**Highlights of CASIS Conference, January 23, 2015**

Greg Fyffe

 (This summary was originally prepared for Vanguard magazine and is used with their permission. A link to the slides used by Mark Galeotti is provided. Other presenters did not have slides, or did not wish to have them published. The program is attached below.)

The focus of the 2014-15 CASIS conference was a comparison of the geopolitical ambitions, and intelligence systems, of Russia and China, with a reflection on the evolution of western intelligence systems.

The opening speaker was Jennifer Sims, Senior Fellow for Intelligence, for the Chicago Council on Foreign Affairs. Professor Sims is currently writing a book on intelligence from the Spanish Armada to the present day, and is well-equipped to offer ideas on trends.   She noted that the 21st century is ”conflict-ridden and unstable” due to transnational terrorism and insurgencies, cyber war, the rise of non-state actors, Russia’s advance into the Ukraine, and the threats from a changing climate. At the same time confidence in government and intelligence organizations has declined. To meet these challenges the business of intelligence has to be re-thought to ensure that it generates a decision advantage for leaders. She emphasized the need for a capacity for “net assessment,” which means a deeper understanding of what we need to understand about intelligence targets. Finally, decision-makers must own the process.

Jennifer Sims’ presentation provided important insights, and her book, when published, will be an important contribution to the intelligence literature.

Christopher Johnson, Senior Advisor and Freeman Chair in China Studies, at the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington, spoke about changes in Chinese foreign policy and geopolitical outlook. Prior to 2008 China had pursued a policy of a quiet and peaceful rise in international influence. After the market crash of 2008 it became more assertive, feeling that the Chinese model was proving to be superior to dominant western economic and political ideas. Militarily China professionalized the PLA, and declared itself to be a maritime power, something it had not done in 150 years.

China’s new assertiveness has created tensions with its neighbours, and China is trying to re-build positive relationships, while not returning to its previous cautious stance. It continues to be aggressive in the South China Sea, and plans to project naval power far out into the Pacific.

While sophisticated in its strategies, China has no skill at “soft power” which has complicated the task of maintaining good relations with its neighbours. President Xi Jinping has continued to pursue the change in foreign policy emphasis, making it more multidimensional and lessening slightly the focus on relations with the United States.

Peter Mattis, a Fellow at the Jamestown Foundation and expert on Chinese intelligence systems, described a dynamic and agile system, with multiple targets, ranging from Taiwan to dissidents abroad, and support to military operations.

The Chinese civilian intelligence services have moved from being party to state agencies, and have decisively moved into the cyber realm—their “Dreadnought moment,” when technical change allowed them to move closer to the effective capacity of their rivals. We are likely to see China move to more third party operations overseas, lessening their historic dependence on ethnic Chinese intelligence operatives and agents.

Masashi Nishihata of the Citizen Lab at the Munk Centre, University of Toronto, described the relentless cyber attack on dissidents and NGOs outside China. The attempt to entice email recipients to download malware through attachments is so frequent—with several attacks a day—that many organizations have adopted a “no downloads” rule.

Joan DeBardeleben of Carleton University looked at Russian geopolitical attitudes from the Russian perspective (but not endorsing it). Russia feels deeply the loss of its former influence, and resents what it sees as inroads up to its current borders from NATO and the EU. Under President Putin post-Soviet Russia has moved to a more ideological and proactive stance, less oriented to Europe, with more emphasis on military power. This shift presents many challenges to the West—the apparent success, at home and in parts of Europe, for its public relations lines; the West’s need for Russian assistance in certain crisis areas, such as Iran and Syria; and, the difficulties of reversing the direction in which the confrontation is moving. She posed the question (particularly relevant with the experience in Syria)--what happens in Russia if Putin does fall? Who, or what, would replace him?

Describing Russian intelligence services, Mark Galeotti of New York University, emphasized continuity, with services being renamed after the end of the USSR, but largely paralleling their Soviet era counterparts in function and operations. This is particularly true of the basic culture of the organizations—an emphasis on active operations, with overlapping responsibilities, endemic corruption, and a strong tendency to reinforce Putin’s views, rather than provide alternate perspectives. In particular, they share his sense that Russia is “under active attack.”

<https://inmoscowsshadows.wordpress.com/2015/01/24/russias-intelligence-system-a-presentation/>

On the closing panel, John Adams emphasized the need for the Canadian system to build public trust through a more open accountability system, Rob McRae emphasized the need for a futures prospective capacity, and Claude Laverdure  reinforced Jennifer Sims’ thesis that intelligence systems had to see themselves as client-centric organizations.

After a very insightful day, one basic contrast emerged for me. While China’s rise will be challenging for western countries, it can be seen as the natural consequence of China’s economic power. China is a rational actor and its geopolitical stance is coherent. Asserting its interests need not take the form of armed conflict.

Russia, however, while also drawing on a historical sense of its place in global affairs, is already conducting an aggressive war against a neighbour. It is difficult to construct a scenario in which this really benefits anyone, and easy to construct one in which conflict in Europe spreads.

The geopolitical agendas of both countries are supported by a strong investment in intelligence services. We can hope that China’s agencies prove to be more discerning in their judgments than Russia’s, and does not follow the tactic of reinforcing the leader’s most provocatively hostile judgments.

The new intelligence environment which is emerging, as described by Jennifer Sims, is one we will all have to consider as our own intelligence agencies confront changing international dynamics.

**Friday, January 23, 2015**

**Barney Danson Theatre, Canadian War Museum, Ottawa**

***“The Adversaries: Russian, Chinese and Western Geopolitical Agendas and Intelligence Systems”***

**To Register**

[**http://www.eventbrite.ca/e/casis-acers-annual-symposium-2015-tickets-14224276193**](http://eventbrite.ca/event/14224276193?utm_source=eb_email&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=new_eventv2&utm_term=eventurl_text)

***PROGRAM***

***(Will be modified as presentation titles, chairs and panelists confirmed.***

***Speakers and panelists are confirmed unless noted as “tbc”.)***

**8:30-8:55              Registration**

**Coffee/Tea**

**8:55                        Welcome and Introduction to conference themes**

**CASIS President, Greg Fyffe**

**9:00                        Western Intelligence**

**Chair: Wesley Wark**

***"Western Intelligence Practice and  the***

***Coming Age of Uncertainty."***

**Jennifer Sims**

**Senior Fellow for Intelligence, Chicago Council**

**on Global Affairs.**

**Chair Comments and Audience Discussion**

**10:00                      China**

**Chair: Gérard Hervouet, Professeur titulaire,**

**Départment de science politique, Université Laval.**

***China’s Geopolitical Agenda*:**

**Christopher K. Johnson,**

**Senior Advisor and Freeman Chair in China Studies,**

**Centre for Strategic and International Studies,**

**Washington.**

**10:30 -11:00           Break**

**11:00                         *"Chinese Intelligence and the Challenge of Global Reach*",**

**Peter Mattis**

**Fellow, The Jamestown  Foundation.**

***"China and Targeted Digital Threats Against Civil Society"***

**Masashi Nishihata**

**Citizen Lab,  Munk Centre, University of Toronto.**

**Chair Commentary and Audience Discussion.**

**12:30-1:30              Lunch (Included in Registration)**

**1:30                           Russia**

**Chair:  Paul Robinson, Graduate School of  Public**

**and International Affairs, University of Ottawa.**

***"Russia’s Geopolitical Agenda"***

**Joan DeBardeleben**

**Carleton University, Chancellor's**

**Professor, Department of Political Science**

**and the Institute of European, Russian**

**and Eurasian Studies (EURUS; Jean Monnet**

**Chair in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood Relations.**

**"*Russia’s Intelligence System”***

**Mark Galeotti**

**Professor of Global Affairs and**

**Director, Initiative for the Study of**

**Emerging Threats, Centre for Global**

**Affairs, New York University.**

**Chair Commentary and Audience Discussion**

**3:00-3:30               Break**

**3:30                          Implications for Canada**

**Chair: Jez Littlewood**

**Panelists:**

**John Adams: Former Chief of the Communications**

**Security Establishment, Adjunct Professor Queen’s**

**University, Contract Professor Carleton University.**

**Rob McRae: Director, Canadian Centre for**

**Intelligence and Security Studies, (CCISS).**

**Assistant secretary to the Cabinet for Intelligence**

**Assessment in the Privy Council Office, 2011-2014.**

**Claude Laverdure: Foreign Policy Advisor to**

**the Prime Minister 2000-2003; Ambassador to**

**France 2003-2007; Senior Fellow Faculty of**

**Social Sciences, University of Ottawa 2008-2014.**

**Panel Commentary and Audience Discussion**

**5:00                           CASIS Annual Meeting and Election of Officers**