

The Sherman Kent School of Intelligence Analysis and its Role in Improving the Analytical Performance of the US Central Intelligence Agency CIA

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ABSTRACT:

The main goal in current research that the analytical philosophy of Sherman Kent played a major role in developing the craft of intelligence analysis at the American Intelligence Agency, and we point out here that the organized analytical techniques that captured Sherman Kent's interest are scenarios, competing hypotheses, devil's advocate, and teams (A, B).), red team, and low-occurrence/ high-impact probabilities. They all share an important focal point, which is analytical alternatives in order to cover unlikely hypotheses to ensure that no strategic intelligence surprise occurs. We believe here that the period in which Kent lived, in which he witnessed the surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, the Korean War, and the Cuban missile crisis, which is considered one of the largest intelligence failures in The history of the CIA had left him with a fear of strategic surprise, which was reflected in his philosophy of not ignoring unexpected threats and taking them into account in all the analytical methods he adopted.

1. Introduction

The term "strategic intelligence analysis" was first used by Sherman Kent in his book (Strategic Intelligence for American World Policy) in 1949, where he defined it as "the knowledge that a political and military decision-maker must possess in order to ensure national interests and welfare." Most definitions contained in the intelligence literature emphasize the role of strategic intelligence in formulating security strategies at the international level as well as major issues at the national level, while identifying ways to confront threats, risks, and weak points of strong security.

In order for the decision maker to perform his role in order to guarantee the interests of his country and achieve the well-being of his nation, he needs the intelligence community, as strategic intelligence analysts, through their use of "organized analytical techniques," subject the raw data received in their processing and analysis laboratories (the thinking capabilities of the intelligence analyst) to purification. data from impurities (misleading evidence that increases the level of uncertainty in the mentality of the intelligence analyst and the decision maker) in order to extract information and knowledge from the data, and then issue an organized analytical judgment from the extracted information and knowledge, submitting the organized analytical judgment to the decision maker, who will be one of the Inputs to the decision making process.

Research importance

The importance of the topic lies in presenting the relationship between strategic intelligence analysis and the decision-making process in light of the assumptions of the Sherman Kent School. Research into this relationship is necessary in order to know how strategic intelligence analysts work with the decision maker in a strategic environment characterized by volatility, apprehension, complexity and ambiguity. Without this awareness, the decision-making process risks becoming merely a tactical and temporary process and not a strategic one.

All of this led us to adopt the assumptions of the Sherman Kent school because of their importance in deciphering the relationship between whether surprise is inevitable. What is the role of analysis? What Sherman Kent called "strategic warning" is necessary to prevent surprise and reduce the risks of uncertainty and how to deal with it or even exploit it in decision making by thinking about analytical priorities and/or rethinking alternative analysis similar to the change in the strategic environment.

Problem of the Study

Searching for assumptions and schools of thought that work to evaluate the strategic environment in a way that is consistent with the movement of rapid and complex changes on the one hand and the vision and ideology of the decision maker, especially in the issue of setting priorities. The Sherman Kent School is one of the analytical schools that works to evaluate the strategic environment, which is what led to its selection. Therefore, the problem lies in the process of strategic analysis to match the decision-maker's vision with several requirements for the success of the state's strategic performance. Accordingly, the central question in the problem can be formulated as follows: What is the extent of the impact of the decision-making process on the strategic analysis and on the state's strategic performance? To answer the central question, a sub-question can be developed that helps answer the problem of the study according to the following:

What are the assumptions of the Sherman-Kent School? What is its role in the strategic analysis process?

Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the study is based on the hypothesis that: Strategic analysis has cognitive-rational assumptions and schools that contribute to rationalizing the strategic decision-making process and determining priorities based on the rational balance between opportunities and threats. Therefore, the greater the reliance on assumptions and scientific methods, the more rational the decision-making process will be in achieving... The supreme national interests of the state.

Research structure

The research is divided into four sections. The first section is entitled "Sherman Kent's Theory of Intelligence," in which we present Sherman Kent's vision of intelligence elements.

While the second requirement was entitled "Sherman Kent's assumptions regarding the relationship of intelligence analysts with decision makers," through which we present Sherman Kent's opinion on the pattern of the relationship between intelligence analysts and decision makers.

The third requirement was entitled "The role of intelligence analysis in sensing international threats (strategic warning), in which we present how the intelligence analyst can sense external international threats to the national security interests of the state to reduce strategic surprise.

On the other hand, the fourth requirement is entitled "Advanced Organized Intelligence Analysis Techniques," which shows how a group of techniques can develop the capabilities of the intelligence analyst in constructing possible perceptions with what is known as "alternative analysis" to prevent the occurrence of strategic surprise.

The Sherman Kent School of Intelligence Analysis and its role in improving the CIA's analytical performance

The main purpose of Sherman Kent's writing was to authorize it Strategic Intelligence for American world Policy in 1949 to be a beacon that would guide all the analytical methods that would be produced in the future by the intelligence services, (1) Indeed, when President Truman chose General Walter Bedell Smith to be director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the latter had the goal of saving the analytical side of the agency, which he called The name "The Heart and Soul of the CIA." In order to achieve his goal, the general persuaded Sherman Kent to leave Yale University and join the Central Intelligence Agency. Under his supervision and management, Sherman Kent established the National Estimates System, which collects the best available information from all government departments to analyze it using organized analytical techniques. (2) During the term of President George W. Bush and George Tenet's administration of the CIA, the Sherman Kent School was established in 2000 as a way to address the analytical weaknesses of the agency's analysts according to their levels, improve the analytical quality of the final analytical judgment resulting from the application of organized analytical techniques, and thus produce an easy analytical product. Digestion for decision makers as one of the inputs to their decision-making process.(3)

The first requirement: Sherman Kent's theory of intelligence

Sherman Kent viewed intelligence as a specialized form of knowledge that helps the consumer, an organization that produces knowledge, and an activity carried out by the intelligence organization. (4) To further clarify these elements, we will discuss them in more detail.

1- Intelligence is knowledge

This part relates to the craft of intelligence, which Sherman Kent calls “high-level positive foreign intelligence.” This phrase summarizes the type of knowledge that any country must possess, with the necessity of excluding some other parts of knowledge, namely: First, knowledge related to developments in the country’s local scene. Because positive foreign intelligence is in fact “external” in terms of scope, purpose and content and does not focus on what is happening inside the United States of America. Second, knowledge related to the tasks of law enforcement forces, and the word “positive” does not refer to counterintelligence intelligence nor any other type of intelligence designed to detect domestic or foreign intrusions. The phrase “high-level” came to exclude tactical and operational intelligence of a military nature, and to consolidate what Sherman Kent called “strategic intelligence,” which is concerned with providing the knowledge necessary to defend the country and its highest values and achieve the well-being of the citizen. Some of this knowledge can be obtained through clandestine sources as well as research and observation.(5)

2- Intelligence is an organization (institution)

Intelligence is a physical organization of people seeking to obtain a certain type of knowledge, and this organization must be prepared to put foreign countries under surveillance with the possibility of explaining their past, present, and possible future. It must be emphasized that the information the organization produces about foreign countries is useful to the decision-maker. In other words, the information must be relevant to the decision-maker’s concerns about those countries, and it must be complete, accurate, and timely. In order to achieve this goal with high accuracy, it is necessary for this organization to have teams of experts who have the necessary ability to follow developments and inform relevant national authorities of developments in international and strategic politics of foreign countries. Accordingly, they will devote their professional skills to producing useful information about these developments and related matters. Related developments.(6)

3- Intelligence is an activity (process)

Intelligence as a process begins when you deal with knowledge, and the organization that produces this knowledge. Knowledge about strategic intelligence serves two purposes: first, it serves a preventive or defensive use in that it warns us in advance of plans that other powers may have hatched to harm our national interests; Second, it serves a positive use in the sense that it paves the way for an active foreign policy or grand strategy. The research process related to strategic intelligence begins in two main ways: First, when decision makers or strategic planners in the government begin to formulate or introduce something new into foreign policy, then they often turn to intelligence information and ask about the basics and history of the case, and in their quest for knowledge they are motivated Intelligence conducts continuous research and monitoring for the purpose of espionage. Second, an intelligence team brings it to conduct systematic and continuous monitoring of what is happening abroad, openly or covertly, or both in other countries. This process cannot be separated from research because it performs two vital functions: First, it tells us when a country is considering a policy or measure that would harm Our national interests. In this role, it stimulates the production of preventive defense knowledge necessary for the security of the state. Second, it tells us what we must know about foreign affairs if we are to carry out an active foreign policy. In this role, it stimulates the production of offensive knowledge related to the enemy's strategic offensive capabilities, its identified weaknesses, and the enemy's political and economic strengths and weaknesses. Therefore, this is the knowledge on which offensive plans must be based in time of war, and on this knowledge plans must be based in peacetime if the decision maker has to decide whether he will sponsor economic recovery programs in other countries, which he will defend before Congress and before citizens and decision makers. In his country. (7)

The second requirement: Sherman Kent's assumptions regarding the relationship of intelligence analysts with decision makers

Sherman Kent represents the ideal approach in American intelligence work, based on the model of professional objectivity based on a set of professional ethics that list objectivity and freedom from external pressure as basic virtues for the intelligence analyst, (8) so they call for the establishment of a dividing wall between intelligence analysts and decision makers. (9) To avoid the overlapping relationship between intelligence analysts and decision makers increasing the risk of politicization of analyzes and intelligence analysis losing its objectivity when analysts become aware of the preferences of decision makers, leading to the production of analyzes that

are consistent with the preferences of decision makers to satisfy them, and the ideal represented by Sherman Kent means balance in The relationship of intelligence analysts with decision makers. In terms of the importance of analysts maintaining the independence of their work to ensure the analytical depth that enables them to make a distinctive professional contribution to national security; On the other hand, the importance of their communication with decision makers to provide useful intelligence assessments for the decision-making process, and communication is governed by checks and balances within the relationship system, so the analyzes are read by multiple experts, who have no knowledge of the biases and tendencies between an intelligence product and a specific consumer, and the analytical assessments are reviewed by committees. Between agencies. (10) On the other hand, the balance that Sherman Kent sets as a standard for the work of an intelligence analyst is considered an ethical counter to the danger of politicizing analyzes if there is a need for a connection between the two parties. The problem of politicizing analyzes is manageable because the need to present the “pure truth” to decision makers. It is within the core of the training and ethics of every intelligence analyst. In other words, presenting the truth to decision-makers is the reason for the existence of intelligence. Therefore, the greatest risk in the relationship is not that the analyst becomes politicized, but rather that he becomes irrelevant to the decision-making process, especially in risk analysis. The distance of intelligence analysts from decision makers is the most harmful to analysts and national security due to the lack of guidance. As for intent analysis, Sherman Kent believes that analysts and decision makers are very close in their thinking about the likely behavior of the opponent. In this case, neither party will take into account the information. new developments that could undermine their joint result. (11)

Below are some brief recommendations to clarify the options of intelligence analysts as they face what Sherman Kent described as “a never-ending effort to maintain the effectiveness of the relationship between intelligence analysts and decision makers”:(12)

- 1- Defining the task of analysts realistically: The standard of presenting truth to power is fundamental but often symbolic. In complex issues where analysts are not fully informed of US intentions, let alone those of adversaries and other players, the most realistic standard for analysts is to “tell things as they see it and as they think.” When there is a need to provide forecasts and estimates by analysts, it must be remembered that the decision maker is also an analyst, so it must be ensured that the analyzes presented to him are transparent and sound, that the evidence supporting the analysis presented is real and abundant, and that the alternative results are reasonable and have a likelihood.
- 2- To accomplish strategic analysis tasks, intelligence analysts must be experts in how the American government works, as well as other foreign governments. The analyst must be present in the trenches of decision-making to be able to understand the issues, know the goals of their country, how the specific operation takes place, who are the people who benefit, and know the affected, friendly, and neutral parties. And other related issues that of course contribute to improving timely and productive intelligence analyzes that will contribute to making informed decisions.
- 3- The intelligence analyst must place confidence in his or her analytical product. Analytical confidence is directly proportional - in theory - to the specialization that is considered the core of professional practice in intelligence analysis. In other words, if the mission of intelligence analysis is to enrich the decision-making process to help the US government anticipate threats and seize opportunities, then any question for decision-makers must be addressed by intelligence as long as the answer reflects professional analytical prowess.
- 4- If a specific task is not defined by decision makers, analysts must formulate a task the way policy professionals do their work, and then answer it as intelligence professionals.
- 5- It is necessary to achieve a balance between discretionary analysis and practical analysis, as intelligence analysts have an unconditional professional responsibility to conduct comprehensive assessments, such as strategic warnings, identifying perceived external obstacles to US goals, and other forms of analysis. But it should be ensured that these analyzes are communicated to the decision-making units, and if so, the analysts must supplement the final estimate (evaluative analysis) with the business analysis; For example, opportunities to gradually advance US interests through a cost-benefit comparison. Decision makers are paying serious attention to analysts' assessments of what the United States cannot do; If it is balanced with assessments that deal professionally with what the United States can do?

Sherman Kent also concluded that the relationship of decision makers with analysts is determined by the extent of the reliability and usefulness of the analytical product according to the decision makers' logic. In other words, decision makers need evidence that enables them to act upon it, as decision makers' opinions differ about the types of intelligence (basic, current, and discretionary). According to the evidence that accompanies each type of intelligence product, there are three types of relationships: (13)

- 1- Decision makers placed the highest level of credibility in basic intelligence, and were particularly grateful for the breadth and depth of factual information that intelligence was able to produce on many topics, often within a very short period of time.
- 2- They were somewhat less enthusiastic about real-time intelligence, and tended to compare it unfavorably with daily journalism.
- 3- Decision makers place the least credibility in estimated intelligence, perhaps because they believe that estimates are at least relatively or partly speculative and thus lack the authority and reliability of underlying intelligence, which is essentially factual and considered highly reliable. In addition, decision makers tended to feel that they could anticipate the future better than discretionary intelligence analysts.

The third requirement: The role of intelligence analysis in sensing international threats "strategic warning"

Strategic warning can be defined as the timely analytical recognition and effective communication with decision makers of significant changes in the level and nature of threats to national security interests that require a reassessment of U.S. readiness to deter or limit harm. Its goal is to prevent strategic surprise.¹⁴⁾ Strategic surprises can be avoided through alternative analysis. Much of the intelligence literature has called for greater use of alternative analysis techniques, more rigorous testing of prevailing judgments, more deliberate consideration of developments that appear less likely but could be highly impactful if they occur, and institutionalization of the use of alternative analytical methods in cases. Complexity occurs when a change of government or any other event increases the likelihood of departure from prevailing analytical assumptions about political and military dynamics. So intelligence increased. Paying great attention to a wide range of craft techniques within the framework of critical thinking and alternative analysis to ensure greater accuracy when major and surprising events occur. For example: Offices have expanded their use of outside subject matter experts to create and select analytical assumptions, and analysts have increased their use of techniques such as: "Red Team Analysis," "Devil's Advocate," and "A-Team B Analysis," focusing more attention on "Red Team Analysis." low-occurrence/high-impact probabilities for U.S. national security interests, and "Analysis of Competing Hypotheses (ACH)," where the Sherman Kent School runs monthly alternative analysis workshops, and the Kent Center sponsors "scenario" exercises on key national security issue trends to anticipate changes that will Affects American security interests. In applying the above techniques, the intelligence analysis literature calls for increased attention to the factors and causes surrounding uncertainty, and demands that analysts take these factors into account more while providing intelligence assessments, because analysts' final judgment about when and how an adversary will be able to threaten U.S. interests often depends on Available physical evidence about what the aforementioned adversary achieved.(15) Sherman Kent used "words of discretionary probability" in uncertainty, first, to determine the probability of expectation and, second, to anticipate strategic surprises in strategic warning analysis. The terms most used in warning documents to express the range of forecast probabilities are: (almost certain, probable, equal chances or (possible probabilities), probably not, definitely not), (16) and as shown in the table for estimating the probability percentage close to certainty No. (1-1) below:

DEGREE OF CERTAINTY IN PERCENTAGE	ESTIMATED PROBABILITY WORD
93%	ALMOST CERTAIN
75%	Possible
50%	EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES
30%	MAYBE NOT
7%	OF COURSE NO
0%	IMPOSSIBLE

Donald P. Steury (Editor), Sherman Kent and the Board of National Estimates (Washington, DC: History Staff Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 1994), p137

It is clear from Table (1-1) that the word “maybe” can be used to describe situations in the lower ranges of probability, and the word “equal chances or possible” if the percentage of probability is close to (50-50) of certainty.⁽¹⁷⁾ Richard Heuer criticized Sherman Kent's method regarding estimated probability words in making a judgment in intelligence analysis, which Richard Heuer called the (subjective probability) or (personal probability) method because such a judgment is an expression of the analyst's personal belief that a particular interpretation or estimate is correct. Therefore, verbal expressions of uncertainty such as: (possible, likely, might be possible, unlikely) are a form of subjective probability judgment, which have long been recognized as sources of ambiguity and misunderstanding. The word that something can happen or be possible refers to the probability of expectation ranging from 1% to 99% probability. When intelligence conclusions are formulated in vague terms (possible, likely, perhaps), the decision-maker's interpretation of the conclusions will be biased in favor of consistency with what the decision-maker himself believes and tends toward.⁽¹⁸⁾ There are other theories in the field of strategic intelligence that go in the opposite direction to what Sherman Kent did, with the need for the intelligence analyst to resort to the strongest probability that he put in the words of estimated probability. Among these theories are:

- 1- The 1% Theory: Created by Dick Cheney when he was Vice President. The theory holds that if there is a 1% chance that a threat is real, then the United States should confront that risk and consider it a real risk. In other words, this theory calls for treating the potential threat as certain in terms of the response. The matter is not about the possibility and its analysis, but rather about the American response to that threat. It is an event with a low probability of occurrence, but it has a major impact if it occurs, so the United States must take the initiative. To a direct preemptive war.⁽¹⁹⁾
- 2- Black Swan Theory: Created by Nassim Nicholas Taleb. The theory examines the repercussions of unexpected and rare events, which many individuals find difficult to imagine occurring, and therefore they may consider their occurrence to be a form of science fiction. From Nassim Taleb's point of view, a black swan event has three main characteristics: an unforeseeable, unavoidable, accidental event that has a wide-ranging impact. The possibility of predicting the event retroactively. In other words, human nature usually connects it after the event has occurred on the ground. Historical events to make it less random and more predictable than it was in reality, and so that people's minds would be more able to comprehend it. ⁽²⁰⁾
- 3- The gray rhino approach: Major threats that are unusual in occurrence, yet are ignored until they occur, such as the coronavirus outbreak.⁽²¹⁾
- 4- The hidden gorilla approach: threats that are completely visible, yet go unnoticed. These threats are known as “invisible gorillas.”⁽²²⁾
- 5- Black Elephant Approach: These are threats that are widely expected but are intentionally or unintentionally ignored by many. Or they were threats that were clearly felt by some, yet no one spoke about them, leading to a surprise even though they were expected and felt by some to some extent.⁽²³⁾

Fourth requirement: Advanced structured analytical techniques

Advanced structured analytical techniques challenge persistent assumptions and expand potential outcomes. It helps analysts understand threat intent, especially when information is not clearly stated. Advanced structured analytical techniques are divided into two parts: ⁽²⁴⁾

- 1- Advanced structured analytical techniques, which explore a problem from different (often multiple) perspectives, allow better reception of analytical criticism and give greater avenues for exploring and challenging rational arguments. It includes a range of technologies such as:
 - The competing hypotheses technique (Analysis of Competing Hypothesis: Evaluating multiple hypotheses through a competitive process to reach unbiased conclusions and attempt to confirm the results. It is a tool that helps make judgments on important issues that require careful appreciation of alternative explanations or conclusions.
 - Devil's Advocate Technique: Challenges the prevailing view or strong consensus by building the best possible case for an alternative explanation.

- Team A - Team B technique: Uses separate analytical teams that compare two (or more) competing viewpoints or hypotheses.
 - Low Occurrence/High Impact Probability Technique: Highlights an unlikely event that would have serious consequences if it occurred.
 - And what if technology? Or what if? Assume an event has occurred that has potential impacts (negative or positive) and explain how it might happen.
- 2- Advanced structured, creative or imaginative analytical techniques help analysts approach the problem from multiple perspectives. Imaginative techniques facilitate analysts' ability to predict events, expand the scope of choice, and generate ideas creatively, thus reducing the chances of missing unexpected results. The appropriate application of imaginative techniques can help identify differences in viewpoints and different assumptions among members of the analytical team. It includes a group of technologies:
- Brainstorming technique: A tool that helps generate a huge amount of ideas that are produced through an organized process with clear rules (thinking outside the box).
 - Functional analysis technique (critical factor analysis): It helps in identifying the threat's weaknesses by knowing its capabilities, and also helps in identifying windows of opportunity and the threat's weak points.
 - Outside-in thinking technique: indirectly identifies the full range of underlying factors and trends that shape an issue.
 - Red Hat Team Technique: Helps model the behavior of an individual or group by trying to replicate how a threat thinks about a problem.
 - Possible Futures (Scenarios/Alternatives) Technique: Systematically explores multiple ways in which a situation could develop when there is a high degree of complexity and uncertainty.

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