

***Vaults, Mirrors and Masks: Rediscovering U.S. Counterintelligence*, edited by Jennifer E. Sims and Burton Gerber**

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As the editors aptly note in their introduction to *Vaults, Mirrors and Masks*, counterintelligence has been neglected. Although the 9/11 Commission recognized counterintelligence as a critical factor in preventing successive attacks on the United States, counterintelligence has received little more than lip service in the ensuing intelligence. Counterintelligence has been similarly given scant attention in the study of intelligence ethics. Perhaps because the issues of interrogation and espionage are more on the forefront, counterintelligence seems to get an ethical pass.

When one considers that the antecedents of today's counterintelligence services might be known as "the secret police" or "the Cheka" or "the Gestapo," one must agree that these organizations hardly conjure up models of ethical behavior. These historical organizations had the mission to fend off surreptitious infiltrations from external enemies, but they also directed their energies toward keeping the regime in power by identifying and suppressing even legitimate opposition, a goal clearly in conflict with the values of a democratic society.

The paradox for counterintelligence in an open and democratic society such as the United States is that the citizenry is happy with the product but rankles at the process. The methodology of penetrations, informants, surveillance, wiretaps, and the like is somehow distasteful to most Americans, who view such measures as slightly unethical. Americans sometimes look more askance at the practitioners of counterintelligence than at those whom counterintelligence uncovers. Even today, despite the overwhelming evidence that the Soviet KGB used the Communist Party of the USA as a pool of possible recruitment leads, there are still Americans who believe the FBI's pursuit of the Communist Party bordered on harassment of legitimate divergent opinion. When one expands the definition of

“counterintelligence” beyond the thwarting of a hostile intelligence service’s attempts to obtain information and includes the efforts to penetrate the service and to disrupt its intelligence collection by such means as false information, we tread very closely to the ethical line. How can one inject a false story into the foreign press and not expect that it will be soon picked up by the twenty-four-hour international news services and eventually find its way to the American press?

Jennifer Sims and Burton Gerber have assembled a thought-provoking group of essays that examine the theory and practice of counterintelligence. The scope of the articles is such that both the counterintelligence expert and neophyte will gain greater understanding of the challenges of this intelligence field. This volume provides the thoughtful student with the foundation of understanding from which reasonable discussion of the value of counterintelligence in a democratic society can develop.

While the ethical behavior of other elements of the intelligence process—interrogators, analysts, and case officers—has been routinely examined, counterintelligence often slips through the cracks. The editors observe early on that counterintelligence has been the orphan child in the intelligence reforms of the past ten years. Since it does not neatly fit into the definitions that have arisen in the intelligence community for intelligence practice, its place in the intelligence community is unclear.

In her introductory essay, entitled “Democracies and Counterintelligence: The Enduring Challenge,” coeditor Jennifer Sims observes that most books on counterintelligence focus on the operations that have caught spies rather than looking at the development of cogent and coherent policy.

The book is divided into three sections. In part 1, entitled “Framing the Problem,” Sims stresses the importance of a completely integrated counterintelligence strategy not only to the intelligence strategy but also to the creation of national policy. She notes that the methods and techniques used by counterintelligence need to be expanded beyond the expected spy catching.

The remaining three essays in this section provide the reader with a good understanding of counterintelligence as it has been practiced in the United States. The authors observe, among other things, that the politicization of counterintelligence—particularly as evidenced in the Palmer Raids of the 1920s, the pursuit of communists in the 1950s, and the examination of protest movements of the 1960s—did

great damage to the reputation of the field. The third essay in this section correctly observes that democracies cannot long endure when citizens come to distrust one another or question the loyalty of those who hold opposing but valid views. In this environment, counterintelligence is difficult to practice. At first blush, the fourth article in this section seems out of place, since it deals not with the practice of counterintelligence but with the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II. The author, Austin K. Yamada, observes that this action was not motivated by either legitimate security or counterintelligence concerns but rather came from a political motivation. He uses this point to illustrate how excesses can easily occur if counterintelligence is allowed to be used as a political tool.

The five authors in part 2 offer perspectives on perceived weaknesses in how counterintelligence is currently practiced in the United States. In his essay on counterespionage, Robert Wallace posits that this part of counterintelligence is woefully lacking in U.S. intelligence. Other essays examine the status and performance of counterintelligence in the Department of Defense, the relationship of counterintelligence and law enforcement, and the cooperation of counterintelligence in the other intelligence disciplines. The final essay in this section examines the role national counterintelligence services should have in the protection of national industry from economic espionage.

In part 3, entitled "Strategies," the editors have assembled four essays that examine possible future developments in counterintelligence. In the first article, Rodney Faraon describes the difficulties inherent in counterintelligence cooperation between the private sector and national counterintelligence authorities. The second article explores the challenges of developing a counterintelligence system that allows cooperation between local and national governments. The third article highlights the hazards of conducting counterintelligence and domestic intelligence operations while still trying to maintain a healthy respect for civil liberties.

In the final essay in this section, entitled "The Way Ahead," the editors summarize the themes of the preceding essays and offer five practical steps to improve U.S. counterintelligence.

This book is a must-read for anyone who is serious about intelligence reorganization and the use of counterintelligence for more than just spy catching. For those interested in considering the ethical position of counterintelligence, it provides a firm basis upon which

to begin understanding of the principles of this woefully understudied intelligence practice.

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