

Bergin, Anthony and Hall, Robert, eds. Intelligence and Australian National Security-, Canberra: Australian Defence Studies Centre, 1994.

A. D. McLennan

Volume 15, numéro 2, fall 1995

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/jcs15_02br11

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

The University of New Brunswick

ISSN

1198-8614 (imprimé)

1715-5673 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

McLennan, A. D. (1995). Compte rendu de [Bergin, Anthony and Hall, Robert, eds. Intelligence and Australian National Security-, Canberra: Australian Defence Studies Centre, 1994.] *Journal of Conflict Studies*, 15(2), 178–180.

Bergin, Anthony and Hall, Robert, eds. *Intelligence and Australian National Security*-, Canberra: Australian Defence Studies Centre, 1994.

The book comprises the proceedings of a conference held at Canberra in November 1993. According to the blurb it is a "landmark publication ... the first to analyse Australia's intelligence requirements and options in the post-Cold War era." Indeed some of the pieces sparkle; many are earnest. Unlikely facts emerge: Bank of China officials are suspected of misappropriating 28 billion dollars; the Abu Nidal Organization was among the creditors of the fraudulent Bank of Credit and Commerce International.

Deficiencies, however, include the fact that the conference defined its aim too broadly. Every agency from the Customs service and Coastwatch up claim a national intelligence or security role, but the national intelligence authority, the Office of National Assessment (ONA), did not attend and neither did the collectors. So bids emerge, but no unity of theme or agreement as to the proper character and function of intelligence. This lack of focus contrasts with that of the 1994 CASIS (Canadian Association for Security and Intelligence Studies) conference on national intelligence assessment.

More egregious still is special pleading: academics wanting access to intelligence secrets, with presumed wisdom being their credentials; others were frankly keen to gain access to the public trough. Deep self-interest informed a plea for "greater openness," cast in terms of high principle, by a journalist whose specialty is low intelligence leaks.

Because the papers vary so much in subject matter and quality, selective reading according to taste and interest is recommended. That said, the must read for its perspicacity and analytical grip is John Ferris' global perspective on intelligence after the Cold War. Here this reviewer has only two points of disagreement to register. The first is that Ferris' judgment that "the shape of intelligence services is always dictated by the policies and perceptions of their masters" understates the force of bureaucratic inertia. Second, he has buried the KGB prematurely. These points aside, Ferris' global view from Calgary contrasts with the provincial character of many, though not all the Australian contributions.

Gary Waters provides a gripping read on the Gulf War, a distant event in which Australia had large interests, although its forces played a small part. His essay is a reminder that preventing wars, and failing that, winning them, remains the most potent function of intelligence. And Brendon Hammer demonstrates, with impressive economy and clarity, intelligence's future in underpinning non-proliferation regimes.

Peter Polomka takes the prize for novel judgments, advocating pre-emptive capitulation by Australia and its neighbours in response to China's growing military power. And he revisits the argument that Norman Angell canvassed ca. 1913 that economic interdependence will rule out war between the great powers, thus failing to note how nuclear weapons have kept the peace.

Also novel is Alan Wrigley's dismissal of the utility of intelligence for defence. This is surprising, given that he is a former senior Defence official, designer of a notable military aircraft and sometime Director-General of ASIO, Australia's security service. Paul Dibb sets him right on the importance of superior intelligence collection capability to Australia's defence posture. Wrigley presents ONA as an American mouthpiece in national intelligence debates during the 1980s about the cogency of the Soviet threat to Australia's security, as if ONA were incapable of itself judging the evidence. Whether he does so from ignorance or spleen is hard to say.

Another contributor's judgment that US intelligence analysis on the Soviet Union failed — as if the USSR would have crashed without immense external pressure — also exemplifies the wrongheaded thinking that remoteness breeds. Both views downplay the importance of the Soviet threat to Australia's security. This position is strangely at odds with the conference's assumption that the end of the Cold War transformed international security, and with the intensity of KGB interest in ASIO at which Oleg Kalugin's published remarks hint.

As a consumer, Kevin Rogers writes succinctly about the utility of intelligence support for counter-terrorism. But his concept of shared responsibility for outcomes between producers and consumers would blur dangerously the critical divide between intelligence and policy. Robin Miller writes thoughtfully about

the parliamentary oversight of intelligence, but may underestimate the risks in Australia of thereby politicizing intelligence.

Paul Barratt explains persuasively how commercial intelligence could help business. However, he doesn't investigate the difficulties of exploiting for private sector gain intelligence collected for national security purposes. Greg Austin's well intended suggestion that the Inspector General of Intelligence and Security monitor analytic performance in economic intelligence has a totalitarian character.

Hugh Smith's discussion of the United Nation's intelligence needs for peace keeping/enforcement operations underlines the fact that the UN is not a government driven by national purposes. Australia's advocacy of maritime confidence-building measures in the Western Pacific gives too much weight to misunderstanding as the cause of conflict as opposed to clashes of interest. Sam Bateman acknowledges that intelligence is unlikely to prove rewarding in this area.

In conclusion, Major General Hartley points out that CNN hasn't made intelligence redundant; and that academics aren't bound to make good intelligence analysts — experience is mixed. But his advocacy of quality management and client orientation is nothing more than managerialist jargon for the intelligence tradition of meeting customer requirements.

A.D. McLennan

Canberra