

Chairman's Summary

War and Information in History

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The 2022 International Forum on War History, which marked the 70th anniversary of the National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), was the first initiative at the Center for Military History to focus on the theme of information and intelligence. Using major wars from the late 19th century to the present day as case studies, this forum aimed to examine how the relationship between war and information has changed historically and how these changes have impacted the modern world, and to present historical perspectives for a deeper understanding of current international affairs. The forum consisted of a keynote speech, a special address, and two sessions, and was chaired by ISHIZU Tomoyuki, Director of the Center for Military History, NIDS.

In his keynote speech, Professor John Ferris of the University of Calgary presented a research paper titled “Signals Intelligence and Japanese Security.” Prof. Ferris noted that British signals intelligence (sigint) contributed to the Allied victories in both world wars. He discussed how, between 1946 and 1992, the Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ) aided western victory by gathering intelligence on Soviet military intentions and capabilities, intercepting voice and high-frequency and very high frequency Morse code. He also touched on Japan, saying that although Japan achieved some success through the effective use of sigint in the Russo-Japanese War’s Battle of Tsushima, it was defeated in the Pacific War due to the inferiority of its intelligence to that of the United States. Today, Japan has taken steps to bolster its cybersecurity, but there is a tendency to isolate sigint from contact with civilian agencies and the public. Prof. Ferris stressed that in order to achieve cybersecurity, the national government must take the initiative to ensure that there is coordination between state and society, which requires translucency by the state and trust from the people. Finally, he warned that he fears that Japan’s cybersecurity is far more vulnerable than the Japanese public imagines.

In Session 1: Strategy and Intelligence in the Pacific War, research papers were presented by MORIYAMA Atsushi, Professor, University of Shizuoka; SHIMIZU Ryotaro, Senior Fellow, NIDS; and IWATANI Nobu, Professor, Hokkaido University.

First, Professor Moriyama gave a presentation titled “Japan’s Southward Advance and Intelligence in 1941” on how the United States viewed Japan’s southward advance policy through the lens of decrypted information. MAGIC information, which was obtained by intercepting and decrypting Japan’s diplomatic codes, had a certain effect in amplifying American distrust of Japan and hardening its policy towards Japan. Prof. Moriyama argued that one of the reasons this reinforced misunderstandings and prejudices, rather than eliminating them, was that policymakers were directly exposed to the raw information before it was processed into intelligence, and that their prejudices were amplified by the assumption that

the decrypted telegrams concealed Japan's true intentions. He pointed out that because Japan ultimately acted in line with their prejudices, the possibility of avoiding war (which existed at the time) was relegated to the background, and the narrative boiled down to a simple story of Japan steadily planning and executing a war of aggression, with American prejudices and fallacies gaining a place in official history.

Next, Senior Fellow Shimizu gave a presentation titled "Japan's Surrender and U.S. Intelligence Services: the Clandestine Struggle over the Yalta Secret Agreement." Shimizu touched on the history of the February 1945 Yalta Conference and what was discussed there, particularly the content of the secret Far East agreement on the Soviet Union's entry into the war against Japan following Germany's surrender, and President Franklin D. Roosevelt's guidance of the war. Analyzing the reports of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) in the second half of World War II, he stated that by 1945, the OSS had begun to look ahead to the postwar period and was clearly expressing caution towards the Soviet Union. He then examined OSS peace negotiations in neutral Switzerland and the Vatican and pointed out the possibility that U.S.-Soviet information warfare was taking place over Japan's surrender, as well as the fact that the OSS was operating somewhat independently from the U.S. president, government, and military, as an intelligence agency. He concluded his presentation by pointing out that the OSS had used information about the secret Yalta agreement as leverage to facilitate peace negotiations with the Japanese side with the goal of achieving an early end to the war.

Finally, under the title of "Chiang Kai-shek and the Outbreak of War Between Japan and the United States: Intelligence and Strategy," Professor Iwatani examined China's situational assessments of Japan during the period leading up to the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States, and the utility of the intelligence that served as the basis for those assessments. On the utility and role of intelligence in the resistance strategy of Chiang Kai-shek and Chinese government leadership, Prof. Iwatani analyzed China's intelligence organizations and how they operated, and argued that the intelligence activities at the time, while inefficient due to the existence of multiple competing agencies and the concentration of power in the hands of Chiang Kai-shek, were able to provide important information on which to base situational assessments. On the other hand, he stated that the technological limitations of China's intelligence capabilities made it difficult to make timely judgments about Japanese developments, and therefore, the impact of the intelligence gathered on situational assessments regarding the outbreak of war between the Japan and the United States was minimal. From these considerations, Prof. Iwatani concluded that it was not China's intelligence activities, but rather thoughtful deliberation based on limited intelligence that enabled Chiang Kai-shek to make relatively accurate strategic assessments at the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States.

An overall discussion was held based on the above reports. During the discussion, Center Director Ishizu posed the question of whether technological advances in intelligence could clear the "fog of war," as Clausewitz put it. Prof. Ferris responded that the advent of Artificial Intelligence (AI) is changing the way governments analyze information. Prof. Moriyama brought up that there are issues as to how far AI can approach the complexity of human decision making, while Prof. Iwatani pointed out that the challenge is whether an organizationally

scalable process for information processing can be built using AI. Senior Fellow Shimizu stressed that while the development of information technology will undoubtedly reduce areas of uncertainty on the battlefield, it will also make activities such as disinformation easier, which will increase the overall risk.

In the special address, Dr. MIURA Lully, President of the Yamaneko Research Institute, Inc., presented a research paper titled “Risk Communication and the Formation of Public Opinion.” Dr. Miura stated that the post-Cold War structure is ending, and the West faces the risks of China and Russia, as well as the developed country risks of public opinion and structural transformation. She noted that in developed countries, public opinion risks are particularly important in the area of security. Using the United States during and after the Vietnam War as a case study, she described how the U.S. military had attempted to distance the public from war and security concerns by showing only the highlights of its wars, yet nevertheless lost public support beginning in 2001 with the war on terrorism. This approach, she asserted, may have reached its limits in modern times with the advent of the Internet and social media. Dr. Miura also asserted that lessons from the war in Ukraine point to the importance of obtaining public and international support through strategic communication; ideal risk communication requires getting the public to understand that preventing the worst-case scenario is the priority, and that goals will be modified as the situation unfolds. She then presented the results of a survey by the Yamaneko Research Institute on Japanese attitudes concerning a Taiwan contingency, and pointed out that, as with the COVID-19 pandemic, even though the Japanese public is aware that the risk of a Taiwan contingency is “scary,” discussion on specific policies has not deepened. Finally, Dr. Miura concluded her lecture by stating that the infiltration of foreign powers is a shared matter of concern among advanced democracies, and that Japan must also strive to overcome such intelligence operations.

In Session 2: Intelligence, Politics, and the World War, research papers were presented by Sir Hew Strachan, Professor, University of St. Andrews; Brian P. Farrell, Professor, National University of Singapore; and HARUNA Miki, former Professor, Nagoya University. Before the session, Director Ishizu expressed his deepest condolences on the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, who passed away on September 8, and thanked Sir Hew Strachan for attending this forum in the midst of his duties guarding the Queen’s coffin in his capacity as Lord Lieutenant of Tweeddale.

Professor Strachan began the session by presenting a paper titled “Strategy and Intelligence in the First World War.” He pointed out that while geographical intelligence in the form of maps and naval charts was the most important form of intelligence from the Napoleonic Wars to the First World War, after the Franco-Prussian War in 1871, countries followed Prussia’s (Germany’s) example in establishing their own general staffs, and began to collect information from other countries, send military observers to study others’ wars, and use military attachés stationed at embassies to obtain information. Prof. Strachan further discussed how two technological innovations from the First World War transformed intelligence collection, bringing about a new phase in the use of intelligence in war. The first was the development of wireless telegraphy by Marconi and the evolution of enciphering and decoding technology. The second was the development of the aircraft and balloon, which made

aerial reconnaissance possible. He emphasized that these contributed to a better understanding of the enemy situation in land and naval battles, and had a significant impact on the course of the war. Finally, Prof. Strachan pointed out that the two innovations contributed extensively not only on the battlefield, but also on the economic front, in controlling imports of goods to Germany through neutral countries, and on the diplomatic front, in intercepting intelligence that led the United States to enter the war.

Next, Professor Farrell gave a presentation on British intelligence activities during World War II titled “The Politics of Intelligence in Grand Strategy: The Joint Intelligence Committee and Britain’s War Against Japan, 1942-1945.” Prof. Farrell chiefly discussed how the British used intelligence in building their strategy against the Axis Powers, focusing on the Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), an intelligence assessment body which reported directly to the Prime Minister. The British government sought to avoid adopting undesirable strategic policies and used JIC reports as a foundation to help it develop a strategy in the war against Japan that would strike a balance with the higher priority war in Europe. In the process of building a grand strategy against Japan in 1943, the British, who were considering a counteroffensive against Japan in Burma at the request of the United States, tried to reinforce their strategic position using the JIC’s intelligence on Southeast Asia to formulate a strategy against Japan that would give their country an edge. However, Prof. Farrel argued, the role played by the JIC and its intelligence was significantly limited by the need to consider simultaneously the war against Japan and the situation in the European and Pacific theaters.

Finally, Professor Haruna gave a presentation titled “The Development of U.S. Intelligence During the Cold War.” He stated that the U.S. intelligence system was set up as a result of reflection on why the United States had failed to prevent the attack on Pearl Harbor by the Japanese military. The investigation recommended centralizing operational and intelligence work and clarifying the lines of responsibility among intelligence agencies and for intelligence analysis, which led to the establishment of a new system of agencies and organizations under the National Security Act. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) was supposed to gather and analyze intelligence and conduct covert operations, but the National Security Act did not contain explicit provisions related to covert operations. However, the escalation of the Cold War enabled the smooth functioning of the new security agencies and intelligence organizations. Furthermore, the September 11, 2001 attacks in the United States called for the most extensive reform implemented since the National Security Act. Prof. Haruna emphasized that we must not forget that in democratic societies, the perpetual challenge confronting the intelligence community is how to strike the right balance between “democracy” and “secrecy.” He also pointed out that after the September 11, 2001 attacks, the focus on counterterrorism measures led to a decline in vigilance toward China and Russia, which may have contributed to the current serious international circumstances.

An overall discussion was held based on the presentations. During the discussion, Prof. Haruna raised the issue of whether there had been any moves to stop the development of the atomic bombs, as the atomic bomb development program continued, and the bombs were used against Japan even though Allied victory was assured at the end of 1944. In response, Prof. Farrell pointed out that in 1944, U.S. atomic bomb development was in its experimental stages,

and the bombs were not initially envisioned to be used against Japan. Prof. Strachan said that as of 1944, the Allies could not determine how long Germany and Japan would continue the war, and stopping development was out of the question. He pointed out that the experience of World War I had convinced the leaders that the war must be ended decisively, and this led to the use of the atomic bomb.