Sherman Kent, known as the father of American intelligence analysis, is one of the most revered figures at the Central Intel- ligence Agency (CIA). The legacy of Kent's public service continues to define the agency, especially through the intelligence analysis school named in his memory and the in-house journal he founded. Kent's most important contribution to the intelli- gence community lies in a theory of intelligence he developed and implemented at the CIA in its early years.

Advocating expert, all-source strategic estimates as the best op- tion to serve the needs of the state, Kent's policies functioned well during the Cold War. However, the increased demand for immediate actionable intelligence since 9/11 has diminished the CIA's ability to conduct important long-range strategic esti- mates. While the killing of Osama Bin Laden stands as a testa- ment to the ability of the CIA's new policies to root out terrorists wherever they hide, the intelligence wars of the future lie not in the mountains of Afghanistan but in the waters, skies and na- tions of the Pacific. If the US hopes to compete with peer rivals for mastery of these regions, its intelligence agencies, specifically the CIA, should look back to Kent to find a way forward.

Sherman Kent arrived at the CIA in 1950. Following the reorga- nization of the agency in the wake of its failure to provide warn- ing of the outbreak of the Korean War a year later, Kent became the director of the new Office of National Estimates (ONE). De- signed to be the heart of national intelligence operations, ONE was tasked with creating National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) – the wide ranging all source strategic intelligence documents produced by the CIA for policymakers. Through his position, Kent established the basic theory of intelligence analysis that served the agency throughout the Cold War. Kent's intelligence theory and methodology revolved around the collection of the 'basic-descriptive' facts and current events of a targeted state where- ever they hide, the intelligence wars of the future lie not in the mountains of Afghanistan but in the waters, skies and na- tions of the Pacific. If the US hopes to compete with peer rivals for mastery of these regions, its intelligence agencies, specifically the CIA, should look back to Kent to find a way forward.

The CIA's Past and Future

As the 100th birthday of Sherman Kent, the "fa- ther of Intelligence Analysis" approaches, Ex-Patt looks at the CIA and its direction. | James Bohland

Russell, an analyst at the CIA during the 1990s, noted that this reduced workforce “was excessively exhausted from work- ing one crisis after another, focused on current intelligence to the detriment of longer-term strategic research to warn policy- makers of crises that lay over the horizon.” This exhaustion in turn led to several dramatic intelligence failures.

The first major failure came during the Gulf War when the CIA misdiagnosed and then authorized the bombing of the al-Fitr- dos bunker. The bunker, thought to be of critical importance to the Iraqi Army, instead housed only the families of Iraqi of- ficials. This mistake led to the erection of an ineffectual wall of bureaucracy within the agency. Unfortunately, this bureau- cacy failed to prevent future embarrassments when the CIA mistook and then authorized the bombing of the Chinese Ein- bassy in Belgrade during the Kosovo War of 1999, believing it to be a Serb weapons factory. Russell notes that these bomb- ings demonstrate how the CIA opted to add bureaucracy to the Agency throughout the 1990s, instead of "[building] analytic muscle that would lead over the [lung] run to better […] in- telligence." These examples also demonstrate the way in which the CIA of the 1990s operated as a type of military intelligence agency, providing tactical intelligence to the military, instead of focusing on the larger strategic issues of the day. Ironically, even with this shift towards current intelligence at the CIA expand- ing in the 1990s, effectiveness at the agency grew very little. This trend expanded in the years after 9/11.

In 2007, in examining the issue of American strategic intelligence over the past decade, John G. Heidenrich, an ana- lyst at the Defense Intelligence Agency, received a stinging rhe- torical answer to his question from another analyst: "Is Amer- ican […] strategic intelligence up to the demands of the global environment and our national policies and strategies? […] the answer is no." In the years following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, the focus of the CIA shifted dramatically away from producing strategic intelligence and towards generating actionable intel- ligence. For example the CIA Counterterroristum Center, whose main goal is to hunt down terrorists using actionable intelli- gence, saw its ranks swell from around 300 employees at the time of the 9/11 attacks to somewhere around 2,000 employees, or ten percent of the CIA's work force today.

This shift in focus has drastically reduced the time spent con- ducting deep strategic research, as analysts are forced to rush from crisis to crisis without being able to spend time on their own research. In addition to this, as the President's Intelligence Advisory Board noted in a 2013 report, "US spy agencies are paying inadequate attention to China, the Middle East and oth- er national security flash points because they have become too focused on military operations and drone strikes." If the US desires to develop a strategy to confront these looming future threats, its intelligence agencies must return to the policies in- stituted by Sherman Kent at the Office of National Estimates in the early 1950s.

The CIA has opted to remember Kent in name only, choosing both consciously and by force of nature to stray from the intelli- gence principles he implemented in the CIA in its infancy. While reexamining the uses of these techniques for current and future intelligence challenges would be a good start for the CIA, other reforms must also be considered. A thorough study of the problems stemming from the policymaker/intelli- gence potential relationship would help the CIA with its bureaucratic outreach. In addition, in an era of austerity and sequestera- tion, one should consid- er the degree to which the CIA bureaucracy has created a self-fulfilling prophecy of its national importance in order to garner a larger allotment of dwindling government funds. While examining these difficult questions will improve the CIA's performance in the fu- ture, the CIA needs to focus in the near term on improving its human capi- tal.

As Sherman Kent noted in 1965, “there is no substitute for the intellectually competent human – the person who was born with the markings of a critical sense and who has developed them to their full potential; who through first-hand experience and study has accumulated an orderly store of knowledge; and who has a feeling for going about the search for further enlight- enment in a systematic way.” If the CIA can attract the type of people noted by Kent so long ago, it will have gone a long way toward improving itself, and preparing itself to meet the chal- lenges facing America now and in the future.