

H-Diplo | ISSF

Roundtable, Volume III, No. 15 (2012)



A production of H-Diplo with the journals *Security Studies*, *International Security*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, and the International Studies Association's Security Studies Section (ISSS).

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Introduction by Robert Jervis

Paul R. Pillar. *Intelligence and U.S. Foreign Policy: Iraq, 9/11, and Misguided Reform.* Columbia University Press, 2011. ISBN: 978-0-231-15792-6 (cloth, \$29.50).

Published by H-Diplo/ISSF on 4 June 2012

Stable URL: <http://www.h-net.org/~diplo/ISSF/PDF/ISSF-Roundtable-3-15.pdf>

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Introduction by Robert Jervis, Columbia University

Intelligence is an odd area of study. While it has always been fascinating to the general public, until recently it was the “missing dimension” of foreign policy, ignored by serious scholars because information was lacking and it had the stigma of being the playground for cranks if not frauds. The increasing availability of documents, a changed political atmosphere, and a flood of books and journals have created a very different situation. A second unusual characteristic is that while some of the recent studies have been written by people who have worked in the academy, more are produced by scholars who have spent time in the intelligence community (IC) and by former members of the IC.

Both the book under review and our reviewers exemplify these characteristics. They produce a great deal of information and analysis. Paul Pillar, the author of *Intelligence and US Foreign Policy*, is a career intelligence analyst, but one who has a Ph.D. and has written important books that go well beyond reporting his government service. Indeed, *Negotiating Peace: War Termination as a Bargaining Process* (Princeton University Press, 1983) anticipated much of the rational choice and game theoretic academic literature that has had an important impact on the security studies field in recent years. Unlike most H-Diplo Roundtables, only a minority of our reviewers come from the academy. Brent Durbin is the only one without major experience in the IC, and he was a senior staff member in the Senate; Loch Johnson, one of the leading scholars in the field, has logged serious time in relevant Congressional committees and reform commissions; Gregory Treverton, a RAND analyst who has written extensively about intelligence, was Deputy Director of the National Intelligence Council (NIC); Mark Lowenthal, now the president of an organization that trains people for work in the community, has written the leading survey of intelligence and served in high positions in the IC. Carl Ford has had the most extensive government experience, having filled an important policy position in the Department of Defense as well as serving as Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Research (INR) in the State Department. This range of reviewers is appropriate because despite the availability of documents, it is extremely hard to penetrate the world of intelligence and its influence on foreign policy without having some first-hand experience. But because people’s experiences are different, differences among the reviewers also are to be expected.

All agree that Pillar’s book is a significant contribution to our understanding of key current issues and the role of intelligence in general. Truth in introducing leads me to note that I provided a jacket introduction for the book, and I also agree that Pillar’s outspokenness--Treverton calls it “a kind of *cri de coeur*”--gives it vividness and verve. The subtitle of the book is *Iraq, 9/11, and Misguided Reform*, issues with which Pillar was deeply involved, and the reviewers note that as a defense of his role and a rebuttal to attacks on it, his account adds to the historical record but obviously cannot be the final word. The line between being outspoken and over-claiming is a thin one.

The reviewers are taken by Pillar’s strong claim that intelligence generally has much less influence on policy than is usually believed. This of course can be seen as self-serving by absolving intelligence of the blame for the Iraq war and the attacks of 9/11, but the

reviewers agree with Pillar that on the broadest issues of foreign policy it is indeed policy-makers' political preferences, outlooks, and calculations that are mainly responsible for policy. But they think that Pillar has gone a bit too far. Lowenthal points to the role of intelligence in providing the background and context that shapes policy in subtle but important ways, Ford argues that faulty intelligence on Saddam's WMD programs had more influence than Pillar acknowledges, and Johnson also feels that Pillar "is too quick to absolve the intelligence committee of blame" in Iraq. Durbin does not argue that intelligence plays a larger role, but notes that Pillar's evidence to the contrary is often thin.

The second major thesis of Pillar's book is that if intelligence rarely influences policy, the reverse is not true--i.e., on issues of high salience, intelligence often is politicized. Here too the reviewer's disagreements are more in degree than outright rejection. Ford especially points to all the errors in the WMD assessments that were not only wrong but that deceived policy-makers (and other members of the IC) about the quality of the evidence at hand. Lowenthal thinks that Pillar sees politicization as pervasive in part because he has set "the bar rather low" for what constitutes this deformation.

The third major question addressed by the book is the efficacy of various intelligence reforms, especially the creation of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI). Here too the reviewers admire the vigor of Pillar's argument that the reform was misguided, that the necessary changes could have come about by empowering the Director of Central Intelligence, and that the office of the DNI has become an added layer of bureaucracy. But they also sound cautionary notes. Durbin believes that it is too early to tell what will come of this and Johnson points out that numerous previous commissions have called for a DNI.

Pillar engages these issues.

Participants:

Paul R. Pillar is Visiting Professor and Director of Studies in the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University. He is retired from a 28-year career with the CIA and the National Intelligence Council. He is a graduate of Dartmouth College (A.B.), Oxford University (B.Phil.) and Princeton University (M.A., Ph.D.). In addition to the book under review he is the author of *Negotiating Peace: War Termination as a Bargaining Process* (1983) and *Terrorism and U.S. Foreign Policy* (2001).

Robert Jervis is Adlai E. Stevenson Professor of International Politics at Columbia University. His most recent book is *Why Intelligence Fails: Lessons from the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War* (Cornell University Press, 2010). He was President of the American Political Science Association in 2000-01 and has received career achievement awards from the International Society of Political Psychology and ISA's Security Studies Section. In 2006 he received the National Academy of Science's tri-annual award for behavioral sciences contributions to avoiding nuclear war.

Brent Durbin is Assistant Professor of Government at Smith College, where he teaches courses in U.S. foreign policy, intelligence, decision making, and war. He has also taught at

Stanford University and the University of California, Berkeley, where he received his Ph.D. in political science. He is currently completing a book on the politics of U.S. intelligence reform since 1946. He is also a director of the Bridging the Gap Project, which aims to build bridges between scholars and the foreign policy community. Previously, he served as a senior staff member in the U.S. Senate.

Carl W. Ford received a B.A. in Asian Studies, and an M.A. in East Asian Studies from Florida State University and is currently a Professorial Lecturer at Georgetown University in the School of Foreign Service. Previous government service included: Assistant Secretary of State for Intelligence and Research, 2001-2003; Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for International Security Affairs, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1989-1993; National Intelligence Officer for East Asia, National Intelligence Council, 1985-1989; Professional Staff, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate, 1980-1985; Analyst, Office of Strategic Research, Central Intelligence Agency, 1974-1979; Analyst, China Ground Forces Division, Defense Intelligence Agency, 1971-1974. Ford is currently collaborating with Dr. C. J. Jenner, Economic and Social Research Council Fellow, University of Oxford, on a paper, *History, Policy-Making, and the South China Sea*.

Loch K. Johnson is the Regents Professor of International Affairs in the School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Georgia. He served as assistant to the chairman on the Church Committee, staff director of the Subcommittee on Intelligence on the House Intelligence Committee, and assistant to the chairman of the Aspin Commission on Intelligence. His latest books are *The Threat of the Horizon: An Inside Account of America's Search for Security After the Cold War* (Oxford, 2011), and *National Security Intelligence: Secret Operations in Defense of the Democracies* (Polity, 2012). He is the senior editor of the international journal *Intelligence and National Security*, published in London.

Mark M. Lowenthal received a Ph.D. from Harvard and is President and CEO of the Intelligence & Security Academy, LLC, a national security education, training and consulting company. From 2002-2005, Dr. Lowenthal served as the Assistant Director of Central Intelligence for Analysis and Production and also as the Vice Chairman for Evaluation on the National Intelligence Council. Prior to these duties, he served as Counselor to the Director of Central Intelligence; staff director of the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence and in the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research. Dr. Lowenthal has written extensively on intelligence and national security issues, including five books and over 100 articles or studies. His most recent book is *Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy* (Sage/CQ Press, 5th ed., 2011).

Gregory F. Treverton is director of the RAND Corporation's Center for Global Risk and Security. His most recent book on intelligence is *Intelligence for an Age of Terror*, Cambridge University Press, 2009.

Review by Brent Durbin, Smith College

There is a well-traveled aphorism in intelligence circles: There are no policy failures, only policy successes and intelligence failures.¹ Though usually recounted in jest, this view echoes the version of events peddled by policymakers seeking absolution from the failures of 9/11 and the Iraq War. Fortunately, policymakers are not the only ones who write history. In *Intelligence and U.S. Foreign Policy*, Paul Pillar gives us an account of pre-Iraq War decision making that separates intelligence failure from policy failure (there were both) and demonstrates how little the first had to do with the second. The author brings a unique perspective to his subject: he was among those responsible for producing the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) programs that was subsequently used by the George W. Bush administration to support going to war. Pillar's story of pre-Iraq intelligence and policymaking is gripping, important, and, given the many lives lost in the war, tragic. It also motivates a useful and wide-ranging assessment of the United States (U.S.) intelligence community and its often uncomfortable relationship with foreign policy. While the breadth of ambition here may occasionally leave the reader wanting a deeper focus on specific issues or events, overall Pillar has produced a masterful and highly informative blending of U.S. history, personal experience, and thoughtful analysis of the role played by intelligence in American government and society.

The book begins with an account of the Bush Administration's run-up to and rationales (or, on this telling, rationalizations) for the 2003 Iraq war. Based on a mix of familiar sources and personal recollections, these four chapters provide a succinct and damning account of intelligence politicization, confirmation bias, and a host of other ailments that undermined effective decision making prior to the war. Pillar then broadens his attention to outline the dysfunctional political environment in which intelligence agencies operate. Here Pillar describes four realities of U.S. intelligence that belie common beliefs about its role in policymaking: (1) the general irrelevance of intelligence in major foreign policy decision making; (2) the politicization of intelligence when it is used; (3) the treatment of intelligence as a "spectator sport" (175) in which agencies and analysts make for handy scapegoats when things go wrong; and (4) the often misguided search for a solution to intelligence failure through reorganization and reform. In the book's final five chapters, Pillar evaluates the impacts of 9/11 on U.S. intelligence and provides alternative recommendations for what he calls "real reform." (311)

Iraq, Intelligence, and Democratic Accountability

¹ Martin Petersen, "What We Should Demand from Intelligence," *National Security Studies Quarterly* (Spring 1999); cited in Charles E. Lathrop (pseudonym), *The Literary Spy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2004), 326. Lathrop cites Petersen as noting that the quote comes from a Senior State Department official reportedly speaking "only half in jest."

A quick LexisNexis search for “Iraq War” and “intelligence” turns up nearly 1000 entries, from as early as September 2002 and as recent as December 2011.² This group does not include the reports of several government investigations covering intelligence issues during the Bush years, or dozens of books by scholars, pundits, and many of the high-profile policymakers involved. Robert Jervis has called the Iraq WMD debacle “[p]erhaps the most studied intelligence failure since Pearl Harbor,”³ leaving one to wonder what there is to add to the public record on the topic.

Plenty, it turns out. Pillar succeeds both in clarifying what happened and in framing these events in such a way that they convey broader lessons about intelligence and U.S. foreign policy. Pillar’s full accounting has been awaited since at least 2006, when he published an article in *Foreign Affairs*⁴ identifying himself as the analyst with primary responsibility for important parts of the intelligence community’s ill-fated Iraq WMD estimate⁵, and making his case that the Bush Administration politicized this and other intelligence to drum up support for its prior decision to go to war. With this article Pillar staked out a position contra the former administration’s defenders in a battle over who said, thought, read, and did what in the run-up to the Iraqi invasion. Were Bush and his advisors led astray by faulty intelligence, as they have claimed? Or were intelligence products used cynically and selectively to justify war decisions that had already been made?

In the intervening years, the scales have shifted decidedly in support of the latter view, and Pillar provides the most blistering account yet of how little intelligence influenced the decision to invade Iraq.

This story will be familiar to many:

- 1) Highly placed individuals in the Bush Administration had their sights set on Iraq even prior to 9/11. That tragedy opened a window of opportunity allowing the perception of grave danger from Iraq to take hold of the president and steer the country to war.
- 2) Contrary to the narrative put forth by the administration – and consequently believed by many Americans – intelligence assessments of Iraq’s weapons programs and its possible ties to al-Qaeda terrorists had no impact on the decision to go to

² Search conducted of LexisNexis *Academic*, category “Major World Publications.” Search terms “Iraq war” and “intelligence” produced 981 entries; “9/11” and “intelligence” produced 978; “9/11” and “Iraq” produced 987. Last searched 13 January 2012.

³ Robert Jervis, *Why Intelligence Fails* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010), 123.

⁴ Paul Pillar, “Intelligence, Policy, and the War in Iraq,” *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 2006).

⁵ Pillar reports that “judgments about [Iraq’s] likely usage [of WMD] were chiefly my responsibility.” (38) Responsibility for the overall estimate fell to Robert Walpole, the National Intelligence Officer for WMD. See George Tenet, *At the Center of the Storm: My Years at the CIA* (New York: HarperCollins, 2007), 323.

war. Moreover, while some of these intelligence analyses were seriously flawed, most included severe warnings about the risks in security, time, and treasure associated with an effort to topple Saddam Hussein's regime.

3) Even though intelligence was not an important influence on the decision to invade Iraq, it was central to the administration's public case for the invasion. The intelligence community became a handy scapegoat when no illicit weapons were found and the war failed to wrap up as quickly or as neatly as predicted.

Pillar has marshaled a wealth of evidence to support this account, and employs his training as both an intelligence analyst and a social scientist to fit the empirical record into a convincing narrative. Occasionally, he can be guilty of over-selling his case, as when he claims that "[George W.] Bush's personal history as a born-again Christian who had to overcome an earlier problem with alcohol probably contributed to the image he held of a troubled Iraq being reborn as a liberal democracy" (64). Yes, perhaps. Placed alongside the overwhelming evidentiary record mustered here, such facile observations serve only to draw attention away from the formidable main stream of Pillar's argument. Fortunately, such distractions are rare in this generally careful, well-crafted, and devastating account. The upshot of this story can be summed up in one chilling sentence: "War had become a certainty before it became an option." (56) It would be comforting to see this as utterly anomalous, to believe that policymakers choosing to risk American lives in war will only do so when the overwhelming body of evidence – including the official judgments of the intelligence community – support such a course of action. Unfortunately, history shows otherwise. From the Thornton Skirmish, which opened the Mexican-American War, to the sinking of the U.S.S. Maine in Havana harbor, the Gulf of Tonkin incident, and now the Iraq War, American leaders have been willing to manipulate evidence to garner public support for war. One hopes that future decision makers will note the outcome of this most recent case before doing so again.

Like Virgil in Dante's *Inferno*, Pillar serves as such a knowledgeable escort through the events that preceded the Iraq invasion because he was there. This allows him to shed light on the tools available to intelligence analysts facing what they perceive to be politicization. It is striking to read a senior intelligence official discuss so baldly his strategies for rounding the political barriers erected by his elected superiors. He describes the process of generating unsolicited, "push" analyses warning of the dire challenges likely to arise following an invasion of Iraq, and then seeking out policymakers – in this case Richard Haass's Policy Planning Staff at the State Department – to become the putative requestors of the reports. (56) Regardless of how one feels about the merits of the *ex ante* case for the Iraq war, this could be construed as just the sort of independent policy advocacy within the intelligence community that presidents from Nixon to Bush have so vigorously decried. Such maneuvering is hardly comparable to the large-scale dissembling seemingly practiced by the war's advocates, and many will view Pillar's efforts as admirable, even valiant. Still, they underscore the grey nature of democratic accountability in the conduct of intelligence and foreign policy.

Pillar's detailed analysis makes it tempting to focus here mostly on the book's account of pre-Iraq War intelligence. (In his review for the *New York Times*, Thomas Powers chose this path, scarcely touching on the remaining five-sevenths of the book.⁶) The author's distinctive position at the heart of pre-Iraq intelligence, combined with his careful reading of a wide array of other relevant sources, makes his the ultimate insider's account of the role played by intelligence community estimates in the decision to go to war. But Pillar recounts this story in the service of a greater goal: to improve the way U.S. intelligence is used and understood. Explaining pre-Iraq decision making is not the book's main purpose, and it would do the author a disservice to treat it as such. Pillar explicitly uses the Iraq War case, along with post-9/11 intelligence reforms and a host of other episodes, to make his broader argument about the dysfunctional politics of intelligence in the United States.

To this end, Pillar next provides a short tour of foreign policy challenges from the Cold War, including Korea, Cuba, Vietnam, Afghanistan, and the fall of the Soviet Union. In many of these cases, key decisions were only tangentially related to intelligence, if at all.⁷ Historical analogies, personality types, electoral politics, and grand strategic theories ('falling dominoes') each had a more privileged place in guiding policy than did intelligence. These political and cognitive influences have long served as bugbears to the intelligence community, impervious and indefatigable in the face of even the surest contrary assessments. In his survey of the Cold War, Pillar also shows how intelligence findings were often reworked by political actors to better fit existing beliefs. "As a shaper of policy," Pillar writes, "ideology decisively trumps intelligence." (120)

It is unfortunate, though understandable given the ambitious scope of his project, that Pillar is not able to delve deeper into these histories. (Most receive only two or three pages each.) In some cases, the available evidence is even stronger in support of Pillar's argument than he presents. On Korea, for example, Pillar notes that intelligence was ignored by the "very small number of men" involved in policy deliberations. (98) Two factors he does not mention are particularly damning on this count. First, throughout spring and early summer of 1950, Ray Cline at the CIA's Office of Reports and Estimates had been including in his reports to the White House and cabinet secretaries a section titled "North Korea's Menacing Preparations for War,"⁸ outlining developments such as the fortification of roads and railroads designed to support the coming invasion. The last of these papers was submitted just five days before the North Korean attack.⁹ Second,

⁶ Thomas Powers, "The Weapons that Were Not There," *New York Times* (September 30, 2011).

⁷ He is not the first to reach this conclusion. See for example John Lewis Gaddis, "Intelligence, Espionage, and Cold War History," *Diplomatic History* 13:2 (1989), 191-212.

⁸ Ray S. Cline, *Secrets, Spies, and Scholars* (Washington: Acropolis Books: 1976), 106.

⁹ William B. Breuer, *Shadow Warriors: The Covert War in Korea* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996), 37-40. In a U.S. Senate hearing following the invasion, Secretary of State Dean Acheson and Secretary of Defense Louis Johnson denied having receiving any such warnings, and only recanted when Walter Pforzheimer, the CIA legal counsel, produced delivery receipts bearing the signatures of both men.

Truman's circle of trusted advisers explicitly excluded the Director of Central Intelligence, Admiral Roscoe Hillenkoetter. Truman's tainted view of the CIA and its leadership was made clear when Hillenkoetter was not even invited to brief the emergency meeting called by the president on June 25, 1950, the first night of the invasion.

Such details would help to show just where Iraq and 9/11 fit in America's history of unsuccessful intelligence-policy interaction. Fortunately, there are other places to go for the more complete stories. (One example: Joshua Rovner's recent book on politicization, *Fixing the Facts*, which provides thorough and well-considered accounts of many of the same cases.¹⁰) Still, Pillar does include enough information to show that Iraq and 9/11 are far from isolated incidents. So if the system is broken, what can be done to fix it? This question motivates the second half of *Intelligence and U.S. Foreign Policy*.

"Real Reform"

If Iraq is "the most studied intelligence failure since Pearl Harbor," 9/11 is surely a close second. Pillar focuses less on the intelligence that preceded the attacks than on the way this intelligence was manipulated and misrepresented in the 9/11 Commission's investigation. His story does not depart greatly from earlier accounts, most notably *The Commission*¹¹ by Philip Shenon, although this does not make the story any less worth telling.

As with Iraq, Pillar's background in both intelligence and political science, combined with his front-row seat as the Commission did its work, gives his analysis of events a richness and authority that few have matched. His assessment is scathing. "In sum," he writes, "the 9/11 Commission's report and other output constitutes a badly flawed and highly inaccurate account of the U.S. intelligence community's work on international terrorism prior to 9/11." (272) These flaws impacted more than just the politics of 9/11 accountability. They drove an intelligence reform process that Pillar views as misguided and perhaps even harmful to U.S. national security.

The most significant post-9/11 intelligence reorganization came with the passage of the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004. In Pillar's view, IRTPA was not passed because it was demonstrably the right thing to do. Rather, *something had to be done* in the pursuit of national catharsis. IRTPA's creation of a new Director of National Intelligence and an independent, community-wide counterterrorism center were old solutions with a long shelf life, easy to pull down and hold up as correctives to the perceived problem of decentralization, which had kept the requisite dots from being connected prior to 9/11.

¹⁰ Joshua Rovner, *Fixing the Facts: National Security and the Politics of Intelligence* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

¹¹ Philip Shenon, *The Commission: The Uncensored History of the 9/11 Investigation* (New York: Twelve, 2008).

Pillar is not sanguine about the effects of the IRTPA reforms. “The reorganization of 2004 did nothing to ameliorate the problem [of politicization],” he writes. “[T]he DNI is in the same position relative to politics and the policymakers as the DCI was.” (311) Did IRTPA succeed in loosing the Gordian knot of dysfunctional U.S. intelligence? Probably not. But neither is it the aimless, redundant behemoth some have made it out to be. It is true that the idea of separating community leadership from the DCI’s CIA responsibilities has been around for decades. This does not make it a bad idea, however. Thomas Fingar, who directed the National Intelligence Council during the implementation of IRTPA, recounts that he was given much greater freedom to implement needed changes under the ODNI structure. ODNI, he writes, has “improved prospects for top-down changes to integrate the Intelligence Community,” since, under the old system, “directors of central intelligence lacked the authority, incentives, or time to transform members of the notional ‘community’ into a single integrated enterprise with specialized components.”¹²

In truth, it is too early to tell whether ODNI is simply “a new layer of bureaucracy” (295) impeding effective coordination and intelligence-policy relations, or a long-needed hub that can pull together a disparate community and better communicate its products to policymakers. As the new structure evolves, leaders in both the policy and intelligence worlds would do well to consider the potential pitfalls highlighted in Pillar’s analysis.

In addition to reconsidering post-9/11 reorganizations, Pillar recommends a number of ways to improve the intelligence process. These include insulating intelligence analysts from political pressure; better informing outsiders of the intelligence community’s activities and limitations; and improving policymakers’ expectations regarding knowledge and uncertainty.

Pillar highlights the need for a more focused discussion about the professional proximity of intelligence analysts to policymakers. Citing a lack of consensus on the issue, he argues for “keeping an open mind” (314), noting that there are merits to both sides of what has been called the “Kent-Kendall” debate.¹³ Then he seems to come down suddenly and firmly in support of more separation between intelligence and policy: “Even if we accept the objective of greater independence for U.S. intelligence, there is no school solution for achieving it.” (314) Given the Iraq WMD experience, it is easy to see how he arrives at this position. A more independent intelligence community would be less susceptible to pressure – tacit and explicit – from policymakers to skew analysis for political reasons.

¹² Thomas Fingar, *Reducing Uncertainty: Intelligence Analysis and National Security* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2011), 137.

¹³ Sherman Kent argued for an intelligence service vigorously independent of the policy process; Willmoore Kendall advocated that analysts be attentive to the objectives of policymakers. This latter view has more recently been associated with former DCI and Defense Secretary Robert Gates. See Jack Davis, “The Kent-Kendall Debate of 1949,” *Studies in Intelligence* 35:2, 91-103. Available at <https://www.cia.gov/library/center-for-the-study-of-intelligence/kent-csi/vol35no2/pdf/v35i2a06p.pdf>.

Yet if two of the central problems of U.S. intelligence are its irrelevance in decision making and its vulnerability to politicization, efforts to fix the second could easily exacerbate the first. For example, Pillar considers the possibility of making intelligence part of a “quasi-autonomous body within the executive branch” (314), similar to the Federal Reserve. This could well make intelligence “more autonomous and less vulnerable to politicization than it is now.” It could also make it even less relevant to decision makers. As Richard Betts has pointed out, “[s]uch changes could not make intelligence any more useful or influential because they could not force presidents to rely on their judgments or legislators to act on their recommendations.”¹⁴ Even so, novel ideas such as this are important to add to the discussion, for, as Pillar observes, “the ever-spinning wheel of intelligence failure and demands for reform will continue to turn.” (315)

Additional suggestions address the need to make intelligence more transparent and accessible, particularly to Congress and the American public. It is not often that one finds a former bureaucrat arguing for greater Congressional oversight. Pillar makes a lucid case that a stronger hand from Congress – perhaps including a nonpartisan “congressional intelligence office” akin to the Congressional Budget Office – would both improve the use of intelligence by legislators and reduce the likelihood of executive branch politicization. Similar benefits would accrue from more engagement with the public. Popular conceptions of both Iraq and 9/11 have been shaped by the selective release of intelligence products, which has allowed political actors to shift more than a fair share of blame to the intelligence community. “More comprehensive – regular and expected—sharing of judgments with the public” (316) would help to keep policymakers honest.

A final category of recommendation has to do with “reducing cognitive impairment” (317) among policymakers, particularly as this relates to dealing with uncertainty. Here Pillar provides a list of recommendations for overcoming cognitive bias, most of which are sensible, compelling, and highly unlikely to be adopted in any systematic way by policymakers. Still, by centering his analysis on the management of uncertainty, he does bring some fresh ideas to this well-furrowed landscape. For example, reminding policymakers and the American public that the financial services industry is built on uncertainty and rewards those who acknowledge what they do not know (through hedging, pricing risk, and other techniques) may succeed in changing behaviors where admonitions to ‘expect surprise’ or ‘update beliefs to new evidence’ have long failed.

In the end, intelligence is so difficult because it is riven by important tradeoffs. There are both benefits and costs to the type of bureaucratic centralization ODNI represents. Analysts need to be both close enough to policymakers to understand their needs, and distant enough to maintain independence. Balancing these competing goals is hard even when the politics are not stacked against the effective use of intelligence. Episodes such as the Iraq WMD fiasco and the 9/11 Commission investigation lay bare fundamental problems with America’s system of intelligence and policymaking. In this book, Paul Pillar

¹⁴ Richard Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence: Knowledge & Power in American National Security* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007), 100.

brings these challenges into even sharper relief, first through his detailed insider accounts of post-9/11 policy making, and second through his thorough analysis of the system's underlying and at times intractable flaws. Herein may lie Pillar's greatest contribution: that readers will come to his book for an insider's take on pre-Iraq policymaking and post-9/11 reforms, and will leave with a more nuanced understanding of what intelligence can and cannot do to improve the conduct of U.S. foreign policy.

Review by Carl W. Ford Jr., Independent Scholar

Paul Pillar's *Intelligence and U.S. Foreign Policy* leaps off the page. It is a hard-hitting no-holds-barred personal account of the complex twenty-first century nexus between intelligence and foreign policy. His examples, 9/11, the Iraq War, Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD), and the politicization of intelligence—deep dive issues all—are examined in detail. He brings to the task his experiences as an intelligence officer, and his scholarly achievements at Georgetown University, providing the important perspective of a practitioner's look inside decision-making theory's "black box."

From the first pages he is in attack mode, eagerly telling his side of the story, often quite passionately, leaving no doubt where he stands on the book's key focus: the 9/11 Commission's role in intelligence reform; the Iraq War, President Bush's decision-making; and the responsibility for politicizing intelligence. Support for his views, however, sometimes falls short.

For the purpose of this review, I have organized my comments around five of the book's themes: uncertainty, 1) the decision to go to war in Iraq, 2) WMD Intelligence's Role in the Policy Process, 4) the Bush administration's politicization of intelligence, and 5) the 'close versus distant' question.

While my five themes do not do justice to the depth and breadth of the materials covered by *Intelligence and U.S. Foreign Policy*, I have chosen them with an acknowledgment of my own limitations. The analytical lens I use as a reviewer is colored by my own experiences and expertise. First and foremost, I am an intelligence officer,¹ one who for a time served as a policy-maker,² and at the end of my career was given the opportunity to develop and teach a seminar—Executive Branch Decision-making—for Georgetown's School of Foreign Service. While each of these experiences provided me some level of expertise, they are also responsible for cultivating my biases and strong opinions, for which I make no apologies.

1) Policy-makers and general readers can learn much from the author's insights into uncertainty, the degree of which the Intelligence Community (IC) often fails to articulate clearly. The first lesson is "We should not be surprised to be surprised." (337) He is talking specifically about "tactical surprise . . . which is harder to reduce, let alone eliminate, than strategic surprise. . . because it involves unobservable and perhaps unattainable things such as an adversary's secret plans." (337)

Most policy-makers do not see surprise this way. They fail to accept his second lesson that it is "Sheer complexity . . . that foils prediction," (220) not secrecy. Policy-makers, despite the consequences of surprise and uncertainty that appear throughout the book, want

¹ Army HUMINT Case Officer; Basic Research Analyst, DIA; Directed Research Analyst; CIA, National Intelligence Officer for East Asia, NIC; Assistant Secretary for INR, Department of State.

² Principle Deputy Assistant Secretary, ISA, Office of the Secretary of Defense, 1989-1993.

accurate predictions, not excuses. For them warning—strategic, tactical, or whatever—is the IC’s primary function. (8-9) If it cannot prevent another 9/11, then why is the government spending so much money on intelligence? (243)

Uncertainty is something that is not a problem for intelligence officers. The common refrain I hear from them is ‘Policy-makers don’t get it, we are not seers or mind readers.’ This, in fact, mirrors almost exactly the explanation of uncertainty the author presents in the book. For him uncertainty is a fundamental element in the policy nexus. He also highlights the serious consequences of this disconnect between policy-makers and intelligence officers. (9-10)

I wholeheartedly agree. If taken to heart, the book’s insights into uncertainty could dispel many of the myths that policy-makers hold about what intelligence can and cannot do. That would be a major accomplishment in its own right. I would only add that intelligence officers tend to give in to criticism too easily, always promising to do better next time, and marching on without complaint. Many, as the author notes, even buy into the policy-makers’ sometime cockamamie plans to fix, or reform the IC. (295) Their only request: ‘Give us more money.’

What intelligence officers ought to do is to fight harder for their beliefs, to stand firmly behind their analysis of the threat. Perhaps they fear being marginalized or isolated from the intelligence-policymaker process. Whatever the cause, inaction has wrought havoc on the IC’s ability to produce much more than a daily Top Secret newspaper. Larger budgets will not fix the problem. Pouring more money and human resources into taming surprise only insures many of the policy-makers’ urgent problems will go unaddressed.

2) The author believes the decision to go to war in Iraq was made without the benefit of an orderly policy process. His case rests on the proposition that “There was not just a poor policy process or an incomplete one or a biased one; there was no policy process.” (432) If this is not correct, a number of the book’s other conclusions are suspect. For his evidence the author cites anecdotes from members of the Bush Administration after the war. (13) (14) (327) I am confident that the author and his sources believe what they say. The historical record, however, argues otherwise.

Bob Woodward’s *Bush at War*, and *Plan of Attack*, provide a detailed account of the policy process starting early in the Bush Administration. The first reference came in February 2001, when the National Security Advisor, Condoleezza Rice, chaired a Principals meeting to review Iraq policy. Vice President Cheney, Secretary Rumsfeld, Secretary Powell, and CIA’s Deputy Director John McLaughlin sat in for George Tenet.³ Deputy National Security Advisor Stephen Hadley followed up, chairing four Deputies meetings on Iraq policy between 31 May and 26 July.⁴ Later the Deputies presented a Top Secret paper to the Principals on August 1, entitled, “A Liberation Strategy” proposing “...a phased strategy of

³ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack* (New York: Simon & Schuster Paperbacks, 2004), 13.

⁴ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 21.

pressuring Saddam and developing the tools and opportunities for enhancing that pressure....”⁵

Then the United States experienced 9/11. From where I sat, I believe the President and his advisors viewed the idea of a direct terrorist threat to the homeland as only a remote possibility. But the unthinkable happened. Thousands died. Responding to the attack became all-consuming. In that process, Iraq got its share of attention. It began with Secretary Rumsfeld musing about attacking Iraq in a meeting with his staff shortly after the attack on the Pentagon.⁶ Secretary Rumsfeld mentioned Iraq again the next day at a Principal’s meeting.⁷ Iraq also came up at Camp David, first by National Security Advisor Rice and then Deputy Secretary of Defense Wolfowitz.⁸ Also at Camp, David Secretary Rumsfeld came back to the issue a third time in the form of a question.⁹ But the President had heard enough. He turned the focus of the discussion back to Afghanistan.¹⁰

Then there is in fact a gap in Iraq policy discussions. Iraq did not come up again until after the Administration’s first successes in Afghanistan. On 21 November 2001, the President directed Secretary Rumsfeld to start contingency planning for Iraq. “I want to know what the options are,” he recalled. “A president cannot decide and make rational decisions unless I understand the feasibility of that which may have to happen.”¹¹ On 28 December, the President received his first Iraq briefing from General Franks at the ranch in Crawford, Texas. Other principals participated via video.¹² During the discussion DCI Tenet indicated the CIA was overextended and urged caution.¹³ On 3 January 2002, the President and others received a briefing from the CIA indicating: “...covert action would not remove Saddam. The CIA would not be the solution.”¹⁴

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 25.

⁷ Bob Woodward, *Bush At War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2002), 49.

⁸ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 25.

⁹ Woodward, *Bush At War*, 84.

¹⁰ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 25.

¹¹ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 30.

¹² Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 52-66.

¹³ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 64.

¹⁴ Woodward, *Plan of Attack*, 72.

In addition, a series of at least ten Principal meetings devoted to Iraq were held between January and August 2002.¹⁵

I submit these events from February 2001 through August 2002 clearly constitute a policy process. Although it is fair to criticize the policy choices President Bush made, and many do, it is a different matter altogether to conclude there was no policy process at all.

3) The author argues the IC's views on WMD did not have, and could not have had, any influence on the decision to go to war in Iraq, because the policy-makers had made up their minds prior to the October 2002 National Estimate (NIE). (13)

Given that there was a policy process; and that either DCI George Tenet or his CIA Deputy John McLaughlin were present at the numerous briefings and Principals' meetings during 2001-2002; and that the President was briefed daily on at least CIA's views; it is unclear why the author thinks as he does. He points to the October NIE as a crucial piece of evidence, but argues that the decision to go to war had been made long before. (35) But, exactly when that decision was made he does not say.

I agree that the evidence clearly indicates that the President had demonstrated a willingness to use military force to oust Saddam Hussein before October 2002, and that by the time of the estimate he may have concluded military action was the only way to insure regime change. It is also clear the NIE was used to help in "selling the war." (28) However, to conclude intelligence analysis did not play a role in the policy process is a stretch.

The views expressed in the NIE did not just appear because the Congress (36) asked for the October estimate. The IC's assessment of Iraq's WMD programs began to shift as early as March 2001 when reporting suggested, "Iraq was seeking high-strength tubes made of 7075 T6 aluminum alloy."¹⁶ This was followed by a Department of Energy (DOE) Intelligence Highlight in April for policy-makers examining Iraq's interest in "High Strength Aluminum Tube Procurement."¹⁷ When the IC obtained samples of the aluminum tubes in June,¹⁸ senior policy-makers were informed before many in the IC were told. By August, the National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC) had concluded the tubes could not be used for conventional rockets.¹⁹ And DOE had published a Technical Note, entitled, "Iraq's Gas

¹⁵ Carl Ford, *Iraq Timeline*, (prepared for seminars at Georgetown and George Mason Universities: 2004-2009).

¹⁶ Report to the President of the United States: *The Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction*, (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2005), 55.

¹⁷ *WMD Commission Report*, 199.

¹⁸ *WMD Commission Report*, 198.

¹⁹ *WMD Commission Report*, 199.

Centrifuge Program: Is Reconstitution Underway.”²⁰ DOE circulated a similar report on 13 September.²¹ In November the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) weighed in with its view, “Iraq Procuring Possible Nuclear-Related Gas Centrifuge Equipment.”²² Before Christmas 2001, a Senior Executive Memorandum was published discussing the implications of Iraq’s procurement of the aluminum tubes.²³ Followed in March 2002, by another Executive Memorandum assessing, “The Status of Iraq’s Uranium Enrichment Program.”²⁴

My recollection is that by March 2002, individual agencies had circulated their positions on nuclear reconstitution to the policy community on several occasions, previewing the views that were later incorporated into the October NIE. Throughout the summer, a flurry of papers and briefings hammered home agency positions. When the Congress asked for an estimate, (36) I remember thinking, ‘Why in the world would they want an NIE?’ INR’s and the other agencies’ views were well known, policy-makers’ in-boxes had received a steady diet of WMD assessments for months, and I had participated in several congressional briefings before the estimate was finalized in October. I grant that the NIE was put together quickly, but virtually every word in the estimate had been written and disseminated by one agency or another months before. Agency positions appearing in the estimate essentially remained unchanged since March of 2002. The WMD Commission agreed.²⁵

From my perspective, the claim that “...WMD was not the principal driver of the Bush administration’s decision to invade Iraq, and the famously flawed intelligence analysis on the subject had no or almost no influence on the decision,” (15) does not ring true. The President, his advisors, and members of Congress were traumatized by 9/11 as much or more than the American people. It happened on their watch. They swore to protect the nation from all threats, foreign and domestic. They failed. When the IC unprompted reached the judgment Iraq had restarted its nuclear weapons program, were policy-makers supposed to ignore it? Did it not suggest these materials might fall into the hands of terrorists? Many Americas certainly thought so. Their fear was real. Indeed, without WMD I cannot see how President Bush could have sold going to war to the Congress or the American people. Pillar’s “Principal driver” (15) may overstate the influence WMD intelligence had on decision-makers, but his arguing that IC findings were not a major factor ignores the historical record.

²⁰ *WMD Commission Report*, 198.

²¹ *WMD Commission Report*, 199.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *WMD Commission Report*, 200.

²⁵ *WMD Commission*, 183.

4) Chapter 6, “Politicization”, is in many ways the heart of the book. The author argues that administration officials intimidated analysts to such a degree they were forced to alter their views on key issues, and that they, in effect, provided the script for selling the Iraq war. He writes, “Understanding how politicization infected the intelligence community’s own work requires understanding the environment that the Bush administration’s push for war created and in which intelligence officers functioned. Such understanding is difficult for anyone who did not experience the environment firsthand.” (147)

My experiences were far different, but so too, as the author points out, were the findings of Senate Intelligence Committee investigators (152), and the Weapons of Mass Destruction Commission (152-153). Both investigations dispute the book’s claims of politicization. Maybe it is because Pillar’s definition of politicization is different. Politicization, for me, requires a policy-maker applying pressure, and an intelligence officer bending to that pressure. In the period in question, I witnessed the former, but not the latter. For the vast majority of intelligence officers there is no room in intelligence for the officer who cannot say no, or who only feels comfortable bringing policy-makers good news. The notion of speaking truth to power for most of us is not just a cliché. It is our honor code.

There may also be differences in what we see as the role intelligence officers play in the policy process. The author’s “text book” model, in which intelligence plays a “guiding role,” (5) and where policy-makers look to the wise men in the IC for advice before making a decision, does not exist in my vision. He also argues that “...most prewar intelligence analysis on Iraq was good, especially regarding the prospective consequences of the war. The policy implication of the intelligence community’s work on Iraq was to avoid the war, not to launch it.”(4) I disagree on both counts.

First, the work produced by the IC was not very good.²⁶ Sometimes it guessed right,²⁷ in other cases it was “dead wrong.”²⁸ In both cases, the IC’s opinions primarily were based on a handful of HUMINT reports, and on the background knowledge of a few smart intelligence analysts. No one had much hard evidence; but everyone had strong opinions. In-depth research backing up analysis was missing. Accordingly, policy-makers were free to choose answers, picking those they liked, and ignoring those that conflicted with their cognitive worldview.

Second, my mentors, starting with Eva Watkins at DIA, taught me that intelligence officers do not make policy. Any report suggesting how a problem might be solved stops being an intelligence product. The job of an intelligence officer is to provide policy-makers with new

²⁶ *WMD Commission*, 194.

²⁷ The author and the analysts, who prepared the NIE, *Principal Challenges in Post-Saddam Iraq*, have much to be proud about. Unlike the WMD estimate, *Post-Saddam Iraq*, could have and should have been heeded by the policy-makers. Even if the NIE had not changed minds on an invasion, a better understanding of what might lay ahead should, at a minimum, have alerted policy-makers to review Phase IV of their plan.

²⁸ *WMD Commission Report, Letter to the President*, 31 March 2005.

knowledge, trends, the why's, cultural context, insights into the adversary, etc., not what the policy-maker should do with that knowledge. But there is also no rule that says policy-makers must accept what the IC tells them. I was taught that it is the analyst's fault if policy-makers do not listen. My mentors' mantra was, 'produce quality intelligence and most intellectually honest people will pay attention.' The IC's analysis on Iraq's WMD programs was not 'quality intelligence.'

There were also times when the IC did more than just "get it wrong" or "make mistakes." The WMD Commission found that NGIC; DIA's HUMINT Service; and CIA's Weapons Intelligence, Nonproliferation, and Arms Control Center (WINPAC) "...made such serious errors, or resisted admitting their errors so stubbornly, that questions may fairly be raised about the fundamental culture or capabilities of the organizations themselves."²⁹

Most shocking to me personally, was the attempt by CIA to make it appear that a contractor had successfully built a centrifuge using the aluminum tubes taken from the shipment bound for Iraq. That was only part of the story. Eventually, my analysts were able to contact the contractor directly to get more details. It turned out that the centrifuge worked for an hour or two then broke down. The exact reason, DOE had said a year earlier, it thought no one in their right mind would choose the tubes for building centrifuges—the tubes would be unreliable and tend to break down frequently. Given that the tubes were a key element in the argument that Iraq had reconstituted its nuclear weapons program, I think it is fair to say this unprofessional behavior was especially egregious. It influenced policy, but in the wrong way.

There is a right way to make a difference, to participate in, and to influence the policy process, but it is not easy. I was taught that to communicate effectively with a policy-maker your message must be policy relevant. Intelligence analysis is not an academic exercise. Unless it is something policy-makers have asked for, or they need, it is a waste of time and taxpayer money. It is not enough to produce new knowledge, or to work on topics analysts think interesting. The IC works for the policy-makers in the Executive Branch and the Congress, not a university or a think tank. Helping them understand the problems and challenges they face is job one.

Anticipating what a policy-maker needs is also key. You cannot always wait for them to ask a question. (14) Equally important, it is not enough for intelligence to be relevant and interesting. If the work does not land on a policy-maker's desk at the right time, it has limited, if any, impact. I have found that following the collection schedule, more than a policy-maker's appointment book, is one of the quickest ways to miss opportunities for helping the policy-makers.

As long as the IC only aspires to be a classified *Washington Post* or *New York Times*, the IC will fall short of its customers' wants and needs. Policy-makers want substance. Just like the best medical reporter at CNN is unlikely to discover a cure

²⁹ WMD Commission, 195.

for prostrate cancer, you should not expect analysts utilizing current reporting's 'read and remember' techniques to provide the detailed answers policy-makers could use most. Complex questions are not answered by current reporting. Tough problems require research, something the IC does not do much anymore.³⁰

Most important, too many analysts forget that policy-makers are not particularly interested in their opinions, especially when it is a subject already important to them. On most issues, policy-makers have opinions of their own, opinions that they have developed over years. Getting them to change their minds requires presenting them reasons for adjusting their thinking. That is why intelligence analysis is so difficult. It must be persuasive. Educated opinions are never a substitute for evidence.

I believe that the image depicted in the book of intelligence officers bending to pressure applied by hard headed, opinionated policy-makers is highly exaggerated. The intelligence officers I have known do not back down so easily. The more pressure they feel, the harder they dig in their heels. Some officers deal with pressure better than others, and, unfortunately, there are a few bad apples, but changing one's analysis to please a policy-maker will be noticed and the officer in question risks losing the trust of his or her peers. Once lost, gaining back that trust is almost impossible. If intelligence officers can no longer take their colleagues' word at face value, the system breaks down.

5) The author would have the IC distance itself from the policy-makers, especially those in the Executive Branch, believing otherwise the danger of politicization is too great: The IC "... should be given an institutional status that makes it more of an assuredly independent, unpoliticized voice." (314)

In my view, the effectiveness of the IC has nothing to do with being 'close' or 'distant,' it is the quality of intelligence that counts. I find the intelligence officers who debate the 'close versus distant' issue often have little idea what policy-makers do, or the type of intelligence they would find most useful.

For most policy-makers the amount of information they receive daily is not their primary concern. Officials want to keep track of events as they happen, of course, but knowing the latest events in Syria goes only so far in providing policy-makers the knowledge and insights they need to make good decisions. What policy-makers want most is help in understanding the complexities of foreign and national security policy. When they are focused on a problem their demand for details is insatiable. At other times, almost everything else you send them gets at best only a cursory look.

Two things are certain. First, submitting only 'current' news does not cut it. It cannot provide the details policy-makers want. Second, offering 'policy comments' only makes it worse. Once policy-makers suspect intelligence officers of letting personal policy

³⁰ *WMD Commission*, 25.

preferences influence their analysis, the credibility of any future judgments is forever questioned.

The IC has much to offer policy-makers. Its experts are second to none, and the bank of knowledge they have stored is amazing. Having smart analysts is not enough, however. Unless the policy-maker finds the IC's information persuasive, time and effort will be wasted. Intelligence is not about what the IC thinks; it is about 'show me your evidence.' There is no place for take it or leave it in intelligence. (314) Close or 'distant' means little when the IC's message is unconvincing. 'Cozying up' to the policy-makers alone does not make the intelligence more credible. When you get there you must be able to back up what you say with convincing evidence.

For anyone interested in the influence of intelligence on decision-making in Washington, Paul Pillar's latest book is an indispensable read—one of the top dozen in the fledging field of intelligence studies. His themes are depressing, though, for anyone hopeful that intelligence can shine a light on world affairs that will lead to more informed policy choices by America's decision-makers. As he puts it, "... the overall influence—for good or for ill—of intelligence on major decisions and departures in U.S. foreign policy has been negligible" (5).

In Pillar's view, trumping reliable, timely intelligence from the sixteen secret agencies that make up the U.S. "intelligence community" are such variables as the personalities of politicians and the complex array of domestic interest groups that besiege Congress and the bureaucracy. Those who make decisions already have fixed in their minds "concepts and images" (6) that guide policy outcomes; they brush aside information and analysis that fails to conform to these predispositions. In the case of the Second Persian Gulf War in 2003, for example, the United States invaded "in spite of, not because of, what the U.S. intelligence community said about Iraq" (11). Further, intelligence proves inadequate because it is almost always engulfed in billowing clouds of uncertainty, with few definite answers for even those decision-makers who take the time to read spy reports. A combination of politicization (the twisting of intelligence to serve a preconceived policy objective) and uncertainty reduces intelligence to the level of insignificance in American foreign policy.

Pillar's perspectives on intelligence "reform" are gloomy as well. He places the word in quotations to emphasize how "fruitless" (9) measures to improve U.S. intelligence have been in recent years. Echoing the view of intelligence scholar Richard K. Betts, who is cited frequently in this volume, Pillar maintains that the "... possible reforms that offer genuine hope for better guiding policy are few, and the probable impact of most is limited" (12).¹ The centerpiece in Pillar's argument about the irrelevance of intelligence is the war launched by the United States against Iraq in 2003. "There was no chance of influencing the decision itself, which had already been made," he concludes (14). Even though Pillar served at the time as the National Intelligence Office (NIO) for the Near East and South Asia, he recalls that "no Bush administration policymaker asked my office for any classified assessment on anything having to do with Iraq until a year into the war" (52). He acknowledges that on the central question of whether Iraq had a WMD program underway prior to the invasion, the Cassandra-like warnings of his colleagues were "famously flawed" (15). He sidesteps the opportunity, however, to examine why these mistakes occurred and focuses instead on the Bush administration's multiple distortions of

¹ See a similarly pessimistic account of intelligence reform prospects, see Richard K. Betts, *Enemies of Intelligence: Knowledge & Power in American National Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007).

intelligence about Iraq.² Pillar tells us that the Iraqi war is “a tale about policymakers pulling, not of intelligence services pushing” information (32). But what was available for the policymakers to pull? With respect to the WMD, the answer is: analysis that largely confirmed the likely presence of unconventional weaponry in Iraq. While the Bush administration had probably decided on war anyway, what if the intelligence community had stated unequivocally that Iraq most likely did not have a WMD program of any significance; or at least that the picture was unclear and more time was necessary to examine this hypothesis before sliding into war (precisely the position of two important U.S. allies, France and Germany)? Then perhaps a national debate would have ensued over the wisdom of an attack against Iraq. Instead, the Bush administration had its core pro-war propaganda theme about the danger of Iraqi WMD conveniently confirmed by most of America’s intelligence agencies.

Rich material is available for Pillar’s critique of the Bush Administration’s irresponsible uses of intelligence. Yet the author is too quick to absolve the intelligence community of blame in the unfortunate decision to attack Iraq. Beyond the multiple analytic failures (such as the acceptance of snow jobs by such dubious assets as “Curveball,” Ibn al-Shaykh al-Libi, and Ahmed Chalabi) stands the haunting question of why skeptical intelligence officers did not do more to alert the American people about the intelligence legerdemain being carried out by top officials in the Bush Administration.

During the Vietnam War, a number of U.S. Foreign Service Officers (among them, Anthony Lake, who would go on to become Bill Clinton’s national security adviser) resigned from office rather than be associated with that ill-begotten military intervention. Their public exits, sometimes noisily voiced, raised constructive questions about the wisdom of that war, which in turn led to a reevaluation of America’s presence in Indochina. What happened to the notion of ‘exit and voice’ when it came to protesting the political manipulation of intelligence in 2002-2003? Pillar accurately observes that the Bush Administration spent a year conditioning public opinion to support the Iraqi invasion, chiefly by scaring the wits out of Americans with speeches about the possibility of mushroom clouds appearing in their backyards, the result of possible Iraqi nuclear attacks against the homeland. (Simultaneously, Prime Minister Tony Blair was engaged in similar scare tactics in the United Kingdom.) Pillar writes: “The Bush administration’s most successful act of preemption was not against Saddam Hussein—who was not on the verge of attacking U.S. interests—but instead in domestic politics by keeping its intentions unclear long enough to prevent effective opposition to the war from mobilizing” (29). While all of this was going on, where were American intelligence officers, many of whom knew better and could have brought some balance to this debate? Even if none felt strongly enough about the administration’s mendacity to resign in protest, why didn’t they at least complain more energetically to the congressional committees that supposedly

² For an understanding of the intelligence errors related to Iraqi WMD, see (among other works) Robert Jervis, *Why Intelligence Fails: Lessons from the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010).

oversee the intelligence agencies? And why weren't members of those committees themselves digging deeply into the subject?

At least, though, a few intelligence officers (Pillar among them) did what they could on the inside to counter some of the distortions, such as the ongoing insistence by Vice President Dick Cheney that Al Qaeda had a meaningful 9/11 connection to the Iraqi leader Saddam Hussein, and the conclusion offered in the 2003 State of the Union address that Iraq had purchased yellow-cake uranium from Niger. (The intelligence community thoroughly discredited this second allegation well before the President's nationally televised speech.) Pillar suggests that intelligence officers succumbed to political pressure on the matter of Iraqi WMD (158). My interviews with top analysts indicate, though, that they resisted efforts by policymakers to pressure them—including an historic eight visits by the Vice President to the CIA. Analysts are trained to seek the truth and to stiff-arm attempts at politicization, and they usually honor these professional tenets.

"Intelligence services are supposed to help resist the offensive thrusts of foreign adversaries, not the offensive thrusts of their own political leaders," Pillar writes (35). Yet, with the stakes as high as they were in the months preceding the war in Iraq, shouldn't intelligence managers have taken on the added responsibility of letting the American people know (through their representatives on the House and Senate Intelligence Committees) when intelligence was being politicized? No one else is in a better position than intelligence officers to halt the drift toward an unjustified warfare that relies in large part on the twisting of information. Even though a majority of the intelligence agencies believed that an Iraqi WMD existed (but that Baghdad would probably not have nuclear weapons for years to come), insufficient efforts were made to inform lawmakers about important dissents against the WMD hypothesis among intelligence officers within Air Force Intelligence, the Department of State, and the Department of Energy. For example, as Pillar notes, there was "substantial disagreement among experts" (142) regarding the purpose of aluminum tubes spotted in Iraq. Were they components for nuclear enrichment centrifuges, or merely launchers for conventional rockets? The opening Key Judgment section of the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) on Iraq—hastily prepared in 2002 at the insistence of some lawmakers, not the Bush White House—reportedly failed to mention these disagreements and dissents. Moreover, why didn't the intelligence community prepare an earlier NIE of its own regarding Iraq, even if one had not been requested by policymakers (a common practice)? And why weren't the dissents highlighted in the estimate that was finally produced for Congress? Had members of Congress read this document (apparently few did)—or at least been alerted by highlighted dissents in the Key Judgment section—this might have provoked more reservations on Capitol Hill, with lawmakers applying the brakes in the rush to war. One senator who took the time to read the full estimate was Bob Graham (D, Florida, and head of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence at the time), who subsequently voted against the war resolution.

It is well known that members of Congress are distracted by their many duties; therefore, intelligence managers must be as persistent as a tropical rain in making sure that Capitol Hill understands the weaknesses and uncertainties in NIEs and other intelligence reports, by highlighting dissents and seeking further opportunities to brief lawmakers and their top

aides. Intelligence must be *marketed*, not merely thrown over the transom. The real experts in the art of producing a tropical rainfall in Washington were officials in the Bush White House and their allies in the Department of Defense, whose steady pro-war rhetoric drowned out the faint messages of dissent coming from the intelligence community. Contrary to Pillar's thesis, intelligence might have mattered had its mangers more effectively communicated to lawmakers (especially members of the two congressional Intelligence Committees, who are well positioned to countermand White House propaganda) the softness of the WMD findings and the magnitude of the information distortions perpetrated by the Bush Administration. If this counterbalancing had occurred, a logical conclusion for America's representatives would have been to delay invasion plans until more information could be gathered about the WMD hypothesis.

"Intelligence has had almost no guiding role in great decisions . . .," Pillar stresses, although he believes that it "has played an important supporting role in many lesser decisions and in implementing the great ones" (96). Korea, the Cuban missile crisis, and Vietnam are among his examples of decisions made with little attention to intelligence. Yet the Cuban missile crisis is, in fact, an example of how important intelligence can be in policymaking. Imagery from U-2s made it clear to President John F. Kennedy that he had two weeks to consider a range of possible responses before the Soviet missiles were armed and ready for firing—a valuable gift of time from the intelligence community that allowed the President to shelve the idea of an immediate overt invasion of the island that might have ignited a nuclear holocaust. Even broad "grand strategy" often has at its foundation a set of intelligence findings, despite Pillar's insistence that the contribution of intelligence to major strategic decisions "has been almost nil" (120). The containment doctrine and the domino theory did not materialize out of thin air, but were derived by George Kennan, Paul Nitze, and others in part from intelligence reporting on the Soviet Union and China. Or consider the important decision made by President Dwight D. Eisenhower in 1954 against the use of atomic weapons to rescue French troops surrounded at Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam. Archives suggest that an NIE requested by the President on this situation contributed to his decision against using the nuclear option.³

It is not that Pillar's thesis is without merit, but rather that it is overstated. He is correct: intelligence is often ignored. President Lyndon B. Johnson's decision-making with respect to Vietnam is indeed a prime illustration, as Pillar suggests. Another example of his thesis comes from the Reagan Administration, which was often guided more by a deep-seated ideological phobia toward Moscow than by accurate intelligence about a possible new dawning in the Cold War. Even in the Vietnam case, however, key policymakers (including Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara) began to turn against the war in part because of on-going negative intelligence reports from Saigon. Today, America's approach to the struggle against terrorism is often driven by information and insights derived from intelligence—even if the Clinton and the second Bush administrations were slow to accept warnings about a probable Al Qaeda attack against the United States. Intelligence is but

³ See an account in Stansfield Turner, *Burn before Reading: Presidents, CIA Directors, and Secret Intelligence* (New York: Hyperion, 2005), 79.

one current in the river of information that flows toward policymakers in Washington, D.C.; however, given the rare insights that come now and then from satellite and airplane surveillance, telephone tapes, and human agents, it can be an important current.

Here is Pillar's ideal model of policymaking: "... decision makers consider facts and analysis from the intelligence community and other relevant parts of the government, weigh all alternatives, and select a policy most likely to advance the national interest" (119). In my experience, this is often what happens---although accompanied by the frustrations arising from the existential reality that analysis is always carried in an environment of incomplete information and uncertainty. Granted, it was certainly not the approach adopted by the second Bush administration in the lead-up to the Second Persian Gulf War.

One can empathize with the author's pessimism about reform. The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004—the centerpiece of reform after the 9/11 inquiries—was largely a bust. It failed to give the new Director of National Intelligence (DNI) an adequate budget and personnel authority to bring about the desired integration of the intelligence community. Moreover, it foolishly placed the office of the DNI miles away from the CIA, where most of the government's intelligence analysts reside. Pillar is a sharp critic of the Kean Commission, established (reluctantly) by President Bush to investigate the intelligence failures associated with the 9/11 attacks. According to Pillar, the Commission was more of a public relations operation than a serious search for understanding and meaningful reform. He believes that the Commission failed to listen to key intelligence officers. (Pillar was never called as a witness, for example.) As a result, the panel missed the main point, namely: "... that the 9/11 disaster occurred despite strong strategic warning, including warnings from the intelligence community, about the underlying threat and despite an appreciation within both intelligence and policymaking circles of the nature and seriousness of that threat" (279). With only a mention in passing of the many mistakes made by the intelligence community prior to the attacks (such as the CIA's slow reporting to the FBI that two of 9/11 hijackers had entered the United States via San Diego), Pillar argues that the intelligence community served the nation well in raising red flags about Al Qaeda's nefarious intentions. This book is not the place to seek an understanding of the community's fumbles and its lack of actionable intelligence about the approaching 9/11 attacks, or about the long list of perils it forwarded to policymakers from 1995 to 2001 (such as possible attacks against U.S. nuclear reactors) that had a numbing effect and seemed to paralyze a meaningful response to any one of them.

Pillar notes that strengthening the powers of the existing DCI in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks would have made more sense than trying, and failing, to create an effective new national spymaster (the DNI). My study of reform ideas percolating in Washington during the decade prior to the attacks indicates that a stronger DCI was the remedy that most thoughtful observers in the intelligence community embraced as a means for overcoming fragmentation among America's spy agencies.⁴ This proposal was skillfully blocked by the

⁴ Loch K. Johnson, *The Threat of the Horizon: An Inside Account of America's Search for Security After the Cold War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Department of Defense and its allies on Capitol Hill during the 1990s—the same coalition that would emasculate the idea of a strong DNI in 2004. Pillar has his own ideas for change. He sees the Federal Reserve as a possible model for the intelligence community. Under his plan that is focused mainly on removing politics from intelligence, the DNI would have a lengthy, fixed term; and he or she would be supervised by an independent board of governors subject to Senate confirmation. Further, to improve oversight by lawmakers, Pillar would establish a congressional intelligence office (patterned after the Government Accountability Office). These “antipoliticization suggestions” (318) are thoughtful and warrant close study. As Pillar writes, they might “enable the intelligence community, when necessary, to function as a check on the executive and not just a partner of it” (322).

Pillar has written a highly readable and important book that forces us to confront the possibility that intelligence is, at best, a secondary consideration in the making of U.S. foreign policy. He concludes that “. . . further efforts to collect information and to improve the detailed accuracy of our images [of security threats] are apt to have diminishing returns” (349-350). While it is true that we must continue to make decisions in a fog of uncertainty, Pillar’s stance on the value of intelligence and of intelligence reform strikes me as unduly bleak. The United States has taken notable strides toward chasing away some of the uncertainty in international affairs. For example, its intelligence-driven capacity for battlefield transparency has advanced dramatically in recent years, leading to substantial reductions in American casualties. And on the reform front, the government has adopted significant improvements in intelligence since 1975, from more serious oversight to stunning new collection capabilities (such as drone technology). “We may not have attained truth, and on many matters we may never attain it, but it is worthwhile to strive for it and to come as close to it as we can,” notes Pillar in a brief burst of optimism at the end of the book (355). Exactly, and that is why we need to move forward with a sense of confidence toward additional reforms—starting with another try at the creation of more meaningful authority for the Director of National Intelligence.

Books and articles about U.S. intelligence or about intelligence in general have become something of a cottage industry. It has become extremely difficult to keep abreast of all that is being written, let alone distinguish the gold from the dross. One subset of this genre is the memoir of retired intelligence officers, essentially written to settle scores and to plead cases one last time.

Paul Pillar's *Intelligence and U.S. Foreign Policy: Iraq, 9/11 and Misguided Reform* transcends the pitfalls of many intelligence memoirs and is clearly a source of gold, not dross. Pillar retired in 2005 as the National Intelligence Officer (NIO) for Near East and South Asia, the Intelligence Community's leading analyst on the region. In that capacity and in several other senior assignments he was directly involved in the war against terrorists, before and after 2001, and in such issues as Iraq's WMD programs prior to the 2002 decision to go war. Given that background we could reasonably expect yet another exculpatory trip down memory lane. Happily, that is not the book that Pillar has written.

Pillar does deal with those two areas of controversy, to which I will return later. But he uses his decades of experience in intelligence to review a much larger and much more important issue: the relationship between intelligence and policy with a firm view on two key aspects of this relationship. The first is the degree to which intelligence helps inform policy decisions. The second is the degree to which politicization interferes with intelligence. Pillar's conclusions in both aspects will be discomfiting to many but they cannot be dismissed out of hand. Briefly, Pillar, argues that intelligence has been much less influential in making policy decisions than is usually assumed or argued and, more controversially, that politicization is much more pervasive than is usually portrayed.

Both of these contentions bear further examination – not because Pillar is necessarily wrong but because they are, indeed, at issue. I am not sure how my professional colleagues will react to his arguments. My disagreements are more of degree. On the first issue, the influence of intelligence on policy decisions, it depends how and what one counts. If we restrict ourselves to the great seminal decisions – which are actually and happily rare in government, then Pillar may have a strong case. Senior officials are nothing if not self-confident and they often rely on their own instincts during moments of crisis. This is not to say that the intelligence brought to and used by them at these moments is irrelevant but it may not be the decisive factor. However, there is more to government than these key decisions. There is also the day-to-day. And here one may disagree with Pillar's argument. Intelligence provides a great deal of the background and context that later comes into play during crises, allowing the policy makers to make decisions with greater certainty based on their instincts and their judgments. This point is made most eloquently by Richard Kerr, a former acting Director of Central Intelligence and career intelligence analyst, in his essay, "The Track Record: CIA Analysis from 1950 to 2000," in Roger George and James Bruce, eds., *Analyzing Intelligence* (Georgetown University, 2008). But, in fairness to the author and to the potential reader, Pillar makes his case based on a broad and interesting review

of intelligence and policy across several decades. Thus, we have more here than a memoir; we have an interesting analysis of the history of U.S. intelligence.

Turning to politicization, again much depends on how you define it. Pillar sets the bar rather low, in my view, and therefore sees the problem as pervasive. Pillar believes, both in this book and in his recent *Foreign Policy* article, “Think Again: Intelligence,”¹ that policy makers and intelligence officers need a more distant relationship than has been the case over the past 60-plus years. I am not sure this is either practical or desirable. Policy makers want and expect close-in intelligence support and intelligence officers want access. This is the dependency that Pillar wants to erase and, if his first contention – about the minimal influence of intelligence over policy – is correct, then proximity does not matter. Given that I assess intelligence influence somewhat differently, I would argue that proximity is still desirable and useful, for both parties. Again, there is room here for debate.

Finally, we return to the subtitle subject matter of Pillar’s book, “misguided reform.” Much ink has already been spilled on what did or not happen in intelligence regarding 9/11 and Iraq WMD. Pillar has a definite point of view – one with which I agree and one that is out of step with the received popular wisdom in both cases. The convergence of these two events made intelligence ‘reform’ politically mandatory but also badly muddied the waters about the nature of that reform. The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA, 2004) that was the end result of a highly truncated and highly politicized process was, ostensibly, an attempt to put the recommendations of the 9/11 Commission (formally, the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States) into law. A reading of the IRTPA, however, reveals that many of its recommendations had less to do with 9/11 than with the Iraq WMD issue and that many parts of the law attempted to legislate improved analysis, as if that could be done.

This portion of Pillar’s book is a welcome addition to the literature that reveals the many intellectual shortcomings of the much over-praised 9/11 Report. Readers concerned about Pillar’s objectivity and accuracy are referred to Richard A. Posner, *Preventing Surprise Attacks: Intelligence Reform in the Wake of 9/11* (Hoover Institute, 2005) and Philip Shenon, *The Commission: The Uncensored History of the 9/11 Investigation* (Twelve books, 2008). The second issue, the national intelligence estimate (NIE) on Iraq WMD, has also entered into legend – in the distortive sense of the word. Pillar’s views are again worth noting as he was there at the time (as I was) and he offers a much more perceptive understanding of what went wrong than is available elsewhere. Readers are also directed to Thomas Fingar’s *Reducing Uncertainty: Intelligence Analysis and National Security* (Stanford University, 2011) for another senior intelligence analyst’s views on the issue.

Which of these two issues is the more important? The IRTPA resulted in the creation of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI), who serves the President and is the senior intelligence official in the United States but who controls no agencies directly. I was not a

¹ Paul R. Pillar, “Think Again: Intelligence,” *Foreign Policy*, January/February 2012, <http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2012/01/03/intelligence>, accessed 3 June 2012.

supporter of the idea but it does not seem to have done much harm and has made some positive contributions to how the U.S. manages intelligence. The Iraq WMD NIE issue is still with us, however. In a world where the nuclear programs of Iran and North Korea remain potential flashpoints, the Iraq estimate sits like Banquo's ghost, a doleful and baleful reminder of past error that still undercuts the credibility of intelligence analysis almost ten years later.

Debates over intelligence – what it is, how best to do it, its track record – will continue among practitioners, academics and others. Pillar's book is a valuable contribution to the debate. While it is not the last word on the subject, it is nonetheless an informed and heartfelt point of view.

In Defense of Irrelevance

This fine book is a kind of *cri de coeur* by a distinguished intelligence analyst who labels himself a political scientist, which he now is, at Georgetown, after a long CIA career that included stints as deputy chief of the CIA's Counter Terrorist Center (CTC) prior to September 11th and as National Intelligence Officer (NIO) for the Middle East as the Bush administration moved toward war in Iraq. The *cri* is sometimes perhaps a shade too loud, much of it is familiar from Pillar's published journal articles, and sometimes there is more detail than many readers will seek. But it is generally on the mark, by my lights – I say that as one who worked with him for several years when he was at CTC and I was at the National Intelligence Council (NIC) and am an admirer. Throughout, the book is enriched by the insights from Pillar's own experience, which give parts of the book a pleasantly autobiographical flavor.

My favorite of his statements of the *cri* comes early on: Policy-makers' "images of the outside world flow from preferences more than preferences flow from the images." (9) It is customary in discussions of intelligence to note that intelligence, and intelligence analysis in particular, is but one input to policy, and perhaps not a very important one at that. Decisions are driven by a host of other factors, ranging from calculations of domestic politics to bureaucratic rivalry, and from ideological preferences to score-settling. But Pillar is also right on the mark in arguing that even intelligence's stock-in-trade, images of the outside world, are likely to be driven as much or more by policy-makers' ideologies, or fears, or histories or historical memories. And so he discusses, fairly tersely, a long list of major decisions – from intervening in Korea, to Vietnam, to regarding the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan as relentless Soviet expansion, to the Soviet evil empire – that seem generally not to have been much influenced by intelligence, even when the intelligence turned out to be right.

My own favorite example is the decision to sharply escalate the U.S. commitment in Vietnam, made in the summer of 1965. Now, the Vietnam War is for students ancient history, right up there in immediacy with the Peloponnesian Wars. But when I taught at Harvard's Kennedy School in the 1980s, the war was still a living memory, and the received wisdom of graduate students was that the United States had been clueless: Vietnam was a complicated civil war in a far-off place of which Americans knew little. My mentors, Richard Neustadt and Ernest May, whom Pillar also cites, and I taught a course on intelligence, and we used the escalation decision in the summer of 1965 as a major case, drawing on the *Pentagon Papers*.

What is striking about the intelligence estimates that summer is just how good they were. Their portrayal of South Vietnam made you wonder why anyone would want it as an ally. (The story, probably apocryphal, is told about President Johnson telling his advisors that in the carousel of South Vietnamese coups, one day those advisors would have him introducing to the press 'our gallant ally, General Fuk U.' Yet for many in the

administration, the decision was driven more by another living memory – Munich and appeasement, no matter how tortured the analogy between Munich and Vietnam seems in retrospect. For Johnson, too, domestic politics was driving his fear of the hot breath of the hawkish Kennedy legacy.

In the event, the assessments of the war were right on: it would take a half million U.S. troops and three years to turn the tide. Sure enough, three years later came Tet, a decisive defeat for North Vietnam. By then, though, the battle may have been won but the war was lost. It was lost on terrain that should have been the expertise of men I admire – McGeorge Bundy, especially, but also Dean Rusk – the streets and campuses of the United States. The root of the problem was hubris. They did not believe what military intelligence was portraying and thought that The military was doing worst case analysis and America's technological might surely would make it easier.

The run-up to the war in Iraq, especially those weapons of mass destruction (WMD) that weren't, has been thoroughly picked apart, but here too Pillar adds some fresh insights. He is perhaps too charitable about the October 2002 estimate; no surprise, since he was close to it. The problem was not that it was wrong – Pillar cites Richard Betts' conclusion that knowing what was known in October 2002, the only conclusion an analyst could have come to was "yes, Saddam has WMD." Yet that conclusion was pure deduction from Saddam's previous behavior and his obstruction of the inspectors, not induction from evidence. Indeed, the challenge of estimative intelligence is that often it begins where the evidence ends. The problem with the estimate was that it was way too wrong. It did not have the warning Betts suggested after the fact: "There is very little direct evidence, and no highly reliable direct evidence, to back up the deduction." (90) At the least, the estimate should have included a box outlining the best case that could be made that Saddam *didn't* have WMD.

Not that it would have made the least difference. For the administration, the decision to go to war had been long since taken – in Pillar's nice line, "calendars do not run backward" (35)– and several of the seniors, Paul Wolfowitz for instance, were honest enough to admit that WMD was the best bumper-sticker for the war, not the real reason. As for congressional Democrats, fearful of looking soft on national security so soon after September 11th, almost any fig leaf would have covered a "yes" vote for war. In Vietnam, the hubris was about the war, in Iraq about the postwar. But again, it was men – perhaps that there were too few women, Condoleezza Rice excepted, is part of the problem – whom I know and are able, Don Rumsfeld, Paul Wolfowitz, Jerry Bremer, who made the decision. But they held premises – such as that Iraq would greet the Americans as liberators – that seemed then preposterous and have only gotten more so with the passage of time. It was hubris, this time less about American firepower than about America as a model.

It is the intellectual shallowness of the situation that is breathtaking. And on this score, Pillar adds telling information by discussing two other Intelligence Community products, both of which he set in motion, the first about the main challenges facing a post-Saddam Iraq and the other about the regional implications of regime change. These were cautionary in almost every respect. Producing a stable, representative system would be

“long, difficult, and probably turbulent”; (57) the country would face a deeply divided society with high potential for violence; and that notwithstanding oil, the country’s economic options would be “few and narrow.” (57) Yet these, like other similar assessments produced by the State Department or the Army’s Strategic Studies Institute, fell on deafly confident ears.

Pillar has written about the politicization of intelligence before, and his long chapter here covers many forms, most of which were present in the WMD episode. Direct pressure from policymakers to shape conclusions is rare, and would hardly be admitted by analysts in any case, but it is sometimes a fairly short step from that to knowing what political masters are looking for and shading in that direction: witness George Tenet’s “slam dunk” line about Iraqi WMD at a White House meeting in December 2002. More subtle forms including cherry picking from among different assessments, and sometimes growing some cherries, as the Bush administration’s Pentagon did by placing faith in sources the rest of the community had discredited. How questions get asked shapes the answers, so the focus on “does he or doesn’t he?” cut off many lines of analysis about Iraq’s circumstances and Saddam’s motivation. And simply asking the same question again and again, as the Bush administration did about connections between Al Qaeda and Saddam, both gives the question a credibility it doesn’t deserve and consumes analytic time that might be spent on other issues.

For Pillar, the Intelligence Community is the perfect scapegoat for failure. He quotes former DCI Richard Helms: “I am the easiest man in Washington to fire. I have no political, military or industrial base.” (179) That scapegoating is evident in scorekeeping, especially counting failures and even more so failures to predict. Yet Pillar pursues his ‘intelligence mostly doesn’t matter’ theme through a nice comparison between the 1967 and 1973 Arab-Israeli wars. The first was anticipated, while the second came as a surprise. But U.S. policy was, if anything, more effective in the latter than the former.

So what is to be done, if anything? Can intelligence be reformed? Pillar discusses how *not* to reform intelligence – the 9/11 panel. Here, he engages in some score-settling of his own, and the commission staff director, Philip Zelikow, emerges as the villain, burdened with conflict of interest, given his links to the administration, and convinced before the investigation of what should be done. Some of this may be TMI, too much information, as the kids say, but the analytic point is on the mark: the report’s discussion does not really connect to its main recommendation, the creation of the director of national intelligence (DNI). I am one of those who supported the DNI but not because of September 11th. The attack itself was a powerful incentive to improve the ragged communications among the three-letter agencies to which the commission pointed. After September 11th, the CIA and the FBI knew not only that they *could* talk to one another. They knew that had to.

Rather, the argument for the DNI was better strategic management of the entire intelligence community to ensure that Americans get their \$80-plus billion worth of intelligence. Pillar is right that DCIs could have done that job, though their authority was relatively weak and most were quickly beguiled into concentrating on *their* agency, the CIA. So far, sadly, the DNIs have not been visibly effective in that strategic management. They

have gotten from the various agencies what Washington calls push-back on issues large and small. In the process, the ODNI has become what opponents feared it might – just one more layer of bureaucracy. The history of reorganization in the U.S. government is a hoary one, and years ago watching the carousel of reorganization in intelligence led me to a maxim: any organization is better than any reorganization.

Instead, Pillar's suggestions flow along two lines. One would begin with the recognition of, then a real debate over, the trade-off between relevance and politicization, between, in other words, checking on policy-makers and supporting them. Before Iraq, I leaned hard toward relevance, thinking that intelligence's separation from policy led it too often to produce interesting answers to questions no policy-maker was asking. Now, I'm not so sure. Beyond a debate, Pillar would give the DNI a long, fixed term, like the FBI director, and create a collective body, somewhat akin to the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. He would add to that a congressional intelligence office, something on the lines of the Government Accountability Office or the Congressional Budget Office, not to replace oversight by the intelligence committees but to "be the principal locale in the legislative branch of scrutiny and vigilances regarding the substantive use and misuse of intelligence." (316)

The second concerns what Pillar calls "cognitive impairment," (317) the stubborn fact that preferences produce images of the world, not vice versa. He despairs of changing individual policy-makers, and so bets instead on process, hoping for ones that will be both comprehensive in surveying underlying assumptions and competitive in challenge images. There, his main recommendation, one I support, is, he recognizes, not going to happen: dramatically shrinking the political layer of the U.S. government. The existence of so many political in-and-outers can provide fresh perspectives, but it also produces enormous churn, new doctrines and new strategies with no implementation and short lives. More to point for Pillar, it badly blurs "the distinction between politics and policy, on the one hand, and dispassionate interpretation of overseas reality, on the other."

His last chapter is an intriguing coda on uncertainty. Policy-makers, like other humans, want certainty even if they know they cannot have it. He does not put it this way, but while U.S. intelligence says it aims to assess uncertainty, it really tries to eliminate it. In that sense, it says it is Clausewitzian but is not. It really is Jominian, after Clausewitz's Swiss contemporary, Baron de Jomini. The distinction between the two is developed in a wonderful recent essay by Jeffrey A. Friedman and Richard Zeckhauser.¹ Jomini, a child of the enlightenment, believed that good analyses could produce the right answers. That same spirit runs in a direct line from Roberta Wohlstetter's magnificent book about Pearl Harbor to the 9/11 panel report: if only the dots had been connected, the future might have been foreseen. This same spirit inheres in the usual methods of intelligence: notice the emphasis on 'best bets' or assessment of competing hypotheses, which implies not only that the competition will sharpen analysis but also that there might be a winner.

¹ Jeffrey A. Friedman and Richard Zeckhauser, "Assessing Uncertainty in Intelligence," 23 September 2011, available at http://scholar.harvard.edu/friedman/files/friedman_and_zeckhauser--assessing_uncertainty_in_intelligence.pdf

Pillar's admonitions point in a Jominian direction: expect surprise, enemies may not remain enemies, friends may not stay friends, salvage benefit even when wrong. They amount to a recognition that uncertainty, Clausewitz's 'fog of war,' cannot be made to go away. Suppose, instead, that intelligence become truly Jominian: consequence would be deemed as important as likelihood. In that process, intelligence would, in effect, produce a probability distribution in which consequential outcomes would receive attention not just as excursions, even if their probability was low or could not be assessed very clearly. The process would not change the fact that policy-makers derive images of the world from their preferences, and it might simply befuddle. But it would put the attention of both intelligence and policy where they should be – on assessing consequences for the nation's interests, not engaging in an ultimately futile attempt to predict the future.

Author's Response by Paul R. Pillar, Georgetown University

I thank the five reviewers for their attention to the book and for their well-spoken comments. There is more on which I agree with the reviewers than disagree—and for that I thank the reviewers as well. I will focus on the points of disagreement, which should not be taken as implying that those points are any more important than the areas of agreement.

I wrote *Intelligence and U.S. Foreign Policy* to elucidate certain aspects of the relationship between intelligence and policy that are widely misconceived or misunderstood. The book is primarily a dispelling of mistaken conventional wisdom. It never was intended to be a scorecard of intelligence performance. Indeed, one of the major themes of the book is how such scorecard-keeping is an unhelpful distraction from the more important objective of producing better informed and more effective foreign and security policy. Even this distinguished group of reviewers moves at times into the scorecard mode, indicating how strong the tendency is to get into that mode. We collectively are accustomed to discussing intelligence in terms of what the agencies concerned got right or got wrong, often overlooking that in the end none of this matters directly for U.S. interests. What matters is how any of this affects the construction and execution of sound policy.

I try to add value in what I write by addressing and explaining what is not sufficiently understood, rather than repeating or reinforcing what is already widely known. I thus am inclined to focus on what is contrarian, and the present book exhibits that inclination. Intelligence errors in the two episodes named in the subtitle have been so exhaustively and repeatedly described that it is unlikely there is much, if anything, more that would be useful to say about them. My approach in the book was to take note of intelligence failures regarding unconventional weapons in Iraq (94 and *passim*) and the 9/11 terrorist attack (240), as well as some other episodes which I address and in which intelligence erred, and to devote the most space to aspects that by contrast are not well known or are the subject of erroneous conventional wisdom. To tell one more time stories that already have been told and milked repeatedly by journalists, scholars, and pundits would only cause more trees to die and more shelves to groan without adding value.

Other reviews of this book have focused mostly on the chapters about the decision to go to war in Iraq. This is also the portion of the book that has been most positively received. In a sense this reaction is not surprising. Although this portion is contrarian regarding the influence, or lack of it, of intelligence on the decision, it meshes with what has become a widely accepted view that not just intelligence but also the decision-making and public salesmanship of the Bush administration were defective. That broadly-held perception—supported by the work of investigative journalists—arose because the Iraq War went sour and came to be seen by a majority of Americans as a costly mistake. Had the war been a success, many of the journalists' books would not have been written and defects in the decision-making would have gone largely unnoticed.

There still is a conventional wisdom, with which my book certainly does *not* mesh, that intelligence about Iraqi programs involving weapons of mass destruction (WMD) drove the decision to launch the war. The present reviewers seem in several places implicitly to accept that conventional wisdom by dipping into the now-familiar well of observations about what was wrong with intelligence on that subject. I agree with most of the reviewers' (especially Loch Johnson's) observations about that, just as I agree with most of what the most thorough official inquiry, the Silberman-Robb commission, had to say about it. But if our objective is to understand why this particular war was launched, all of this is almost beside the point, given the multiple reasons I address in the book (13-42) as to why the intelligence on WMD did not drive the decision. The ideological drivers predated even the Bush administration's entry into office. Once Bush was in office, the intelligence community, far from ringing any alarm bells about Iraqi WMD, barely mentioned the subject. The decision to launch the war was firm before the infamous intelligence estimate on the topic—which the administration never requested—was even begun. Judgments even in that flawed document regarding possible use by Saddam Hussein of WMD ran directly counter to the administration's main war-selling theme. Iraq was by no means the most threatening rogue state proliferator at the time. Most important, even a presumption of active Iraqi WMD programs or stockpiles simply did not equate, as a matter of logic or strategy, with a case to launch an offensive war against the country. As Deputy Secretary of Defence Paul Wolfowitz, probably the most enthusiastic promoter of the war at higher levels of the administration, acknowledged in an unguarded moment, WMD was simply the topic that most people in the government could agree on as a rationale for the war. It was a sales point, not a driver.

Carl Ford clearly has the biggest disagreement of any of the reviewers with my account of how the United States got into the Iraq War. He seems to have established as his objective a defense of the Bush administration's decision-making and a righting of what he sees in my book as an unbalanced reckoning of the relative magnitude of errors by policymakers and intelligence agencies. In so doing he leaves unmentioned major lines of analysis and evidence in the book that address the very matters he raises.

Ford takes exception to my observation that there was no policy process, meaning in this instance a procedure for determining whether the war was a good idea. I am not the only one to note this; Richard Armitage, the deputy secretary of state at the time, made an identical observation (13). Ford's refutation consists of enumerating the many meetings the administration held on Iraq. Certainly there were many meetings, on selling the decision to go to war and later on implementing the decision. But despite the yeoman work of Bob Woodward (whom Ford cites extensively) and other investigative journalists, no one has ever discovered any meeting (or even an options paper) that addressed whether the United States should launch the war at all. There was thus never an opportunity for intelligence (or any other input from the bureaucracy, for that matter) to influence Bush's decision to invade. The question was simply never on any agenda.

I agree with Ford that the snake-bitten national intelligence estimate completed in October 2002 was by no means the only intelligence input to the administration about Iraqi WMD. He says that positions of intelligence agencies on this subject were unchanged from March

2002. But that date was *after* the war-makers saw that the post-9/11 political climate had given them the opportunity to realize their long-held dream to use military force to topple Saddam Hussein. It was after Bush declared the Axis of Evil, and it was after the president directed Tommy Franks, Commander in Chief, United States Central Command, to draw up war plans. A more meaningful comparison is with what the intelligence agencies were saying on the subject in the opening months of the Bush administration, before the drive toward war had begun. The most authoritative statement of intelligence judgments was CIA Director George Tenet's statement to Congress on worldwide threats (31) in February 2001. There is no way that statement could be interpreted as providing an impetus or justification for a war against Iraq. The statement did not even mention, for example, the possibility of Iraq developing a nuclear weapon.

Ford is clearly correct that the WMD issue was a critical part of selling the war to Congress and the public. But selling the war is a completely different question from what led the decision to be made in the first place. And even just focusing on salesmanship, to say the topic of WMD was important in the sales campaign is quite different from saying that the intelligence community's judgments were what sold the war. It is even more different from saying that the difference between good and bad intelligence made the difference between being able or unable to sell the war. Ford ignores the section in the book (88-92) that analyzes exactly these questions. I will not repeat the analysis here, but the main point is that the sales campaign exploited a badly dumbed-down version of the subject that reduced it to a yes-or-no question of whether or not Saddam had WMD. The best possible intelligence analysis given the information available, which would have been more agnostic and cautious than the flawed analysis that the intelligence community in fact produced, would barely have slowed down the administration's sales campaign. Even in an impossibly counterfactual world in which the intelligence community got everything exactly right, most of the themes in that campaign would not have been different from the themes we in fact heard. We now know that Saddam did have the intent to resurrect his unconventional weapons programs. And the Bush administration's pro-war campaign was largely about intentions, or even just possible intentions—what Saddam “could” do if he had WMD.

In his effort to depict the intelligence community's work as “not very good,” Ford steps away from the WMD topic just long enough to criticize a prescient pre-war community assessment about the mess that would ensue after Saddam's ouster as an instance of the community having “guessed right.” His formulation echoes one used by President Bush, who after a leak dismissed as “just guessing” another community estimate, written a year into the war and continuing the gloomy (and ultimately mostly accurate) analysis about the developing course of events in Iraq. The estimate to which Ford refers was the product of months of work and extensive consultation with experts outside as well as inside the government, with the judgments based on careful consideration of the social structure and political culture of Iraq. Inasmuch as it was consistent with the judgments of many outside experts, it could not necessarily be called original. But it certainly wasn't guessing.

The estimate about the huge challenges in post-Saddam Iraq (as well as a companion estimate about regional repercussions of the war) could not in any way be considered part

of a case for war. To the contrary, if one were to have drawn policy implications from these estimates it would be to avoid the war, not to launch it. The administration's ignoring of these major judgments—on matters which turned out to be more important for U.S. interests in the end than anything having to do with WMD—is another indication of the non-influence of intelligence on the decision to invade Iraq. And then there was all the intelligence work about Iraq's terrorist connections—exhaustive and detailed work, because of the policymakers' intense interest in the topic, which in turn reflected the policymakers' efforts to use this subject as another theme, alongside WMD, in selling the war. The intelligence agencies' judgment, based on this extensive work, that there was no alliance between Saddam's regime and al-Qaeda, differed substantially from the administration's declaration that there was. It was the intelligence judgment that turned out to be correct.

Loch Johnson makes some more restrained comments about what intelligence officers might have done differently and what effect this might have had on debate about going to war in Iraq. He writes of what might have been if the intelligence agencies had "stated unequivocally" that Iraq probably did not have the feared weapons. But there never was a basis for making any such unequivocal statement, and it would have been irresponsibly bad analysis for the intelligence agencies to have made such a statement in 2002. Or, continues Johnson, what if the same agencies had stated that "more time was necessary to examine this hypothesis before sliding into war"? Even if intelligence agencies somehow could have found a way consistent with their professional roles to tell not just the administration but also the public that the administration's war timetable didn't make sense, any effort to do so would have been feckless. The war train had been rolling down the track since the early weeks after 9/11, and by the autumn of 2002 the makers of the war were determined to accomplish their invasion before the heat of the next summer in Iraq and before any more international opposition to the war might develop. Their determination was reflected in the fact that it was the United States, not Saddam Hussein, that kicked international weapons inspectors out of Iraq in the final days before the war. A "logical conclusion," as Johnson says, would have been to not rush into war, but logic was not what was driving the policy.

Johnson's musings about what more the intelligence agencies could have said or done about the WMD issue sound reasonable as stated, and in general seem consistent with the role of intelligence. But try to translate the musings into specific steps that could have been taken during the period in question, and no possible steps emerge that would have been feasible or effective, or even consistent with the professionalism of intelligence officers. Besides the determination of the administration to launch the war, a couple of other realities set the limits of feasibility. The absence of a policy process leading to a presidential decision on whether to launch this war meant there was no discernible line between pre-decision and post-decision phases. The identification of such a line is, for intelligence officers just as for military officers, critical in defining responsibilities. Before making a decision the duty is to give the most honest and complete input about the pros and cons of all possible options; after the decision has been made the duty is to salute and do one's best to help implement the decision, regardless of any individual officer's opinion about the wisdom of decision. In the Iraq case, however, war became a certainty before it

became an option. Johnson speaks of how intelligence officers could have “brought some balance to the debate.” But by the time there was anything close to a real debate about going to war, any effort by intelligence agencies to “bring balance” would have been indistinguishable from insubordination. This would have been true even in discussions within the administration, and would have been all the more so with respect to anything the agencies might have done with Congress or the public. (Whatever the agencies might have tried to do along this line certainly would have clashed with Carl Ford’s conception of the proper role of intelligence.)

Another important reality is that the course of what passed for debate about the war was determined by the politics and mood of the moment, especially the Bush administration’s successful exploitation of Americans’ suddenly increased militancy in the wake of 9/11. The debate was deficient not because of any shortage of doubtfulness from the intelligence community. In the book I describe how a climate in which even many people outside of government who recognized the squishy nature of the administration’s case about WMD and about terrorism nonetheless supported the war. And of course many others, as reflected in the vote on the war resolution in Congress, opposed the war for this as well as other reasons.

I share Johnson’s emphasis on Congress as having an important responsibility as a co-equal policy-making branch of government. (Thomas Ricks in his book *Fiasco* gives an especially good account of how members of Congress did not perform that responsibility in the Iraq case but instead were driven primarily by a political need not to get in the way of the war train that the Bush administration had already sent hurtling down the track.)¹ The intelligence community could not have led Congress to perform that responsibility any more or better. Johnson says the intelligence agencies should have “more effectively communicated to lawmakers...the softness of the WMD findings.” What exactly would “more effective communication” have meant in this instance? The reasons for softness were all laid out even in the infamous October 2002 estimate, which hardly any members bothered to look at it. Senator Graham’s reaction to the estimate indicated how much the “softness” had been communicated in it. The fact that there were dissents and disagreements was clear even in the Key Judgments section, but hardly anyone bothered to look at even that. And if very few members could be bothered to look at an estimate shortly before they were to vote on whether to start a war, even fewer would have bothered if to look at any similar document months earlier.

Johnson rightly talks about the responsibility of intelligence officers to market their products and not just throw papers over the transom. But in this instance the only possibility for trying to implement Johnson’s advice—beyond the briefings on Capitol Hill that did occur and which included intelligence officers holding dissenting viewpoints—would be for intelligence agencies on their own initiative to have sought out members of Congress for the express purpose of emphasizing how much intelligence did not support the unequivocal statements in the Bush administration’s sales campaign for the war. This would certainly have been seen as insubordination, and would have provided

¹ Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco: The American Military Adventure in Iraq*, Penguin, 2006.

ammunition—in this case, legitimate ammunition—for those who argued that intelligence officers were not acting objectively but instead were trying to subvert or defeat the president’s policies.

Some members of Congress did try to fulfill their policy-making responsibilities. Graham and several of the other Democrats on the Senate intelligence committee correctly seized on a judgment in the weapons estimate that if Saddam had WMD he probably would not use them against U.S. interests or give them to terrorists except in the extreme circumstance of someone invading Iraq and trying to overthrow his regime. The senators insisted there was no less reason to make this important judgment public than there was to make public the alarming statements about WMD in the administration’s sales campaign. In an arrangement that a colleague of mine and I negotiated with the senators—and which some other intelligence officers believe to this day went beyond the bounds of the proper role of intelligence—we agreed to draft a releasable letter to the committee that incorporated the judgment. The letter was published in the *New York Times*. To anyone who cared to notice, this judgment stood the administration’s whole pro-war campaign on its head. It is hard to imagine the intelligence agencies pressing the envelope of their responsibilities any farther to provide “balance” to the debate than they did by making this judgment public—in response to a request from senators in the opposition party, no less. But any influence this disclosure had on the course of the debate barely registered, and the pro-war campaign did not miss a beat. On the day the letter went to the committee, President Bush delivered a major speech about all the scary things Saddam Hussein “could” do with WMD, including giving them to terrorists.

The disproportionate attention to the Iraqi WMD issue—not specifically just by these reviewers but more generally in countless other discussions and commentaries—is unfortunate, given, as noted, that this topic was not the reason the United States went to war. This whole unpleasant episode had nothing to do with intelligence informing the making and execution of U.S. policy. Instead, it involved how intelligence agencies reacted to a situation that they are poorly equipped or positioned to react to: an administration’s use of selected bits of intelligence to muster public support for a politically charged decision it has already taken. Perhaps a positive side of the disproportionate attention as it relates to the book under discussion is what Brent Durbin expresses nicely at the end of his review: that readers who come to this volume interested mainly in the Iraq story or perhaps my evaluation of post-9/11 reforms might take away a “more nuanced understanding of what intelligence can and cannot do to improve U.S. foreign policy.”

Moving beyond Iraq, Johnson and Mark Lowenthal both appear to take issue with my observation that intelligence has had almost no effect in determining the biggest decisions of U.S. foreign policy of the past several decades. Careful attention to exactly what I am saying indicates that we do not really have a disagreement. Intelligence certainly has provided background and context, and specific informational input, to some of the big decisions. It has played a significant role in many lesser decisions, and it has a lot to do with executing many decisions, big and small. But that is different from saying that intelligence determined how the big decisions came out, or even that it was a major reason a decision went one way rather than another way. This is not a matter of intelligence being

“ignored,” but instead of explaining why the big decisions came out the way they did. The record of U.S. foreign policy since World War II shows that intelligence does not provide that explanation.

Regarding politicization, both Ford and Lowenthal believe that I have defined the phenomenon too broadly. Ford says it is a matter of bending to direct arm-twisting. That narrow conception conforms to a popular conception of politicization, one that also appears to have been used by official inquiries that have mentioned the subject, to the meager extent they have mentioned it at all. I expect this narrow conception has been favored because people tend to think in terms of right and wrong, and of whether blame for errors and woebegone policies should be directed at one place rather than another. We may be inclined to throw a penalty flag at someone who twists arms but not to do so in response to more subtle influence. Precisely because arm-twisting is a flagrant foul it is relatively rare, and for the same reason it rarely succeeds. I believe—and this is a major theme of the book—that blame games are less important and less useful than examination of why foreign policy is well-informed or ill-informed. Such examination indicates that policy preferences can and do influence intelligence output in many different ways, and it is in the ways that are more subtle than arm-twisting that such influence is most often felt. Both the subtlety and *amour propre* are reasons that self-reporting by intelligence officers (which Johnson refers to) is a poor indicator of whether influence is occurring.

We ought to worry about such influence even if we don't get to throw any penalty flags, because it affects the quality of intelligence and the accuracy of images that come to policy-makers. And although the influence cannot be eliminated entirely, there are greater and lesser degrees of political influence. Moreover, this is one subject on which organizational arrangements—that favorite of would-be reformers—matters. Whom one works for is important.

Brent Durbin addresses organizational matters in questioning my suggestion of giving intelligence a quasi-independent status akin to that of the Federal Reserve. Durbin (and Lowenthal) worry that greater independence would mean less relevance. Diffidence is called for here. As I make clear in the book, although organization does affect influence, the prospects for organizational change to fix any kind of perceived problem about intelligence always will be limited and uncertain. The suggestion about the Fed as a model was coupled with acknowledgment (314-315) that many issues would first need to be more fully thought through. Moreover, the suggestion was only an interim proposal pending more of a public debate on what we really want out of our intelligence services.

Two further observations can be made about separation and relevance. First, the independence-vs.-relevance tradeoff which intelligence officers have discussed for decades is not as simple as is commonly portrayed. Among other things, the portrayal blurs the distinction between relevance and influence. The Iraq War experience is one of the more recent and painful examples in which intelligence did not influence a major policy decision even though intelligence agencies had ample close contact with policymakers and were doing work highly relevant to the policy. Second, there is no inherent reason that the type of organizational separation that could reduce political influence on the substance of

intelligence judgments would make intelligence any less relevant in its selection of topics on which to collect and questions on which to make judgments. The *raison d'être* of intelligence agencies would still be to provide collection and analysis on matters of relevance and importance to policymakers. Nor should cooperation with other parts of the executive branch be precluded. The quasi-independent status of the Federal Reserve did not prevent it from working closely with the Department of the Treasury to deal with the recent financial crisis.

I close on the same note on which Gregory Treverton appropriately closes his review. Intelligence is not a prediction game or a pretension to know the unknowable. It is one mechanism, along with others, for helping national leaders deal with an inevitably uncertain world. To expect it to be something else is a formula not only for dashed expectations but also for misdirected solutions to solve misunderstood problems.

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