to the benefits provided by surprise, will create a more challenging environment for the intelligence community in the future.

MISCALCULATION AND THE CRISIS IN THE GULF

Iraq's invasion of Kuwait, and the subsequent international response to Saddam Hussein's initiative, is representative of the type of scenario that intelligence

analysts could again confront in the years ahead. Hussein's campaign in the Gulf appeared to be premised on a "preferred strategy" that projected an insignificant Western and Arab reaction to the seizure of Kuwait. But, if the success of the campaign was dependent on international acquiescence to Iraqi aggression, the quest to secure the element of surprise for the invasion of Kuwait created political conditions which have precluded the realization of this preferred strategy. Much as the surprise inflicted on the United States at Pearl Harbor doomed Japan's overall war plans, Hussein's lightning strike into Kuwait undermined the conditions needed for Iraq's preferred strategy to unfold. In other words, Hussein's move into Kuwait appears to have been premised on two significant mistakes.

First, Hussein and his circle of advisors grossly miscalculated the way nations outside the Persian Gulf region would respond to the seizure of Kuwait. Apparently, the origins of this mistake lie in the extremely ethnocentric view of the world embraced by Iraq's leadership and the regional focus of their strategic deliberations. In April 1990, for example, Hussein told members of a visiting U.S. congressional delegation that "we know that an all-out campaign is being waged against us in America and in the countries in Europe," and that Iraq intended to liberate itself from "the blackmail of the Zionist lobby."[22] Admittedly, the conspiratorial overtones of Hussein's analysis are relatively unique, but his tendency to view international initiatives unrelated to his country as directed against his nation is a common occurrence among statesmen.[23] In the case of Iraq, however, these misperceptions are exacerbated by the way policy is formulated at the pinnacle of the Iraqi government. Surrounded by sycophants with little experience outside the (literally) cutthroat competition of Iraqi politics, Hussein enjoys dictatorial powers and tolerates little, if any, policy or political dissent.[24]

Under these circumstances, isolation and lack of debate — far more extensive than the pressure for consensus produced by the related phenomenon of group-think — are reflected in policy deliberations and policymakers' views of the world. None of Hussein's advisors, for example, have managed either to inform him or convince him of the darker implications of the Vietnam analogy that he apparently employs to anticipate American behavior.[25] In effect, the Iraqi leadership's highly self-centered and regional perspective led to three significant mistakes concerning the non-Arab world's response to the invasion of Kuwait: (1) a failure to recognize the implications of the historic change in Soviet-American relations; (2) a failure to appreciate American domestic politics; and (3) a failure to anticipate international condemnation of the seizure of Kuwait. Indeed, Hussein's myopia is so severe that this third error was exacerbated by Iraqi initiatives undertaken after the invasion.

If the invasion of Kuwait had come five years earlier or five years later, the United States might not have been able to respond on such a massive scale. Five years earlier, the Soviets, in support of their Iraqi client, probably would have objected to American intervention in the Gulf. For that matter, for the United States to withdraw its two armored divisions deployed in Europe to prosecute a land campaign in Iraq would have been extremely difficult. Hussein and his advisors, however, seemed oblivious to the historic changes in the Soviet-American relationship — specifically the end of the Cold War — and the increased likelihood that the superpowers would collaborate constructively in resisting Iraqi aggression.

The Iraqis probably hoped that the Soviets would resist American intervention in the Gulf or continue to supply Iraq with weapons. In contrast, the actual Soviet response to the crisis, let alone open Soviet deliberations concerning direct participation in the anti-Iraq coalition, probably came as a rude shock to Hussein.[26] Iraq was even forced to warn the USSR against divulging Iraqi military secrets to United Nations forces, a warning that the Soviets apparently ignored.[27] Despite ample evidence that superpower decisionmakers no longer view international relations as a zero-sum game, in which one side's troubles translated into a direct gain for its competitor, Hussein failed to anticipate how the end of the Cold War could affect his campaign against Kuwait. Not only do present circumstances allow the superpowers to commit large forces in regional conflicts, the end of the Cold War raised the possibility that Soviets and Americans would act in concert to oppose threats to international order.

If the Iraqi invasion had occurred five years later, the United States might have lacked the military capability to intervene massively against Hussein. In the months preceding the August invasion, a battle over defense expenditures raged in Washington concerning not the desirability, but the extent of budget reductions. In this sense, time was on the side of Iraq: America's ability to project force in the Persian Gulf would have diminished in the years ahead. Moreover, even though the debate over military budgets has been overshadowed by events in the Gulf, the existence of this debate virtually guaranteed that there would be an influential constituency within the United States *for* the use of force against Iraq. In other words, those proposing only moderate reductions in military capability could seize upon Iraqi aggression as evidence that the United States needs to maintain significant forces despite the conclusion of the Cold War.

In addition to miscalculating the superpower response to the invasion, the Iraqi leadership apparently underestimated the international condemnation that would follow the seizure of Kuwait. The regime in Baghdad then compounded the damage done by this initial miscalculation by using foreign nationals as human shields to deter air attacks against strategic facilities. Indeed, the taking of hostages was a major strategic blunder; not since Hitler's gratuitous declaration of

war on the United States had a leader taken such a cavalier attitude toward the prospect of engaging in a global conflict.[28] By indiscriminately threatening foreigners, Hussein antagonized nations — Japan stands as a case in point — that might have preferred to remain aloof from the crisis. The hostage ploy actually helped turn a regional dispute into a conflict between Iraq and a global coalition organized under the auspices of the United Nations. U.N. resolutions not only affirmed the legal and moral basis of American intervention in the conflict, they also eliminated the incentives for Hussein's former arms suppliers to continue their sales to Iraq.[29] The triple blow of virtually universal condemnation, U.N. sanctions, and termination of arms shipments to Iraq, must have come as a rude shock to Hussein and his advisors.

Second, Iraq's leadership misunderstood how their deception strategy, needed to secure the element of surprise for the invasion, would reduce the odds of Arab acquiescence to the seizure of Kuwait. Arab passivity would have reduced the likelihood of international intervention in the crisis. The Saudi decision to resist Hussein was crucial, for example, because it allowed the United States, Great Britain, and France to make use of Saudi Arabia's extensive network of airfields and military facilities.[30] If all Arab leaders had followed in the footsteps of Jordan's King Hussein, who defended Iraq's actions and described Saddam Hussein as "a patriot," American military intervention in the Gulf war would have been problematic or even politically impossible.[31]

Admittedly, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that Hussein's estimate of the Arab reaction to his initiative was at least as misguided as his miscalculation of the general international response to the invasion of Kuwait. Still, Iraq's deception campaign, intended to mask its preparations for the invasion, directly antagonized Arab states in the region. The Iraqis not only relied on diplomacy to create reasonable doubts about their intentions, but Hussein himself apparently took advantage of the good intentions of Arab leaders, especially Egypt's President Hosni Mubarak, who had attempted to broker an equitable resolution of the "border dispute" between Iraq and Kuwait. Indeed, even after the invasion had occurred, the Iraqi leadership maintained the deception campaign by reassuring Saudi leaders that the invasion of Kuwait had been a "mistake."[32]

Iraq's deception strategy succeeded in gaining the element of surprise for the invasion. But, by using diplomacy and personal appeals to deceive key Arab leaders about his intentions, Hussein's treachery was driven home to Arab elites. Burned once by Iraqi trickery, Arab elites even turned a deaf ear to Iraqi promises to transform any confrontation in the Gulf into an Arab-Israeli war. In effect, Hussein failed to realize how his strategy of deception would ultimately undermine the political basis — Arab acquiescence to his ambitions — of his overall campaign plan. Because of this miscalculation of the political

consequences of surprise and deception, the invasion of Kuwait began to fail just as Iraqi troops occupied the entire country.

In effect, the Iraqi regime made at least two important mistakes in deciding to launch a surprise invasion of Kuwait. On the one hand, Hussein significantly underestimated the willingness and ability of the international community to oppose Iraqi aggression. On the other hand, he failed to recognize the internal contradictions contained in his effort to launch a surprise attack. Even though surprise facilitated the initial occupation of Kuwait, it galvanized Arab resistance to Hussein's hegemonial aspirations in the Gulf. Iraqi treachery reduced the traditional Arab reluctance to allow Western military intervention in the region, undermining the political conditions, mainly political infighting among Arabs and distrust of the West, needed for the success of the Kuwaiti gambit.

CONCLUSION

The failure of American intelligence in predicting Iraqi intentions toward Kuwait, has been subjected to much speculation. Initial reports indicate that the American intelligence community did *not* fail to collect information about the buildup of Iraqi forces in preparation for the invasion. Instead, Hussein's deception strategy succeeded in at least temporarily inhibiting a vigorous American and international reaction to the impending threat against Kuwait. Although a few dissenting opinions were voiced, statesmen and intelligence analysts tended to interpret the massing of Iraqi forces along the Kuwaiti border as simply a facet of Saddam Hussein's diplomatic campaign to pressure Kuwait.[33] As a result, Hussein's military moves benefited from the element of surprise. Even though Iraq did not need a force multiplier to overwhelm Kuwaiti defenses, surprise was needed to present the international community with a fait accompli, thereby strengthening Iraq's position in Kuwait.

When viewed in this broader international context, the invasion of Kuwait represents the type of event descried in the theoretical sections of my assessment. As the weaker side in a possibly global conflict, Iraq sought the element of surprise to increase the likelihood that its initiative would succeed. The decision to launch a surprise attack, however, was based upon a preferred strategy. The Iraqi action could not prevent a vigorous Arab and international response to the seizure of Kuwait, but was instead predicated on the assumption that the international community would not interfere with Saddam Hussein's aspirations in the Gulf. Moreover, the preferred strategy itself contained internal inconsistencies that doomed it to failure. Hussein failed to realize how his strategy of deception would undermine his initiative's political basis by eliminating Arab willingness to submit to Iraq's bid for hegemony in the Gulf. Additionally, the narrow regional focus of the Iraqi leaders — a manifestation of

the cultural gulf between Western and Third World leaders — led them to underestimate the likelihood that the invasion of Kuwait would spark U.N. sanctions and a military response from the international community. In a sense, Hussein underestimated the force multiplier effect produced not only by surprise, but by the fait accompli that surprise would allow him to achieve. Even though the military balance shifted toward Iraq after the invasion, its troops, in their formidable positions in Kuwait, did not enjoy enough of a defense advantage to deter international intervention in the conflict.

In light of the situation in the Persian Gulf and the historic changes in Europe, what does the future hold for the American intelligence community? If current trends continue, efforts to deceive the United States could increase as a proliferating number of competitors attempt to gain the element of surprise for their actions. In the future, analysts could encounter more nations more interested, in comparison to the USSR, in confronting the United States with surprise initiatives. Overcoming deception strategies will be harder. It will be increasingly difficult for analysts to anticipate the mistakes made by adversaries by bridging the cultural gulf that exists between Westerners and Third World opponents.[34]

But Iraq's recent surprise attack also demonstrates the continued relevance of many of the concepts used to explain and, to a degree, to anticipate surprise. The preferred strategy embraced by Hussein, his myopia, and his miscalculation of the force multiplier effect produced by surprise are not without precedent in the history of international relations. His selective use of analogies — here the Vietnam analogy comes to mind — to anticipate the American response to his initiatives is also a relatively common phenomenon among statesmen. To take advantage of these continuities across time and cultures, however, analysts must deliberately integrate into their estimates an awareness of how different historical, cultural, military, religious, and ideological backgrounds influence the strategic deliberations of their opponents.[35] This is no small task. Yet, efforts in this direction, undertaken by both the academic and intelligence communities, could improve the ability of American analysts to anticipate the types of challenges that could threaten the "New World Order."

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[13]On the Ardennes Offensive see Hugh M. Cole, 1965, *The Ardennes: Battle of the Bulge*, Office of the Chief of Military History, Washington, D.C.; John Eisenhower, *The Bitter Woods*, 1969, G.P. Putnam's Sons, New York; Hanson Baldwin, *Battles Lost and Won*, 1966, Harper & Row, New York, pp. 315–367; Omar N. Bradley, 1951, *A Soldier's Story*, Henry Holt & Co., New York, pp. 447–495; and Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1948, *Crusade in Europe*, Doubleday & Co., New York, pp. 337–365.

[14]According to Wohlstetter, Japan's "initial success might discourage us [the United States] and make us quit, and her leaders could only hope that that was what would happen; but they had no way of depriving us of the means and the will to continue fighting," Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor*, p. 353.

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[17]Davidson quoted in William C. Westmoreland, 1976, *A Soldier Reports*, Doubleday, Garden City, N.Y., p. 322.

[18]For examples of this consensus see Richard Betts, "Analysis, War and Decision: Why Intelligence Failures are Inevitable," in *World Politics* (October 1987), p. 63; Handel, "Intelligence and the Problem of Strategic Surprise," p. 229; and James J. Wirtz, "The Intelligence Paradigm," in *Intelligence and National Security* (October 1989), pp. 829–837. For a dissenting opinion see Ariel Levite, 1987, *Intelligence and Strategic Surprise*, Columbia University Press, New York.

[19]In a relative sense, the decline of the threat posed by the USSR could heighten American perceptions of the apparent threat to U.S. interests posed by Third World contingencies. In an absolute sense, instability in the "periphery" could mount as the superpowers' "spheres of influence" recede, leading to an objective increase in the threat posed to American interests by events in the Third World.

[20]Van Evera, Stephen, "Primed for Peace: Europe After the Cold War," in *International Security* (Winter 1990–91), p. 45. This positive evaluation of the situation faced by the American intelligence community during the Cold War is based upon Kenneth N. Waltz, 1979, *Theory of International Politics*, Addison-Wesley, Reading, Mass.; and John Lewis Gaddis, "The Long Peace: Elements of Stability in the Postwar International System," in *International Security* (Spring 1986), pp. 99–142.

[21]For an insightful discussion of a non-Western intelligence organization, see Dale F. Eickelman, 1988, "Intelligence in an Arab Gulf State," in *Comparing Foreign Intelligence*, Roy Godson, ed., Pergamon-Brassey's, Washington, D.C., pp. 89–114.

[22]Saddam Hussein quoted in R. Jeffrey Smith, "U.S. Forces Seen as Only Option," *The Washington Post*, 30 September 1990, p. 23.

[23]Jervis, Robert, 1976, *Perception and Misperception in International Politics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, pp. 343–355.

[24]Lardner, George, "Saddam's Inner Circle Seen as Unquestioning," in *The Washington Post*, 3 December 1990, p. 17.

[25]Ibid. In employing the Vietnam analogy, Hussein apparently focuses on the American decision, interpreted as a lack of will, not to see the war to a successful conclusion. Hussein ignores the fact, however, that the United States was heavily involved in Vietnam for over twenty years, an involvement that produced hundreds of thousands of Vietnamese casualties. Despite this perceived "lack of will," the Vietnamese still have not recovered from their exposure to American military power. For a discussion of the way American and foreign statesmen have employed the Vietnam analogy see Douglas Macdonald, "The Vietnam Metaphor in United States Foreign Policy," paper presented at the New England Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Cambridge, Massachusetts, 7–8 April 1989.

[26]Dobbs, Michael, "Moscow Struggles to Determine Role in Gulf Crisis," in *The Washington Post*, 7 August 1990, p. 12.

[27]Cody, Edward, "Iraq Warns Soviets Against Giving U.S. Military Information," in *The Washington Post*, 13 October 1990, p. 17.

[28]As the United Nations Security Council deliberated the resolution to use force to drive Iraq from Kuwait, *Al Tharawa*, Iraq's government-run newspaper declared, "any decision taken by the Security Council under the present U.S. hegemony is of no concern to us. It will not force us to step back or relinquish our national historical rights," quoted in Philip Shenon, "Iraq Says U.N. Backing for Use of Force is 'No Concern to Us,' " *The New York Times*, 29 November 1990, p. 14.

[29]Although the Soviets and Chinese supplied Hussein with the bulk of his arsenal, several Western nations, including the United States, contributed over the years to the Iraqi military machine, see "Over 200 Western Firms Exported Weapons to Iraq," *The Wall Street Journal*, 3 October 1990, p. B4.

[30]Coll, Steve, "U.S.-Gulf Ties Eased Buildup," in *The Washington Post*, 14 August 1990, p. 14.

[31]Hoffman, David, and Dan Balz, "Iraqi Threatens U.S. Interests, CIA Says," in *The Washington Post*, 6 August 1990, p. 1.

[32]Miller, Judith, "Saudis Tell of Iraq Hot-Line Drama," in *The New York Times*, 4 October 1990, p. 15.

[33]Scarborough, Rowan, "CIA, Defense Saw Different Aims in Buildup," in *The Washington Times*, August 1990, p. 11; Rowland Evans and Robert Novak, "Saddam's Dangerous Vision," in *The Washington Post*, 3 August 1990, p. 23; and Neil Munro, "Invasion Shows Interpretation, Politics Restrict Value of Military Intelligence," in *Defense News*, 13 August 1990, p. 35.

[34]The debate over future intelligence budgets has already raised these and similar issues, see George Lardner, "Amid Defense Cuts, Intelligence Funding Allocations May Shift," in *The Washington Post*, 9 October 1990, p. 4.

[35]For an elaboration of these ideas, see James J. Wirtz, "On Using Mirrors to See Others," in *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* (Winter 1989), pp. 588–592.