

THE POLITICS AND PSYCHOLOGY OF INTELLIGENCE AND INTELLIGENCE REFORM ROBERT JERVIS pdf

1: Robert Jervis - Wikipedia

Robert Jervis Abstract Policy-makers always say they want the best intelligence, but in fact they do not because good intelligence often raises doubts and challenges policy.

Cornell University Press, Torrey Froscher Can intelligence failure be avoided? Robert Jervis begins his study of two well-known cases, the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War, by noting that the question is more complicated than it may first appear. In this sense, intelligence failures are indeed inevitable, whatever steps might be taken to try to avoid them. A more interesting question is whether analysts succeed or fail in making the most of information available to them. In two case studies, Jervis identifies key reasons why analysis fell short while also demonstrating that the most common explanations for these failures are wrong. His conclusion in both cases is that if analysts had done their best, i. The fundamental reason for the failure, according to Jervis, was that judgments were based mostly on their inherent plausibility and alternative possibilities were not seriously considered. The shah had defied previous predictions of his demise and was expected to do so again. CIA believed that the shah would crack down if his rule was threatened, apparently not taking into account that this expectation was at odds with US advice that he should continue to pursue democracy and reform. Analysts had developed plausible inferences about what was happening in Iraq that guided their interpretation of the relatively few specific bits of information that were available. It made no sense that Saddam Hussein would continue to obstruct inspections and risk a US attack if he had nothing to hide. This general presumption, rather than the specific evidence being reported, was the basis for the judgment that Iraq had WMD. As in the case of Iran, they did not take into account that there was no way to determine if this core belief was true or false. Jervis does not discount or excuse the specific errors of analysis and sourcing that received most of the attention in the official postmortems of the Iraq failure. In fact, given the information available, the least damning verdict that might have been offered was that there was no solid evidence of continuing programs. Any claim that Saddam had ended his WMD programs would have been seen as highly implausible, even if there was evidence to support it. This is not to say that the IC could not do a better job. Analysts tend to look for and find what they expect to see. Most important, they do not make an effort to consciously articulate the beliefs that guide their thinking and consider what evidence should be available if they were true, or what it would take to disprove them. Facts do not speak for themselves but inevitably are seen in a framework of understanding and belief—whether that framework is recognized or not. Analysts rarely think about that contextual framework or what it would take to make them change their views. The perils of such thinking traps are not a new concern to intelligence analysts. Intelligence products tend to focus on the latest events, reporting the facts with little reflection or interpretation. Conclusions are too often merely assertions without explanation or support beyond their inherent plausibility. Although it has all the necessary raw materials, the IC has never developed an effective peer review process for analytic production. In accordance with the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of , analysts are applying new guidelines designed to improve characterization of sourcing, clarify assumptions, and encourage consideration of alternative possibilities. Jervis does not assess the merits of these initiatives specifically, but he clearly believes that the prospects for improvement are limited by the fundamentally intractable nature of the problem. He suggests that better analysis requires a robust examination of how judgments are reached and a sharp focus on underlying factors that are often overlooked. Why do specific judgments seem plausible and are there alternative possibilities? Could the information advanced in support of a particular thesis be explained by other factors? Are we misunderstanding the impact of political and historical factors unique to the issue or region? He recommends supplementing this program of self-scrutiny with substantively focused peer review and extensive study of a range of historical cases. Even as Jervis explains the challenge of overcoming congenital intelligence limitations, he also warns that better analysis in the sense he suggests might not be particularly welcomed by consumers. By their nature, decision makers need to have conviction

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and are focused on selling and implementing their policies. Intelligence analysis that gives more scope to alternative interpretations of the evidence is not likely to be well received. Jervis offers a colorful quote from John Maynard Keynes to illustrate the point: Ideally, this could raise the level of understanding and debate before policymakers make decisions. At the same time, however, they are unlikely to pay attention unless they are already seized with the issue, so there is a narrow window for such inputs. There is much more of value to the intelligence professional in this concise but densely packed volume, including a discussion of the complexities of politicization, specific insights on other historical cases of interest, and detailed endnotes that constitute a survey of relevant literature. Dec 10, Dec 14,

2: Summary/Reviews: Why intelligence fails :

In Why Intelligence Fails, Robert Jervis examines the politics and psychology of two of the more spectacular intelligence failures in recent memory: the mistaken belief that the regime of the Shah in Iran was secure and stable in , and the claim that Iraq had active WMD programs in

3: Why Intelligence Fails, Lessons from the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War

1 The Politics and Psychology of Intelligence: Iraq and Other Wars. Robert Jervis. This paper is put together from chapters 3 and 4 of my book, Why Intelligence.

4: Why Intelligence Fails : Robert L. Jervis :

Jervis, Robert. "What's Wrong With the Intelligence Process?" International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence 1, no. 1 (Spring): [Reform/80s][c] Jervis, Robert. Why Intelligence Fails: Lessons from the Iranian Revolution and the Iraq War. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press,

5: The Politics and Psychology of Intelligence and Intelligence Reform : The Forum

"An accessible and powerful introduction to one of the most important scholars in the history of international relations, this magisterial collection of Robert Jervis's most significant essays, gathered here for the first time, comprehensively applies principles of psychology to enduring problems in international politics.

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