Introduction

Peter Berkowitz

ONCE THE PROVINCE of policy wonks of the most esoteric variety, intelligence reform since the surprise attacks of 9/11 has galvanized public attention. The failure to discover weapons of mass destruction in Iraq two years later intensified the concern. To determine what went wrong and how to improve American intelligence, two blue-ribbon commissions were formed. In November 2002, Congress and the president created the National Commission on Terrorist Attacks upon the United States. Published in July 2004, *The 9/11 Commission Report* was greeted with critical acclaim and, improbably, became a national best-seller. The bulk of the report explored the rise of Islamic extremism and the new threat posed to American national security by the deadly forms of terrorism al Qaeda and its ilk had developed. In conclusion, the report made a series of proposals for restructuring the U.S. intelligence services. Scarcely four months later, after a bitterly fought presidential election and with little examination of the merits of the 9/11 Commis-

sion's proposals, Congress passed, and President George W. Bush signed into law on December 17, 2004, the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, which largely enacted the commission's recommendations.

Meanwhile, in February 2004, while the 9/11 Commission was in the midst of its work, the president created the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction. The WMD Commission, which presented its report to the public on March 31, 2005, concluded that U.S. intelligence about Iraqi WMD was "dead wrong"; current U.S. intelligence about the nuclear capabilities of other countries is poor; the nation's intelligence collection and analysis rely on outmoded assumptions that rigidified during the Cold War and that thwart proper analysis of today's adversaries; and the intelligence community suffers from a sclerotic bureaucratic structure that stifles creative thinking and independent judgment. In short, debate about the future of American intelligence—including questions about the effectiveness of the recent restructuring itself—has only just begun.

The essays gathered in this volume refine the debate. They deepen understanding of the new national security threats presented by terrorism, by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and by the spread of Islamic extremism. They bring into focus the variety of obstacles—intellectual, governmental, bureaucratic, military, and technological—to making U.S. intelligence more capable of gathering effectively, interpreting accurately, and conveying concisely to policy makers knowledge about our new adversaries. They also put forward recommendations for effective reform. Distinguished and diverse, the contributors approach the problem from a variety of disciplinary perspectives. Yet whether from the perspective of the political scientist, policy analyst, lawyer, or journalist, they converge in arguing that the task of reforming U.S. intelligence is urgent, the challenges are formidable, and the stakes are high.

Richard Shultz opens the volume by exploring the rise and nature of nonstate armed groups and the distinctive features of the national security threat they pose. Until September 11, the United States, in accordance with the conventional wisdom, viewed other states as the major threat to national security. However, the massive terrorist assault on American soil threw into sharp relief the capacity of nonstate armed groups to strike high-value strategic targets through asymmetric means not only in the United States but across the globe. Indeed, armed groups have emerged as major players capable of undermining states and provoking regional instability in ways that directly affect America's vital national security interests.

The international context in which armed groups have emerged, stresses Shultz, is characterized by a crucial paradox. Even as globalization has promoted integration through the creation of international markets, the development of regional and transnational cooperation, and the spread of liberal and democratic norms, it has also contributed to the alarming rise of failed states, which in turn has produced serious fragmentation in the international order and has left lawless and ungoverned areas where armed groups can find safe haven. Although they differ in crucial respects, the power of all these nonstate actors has grown dramatically since World War II, and all have taken advantage of the information-age technology and network-based approaches to organization encouraged by globalization. By distinguishing the variety of armed groups—insurgents, terrorists, militias, and criminal organizations—Shultz seeks to bring into focus the peculiar threat they represent, as well as the need for the intelligence community to refashion intellectual tools that were designed to combat the specific threats posed by nation-states.

Gary Schmitt argues that one of the main reasons the U.S. intelligence community failed to come to grips with "the novelty and the gravity of the threat posed by" one particular armed group, that of

bin Laden, was their deeply entrenched assumptions and ideas about how to collect and analyze intelligence. The dominant view, dating back to the late 1940s and the creation of the CIA, is that intelligence differs from policy making and should be kept strictly separate from it because it involves applying the methods of value-neutral social science. In Schmitt's view, the demand for value neutrality is overdrawn and has bad consequences. Because hard facts are hard to come by and must always be given context by larger views of morals, politics, and foreign affairs, intelligence analysis can never, without becoming trivial or irrelevant, be separated entirely from debatable opinions, values, and policy judgments. Moreover, because intelligence is a craft and not a precise science, the United States will never be able to avoid surprise attacks altogether. The goal should be to make policy makers more deliberative.

The intelligence community should concentrate on placing new information in larger contexts and on alerting policy makers to the array of potential dangers and potential opportunities. Accordingly, Schmitt recommends lowering the "sacred curtain" between intelligence analysis and policy making by employing those trained in intelligence gathering and analysis to serve as liaisons to the policy-making world. In addition, to promote creative and critical thinking, he recommends moving from a consensus-driven National Intelligence Estimate to the production of multiple competing reports that draw on analysts from both the intelligence and the policy-making community. Schmitt worries that, unfortunately, the Intelligence Reform Act may do little to change the way analysts think about intelligence and communicate with policy makers. Indeed, he argues that the act's further centralization of intelligence in a single director and center may, if not managed carefully, actually result in the president receiving a less "accurate picture of not only what we do know but also what we don't."

Gordon Lederman shifts the focus from ideas to institutions. He

presents the case for the 9/11 Commission's major recommendations—the creation of a director of National Intelligence (DNI) to oversee the array of intelligence operations in the United States and the establishment of a National Counterterrorism Center to integrate intelligence on and conduct operational planning against terror—and for the Intelligence Reform Act that implemented these recommendations. The old system, brought into existence by the National Act of 1947, lacked a strong central management structure. In particular, it was led by the director of Central Intelligence (DCI), who served as head of the CIA as well as head of all of the many other intelligence operations in the country. This stretched the DCI and exposed him to an ineliminable conflict of interest. Moreover, the DCI lacked such routine, yet critical, executive powers as control over funding and hiring of senior managers. In contrast, the new director of National Intelligence established by the Intelligence Reform Act does not run the CIA and is endowed with a fuller range of executive power.

Beyond organizational structure, the old system was in need of reform because it was designed with the Soviet threat in mind. The Soviets could be deterred by America's nuclear capabilities, and the conventional strikes that the Soviet Union could mount, which required slow and obvious mobilizations, would give American intelligence plenty of time to react. However, suicidal terrorists, using advanced communications technology, operating around the globe, and bent on accomplishing mass destruction, present different challenges that demand greater swiftness and efficiency. The aim of the newly created National Counterterrorism Center, Lederman emphasizes, is to serve as the focal point for intelligence analysis and to better coordinate intelligence acquisition, military planning, behind-the-scenes diplomacy, public diplomacy and foreign aid, law enforcement operations, and border security.

Reuel Marc Gerecht proceeds from the hard-hitting assertion that not only has America's Clandestine Service—responsible for

recruiting foreign agents and penetrating the enemies' organizations—not performed well against Islamic extremism, but it has actually consistently performed poorly since the onset of the Cold War. The principal problem is the inability of intelligence agents to meet Islamic terrorists, or those who might associate, or even remotely know those who might associate, with Islamic terrorists. So what can be done to reconstruct the CIA so that it can better target Muslim extremists? According to Gerecht, the problem runs deep: Until the internal culture and conventional mind-set at the CIA is cured, the Clandestine Service will remain ineffective in the fight against bin Laden. The first step is to repudiate "the recruitment myth." Gerecht contends that the supposed Cold War golden era—in which "inside" officers, ensconced at U.S. embassies in the guise of staff diplomats, found new recruits through suave interaction at formal cocktail parties—was largely a fantasy. In fact, case officers have always tended to be risk averse, careerist, and subject to counterproductive incentives emanating from headquarters at Langley. At this point, argues Gerecht, simple reforms won't work. Instead, a major overhaul is needed.

To make the Clandestine Service more operationally effective, Gerecht advises, agents abroad should be sharply reduced. He would reconstruct the Clandestine Services around the nonofficial cover officer (NOC), who works well beyond the walls of embassies and the sealed world of public diplomacy. A small cadre of NOCs in critical foreign hot spots would have many advantages where it counts: in setting up Muslim front organizations, in getting close to prospective Muslim agents, and in joining radical groups.

Kevin O'Connell goes beyond the specific challenges dealt with in *The 9/11 Commission Report* and addressed by the Intelligence Reform Act to consider how American intelligence can best take advantage of extraordinary new developments in science and technology. While the search for better technology is as old as war, we have entered, thanks to the information revolution, "a new intelli-

gence age" or "an era of transparency." The abundance of new information and techniques of communication does not mean, however, that the whereabouts and intentions of the enemy are now more clear. E-mail, the Internet, and global positioning systems are available to terrorists as well as to us. Certainly much can be done to improve the management of technical intelligence resources, especially in the area of intelligence collection, but the difficulties must be faced forthrightly. The main difficulty, according to O'Connell, is that even as technology makes possible the collection of more and richer data, it also requires greater education and training for it to be interpreted effectively.

Given the high cost and complexity of the technical systems involved, the director of National Intelligence will have his work cut out for him. It will be necessary to create small teams that will focus on the new technologies, to build flexibility into the budget, to recruit highly qualified people, and to encourage risk-taking, experimentation, and innovation within the intelligence community's massive bureaucracies. In addition, intelligence agencies will have to become more focused on assessment of their priorities in the collection of data, more rigorous in their management of the flow of data, more supple in their dealing with U.S. industry, and more sophisticated in their understanding of trade-offs between resources devoted to collecting data and resources devoted to analyzing it. Precisely because a consensus has emerged that U.S. intelligence services are ripe for reform, now is the moment, O'Connell stresses, to incorporate science and technology into the reform agenda.

America faces new kinds of adversaries, armed with smarter and more sinister weapons, who are capable, while dispersed around the globe, of communicating and coordinating actions with unprecedented ease. As the contributors to this volume demonstrate, this changing world requires changes in how the United States collects and analyzes intelligence and translates it into policy.

In particular, in an age of Muslim extremism and global terrorist networks, the intelligence community must revise the assumptions that underlie, and the ideas that inform, intelligence work; must reform the management style and organizational structure of the intelligence services; and must establish more effective procedures for taking advantage of the dizzying pace of technological advance. Improving the quality of the public debate about the intelligence community is a small but essential step.