

British intelligence and the Anglo-American ‘Special Relationship’ during the Cold War*

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Abstract. Our present understanding of British intelligence and its relationship to Anglo-American cooperation in the postwar period leaves much to be desired. Indeed while it has often been remarked that the twin pillars of Anglo-American security cooperation were atomic weapons and intelligence exchange, there remains an alarming disparity in our understanding of these two areas. The importance of intelligence is often commented on, but rarely subjected to sustained analysis. This article seeks to fill that gap by looking in turn at the nature of the Western ‘intelligence community’, the impact of alliance politics upon intelligence common to national estimates and the significance of strategic intelligence cooperation.

Since 1945, rapid technological change has provided military forces with increased mobility and almost unlimited firepower. The ability of states to carry out surprise attacks has correspondingly increased; indeed, some analysts have gone so far as to suggest that surprise attacks will almost invariably meet with short-term success. Events in the South Atlantic in 1982 and in Kuwait in 1990 lend support to this hypothesis. A direct response to the related problems posed by rapid technological change and surprise attack has been the contemporaneous growth of intelligence communities. The central objective of these intelligence communities has been to offer precise estimates of the capabilities of opponents and timely warning of their intentions.¹

From the outset, the British Chiefs of Staff (COS) were conscious of the connections between new strategic developments, the possibility of surprise attack and the growing importance of strategic intelligence. In 1945 their greatest long-term fear was that they would be ‘Pearl Harbored’ by a country equipped with atomic weapons. In November 1945 the Director of Intelligence at the Air Ministry warned: ‘If we are going to be attacked by a major power, I have no doubt that the attack will be exactly of this nature’.² It was this for this reason that the disastrous scaling-

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¹ R. K. Betts, ‘Analysis, War and Decision: Why Intelligence Failures are Inevitable’, *World Politics*, 31:1 (Oct. 1978), pp. 961–88. See also M. I. Handel, ‘Intelligence and the Problem of Strategic Surprise’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 7:3 (Sept. 1984), pp. 229–82; ‘Clausewitz in the Age of Technology’, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 9:3 (Sept. 1986), pp. 51–92.

² Minute by the Director of Intelligence, Air Ministry, September 1945, AIR 20/3420, PRO. See also JIC (46)95 (0) Final, ‘Future Scale of Air Attack Against the United Kingdom’ (Limited Circulation), 12 November 1946, AIR 20/2740, PRO. On these scientific developments see Julian Lewis, *Changing Direction: British Military Planning for Post-war Strategic Defence* (London, 1988), pp. 178–241.

down of wartime intelligence that had occurred in 1918 was not repeated. Signals intelligence remained a high priority and as early as July 1945 Air Chief Marshal Sir John Slessor called for the development of a long-range very high-altitude strategic reconnaissance capability.³ The burgeoning intelligence services of the Cold War had already begun to emerge.

The resulting intelligence that was produced strongly influenced the short-term responses of policy-makers at moments of crisis and also the shape of long-term defence programmes, not least because these organizations often enjoyed direct access to policy-makers at the highest level. The major strategic decisions of the postwar period, whether addressing the conduct of the Cold War or some future possible 'hot war', drew much of their authority from an insistence that their contentions flowed objectively from high-level intelligence assessments. Senior intelligence officers, far from complaining that attention was not being paid to intelligence, became alarmed that planners had become obsessed by estimates and were unwilling to undertake planning without first being given a 'crystal-gazing' paper from the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), forecasting the key assumptions over the next five to ten years. The JIC warned that these papers were only vague estimates, but planners tended to take their word as law. As one official observed, 'I think most people would agree there is something badly wrong with our system . . . [T]he trouble lies not in the J.I.C. itself, but in the way it is used'. To some degree this was a Whitehall habit derived from wartime operational planning based on reliable ULTRA material that had been carried over into peacetime.⁴ The extent to which JIC papers served a 'legitimizing' function for planners and policy-makers is a further reason why intelligence estimates warrant careful study.⁵

Intelligence, and JIC reports specifically, provided the basic assumptions that informed an incremental policy process. In 1945, assumptions about the punishing effect upon the Soviet Union of Stalin's purges and then of the Second World War prompted the British to plan their defence effort on the basis that the Soviets would not be ready for war for at least ten years. These British basic planning horizons were underpinned by assumptions about limited Soviet technical and scientific capabilities that were, in part, based on cultural, even racial, stereotypes. Following extensive contact with Soviet forces in 1945, reports flooded into London asserting that the Russians 'are peasants and should be regarded as such', and speaking of a 'dullness and stupidity of expression that is quite remarkable'. Other reports observed that 'it would be unreasonable to expect Anglo-Saxon standards of behaviour from a primitive and largely Asiatic race'. There are obvious parallels to be drawn here with the fatal underestimation of Japanese military power in the 1930s. These views reinforced a British presumption in 1945 that while the Soviets

³ Slessor (AMP) minute to VCAS, 16 July 1945, AIR 2/12027, PRO; Christopher Andrew, 'The Making of the Anglo-American SIGINT Alliance', in Hayden B. Peake and Samuel Halpern (eds.), *In the Name of Intelligence* (Washington, DC, 1994), pp. 94–109.

⁴ Evershed to Elliot (COS), 30 June 1949, DEFE 11/349, PRO.

⁵ American estimates of Soviet capabilities and intentions, unlike British ones, have long been a subject of study. See e.g., Lawrence Freedman, *US Intelligence and the Soviet Threat*, 2nd edn (Princeton, NJ, 1986); John Prados, *The Soviet Estimate: US Intelligence Analysis and Russian Military Strength* (New York, 1982); David H. Dunn, *The Politics of Threat* (London, 1997).

would enjoy quantitative superiority in postwar Europe, they would remain qualitatively inferior in terms of military science and technology.⁶

Subsequently, dramatic new intelligence that invalidated previous estimates contributed to a radical shift in defence effort. Two examples, both drawn from 1950, serve to illustrate this. First, intelligence provided by the American Long-Range Detection Program that the Soviet Union had succeeded in detonating an atomic device in the autumn of 1949 (rather than the outbreak of the Korean War) prompted major British reconsideration of strategic thinking in 1950, encapsulated in the landmark Cabinet Defence Committee paper 'Defence Policy and Global Strategy'.⁷ American intelligence estimates had previously suggested that the Soviets would most likely produce an atomic weapon in 1953, while the British JIC believed that 1954 was the most likely date.⁸ The existence of the Soviet bomb, subsequently confirmed by the British detection programme, taken together with the news that espionage by the British-employed Klaus Fuchs might help to explain Soviet achievements, left the COS in a state of shock. By early 1950 they were forced to embark upon a thorough reconsideration of the purpose of the British independent atomic weapons programme, these discussions marking one of the very few points at which the COS have considered its abandonment.⁹

Similar observations could be made about estimates and Britain's conventional weapons programme. The COS had decided not to introduce a new generation of high-performance interceptors for the RAF until 1953–4, based partly on estimates of the Soviet aircraft programme and partly upon the JIC's broader assumption that the Soviet Union would not be ready for war before 1957. The Korean War shattered the latter assumption, and the first few months of that conflict also provided opportunities to reassess the standard Soviet interceptor, the MIG-15. By the autumn of 1950 the new air intelligence picture of the MIG-15, based on its performance in Korea, had horrified the COS. The Chief of the Air Staff confessed: 'Not only is it faster than anything we are building today, but it is already being produced in very large numbers . . . The Russians, therefore, have achieved a four year lead over British development in respect of the vitally important interceptor fighter.' Best estimates of Soviet aircraft production suggested that there were already 400 MIG-15s in the Soviet zone of Germany and that this number would double by the end of 1950. This new information revealed 'an exceedingly serious situation', and the Chief of the Air Staff urged his colleagues to ensure that 'extraordinary measures are taken at once'. These included obtaining high-performance

⁶ W/Cdr Keat, British Air Forces Austria, 1 October 1945, FO 371/47954, PRO; Military Attaché to H.M. Ambassador Poland, 1 October 1945, *ibid.* The FO minuted upon the latter report 'Read with interest and agreement'.

⁷ DO (50)45, 'Defence Policy and Global Strategy', 7 June 1950, *Documents on British Policy Overseas*, series II, vol. IV (London, 1991), pp. 411–34. See also T. J. Botti, *The Long Wait: The Forging of the Anglo-American Nuclear Alliance, 1945–58* (Westport, CT, 1987), pp. 102–27.

⁸ Christopher Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only: Secret Intelligence and the American Presidency from Washington to Bush* (London, 1995), p. 177; Richard J. Aldrich and Michael Coleman, 'The Cold War, the JIC and British Signals Intelligence, 1948', *Intelligence and National Security*, 4:3 (Jul. 1989), pp. 535–8. On the Long-Range Detection Program see C. A. Ziegler and D. Jacobson, *Spying without Spies: The Origins of America's Secret Nuclear Surveillance System* (New York, 1995).

⁹ The COS wondered 'might it not be better for us to concentrate the resources we had on vital projects to which we were more suited . . . (e.g. Guided Weapons)? . . . The Chiefs of Staff agreed it was right to approach the problem with open minds', COS (50) 26th meeting, 'The United Kingdom Atomic Weapons Programme', Confidential Annex (Special Circulation), DEFE 32/1, PRO.

fighters for the RAF from the United States as a stopgap; asking the USAF to implement a section of 'War Plan GALLOPER' which required the despatch of a further American fighter group to the UK; and 'speed[ing] up, by every possible means' the production of the next generation of RAF fighters.¹⁰ Variants of all these measures were implemented.¹¹

It is not the purpose of this article to embark on a detailed and extensive exploration of the impact of estimates upon British defence policy. Even a preliminary review of recently released papers suggests that the development of British foreign and defence policy cannot be understood without careful consideration of estimates and their influence. But despite their demonstrable importance, our present understanding of British intelligence, estimates and the related subject of intelligence 'liaison' with the United States in the postwar period leaves much to be desired. This stands in stark contrast to our knowledge of Anglo-American collaboration over atomic weapons programmes which, while constituting an equally challenging area of research, has nevertheless been the subject of a number of impressive studies.¹² While it has often been remarked that the twin pillars of Anglo-American security cooperation during the Cold War were atomic weapons and intelligence exchange, there remains an alarming disparity in our understanding of these two related areas.¹³

Some attempts have already been made to analyse Western intelligence cooperation.¹⁴ In particular, Richelson and Ball have produced a broad overview of all forms of postwar intelligence cooperation between the English-speaking countries. However, the approach adopted by these authors is, as they assert, to provide a handbook of organization and structure, rather than to demonstrate the impact of intelligence and estimates upon national security policy or upon alliance systems as a whole.¹⁵ Conversely, in general studies of Anglo-American relations, the importance of intelligence is often remarked upon in parenthesis, but rarely subjected to

¹⁰ CAS to COS Committee, 'Soviet Interceptor Fighter Development' (Limited Circulation), September 1950, AIR 75/117, PRO. In 1955 the COS were no less shocked by intelligence on the MIG-17; see AIR 8/2460 *passim*, PRO.

¹¹ Patrick E. Murray, 'An Initial Response to the Cold War: The Buildup of the U.S. Air Force in the United Kingdom, 1948–56', in Roger G. Miller (ed.), *Seeing Off the Bear: Anglo-American Air Power Cooperation during the Cold War* (Washington, DC, 1995), pp. 15–24.

¹² The literature on Anglo-American nuclear relations since 1945 is immense. The three most recent studies are Ian Clark, *Nuclear Diplomacy and the Special Relationship: Britain's Deterrent and America, 1957–62* (Oxford, 1994); Jan Melissen, *The Struggle for Nuclear Partnership: Britain, the United States and the Making of an Ambiguous Alliance, 1952–9* (Groningen, 1993); J. Baylis, *Ambiguity and Deterrence: British Nuclear Strategy, 1945–64* (Oxford, 1995).

¹³ Memorandum from the Directorate of Intelligence and Research (State Department) to Dean Rusk, 'What Now for Britain? Wilson's Visit and Britain's Future', REU-11, 7 February 1968, Philip M. Kaiser papers, Box 8, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MO.

¹⁴ James Bamford, *The Puzzle Palace: America's National Security Agency and its Special Relationship with Britain's GCHQ* (London, 1982); Jeffrey T. Richelson and Desmond Ball, *The Ties that Bind: Intelligence Co-operation between the UKUSA Countries—the United Kingdom, the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand*, 2nd edn (London, 1990).

¹⁵ Richelson and Ball, *Ties that Bind*, pp. 8–9. See also the correspondence between Jeffrey Richelson and Mark Lowenthal concerning methodology, *Intelligence and National Security*, 3:1 (Jan. 1988), pp. 226–7.

sustained analysis or integrated into the context of the discussion.¹⁶ Any investigation of this subject must also take some account of more complex multilateral relations with European and Commonwealth organizations, this broader pattern of cooperation often being referred to as the 'Western intelligence community'. Four main themes are addressed: the extent and nature of an integrated 'Western intelligence community'; the impact of alliance politics upon the intelligence collection process; attempts to achieve common national estimates in areas that underpinned important aspects of policy-making; and the significance of strategic intelligence cooperation in cementing the alliance as a whole during Britain's shift to a more subordinate position in the overall relationship.

The study of detailed themes within the Anglo-American intelligence relationship, based on substantial primary documentation, has become possible only since the end of the Cold War, which triggered decisions in London, Washington and Moscow to declassify substantial archival materials for the Cold War period. In Britain the Waldegrave Initiative on Open Government resulted in the release of several thousand hitherto closed files into the public domain.¹⁷ While some of these recent releases have been startling, constraints still continue to operate. It remains difficult to study aspects of this subject beyond 1970. Moreover, the release of different types of material at different speeds poses problems when one attempts detailed comparisons of estimates.¹⁸ But perhaps the greatest problem confronted by those attempting a rigorous study of postwar intelligence, particularly from the British point of view, remains the relative dearth of other serious studies in the field, compared to the plethora of unreliable memoirs and sensational accounts. There is now such a volume of improbable material in the public domain that the broad outline of the subject, as presently understood, is often in need of testing. The attendant danger in this area is always that we find ourselves engaged in a search for broad theories that explain only pseudo-facts. This problem is present in many aspects of the study of political science, but it is especially present in the study of intelligence. Hence, in the study of intelligence, concern for accurate description must always accompany attempts at explanation.¹⁹

¹⁶ See, e.g., C. J. Bartlett, *'The Special Relationship': A Political History of Anglo-American Relations since 1945* (London, 1992); Robert M. Hathaway, *Great Britain and the United States: Special Relations since World War II* (Boston, MA, 1990). For two exceptions see the useful discussions in Christopher Hitchen, *Blood, Class and Nostalgia: Anglo-American Ironies* (London, 1990); David Reynolds, 'A "Special Relationship"?: America, Britain and the International Order since the Second World War', *International Affairs*, 62:1 (Winter 1985/6), pp. 1–20. On liaison generally, see H. Bradford Westerfield, 'America and the World of Liaison', *Intelligence and National Security*, 11:3 (Jul. 1996), pp. 523–60.

¹⁷ Wesley K. Wark, 'In Never-Never Land: The British Archives on Intelligence', *Historical Journal*, 35:1 (Feb. 1992), pp. 195–203; Richard J. Aldrich, 'Never-Never Land and Wonderland? British and American Policy on Intelligence Archives', *Contemporary Record*, 8:1 (Summer 1994), pp. 133–52.

¹⁸ The incomplete range of estimate materials available in London rendered a quantitative approach unpromising. On the US see Scott A. Koch, *CIA Cold War Records: Selected Estimates on the Soviet Union, 1950–1959* (Washington, DC, 1993).

¹⁹ Robert K. Merton, 'Three Fragments from a Sociologist's Notebooks', *Annual Review of Sociology*, 13 (1987), pp. 2–6.

A 'Western intelligence community'?

The concept of a 'Western intelligence community', while a useful shorthand, is often misleading. Most postwar intelligence cooperation took place in a narrow functional context, resulting in a number of largely separate, but parallel, Anglo-American–Commonwealth communities of human intelligence collectors, signals intelligence collectors, analysts, domestic security officials and covert action specialists. This was exacerbated by the rapid rise of scientific and technical intelligence as key areas. This tendency towards separation by function was increased by intense bureaucratic competition in each country (particularly the United States), by rigid compartmentalization for reasons of security and by a desire to exclude additional parties, whether European or New Commonwealth, from sensitive core activities. The resulting pattern was a loose federation of diverse groups rather than a coherent 'Western intelligence community'.

Diversity and decentralization were most pronounced in the United States, where bitter interservice rivalry combined with abundant resources to produce significant duplication, as seen in the struggles required to create the National Security Agency in the 1950s and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) in the 1960s.²⁰ The most spectacular failure was the inability of the Director of the CIA to impose greater coherence upon the American system. Britain's Major-General Kenneth Strong, the long-serving Director of the Joint Intelligence Bureau (JIB) (1948–64), enjoyed close and friendly relations with the CIA, but even he was forced to concede that the 'CIA has very largely failed to achieve centralisation, far less integration, even within the limitations imposed on it'.²¹ For British officials, not only in London and Washington but also at various major outstations, the constantly shifting organizational patterns of American intelligence presented something of a headache, since cultivation of one American friendship was quite often at some cost to another. Scientific intelligence officers in Germany complained: 'Anglo-American relations are very complicated here owing to the strained relations between the competing American bodies'.²²

In Britain substantial diversity also obtained, despite the stronger conventions of central control established by the strengthening of the JIC system during the war. The secret services were moving towards diversification, with Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) escaping the direct control of the Secret Intelligence Service (SIS) in the immediate postwar period, and new departments, such as the Atomic Intelligence Unit, securing a largely independent existence. Even the service intelligence departments, perhaps the most likely candidates for rationalization, managed to avoid substantial change. In the 1950s and 1960s there were repeated Treasury-driven exercises to examine whether the service intelligence elements might not be brought together and housed in one building in the Whitehall area. The principal advocate of this was Kenneth Strong, Director of the JIB, one of

²⁰ Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only*, pp. 186–8, 189–97; Patrick N. Mescall, 'The Triumph of Parochialism and Bureaucracy: Robert S. McNamara and the Birth of the Defense Intelligence Agency', in Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones and Andrew Lownie (eds.), *North American Spies: New Revisionist Essays* (Edinburgh, 1991).

²¹ Strong (JIB) to Minister of Defence, 17 May 1950, AIR 8/1953, PRO.

²² Evans (STIB) to Smith (MI 10), 28 May 1951, DEFE 41/6, PRO.

the few genuinely interservice intelligence organizations in London. However, the COS managed to resist this change for two decades, insisting instead upon separate Army, Navy and Air intelligence elements, each integrated with the operational machinery of its own service. In 1950, in discussions with Minister of Defence Shinwell, the COS insisted: 'The present system . . . is working well . . . [I]f the present situation was reversed . . . in war the situation might be disastrous since intelligence must frequently be acted upon immediately and thus no measures which would cause any delay whatsoever can be accepted.'²³ In 1960 a review of intelligence by General Sir Gerald Templer recommended the centralization of intelligence on high-profile areas of interservice interest such as guided missiles, and was met by howls of protest. Only in 1964 did Strong achieve victory, becoming the first head of a centralized Defence Intelligence Staff.²⁴ In both London and Washington the tradition of a myriad of separate, specialist intelligence organizations remained strong.

This fragmented structure rendered many aspects of Anglo-American intelligence cooperation peculiarly resilient, since narrow, compartmentalized relationships, for example between those working on economic intelligence or guided missile intelligence, could remain unshaken by high-level disagreements over Cold War policy, or by security failures. It also makes generalization about the overall mosaic of Western intelligence cooperation more difficult, though not impossible.

The way in which this fragmented structure of intelligence cooperation behaved is most clearly indicated by the relationship between two different types of function performed by intelligence services during the Cold War: those activities which contributed to the production of national estimates, and those activities in the area of special operations or 'covert action'. Organizations such as the British SIS and American CIA cooperated closely over the exchange of both raw intelligence and finished estimates concerning Eastern Bloc capabilities and intentions. Simultaneously, they were also involved in continual and sometimes explosive disagreements over the nature and purpose of covert action. But in most cases these activities remained compartmentalized by function and had limited impact upon each other.

To illustrate this, by the early 1950s the British and Americans had revised the complex system for exchanging intelligence that had developed during the war. Representatives of the CIA's Office of National Estimates worked with the British Joint Intelligence Staff on a daily basis. Not only was a great volume of papers formally exchanged, but British and American officials achieved a certain amount of input into each other's papers before they were finished. Ray S. Cline, who served with the CIA in London, recalls that in the 1950s there were '18 CIA analysts busy in London comparing notes with their counterparts in economic intelligence,

²³ Elliot (for COS) to Shinwell, COS 1403/23/10/50, 21 October 1950, DEFE 11/349, PRO. See also Shinwell to Attlee, 22 June 1950, *ibid*.

²⁴ Memorandum by Mountbatten (CDS), 'Missile Intelligence', 15 March 1961, AIR 8/1953, PRO; Note by the CAS, 'Missile Intelligence: Air Ministry Comments on the Templer Report', 7 March 1961, *ibid*.; Hunt (JIC) to Bufton (ACAS (I)), JIC/1482/60, 9 September 1960, *ibid*.

scientific intelligence, and general strategic analysis'.²⁵ In Germany the British Liaison Officer attached to the intelligence element of the US European Command (EUCOM) Headquarters in Heidelberg was receiving raw intelligence material amounting to one hundredweight of paper each day. Cooperation was even closer in the rapidly expanding field of air intelligence, with 'exchange officers' working within each national command structure.²⁶ There was a vast and confident transfer of material at most levels.

Yet at the same time, prominent CIA officials were content to launch covert operations designed, in part, to modify some aspects of British foreign policy which were distasteful to Washington. Typically, Washington was dismayed by the consistent opposition to Euro-federalism and OEEC activities offered by both Labour and Conservative governments after the war. By 1949 the United States perceived London as the major obstacle to a federal United States of Europe.²⁷ During the period 1949–60 the United States undertook a programme of covert funding of European federalist organizations, including some based in Britain, in an attempt to increase popular support for federalism and thus modify the British position.²⁸ This programme underlines the compartmentalized nature of the Anglo-American intelligence relationship.²⁹

The importance of compartmentalization by function is underscored by the problems that arose on occasions when there was an unavoidable interplay between estimates and covert action. These can be illustrated by examining deliberations over the nature and resilience of the Eastern Bloc, on the one hand, and discussions on the advisability of a programme of liberation or 'roll-back'-type operations, on the other hand.³⁰ As early as 1948, officials in both London and Washington, heartened by events in Tito's Yugoslavia, had decided upon a programme of covert action designed to destabilize the Eastern Bloc, and qualified enthusiasm for this idea was

²⁵ Ray S. Cline, *Secrets, Spies and Scholars* (Washington, DC, 1976), pp. 123–8.

²⁶ See, e.g., Captain Hollinger USAF, attached AI3(f), Air Ministry, to Directorate of Intelligence, Washington, DC, 23 January 1951, enclosing 16 copies of AI3(f), 'Estimates of Soviet Aircraft Production', 31 December 1950, File 2–18347, Box 127, TS Cables and Section, RG 341, United States National Archives, Washington, DC (hereafter USNA). Correspondence with former members of AI3(c)1, Target Intelligence, Air Ministry, 10 and 20 February 1994.

²⁷ Alan Bullock, *Ernest Bevin: Foreign Secretary, 1945–51* (New York, 1983), pp. 531–4, 659–61, 730–3; Stuart Croft, 'British Policy towards Western Europe, 1947–9: The Best of All Possible Worlds?', *International Affairs*, 64:4 (Autumn 1988), pp. 623–5.

²⁸ These findings have been summarized in Richard J. Aldrich, 'European Integration: An American Intelligence Connection', in Anne Deighton (ed.), *Building Postwar Europe: National Decision Makers and European Institutions, 1948–63* (London, 1995), pp. 159–79; and 'OSS, CIA and European Unity: The American Committee on United Europe, 1949–1960', *Diplomacy and Statecraft*, 8:1 (1997), pp. 184–227. See also Hugh Wilford, 'The Information Research Department: Britain's Secret Cold War Weapon Revealed', in this issue of *Review of International Studies*.

²⁹ It appears that the 'multitude of embarrassments' caused by CIA operations in allied countries first began to be addressed under Kennedy. See Memorandum for the President by Arthur Schlesinger, 'CIA Reorganization', 30 June 1961, File: Central Intelligence Agency General (1961), Box 270A, National Security Files, John F. Kennedy Library, Boston, MA.

³⁰ The classic study of the liberation issue is Bennett Kovrig, *The Myth of Liberation* (Baltimore, MD, 1973). See also Klaus Larres, 'Preserving Law and Order: Britain, the USA and the East German Uprising of 1953', *Twentieth Century British History*, 5:3 (Nov. 1994), pp. 320–50; Jim Marchio, 'Resistance Potential and Rollback: US Intelligence and the Eisenhower Administration's Policies towards Eastern Europe, 1953–6', *Intelligence and National Security*, 10:2 (Apr. 1995), pp. 219–41; Christian F. Osterman, 'The United States, the East German Uprising of 1953, and the Limits of Rollback', *Cold War International History Project Working Paper No. 11* (Dec. 1994).

incorporated in mainstream policy towards the Soviet Union.³¹ However, the detonation of a Soviet atomic weapon in 1949 and the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950 prompted Britain to reconsider. Thereafter, Britain, increasingly conscious of its strategic vulnerability, displayed a propensity to avoid any actions that the Soviets might consider provocative. In contrast, the Americans affirmed a greater degree of commitment to 'liberation' in NSC-68, completed in 1950, which called for the use of 'all means short of war to . . . induce a retraction in the Kremlin's power and influence and . . . intensification of . . . operations by covert means in the fields of economic warfare and political and psychological warfare'.³² This divergence mirrored broader Anglo-American disagreements over the wisdom of pursuing *détente* during the early and mid-1950s.³³ The question of policy on liberation was bound up with estimates of Eastern Bloc resilience, and policy towards the Soviet Union generally. The acrimony generated by the general nature of the resulting disagreements could not be contained by compartmentalization, resulting in heated discussions during the winter of 1951–2.

The worrying divergence of views on liberation, which had already revealed itself on the ground in operational terms, surfaced in American discussions with SIS in London in December 1951. It was addressed substantially in January 1952 by a British Permanent Under-Secretary's Committee (PUSC) paper, entitled 'Future Policy towards Soviet Russia', which explained the reasons behind the British decision to halt liberation activities. This paper argued that Western policy should now aim at reaching a *modus vivendi* with the Eastern Bloc through the negotiation of a number of local settlements that 'might be expected to lead cumulatively to a general stabilisation'. While it considered the impact of the Tito–Stalin split highly favourable for the West, nevertheless the paper's conclusions were that 'operations designed to liberate the satellites are impracticable and would involve unacceptable risks'. Instead, a preference was expressed for covert action designed to hasten broad changes in the whole Soviet system. This conception involved viewing the Soviet system as a whole, and not regarding subversive operations in the satellites as an attempt to liberate specific territories. Instead of risings and revolt the British preferred 'a series of specialist operations against specific targets' within Communist governments, economies and the Soviet Army.

Even this less dramatic programme was proposed by Britain only as a 'sop' to the United States. The PUSC worried that the United States rated the possibility of successful liberation 'a good deal higher than we do' and that these activities would get out of control, facing the West with the choice of armed intervention in support of their proxies or abandoning pro-Western elements to their fate. Yet it recognized

³¹ See, e.g., RC (16)48, minutes of the Russia Committee, 25 November 1948, N13016/765/38, FO 371/71687, PRO; NSC 10/2. 'National Security Directive on the Office of Special Projects, 18 June 1948, reprinted in Thomas H. Etzold and John L. Gaddis (eds.), *Containment: Documents on American Policy and Strategy, 1945–50* (New York, 1978), pp. 125–8.

³² NSC-68, 'United States Objectives and Programs for National Security', 14 April 1950, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (hereafter *FRUS*) 1950, vol. 1, pp. 237–92. As late as 1957 the JIC considered that attempts to liberate one of the satellites 'would give rise to extreme tension' and were one of only three scenarios which could 'increase the risk of Global War'. JIC (57)30, quoted in 'Air Defence of the UK, Annex E: The Likelihood of Attack on the British Isles in Each Year Between Now and 1965', September 1957, DEFE 7/970, PRO.

³³ For a penetrating analysis of Britain and 'Cold War fighting' see John W. Young, *Winston Churchill's Last Campaign: Britain and the Cold War, 1951–1955* (Oxford, 1995).

that the United States would be reluctant to pay much heed to British criticisms of covert action if they seemed 'only obstructive and negative'.

They might be more ready to listen if the United Kingdom was able to indicate agreement in principle to study the possibilities of a more forward policy aimed not at fomenting revolt in the satellites but at weakening the whole fabric of the Soviet Empire; and was then in a position to put forward suggestions and criticisms as a partner from the inside. This course would clearly involve the United Kingdom in going some way with the Americans toward a more forward policy.

This important paper stated that (except in Albania) liberation looked unpromising, not least because it would destroy any intelligence network which the Western powers had built up among resistance elements, although the British did not rule out efforts to 'poison relations between satellite Governments and the Soviet Union'. But in reality by 1952 the Foreign Office and SIS had little heart for any sort of operations which might be considered provocative. Copies of the paper were provided to the British Ambassador in Washington, Sir Oliver Franks, and to Air Chief Marshal Sir William Elliott, Head of the Joint Staff Mission, in preparation for wide-ranging 'politico-military talks' in Washington in early 1952.³⁴

The Americans were less than delighted. On 12 March 1952 the high-level State Department-Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) Co-ordinating Committee met at the Pentagon and considered the 'British paper on covert operations'. They were not taken in by British attempts to present this as a mere change of direction, and General Bradley, chairman of the JCS, encapsulated the mood, observing: 'What worries me is that this paper has an appeasement ring to it'. Robert Joyce of the Policy Planning Staff then went on to explain that it was nevertheless essential to achieve some general agreement on the subject because, during the previous year, it had become clear that SIS and the CIA had begun 'to foul each other up in some of their covert operations'. He then recalled the substance of recent Anglo-American discussions on the subject of covert operations, held in London in December 1951:

I outlined to the British as best I could the NSC-68 policies and indicated why Bedell Smith [Director, CIA] desired to beef up his covert operations . . . I tried to obtain their approval for our point of view and to obtain their agreement that they would not foul up our operations. I must say that in December I got a very negative reaction. The British were strongly inclined to accept the status quo . . . The pitch is that the U.K. wants a voice in decisions on these matters. They are worried that the Americans will go too far too fast. They repeatedly emphasized that they are only 25 miles away from the Continent and that this is much too close for comfort.

At one level, these arguments were bound up with estimates of the resilience of the Eastern Bloc, and so the British paper on covert action had been accompanied by London's assessment on this subject. The Americans noted that it appeared that 'the difference in U.S. and British views on covert operations stemmed from a somewhat different analysis of the Soviet system'. But as these discussions developed, it was clear that, more fundamentally, their problem was not differing analyses of the Soviet system, but rather divergent appreciations of *their own* national vulnerability.

³⁴ The British paper in question was PUSC (51)16 (Final), 'Future Policy Towards Soviet Russia', and Annex B, 'Liberation of the Satellites', 17 January 1952, ZP10/4, FO 371/25002, PRO.

As Joyce succinctly put it, the British 'want to influence us a little and perhaps even control us a little. This is the guts of the matter'.³⁵

It is worth emphasizing that British reticence did not stem from an aversion to covert action as an instrument, but from its distinctive view of an appropriate policy towards the Soviet Bloc (and also Communist China). Britain and the United States found they were able to cooperate more freely over covert operations in Third World countries. The best-known example was the toppling of the Mossadeq government in Iran in 1953. Equally, in May 1958, the British Foreign Secretary, Selwyn Lloyd, expressed his enthusiasm to John Foster Dulles for the ongoing Anglo-American-Australian covert operations to assist rebel forces in Indonesia. Dulles reported:

In private conversation with me evening of May 6, Lloyd said that he thought most recent news from Indonesia encouraging and we should not rpt not give up hope of keeping on the pressure through the rebellious forces now rpt now principally in the Celebes . . . He said his Ambassador in Djakarta strongly favored trying for a political solution and abandoning any assistance to the rebels, but that Rob Scott [Commissioner-General for the United Kingdom in South-east Asia], whose judgment Lloyd valued more highly, did not rpt not share this view.³⁶

Equally the COS favoured maximum disavowable aid to the Indonesian rebels, although they shied away from anything that might lead to a full-scale overt conflict.³⁷

Wide-ranging problems and disagreements over policy towards the Soviet Bloc and Communist China were probably the major impediment to most aspects of Anglo-American intelligence cooperation. It is worth comparing these sorts of problems with the traditional picture of Anglo-American intelligence friction which has tended to emphasize security leaks and the activities of Soviet penetration agents within Whitehall as the primary source of problems. While the latter were troublesome, the impact of figures such as Burgess and Maclean has probably been exaggerated.³⁸ Security incidents clearly had an indelible impact upon those closely associated with the individuals concerned, such as those specifically tasked with responsibility for counter-intelligence within the CIA. There was also clearly a deleterious impact on atomic cooperation.³⁹ Outside these specific areas, though, most intelligence officers accepted these security problems rather philosophically, regarding them as an inevitable problem that 'came with the turf' in their particular line of work. In 1955, four years after the defection of Burgess and Maclean, Admiral Arthur Radford, Chairman of the JCS, noted that things had continued as before and there indeed had been 'little or nothing in the way of positive action

³⁵ Minutes of the JCS-SD Co-ordinating Committee, 12 March 1952, File: JCS-SD Meetings, Box 77, Policy Planning Staff Records, Lot Files 64D 563, RG 59, USNA. Throughout the 1950s the United States produced a stream of high-level estimates on this subject, e.g., NIE 10-58, 'Anti-Communist Resistance Potential in the Sino-Soviet Bloc', 4 March 1958, *FRUS* 1958-60, vol. 10, Part 1, pp. 7-11.

³⁶ Dulles (Copenhagen) to Washington, Dulte 15, 7 May 1958, 756D.00/5-758, RG 59, USNA, quoted in Audrey R. Kahin and George McT. Kahin, *Subversion as Foreign Policy: The Secret Eisenhower and Dulles Debacle in Indonesia* (New York, 1996), p. 174.

³⁷ Brief for the CAS, 'Operations in Undeclared War', 30 May 1958, AIR 8/1954, PRO.

³⁸ V. Newton, *The Butcher's Embrace: The Philby Conspirators in Washington* (New York, 1991).

³⁹ An example of the cataclysmic impact of security failure is the case of James Jesus Angleton, a senior American counter-intelligence officer. See Tom Mangold, *Cold Warrior: James Jesus Angleton, the CIA's Master Spy Hunter* (London, 1991). See also John Cloake, *Templer: Tiger of Malaya* (London, 1985), pp. 179-80.

which has been taken to correct past mistakes or prevent future repetition of these mistakes'.⁴⁰

Moreover, in the years immediately following the hasty departure of Burgess and Maclean to Moscow, the United States encountered its own share of serious security problems. In 1956 the 'compromise' of the US EUCOM headquarters building by Soviet listening devices was uncovered.⁴¹ In 1960 two American signals intelligence personnel, Bernon F. Mitchell and William H. Martin, defected to the Soviet Union. As a result of this, Britain expected 'severe, widespread and highly effective communications security countermeasures to be taken by Russia, with the result that we may be denied much of the intelligence we are now producing'.⁴² Security problems were no longer a British preserve. Instead, it was general problems concerning the nature and direction of the Cold War that created the greatest friction. Notwithstanding this, a great deal of cooperation continued untroubled by these wider issues, since many Anglo-American intelligence activities were specialized, compartmentalized or technical.

Intelligence collection

Anglo-American intelligence cooperation was at its closest in the area of collection by both human and technical means. The willingness of some agencies in Washington to closely integrate collection with the efforts of their British counterparts, despite the unequal volume of exchange, has previously been explained in two separate but related ways. First, it has been ascribed to the joint infrastructures and the close personal associations that were a legacy of the Second World War. Secondly, historians have also emphasized Britain's wartime ability to project a (partly spurious) image of a highly professional approach, based on centuries of secret service activity, in contrast to the so-called amateurs of burgeoning American agencies. Certainly Franklin D. Roosevelt seemed to view British intelligence as a near-omniscient organization.⁴³ These arguments have some force and are especially effective in explaining postwar cooperation between those who had previously been members of, or who had worked very closely with, Eisenhower's SHAEF Command. These included Lord Portal of Hungerford who was superintending Britain's atomic intelligence programme, Strong of the JIB and Walter Bedell Smith, Director of the CIA, 1950–3, not to mention President Eisenhower himself.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ Interview with a retired senior CIA officer, Washington, DC, 2 July 1992. Memorandum by Admiral Radford, (Chairman JCS), 'National Security Implications Resulting From the Defection of British Diplomats, Donald Duart Maclean and Guy Francis DeMoncy Burgess', 26 October 1955, CCS 385 (6-4-46) (2) Sec. 14, JCS Central Files, RG 218, USNA.

⁴¹ Memorandum for the Secretary of Defense by Admiral Radford, 'Clandestine Listening Devices', 6 April 1956, File: Presidential Papers 1956 (8), Box 3, Presidential Subseries, Special Assistant Series, OSANA, WHO, Dwight D. Eisenhower Library, Abilene, Kansas (hereafter DDEL).

⁴² Memorandum to Minister of Defence, 'Defection of US Personnel from NSA (US G.C.H.Q.)', 29 August 1960, DEFE 13/342, PRO.

⁴³ Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only*, pp. 75–122. See also David Stafford, *Camp X: SOE and the American Connection* (London, 1986); Thomas F. Troy, *Donovan and the CIA* (Frederick, MD, 1981).

⁴⁴ See, e.g., Strong (JIB) to Bedell Smith (CIA), 16 April 1952, File S, Box 20, Bedell Smith papers, DDEL.

However, not all wartime intelligence relationships were amiable, and serious confrontations developed in Asia and the Middle East. As the Axis threat receded in 1944, Allied intelligence turned its attention increasingly to rival schemes for commercially valuable territories whose futures were as yet uncertain, stretching from Cyrenaica to Hong Kong.⁴⁵ Even in Europe, US Navy and USAF intelligence officers were depressed by their dependence on the British for signals intelligence and were quietly determined to build their own substantial European capability after 1945. It was always the intention of London and Washington that the Anglo-American signals intelligence alliance should continue unbroken into the postwar period, and decisions to this effect were taken by both Truman and the British COS in late 1945. But equally, it is no surprise that Anglo-American negotiations over postwar signals intelligence cooperation were tough and dragged on until mid-1948.⁴⁶

All this suggests that equally powerful explanations of the extent of postwar cooperation in the field of intelligence collection lie in areas other than the well-worn groove of wartime familiarity. Of equal, if not greater, importance was the extreme difficulty in collecting any intelligence from inside the Soviet Union and Communist China, secure police states in which human operations were increasingly hazardous, and where communications were largely immune from cryptanalytical attack. In these conditions of 'famine', the United States considered that British and Commonwealth contributions were indispensable.⁴⁷ Wartime experience did contribute here in another sense, for the limpidly clear picture of Axis thinking afforded through the remarkable achievements of ULTRA and MAGIC served to throw this new problem of the Soviet target into stark relief. By contrast, the Soviets, using one time pads, enjoyed relatively secure communications when this system was employed properly. They and the Communist Chinese also made extensive use of landlines for communication that could be intercepted only with great difficulty.⁴⁸ The losses incurred through running human agents in these countries help to account for the anxiety to cooperate in improving technical surveillance, including the RB-57 and U-2 aircraft programmes in the 1950s.⁴⁹ There was also increasing disillusionment with the agent networks inherited from the Germans in 1945.⁵⁰ In

⁴⁵ Ronald H. Spector, 'Allied Intelligence in Indochina, 1943-1945', *Pacific Historical Review*, 51:1 (Mar. 1982), pp. 23-50. The arrival of a large OSS contingent at the UN San Francisco Conference in 1945 was a clear indicator of this.

⁴⁶ Memorandum by General Hoyt S. Vandenberg, 'Ninth Air Force Experience in the use of "Y"', 26 February 1945, File: Special Secret Activities, Box 63, Vandenberg papers, Library of Congress; Andrew, 'Making of the Anglo-American SIGINT Alliance', pp. 103-7; Andrew, *For the President's Eyes Only*, pp. 162-4.

⁴⁷ The Director of Naval Intelligence remarked in 1953 that in 'the face of intense security arrangements it is becoming progressively more difficult to gather intelligence on the Soviet Navy'. DNI in NID/GC Report No. 42, January 1953, DEFE 13/352, PRO. Interview, retired senior SIS officer, London, 8 August 1993; interview, former JIC chairman, London, 17 July 1993.

⁴⁸ On fragmentary breaks into postwar Soviet 'Venona' material see Robert J. Lamphere and Tom Shachtman, *The FBI-KGB War: A Special Agent's Story* (New York, 1988), pp. 78-98; Christopher Andrew and Oleg Gordievsky, *KGB: The Inside Story of its Foreign Operations from Lenin to Gorbachev* (London, 1990), pp. 326-9, 369-71.

⁴⁹ Cline, *Secrets, Spies and Scholars*, pp. 176-9; *Chiang Ching-kuo Remembered: The Man and his Political Legacy* (Washington, DC, 1989) pp. 83-92.

⁵⁰ Major General C. A. Willoughby to Richard Nixon, Vice President, 3 November 1960, Folder 5, Box 9, Presidential-Vice Presidential, 1959-72, Willoughby Papers, RG 23, MacArthur Memorial, Norfolk, VA; Willoughby to Dean Rusk, 20 October 1961, Folder 10, *ibid.*

short, this difficult challenge resulted in enormous pressure to pool resources. The importance of this factor was underlined by the way in which both the British and the Americans developed close postwar links with the services of some neutral European states with which there had been little history of wartime fraternization.

Some of the assets enjoyed by the British in 1945 were too substantial for the United States to ignore, particularly for planning future strategic air operations against the Soviet Union. Britain and the United States had each captured several large collections of the German aerial target photography covering the western Soviet Union. In some cases, this had been snatched literally from under the noses of Soviet troops in Germany; in other cases, nitrate film had been recovered from burning river barges. All this material was carefully catalogued and processed in a combined Anglo-American programme codenamed 'Operation Dick Tracy', and the results deposited in Washington and at Britain's Joint Aerial Reconnaissance Intelligence Centre (JARIC) at Brampton. Britain supplemented this material by conducting a limited number of overflights of the Soviet Union, beginning perhaps as early as 1948.⁵¹ The USAF found the prospect of the exchange of these sorts of materials irresistible and concluded a formal agreement on target intelligence in 1948.⁵²

British material was valuable to the United States because the State Department initially forbade similar American overflight projects. This raises the awkward question why the British, at the outset, were more relaxed about these potentially provocative aerial activities. There are several answers to this question. First, the British initially underrated the performance of Soviet air defences, and consequently flights which they believed would be without incident were sometimes surprised by a stern Soviet response. Secondly, during the 1950s and 1960s, London and Washington alternately developed cold feet about overflights and, during each successive phase, one provided the other with material that resulted from their operations. In the early 1950s the British operated a Special Duties Flight of loaned American RB-45C aircraft over the Soviet Union. This position had reversed by the mid-1950s. The United States had become more adventurous, and the British more cautious, with London initially denying the United States permission to fly U-2 missions over the Soviet Union from British territory.⁵³

An important distinction regarding the British attitude must be drawn here. Growing British reticence during the late 1950s and early 1960s stemmed less from a belief that a specific incursion over the Soviet Union might provoke a war, and more from a feeling that these activities were generally contributing to a less attractive Soviet strategic posture. Consequently, in the wake of the loss of Gary-Powers' U-2 over the Ural Mountains, London remained calm and the JIC dismissed threats by Premier Khrushchev and Marshal Malinovsky to attack bases from which future

⁵¹ Major General George C. MacDonald, ACAS A-2, to Director of Naval Intelligence (USN), 'Exploitation of German Captured Photography', 24 July 1946, 2-22143, Box 37, TS Control and Cables Section, RG 341, USNA; Memorandum, 'New Photo Cover', 16 December 1948, File 2-5400-2-2599, Box 43, *ibid.*

⁵² 'USAF-RAF Joint Agreement on Target Intelligence', n.d. (presumed February 1948), File 2-19622, Box 57, TS Control and Cables, RG 341, USNA.

⁵³ Paul Lashmar, 'Canberras over the USSR', *Aeroplane Monthly*, February 1995, pp. 32-5; OH-168, Oral History Interview with R. M. Bissell, Jr (CIA), p. 43, DDEL; presentation by Squadron Leader J. Carrington, 'RB-45 Operations' to conference on air intelligence at RAF Bracknell, 21 March 1996.

reconnaissance flights were launched as 'a bluff'. But the Cuban Missile Crisis made the British reconsider. In its wake, the COS held a lengthy conference on future Soviet defence policy, with Sir Hugh Stephenson, Chairman of the JIC, concluding that:

Russian efforts to build up their forces were not only because of their fears of future imbalance between themselves and the West, but also because recent discoveries of United States reconnaissance potential had made them think that their present deterrent might not be valid. Photographs obtained from the American U-2 aircraft, coupled with confident statements by the United States, had made them believe that they might be victims of pre-emptive attack.⁵⁴

However, the debate concerning overflights was now being eclipsed by the prospect of photographic coverage from the embryonic satellite programmes.

A constant threat to this growing network of cooperation over collection was Britain's equally close associations with the Commonwealth, in the form both of the 'Old Dominions', such as Canada and Australia, and of the New Commonwealth, consisting of states such as India and Pakistan.⁵⁵ A number of these states, notably Australia, had developed alarming security problems during the 1940s. Shortly after the end of the Second World War, this prompted Admiral Inglis, the US Director of Naval Intelligence, to threaten to terminate cooperation with USAF intelligence on account of its close British links. General Cabell, the Director of Air Intelligence (A-2), recalled that 'Admiral Inglis . . . threatened to cut off the flow of U.S. Navy-acquired intelligence, to us so long as we had a British officer in our shop'. However, Cabell calmly explained to Inglis that the benefits of alliance cooperation were such that he would prefer to sever relations with US naval intelligence than with British air intelligence.⁵⁶ In the field of collection, the careful calculation of intelligence dividends counted for more than Anglo-American bonhomie.

Analysis and estimates

Cooperation in the area of intelligence analysis and in the preparation of national estimates, together with its impact upon policy, is a more complex issue than that of collection. While great volumes of finished estimates were exchanged and attention was paid to each other's systemic improvements in assessment machinery, nevertheless the whole process of exchange was characterized by justified suspicions. Fears were expressed either that intelligence might be used to manipulate policy or that requests for comments on estimates might be a device to draw policy-makers into discussions on subjects which they did not wish to address in an Allied context.

⁵⁴ Summary of JIC (60)43 (Final), 'Soviet Threats Against Reconnaissance Flight Bases Following US Incident', 30 May 1960, DEFE 13/342, PRO; Confidential Annex to COS (62) 58th mtg, 25 September 1962, DEFE 32/7, PRO, discussing JIC (62)81, a long-range paper on Soviet defence policy over the subsequent five years which was given 'a very restricted circulation'.

⁵⁵ Report by the Security Service, 'Security in the Dominions', appendix to JIC (48)127 (Final), 'Disclosure of British Military Information to Commonwealth Countries', Guard, 17 December 1948, L/WS/1/1074, India Office Library and Records.

⁵⁶ Unpublished memoirs of General Charles Cabell, Ref.168.702.6, microfilm frame 1854, Center for Air Force History, Bolling Air Force Base, Washington, DC. See also the remarks of Admiral Inglis (DNI) at JIC 175th mtg, 14 December 1948, CCS 334 JIC (5-27-48), JCS Central Files, RG 218, USNA.

Attempts to produce 'Agreed British–American Intelligence' (ABAI) estimates or, later, agreed NATO estimates sometimes failed or else resulted in compromise papers that were ignored by policy-makers.

Estimates with a bearing on atomic issues were an area of perennial disagreement because of their profound policy implications. As early as 1950 a British 'JIC team' despatched on a liaison visit to Washington became enmeshed in an interminable debate over the most likely date of a future Russian attack. Such speculation often revealed more about the mindset of the participants than that of the Soviet Union.⁵⁷ Throughout the 1950s, analysts working under the American JCS tended to be more optimistic than the British about the results of any air offensive against the Soviet Union, and also about the extent of the damage that might be inflicted by any Soviet strategic air offensive against Britain. Both sides accepted that this disparity of view stemmed more from their different geostrategic perspectives than from differing sets of data.⁵⁸ Commonly, the British found that they agreed with CIA estimates, but not with the estimates produced by those working close to operational planners under the American JCS.⁵⁹ Meanwhile, concerns about the extent to which estimate exchange might influence policy were underlined by the decisions of both the British and the Americans to change or sanitize some estimates before they were exchanged.⁶⁰

Even when considerable efforts were made to negotiate agreed high-level estimates, the result was often a superficial compromise which was of little practical value to policy-makers. This is clearly demonstrated by the divergence of British and American views over the significance of Sputnik in the autumn of 1957. At first glance the procedures adopted appear to constitute a model of alliance cooperation over estimates. Sir Patrick Dean, Chairman of the JIC, was invited to Washington to attend talks with the CIA on Sputnik:

In Washington we held discussions with Mr Allen Dulles, Mr Amory, General Cabell and Mr Cumming (State Department). The basis for discussion was a memorandum prepared by the C.I.A. Sir Patrick Dean suggested certain amendments to their memorandum to bring it into line with British thinking, these amendments were accepted by the American representatives and the resultant document is attached at Annex . . . Finally, the agreed views in the memorandum at Annex were reported by Mr Allen Dulles to a plenary meeting of the recent Anglo-American Conference in Washington, and were approved by both President Eisenhower and the Prime Minister.

However, appearances were deceptive. Robert Amory of the CIA informed Dean privately that, in reality, American intelligence agencies in Washington could not accept the essence of the British view that there would be a three-year gap between Sputnik and the arrival of a real threat from Soviet intercontinental ballistic missiles

⁵⁷ Minutes of a Russia Committee meeting, 12 September 1950, RC/133/50, N1053/26/G, FO 371/86762, PRO.

⁵⁸ See, e.g., discussion of JIC (52)30 (Final) at COS (52) 102nd mtg, 15 July 1952, DEFE 32/2, PRO; DNI memorandum, 6 July 1953, ADM 205/89, PRO; Brownjohn to Minister of Defence, 26 June 1953, DEFE 13/352, PRO. See also I. Clark and N. Wheeler, *The British Origins of Nuclear Strategy, 1945–55* (Oxford, 1989), pp. 186–9.

⁵⁹ Brownjohn to Minister of Defence, NCDB/M/4, 10 February 1953, DEFE 13/352, PRO.

⁶⁰ For unnumbered British JIC papers in Washington that do not correspond to the numbered London series see 091.France, Box 10, and 091.Greece, Box 14, Army Plans and Operations Files 1948/9, RG 319, USNA. For American sanitization of material destined for London, see minutes of JIC 177th mtg, 13 January 1949, CCS 334 JIC (5-27-48), JCS Central Files, RG 218, USNA.

(ICBMs). The Americans believed that 'appreciable quantities' of ICBMs could be deployed in the next one to two years. Accordingly, he warned that the estimate that incorporated British views would cut little ice in Washington, despite approval at the highest level.⁶¹

The British were no less guilty of rushing to disregard the agreements achieved by British and American analysts. Two years earlier, 'a compromise between the U.K. and U.S. views' on the progress of the Soviet ICBM programme had been incorporated into a major Cabinet Defence Committee paper. But this did not prevent Sir Frederick Brundrett, Chief of Defence Science and Chairman of the Defence Research Policy Committee, from urging the Minister of Defence to disregard it, precisely because it was a compromise:

[A]lthough the Russians have carried out a very long series of trials . . . we think that they will not be able to solve the problems involved in the very long range missiles for them to attack the Americans before 1965 and will be unlikely to be able to mount a very serious threat against North America until some years later, possibly even 1970.

The Americans however, take a much more pessimistic view . . . The evidence on which the American views are based is known to us and is considered, in my opinion absolutely rightly, to be totally unacceptable.

Brundrett warned that all this derived from an excessive American 'fear of underestimating the enemy' which in turn stemmed from surprises such as the Soviet atomic bomb and the MIG-15.⁶²

Matters were complicated by the many levels of intelligence estimate. Officials in both London and Washington appear to have clearly understood the extent to which American policy-makers, particularly the JCS, took only limited notice of the agreed American high-level National Intelligence Estimates, because of the compromises involved in their production, and instead preferred estimates prepared by their own departments.⁶³ Therefore one of the main tasks of British liaison officers in Washington was to disperse multiple copies of JIC papers through the decentralized American policy-making machine, often to quite a low level, as well as trying to influence high-level or centrally agreed American papers in draft.⁶⁴ Much the same situation was to be found in London. Mid-level planners continued to give close attention to estimates, but when senior policy-makers did not like a JIC report, they chose to disregard it, citing their operational experience which they claimed gave them a superior ability to 'draw the strategic or tactical deductions from the facts'. Air Chief Marshal Sir John Slessor remarked that he and his colleagues simply refused to accept the pessimistic JIC estimates of Soviet military capabilities *vis-à-vis* Western Europe:

⁶¹ JIC Secretary to Chairman COS, 'Comments on Various Military Factors Affecting Soviet Capabilities and Intentions over the Next Five Years', JIC/2291/57 (Limited Circulation), 31 October 1957, and Annex, Central Intelligence Agency Memorandum No. 1416446, 22 October 1957, DEFE 13/342, PRO.

⁶² Brundrett to Minister of Defence, FB/483/55, 'Note on Military Potential Section of Annex to D.C.(55)46', 28 October 1955, DEFE 13/342, PRO.

⁶³ Ridgway to JCS, 18 July 1953, File Jan-Dec 53, Box 28, Ridgway papers, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

⁶⁴ See, e.g., Bradley (JCS) to Pirie (JSM Washington) thanking him for 'five copies of a report by your Joint Intelligence Committee examining the likelihood of war with the Soviet Union up to the end of 1954', 13 March 1951, 091.England, Box 1, Bradley Files, RG 218, USNA.

I have long thought . . . that there are disadvantages in accepting for planning purposes the J.I.C. estimates of Russian capabilities . . . I just do not believe these estimates that the Russians could be at the Rhine in a few days . . . I don't believe the Intelligence people are the best qualified to do this sort of appreciation. Inevitably and, up to a point, rightly it is their job to produce the worst possible case.⁶⁵

Senior figures in London and Washington, then, did not hesitate to bend or disregard inconvenient estimates. Meanwhile the remarks of those assigned to SHAPE intelligence during the 1950s with the task of producing agreed estimates in support of NATO summed up the experience of Allied cooperation on estimates: '[We] felt that we had nations who wanted to plant intelligence to support their national aim as opposed to having intelligence speak to the issue as it really was'.⁶⁶ London and Washington were therefore alert and ready to resist attempts to influence policy through the medium of estimates. More broadly, the theoretical work that has hitherto been undertaken on the intelligence-estimate-policy relationship in a *national* context offers a firmly realist, rather than idealist, interpretation in which intelligence is portrayed as 'a function of command'. This realist interpretation could be readily extended to explain aspects of estimate exchange in the context of alliance.⁶⁷

Intelligence and alliance

Perhaps the most difficult subject to evaluate is the broader role of intelligence in cementing the alliance as a whole during the Cold War, a period when Britain was continually shifting towards a more subordinate position *vis-à-vis* the United States. It is unlikely that 'agreed estimates', even when they were approved at the highest level, did much to encourage convergent policies, since these agreed estimates were often regarded as a flawed compromise. Instead, in broad terms, it was in the area of collection that Britain's intelligence contribution was most important, helping to offset the growing postwar asymmetry of the 'Special Relationship'. This was partly because, while Britain's intelligence-gathering capabilities declined relative to those of the United States after 1945, the rate of their *relative* decline was slower than that of British military capabilities.

This was certainly the view taken by the State Department. In February 1968, on the eve of Prime Minister Harold Wilson's visit to Washington, Dean Rusk, Secretary of State, called for an analysis of the 'nature and worth of the "special relationship"'. The resulting report, produced by the Bureau of Intelligence and Research and entitled 'What Now for Britain?', stated bluntly that Wilson's visit

⁶⁵ Slessor to VCAS, JCS 37/1, 20 September 1949, AIR 75/92, PRO. On the US JCS see Mescall, 'The Triumph of Parochialism', pp. 127–34.

⁶⁶ Oral history of Colonel Herron W. Maples, SHAPE Intelligence and DIA, Box 1, Oral History Collection, US Army Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania.

⁶⁷ The phrase 'a function of command' is drawn from Patrick Mescall's work on the DIA. A classic statement of the idealist position is S. Kent, *Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy* (Princeton, NJ, 1949; rpt, 1966). A classic realist statement is P. J. McGarvey, 'DIA: Intelligence to Please', in Morton H. Halperin and Arnold Kanter (eds.), *Readings in American Foreign Policy: A Bureaucratic Perspective* (Boston, MA, 1973), pp. 318–28.

came at the time when Britain had 'never cut a less impressive figure in Washington's eyes'. Wilson's popularity was judged to be 'at an abysmal low', in addition to which 'his country has few friends and no future course that promises future success'. During the previous three months the Wilson government had been forced into devaluation through the failure of its economic policies, its attempts to enter Europe had received another French rebuff, and it had announced a wholesale retreat from defence commitments east of Suez. President Johnson had tried to persuade London to reverse these defence cuts on account of American burdens in Vietnam, but without success, prompting Washington to conclude that Britain had finally conceded 'its inability to remain a world power'. One critic, they noted, had recently asserted that the relationship was now special only in the sense that the relationship between a master and an old family retainer was special, 'with all that this implies about inequality, loyalty, permanence, and toleration of eccentricities'.

Surprisingly, and notwithstanding this catalogue of disasters, the State Department dismissed these gloomy predictions, insisting that Britain remained a valued partner and that there were certain important features of alliance cooperation that remained genuinely 'quite special'. They continued:

At bottom the most concrete proof that the United States and the United Kingdom are each other's favored partner is found in the fields of nuclear weaponry and intelligence. Each government provides the other with material and information that it makes available to no-one else. . .

There is a division of labor in certain geographic and functional fields, and on some areas and subjects, each nation is dependent for its intelligence mainly on the other. . .

Peering ahead into the 1970s, Washington saw the British as still having a valuable contribution to make in the related fields of intelligence and strategic weaponry. In both these fields, much of the British contribution was derived from its overseas territories, from its 'residual empire', which provided not only invaluable political contacts but also a vast panoply of key airbases, naval installations and suitable sites for technical collection. Britain's 'far-flung dependencies and Commonwealth affiliates' provided 'an unrivalled network of . . . facilities that served US foreign policy interests'. 'Around the globe . . . these installations provide valuable—in some cases indispensable—contributions to US security arrangements'.⁶⁸

Britain's ability to make a 'special' contribution to the Western intelligence effort was particularly strong in the area of non-Soviet targets. Because of the long-term American confrontation with Communist China over Korea, Taiwan and then Vietnam, British territories in Asia proved invaluable. In contrast, for three decades following 1949, the United States lacked even the overt collection possibilities that an embassy in Beijing would have provided. In 1957 the US National Security Council noted that US officials based in Hong Kong had access to 'uniquely valuable sources of intelligence' and 'a mass of data based on first-hand observations of conditions on the mainland'.⁶⁹ This extended to other areas such as Africa,

⁶⁸ Memorandum from the Directorate of Intelligence and Research (State Department) to Dean Rusk, 'What Now for Britain? Wilson's Visit and Britain's Future', REU-11, 7 February 1968, Philip M. Kaiser papers, Box 8, Harry S. Truman Library, Independence, MO.

⁶⁹ NSC 5717, 'U.S. Policy on Hong Kong', 17 July 1957, Box 21, NSC Series, OSANA, White House Office, DDEL. For a discussion of the impact of Hong Kong-derived material on US policy in Cambodia in 1970 see Thomas Powers, *The Man who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA* (London, 1979), pp. 216–17.

as the focus of the Cold War shifted to the Third World in the 1960s. Crucially, British technical collection systems were more immune to imperial retreat than overt British defence dispositions. Britain maintained technical facilities in successor states, sometimes on an undeclared basis, for example in Ceylon where the host government was informed that they were permitting the continued operation of a British communications relay station.⁷⁰ Britain also assisted new governments throughout Asia, Africa and the Middle East in running their own nascent clandestine services.⁷¹ The eventual erosion of these substantial British assets occurred in the 1970s and 1980s as a result of American advances in the use of satellite platforms, not because of the reduction in Britain's global military role during the 1950s and 1960s.⁷²

In spite of these clear indicators, the precise nature and value of intelligence cooperation within the 'Special Relationship' during the Cold War remains something of an imponderable. The peculiar difficulties involved in any assessment of its wider importance are usefully thrown into relief by a comparison with Anglo-American atomic cooperation. On the one hand, atomic cooperation undoubtedly endured a far more troubled history over the same period, being all but halted by the McMahon Act in 1946. Even at operational level, while British bases were provided for American strategic forces, Washington came to the uncomfortable conclusion, as early as 1948, that the British might well abruptly terminate these base agreements in time of crisis. Anglo-American atomic cooperation was not fully restored until 1958. Intelligence cooperation was much more stable, partly because it was compartmentalized and partly because it involved less strategic risk.⁷³

Yet on the other hand, if intelligence cooperation was a more stable and indeed an almost ubiquitous factor in the 'Special Relationship', it was nevertheless *subordinate* to themes such as atomic cooperation.⁷⁴ While both the British and the Americans identified intelligence on the Soviet atomic weapons programme and associated delivery systems as a very high priority indeed, nevertheless cooperation in this field was badly damaged by the broader impediments to all Anglo-American atomic cooperation that prevailed until the late 1950s, when Britain finally detonated a hydrogen bomb. Remarkably, Britain and the United States were unwilling to share some of their intelligence on the Soviet atomic programme for fear of telling

⁷⁰ D (57)3, 'Defence Facilities in Ceylon', note by Minister of Defence, 21 January 1957, and 'draft opening statement', 3 December 1956, DEFE 13/230, PRO.

⁷¹ J. M. Lee, *African Armies and Civil Order* (London, 1969), pp. 63–70. This was especially true of the Arab Gulf states.

⁷² An outstanding survey of this subject is offered by Jeffrey Richelson, *American Espionage and the Soviet Target* (New York, 1987). Britain's desire to be seen to make a substantial intelligence contribution to assist her alliance diplomacy *generally* remains a consideration in the 1990s. See James Adams and David Leppard, 'Spy Rivals Crow as GCHQ Faces Cuts', *Sunday Times*, 26 Mar. 1995, p. 22.

⁷³ See, e.g., memorandum by Cabell, USAF Director of Intelligence, 'Basic Assumptions for Planning (British Report dated 8 April 1948)', 27 May 1948, File 2-1200-2-1299, Box 40, TS Control and Cables Section Records, RG 341, USNA. This memorandum discussed the British paper JP (48)11 (Final). Cf. Reynolds, "'Special Relationship'?", p. 11.

⁷⁴ This subordination is illustrated by NSC 151/2, 'Disclosure of Atomic Information to Allied Countries', 4 December 1953, File: Presidential Papers 1953 (2), Box 1, Presidential Subseries, Special Assistant Series, OSANA, WHO, DDEL.

each other something that they both already knew, namely, the detailed techniques of hydrogen bomb manufacture.⁷⁵

Intelligence, then, was always a special part of the 'Special Relationship' during the Cold War, yet in another sense it was often subordinate. The British and American intelligence services existed, as their name implies, to provide a 'service' to policy-makers and operational planners.⁷⁶ This observation begs the broadest questions of method and approach in the study of intelligence in an alliance context. Perhaps Anglo-American cooperation over atomic intelligence would be better examined as part of a general study of Anglo-American atomic cooperation, rather than as part of an analysis of the wider activities of the 'Western intelligence community' which, as this article suggests, enjoyed a rather dispersed and compartmentalized existence.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Memorandum of a conversation between Macmillan and Eisenhower entitled 'Geneva Nuclear Test Negotiations', 29 March 1960, Box 5, McCone papers, DDEL. See also Eisenhower to Allen Dulles (CIA), 5 November 1957, File: Allen Dulles (2), Ann Whitman File, Administrative series, DDEL; Eisenhower to Allen Dulles (CIA), 5 March 1959, File: Allen Dulles (1), *ibid*.

⁷⁶ Mescall, 'Triumph of Parochialism'; Philip H. J. Davies, 'Organizational Politics and the Development of Britain's Intelligence Producer/Consumer Interface', *Intelligence and National Security*, 10:4 (Oct. 1995), pp. 113–32.

⁷⁷ Some of the issues in this article are elaborated on in Richard J. Aldrich (ed.), *Espionage, Security and Intelligence in Britain, 1945–79: Documents in Contemporary History* (Manchester, forthcoming 1998).