

Book Reviews

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Book Reviews

Abstract

Afghanistan: Transition Under Threat. By Geoffrey Hayes and Mark Sedra, editors.

Enemies of Intelligence: Knowledge & Power in American National Security. By Richard K. Betts.

Book Reviews

***Afghanistan: Transition Under Threat.* By Geoffrey Hayes and Mark Sedra, editors. Ontario, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2008. ISBN 978-1-55458-001-8. Notes. Bibliography. Charts. Index. Pp. xxxiv, 309. Paper, \$29.95.**

As this review is being written, President Obama has just concluded a meeting with Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper at which one of the primary topics of discussion was the “deteriorating situation” in Afghanistan. Obama recently ordered another 17,000 U.S. troops to that troubled nation, and while Harper remains committed to his country’s pledge to help rebuild Afghanistan, Canada looks to withdraw its nearly 3000 troops by 2011. It remains to be seen whether Afghans can regain control of their country’s security situation, but given the increasing instability and a resurgent Taliban and al-Qaeda efforts, it seems likely that additional U.S. troops will be needed to prevail on what Obama has termed the main front in the war on terrorism. If nothing else, Canada’s economic assistance will be vital, but the current uncertain conditions highlight the importance of understanding *why* we are facing a “transition under threat,” as the editors have aptly subtitled this timely volume.

Hayes and Sedra have done good service in bringing together in one volume a collection of eleven papers presented in Waterloo, Canada in December 2006, at a workshop sponsored by the Centre for International Governance Innovation and co-organized by the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies. The collected essays address three distinct, yet interrelated, aspects of Afghanistan’s transition from war to peace and are organized under the headings of “Political Transition,” “Economic Transition,” and “Security Transition.” A final section of three essays under the category of “The Canadian Case,” specifically examines Canada’s experience in Afghanistan. Despite the recent attention on the state of Afghan affairs, it was apparent to these scholars and other experts even in 2006 that the situation there was yet so uncertain as to give rise to questions about whether efforts to bring stability were “gaining ground or were on the verge of ‘strategic failure’” (p. vii). A sense of the authors’ collective foreboding that the latter situation was the most likely outcome provides a somber background for these essays.

An insightful look at the legacy of 2001’s Bonn conference and resultant agreement provide the foundation for a discussion of the political transition. In “Looking Back at the Bonn Process,” William Maley cites two significant factors as contributing to the failure to deliver fully on

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the promises of Bonn. One is Pakistan's penchant for interference in Afghan affairs, and the other is the relegation of Afghanistan to a back seat in favor of Iraq, to which resources and attention have been largely diverted. Maley further cites as critical the initial decision not to expand the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) beyond Kabul, a situation that contributed significantly to disorder in outlying areas of the country.

In "Afghanistan: The Challenge of State Building," former Afghan Interior Minister Ali A. Jalali also blames the legacy of corruption in his country for the failure to provide a suitable foundation for the growth of democracy. The Afghan state clearly was unable to provide the most basic public services, most notably, security. Jonathan Goodhand rounds out the discussion of the political transition with a provocative look at how poppy production plays a central role in security affairs, asserting that drug policies are actually "undermining higher policy goals related to security and governance" (74). Goodhand echoes Jalali's lament over the lack of focus on strengthening "core state institutions," and in a plea to reconsider intensive eradication efforts he concludes that "rather than criminalizing war economies there is a need to think more carefully about how to harness the energies of war in order to pay for peace" (77).

Perhaps of most interest to the readers of this review will be the section of the book dealing with the security transition. Antonio Giustozzi's "The Neo-Taliban Insurgency: From Village Islam to International Jihad," insightfully contends that a new Taliban strategy has emerged that emphasizes building support among Muslim nations and stretching Western capabilities by creating multiple areas of unrest around the world. Rather than turning Westerners' public opinion against their countries' military efforts, Neo-Taliban focus is on winning Muslim public opinion and thereby strengthening sources of funding and volunteers. Inside Afghanistan, that means first removing pro-government forces from the fight, thus promoting the image from that point that the Taliban is waging a war against foreign aggressors.

In Mark Sedra's "Security Sector Reform and State Building in Afghanistan," the author reflects on the state of security sector reform (SSR), noting that the process of remaking Afghanistan's state security architecture "continues to be characterized by short-termism" (212) and a failure to balance long and short-term goals. Moreover, he asserts, pumping funds into unreformed state institutions still ripe for corruption will serve only to further alienate Afghans victimized by that corruption. Sedra recommends adoption of "a holistic approach that aims to change

the culture and ethos of the system,” (213) and hopes for a continuation of the momentum in placing SSR efforts on the right course for success.

Afghan Ambassador to the United States, Husain Haqqani’s article, “Insecurity along the Durand Line,” provides an historical primer describing the creation of Afghanistan’s border first with British India and then with the independent state of Pakistan, tracing the process by which the latter developed relations with the United States by portraying itself as the bulwark against Soviet influence in the region and by maintaining influence in Afghanistan. While interesting in its portrayal of Afghanistan’s views on the historical relations between that country and Pakistan, Haqqani’s version, though useful, seems decidedly partial in fixing blame. He contends that Pakistan’s historical fears of insecurity on its borders still influence Afghanistan’s external relations and must be addressed by the international community before stable and cordial relations can exist between the two neighbors.

In all, this fine collection of essays provides a useful look at where we have been and, unfortunately, where we still need to go in efforts to restore the security of Afghanistan. The book will be of interest to scholars and strategic security practitioners alike.

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***Enemies of Intelligence: Knowledge & Power in American National Security.* By Richard K. Betts. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2007. ISBN 978-0-231-13889-5. Notes. Index. Pp. xiv, 241. \$21.50.**

We are all aware that the events of September 11, 2001 brought intense focus on our nation’s Intelligence Community (IC), with an enormous variety of corrections, reorganizations, and improvements proposed, many of which were implemented. At the same time allegations of serious error, incorrect reporting, and excessive compartmentation drew front-page headlines in U.S. newspapers and television news programs. In *Enemies of Intelligence: Knowledge & Power in American National Security*, Richard Betts explores these issues and looks at the changes that have resulted, while providing significant background and interesting evaluations of the products of those changes. He also offers his perspective of possible solutions to problems, including strategies to enhance the effectiveness of intelligence analysis and reporting.

While the intelligence business is itself based on a history of many centuries—even the ancient Romans and Greeks used intelligence to

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their advantage and sometimes to their disadvantage—Betts focuses on the events of the past several decades to illustrate his points, generally from World War II to the present day. In this respect the book could be considered a commentary, or perhaps a set of proposed solutions to complex problems that are faced in today's world. He does this based on a distinctive association with the IC. Currently he is Director of the Arnold A. Salzman Institute of War and Peace Studies at Columbia University, and senior fellow at the Council of Foreign Relations. Betts is also the author of several books on military strategy and foreign policy. He has served on staffs of the Senate Intelligence Committee (the Church committee) and National Security Council in the 1970s, as a consultant to the National Intelligence Council and the Central Intelligence Agency in the 1980s, on advisory panels for the Director of Central Intelligence in the 1990s, and on the National Commission on Terrorism (the Bremer commission) in 1999–2000.

Certainly this book is not unique in the field of reviews of our current IC. The thirty-four pages of notes with footnoted references are enough to demonstrate the number of publications on this subject. Indeed, these references are really a treasure trove of materials pertinent to this complex topic, and they provide the basis for a thorough evaluation of many of the concepts. Betts draws from this vast set of publications in order to provide his own perspective regarding the intelligence processes and structure.

Betts skillfully uses his academic experience in combination with his on-the-job experience in order to define many of the problems the IC has faced in the past and those that continue to be of fundamental importance. He clearly points out that public criticism of the IC is often based on limited or even incorrect information. Many successes go quietly into the unknown, while failures most often become public. He also points out that sometimes it is difficult to clearly determine the degree of success of an operation, particularly if it preempts an enemy action. For example, if we learn through intelligence that an enemy action is forthcoming we might implement a defensive measure. If the enemy in turn realizes that a defensive measure exists and does not pursue the action, it is difficult to recognize the degree of success. Similarly, if there is insufficient real proof that an enemy action might take place, but the implementation of an appropriate defense is too expensive or complex based on the evidence available, a lack of action on our part would reflect badly on the intelligence process if the enemy action actually occurred. As noted on the book jacket, author unknown, "Betts argues that when it comes to intelligence, citizens and politicians should focus less on consistent solutions and more on achieving a delicate balance between

conflicting requirements. He also emphasizes the substantial success of the intelligence community, despite its well-publicized blunders, and highlights elements of the intelligence process that need preservation and protection.”

I must admit that when I read of his activities with the Church commission, which was extremely critical of the Intelligence Community in the 1970s, his academic experience and work with the Brookings Institution, both generally liberal environments, I did not expect to find supportable conclusions. In fact I found that he clearly expressed real problems in both the intelligence and political worlds, and made proposals that can positively affect not only the collection and reporting of intelligence, but the evaluation and analysis followed by the determination of appropriate actions based on the intelligence. Anyone involved in final intelligence product analysis or implementation of responses to threats should read this book and consider using the approaches offered by Richard Betts.

Ed Urie is a member of the Henley-Putnam University faculty and is also an adjunct professor at Johns Hopkins University. He is a retired U.S. Army Intelligence Officer and a veteran of CIA and NSA.