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Observations on the Bean-Naquin Interview

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READERS' FORUM

Observations on the Bean–Naquin Interview

Most startling in Douglas Naquin's interview with Hamilton Bean in these pages earlier this year were the areas of agreement between Mr. Naquin and me.¹ We agree on the Intelligence Community's (IC) failure to alter its thinking. We agree that the IC's leadership (both strategic and operational) is incapable of making serious trade-offs from unprocessed secret collection to fully-developed open source intelligence (OSINT). We agree that the secret disciplines are stove-piped and out-of-touch with holistic decision-support needs for the whole of government Planning, Programming, Budgeting and Execution System (PPBES). And we agree that OSINT tradecraft exists and matters very much. We also agree that a more distributed business model for OSINT is essential for supporting national security, to which I would add national competitiveness.

But Mr. Naquin chose to survive within a very bad system rather than lead the breakout that was needed. At the moment of writing I am a front-line user of all-source intelligence in Afghanistan, and pleased to confirm that for non-kinetic situational awareness eighty percent of what makes the cut is from the Open Source Center (OSC) and external open sources—though, for kinetic and non-kinetic targeting, OSINT is much less useful, and classified sources do not shine either. On the basis of my direct experience, I have become a huge fan of the OSC for what it does so well within the severe constraints under which it operates. Henceforth, I will champion the OSC's liberation from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), thereby turning it into the Open Source Agency (OSA) that a handful of professionals, including me, have fought for since 1969. As Arnold Donohue of the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) said at the 1992 Open Source Solutions (OSS) conference, "There's plenty of money for

OSINT.” What is lacking is leadership across the board. NATO and the U. S. Special Operations Command (SOCOM) need an OSA, as do the President and the United States government at large.²

In continuing the discussion, I offer a few thoughts that diverge from Mr. Naquin’s thinking, as well as that of many others in the field:

1. Intelligence is about decision-support, the outputs. To define intelligence on the basis of inputs or secrecy is to diminish, distort, disrupt, and ultimately destroy the evolving craft of intelligence.
2. Open Source Everything (OSE) is the only affordable, inter-operable, scalable approach to the technical challenge of connecting dots to dots, dots to people, and people to people. An OSA will set the gold standard for decision-support intelligence, and help create a smart nation and a world “brain.”
3. Douglas Naquin led the OSC to the end of the beginning. I continue to lead an informal global network toward the larger end: unifying what I have consistently termed the “eight tribes of intelligence”³ and achieving M4IS2.⁴
4. OSINT is HUMINT (human intelligence). It is not a technical discipline. OSINT is about “knowing who knows,” as intelligence specialist Stevan Dedijer shouted out at the OSS ‘92 conference. It is not about the volume of digital or analog information to be processed, but rather about harnessing the distributed human intelligence of the whole earth.
5. Sharing, not secrecy, is the “root” for twenty-first century decision-support intelligence.
6. Intelligence for decision-support is an inherent function of government, not private contractors. I have no problem with micro-outsourcing. I do, however, consider “butts in seats” to be a monstrous betrayal of the public trust. The money spent on L-3, SOS international, and others in this past decade has been a total waste.
7. Collective intelligence and integral consciousness are vital concepts that the U.S. Intelligence Community, unfortunately, still does not understand.

I offer these thoughts in appreciation of the work now being done by many scholars and professionals, Hamilton Bean in particular, to advance the concept of OSINT.

Robert David Steele Vivas
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REFERENCES

¹ Hamilton Bean, “The Paradox of Open Source: An Interview with Douglas J. Naquin,” *International Journal of Intelligence and CounterIntelligence*, Vol. 27, No. 1, Spring 2014, pp. 42–57.

² My two-page memoranda, one on the OSA and the other on three challenges facing NATO, are easily found at Phi Beta Iota, the Public Intelligence Blog

(<http://www.phibetaiota.net>) under the NATO OSINT page, along with the historic contributions from over 800 international authorities speaking at fifteen open conferences that unfortunately ended in 2006.

³ The “eight tribes of intelligence”: Academic, Civil Society, Commerce, Government, Law Enforcement, Media, Military, NGO/Non-Profit.

⁴ Multinational, Multiagency, Multidisciplinary, Multidomain Information-sharing, and Sense-making.