

STUDIES IN INTELLIGENCE

Intelligence Governance and Democratisation

A comparative analysis of the limits of
reform

Peter Gill



Intelligence Governance and Democratisation

This book analyses changes in intelligence governance and offers a comparative analysis of intelligence democratisation.

Within the field of Security Sector Reform (SSR), academics have paid significant attention to both the police and military. The democratisation of intelligence structures that are at the very heart of authoritarian regimes, however, have been relatively ignored. The central aim of this book is to develop a conceptual framework for the specific analytical challenges posed by intelligence as a field of governance. Using examples from Latin America and Europe, it examines the impact of democracy promotion and how the economy, civil society, rule of law, crime, corruption and mass media affect the success or otherwise of achieving democratic control and oversight of intelligence. The volume draws on two main intellectual and political themes: intelligence studies, which is now developing rapidly from its original base in North America and UK; and democratisation studies of the changes taking place in former authoritarian regimes since the mid-1980s including security sector reform. The author concludes that, despite the limited success of democratisation, the dangers inherent in unchecked networks of state, corporate and para-state intelligence organisations demand that academic and policy research continue to meet the challenge.

This book will be of much interest to students of intelligence studies, democracy studies, war and conflict studies, comparative politics and IR in general.

Peter Gill is Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the University of Liverpool, UK. He is the author of *Policing Politics* (1994), *Rounding Up the Usual Suspects* (2000) and co-author of *Intelligence in an Insecure World* (2nd edn, 2012).

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To Ellen, Richard and Emily Charlotte

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Preface

The process leading to the writing of this book started over ten years ago when I worked occasionally with various organisations involved in ‘capacity-building’ with democratising countries, mainly in Eastern and Southeast Europe, but eventually also in Brazil and Indonesia. For someone whose research into intelligence issues had hitherto been carried out as an academic with no practical experience either in intelligence or as a politician, the workshops and seminars I attended provided fascinating insights into the world of ‘intelligence reform’. It also brought me into contact with a literature on ‘security sector reform’ that had been developing since the mid-1990s, although little of this actually dealt with intelligence per se compared with military and police reform. There were some well-thought-out guides on what democratic intelligence governance would look like and, increasingly, thoughtful studies on the course of reform within specific countries. But, initially, the gap I wanted to fill was the absence of any comparative assessment of the success or otherwise of reform in previously authoritarian regimes where ‘intelligence’ had been synonymous with repression.

However, as time went on, events led me to ignore the very good advice I’ve given over the years to doctoral students not to allow themselves to be tempted down interesting byways and distracted from their central thesis! The first main factor was that, from about 2003 onward, it became increasingly apparent that the ‘old’ democracies, notably the UK and the USA, themselves presented models of intelligence governance which fell far short of the ideals that were sometimes being presented as models to ‘new’ democracies. The second factor – the role of non-state intelligence organisations – was, in itself, not new but increasingly demanded to be included in any serious analysis. These factors have therefore led me to consider more broadly the conditions required for democratic intelligence governance, including the implications of links not only between states and corporations but also with what are described as ‘para-states’.

Thus the purpose of this book may be stated as an examination of the *possibility* of governing intelligence ‘democratically’ given the variety and complexity of the forms it takes. As such, it intends to contribute to the academic debate but, hopefully, practitioners of both intelligence and security

sector reform will also find the analysis thought-provoking. The Intelligence Studies literature is dominated by discussion of the history, institutions and laws surrounding this state activity but this study is located in the broader framework of the extensive literature on ‘democratisation’, both general and, more specifically, in relation to the security sector. Intelligence is a central state function and is, in some respects, distinctive, but it is not *wholly* different from other state activities and this broader literature provides an important context for the analysis. If, as I do, one sees the strength of Intelligence Studies lying in its very interdisciplinarity then, of course, analysis must draw on the diverse literatures of history, international relations, law, political science, psychology, sociology, anthropology, etc. In plundering these, there is a danger of understanding them superficially but this price must be paid because, surely, intelligence is essentially an interdisciplinary activity and cannot be studied otherwise.

In another respect, however, I suspect that apologies are due for falling into the trap of trying to be an ‘expert in everywhere’. I am sure that comparative analysis is essential in order to move the study of intelligence beyond the necessary detailed descriptions of individual countries but the challenges are obvious. Apart from brief forays abroad, I have only ever lived in England and my language skills are typically British; that is, poor. To some extent I addressed that with the aid of an emeritus fellowship from the Leverhulme Trust that funded some travel and translation of materials into English, for which I am very grateful. Mike Edwards, Sally Evans, Enri Hide and Dan Mazãre all provided me with excellent translations. I have been fortunate to have some good colleagues who are natives of the main areas I have sought to discuss – Latin America and Southeast Europe – and who have read some or all of what follows and saved me from some errors of fact and interpretation; in this respect I am grateful to Marco Cepik, Eduardo Estévez and Florian Qehaja. Despite their best efforts, there may well be generalisations here that readers will find irritating; I just hope that they conclude that the overall benefits of this comparative discussion outweigh the lapses.

I thank other colleagues who have also read and commented on parts or all of the book for me: Andrew Defty, Richard Eager, Stuart Farson, Mark Phythian, Alison Wakefield, Michael Warner and Aidan Wills. Throughout this project I have had numerous very helpful conversations with colleagues at the Geneva Centre for Democratic Control of Armed Forces (DCAF) and with others invited to various meetings over the years. I want to thank especially Marina Caparini, who read and commented on my ideas early on, Philipp Fluri, Antje Fritz, Teodora Fuior, Franziska Klopfer, Marc Remillard, Fred Schreier, Darko Stancic, Thorsten Wetzling and Hans Born. My honorary research fellowship in the Politics Department of the University of Liverpool has provided me with necessary access to journals, and has also offered occasional opportunities to try out ideas on staff and students.

Given the time it has taken to bring this project to fruition, I just cannot remember all the people with whom I have had informative conversations

over the years, so please forgive me if you are one of them but not in this list: Michael Andregg, Priscila Antunes, Rubén Arcos, Didier Bigo, Steven Boraz, Stefan Brem, Tom Bruneau, Ümit Cizre, Vlatko Cvrtila, Phil Davies, Thanos Dokos, Antonio Díaz, Ken Dombrowski, Arjan Dyrmishi, Roland Friedrich, John Gentry, Joanisval Goncalves, Mike Goodman, Dan Gressang, Michael Herman, Claudia Hillebrand, Sotiraq Hroni, Martha Huggins, Lauren Hutton, Saša Janković, Peter Jackson, Loch Johnson, Kalman Kocsis, Stéphane Lefebvre, Ian Leigh, Helge Lurås, Steve Marrin, Cris Matei, Gustavo Matey, Jon Moran, Diego Navarro, John Nomikos, Kevin O'Brien, Kevin O'Connell, Conor O'Reilly, David Page, Vesselin Petkov, Predrag Petrović, Valentin Philip, Terry Quist, Julian Richards, Len Scott, Shlomo Shpiro, Andrei Soldatov, David Strachan-Morris, Greg Treverton (who inadvertently gave me the idea for [Chapter 4](#)), Reg Whitaker, Lee Wilson, Peter Wilson and Jim Wirtz.

[Figure 2.1](#) herein reproduces [Figure 1.3](#) from Gavin Cawthra and Robin Luckham (eds), *Governing Insecurity: Democratic control of military and security establishments in transitional democracies*, 2003, by permission from Zed Books, London. I am very grateful to Andrew Humphrys, Hannah Ferguson and Elizabeth Spicer at Routledge for their continuing support throughout the process of seeing this book into print. Finally, endless thanks to Pen whose love and support for my efforts has always been unstinting.

Although 'complete', this book really represents a 'work in progress', in the same way as democratisation is a process, not an event. Our field of interest still awaits a full evaluation of the success or otherwise of democratisation in former authoritarian regimes. My hope is that colleagues, students, researchers and practitioners find the analysis sufficiently helpful that it provokes them into researching further, if, for no other reason, than to challenge the conclusions here and to produce that evaluation. In the meantime, I take responsibility for remaining errors.

Pete Gill, Liverpool

1 Intelligence and democracy

Introduction: a challenging project or just an oxymoron?

There is, to put it mildly, much tension between these concepts; indeed, for some readers their incompatibility is so complete that any notion of ‘democratic intelligence’ is oxymoronic. Throughout history, security and intelligence agencies have been created by executives – democratically elected or not – usually by decree, involving neither public discussion nor statutory enactment. The only democratic ‘control’ might come from elected ministers but they were often ignorant of intelligence policies and operations. Almost total secrecy ensured little or no informed public discussion of intelligence matters. Yet, since the mid-1970s there have been increasing, if uneven, efforts throughout Europe, the Americas and more sporadically in Africa and Asia to, at least, reduce this tension, and this study considers the extent to which these efforts have been successful and, if not, why not. This chapter prepares the ground by discussing what intelligence governance looks like in an otherwise established ‘liberal democracy’ and then provides examples from intelligence under authoritarian regimes. The growing empirical richness of materials available for ‘Intelligence Studies’ is contrasted with its relatively undeveloped conceptual frameworks and a suggestion made as to how this ‘interdiscipline’¹ might progress.

Change has been triggered by two main factors: in the ‘older’ democracies (North America, Western Europe, Australia and New Zealand), the impetus was often scandals involving abuses of power and rights by the agencies. Typically, these gave rise to legislative or judicial enquiries that resulted in new legal and oversight structures for the agencies, some achieved by statute, others by executive order. Elsewhere, this shift has been a central, and sometimes painful, aspect of the democratisation of formerly authoritarian regimes, both civilian and military, a process also marked by recurrent scandals. For example, the death of Franco in 1976 precipitated democratisation in Spain that included the demilitarisation of intelligence. Military rule ended in Brazil in 1985, though the military-dominated Serviço Nacional de Informações (SNI) was not replaced until 1990 as part of a continuing process of demilitarisation. In the countries of the former Soviet bloc no agency

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has been immune to change although the amount of real, as opposed to nominal, reform varies widely. In Russia itself some initial moves in the 1990s have been effectively reversed since 1999 so that the Federal Security Service (FSB) is as central to Russia's autocracy as was its Soviet predecessor.

Debates relating to the definition of democracy and democratisation are considered in detail in the next chapter but a definition of *intelligence* is required that could apply to any political regime – authoritarian, democratic, theocratic – so intelligence is:

mainly secret activities – targeting, collection, analysis, dissemination and action – intended to enhance security and/or maintain power relative to competitors by forewarning of threats and opportunities.²

This needs to be distinguishable from other 'knowledge management' and surveillance practices ubiquitous throughout organisational life in both state and corporate sectors. All are engaged in trying to keep up with the ever-increasing rate of change in information and communication technologies even if it constitutes a particular challenge for intelligence agencies. Even the most secretive of agencies will deploy *some* resources to gathering 'open source' information especially from the Internet (they are surely missing many tricks if they do not); yet key elements of intelligence work remain secret, especially their sources, methods and international collaboration. Second, the intelligence 'cycle' that begins with targeting is often used as a shorthand way of describing what is actually a much more complex process including interrelated actions aimed at turning raw information into intelligence sufficiently validated that it convinces a decision-maker to exercise some power in pursuit of a course of action or, if no action is taken, at least provides a useful increase in knowledge.³ It is this link between knowledge and power – 'surveillance' – that is at the core of all intelligence work.⁴

Third, while security may be defined as 'the absence of threats', how this is actually operationalised is highly contested.⁵ All governments claim to be acting in the interests of their nation and people even if the primary, if not sole, mission of their intelligence agencies is the protection of the governing group. Protection of those in power or, more broadly, existing state institutions is *always* the objective of security and intelligence agencies, though the significance of this compared with other priorities will vary widely among regimes. Fourth, intelligence is always competitive; it is directed at some 'other' state, group or company either as a defensive mechanism at the threat they pose to one's institutions, people or market share, or as an offensive tool in seeking to advance one's own interests in terms of territory, influence or profit. Fifth, because its object is *security* and some element of it will be conducted in *secrecy*, it will always provoke *resistance* from those it targets. It is this resistance – again, both defensive and offensive – which gives rise to the whole field of counterintelligence: seeking to protect the integrity of one's own agencies, people and information from the penetration of others.⁶ These factors all

contribute to the argument that it is far from idle to consider whether there are near-universal commonalities in intelligence processes and structures.

Any study with these aims must be comparative albeit essentially ‘qualitative’. The field of democratisation studies includes much work based on the manipulation of large datasets⁷ but these are simply unavailable to intelligence researchers for the fairly obvious reason that the basic information on which such sets might be constructed barely exists within government and is certainly not published if it does. So we have no equivalent of the data on elections, education, crime, unemployment, etc. on which comparative analysis is often based in other government fields. It must also be acknowledged that there is a necessary trade-off between the modernist aim of generalisation and the postmodernist preference for ‘thick description’ that accounts more fully for complex national cultural specificities. Clearly, there is a space in the literature for both; indeed, the former can only build on the latter produced by country experts. Equally, however, any survey of national studies reveals aspects of intelligence that recur everywhere and provide fertile ground for comparison.⁸ Specifically, ‘surveillance’ is ubiquitous even if its philosophical roots may be different in Western compared with non-Western societies.⁹

Before moving on we should clarify our use of the terms ‘information’ and ‘intelligence’. There is a technical reason for distinguishing the terms in relation to the intelligence process rather than its organisations and that is to retain information as a general term relating to what agencies collect and intelligence as a term applied to what they produce after a process of validation and analysis. More generally, the distinction may be just a matter of language; for example, the Portuguese word *informações* can be translated as either.¹⁰ Some languages deploy different terminologies for ‘intelligence’ depending on the positive or negative connotations to be conveyed. In Arabic both *mukhabarat* and *istikhbarat* may be used to denote intelligence, though the latter normally refers to military intelligence while the former is used for all types. But different words are used to distinguish spying for benign or malign ends: the verb *tajassasa* is normally associated with spying on behalf of someone else, especially for an enemy, while *tahassasa* is used specifically to describe the act of acquiring information for oneself or for a good cause.¹¹ In many Arab states *al-mukhabarat* denotes fear and in Latin America ‘intelligence’ is associated with ‘dirty wars’.¹² The United Nations, for many years, avoided using the term because of its derogatory implications.

Establishing benchmarks: intelligence in an ‘old’ democracy

Much of this study is concerned with the process by which intelligence in former authoritarian regimes in Europe and Latin America has become more democratic, or not. However, in doing so, we must also consider the experience of more established democracies in recent decades as they have also passed intelligence legislation and established more transparent oversight arrangements (these issues are discussed in more detail in [Chapter 7](#)). In other

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words, the idea of ‘democratic intelligence’ is very young and even the older democracies are still experimenting in order to move towards it. So it is worth asking why it took so long for the older democracies to reform their own systems and what lessons, if any, this holds for new democracies and, indeed, the very possibility of establishing democratic intelligence governance. Space does not permit a full survey of the older democracies here but take the UK as a not necessarily typical example.

Parliament had effectively triumphed over the monarchy in the battle for supremacy by the end of the seventeenth century and Cabinet government developed thereafter. After 1832 parliamentary democracy became established with the broadening of the franchise through to 1928 when everyone over the age of 21 received the vote. Yet Parliament had no role in the development of the UK intelligence agencies. While a sophisticated surveillance system intended to protect the Protestant succession was developed in the late sixteenth century,¹³ the modern intelligence system started developing 300 years later when the Irish Special Branch was created in 1883 in the London Metropolitan Police to deal with violent Irish nationalism.¹⁴ In 1909 what would become MI5¹⁵ (or the Security Service) and MI1c (later, the Secret Intelligence Service, SIS or MI6¹⁶) were created respectively for domestic security and foreign intelligence amid fears of the growing German threat to British interests. During the First World War the forerunner of what would become Government Communications Headquarters¹⁷ (GCHQ) was established for code-making, code-breaking and signals intelligence (SIGINT). As well as their core defensive role of covertly collecting information with respect to threats to national security including terrorism, espionage, economic well-being and serious crime, the agencies also have an offensive role. Thus MI5 will seek to disrupt attacks through its surveillance operations, often working with police who will carry out arrests where ‘evidence’ rather than simply ‘intelligence’ has been gathered, and MI6 conducts covert operations in support of government objectives abroad. GCHQ has the defensive function of protecting the UK’s own communications from interception and disruption by others while it will disrupt and interfere with others’ computer networks, functions of which we know a great deal more thanks to the steady publication of National Security Agency (NSA) and GCHQ documents since June 2013 in *The Guardian* and elsewhere.¹⁸

Democratic governance of intelligence is manifested in two complementary ways: control, whereby agencies are established and funded solely by parliaments and, for example, ministers authorise intrusive activities such as communications interception. The second requirement is for oversight – both internal and external – to review the legality, propriety, efficiency and effectiveness of intelligence agencies. Up until 1985 the UK only had the first of these so that state opening of mail and telephone tapping was subject to no statutory regime and rested on the traditional royal prerogative power.¹⁹ The legality of this was challenged when the police inadvertently admitted during the trial of James Malone that they had been tapping his phone

but, even when a senior English judge hearing an appeal determined that interception cried out for legislation, the government responded in 1979 with a review that found the time-honoured procedures to be adequate, requiring no legislation. However, the realisation was dawning in Whitehall that these procedures would not survive scrutiny before the European Court of Human Rights (ECtHR), and so it proved when it unanimously upheld that tapping Malone's phone had constituted an infringement of Article 8 (privacy) because the rules in the UK were imprecise, left too much discretion to the executive and provided no avenue for citizens to complain.²⁰ Consequently the UK government was obliged to introduce the Interception of Communications Act 1985 (IOCA) which made interception illegal unless conducted with the authority of a ministerial warrant, established the post of commissioner to review the legality of the warrant process and created a tribunal to receive complaints from the public.²¹

With the dam of bureaucratic resistance now breached, the tide of reform swept through as further allegations of illegal surveillance surfaced and the government struggled unsuccessfully to prevent the publication of *Spycatcher*, written by a former MI5 officer. As IOCA was being debated in Parliament a former officer alleged that MI5 was guilty of improper surveillance of, among others, prominent civil liberties campaigners who, in turn, instituted legal proceedings that would certainly end up at the ECtHR. It was equally inevitable, in the light of previous ECtHR decisions such as *Malone and Leander v. Sweden*,²² that the lack of any statutory or oversight framework for MI5 would see the UK lose again. Officials were concerned to try to avoid this and eventually persuaded Margaret Thatcher (not a fan of greater government transparency) that a statutory mandate was required and the Security Service Act (SSA) was passed in 1989. But this created a fresh anomaly since neither MI6 nor GCHQ had been formally acknowledged in law. Once Thatcher left office in 1990 amid increased parliamentary assertiveness regarding oversight, the fact that the sky had not fallen in after the 'legalising' of the Security Service and the experience of the Scott Inquiry into the 'arms-to-Iraq' affair led to the Intelligence Services Act 1994 (ISA) which provided statutory mandates for both SIS and GCHQ as well as setting up the Intelligence and Security Committee (ISC), the UK's first steps towards parliamentary oversight.²³

Over the past twenty years this oversight architecture of ISC, commissioners and tribunal that was essentially 'bolted on' piecemeal between 1985 and 1994 to a structure of agencies in development for over 100 years has satisfied the minimal requirements of the ECHR and, hence, the 'rule of law', but, arguably, was more about improving the management and control of the agencies than a triumph for democracy.²⁴ The broad mandates provided by the SSA and ISA to the intelligence agencies, reinforced by the equally broadly drawn Regulation of Investigatory Powers Act 2000 (RIPA) which governs covert surveillance have clearly enabled the agencies to carry out their mandate (albeit with fewer resources than they might like). But when it comes to controversies such as the alleged collusion of the UK agencies in

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torture²⁵ or investigating their failure to prevent terrorist incidents,²⁶ it is far from clear that the combined, if fragmented, resources of ISC, judicial commissioners and tribunal have been capable of providing genuinely robust oversight. The post-June 2013 revelations of widespread Internet surveillance have shaken the system further and it remains to be seen whether the new 2015 UK Conservative government takes up the ISC's recommendations for a more holistic and transparent law governing intelligence activities or the more radical proposals made by the Independent Reviewer of Terrorism Legislation.²⁷

But this is not the place for a detailed analysis of the adequacies or otherwise of the UK oversight system; rather, it is to consider whether UK experience provides any benchmarks for the broader study of democratising intelligence. Are there any general lessons that might be learned from this potted history? First, a well-established parliamentary democracy can exist happily for many years with a large intelligence sector subject to, at best, limited ministerial influence but completely without any external oversight. It is relatively easy to establish democratic control via ministers or presidential appointees but, in so doing, countries must guard against the real possibility that ministers see the agencies as 'theirs' to be deployed for partisan purposes, especially around elections with which there may not be much experience in former authoritarian countries.

So, why did reforms take so long in the UK? It is safe to assume that executives will prefer secrecy over openness when it comes to intelligence, in some cases reflecting a genuine interest in protecting national security and public safety, but also because it just makes life much easier and prevents unwelcome embarrassment if and when agencies fail to do their job and/or abuse human rights. In the UK the tradition of secrecy was embedded in governance more firmly than most of the old Western democracies: no US-style first amendment guaranteeing freedom of the press, no incorporation of the European Convention of Human Rights (ECHR) until 1998, a parliamentary system in which the executive, by definition, maintained a majority in Parliament, a judiciary very deferential to the executive on security matters²⁸ and a press largely uninterested in matters of right and liberties all contributed. Before the dam was breached in the 1980s, therefore, the executive was routinely able to respond to periodic crises and scandals with largely internal enquiries and soothing assurances that, while occasional 'rotten apples' and 'mistakes' occurred, the underlying system was sound. In other words, political culture is crucial; if deference to the executive and secrecy are well entrenched then oversight faces many challenges.

Second, even when formal structures for oversight are established, the UK experience indicates that they must be carefully examined in order to determine whether they are to provide 'symbolic reassurance'²⁹ or actually to have real impact upon how intelligence is conducted. The resources available to whatever body, whether inside or outside Parliament, are a crucial factor in determining the potential influence it may have. These include powers of access to information, availability of expertise either in the membership or its staff,

and, perhaps, most important of all, political will among those responsible to use their resources. They have to believe their task is important because the political pay-offs for elected members are minimal: rather than telling voters what they have achieved in fields of housing, education or welfare, much of what they do will remain secret. Members of oversight bodies may well find the assignment prestigious with its privileged access to information but they may also find themselves criticised for ‘harming’ national security or ‘hand-cuffing’ the agencies, especially at times of heightened public insecurity, and need to display much resolve if they are not to be ‘rolled over’ by executives.

Third, while much progress has been made in establishing formal statutory oversight of state intelligence agencies in almost all new democracies over the past quarter century, their common experience has been to suffer from inadequate resources within an overly politicised environment. In addition, overseers everywhere face three relatively new, or newly intensified, challenges that limit the ability of oversight bodies to even find out what is really happening, let alone assess its propriety. The first of these is the ever-increasing international cooperation between intelligence agencies, the details of which are among the agencies’ most closely guarded secrets. The potential value of such cooperation to increase the collective security is undeniable but, as the scandal of extraordinary rendition showed, the potential for abuse is equally great.³⁰ The second factor is the growth of private sector intelligence bodies working on contract for both states and corporations where, again, the potential for either good or ill is significant but because self-regulation and ‘business confidentiality’ are the norm, public oversight bodies are effectively frozen out.³¹ Third, the revolution in information and communications technologies since the 1990s has dramatically altered the intelligence landscape which, on the one hand, provides unprecedented opportunities for information gathering, yet, on the other, also enhances the possibility of resistance. The impacts of these three ‘challenges’ are recurring themes throughout this study.

Intelligence and authoritarianism

When it comes to the place of intelligence within the different types of authoritarian regime,³² the main relevant distinction for this study is between military dictatorships and single-party regimes. Jan Teorell suggests that the former were more prone to democratise than the latter, though during the Cold War, transitions to democracy in former military regimes were less likely to take root and further military intervention occurred.³³ This cycle has been less evident since the end of the Cold War but military influence may still be very significant in supposedly democratic governments as political surveillance remains a key technique in the maintenance of power.³⁴

Even within either military or single-party regimes there will, of course, be differences. Eduardo Estévez compares the trajectories of Argentina, Ecuador and Peru from different bases as they reformed military controlled political police. He shows that ‘path dependency’ limited the amount of real change

that took place until, in two cases, crises acted as crucial junctures prompting reform.³⁵ Similarly, Malloy contrasted different subtypes of military regime in Latin America such as ‘bureaucratic authoritarianism’ in Brazil with military populism in Peru after 1968 but the ‘critical point of similarity is that each of these regimes is characterized by strong and relatively autonomous governmental structures that seek to impose on the society a system of interest representation based on enforced limited pluralism’.³⁶ Cuba provides the very different example of communist rule in Latin America (see [Box 1.1](#)).

Box 1.1 Cuba: post-revolutionary intelligence from the ground up

When Castro’s troops entered Havana in early January 1959, this signalled the end for the old intelligence apparatus. Disbanded with the rest of Batista’s army, its members were more often than any others accused of criminal activity in their attempts to suppress dissent during the dictatorship. Some were executed without trial in the early days of rebel control of the capital, others soon thereafter following dubiously conducted trials. Still others spent decades in prison. None were retained for service in the new army that the revolutionary government was to form on the skeleton of the small force it commanded in the early days of 1959.

The rebel forces had no formal intelligence service. Yet there were many people, especially in the cities, who were involved in informing the insurgents of the movements of government forces, the probable threat to dissidents at particular times, the state of morale of security forces personnel, and the usual needed information of any insurgent group.

In the early days of the new government, such was popular fervour in favour of Fidel, that little was done to prepare for dissent or foreign intrigues. But this was not to last long.... There was thus a nearly desperate need for Castro to know what was going on in Washington and in the international community, not to mention in the now large, and overwhelmingly anti-Castro, Cuban-American community in Miami and elsewhere. It was in this context that the first organs of intelligence were formed by the new government. In late 1961, in light of the rupture of diplomatic relations in January, the bombardments preceding the Bay of Pigs invasion attempt, the official declaration of the Marxist-Leninist nature of the regime, the attempts by the CIA to stimulate actively dissident elements on the island to rise up against the government, and finally the invasion itself; the General Intelligence Directorate (DGI-*Dirección General de Inteligencia*) was founded as the principal state intelligence agency.

Source: Klepak (2008, 149–150).