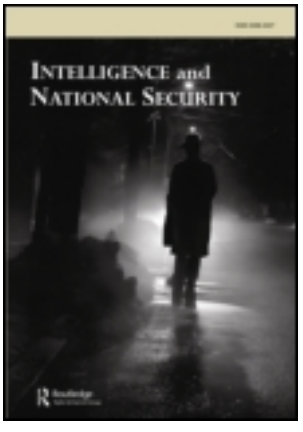

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Looking for Intel? … or Looking for Answers? Reforming Military Intelligence for a Counterinsurgency Environment

LEO BLANKEN* AND JUSTIN OVERBAUGH

ABSTRACT We analyze the recent Flynn Report and assess its implications for the future of military intelligence in Afghanistan. In particular, we argue that the report seeks to expand the substantive tasks of the military intelligence practitioner, while collapsing non-trivial aspects of existing organizational hierarchies. We argue that implementation of the Flynn Report's proposals would match poorly with the traditional nature of military intelligence and the realities of human resources constraints in the military. Further, the resulting scale of unfiltered data such a system would produce might serve to overwhelm rather than assist decision-makers. Finally, we conclude that the problems expressed in the Flynn Report should not be traced to the military intelligence apparatus per se, but rather to the inability of US political leadership to map out a clear vision for current operations – both in Afghanistan, and in the counterinsurgency environment in general.

Introduction

Current military operations in Afghanistan have sorely tried the capabilities of the United States' military in many respects. The use of the Cold War legacy force to execute policy in an increasingly demanding counterinsurgent conflict has highlighted the problem of applying a tool crafted for one set of tasks to others. One aspect of operational support has emerged as notably important, as well as notably problematic in this conflict: intelligence. In 1995, Director of Central Intelligence John Deutsch defined the goal of US military intelligence as giving 'commanders real-time … comprehensive, continuous surveillance and information about the battlespace in which they operate … Dominant battlefield awareness, if achieved, will … provide you … with an unprecedented combat advantage'.[1] Reports from

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[1]Quoted in Mark M. Lowenthal, *Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy*, 4th ed. (Washington, DC: CQ Press 2009) p.273.

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Afghanistan show that International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) field commanders do not enjoy this type of dominant awareness; Major General Michael Flynn (while serving as Deputy Chief of Staff, Intelligence for ISAF) argues, that 'eight years into the war … the US intelligence community is only marginally relevant … [and is] unable to answer fundamental questions about the environment'.[2]

In response to this problem, Flynn and some colleagues have produced a report that advocates sweeping changes in the function and organization of military intelligence with the hope of correcting the situation. The authors consider the report's findings to be so conclusive that '[i]ts contents should be considered as directive by the senior author, who is the top intelligence officer in Afghanistan'.[3] Because of the authority and conviction of the Flynn Report, we restrict our discussion directly to the proposed reforms contained therein, though it is simply a representative example of a much larger body of thinking within the current intelligence debate. Though we agree with many aspects of the Flynn Report as thoughtful critiques of current military policy, we differ considerably with the implications and policy recommendations the report's authors draw. These reservations fall along two dimensions. The first has to do with the duties which are to be tasked to the military intelligence practitioners. The second has to do with the structural organization of military intelligence. In particular, the Flynn Report argues for an expansion of substantive duties, as well as the collapsing, to some degree, of the chain of command within the military–political structure. This would not only mutate the traditional nature of military intelligence, but would also risk an undifferentiated deluge of data flowing upwards to higher-level decision-makers.

We, rather, identify American political leadership as the key source of the pathologies identified by Flynn. Clausewitz argues that war is a continuation of politics by other means. We can borrow terminology from the field of economics to interpret Clausewitz's insight; the political leadership is a *principal* that tasks a bureaucratic *agent* (in this case, the military) to perform specified tasks.[4] Flynn and his co-authors blame the agent (military intelligence), while we shift the bulk of the blame to the principal (the political leadership). We argue that it is the political leadership's failure to clearly identify goals in the conflict, as well as concrete operational benchmarks, which has left the military intelligence apparatus in the lurch. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates recently tried to explain the mission:

> [It is] really quite clear. We are in Afghanistan because we were attacked from Afghanistan, not because we want to try and build a

[2]Michael T. Flynn, Matt Pottinger and Paul D. Batchelor, *Fixing Intel: A Blueprint for Making Intelligence Relevant in Afghanistan* (Washington, DC: Center for New American Security 2010) p.7.

[3]Flynn, Pottinger and Batchelor, *Fixing Intel*, pp.9–10.

[4]See Jean Jacques Laffont and David Martimont, *The Theory of Incentives: The Principal–Agent Model* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2001).

> better society in Afghanistan. But doing things to improve governance, to improve development in Afghanistan, to the degree that it contributes to our security mission and to the effectiveness of the Afghan the government in the security area, that's what we're going to do.[5]

The initial goals of destroying Al Qaida training camps and deposing the Taliban regime were achieved within months of September 11. Into what, then, has the mission evolved? Gates states unequivocally that we are not 'build[ing] a better society', but that we *will* engage in producing good governance and economic development, but only to the degree to which it contributes to our security mission. The logic of linking such scatter-shot nation building efforts – physical infrastructure, local governance, a centralized state, democratic values, and economic growth – to overall success in a counterinsurgency campaign has not been worked through.[6] Further, this bit of confusion at the top increases considerably as political goals are translated into strategy, operations, and tactical missions for conventional military units on the ground. This results in serious complication for intelligence practitioners, as they use limited resources to account for the disparate and complex aspects of this multidimensional environment.

The article proceeds as follows. First, we briefly summarize the Flynn Report and its recommendations. Second, we borrow some concepts from the organization theory literature to structure our discussion. In particular, we argue that Flynn's proposals would push military intelligence into an 'adhocracy' form of organization rather than a 'machine bureaucracy' (a form which it has traditionally assumed, and to which it is better suited). We then contrast the traditional nature and organization of military intelligence to the proposed reforms of the Flynn Report. In terms of substance, we identify the proposed Flynn model as an *inductive approach* to military intelligence for which, we argue, current human resources available to the military are poorly suited. We rather identify a *deductive process* of military intelligence that is a better fit with current resources – yet that requires strong management and clear strategic leadership to be effective. We then contrast two alternative sets of policy in light of the problems the Flynn Report identifies. First we show that following Flynn's recommendations would seriously change the nature of selection, training, and education of military intelligence personnel – a Herculean task within the realities of the current military bureaucracy. We contrast that with a second path as an

[5]Quoted in Eugene Robinson, 'The No-Win War', *Washington Post*, 3 August 2010.

[6]On using a conventional military forces for conducting counterinsurgency, see Hy S. Rothstein, *Afghanistan and the Troubled Future of Unconventional Warfare* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press 2006). For an empirical test of the multiple and unintended impact of development efforts, such as building roads, see Yuri M. Zhukov, 'Roads and the Diffusion of Insurgent Violence', paper presented at the American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, Washington, DC, 2010.

alternative to the Flynn recommendations. This would entail the political leadership providing the military intelligence practitioners with an appropriate model of the conflict, or 'threat template' (political goals, strategic vision, operational benchmarks) from which they can proceed with their traditional function. Pursuing this second path, however, would require greater effort by the leadership. This would include sorting out the ultimate goals and how we plan to achieve them, tasks which have hitherto been neglected. Finally, we conclude with broader implications of this discussion of intelligence to the larger problem of conducting counterinsurgency.

The Flynn Report

The authors of the Flynn Report propose intelligence reforms in Afghanistan in response to complaints by senior military and civilian leaders concerning the quality of intelligence support. Flynn and his colleagues grapple with how intelligence should support decision-making in a complex and unstable counterinsurgent campaign, and conclude by claiming that the intelligence apparatus, in its current form, is failing to contribute effectively to the overall strategy in Afghanistan.[7] The impetus for the report is a statement by General Stanley McChrystal, then the ISAF Commander, that 'senior leaders – the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, the Secretary of Defense, Congress, the President of the United States – aren't getting the right information to make decisions with'.[8]

Why is this happening? According to Flynn and his colleagues, the problem is the standard practice of focusing exclusively on information about the enemy at the expense of developing the other aspects of the operational environment that are critical in executing an effective counterinsurgent strategy. Additionally, they identify two 'inescapable truths'. The first being that intelligence products from Brigade and Regional Commands are largely superfluous. The second truth is that relying exclusively on defeating the insurgency through lethal means is insufficient.[9] While the report highlights intelligence success achieved by Battalions in the field, it also demonstrates that intelligence processes at the Brigade level and higher fail to adequately describe the operational environment. As a solution, the report calls for the establishment of Stability Operation Information Centers (SOICs) aligned with the Regional Commands to serve as a clearinghouse of information and a hub for analysts and 'information brokers'.[10] The purpose of these SOICs is not to collect information about the enemy; rather, their primary focus is in-depth and detail rich reporting on the operational environment at the district level. By bypassing the traditional military intelligence reporting channels, focusing solely on non-kinetic information requirements, and staffing them with the best analysts available, these SOICs

[7]Flynn, Pottinger and Batchelor, *Fixing Intel*, p.7.
[8]Ibid., p.4.
[9]Ibid., p.8.
[10]Ibid., p.19.

will supposedly be able to finally provide the answers that senior military and civilian leaders require.

Though we limit our detailed discussion to the Flynn Report, it is useful to place this discussion within the broader context of recent trends in national level intelligence reforms since September 11. The bulk of the proposed reforms have been aimed at eliminating rigid structures within the national intelligence community and allowing for information to be 'set loose from the outdated need-to-know standard for sharing that constricted its flow during the Cold War'.[11] In its most extreme form, this position advocates 'a completely new process in which the President ... is exposed to the complete range of all human knowledge in all languages ... as needed. [This model] is equally applicable for every policymaker in the DoD ... all the way to every Special Forces A Team commander or company commander in the field'.[12] Taken in this context, the Flynn Report is a natural extension of such logic to the intelligence tasks within the setting of a counterinsurgency campaign. We do not think, however, that this is the most fruitful direction for military intelligence to proceed due to the constraints of human assets and the nature of military organizations. We now develop this argument further by introducing some concepts from organization theory.

A General Model of Organizations and their Operating Environments

The argument put forward by the Flynn Report seeks to reorient military intelligence, but in a deeper – and less recognized sense – seeks to reorient the very nature of intelligence units and their place within the politico-military structure as a whole. Our argument is that the transformation of military intelligence units that is required by the proposed Flynn reforms is a misfit with the current human resource realities of such units. We now present a model of organization types and their operating environments – contrasting where military intelligence has historically been located, to where the Flynn proposals would require it to exist. In sum, we argue that the Flynn Report requires moving the military intelligence apparatus to an 'adhocracy' structure, which we argue is inappropriate. It demands too much of the intelligence operators to produce intelligence and asks too much of the cognitive capacity of decision-makers to consume such a volume of data. We, rather, argue that military intelligence has traditionally been closer to the 'machine bureaucracy' quadrant and, with proper direction from political leadership, should remain so.

Figure 1 shows a prescriptive typology, in which organizational types are matched to various operational environments. The vertical dimension represents the degree to which the environment is in flux across time (ranging from static to turbulent), while the horizontal axis represents the

[11]Calvert Jones, 'Intelligence Reform: The Logic of Information Sharing', *Intelligence and National Security* 22/3 (2007) pp.384–5.

[12]Robert D. Steele, *Human Intelligence: All Humans, All Minds, All the Time* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute 2010) p.6.

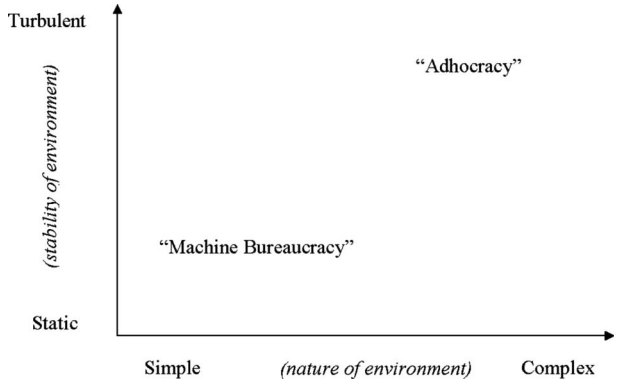

Figure 1. Linking Organization Types to the Operating Environment.
Source: Adapted from Henry Mintzberg, *Structure in Fives: Designing Effective Organizations* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall 1993).

number of external factors that need to be accounted for by the organization (ranging from simple to complex). Based on the ranges of these dimensions, four ideal type organizations can be deduced: 'simple structure', 'professional bureaucracy', 'adhocracy', and 'machine bureaucracy'.[13]

Here we focus on the 'machine bureaucracy' and 'adhocracy' types. In the lower-left quadrant, the 'machine bureaucracy' fits with a simple and static operating environment. This bureaucratic structure contains rigid formalization and a high degree of both vertical and horizontal specialization. The members have little need for advanced education and training – relying instead on a severe standardization of the work processes based on each member's function within the organization. Complex mass production facilities, such as an automobile plant, resemble a machine bureaucracy. In

[13]We restrict our discussion to 'machine bureaucracy' and 'adhocracy', but the argument generates ideal-types for the other two quadrants as well. In the upper-left quadrant, the 'simple structure' organization fits with an operating environment characterized as simple but turbulent. Management structure is centralized through direct supervision of function, while the members of the organization require little specialization, education, or advanced training. Small retail stores can fit this mode, where the actual products which are sold can change with the vagaries of the market (Halloween masks in October, heart-shaped boxes of candy in February), while the task (operating a cash register and stocking shelves) remains uncomplicated and uniform. In the lower-right quadrant, the 'professional bureaucracy' fits with a complex but stable operating environment. Management structure is decentralized, with a large degree of functional specialization and relative autonomy among members. Universities fit this mode, where the academic departments are differentiated among a wide range of disciplines, and operate beneath a relatively shallow vertical hierarchy. Faculty positions within the academic departments require high levels of education and expertise, and are accompanied by a fair degree of autonomy. The product of the university (education and research) is based within academic disciplines that only evolve at a glacial pace. In this case, a standardization of skills is sought, often managed through professional societies and accreditation mechanisms.

the upper-right quadrant, the 'adhocracy' accords with a complex and turbulent operating environment. This is the most challenging environment within which an organization might exist. Members of the organization will need to be highly qualified and motivated, and will be required to possess advanced and ongoing training and education. The management structure will need to be flexible and accommodating, both to the dynamic external environment, as well as to its own members. The organization as a whole must identify new challenges, devise innovative solutions, and be prepared to do so over again as the external situation evolves. Advanced research-and-design programs are examples of this type of organization. Changing technology, the efforts of rivals, and the uncharted nature of the problem would require such an effort to utilize a flexible 'adhocracy' of highly specialized and well-trained members to succeed.

The Flynn Report's recommendations would constitute the pushing of military intelligence in Afghanistan towards the upper-right 'adhocracy' quadrant. It does so by requiring military intelligence practitioners to take on the tasks of many other professions, while jettisoning their traditional organizational structure. We advocate, rather, that military intelligence be pushed back towards the lower-left 'machine bureaucracy' quadrant. More specifically, we argue that the proposed Flynn recommendations would dissolve much of the bureaucratic structure that allows military intelligence units to accept, train, and rapidly deploy people with reasonable expectations of performing their assigned tasks. Further, we identify the source of current dysfunction *not* within the military intelligence structure, but rather in the strategic-political leadership, which has abdicated its job of matching requests for intelligence data to specified operational benchmarks and strategic goals. Finally, we note that even if the Flynn recommendations were to be instituted, the resulting amount of unfiltered data that would flow upwards would more likely overwhelm, rather than assist decision-makers.

Requiring the military intelligence apparatus to operate as an 'adhocracy' would entail two significant changes: an increase in the scope of duties required of the intelligence analysts and a collapsing of the current military intelligence organizational structure. This task is hardly easy, as the current role of the intelligence analyst, and the organizational structure in which he operates, are nestled in a rigid bureaucratic structure that exists for good reason and is also extremely resistant to change. In the next section we will first explore the *substance* of military intelligence by arguing that the traditional model of military intelligence is essentially a deductive approach, while the Flynn Report demands an inductive approach. Secondly, we will illustrate the importance of the traditional military intelligence *organizational structure* and what effects the proposals in the Flynn document may have on the principal–agent relationships built into that model.

Proposed Reform of the Substance of Military Intelligence

Military definitions for intelligence vary. At the most basic level, however, intelligence is information that has been critically examined and, if possible,

compared to existing information or experience to produce answers relevant to the challenges facing decision-makers.[14] The Marine Corps definition is perhaps the most cogent stating, 'intelligence is knowledge – knowledge about the enemy or surrounding environment needed to support decision making'.[15] Information that does not support a decision, including unrefined pools of data, does not qualify as intelligence. To develop our analysis of the report's recommendations, it is useful to contrast the traditional approach to intelligence used for conventional warfare – which we will identify with a *deductive* process – with the newly proposed approach to intelligence as articulated by Flynn et al. – which will identify with an *inductive* process.

In a conventional war environment, military intelligence analysts rely on a process of deduction to produce this knowledge. For example, in preparation for a major conventional war with Warsaw Pact forces, intelligence collectors during the Cold War – often at great personal risk – gathered information about Soviet doctrine, training, equipment and capabilities that was then collated in the enemy 'order of battle' (OB).[16] This OB created a common 'threat template' that could be used for deductive analysis by both senior and junior personnel in creating intelligence products for commanders. From the information contained in the OB, analysts could gather reports from the battlefield and make reasonable conclusions about what was happening on the ground. For a heuristic example, from the placement of an enemy reconnaissance vehicle the location of the main attack force, headquarters element, and supply chain could be deduced. Analysts cross-referenced the reports received with known enemy doctrine and were able to create a somewhat reliable picture about the enemy disposition, capabilities, and intentions. While this seems a straight-forward process, it is by no means simple. Some voices in the contemporary debate seem almost nostalgic for the 'easy' days of figuring enemy intentions during conventional conflict, and yet the task of the intelligence analysts in this environment is anything but easy. In addition to maintaining massive OB references in peacetime, analysts must work feverishly in combat to develop and update myriad products such as unit workbooks, OB situation maps, and key enemy personality files.[17] Determining the enemy course of action under OB may be more mechanistic, but is challenging nonetheless.

Since significant American military involvement since the end of the Cold War has been with unconventional warfare, intelligence analysts, not being

[14]See Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Publication 2-0: Joint Intelligence* (Washington, DC: GPO 2007); Department of the Army, *Field Manual 2-0: Intelligence* (Washington, DC: GPO 2010); United States Marine Corps, *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 2: Intelligence* (Washington, DC: GPO 1997).

[15]United States Marine Corps, *Intelligence*, p.7.

[16]John J. Miller, 'Our Last Cold War Casualty', *National Review*, 5 April 2004, <http://old.nationalreview.com/flashback/miller200503222144.asp> (accessed 21 January 2011).

[17]Department of the Army, *Field Manual 34-3: Intelligence Analysis* (Washington, DC: GPO 1990) pp.3–12.

able to consult OB, have been challenged to provide the knowledge that commanders need to make informed decisions on the battlefield. Consequently, analysts have come to rely on an inductive solution to generating intelligence. By collecting and analyzing as much information as possible, analysts began to infer the realities of the operation effects, the environment, and the status of the enemy.

Current military intelligence doctrine often shows a failure to appreciate the differences between deductive versus inductive analysis and points to an implicit drift away from the traditional approach. Joint Doctrine indicates that intelligence, by definition, is 'information … related to other information already known about the operational environment and considered in light of past experience regarding the adversary'.[18] This seems to indicate that the Joint Doctrine writers envision at least some prior framework of understanding the threat environment is critical to intelligence analysis. Marine Corps doctrine is more explicit in that it specifically calls for understanding 'existing conditions and enemy capabilities' before attempting to determine enemy course of action.[19] The Marine doctrine stresses the importance of understanding the enemy's 'doctrine, tactics, techniques, and procedures-as well as his past performance in training and in combat' and the 'institutions, preferences, and habits' of an enemy culture.[20] The Marines go even further to stress the importance of a 'preexisting mind set' or worldview. This is described as 'a set of assumptions, biases, and preconceptions' that serve as a frame of reference for the analyst. This organization values this antecedent knowledge as it serves to allow the observer to separate 'signals' (the useful information) and 'noise' (useless information).[21] As currently written, it appears that Joint and Marine Corps Doctrine places an emphasis on the deductive form of analysis.

Army Doctrine, however, seems to be creeping closer to the inductive process articulated by Flynn and his colleagues. It stresses the importance of 'generating intelligence knowledge' by obtaining information 'through intelligence reach; research; data mining; database access; academic studies, products, or materials; intelligence archives; open source intelligence (OSINT); and other information systems'. This process is the 'foundation for performing Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield (IPB) and mission analysis'.[22] By this method, the writers of Army Doctrine expect analysts will then be able to define threat characteristics. In an effort to gain relevance in the unconventional war-fighting environment, it appears that Army Doctrine is attempting to make the switch from a deductive analytic process to an inductive one. Unfortunately, for reasons developed below, we feel such a change is not appropriate one for military intelligence doctrine.

[18]Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Joint Intelligence*, p.ix.
[19]United States Marine Corps, *Intelligence*, p.5.
[20]Ibid., p.34.
[21]Ibid., p.49.
[22]Department of the Army, *Intelligence*, pp.1–8.

Current military intelligence soldiers are trained in a narrow band of skills and at a limited depth. Analysts are not trained to be subject matter experts in any particular field, and are certainly not experts in a wide range of topics. Current military analyst training requires a short stint at basic training to acquire the necessary tactical skills and a few months of follow on training in their respective MOS (military occupation specialty) which is designed to provide enlistees with a basic level of proficiency. Further, with the steep rise in information technology, the analyst's job has increasingly gravitated toward operating automated systems rather than critical thinking. These realities suit the 'machine bureaucracy' nature of the military and have worked well determining enemy course of action against the conventional OB template. The question then becomes what to do when the OB template becomes outdated?[23] Flynn's proposed course of action is outlined below.

In the absence of an appropriate threat template for the new threat environment the requirement for critical thinking skills increases as the inductive process becomes a requirement of each analyst. In the vision outlined by the Flynn Report, analysts are to 'absorb information with the thoroughness of historians, organize it with the skill of librarians, and disseminate it with the zeal of journalists'.[24] Recruiting and selecting analysts who bring the right characteristics, knowledge, skill and abilities required to meet these challenges to the table will require significant change. Historians and librarians, for example, earn graduate degrees before obtaining their respective titles. Their level of education stands in sharp contrast to the average military intelligence analyst. The problem presented by the method advocated in the Flynn document, therefore, is that it requires a complete revamping of the military intelligence recruiting, selection and training process. No longer can an analyst simply be required to enter data into automated systems. Instead, analysts would need to become well versed in a wide range of skills from critical thinking to foreign languages, culture, religion, and ideology. Such work would require a basic grounding in social science disciplines such as economics, political science, and sociology as well. Where would such people come from? Could the military train these wide-ranging skills? The authors of the Flynn document seem to tacitly recognize this problem when they advocate using civilian analysts to staff the Stability Information Operations Centers, or recruiting only the 'best' and 'hungriest' personnel to work these centers.[25] Further, the authors' critique of the current military intelligence apparatus suggests that military intelligence shops across the board are expected to perform at this higher level. Without a commensurate change in the system that produces these analysts, it is unlikely that this could be achieved with the existing human resources of the military.

[23]On problems using OB-oriented intelligence in an unconventional warfare environment see James J. Wirtz, 'Intelligence to Please? The Order of Battle Controversy during the Vietnam War', *Political Science Quarterly* 106/2 (1991) pp.239–63.
[24]Flynn, Pottinger and Batchelor, *Fixing Intel*, p.23.
[25]Ibid., p.5.

Proposed Reform of the Organization of Military Intelligence

The organization of the military intelligence reporting structure exists to assist commanders in gaining the knowledge that they require for effective decision-making, rather than to provide a complete portrait of the operating environment. To that end, the military intelligence reporting chain mirrors the bureaucratic structure of the operational elements that it supports. At every level, from Battalion and above, there exists an intelligence section dedicated to assisting their commander's ability to answer specific questions about the operational environment. When commanders receive directives from higher authorities, uncertainties about the operational environment naturally lead to the generation of specific questions that have to be answered in order for the commander to succeed. Through a deliberate staff process these questions are articulated in the Commander's Critical Information Requirements (CCIR), and the intelligence subset: Priority Intelligence Requirements (PIR), which help the commander limit the scope of information that he needs for effective decision-making.[26] Information required by higher commands is also rolled up into the CCIR. In this way, questions generated from the very highest levels can be explored and answered at the appropriate echelon.

Next, through the collection cycle and creation of products, such as the Intelligence Summary (INTSUM), the commander and all of his subordinates gain a general picture of the operational environment.[27] As information is passed up from the commander's subordinate elements, it is processed, and only the most salient points that answer the CCIR should be included. These products, which can be distributed in writing and briefed in a graphic format, provide the commander, his staff, subordinate elements, adjacent units and higher headquarters with a comprehensive and consolidated picture of what is occurring in the specified region. Similarly, answers to questions emanating from higher commands are subsequently pushed up.

The effect of collapsing this military intelligence reporting structure would be profound. In the Flynn Report, traditional structure is rejected in favor of a cadre of 'hungry' analysts, select groups of 'information brokers' and the creation of Stability Operations Information Centers. The purpose of these

[26]As PIR relates to enemy activity a new type of information requirement, Host Nation Information Requirements (HNIR), has been proposed to ensure commanders receive all relevant information about the operating environment in a counterinsurgent campaign. See George Franz, David Pendall and Jeffrey Steffen, 'Host Nation Information Requirements: Achieving Unity of Understanding in Counterinsurgency', *Small Wars Journal*, 15 January 2010, <http://smallwarsjournal.com/blog/2010/01/host-nation-information-requir/> (accessed 3 February 2011).

[27]It should go without saying that these products do not include all available information about a given area. The local commander should *always* know more about his area than his commander, but the higher commander should always know the *relevant* information from the local area commander. It is the higher commander's job to ensure that his subordinate commander knows precisely what that information is.

centers, and the people that work in them, is to collect and make available the vast amounts of information lost in the reporting chain. Stability Operations Information Centers are intended to flatten military intelligence organization, presumably allowing any customer to come to the trough of information directly, bypassing the allegedly cumbersome bureaucracy of the current system. We raise two issues in regards to this proposal.

The first issue is the change in structure will not resolve the underlying problem. Unless unlimited resources and manpower are devoted to these centers, they will run up against the same obstacles faced by current military intelligence shops: limited time and limited people. They will necessarily have to develop prioritized information requirements in the exact same manner that the commander develops his CCIR. If this is the case, the structure that already exists within the military intelligence reporting chain is adequate. The failure is not with the system itself, it is with the inability of commanders to develop the right information requirements and/or the failure to enforce those requirements. Accordingly, developing another organization to accomplish these tasks does not appear to address the root of the problem.

Second, the process proposed by the report, even if implemented successfully on the ground, may produce more information – but be of less use to decision-makers. More precisely, the information gathered in these centers would not have gone through the traditional winnowing process of the military intelligence reporting chain. This is precisely what the authors of the Flynn Report want; they argue that senior analysts are 'starved for information from the field, so starved, in fact, that many say their jobs feel more like fortune telling than serious detective work … [despite the fact that] literally terabytes of unclassified and classified information [is] typed up at the grassroots level'.[28] This information however, traditionally vetted by commanders at various levels, will instead be pushed and parceled out by a variety of analysts to a variety of customers through this less-structured system. The traditional processes of the military intelligence reporting chain is supposed to separate the signals from the noise, but under this plan there may be simply far more data without a distinction between the two. Without a dedicated collection effort guided by clear direction from a commander or consumer, this process simply becomes an exercise in collecting vast amounts of information. While a repository for information might be useful, it falls outside the scope of intelligence. In other words, the intelligence community should dismantle the 'stove-pipe' system and allow an unmitigated flow of much more (if not *all*) intelligence data up the chain of command. Such proposals fail to recognize that senior decision-makers need filtering of information, due to simple human cognitive limitations.[29] Failure to appreciate this limitation runs the risk of overloading, rather than informing, the strategic and political leadership.

[28]Flynn, Pottinger and Batchelor, *Fixing Intel*, p.9.

[29]See John D. Steinbrunner, *Cybernetic Theory of Decision: New Dimensions of Political Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press 2002).

There is a push/pull relationship between the principal and the agent – but if the principal is dissatisfied with the products being 'pushed' upward, it is probably time for the principal to think harder about its information requirements, rather than dismantle the structure and opt for a massive pool of unrefined data.

Rigid structures exist in the bureaucratic military intelligence reporting chain for good reason. They allow for a focused collection effort, provide a common understanding of the operational environment, and serve to separate the signals from the noise. Collapsing this military intelligence reporting structure is intended to allow the consumers of intelligence gain access to long-denied information. Unfortunately, the real effect may be to sever the relationship between decision-making and intelligence collection, present various (and perhaps conflicting) realities of the situation on the ground, and degrade the ability of intelligence professionals and commanders to separate information from intelligence.

Two Choices: A New Template or a Whole New System

The current military intelligence system continues to recruit, train and develop analysts for a process that no longer meets the information requirements of commanders. To meet the requirements of the unconventional threat the military intelligence community has two choices. First, selecting an appropriate threat template that accurately portrays the general reality of the unconventional environment would allow the current deductive system to be retained. The second option is to fundamentally change the way in which analysts are recruited, trained and developed in recognition of the dramatic increase in difficultly represented by the unconventional environment and the proposed need for an inductive process. The first option is challenging, as the unconventional environment may not lend itself well to general theories. The second option is difficult, as it would require significant change to the bureaucratic system that is not currently designed to produce significant numbers of analysts skilled in an inductive process. Our recommendations fall into two categories: improvements that can be made within the current system and improvements that require significant organizational change.

First, if an appropriate threat template can be developed that usefully portrays the unconventional environment, the current deductive system could be retained and analysts could learn the new design. General theories about unconventional warfare already exist and can be used as a framework for analysts to collect and evaluate information.[30] While we do not go so far

[30]One such model is the 'mystic diamond' detailed in Gregory Wilson, 'Anatomy of a Successful COIN Operation: OEF-Philippines and the Indirect Approach', *Military Review* November–December (2006) pp.2–12. Alternatively, a recent RAND study highlights the similarities between intelligence operations required of police work and counterinsurgency. The paper concludes that the adoption of new tools such as social network analysis, pattern recognition techniques and change detection would aid analysts in the current operational

as to recommend these or other templates, it seems clear that relatively young and inexperienced analysts could be trained in reference to these models in a similar timeframe as conventional OB. With this new training, analysts could deploy to the field and immediately begin to use new model and techniques to template the insurgency and recommend ways to defeat it.

The advantage of this course of action is that it allows for a training modification without any significant organizational changes. By adopting a framework such as this, the military intelligence community can continue to recruit, select and train intelligence analysts in a manner similar with past practices; the curriculum simply needs adjustment. This is extremely beneficial as the military could maintain its current deductive process and simply apply new models as the threat scenario changes. If, for example, traditional military formations of the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) become the major security obstacle for the US military in the next decade, intelligence trainers could simply revert to focusing on an OB template, albeit updated for the contemporary threat. This option keeps military intelligence in its traditional format as a 'machine bureaucracy'. The environment in which it operates essentially becomes more stable and simple as the parameters of its task is being managed by its principal (the strategic-political leadership).

The second option, which we caution against, is to fundamentally change the way in which analysts are recruited, trained, and developed in recognition of the dramatic increase in difficultly represented by the unconventional environment as we currently understand it. Getting analysts who bring the right characteristics, knowledge, skill and abilities required to meet these challenges to the table will require more than verbal coaxing or a change in training regimen. This second option recognizes that hiring high-school graduates and providing them with short training programs in the deductive process may no longer be sufficient. The US Intelligence Community at large (with the notable exception of the Department of Defense (DoD)) understands that there are certain characteristics that enable their analysts to perform the inductive process, and they use that knowledge to hire accordingly.[31] In other words, before critical skills can even be imparted, analysts must be selected for their unique attributes. While knowledge, skills and abilities can be learned, only an appropriate selection process can identify the correct personal characteristics of an effective intelligence analyst. To affect the change that is outlined in the current literature for the military intelligence community, the entire recruiting, selection, personnel management and training and education process for military intelligence analysts in DoD would likely have to be revamped. This

environment. See Walter L. Perry and John Gordon IV, *Analytic Support to Intelligence in Counterinsurgencies* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND 2008) p.15.

[31]George E. Lewis III, *Transforming Army Intelligence Analysis, Training, and Doctrine to Serve the Reasonable Expectations and Needs of Echelon Corps and Below Commanders, Consumers, and Customers* (Ft Leavenworth, KS: School of Advanced Military Studies 2005) p.28.

option would push the military intelligence apparatus into the 'adhocracy' quadrant, by granting a huge degree of autonomy to its members, but at the same time requiring its members to be extremely well-educated and highly trained. This would entail an entire reconstruction of the military intelligence organizations, requiring (realistically) years of effort and billions of dollars.

These recommendations, however, merely apply to the selection of a reasoning process and the changes required as a result. This decision is crucial for the establishment of an effective military intelligence apparatus, but we suspect the problems outlined in the Flynn Report will not be entirely solved by either method. As the authors point out, military intelligence units already do an excellent job of forecasting enemy action on the battlefield. They are largely successful at the tactical level providing crucial intelligence to their commanders about the enemy situation and the host nation population. According to the prevalent counterinsurgency worldview, however, this is not enough. Only by providing the litany of effective services stemming from good governance can the United States and our Afghan hosts be successful. According to the Flynn Report, the military intelligence apparatus has failed to help in this process for myriad reasons to include the inability to accurately locate cell phone towers and power-lines, failing to develop a centralized repository on development projects and ignorance of the best way to administer polio vaccinations.[32] We submit, however, that these are not failures of the military intelligence apparatus, but of the inability of commanders and senior policymakers to properly identify their crucial information requirements and enforce them appropriately. Why have commanders and senior policymakers failed to do this? Without a clearly identified mission and end-state, crucial information requirements are nearly impossible to develop.

Conclusions

In sum, we commend Flynn and his colleagues for rethinking the role of military intelligence in the Afghanistan conflict, and do not deny that they present one viable model of intelligence for the Afghanistan conflict. We have attempted to caution, however, that implementation of these proposed reforms would constitute a poor fit with the realities of the human resources currently available to the military. The unstructured inductive process Flynn and his colleagues propose would push military intelligence into a form of 'adhocracy', for which it cannot provide appropriately trained personnel. We advocate, rather, that the organization remain closer to its 'machine bureaucracy' roots. In doing so, it can be effective through the use of a strategic template; this would structure the work of intelligence practitioners by fitting their efforts into a clearly articulated strategic vision of the conflict and would match with the human resource realities of the military. We agree with the Flynn Report, that something needs to change to address problems

[32]Flynn, Pottinger and Batchelor, *Fixing Intel*, p.20.

with the Afghanistan campaign; but rather than focus on reforming the military intelligence system, we would rather place the onus on the political-strategic leadership to provide better guidance to the existing apparatus. More specifically, we note the lack of leadership in identifying coherent grand strategic goals and how operational tasks fit within the military's operational mandate in Afghanistan. Our argument contends that the degree to which these points are clarified by the political leadership is the degree to which the traditional military intelligence apparatus and process will be effective in the counterinsurgency environment.

The German economist Werner Sonbart wrote of his abandonment of Marxist doctrine in 1915: 'When we lose the ... formulas that have hitherto been our guides amid the complexities of existence ... we feel like drowning in the ocean of facts until we find a new foothold'.[33] We are concerned that the proposed Flynn reforms will leave policymakers drowning in a similar sea of facts. If that were to happen, however, it would be a deluge of their own making. They would have created a military intelligence 'fire hose', from which it might be quite unpleasant to drink. As Stephen Biddle has recently argued: 'the Obama administration must clarify what the end game will look like. Without clear limits on acceptable outcomes, the US and NATO military campaigns will be rudderless'.[34] We agree. Military intelligence is designed to support operations that, in turn, support political goals. Without political goals in place, the efforts of the military agent – intelligence efforts included – become directionless, producing a sea of facts that serve little purpose.

This paper has largely addressed the Flynn Report and its recommendations regarding Afghanistan, and yet broader implications can be spun. The United States is wrapping up a decade engaged in the 'global war on terror' and has yet to conclude what the goals of the 'war' are, and how applications of military efforts should pursue such goals.[35] Observers generally agree that the Cold War legacy force is not optimally suited for current operations, but disagree as to what the new force structure, doctrine, and weapons should look like.[36] Early in this article we referred to Clausewitz's dictum that 'war is a continuation of politics by other means' and we can fruitfully conclude with it, as well. Reorganization of intelligence – as well as doctrine and force structure – are military questions, but ones that only make sense, and can only be answered in response to clear political guidelines. Until those guidelines are in place, all other discussion becomes moot.

[33]Quoted in E.H. Carr, *What is History?* (New York: Vintage 1961) p.76.

[34]Quoted in Deb Reichmann, 'It's Go for Broke Time on 9th Anniversary of War', *Washington Post*, 6 October 2010.

[35]For an early attempt to call attention to this problem see Jeffrey Record, *Bounding the Global War on Terrorism* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute 2003).

[36]See, for example, Kevin Reynolds, *Transformation: To What? For What?* (Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute 2006) and John Arquilla, *Worst Enemy: The Reluctant Transformation of the American Military* (Chicago, IL: Ivan R. Dee 2008).

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