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David Tucker, *The End of Intelligence: Espionage and State Power in the Information Age* [book review]

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David Tucker, *The End of Intelligence: Espionage and State Power in the Information Age*, Stanford University Press, California, 2014, pp.241. ISBN: 978-0-8047-9042-0.

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David Tucker who, according to the biography supplied in the book, has insider knowledge and experience of the US intelligence community, has set out to explore the impact of the information revolution on the state power. In particular he is interested in the extent to which the information revolution has transformed state security and intelligence, and against the conventional wisdom that it has had an overwhelming impact Tucker concludes (gently) that it has not.

This slim volume, spanning 193 pages of substantive text, covers the ground one would expect in a book on this subject: 1) intelligence, information and power, 2) espionage, 3) counterintelligence and covert action, 4) intelligence and warfare, 5) intelligence and irregular warfare, and 6) principals and agents. The role of information is riven through each of these thematically based chapters. A key part of Tucker's argument - that the reader has to buy for the book to work - is that intelligence is essentially information. He does not go to the lengths of others in the field to define out as per Ferris, for example, that intelligence is information that results in a deployment of government resource or as per Herman that intelligence is secret government information used to service government need in a particular way. As such, Tucker's central thesis is more about the power of democratised information, for want of a better phrase, than intelligence as most intelligence scholars would understand it. But it is this corrective, albeit a flawed one, that means I will put this book on my reading list for my students. The notion that in the information age all sorts of routine information has the potential to impact hard-nosed intelligence is interesting and in turn is worthy of seminar debate. This book serves as a relatively brief, but well written entry point into those discussions.

One aspect of Tucker's argument that is worthy of particular attention concerns intelligence analysis. Again, he provides a good entry point into a set of debates concerning analysis and particularly around what constitutes intelligence failure. But Tucker sets the bar rather high, and it feels somewhat unrealistic that analysts might ever be able to provide total cover: if it is known, it is unlikely to be intelligence. It is also possible for practitioners to complete the intelligence cycle in a way that can be judged to be sound and ultimately the judgement to be wrong in terms of the facts that then emerge later. So, whilst the arguments here are interesting, ultimately I think there is much that will be contested by the field in terms of what analysts do, and how states seek to make use of information.

There are several key problems with the way that Tucker presents his arguments. Whilst the evocation of historical example is useful in intelligence studies, the means by which it is deployed in *The End of Intelligence* is somewhat problematic. Yes, some of the key lessons and challenges in intelligence are timeless, but to move the reader around from the sixteenth to twentieth century and then back to the second century nullified the utility of what Tucker was trying to achieve. Certainly for this reviewer anyway. Even more problematic was the attempt to introduce political theory into the first chapter, which then informs the framing of the second chapter concerning espionage. The characterisation of liberalism in the first chapter was - I think - significantly problematic. The liberal tradition of Hobbes was partly around the sanctity of individuals but mostly served a political and economic agenda that justified the transition from lands held in common to private ownership, and made a case for state protection of rights, amongst other things. So, Tucker uses liberalism as a means to make a particular part of his case, but equally it could be used to refute it too. Political theory certainly has a role to play in our understanding of state power and intelligence in particular, but it has to be carefully deployed. I found it was done unconvincingly in this instance.

So, *The End of Intelligence* is certainly worthy of the investment of time in reading and digesting its ambitious and sustained challenge to established orthodoxies. Whilst the bibliography is a little on the slim side and avoids some of the mainstays of intelligence studies, this is well-written book that seeks - perhaps - to flank intelligence studies rather than to engage with it nose-to-nose. This is an enjoyable and thought-provoking contribution to contemporary intelligence studies.