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Role of Intelligence in International Crisis Management

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ABSTRACT

This Working Paper reviews conventional thinking about the contribution of strategic intelligence to early warning of diplomatic crisis and its escalation and resolution. The paper argues that in an increasingly complex and interdependent world driven by forces of globalization strategic intelligence may not be able to provide policy makers the foresight of crisis and its possible outcomes. Instead, strategic intelligence can perhaps help the policy maker to make sense of an increasingly chaotic, uncertain and unpredictable situation and grasp the complexity of a spectrum of possible outcomes.

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ROLE OF INTELLIGENCE IN INTERNATIONAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT

"There cannot be a crisis next week.
My schedule is already full."
Henry Kissinger[1]

The Cuban missile crisis has, and continues to be the locus case of successful crisis management[2] and of the role of US intelligence in shaping the crisis. The evaluations of US intelligence performance in the crisis have usually focused on the failure to estimate the Soviet intent to deploy strategic missiles on Cuba. Special National Intelligence Estimate (SNIE 85-3-62) issued on 19 Sept '62 argued against Soviet deployment of missiles on Cuba because the risks involved were "incompatible with Soviet practice to date and with Soviet policy as we presently estimate it."[3] However, it was monitoring of the Soviet buildup on Cuba, especially the U-2 aerial reconnaissance, which confirmed the construction of ballistic missile sites at San Cristobal and precipitated a crisis. Declassified records now enable us to assess the support US intelligence provided to their policy makers during the crisis by monitoring the levels of Soviet buildup on Cuba and globally while also attempting to estimate Soviet reactions to possible US options against their missiles deployed on Cuba. Declassified records also enable us to follow US intelligence monitoring of the Soviet removal of their missiles from Cuba. In contrast, the opening up of the Soviet archives shows that Soviet intelligence were cut out of the Soviet decision making leading to the deployment of missiles on Cuba and during the crisis had no information on US options and response to this deployment of missiles on Cuba.[4]

The Cuban missile crisis confirms our conventional thinking of an international crisis as an unexpected and surprising turn of events that threatens the survival of the nation-state. Could the CIA have forecast Khrushchev's intention to base offensive

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[1] Attributed to H Kissinger and quoted with his permission in M Leventhal, ed., *The hand of history; An anthology of history quotations commentaries* (Elstree, Herets: Greenhill Books, 2011), pg. 80. Editor M Leventhal invited a number of leading historians to either write an aphorism about history or to select a quote about history or its writing, and to provide a commentary on their choice of quotations.

[2] Graham Allison & Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision; Explaining the Cuban missile crisis* (New York: Longman/Addison-Wesley, 1999, 2nd edn) remains the benchmark study, with this second edition reiterating the Rational Actor Model of decision making argued for in the first edition of the text published some twenty-five years earlier.

[3] CIA History Staff, *CIA documents on the Cuban missile crisis 1962* (Washington D.C.: CIA, 1992)

[4] James G Blight & David A. Welch, eds., *Intelligence and the Cuban missile crisis* (London: Frank Cass, 1998)

missiles in Cuba? Special National Intelligence Estimate 85-3-62 indicates that the CIA did consider this prospect, but ruled it out. Was this another instance of intelligence failure to provide its policy makers early warning of possible war in an escalating international crisis? Twenty years earlier the different intelligence services failed to provide their service chiefs and national leaders warning of the Japanese decision to go to war with the US. Strategic intelligence is, in our current understanding of international crises, expected to provide the policy maker the information which anticipates what the adversary is planning and so enable the policy maker to take appropriate pre-emptive action to avoid war. These notes identify some of the reasons cited for intelligence failure to provide policy makers with early warning of an international crisis that could escalate into war. If we accept that intelligence failures are inevitable, then should we resign ourselves to being surprised, or examine how to reframe our understanding of an international crisis and expectations of intelligence in the management of international crisis?[5]

UNDERSTANDING INTERNATIONAL CRISIS

The start of an international crisis is to recognize when normal diplomatic relations have broken down and events are taking an unexpected and surprising turn, creating a crisis that has to be managed. Crisis management is about maintaining control over events to avoid war,[6] and intelligence is expected to provide policy makers the foreknowledge of events taking an unexpected turn leading to a crisis. For Kennedy the crisis over Soviet deployment of missiles arose on 14 October when U-2 aerial photographs confirmed the construction of missiles sites on Cuba and undermined the Special National Intelligence Estimate 85-3-62. Kennedy and his colleagues who had been assured by that Estimate were thus fundamentally surprised that Khrushchev would act so irrationally against what they, the White House policy group, perceived

[5] See the response of vetern CIA analyst Jack Davis, "Strategic warning: If surprise is inevitable, what role for analysis?" *Sherman Kent Center for Intelligence Analysis, Occasional Papers,* vol.2/i (Jan 2003) available at https://www.cia.gov/library/kent-center-occasional-papers/vol2no1.htm an abbreviated version of which is in "Strategic warning; Intelligence support in a world uncertainty and surprise," in Loch K. Johnson,ed., *Handbook of intelligence studies* (London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 173-188

[6] Alexander L George, ed., *Avoiding war; Problems of crisis management* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1991) and earlier, Phil Williams, *Crisis management; Confrontation and diplomacy in the nuclear age* (New York: J Wiley, 1976) make this point about crisis management being about maintaining control over events to avoid war.

to be Soviet national interests and clear US warnings of its interests.[7] But for Khrushchev the outbreak of a crisis was over whether the US will discover the deployment of Soviet missiles before they had completed it and so present the US with a *fait accompli.* Apparently Khrushchev thought Kennedy would do nothing because the US was already vulnerable to Soviet intercontinental missiles, and Soviet missiles in Cuba were therefore not a new or escalating threat. Further, Khrushchev may have assessed that the Soviet Union could withstand any diplomatic pressure from the young US President. Were both Kennedy and Khrushchev wrongly advised by their respective intelligence services about the intentions and resolve of each to challenge the other?

The first step of political crisis management is understanding what sense the adversaries are making of their rapidly changing environment, and based on that understanding of the adversary's intentions and actions we then decide upon our response to the evolving crisis. What are the motives of the other side in pursuing this course of action which has lead to a crisis? This understanding, especially the resolve of the other side in holding on to their intention, is a key to our formulation of a negotiation strategy for the settlement of the crisis.[8] The crux of successful crisis management is to be aware that the degree of coercion we are prepared to exert on the adversary, often in response to our own domestic and bureaucratic pressures, feeds back into the crisis and our response then becomes the basis of the next phase of the crisis when the adversary has to decide what to do next.

The US response to the al-Qaeda 9/11 attack on the New York World Trade Centre was driven in part by its understanding of al Qaeda narratives of its Islamic vision of the world. But more important was how those al-Qaeda visions fed into US visions of their place and role in the world as was being defined by a group of neo-conservative policy-makers who saw al-Qaeda's actions as an evil against which the US must engage in a Manichean struggle.[9] In contrast, Kennedy's team responses in the

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[7] Both Phil Williams in his *Crisis management* chpt. 7 and A. L. George & W. E. Simons, eds., *The limits of coercive diplomacy* (Boulder, Colo.: 1994 2nd edn) acknowledge that successful crisis management is about recognizing the limits and need to moderate coercive diplomacy.

[8] Richard N Lebow, *Between peace and war; The nature of international crisis* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1981)

[9] The BBC Two 3-part television series *The Power of Nightmares* by Adam Curtis and broadcast on 20 & 27 Oct and 3 Nov 2004brings out, in albeit simplified form for television format, this epic interplay

Cuban missile crisis were apparently in large part driven by how their decisions will be judged by history a decade or century later. As Neustadt and May[10] argued, Kennedy and his team were "thinking in time."

WHY HAS INTELLIGENCE FAILED IN ANTICIPATING INTERNATIONAL CRISIS ?

The traditional expectations of intelligence in the management of a political crisis are firstly, to apprise the policy maker of the impending breakdown of normalcy and the possible outbreak of a crisis or worse, surprise attack. Second, intelligence is expected to provide the policy maker during the crisis with a constant flow of estimates and assessments of the other side's intentions and response to the changing environment. Third, these estimates and assessments are expected to provide the policy maker with an advantage in negotiating a settlement of the crisis or prosecution of a war.

The track record of intelligence in fulfilling these expectations in a crisis has been dismal. All the crises which escalated and erupted into war from before the Japanese invasion of Pearl Harbor that precipitate World War II in the Pacific, to the ongoing war in Iraq have been attributed to intelligence failures of one kind or another. Prussia's victory against Austria in the battle of Sadowa and on to World War I; the Russo-Japanese War in 1904; the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor; the North Korean attack against South Korea in June 1950, and Chinese intervention in the conflict; the Suez War of 1956; the Indo-Chinese War of 1962; crisis and surprise in three Arab-Israeli Wars; the Argentinean invasion of the Falklands in 1982; first and second Gulf Wars against Iraq in 1991 and 2003 were all military surprises that have to a large part been attributed to intelligence failure to anticipate the incentives and opportunities for a surprise attack in a political crisis.[11]

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of two cosmic visions and their moral disgust with each other. Ex-CIA analyst Michael Scheuer writing anonymously in the first edition of his *Imperial Hubris; Why the West is losing the war on terror* (Lond: Bassey's) makes the same critique of the US, that its sense of *imperial hubris* will be its downfall in its war on al-Qaeda.

[10] Richard E Neustadt and Ernest R May, *Thinking in time; The uses of history for decision makers* (New York: Free Press, 1986), pg. 14

[11] Klaus Knorr and Patrick Morgan, eds., *Strategic military surprise; Incentives and opportunities* (New Brunswick, JJ: Transaction Books, 1983)

In this dismal record the Cuban Missile Crisis and the earlier Berlin Blockade Crisis of 1948-49 and possibly, the Sino-Soviet border clash of 1969 stand out as cases of successful crisis management which did not lead to war. Unfortunately, lack of awareness of more instances of successful de-escalation of a crisis[12] to which strategic intelligence may have contributed, has focused attention on the catastrophes of failure of crisis management. The consequent post-mortems and studies have blamed intelligence for failure to provide their policy makers the foresight and understanding to avoid war in a crisis. Broadly, four categories of failures have been identified.

The first category of failures is the inability of intelligence to see through the fog of deception created by the adversary in the build-up to a crisis. Central to penetrating the fog of deception is uncovering the adversary's actions to cover and conceal his movements to launch a surprise attack. The Soviets successfully covered and concealed much of their shipment of their missiles to Cuba from the CIA until14 October, when they were about to complete it. Barton Whaley[13] pioneered the study of stratagems employed by adversaries in a crisis to deceive and surprise their adversary for a strategic advantage. Whaley's 1969 study of the signals and warnings of the German invasion of Russia in 1941 are significant for how the Allied intelligence services drew very different interpretations from these warnings.[14] The lesson that intelligence services have drawn is that Deception and Denial of information by the adversary of their intentions and actions are a major obstacle they are up against in their efforts to provide better assessments and estimates to their policy makers. But to what extent is it feasible or possible to develop counter-deception strategies[15] given that successful deception feeds into, and exploits the adversary's expectations and preconceptions to "see what they expect to see"? It is

[12] Michael Handel has distinguished military surprise as an integral part of military planning from diplomatic surprise Surprise in military planning is to gain a strategic advantage over the adversary who must be then deceived and deprived of knowledge of moves against him. In contrast, diplomatic surprise is about moves and signals to the adversary of planned changes in foreign policy which may surprise the other. The 1971 US-Chinese rapprochement is an instance of a major diplomatic surprise de-escalating US-China tensions. See Handel, *The diplomacy of surprise* (Cambr., Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1981),

[13] Barton Whaley, *Strategem; Deception and surprise in war* (Boston: Artech House repr. Of 1969 eds)

[14] Barton Whaley, *codeword Barbarossa* (Cambr., Mass.: MIT Press, 1973)

[15] Michael Bennett and Edwad Waltz, *Counter deception principle and applications for National Security*(Boston: Artech House, 2007), and earlier, Donald C Daniel and Katherine L. Herbig, eds., *Strategic military deception* (New York: Pergamon Press, 1982)

easy to preach as Sunzi did some two millennium ago that success in battle depends upon knowing oneself first, but practicing that maxim is not easy.

The second category of explanations for intelligence failures are the cognitive biases driving intelligence analysis. As CIA veteran Richards J Heuer, Jr[16] has advised his staff, there are biases in the evaluation of evidence; biases in perception of cause and effect; biases in estimating probabilities and finally hindsight biases in evaluating the quality and value of intelligence products. Studies by a generation of scholars from Roberta Wohlstetter in her 1962 classic study of Pearl Harbor,[17] to Richard Betts, [18] Robert Jervis[19]and a generation of post-Yom Kippur Israeli scholars lead by Michael I Handel[20] and including Zvi Lanir[21] and more recently Ariel Levite[22] and Ephraim Kam[23] have all lamented the inevitability of strategic surprise in a crisis which could lead to a surprise attack. For these analysts, surprise is inevitable.

The third category of reasons for intelligence failures to forecast crisis and surprise attacks are attributed to the management and organization of the intelligence services. This has been the finding of most Commissions of Inquiry from the 39 Volumes *Congressional Hearings* into Pearl Harbor to the Agranat Commission on failures in Israeli intelligence leading to Israel being surprised in 1973. More recently, the *9/11 Commission Report* and the July 2004 Butler report on Iraq called for reform of not

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[16] Richard J Heuer Jr., *Psychology of intelligence analysis* (Washington D.C.: Center for Study of Intelligence, CIA, 1999)

[17] Roberta Wohlstetter, *Pearl Harbor; Warning and decision* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1962).

[18] Richard K. Betts, *Surprise attack; Lessons for defense planning* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1982)

[19] Robert Jervis, *Why intelligence fails; Lessons from the Iranian Revolution to the Iraq war* (Ithaca: Cornell University, 2010) draws on a declassified study Jervis was commission by the CIA to undertake thirty years ago on the Iranian Revolution and now declassified and forms part of this book, together with CIA responses to Jervis's findings and recommendations.

[20] Michael Handel, "Intelligence and the problem of strategic surprise," and "Diplomatic surprise" in his collection of essays, *War, strategy and intelligence* (London: Frank Cass, 1989), pp. 229-311. Handel's insights into surprise and intelligence failure are examined and further developed in Richard K Betts and T Mahnkam, eds., *Paradoxes of strategic intelligence. Essays in honor of Michael I Handel* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[21] Zvi Lanir, *Hahafta'a habsisit: Modi'in Bemashber* [Fundamental surprise: The national intelligence crisis] (Tel-Aviv: Hakibutz Hama'ukhad, 1983). I thank Zvi Lanir, who served in the Israeli Defence Force intelligence, for discussing his work with me in the late 1980's.

[22] Ariel Levite, *Intelligence and strategic surprise* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987)

[23] Ephraim Kam, *Surprise attack; The victim's perspective* (Cambr., Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1988)

only the intelligence community, but much of the entire government.[24] The challenge in reforming the intelligence services is the delicate checking of over- centralisation and balance with decentralization and pluralism.[25]

Finally, failure of intelligence to warn their policy makers of an impending crisis may be rooted in their relations to their policy maker.[26] The mainstream expectation of the intelligence analyst is that he is to provide an objective and accurate picture of 'what is out there" to his policy maker. He is not necessarily a part of the policy process to ensure that his estimates and assessments are not biased and politicized. But separated from the policy process, the intelligence analyst, unaware of policy needs and tensions, risks producing estimates and assessments which are irrelevant to policy needs. The challenge, as more than one intelligence analyst has recognized, is how to be close to the policy maker without being caught in the policy process, to produce politicized products which rationalize and justify policy goals rather than objectively advising on the possible responses these policy goals might evoke from the adversary. As Richard Betts argued back in 1982[27], intelligence may correctly anticipate a crisis, but the policy maker may either choose to ignore it or is reluctant to authorize a military response. . Was US intelligence, as Richard Betts asks[28] "wrong for the right reasons on the issue of WMD in Iraq"?

EMERGENT ISSUES IN CRISIS MANAGEMENT

The expectation that intelligence should provide the foresight in sufficient warning time to pre-empt strategic surprise in a crisis is based on an understanding of the policy process as an empirically driven process within which policy issues and

[24] Daniel Byman, "Strategic surprise and the September 11 attacks," *Annual Review of Political Science* 8(2005), 145-170 and Robert Jervis, *Why intelligence fails.*

[25] Richard K Betts, *Enemies of intelligence; Knowledge and power in American National Security* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 124-158.

[26] An issue that also worries strategic intelligence analysts and their managers, see for example, Jack Davis, "Tensions in analyst-policy maker relations: Opinions, facts and evidence," *Sherman Kent Center for Intelligence Analysis, Occasional Papers* vol.2/ii available at https://www.cia.gov//library/kent-center-occasional-papers/vol2no.1.htm, and Davis' earlier "Improving CIA analytic performance: Analysts and the policymaking process," in *ibid* vol.1/ii which reviews five US government post-mortem critiques of intelligence process. The British perspective on this issue is summed up by Sir David Omand (who retired after a long service in various intelligence capacities as Intelligence and Security Coordinator in the Cabinet Office from 2002-2005) in his *Securing the state* (London: Hurst, 2010), pp. 171-208

[27] Betts, *Surprise attack,* pg. 4.

[28] Betts, *Enemies of intelligence.*

challenges can be empirically verified and analysed for rational choice of a preferred policy to solve the problem. It assumes that the policy maker is in some control of his environment and assured of being able to decide his future in an orderly, stable and predictable world. The quote attributed to Kissinger at the start of this essay typifies this attitude towards our world. Within this ordered world of policy making, an international crisis is precipitated by an actor seeking to challenge and change the established order to his favour. The intelligence analyst is expected to provide the policy maker the warning for action to deter the actor from destabilizing the status quo. This, from the perspective of Washington and its allies, is the issue of North Korea's and Iran's persistence in developing its nuclear capabilities. The challenge for intelligence is how to build a more effective early warning system to anticipate and manage crisis[29].

The current and dominant framework for crisis management, whether political-military[30] or industrial or corporate[31] is that a crisis may be occurring once the warning signals that an international actor is out to challenge the international order and flaunting diplomatic protocols (or industrial safety standards are being breached; or good corporate governance practice disregarded). The challenge for policy makers (and industry or corporate chiefs) is to recognize that the actor challenging the international order has crossed the Rubicon (or the safety valves of the industrial plant is about to blow) and a crisis is in progress, and contingency plans to contain the damage and limit the crisis must be launched. The successful containment and de-

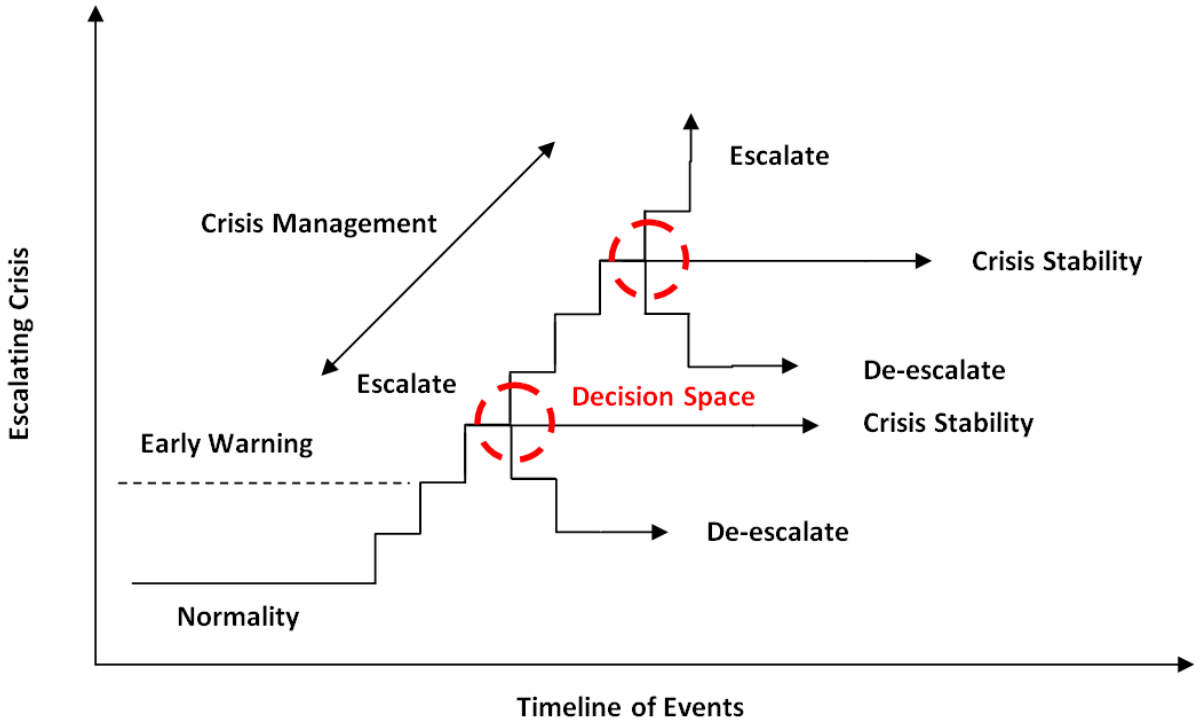
[29] Note especially the declassified 40 year old CIA manual, *Handbook of warning intelligence; Assessing the threat to National Security* by Cythia Grabo (who served as an US intelligence analyst from 1942 to 1980) and Jan Goldman (Lanham, MD: Scarecrow Press, 2010), an abridged version of which is in Grabo, *Anticipating surprise; Analysis for strategic warning*(Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2004). See Paul Bracken's update on the issues of "How to build a warning system: in P. Bracken, Ian Bremmer and David Bordon, eds., *Managing strategic surprise; Lessons from risk management and risk assessment* (Cambridge: University Press, 2008), pp. 16-42. Also relevant is Hèléne Lavoix, "Developing an early warning system for crises," in A Ricci, ed., *From early warning to early action* (Brussels: European Commission, 2006)

[30] Arjen Boin, Paul't Hart and others, *The politics of crisis management; Public leadership under pressure* (Cambridge: University Press, 2005)

[31] On the growing business management literature on managing industrial and corporate crises, see Harvard Business School Publishing, "*Harvard Business Review" on crisis management* (Boston: Harvard Business School, 1999) which indicates how thinking on crisis management has evolved from 1994 to 1999 in eight classic articles. Much of the literature are "how to manage a crisis" manuals, on which see Steven Fink, *Crisis management: Planning for the inevitable* (Backinprint.com.Edition; Cincinnati, Ohio: Authors Guild, 2002) while Ian I Mitroff, & others, *The essential guide to managing corporate crises* (Oxford University Press, 1996) provides a more analytical approach outlining various qualitative techniques for crisis management.

escalation of a crisis (or termination of an industrial accident) in large part depends upon how the policy maker (or corporate chief) makes sense of, and grasp the crises as it unfolds.[32] For how they make sense of the crises as it unfolds very much determines their response which determines whether the crisis de-escalates or reaches some form of stability and standoff or escalates further (Figure 1).[33]

Figure 1



It is however unlikely that any early warning system can anticipate the action of the skipper of a fishing vessel or the Captain of a naval patrol boat when it is confronted by another naval vessel challenging its right to be where it is. Neither can intelligence anticipate the nature and extent of "blowback" which will follow that naval confrontation or detention of a fishing vessel. Making sense of the crises which

[32] The CIA appears to be exploring corporate practice of crisis planning in a category of "exotic" organizations called "high reliability organizations" (HROs) such as nuclear power plants, oil rigs and refineries where there is a high risk of accidents and are therefore expected to be preoccupied with warning systems and signals of breakdowns and accidents, see Warren Fishbein and Gregory Treverton, "Making sense of transnational threats," *Sherman KentCentre for Intelligence Analysis, Occasional Papers,* vol. 3/I (oct 2004) at http://cia.gov/library/keng-center-occasional-papers/vol3no1.htm

[33] See Denis Smith, "The crisis of management: Managing ahead of the curve," in Denis Smith and Dominic Elliott, eds., *Key readings in crisis management; Systems and structures for prevention and recovery* (London: Routledge, 2006), pp. 301-317 and especially his figures 3 and 4 for a similar conceptualization of industrial crises.

followed the 26 March 2010 sinking of the ROKS Cheonan (PC-772); or the7 September 2010 collusion of the Chinese trawler Minjinyu 5179 with Japanese Coast Guard patrol boats Yonakuni and Mizuki near Senkaku Islands; and more recently, the 7 November 2011 Japanese Coast Guard detention of a Chinese fishing vessel within Japanese waters, was difficult. Today we continue to argue about the alternative explanations and narratives of what happened and the appropriateness of the responses to terminate these crises. Similar challenges confront our attempts to understand the political crises which erupted on 1 April 2001 over Chinese interception of a US EP-3 surveillance plane 110 km from Hainan Island, and 23 March 2001 Chinese frigate Jianheu blocking of the US Navy hydrographic survey vessel USNS Bowditch collecting data within China's exclusive economic zone in the South China Sea. Such Incidents at Sea escalating into political crises are likely to continue as the South China Sea and the East China Sea become increasingly contested.[34] The issue for intelligence is what is their role in these crises over such Incidents at sea?

The unintended consequences of an Incident-at-Sea between competing Naval vessels or detention of fishing vessels are "wild cards" that are unpredictable and indicative of a complex and chaotic world. The instinctive reaction of the skipper to being pursued by a Coast Guard vessel cannot be anticipated and may trigger a series of events which culminates in a diplomatic crisis which was totally unpredictable. The policy maker today will not have the time which Kennedy and his advisers had in 1962 to reflect on their proposed responses to Khrushchev.

Information technology today has created a new matrix of real-time information flows enabling an unprecedented number of not only participants in a crises, but also observers to witness what is happening.[35] The response time for officials and policy makers to respond to the detention of their fishing vessels or collusion of their Naval

[34] An issue argued for by Kwa Chong Guan, "Cooperation and confidence building: a Southeast Asian perspective." In S Bateman and J Ho., eds., *Southeast Asia and the rise of Chinese and Indian naval power; Between rising naval powers* (London/New York: Routledge, 2010), pp. 227-231.

[35] This challenge of decreasing response time to an increasing volume of real-time information confronts not only the intelligence analyst and their policy makers, but also traditional media editors as BBC anchor commentator Nik Gowing explains in *'Skyful of Lies' and Black Swans; The new tyranny of shifting information power in crises*, RISJ Challenges (Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism/ University of Oxford, 2009)

vessels is contracted to single-digit hours as the unfolding crises is captured and broadcast by participants on their mobile applications. The crisis maybe compounded by dormant or new stakeholders in the policy process emerging to assert a claim to the crisis for their own agendas. Non-governmental and other political movements or groups may try to push policy makers towards their special interest. The recent incidents-at-sea in the South China Sea involved not only Naval vessels of the conflicting parties, but also their Coast Guards and other maritime agencies with rather different agendas for how to deal with the crisis. All this complicates making sense of the crisis. Strategic intelligence will probably be unable to help the policy maker link cause and effect in such crises because they are impossible to determine in the turbulence of the crisis. This linking of cause and effect maybe apparent only in hindsight, after the crisis and as such makes it difficult, if not impossible, for the policy maker to decide how to intervene in the unfolding course of events to alter the effect.[36]

Donald Rumsfeld's now infamous 2 February 2002 statement on the absence of evidence linking Saddam Hussein with the supply of weapons of mass destruction to terrorist groups, that " there are known knowns; there are things we know we know. We also know there are known unknowns; that is to say we know there are some things we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns — the ones we don't know we don't know" sums up the trauma faced by the policy maker in a crisis, when he is dragged out of working on issues which he aware of, what he knows and does not know, into a world of "unknown-unknowns."

REVISING THE ROLE OF INTELLIGENCE IN INTERNATIONAL CRISIS MANAGEMENT

Dave Snowdon, consultant and researcher in the field of knowledge management explains that in contrast to the realm of known-knowns where the leader has the time to collect and categorise data to make sense of the situation and then respond accordingly, in the world of unknown-unknown the "leader's immediate job is not to discover patterns but to stanch the bleeding. A leader must first *act* to establish order,

[36] Pal Cilliers, "Making sense of a complex world." In Mika Aaltonen, ed., *The third lense; Multi-ontology sense-making and strategic decision making* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007)

then sense where stability is present and from where it is absent, and then respond by working to transform the situation from chaos to complexity, where the identification of emerging patterns can both help prevent future crises and discern new opportunities."[37]

Has intelligence a role to support the policy maker *act* to seize control of events and impose some order at the onset of a crisis? Studies of how corporate chiefs react to crises shows that they act to bring events and structures into existence which they hope will contain, if not terminate the crisis. Diplomatic crisis is an ascending stairway to war on which there is at every step opportunities to de-escalate and return to normal, or achieve a standoff with no resolution of the crisis or climb up the next step of the crisis (Fig.). This decision of whether to escalate or de-escalate the crisis or go for a stand-off is shaped by a range of cognitive biases attempting to instinctively make sense of the chaos of a crisis.[38] Our minds, as Daniel Kahneman has demonstrated, are wired to think fast and slow.[39] Fast thinking enables us to balance on a bicycle without falling, multiply 2x2 or orient to the source of a sudden sound and detect hostility in a voice. It is this system of fast thinking that usually drives our reactions to the world around us, and in this case, respond to a crisis. The slower, more deliberative and logical system of our mind is only activated when fast thinking confronts a problem it has no immediate response to, like multiplying 17x24. The role of intelligence must be to support the slow thinking reflective system of the policy maker's mind. Arguably, intelligence support for the fast thinking system of the policy maker's mind has been its nemesis when it provides the policy maker desired evidence, for example of the presence of WMD in Iraq.

Intelligence should then feed the slow thinking system of the policy-maker's mind to break the instinctive fast thinking system's move to action because that action will

[37] David J Snowden & Mary E Boone, "A leader's framework for decision making," *Harvard Business Review* (November 2007), pg.

[38] K. E. Weick, "Enacted sensemaking in crisis situations," *Journal of Management Studies* 25/iv (1988), 305-17 and *Sensemaking in organizations* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995)

[39] Daniel Kahneman, *Thinking, fast and slow* London: Penguin/Allen Lane, 2011) sums up his work with his late colleague Amos Tversjy on decision-making and uncertainty, for which he received the Nobel Prize in economics in 2002.

feed into the crisis and may escalate it.[40] Decision making in a crisis is not a static single choice. Rather, it is a dynamic decision problem requiring the policy maker to make sequential risky choices in a rapidly evolving and complex environment. The policy maker has to make sense of the feedback and consequences of his choice and decide how to respond to the next round of the crisis. Further, the policy maker can try to anticipate, but cannot control how a decision he makes now will impact on his options later in the unfolding crisis. The sequential risky choices made by adversaries in a crisis create an uncertain and unpredictable environment not under their control. The challenge for intelligence is to advise policy makers on the adversary's capacity for risk, sensitize the policy maker to the possible consequences of his risky choices and open up his mindset to divergent outcomes of the crisis.

There is not one predictable outcome of a crisis. Rather there are multiple possible outcomes as competing parties in the crisis manoeuver and act out their scenarios to contain (or prolong, if not escalate) the crisis. Dave Snowden has pointed out that in a complex and chaotic world there is not one future we are working towards. Rather, there are multiple futures we could work towards which we need to probe, make sense of and then respond to. The start point of policy is not necessarily the past leading into the known present and then work towards the knowable future. Rather the more useful start point may be the multiple futures which a crisis could lead to and probe for whether there are patterns among them which can then be worked back to our present. Understanding China's position on its claims to the South China Sea will involve identifying the various Chinese agencies who have emerged or are emerging as interested parties claiming a stake in the issue and trying to make sense of their different claims and core interests in the South China Sea.[41] Making sense of the strategic ambivalence and ambiguity of the ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) on their positions and claims of some to the South China Sea is even more complex. Strategic intelligence has to revise its modus

[40] Perhaps like the meteorologist Edward Lorenz's butterfly flapping its wings in China could eventually lead to a tornado in the US. See J Gleick, *Chaos* (London: Sphere, 1987) on the "butterfly effect"

[41] See the International Crisis Group, *Asia Report no. 223, 23 April 2012,* "Stirring up the South China Sea (I)" on trying to make sense of Chinese policies and positions on the South China Sea. The issue maybe more complex than poor or lack of coordination between China's different state agencies claiming an interest in the South China Sea, as this report suggests, but a more complex issue of each of these agencies having a different justification and narrative for their stake in the South China Sea.

operandi of simplifying and reducing the "number of dots" it has to connect to form a pattern to increasing the number of dots and the possible patterns they could form.

Traditional data processing, as Max Boisot and Bill McKelvey[42] have argued is hierarchic, in which the mountains of data is processed upwards through the layers of a pyramid of "experts" into a single agreed assessment. In the intelligence world this is the *Intelligence Estimate*, SNIE 85-3-62 issued by the CIA assessing it to be unlikely the Soviets would deploy missiles on Cuba. But in the emergent complexity leading to a chaos world of crisis management, this pyramid has to be inverted in a search for multiple and divergent patterns. Predictive warning may then be more a process of socializing the policy maker into understanding and accepting that there are multiple futures, the "dots" of which need to be connected into various patterns that could form probable futures or scenarios which the analyst and policy maker then needs to keep in view as they work out of their present into their preferred future.

Connecting these multiple futures will be dependent upon the intelligence analyst's awareness and empathy for the different narratives that justifies the initiation and continuation or termination of a crisis. For example, Singapore's reaction to any crisis it has or may be involved in is the narrative of its survival against the odds to economic take-off to global city status and how any financial or political crisis challenges its aspirations to global city status. China's narrative underpinning its response to the various crises it is involved in the South and East China Seas appears to be the narrative of China's rise after a century of humiliation[43] and the continuation of a Cold War strategy of containment enacted in a series of treaties at San Francisco at the end of World War II. For ASEAN, their narrative of the conflicting claims to the islands, reefs and waters of the South China Sea is about managing conflict in the region the "ASEAN Way" and the 40-year successful track record of what some ASEAN's critics have described as equivocation. The challenge for the intelligence analyst is to discern how these foundation narratives are being appropriated, adapted and asserted by different parties in an emerging crisis for different agendas.

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[42] Max Boisot and Bill McKelvey, "Speeding up strategic foresight in a dangerous and complex world: a complexity approach," in Gabriele G S suder, ed., *Corporate strategies under international terrorism adversity* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2006).

[43] See Julia Lovell, *The Opium War; Drugs, dreams and the making of China*(London: Picador, 2011) for a historiographic analysis of the myths of the Opium Wars and its legacy in shaping China's relations with the West .

The conventional reductive analysis of inductive pattern recognition to predict a warning of a crisis will have to change to a more open warning system that probes and attempts to make sense of possible multiple crises and together with the policy maker, judge and assesses which are the more probable crises scenarios they should be responding to. Such a change amounts to a paradigm shift in intelligence practice from attempting to predict the outcome of a crisis to only supporting the policy maker respond to a crisis.

CONCLUSION

This essay has argued for a paradigm shift in our understanding of international crises[44] and the role of strategic intelligence in the termination of these crises on three grounds. The first is the dismal record of intelligence in providing their policy makers with sufficient warning time of the onset of a crisis. This essay has reviewed the variety of explanations and justifications for the failure of intelligence to warn of a crisis which escalates into a surprise attack.

Second, and more problematic, is that intelligence is expected to provide early warning of a crisis within a policy framework that assumes an orderly, controllable and predictable world populated by Rational Actors working to maximize their gains. It is a view of human society and its nature embedded in an Enlightenment vision of the world of men and theorized in the work of at least two if not three generations of 20th century social and behavioural scientists who believed that the understanding of human society can be modelled after the physical and natural sciences. But this view of our physical and natural world as an orderly and predictable reality verifiable by scientific investigations and codified in theories was undermined by new experiments and theorizing about our physical world from the beginning of the 20th century. In Thomas Khun's felicitous phrase, it was a paradigm shift from the Newtonian view of the physical world to a more uncertain, complex and chaotic world of sub-atomic particles of quantum physics. The implications of this shift from the orderly, predictable and deterministic world of Newtonian physics to the uncertainties and

[44] See Dawn R Gilpin and Priscilla J Murphy, *Crisis Management in a complex world* (Oxford: University Press, 2008) for a similar call for a paradigm shift in corporate world approach to crisis management

relativity of the world of quantum physics is reaching the social and behavioral sciences today. Behavioural economics [45] challenges the rationality of *homo economicus* and the Rational Actor assumed in political science. The conundrum for intelligence is how to convince themselves and their policy-makers that the rationality they assume they bring to managing a crisis may be misleading them into believing that they have more control over the course of events than is often the case in the uncertainty and unpredictability of a crisis.

Third is how post-Cold War Globalization is drawing us closer and making us more interdependent in a tightly networked and complex world.[46] Information technology is dragging us from our current www.2 world to a new www.3 world of more complex flows of information and knowledge that is changing our world and how we relate to each other, to governments and to markets. Unforeseen events, this essay has argued, can reverberate through our tightly networked world with catastrophic consequences, escalating minor events or issues into a crisis. An overload of fragmentary and contradictory information enabled by exponential development of information technology contributes to the confusion of the crisis, challenging the power and effectiveness of governments to be more transparent, responsive and accountable for its actions. A new approach to intelligence support for policy makers caught in a crisis is needed.

[45] See for example, the collection of essays in Erwann Michel-Kerjan and Paul Slovic, eds., *The irrational economist; Making decisions in a dangerous world* (New York: Public Affairs/PerseusBooks, 2010) and for how behavioural economics is shaping public policy making in Singapore, see Donald Low, ed., *Behavioural economics and policy design; Examples from Singapore* (Singapore: World scientific/Civil Service College, 2012.

[46] Well analysed by Manuel Castells in his now classic *The rise of network society*. This is the first of a three volume study *The Information Age; Economy, society and culture* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996).

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