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National Security, Child Development, and Intelligence on Intelligence

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Abstract. This article provides a perspective on child development as a national security Issue, efforts to facilitate optimal child development, and the construct of intelligence as an indicator of child development.

Public discourse on national security commonly embraces calculations of correlations of military forces; estimates of external threats from foreign military forces and internal threats from terrorists and from internal subversives, spies, and saboteurs; absolute amounts and kinds of weaponry; and numbers of troops in toto and in segments meeting various performance criteria. This last security component is often associated with human physical and psychological characteristics that may serve as predictors of performance.

Many predictors of performance have been construed as constituting the construct of intelligence. Within these construals, intelligence is most often defined as some general concatenation of potential and actual capability to solve meaningful problems. As to these capabilities, there is a thriving discourse as to whether they are in-born, largely a reflection of experience, a combination of the two, or such that the very question as to their source is irrelevant or even meaningless. As to the hypothesis of meaningfulness, one must note that most parents certainly act through their parenting as if something that looks like intelligence can be nurtured, impeded, or otherwise modified. And, thus, child development and parenting can become a national security Issue.

In looking at expert recommendations for parenting leading to child development, in turn, leading to optimal intelligence, one quickly notes a plethora of definitions, prescriptions, proscriptions, and distributions. Most parenting recommendations may be profitably aligned along interrelated dichotomies such as hard and soft, tough and tender, disciplined and undisciplined, directive and collegial, parent-centered versus child-centered, and so on. Although most definitions of intelligence center on some general capability, the nature of this capability is not agreed on nor is the notion of what the meaningful problems are to which it is to be applied as a sine qua non of its own validation. (One must also note that some experts on human cognition and human performance reject the validity and utility of the intelligence construct altogether or as far as it is applied to some general capability.)

As to the distribution of intelligence--one that can be a target for those seeking to improve the national security through human upgrading--there are also huge diversities of opinion. Some experts advocate that intelligence is normally distributed--thus intentionally or unintentionally suggesting that half the population will be below standard. Some experts posit that what it takes to support meaningful aspects of national security is such that most people can contribute meaningfully--each according to task challenges and capability, and there are enough of differentially intelligent people to take care of what needs to be taken care of. Some experts might even posit that almost all people, or at least those who don't agree with respective notions about national security, are below standard--a positing that might be used to explain undesired aspects of the state of the world and exemplify experts' narcissism.

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With such divergences of beliefs, it is also difficult to validly label the state of public and private education and, thus, validly advocate for or against changes in teacher salaries; class size; pedagogical techniques; teacher training, credentialing, evaluation, and accountability; and the role of school infrastructure, home schooling, charter schools, and so on in the service of a *de facto in loco parentis*. The fact remains, however, that True Believers abound in all these areas and more. And buffeted along on forces seen and unseen, the leaders and followers of tomorrow will continue the success and failures that permeate individual security and that of the nation and the world. (See Bennett, D. S., Bendersky, M., & Lewis, M. (2002). Children's intellectual and emotional-behavioral adjustment at 4 years as a function of cocaine exposure, maternal characteristics, and environmental risk. *Developmental Psychology*, 38, 648-658; Furnham, A., Hosoe, T., Tang, T. L-P. (2002). Male hubris and female humility? A cross-cultural study of ratings of self, parental, and sibling multiple intelligence in America, Britain, and Japan. *Intelligence*, 30, 101-115; Furnham, A., & Mkhize, N. (2003). Zulu mothers' beliefs about their own and their children's intelligence. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 143, 83-94; Furnham, A., Rakow, T., & Mak, T. (2002). The determinants of parents' beliefs about the intelligence of their children: A study from Hong Kong. *International Journal of Psychology*, 37, 343-352.) (Keywords: Child Development, Intelligence, National Security, Parenting.)