Intelligence, Uncertainty and the Art of Command

Guerra, espías e inteligencia en la Historia

16 October 2007

Intelligence and Military Victory

- Optimists
  - Intelligence and National Security, November 2007: the possibility to 'relinquish pre-conceived notions'
  - US military doctrine: Technological superiority and 'Dominant Battle-space Awareness'

- Sceptics
  - Clausewitz, intelligence and uncertainty
  - From C3I to C4SI
  - The enduring challenge of uncertainty

Nature versus *Character* of Intelligence

The Nature of Intelligence: four limiting factors

- Time and Space

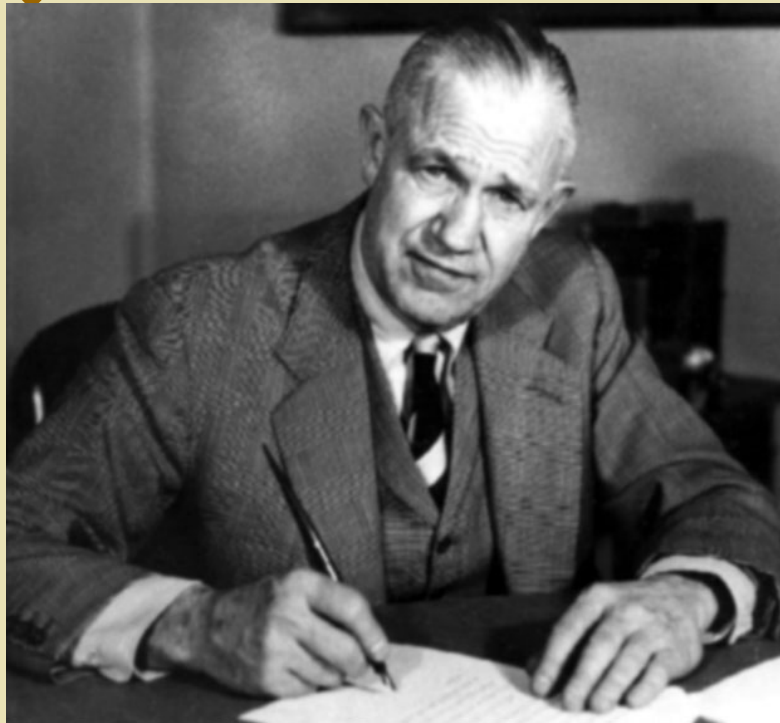- Structure and Organisation

- Politicisation

- Cognition

Wellington and the problem of *Time*

♦ 'How true it is that in military operations time is everything'

Politicisation: Kent versus Gates

Clausewitz and the problem of uncertainty

The Revolutionary and Napoleonic Wars

The Prussian Staff System: Gerhard von Scharnhorst

Technological Change in the 19th Century

◆ Telegraphs

◆ Steam engines

◆ Combustible engines (early twentieth century)

◆ Aircraft (early twentieth century)

The First World War and the rise of Modern Intelligence

- Radio traffic and military operations
- Increasing resources devoted to intelligence

The Intelligence Revolution of the Second World War

- ◆ Machine cryptanalysis and computer code-breaking
- ◆ Industrial scale intelligence collection
- ◆ Truly global communications
- ◆ Rise of intelligence leviathans within the state and security structure
- ◆ Best example of the ability of intelligence to close the 'time-space' equation

Technological Change in the late 20th Century

- Computers and Supercomputers
- Satellites
- The Internet

Enduring limitations

- Time and space
- Structures
- Politicisation
- Cognition

From C3I to C4ISR

- C3I: Command, Control, Intelligence
- C4ISR: Command, Control, Communications, Computers, Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance
- Concept of 'Net-centric warfare'.

Conclusion

- The 'mitigation of uncertainty'
- Not a replacement for strategy or decision-making
- Rarely a reliable basis for planning at the strategic, operational or tactical levels of war