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Political Culture and Intelligence Culture:
France before the Great War

Peter Jackson

> [S]ecret services … are the only real measure of a nation's political health, the only real expression of its subconscious.[1]

In an influential essay written in 2014, Sébastien Laurent lamented the absence of a 'veritable intelligence community' in France. He observed that France's various intelligence agencies were better described as an 'aggregation' of agencies and officials that lacked a clear sense of unity of purpose.[2] The essay that follows will argue that the lack of a community ethos can be traced to the political origins of state intelligence in France. Intelligence culture was shaped in fundamental ways by the political culture of the Third French Republic.

How does a society's political culture manifest itself in the structure and practices of its intelligence machinery? This question is rarely addressed in the growing literature on intelligence. Much of the first generation scholarship on intelligence was either historical work aimed at evaluating its role in war and peace or social science-oriented research aimed at assessing its relative effectiveness in supporting decision-making. Over the past decade a number of studies of 'intelligence culture' have appeared by historians and social scientists.[3] These studies constitute an important first step toward a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between intelligence and the political context in which it operates. One problem with this literature, however, is that it rarely provides a clear definition of what is meant by 'culture'. This essay draws on the social theory of Pierre Bourdieu to understand 'culture' as 'practice'.

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[1] Bill Haydon in John Le Carré, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (New York, 1975), 355. Le Carré himself judged that the United Kingdom's intelligence agencies are 'microcosms of the British condition' in his 'Introduction' to B. Page, D. Leitch and P. Knightley, *Philby, the Spy who Betrayed a Generation* (London, 1977), 33; see also Michael Denning, *Cover Stories: narrative and ideology in the British spy thriller* (2nd edn, London, 2014), 142.

[2] Sébastien Yves Laurent, *Pour une véritable politique publique du renseignement* (Bordeaux, 2014), 24.

[3] Glenn Hastedt warned of the problems inherent in the unsystematic comparative study of intelligence as long ago as 1991 in 'Towards the Comparative Study of Intelligence', *Conflict Quarterly*, 6/ 3 (1991), 55-72; see also the observations of Peter Gill, 'Knowing the Self, Knowing the Other: the comparative analysis of security intelligence' in L. Johnson (ed.), *Handbook of Intelligence Studies* (Abingdon, 2007), 83-6 and P.H.J. Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States*, 2 vols (Westport, 2012), i, 1-14.

The argument that follows is twofold. First, the role of foreign intelligence in French politics and policy was shaped in fundamental ways by the fact that it emerged within a political culture characterised by a lack of ministerial integration and interdepartmental coordination. France's foreign intelligence apparatus was created by ministerial decree and located within the structures of the army general staff. The scenario reflected the cultural predispositions and bureaucratic practices of French politicians and civil servants during this period. The lack of a collegial cultural reflex across government made it all but impossible for French governing elites to imagine an inter-departmental structure for intelligence. The result was that no central machinery of intelligence was created in France either before or after the First World War.

Second, the decision to concentrate foreign intelligence within the army general staff had far-reaching consequences. It meant that the collection and analysis of secret information on the outside world was conducted primarily by army officials and was oriented overwhelmingly towards the acquisition of military knowledge for the army high command. It also meant that the practice of secret intelligence was comprehensively discredited when conflict erupted between the Republican regime and the French army during the Dreyfus Affair at the turn of the century.

Culture and the study of intelligence

In a path-breaking work written in the 1980s, Adda Bozeman underlined the role of political culture in intelligence. Her analysis went beyond the central observation that, while virtually all states collect and use intelligence, there are marked differences not only in national intelligence practices, but also in the role of intelligence in the machinery of foreign and security policy-making. Bozeman argued that these differences were cultural. They did not result solely from their different positions within the international system.[4] Nearly all scholars now acknowledge the importance of culture to intelligence. But investigations of the relationship between intelligence culture, on the one hand, and political and policy culture, on the other, are rare.

One common element in most recent studies of 'intelligence culture' is that they are for the most part collective efforts that lack conceptual coherence. A recent *Handbook of European Intelligence Cultures*, for example, is a compendium of thirty-two national case studies by thirty-five different contributors. While the editors of this important volume tried valiantly to convince the authors of these various case studies to pose the same questions and apply the same general theoretical

[4] Adda Bozeman, 'Comparative Studies of Statecraft and Intelligence in the Non-Western World' (1985) and 'Knowledge and Method in Comparative Intelligence Studies' (1988) both republished in *Strategic Intelligence & Statecraft: selected essays* (Washington, DC, 1992), 158-213. Bozeman first argued for the importance of culture in strategic studies much earlier.

framework, the collection is a kaleidoscope of different approaches that are largely descriptive in character and reflect the interests and obsessions of the individual contributors.[5] Another collection of essays, published as a special issue of *Intelligence and National Security*, explores intelligence through the lens of 'strategic culture'; the interesting and thought-provoking series explores themes such as shared norms and values, institutional structures and 'modes of thinking'. But there is no common framework for analysing these themes across all of the cases in question. Also missing, regrettably, are reflections on the relationship between 'strategic culture', 'political culture' and 'intelligence culture'.[6] An important edited collection on the theme of 'intelligence elsewhere' similarly lacks a common framework for investigating cultural practices. Historical background serves as a substitute for a systematic discussion of political culture in most of the essays in this otherwise excellent collection.[7] A lack of conceptual clarity is similarly present in analyses of the CIA's flaws as 'a cultural thing' as well as in efforts to identify a 'Commonwealth intelligence culture'.[8] The end result is a stimulating body of literature that lacks a rigorous and systematic approach to thinking about the nature and influence of 'culture' in general and 'political culture' in particular.

There are notable exceptions to this general trend in writing about intelligence culture. The most significant is Philip H.J. Davies' work on the cultural dynamics of British and American intelligence. Davies has developed a coherent concept of intelligence culture by drawing on organizational sociology, Weberian theorising on bureaucracy and contemporary management theory. His key distinction is between 'collegial' and 'hierarchical' styles of organization and management. British intelligence, he argues, is animated by a 'collegial ethos' that emphasises frequent contact and is oriented towards collaboration. The US model, conversely, places greater emphasis on competition and the need for voices of authority to impose co-operation where necessary. Davies makes a further interesting distinction between 'organic' approaches to governance and intelligence management in the UK and a more 'formalised' and structured approach in the US. The former is expressed in regularised and permanent consultation in both 'standing' and 'ad hoc' committees.

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[5] Bob de Graaf and James Nyce (eds. With Chelsea Locke), *Handbook of European Intelligence Cultures* (London, 2016).

[6] Isabelle Duyvesten (ed.), *Intelligence and Strategic Culture* (Abingdon, 2012); this collection first appeared as a special issue of *Intelligence and National Security* [*INS*], 26/ 4 (2011).

[7] P.H.J. Davies and Kristian Gustafson (eds.), *Intelligence Elsewhere: spies and espionage outside the Anglosphere* (Washington DC, 2013).

[8] Garret Jones, 'It's a Cultural Thing: thoughts on a troubled CIA' in C. Andrew, R.J. Aldrich and W. Wark (eds.), *Secret Intelligence* (Abingdon, 2009), 26-39. Philip Murphy, 'Creating a Commonwealth Intelligence Culture: the view from Central Africa, 1945-1965', *INS*, 17/3 (2002), 131-72.

The latter places greater emphasis on checks and balances and faith in the effects of competition to enhance performance of the intelligence community as a whole.[9]

These distinctions help illustrate why the British intelligence community has evolved gradually and without major structural renovations while the American community has experienced frequent and far-reaching structural changes. Davies also notes parallels between the British and American intelligence, on the one hand, and structures and practices of government, on the other. The British political system concentrates political authority in parliament and tends to work through consultative structures and practices. At the centre of this system is a prime minister and cabinet drawn, normally, from a party enjoying a majority in the House of Commons. The US system, conversely, reflects the checks and balances built into the Constitution. Power is divided between the executive, congressional and judicial branches of government. The Cabinet is less central to the functioning of the American government, and the three branches of government (particularly Congress and the executive) often assume adversarial positions in relation to one another.[10]

Despite an admirable sensitivity to the importance of historical context, Davies' focus is on management styles and bureaucratic arrangements. The core aim is to assess the relative *effectiveness* of British and American approaches. Davies is much less interested in exploring the origins of these two systems or the role of national political culture in shaping them. Indeed in Davies' analysis one almost gets the sense that intelligence communities emerge and evolve *outside* of politics.

There is a scope, therefore, for an alternative approach that explores the relationship between political culture and intelligence culture.[11] One way of approaching this problem is to draw on Pierre Bourdieu's 'theory of practice'. For Bourdieu, political culture is a set of historically-derived understandings and predispositions that that interact with the wider structural environment to form a basis for practices.[12] Bourdieu refers to these understandings and predispositions as the actor's 'habitus'. Collective actors as well individuals develop their own habitus through a process of formal and informal learning as well as the cumulative impact of daily practices. The habitus provides actors with an ingrained orientation to the external world that generates expectations and understandings about how the world works and how things should be done. Crucially, the habitus is in a continual state

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[9] Davies, *Intelligence and Government in Britain and the United States*, i, esp. 75-89; id., *MI6 and the Machinery of Spying* (London, 2004) esp. 4-9. On the importance of collegiality, see also Michael Herman, *Intelligence Power in Peace and War* (Cambridge, 1996), 9-59.

[10] See esp. Davies, *Intelligence and Government*, i, 84-9.

[11] For an alternative approach, see the interesting call for investigating intelligence culture as part of the wider study of political culture made by Stephen Welch, 'Political Culture: approaches and prospects' in Davies and Gustafson (eds.), *Intelligence Elsewhere*, 13-26.

[12] Bourdieu, *Esquisse d'une théorie de la pratique. Précédé de trois études d'ethnologie kabyle* (Berne, 1972); see also Peter Jackson, 'Pierre Bourdieu' in N. Vaughan Williams and J. Edkins (eds.), *Critical Theorists and International Relations* (London, 2009), 89-101.

of evolution as it responds and adapts to the changes in the external environment. This interaction produces 'practical logic' that generates strategies for action.[13] Practice, in this sense, is much more than just what people or institutions do. It is the product of the ongoing interaction between a social actor's orientation to the world, on the one hand, and the structural environment in which they act, on the other. This approach provides a means of integrating ideological predispositions, political traditions, and bureaucratic structures into an analysis of intelligence culture in France before the First World War.

One specific 'practical logic' rooted in late nineteenth century French political cultures was especially influential in shaping the evolution of French intelligence: a predisposition to emphasise ministerial and institutional independence at the expense of inter-departmental cooperation and coordination. The result was a lack of structures to facilitate effective interministerial consultation and cooperation. There was no French equivalent to the 'committee culture' that was increasingly influential in shaping British government practices during this period.

Aspects of French Political Culture

France was one of the world's leading liberal democracies during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. By 1870 an expanding voting franchise and relative press freedom had created a vibrant and growing public sphere. But it was also an imperial power with a long history of subjugating, colonizing, and exploiting foreign peoples.[14]

France had a long tradition of using espionage and code breaking. Secret agents were used extensively by both sides during the Hundred Years War between England and France. French spies were ubiquitous in Europe and the Mediterranean in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.[15] Fifteenth-century kings Louis XII and François I appointed court mathematicians to decode secret messages sent inside and outside France. Intelligence as an arm of state power was extended considerably under Cardinal Richelieu, chief minister to Louis XIII from 1624-42, who founded the *Cabinet noir* to intercept and decrypt international and domestic correspondence.

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[13] Pierre Bourdieu, *Le sens pratique* (Paris, 1980); David Swartz, *Culture & Power: the sociology of Pierre Bourdieu* (Chicago, 1997); Vincent Pouliot, 'The Logic of Practicality', *International Organization*, 62/2 (2008), 257-88; Peter Jackson, 'Pierre Bourdieu, the "Cultural Turn" and the Practice of International History', *Review of International Studies*, 34/1 (2008), 155-81.
Raoul Girardet, *Mythes et mythologies politiques* (Paris, 1990); Serge Berstein et Michel Winock, *Histoire de la France politique. L'invention de la démocratie, 1789-1914* (Paris, 2002); Nicolas Rousselier, 'La culture politique libérale' and Serge Berstein, 'Le modèle républicain: une culture politique syncrétique' in S. Berstein (ed.), *Les cultures politiques en France* (Paris, 2003), 69-145.

[15] Noel Malcolm, *Agents of Empire: knights, corsairs, Jesuits and spies in the sixteenth-century Mediterranean World* (London, 2016); Diego Navarro Bonilla, '"Secret Intelligences" in European Military, Political and Diplomatic Theory: an essential factor in the Defence of the Modern State during the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries', *INS*, 27, 1 (2012), 283-301; Christopher Andrew, *The Secret World: A History of Intelligence* (London, 2018), 100-213.

During France's *grand siècle*, Louis XV created the *Secret du Roi* to engage in espionage and conduct clandestine diplomacy using a network that extended from Stockholm to Rome and from London to Constantinople.[16] The focus of intelligence-gathering shifted inward against enemies of the Republic, real or perceived, during the Revolution. Foreign intelligence was central, conversely, to politics, policy and war-making under Napoleon Bonaparte. Napoleon's staff developed a sophisticated system for processing all incoming intelligence by the *Bureau topographique* of the Emperor's *Cabinet*.[17] The Napoleonic apparatus for intelligence collection and processing was dismantled by the Restoration regime after 1815. The practices of interception and cryptanalysis, however, endured within the foreign ministry for the rest of the nineteenth century.[18]

The nineteenth century was a period of dramatic technological change in France as in the rest of Europe. The French state was transformed by the effects of technological modernization and bureaucratization during the second half of the 1900s. The number of people it employed increased from 90,000 in 1840 to 430,000 by 1900. Two of the core functions of this emerging bureaucracy were particularly relevant to intelligence. The first was to impose the legal and administrative domination of the state over French territory. The second was to provide the state leadership with the expertise and military force needed to act effectively in international politics. Both functions required the development of increasingly sophisticated means and methods for collecting and processing information.[19]

In 1870, however, France, like Britain, still did not possess a permanent agency responsible specifically for the secret collection of foreign intelligence in peacetime. Intelligence gathering was instead improvised on the ground to meet the specific needs of individual military campaigns. Capabilities thus developed were disbanded once hostilities ceased. This happened in the French as well as the British case after the Crimean War of 1853-1856.[20] In the mid-1800s what permanent

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[16] Alain Hugon, *Au service du Roi Catholique, « honorables ambassadeurs » et divins espions: représentations diplomatique et service secret dans les relations hispano-françaises de 1598 à 1635* (Madrid, 2004); Lucien Bély, *Espions et ambassadeurs au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris, 1990); Stéphane Genêt, *Les espions des Lumières. Actions secrètes et espionnage militaire sous Louis XV* (Paris, 2013).

[17] Hermann Giehrl, *Der Feldherr Napoleon als organizator: Betrachtungen über seine Verkehrsund Nachrichtenmittel, seine Arbeits und Befehlsweise* (Berlin, 1911), esp. 55–7. See also Jay Luvaas, 'Napoleon's Use of Intelligence', *INS*, 3 (1988), 40–54 and Martin van Creveld, *Command in War* (Cambridge, MA, 1985), 65–74.

[18] Eugène Vaillé, *Le Cabinet noir* (Paris, 1950), 220-377; Christopher Andrew, 'Déchiffrement et Diplomatie: le Cabinet noir du Quai d'Orsay sous la Troisième République', *Relations internationales*, 5 (1976), 37-9.

[19] Michael Mann, *The Sources of State Power*, ii: *The Rise of Classes and Nation-States, 1760-1914* (2nd edn, Cambridge, 2012), 44-91 and 254-509, figures from appendices A.2 and A.3 on pages 806 and 807.

[20] Stephen Harris, *British Military Intelligence in the Crimean War, 1854-1856* (London, 1999); Gérald Arboit, *Des Services secrets pour la France. Du Dépôt de la guerre à la DGSE* (Paris, 2014), 23-54.

intelligence capabilities France and Britain possessed were concentrated in their respective empires.[21]

If both France and Britain were global empires, there were crucial differences in both their politics and their political cultures. Britain did not experience violent revolutionary upheaval during the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries. In France, conversely, the legacy of the Revolution of 1789 dominated political discourse. Two aspects of this legacy were particularly important for the evolution of French political culture. The first was a tradition of political change through violence. The second was an enduring Left/Right fracture in French politics and society that conditioned virtually all responses to both domestic and international issues. The course of French politics had been shaped in a fundamental sense by a series of violent upheavals leading to regime change in 1789, 1815, 1830, 1848, and again in 1871.[22] The political logic of confrontation and violent change persisted throughout the life of the Third Republic. It posed an implicit but very real threat to the Republic's survival for the first two decades of its existence.[23]

This threat was only reinforced by the stark absence of consensus over the legitimacy of the Republic as a mode of government. Opposition came from both the Right and the Left of the political spectrum. On the right were advocates of various forms of monarchy as well as more authoritarian alternatives inspired by Bonapartism.[24] On the left, the growing force of the international workers' movement rejected the very concept of the nation-state as a legitimate political model.[25]

This lack of consensus had crucial consequences for the development of French intelligence. It mean that several of the most important institutions of state power were not integrated into the political fabric of the new Republic. One of the central themes of late nineteenth-century French politics was the ongoing effort of

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[21] Sébastien Laurent, *Politiques de l'ombre. État, renseignement et surveillance en France* (Paris, 2009), 200-240. Arboit, *Services secrets*, 58-64; Deborah Bauer, 'Marianne is Watching: knowledge, secrecy, intelligence and origins of the French surveillance state (1870-1914)', PhD dissertation, University of California, Los Angeles, 2013, 89-101.

[22] Vincent Wright, *The Government and Politics of France* (London, 1992), 1-14.

[23] Jeremy Jennings, *Revolution and the Republic: a history of political thought in France since the Eighteenth Century* (Oxford, 2013), 66-88, 198-287 and 388-437; Pierre Rosnavallon, *La démocratie inachevée* (Paris, 2000), 138-238; François Furet, *La Révolution*, ii: *Terminer la Révolution, 1814-1880* (Paris, 1988); Robert Gildea, *Children of the Revolution : the French, 1799-1914* (London, 2008), 91-117, 246-77; Jean-Marie Mayeur, *La vie politique sous la Troisième République* (Paris, 1984), 35-191.

[24] Kevin Passmore, *The Right in France from the Third Republic to Vichy* (Oxford, 2012), 1-5, 18-72; Philippe Levillain, 'Les droits en République', in J.-F, Sirinelli (ed.), *Histoire des droites en France*, i: *Politique* (Paris, 2006), 147-209.

[25] J.-J. Becker, *Le Carnet B. Les pouvoirs publics et l'antimilitarisme avant la guerre de 1914* (Paris, 1973); Maurice Agulhon, 'La gauche, l'idée, le mot' in J.-J. Becker and G. Candar (eds.), *Histoire des gauches en France*, i: *L'héritage du XIXème siècle* (Paris, 2004), 23-44.

elected officials to assert their control over the machinery of state.[26] The army and navy were chief among these institutions. Efforts to 'republicanize' promotion procedures from the early 1880s had a negligible effect on the highly conservative senior army and naval officer corps. The military profession was increasingly popular with the sons of conservative families seeking a 'last institutional bastion against the politics of the republic'.[27] The result was that by the late nineteenth century a durable alliance had emerged between the politics of the senior military establishment and the conservative nationalism of the anti-republican Right.[28] This alliance was a key factor in the national crisis that swept over France after the Jewish army captain Alfred Dreyfus was wrongly convicted of espionage for Germany in 1894. The Right stood firmly by the military even as mounting evidence of Dreyfus' innocence called into question the integrity first of senior intelligence officials within general staff and, eventually, of the army itself.[29]

The Dreyfus Affair opened a profound breach between the republic and its military institutions. The republican majority asserted its authority over the army by intervening in the promotion process. The political and religious views of conservative officers were monitored and became criteria in decisions over career advancement within the war ministry. While this policy succeeded in affirming civilian authority over the military, it did not alter the conservative character of the army leadership.[30] Given the concentration of foreign intelligence within the army general staff, military politics in France would have far-reaching consequences for the role of intelligence that would endure well into the twentieth century.

The ministry of foreign affairs was another core institution in national security policy-making. From its origins, the 'Quai d'Orsay', as it was known, had been the almost exclusive preserve of France's aristocratic families.[31] Republican politicians embarked on a program to 'democratize' and 'republicanize' the foreign

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[26] Marc Olivier Baruch and Vincent Duclert, 'Une histoire politique de l'administration française, 1875-1945' in M.-O. Baruch and V. Duclert (eds.) *Serviteurs de l'État* (Paris, 2000), 7-8.
[27] Oliver Forcade, 'Les officiers et l'état, 1900-1940' in Baruch and Duclert (eds.), *Serviteurs de l'État*, 271; see also François Bédarida, 'L'armée et la République. Les opinions politiques des officiers français en 1876-78', *Revue historique*, 232 (1964), 119-64.
[28] M. Bernard, 'Les militaires dans les partis conservateurs sous la Troisième République: un engagement naturel?' in E. Duhamel, O. Forcade and P. Vial (eds.), *Militaires en république, 1870-1962: Les officiers, le pouvoir et la vie publique en France* (Paris, 1999), 395-404.
[29] Bertrand Joly, *Histoire Politique de l'affaire Dreyfus* (Paris, 2014). More on the Dreyfus Affair below.
[30] André Bach, *L'Armée de Dreyfus: une histoire politique de l'armée française de Charles X à «l'Affaire»* (Paris, 2004), esp. 512-16; D.B. Ralston, *The Army of the Republic: the place of the military in the political evolution of France, 1870-1914* (Cambridge, 1967); Bédarida, 'L'armée et la République'.
[31] I. Dasque, 'La diplomatie française au lendemain de la grande guerre: bastion d'une aristocratie au service de l'État?', *Vingtième siècle*, 99/3 (2008), 34-35; id., 'A la recherche de Monsieur de Norpois: les diplomates sous la Troisième République, 1871-1914', Thèse de doctorat, Université de Paris IV (Sorbonne), Paris, 2007; Peter Jackson, *Beyond the Balance of Power: France and the politics of national security in the era of the First World War* (Cambridge, 2014), 24-32.

ministry during the 1880s.[32] These efforts were generally successful. Anti-republican sentiment was much more rare within the diplomatic corps than within the army or navy. The Quai d'Orsay nonetheless remained a cohesive stronghold of elitism that considered itself the sole national repository of expertise in international affairs. The vast majority of its personnel was educated at the *École libre des sciences politiques*, and the foreign ministry constituted a virtual closed society with a powerful sense of its own distinctiveness.[33] The sense of entitlement with which Quai d'Orsay officials approached diplomacy, and the ill-disguised disdain with which they often viewed both civilian and military collaborators, was an key element of French political and policy culture. It rendered close collaboration with other ministries consistently difficult.

One of the most important, if paradoxical, characteristics of the government machinery of the Third Republic was therefore what Walter Rice Sharp astutely described as 'centralisation without integration'. State institutions were concentrated in Paris. But they were much less integrated, both with one another and within the political fabric of the republic, than their geographic location suggested.[34] One further reason for this was the chronic parliamentary instability that was a hallmark of the Third Republic. The thirty-three years from the founding of the Republic to the outbreak of the First World War witnessed the rise and fall of fifty-eight different governments. The constant ministerial churn that resulted had two important consequences for the administration of foreign and security policy. First, it mitigated against the establishment of durable interdepartmental structures for policy coordination. Second, it enhanced the authority and influence of permanent officials, who remained in post across different governments and often found themselves managing the formulation and implementation of policy while inexperienced ministers got to grips with their portfolios. These officials manifested a clear preferences for informal practices of consultation and information-sharing over interdepartmental structures that were more often than not perceived as a threat to their authority and influence.[35]

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[32] Dasque, 'Diplomatie française', 34-39 and 'A la recherche', 270-9.

[33] The Comte de Saint-Aulaire, a long-serving and distinguished diplomat of this era, likened solidarity within the diplomatic corps to 'a religious brotherhood' into which 'any intrusion was as sacrilege' [my translation]: Saint-Aulaire, *Confession d'un vieux diplomate* (Paris, 1953), 34-5; John Keiger, 'Patriotism, politics and policy in the Foreign Ministry, 1880-1914', in R. Tombs (ed.), *Nationhood and Nationalism in France* (London, 1991), 260; Stanislas Jeannesson, 'La formation des diplomates français et leur approche des relations internationales à la fin du XIXème siècle', *Revue d'histoire diplomatique*, 122/4 (2008), 364-9.

[34] Walter Rice Sharp, *The French Civil Service: bureaucracy in transition* (New York, 1931), 37-41; see also Dorothy Pickles, *Government and Politics in France,* i: *Institutions and Parties* (London, 1972), 46-92.

[35] Baruch and Duclert, 'Histoire politique de l'administration', 10-12; Jean Baillou (et. al., eds.), *Les Affaires étrangères et le corps diplomatique français*, 2 vols (Paris, 1984), ii 40-61; Robert Young, 'The Foreign Ministry and Foreign Policy' in R. Young (ed.), *French Foreign Policy, 1918-1945: a guide to research and research materials* (Wilmington, 1991), 24-31; Jackson, *Beyond the Balance of Power*, 19-46.

Key aspects of French political culture under the Third Republic therefore presented formidable challenges to interministerial collaboration and policy coordination. Most departments of state developed efficient practices of information-sharing with one another. But scarcely any structures were developed to facilitate systematic consultation and coordination in the elaboration of national policy. Simply put, France lacked the interdepartmental reflexes that underpinned the British 'committee culture' that was evolving across the Channel during the same period. The practical logic of interministerial fragmentation made the creation of a French 'intelligence community' difficult, if not impossible, before 1914.

The Evolution of French Intelligence, 1870-1914

The origins of a permanent French foreign intelligence agency can be traced to the Crimean War. The French expeditionary force sent to the Crimea arrived with virtually no intelligence on the political, geographic, and military situation. As in previous campaigns, an intelligence capability was created on the fly and despite an acute lack of local expertise. The military interpreters on the staff of French commander Marshal Leroy de Saint Arnaud were nearly all Arab speakers and veterans of operations in North Africa.[36] The lone Russian speaker, captain Joseph Tanski, eventually became director of military intelligence for the French 'army of the orient'. Tanski was a Polish refugee and veteran of the foreign legion who had served with Saint Arnaud in Algeria. After the conflict ended, he drafted a report detailing the impact of poor intelligence on the early phases of the campaign. Tanski deplored the lack of expertise within the army and was just as critical of the support supplied by the foreign ministry. French diplomats in theatre, he complained, exhibited 'a perfect ignorance of military science'. To ensure that this situation did not reoccur, he called for the creation of a permanent military intelligence organ attached to the army general staff:

> The new service must have its principal location and centre of direction in Paris. It must, above all, centralize and coordinate all military documentation at the moment spread across the statistical bureaux of the ministries of war, foreign affairs and the navy. It must analyse and summarise all reports prepared by officers on missions abroad as well as the messages and reports

[36] Arboit, *Services secrets*, 50-4; Deborah Bauer, 'Planting the espionage tree: the French military and the professionalization of intelligence at the end of the nineteenth century', INS, 31/5 (2016), 664-5.

> of the foreign ministry relating to potential theatres of war.[37]

Tanski was in effect advocating the creation of a central foreign intelligence agency to meet the needs of military planning.

No such service existed. Nor was one created until the end of the 1860s. An understaffed *Section de statistiques* had existed within the *Dépôt de la guerre* (a holdover from the *Ancien régime*) since 1826. Its chief role was to translate foreign military texts, a task for which it was singularly ill-equipped owing to a chronic lack of foreign language expertise. 'Translations cannot be done without translators' observed one report on the section's activities in 1854. The situation had not improved by 1866, when a senior office expressed concern at the 'lamentable lack of specialists in foreign languages' within the army command structures. Colonel Jules Lewal, a veteran of campaigns in Italy and Mexico, deplored the 'lack of enthusiasm' for intelligence within the French army as well as 'complete lack of any systematic espionage' directed against France's enemies.[38]

Efforts were made to expand and improve military intelligence from 1866 onward. These consisted primarily of developing expertise on the German army within the *Dépôt de la guerre*. Although officers from the *Dépôt* were sent across the Rhine on reconnaissance missions, the French army prepared for war against Prussia in 1870 without basic intelligence concerning the intentions and capabilities of its enemy.[39]

The situation regarding signals intelligence (SIGINT) was better. The storied *Cabinet noir* of the *Ancien régime* had been dismantled during the Revolution. But it was quickly restored and then expanded under Napoleon. By 1805 two code-breaking organs served the Empire, one based in the *Bureau de poste* focused on the interception of internal correspondence, and another at the foreign ministry dealing with international communications. This dual system was largely maintained by the restoration monarchies and by the 'Second Empire' of Napoleon III. The interception service at the *Bureau de poste* was moved to the ministry of the interior and placed under the control of the *Sûreté générale*. But the standard of cryptography had

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[37] France, Service Historique de la Défense-Département de l'Armée de Terre [hereafter SHD-DAT], 1M 2037, 'Mémoire sur la création d'un service central de renseignements militaires et d'un corps spécial des guides d'état-major', 16 Jan. 1856. A revised version of the Tanski's report appeared several months later in the *Revue des deux mondes* (Sept.-Oct. 1856), 222-28; see also Joseph Tanski, *Cinquante années d'exil: souvenirs politiques et militaires* (Paris, 1880).

[38] Quotations from Laurent, *Politiques de l'ombre*, 154 and Jules Lewal, *La Réforme de l'armée* (Paris, 2010 [original publication in 1871]), 23.

[39] François Roth, *La guerre de 1870* (Paris, 1870), esp. 244-61; on efforts to improve intelligence before the conflict see Laurent, *Politiques de l'ombre*, 200-23 and 330-1; Arboit, *Services secret*, 58-66 and Bauer, 'Marianne is Watching', 101-3.

declined dramatically. French ciphers in the 1860s were inferior to those of the court of Louis XIV nearly two hundred years earlier.[40]

Yet French cryptography then experienced an impressive renaissance during the last decade of the nineteenth century. The advent of the telegraph, which was the chief means of diplomatic correspondence for all of the great powers by the mid-1870s, presented unique challenges and opportunities for signals intelligence. The new technology transformed the speed and volume of communications, increasing the pace of international politics. More information travelled more quickly across greater distances. But communications were uniquely vulnerable to interception because they travelled across commercially-owned cables. This last fact resolved the traditional challenge which SIGINT organs faced in laying their hands on communications. The postal authorities of all European states provided copies of all telegrams that were sent from or arrived into their national territory. This, in turn, heightened the importance of both cipher security and cryptography in ways that were not immediately understood within the chancelleries of the great powers. [41]

France's code-breakers were among the world's leaders in taking advantage of the new opportunities afforded by use of the telegraph. More books were published on cryptography in France than in any other country. The most important of these was Auguste Kerckoff's classic *La cryptographie militaire*, which served as a foundation text for a flourishing literature on codebreaking during the last decades of the nineteenth century.[42] French SIGINT organs were also able to draw on the talents of a remarkable generation of cryptanalysts. This generation included the retired army major and gifted codebreaker Étienne Bazeries as well as his protégé Jacques Haverna from the ministry of the interior. The army produced a talented circle of cryptanalysts that included colonels François Cartier, Marcel Givierge and, during the war, captain Georges Painvin. By the turn of the century the *Cabinet noir* at the Quai d'Orsay had successfully attacked the ciphers of Italy, Britain, Turkey, and (from 1905) Germany.[43] Efforts were made to coordinate France's SIGINT effort. A *Commission interministérielle de cryptographie* began meeting in 1912 charged with 'coordinating cipher security and decryptment across the ministries of war, the colonies, the navy, the interior and the post'. On the eve of war a *Commission interministérielle de déchiffrement* was also established to manage issues specific to

[40] Andrew, 'Déchiffrement et diplomatie', 39-46.
[41] D.P. Nickles, *Under the Wire: how the telegraph changed diplomacy* (Cambridge [Mass.], 2003); David Kahn, *The Codebreakers: the story of secret writing* (2nd edn, New York, 1996), 189-92.
[42] Kerckhoff's writings were first serialized in the *Journal des sciences militaires* (Jan. 1883), 5-38; Kahn, *Codebreakers*, 230-65.
[43] Alexandre Ollier, *La Cryptographie militaire avant la guerre de 1914* (Paris, 2002), 17-45; Andrew, 'Déchiffrement et diplomatie' 42-4.

code-breaking and cryptanalysis.[44] On the eve of the Great War France was far ahead of most other powers in the realm of SIGINT.

If codebreaking was carried out continuously over the course of the nineteenth century, the creation of a permanent peacetime foreign intelligence agency was undertaken only in response to defeat and national humiliation at the hands of Prussia. The first step in this process was the creation of a peacetime general staff. This development was part of a wider 'German crisis' in French cultural life that had profound influence over the institutional reforms implemented by the Third Republic.[45] The work of the Prussian *Großer Generalstab* ('great general staff') was widely considered to have been decisive for the outcome of the war. It served as a partial model for the reorganization of the command structures of the French army after 1871.[46]

Central to this process were internal arguments for transforming the *Dépôt de la guerre* into a permanent intelligence organization. The most influential was advanced by Paul Joseph Cuvinot, a civilian engineer in the war ministry in the Government of National Defence, who had been charged with monitoring the Prussian order of battle during the conflict of 1870-1871. On the eve of the armistice Cuvinot stressed the need to forego 'collecting statistics' in favour of 'producing intelligence'. Intelligence work, Cuvinot argued, meant 'the comparative study of foreign armies in peacetime'.[47]

This core task was taken on by the *Deuxième bureau* attached to the offices of the 'chief of the general staff' at the ministry of war. The general staff was a new organ created by government decree in 1871. Its *Deuxième bureau* was headed by major Lt. Col. Émile Vanson, a well-connected veteran of the pre-war *Dépôt de la guerre*. Vanson played a key role in designing the reforms that reshaped the French army and its command structures over the course of the 1870s. Under his direction the *Deuxième bureau* assumed responsibility for the study of all aspects of foreign military power. It surveyed the foreign press, and received the reports of all French military attachés posted abroad as well as a steady stream of diplomatic reporting forwarded by the foreign ministry. It drew on these sources to produce a weekly

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[44] SHD-DAT, *Fonds Privés*, 1K 842, *Fonds Marcel Givierge*, 'Étude historique sur la Service du chiffre', tome. I, dr. 1, 4-16; see also Ollier, *Cryptographie militaire* 125-44.

[45] Claude Digeon, *La Crise allemande de la pensée française, 1870-1914* (Paris, 1992); Alan Mitchell, *The German Influence in France after 1870* (Chapel Hill, 1979).

[46] Alan Mitchell, *Victors and Vanquished: the German Influence on Army and Church in France after 1870* (Chapel Hill, 1984), 23-92; Michel Goya, *L'Invention de la guerre moderne, 1871-1918* (Paris, 2014), 19-34; Jean-Charles Jauffret, 'L'oeuvre des militaires de la commission de reorganization de l'armée, 1871-1875' in Forcade, Duhamel and Vial (eds.), *Militaires en République,* 69-70.

[47] SHD-DAT, La 36, Bureau des reconnaissances, 'Aperçu sommaire des operations entreprises pendant la période du 18 octobre 1870 au 7 février 1871', 20 Feb. 1871. Other senior officers calling for the creation of an intelligence service included Major Charles Fay, *Projet de réorganisation de l'armée française* (Tours, 1871) and (Colonel) Lewal, *Réforme de l'armée*.

Revue militaire étranger that received wide circulation within the war ministry and army command structures.[48]

Vanson's tenure as *Deuxième bureau* chief was fundamental in shaping the future evolution of military intelligence in France. It was under his leadership that the distinction between the clandestine collection of secret intelligence, on the one hand, and the analysis of all available information and the preparation of syntheses, on the other, became embedded in the structures and practices of French intelligence. Vanson was the principal designer of a far-reaching reorganization in March 1874 that created six *bureaux* within the general staff. Each bureau was the responsibility of one of two deputy chiefs of staff. Intelligence remained the remit of the *Deuxième bureau*. But the collection of both foreign and counter-intelligence was assigned to the innocuously-named *Section de statistiques*. This new unit provided raw intelligence to the *Deuxième bureau*. Crucially, however, it was established as an independent organ of the general staff and reported directly to the deputy chief of staff responsible for intelligence rather than to the head of the *Deuxième bureau*.[49]

Vanson's justifications for hiving off secret intelligence collection from analysis and dissemination were twofold. First, he argued that espionage was costly and would require a level of funding beyond the means of an individual bureau. Second, and more interestingly, he also argued that the *bureaux* of the new general staff must not be implicated in the clandestine activities of the *Section.*[50] Secret intelligence work was therefore separated from standard staff work. Its marginal positon within the war ministry was given physical expression by its location in a separate building across the street from the main ministry building on the rue St Dominique.[51]

In keeping with the practical logic of interministerial fragmentation, there was no interministerial deliberation concerning either what kind of intelligence service France required or where such a service should be located within the machinery of government. The key decisions were taken and implemented entirely within the war ministry. An earlier proposal, drafted by another *Dépôt de la guerre* veteran, Captain Henri-Théodore Iung, had argued for the creation of a truly interdepartmental intelligence service. It advocated an agency linking together the war ministry, the

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[48] Laurent, *Politiques de l'ombre*, 340-4. Copies of the *Revue* for the period 1872 to 1899 can be consulted at the Bibliothèque nationale de France:
http://data.bnf.fr/en/32860750/revue_militaire_de_l_etranger/. Accessed 18 April 2018.
[49] Laurent, *Politiques de l'ombre*, 348-52.
[50] SHD-DAT, 1 M 2256, *Fonds du général Vanson*, 'Note sur le service et le recrutement du 2e Bureau de l'état-major général', Vanson note, July 1875; ibid., 'Aperçu du service du 2e Bureau pendant les six premiers jours de la mobilisation', July 1878.
[51] Laurent, *Politiques de l'ombre*, 355.

ministry of the interior and the Quai d'Orsay and housed within the military cabinet of the President of the Republic.[52]

Iung's conception called for an interministerial approach to intelligence that was profoundly out of step with existing practices. Unsurprisingly, it was dismissed as 'unhelpful and out of season' by an army high command determined to retain complete control over intelligence gathering.[53] Iung attempted to circumvent this opposition by sending his recommendation to political allies in the national assembly. It eventually reached the desk of the President, Adolphe Thiers.[54] These efforts failed, however. The military establishment asserted its independence and refused to consider an interdepartmental alternative to its own conception. Iung was disciplined for insubordination and reassigned to a division outside Paris.[55]

The practical logic of departmental fragmentation thus asserted itself to prevent the establishment of an interdepartmental intelligence agency. The location of secret intelligence within the war ministry would have far-reaching ramifications for its future evolution. In practice, it kept the *Section de statistiques* isolated from political authority, allowing it wide latitude in its operations with very little democratic accountability. What is more, as Sébastien Laurent has argued, 'the absence of a centralised intelligence organ stimulated interministerial competition for control over information'.[56] The full effects of decisions taken in the early 1870s would manifest themselves during the Dreyfus Affair at the turn of the century.

The size and the remit of the *Section de statistiques* increased dramatically in the two decades after 1874. The first two *Section* chiefs, Major Abraham Samuel and Major Émile Campionnet, were both experts on Germany and veterans of the *Dépôt de la guerre*. Samuel established the first substantial secret intelligence station at Nancy. With Vanson's support, he also introduced the practice of working closely with the gendarmerie in cantons along the Franco-German border. By the end of the 1870s, his successor Campionnet managed a budget of 186,000 francs per year and an extensive agent network that included spies in London, The Hague, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Potsdam, Salzburg, Munich, and Athens.[57] The 1880s witnessed an

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[52] France, Bibliothèque Nationale [hereafter B.N.], Département des manuscrits, Nouvelles acquisitions françaises [hereafter N.A.F.], 20642, *Correspondance et papiers d'Adolphe Thiers*, 'Le Service de renseignements secret. Note personnelle pour le président', 16 Sept. 1871, fols. 43-53. I am grateful to professor Laurent, who first discovered this document; on this episode see also his *Politiques de l'ombre*, 330-2.

[53] SHD-DAT, *Fonds Privés*, 1K 732, *Fonds privé du général Henri-Theodore Iung*, 1, 'Situation militaire du capitaine Iung lors de la guerre de 1870'; this is a partial transcript of testimony provided by Iung (a 'narration faite par l'officier'), no date but certainly 1872-1874.

[54] B.N., N.A.F., 20642, *Correspondance Thiers*, 'Le Service de renseignements secret. Note personnelle pour le président', 16 Sept. 1871, fols. 43-53.

[55] SHD-DAT, 1K 732, *Fonds Iung*, 1, 'Situation militaire du capitaine Iung lors de la guerre de 1870', no date but certainly 1872-1874.

[56] Sébastien Laurent, 'Aux origines de la « guerre des polices »: militaires et policiers du renseignements dans la République', *Revue historique,* 636 (2005), 777-8.

[57] Laurent, *Politiques de l'ombre*, 330-45; Arboit, *Services secrets*, 70-1.

important extension of *Section* activity into the domain of counter-intelligence. This domestic remit included the surveillance of French citizens in co-operation with the *Sûreté générale*, the *police spéciale* in Paris, the *gendarmerie* in the provinces, and the intelligence *bureaux* of all nineteen French army corps.[58]

The lack of interministerial machinery thus did not prevent low-level co-operation in counter-intelligence collection. Nor did it prevent intelligence from circulating widely. By the early 1890s the *Section de statistiques* had established a near monopoly on the provision of secret foreign intelligence not only to the *Deuxième bureau* of the general staff, but also to the secretariat of the newly constituted *Conseil Supérieur de la guerre* and the personal cabinet of the war minister. Raw intelligence was frequently forwarded to the director of the *Sûreté générale* at the interior ministry, as well as to the political directorate at the foreign ministry and the President's *cabinet militaire*. *Deuxième bureau* reports enjoyed a similarly broad circulation.[59] One of the interesting paradoxes of the French state at this juncture is that a lack of bureaucratic integration across ministries did not prevent widespread and generally effective information-sharing. Indeed the French defence and security establishment led the way in this regard at least until the formation of the British Joint Intelligence Committee in the mid-1930s.[60]

The system of collection and dissemination developed over the course of the 1870s and 1880s was destroyed by the Dreyfus Affair. The *Section de statistiques* was at the epicentre of a prolonged crisis that threatened to tear France apart. Evidence of a German spy within the army general staff prompted a deeply flawed internal investigation led by *Section* chief Lt. Col. Jean Sandherr. The aim from the outset was to implicate Alfred Dreyfus, an artillery captain serving on the general staff. Although it became increasingly clear that the investigation was targeting the wrong man, members of the *Section* remained determined to obtain his conviction. Sandherr's deputy, Major Hubert-Joseph Henry, went so far as to fabricate evidence against Dreyfus and to arrange for false testimony at his trial.[61]

The *Affaire* led to open conflict between the army general staff, on the one hand, and the *Sûreté générale* and the *Direction politique* at the foreign ministry, on the other. Officials at the Quai d'Orsay were among the first to doubt Dreyfus' guilt. Foreign minister Gabriel Hanotaux expressed doubts from the moment he was informed of the affair and warned War Minister General Auguste Mercier against arresting Dreyfus.[62] SIGINT reinforced these doubts. On 2 November 1894 the

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[58] Laurent, 'Militaires et policiers', 778-80; Arboit, *Services secrets*, 77-80.
[59] Laurent, *Politiques de l'ombre*, 348-54.
[60] An argument developed in Peter Jackson, *La France et la menace nazie, 1933-1939* (Paris, 2017), 38-40 and 51-7.
[61] Joly, *Histoire politique de l'Affaire Dreyfus.*.
[62] Thomas Iiams, *Dreyfus, Diplomatists and the Dual Alliance: Gabriel Hanotaux at the Quai d'Orsay (1894-1898)* (Paris, 1962), 91-7.

Cabinet noir intercepted a message from the Italian military attaché in a new code. The initial deciphered version of this telegram contained a reference to Dreyfus that suggested that officer's possible guilt. Significantly, however, the definitive version deciphered eight days later (after the new Italian cipher was comprehensively broken) indicated that Dreyfus was innocent.

Despite having been forwarded the definitive decrypt by the foreign ministry on 12 November, the *Section de statistiques* insisted on using the misleading version against Dreyfus at his trial. Senior French diplomats were placed in the invidious position of having strong evidence of Dreyfus' innocence, but being unable to divulge this evidence without compromising the success of SIGINT efforts against Italy. The result was a near complete collapse in interdepartmental relations. Maurice Paléologue, a senior official from the political directorate at the Quai d'Orsay, provided dramatic testimony revealing the details of the decrypted Italian telegram during both the 'revision' of the case and at Dreyfus' re-trial in 1899.[63]

Relations with the ministry of the interior, the other major intelligence actor in the early Third Republic, collapsed altogether as a result of the Dreyfus Affair. Rogue elements from military intelligence were once again at the heart of an illegal operation to undermine due process. This time former members of the *Section de statistiques* conspired to frame the *Sûreté générale* special commissioner, Thomas Tomps, who was assigned to investigate its activities.[64] The resulting scandal led to a complete breakdown in co-operation between the war ministry and the ministry of the interior in the domains of intelligence and counter-intelligence. Bertrand Joly has rightly judged that the Dreyfus Affair caused 'a war between departments'.[65]

Mounting evidence of corruption and criminal behaviour within the *Section de statistiques* led to a profound reorganization of France's intelligence machinery that was initiated in May and completed in a second phase in September 1899. This reorganization was imposed by a 'government of republican defence' led by the French prime minister from June 1899, Pierre Waldeck-Rousseau. Principal responsibility for counter-intelligence was reassigned to the *Sûreté*. The ministry of the interior, in the words of Waldeck-Rousseau, was to be 'the sole [ministry] responsible for public security' and thus 'must resume in total and definitive

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[63] Andrew, 'Déchiffrement et diplomatie', 47-9; on Paléologue's role see the detailed account in his *Journal de l'Affaire Dreyfus*. *L'Affaire Dreyfus et le Quai d'Orsay, 1894-1899* (Paris, 1955), esp. 13-18 and 200-210: entries for 3, 5, 6 and 10 Nov. 1894 and 10-11 Aug. 1899; *Paléologue, Un grand tournant de la politique mondiale, 1904-1906* (Paris, 1934); 23-4; id., *Au Quai d'Orsay à la veille de la tourmente. Journal, 1913-1914* (Paris, 1947), 184-7.

[64] The principal *Sûreté* file on military attempts to frame Tomps is in France, Archives Nationales [hereafter AN], F^{7}, 12925, 'Dossiers du Directeur de la Sûreté'. Laurent provides a masterly analysis of this extraordinary episode in *Politiques de l'ombre*, 397-401.

[65] Joly, 'L'Affaire Dreyfus comme conflit entre administrations' in Baruch and Duclert (eds.), *Serviteurs de l'État*, 229-44.

fashion, the double tasks of counter-espionage and territorial surveillance'.[66] The *Section de statistiques* was dismantled and its personnel was purged. It was replaced by a new service, the *Section de renseignements* (SR), which was placed under the direct control of the head of the *Deuxième bureau*.[67]

Intelligence was reduced to a demoralized backwater within the army general staff. The SR's budget was slashed and it was deprived (albeit temporarily) of the possibility of sending officers abroad to recruit agents and collect intelligence. When appointed *Section* chief in 1900, Colonel Baptiste Faurie found the assignment 'fundamentally disagreeable'.[68] For eight years the SR had no chief of its own. Faurie combined the role with command of the *Deuxième bureau*. Appointed to command of the SR in 1908, major Charles Dupont feared his new assignment would do permanent damage to his career. 'The Service de renseignements is a shambles as a result of the Dreyfus Affair', Dupont was advised by deputy chief of staff Jean-Baptiste Sabatier, 'it is indispensable to rebuild it'.[69]

Foreign intelligence was thus a casualty not only of the Dreyfus Affair, but also the internecine conflict between security agencies that was intensified as a result. This conflict was all the more bitter and debilitating because the French state at the time lacked formal interministerial structures to bring ministers and civil servants from different departments together to tackle problems collectively. The problem was not that there were no links across ministries. Informal contacts based on long-standing personal relationships were common in the *république des camarades*.[70] What was missing was a system of formalized committees meeting regularly with clearly-established remits. Such a system was entirely foreign to the fragmented administrative and political culture of the Third Republic.

The effects of the Dreyfus Affair on interdepartmental cooperation were debilitating and enduring. Tensions with the foreign ministry, for example, stymied efforts to establish a SIGINT section at the war ministry. The *Section de statistiques* had proposed the creation of such a unit under its direction to be staffed by two military cryptologists in 1897. This proposal was approved by war minister de Freycinet (as usual without any interministerial consultation) in April 1899. But the new section was unable to function without the co-operation of the Quai d'Orsay, which housed the senior cryptanalytical service with the most experienced codebreakers. And, as the internal history of military cryptography observed, given the fraught atmosphere after the Dreyfus case, 'the [war] minister did not believe it wise to raise the question with the foreign ministry at that time'. As a result 'in

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[66] Waldeck-Rousseau's circular note cited in Laurent, *Politiques de l'ombre*, 392; see also Arboit, *Services secrets*, 84-5.
[67] Laurent, *Politiques de l'ombre*, 360-472.
[68] Arboit, *Services secrets*, 108.
[69] Charles Dupont, *Mémoires du chef des Services secrets de la Grande Guerre* (Paris, 2014), 83-4.
[70] Bertrand de Jouvenel, *La République des camarades* (Paris, 2014).

practical terms the work of the section was finished before it was even begun'. Code-breaking was nonetheless conducted at the war ministry. But it was undertaken in *ad hoc* fashion by members of the *Commission de cryptographie militaire* (formally responsible for designing secure ciphers).[71]

The absence of interdepartmental reflexes caused another breakdown in 1905, this time between the foreign ministry's *Cabinet noir* and a newly-established team of cryptologists at the *Sûreté générale*. For years the *Sûreté* had turned to to Bazeries at the Quai d'Orsay when in need of assistance in decrypting enciphered messages (primarily communications among anarchist and other revolutionary networks inside France). In 1904 *Sûreté* agents secured access to sections of a cipher dictionary used by the Japanese foreign ministry. The foreign ministry's *Cabinet noir* was duly informed. After working on the cipher for eight days, Bazeries declared that the cipher was unbreakable. His protégé at the *Sûreté*, Jacques Haverna, was undeterred, however, and eventually succeeded in reconstructing the dictionary. Haverna's success provided both the *Sûreté* and the Quai d'Orsay with access to all Japanese diplomatic traffic during the crucial period of the Russo-Japanese War. It also meant that the foreign ministry's monopoly on code-breaking had been broken.[72]

This mutually beneficial arrangement, where code-breakers from the *Cabinet noir* and the *Sûreté* cooperated in attacking foreign codes, did not last. It was destroyed by mismanagement and interministerial rivalry. In an effort to bolster the Franco-Russian alliance, the prime minister Maurice Rouvier instructed the *Sûreté* to forward its solutions of Japanese telegrams to the Russian foreign ministry via its embassy in France. But he did not inform his own department. As a result, when the *Cabinet noir* intercepted the solutions as they were sent from the Russian embassy to St Petersburg, it became convinced that there was a leak at the *Sûreté*. A round of recriminations followed, with the final result that the Quai d'Orsay ceased all co-operation with the interior ministry in the realm of SIGINT. The *Sûreté* created its own SIGINT unit, the misleadingly-named *Service photographique*, in 1907.[73]

The combined effects of the Dreyfus Affair and the episode of the Japanese decrypts undermined efforts to coordinate the efforts of cryptologists across the defence and security establishment. On the eve of war in 1914, three separate code-breaking units were working on foreign ciphers: the *Cabinet noir* at the foreign ministry (which had functioned continually since the beginning of the nineteenth

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[71] SHD-DAT, 1K 842, *Fonds Givierge*, 'Étude historique', tome I, dr. 1, 8-9.

[72] AN, F^7 14605, 'Note sur l'organisation et le fonctionnement du Service photographique de la Sûreté Générale', an internal history by Haverna, 7 Sept., 1917. See also Ollier, *Cryptographie militaire*, 108-11; Christopher Andrew, 'Codebreakers and Foreign Offices: the French, British and American experiences' in C. Andrew and D. Dilks (eds.), *The Missing Dimension: governments and intelligence communities in the Twentieth Century* (London, 1984), 36-7.

[73] AN, F^7 14605, 'Note sur l'organisation et le fonctionnement du Service photographique de la Sûreté Générale', Haverna note, 7 Sept., 1917 ; see also Ollier, *Cryptographie militaire*, 110-11. *Sûreté* material including decrypted Japanese telegrams can be consulted in AN, F^7, 12829 and 12930.

century), the *Service photographique* at the interior ministry (founded in 1907) and a *Bureau du chiffre* at the war ministry (founded in 1912 with close links to the *Deuxième bureau* and SR).[74] Although two commissions were created to ensure interministerial co-operation in the new domain of radio transmissions, the only interdepartmental agreement related to code-breaking was an accord of 1899 envisaging the pooling of national resources at the outbreak of war.[75] This state of affairs was highly unsatisfactory. The interception and decryption of secret communications is a domain in which the pooling of knowledge and concentration of effort is vital.

In May 1904 the minister of war attempted to redress the situation when he wrote to the political directorate at the Quai d'Orsay to propose systematic co-operation in attacking foreign ciphers. Paléologue, now political director at the foreign ministry, remembered his experience with the military during the Dreyfus Affair and was predictably opposed to the idea. He did not even respond to war ministry's overture.[76] The question was taken up again in 1908 as part of a wider drive—again initiated by the war ministry—to create a *Commission interministérielle de cryptographie*. The concept put forward by Captain François Cartier (an SR officer and secretary of the war ministry's cryptography commission) was to pool archives, share expertise, and coordinate work on the ciphers of political subversives and foreign governments. The Quai d'Orsay continued to oppose the idea however. William Martin, director of the *Cabinet noir*, argued that such an arrangement would inevitably compromise the security of this most secret activity. Foreign minister Pichon accepted this logic and refused foreign ministry participation. Plans went ahead nonetheless and an interministerial commission including the ministries of war, colonies, public works, the navy, and the interior was established in January 1909.[77]

For a brief moment it appeared as if the culture of departmental rivalry could be overcome and an inter-ministerial agency created in the realm of SIGINT. But when the commission began meeting three years later, in May 1912, it did so without the participation of the foreign ministry and thus the French state's largest and most experience code-breaking unit. The practical logic of inter-departmental fragmentation was too powerful, particularly in the aftermath of the Dreyfus Affair.

Conclusion

[74] SHD-DAT, 1K 842, *Fonds Givierge*, 'Étude historique', tome I, dr. 1, 21-31.
[75] See the records of the Commission interministérielle des communications and the Commission interministérielle de T[ransmissions] S[ans] F[il] in SHD-DAT, GR 5 N (1872-1919), 7N 1940.
[76] SHD-DAT, GR 5 N, 5N 7, 'Note historique: les rapports entre la Section du chiffre les Affaires étrangères', 8 Jan. 1919.
[77] SHD-DAT, 1K 842, *Fonds Givierge*, 'Étude historique', tome I, dr. 1, 17-19.

Two general conclusions emerge from the above analysis. The first is that the position of intelligence agencies within a state's foreign and defence policy machinery is shaped to an important extent by the political culture of the state and society in question. The second is that the precise location of a foreign intelligence agency within the wider machinery of government determines to a great extent what that agency does, how it performs its role, and for whom.

John le Carré was employing hyperbole when he claimed that the secret services were the 'only' true reflection of a nation's subconscious. He was more on the mark in his reference to 'political health'. The case of France before the Great War leads us inexorably to the conclusion that its intelligence culture was a manifestation of its political culture. The study of intelligence culture can thus be understood as a sub-field of political culture. Historians who focus intelligence rather than politics are therefore likely to miss crucial factors driving the evolution of intelligence.

Deploying Bourdieu's concept of culture as practice illuminates the pivotal role of political culture in the emergence and evolution of foreign intelligence in France. The concept of a 'practical logic' that conditions how actors understand and react to their environment is a useful way to understand the failure to create cross-departmental structures for the collection, interpretation and use of intelligence. The practical logic of interministerial fragmentation that prevailed under the Third Republic mitigated against the establishment of such structures. The concept of 'government intelligence' did not exist in France before the First World War and was slow to emerge in the century that followed.

The role of military intelligence in the Dreyfus Affair provides another illustration of the impact of the logic of fragmentation. The cultural reflexes of French intelligence officials were rooted not only in the formal training they had received as military officers, but also in their practical experience as members of a virtual closed society within the French state. It is impossible to understand the evolution of the Dreyfus case without taking these cultural reflexes into account. The absence of formal interdepartmental structures ensured that the investigation of Dreyfus was the sole responsibility of the *Section de statistiques*. The result was a serious national crisis that pitted the army against the institutions of the Republic. The fall-out fron the *Affaire*, in turn, further marginalised foreign intelligence from political power during the Third Republic. This marginalisation would have far-reaching implications. It was an important factor, for example, in civilian scepticism towards *Deuxième bureau* assessments of the intentions and capabilities of Nazi Germany in the years before the Second World War.[78]

The primacy of political culture over intelligence culture almost certainly applies not just in France but in most other modern states with an intelligence

[78] Jackson, *France et la menace nazie*, *passim*.

apparatus. Davies has already suggested that that is the case for both Britain and the USA after 1945. We can push his argument further and more definitively. France, Britain, and the USA have always had some affinities between their intelligence practices, but also many differences. These differences can be explained at least in part by differences in political culture.