

Controversy over Injunction against Publication of Official Wartime Economic History in the United Kingdom

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This paper examines the case of Postan's *British War Production*, published in 1952, which became the subject of an injunction dispute involving the British Joint Intelligence Committee. The book described Britain's military industrial base during World War II, but its publication was met with resistance in the context of rising tensions between the Soviet Union and the West. In several meetings, economic historians and cabinet secretaries advocated the importance of building a nation-state narrative and making it available to civil society. Conversely, the military opposed the release of information related to the conduct of total war. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Scientific Advisory Board argued that advancements in weaponry and the regular release of economic data rendered information secrecy increasingly obsolete. Although the debate was ultimately resolved somewhat forcefully when Prime Minister Churchill authorized publication, the discussions remain instructive. They include deliberations on the nature of future warfare and the potential benefits of making recent history publicly available.

Introduction

This paper focuses on the controversy over the injunction against the publication of *British War Production* (London: H. M. Stationary Office, 1952, xvi + 512pp.), written by Postan (1898–1981). It aims to clarify the nature of the conflict between economic logic and military logic as highlighted in the deliberations of the Joint Intelligence Committee (hereafter JIC). The controversy over the injunction against publication was triggered by the compilation of an official government-issued military history depicting wartime production in the United Kingdom during World War II. This official war history, which dealt extensively with British wartime production during World War II, including resource management, production structures, and means of production, was authored by an economic historian rather than by the military or government agencies. The controversy over whether the book should be distributed to the public occurred during the Korean War in 1951, at the height of the Cold War. Three distinct groups emerged in this controversy: the military and related government agencies, which argued that publication should be suspended to prevent the spread of important information; the Cabinet Secretariat's Historical Compilation Department, which wanted to prevent the suspension and publish

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the history book; and various government agencies, which examined the information and analysis of both parties.

Although the controversy lasted only five months, it raises important points in several respects. First, it centered on whether priority should be given to information control or to the writing of history by civilians. Public documentation of history by civilians was important in terms of preserving the results of industrial mobilization and management methods, and it also served as a means of disclosing information to the public. Moreover, hiding all mobilizable economic resources and corporate information as military secrets would impede economic activities. On the other hand, unrestricted disclosure of key wartime economic information would be tantamount, in the case of the British during the Korean War, to disclosing military weaknesses to the enemy, especially the Soviet Union. The injunction controversy over this public disclosure clashed between the “logic of the economy and civil society” and the “logic of military and total war.” The controversy also revealed the importance of wartime economics and economic intelligence to government officials of the time. In an era when scientific and technological advancements, including jet warplanes, missiles, and nuclear weapons, were already anticipated, the controversy revealed a conflict between the military, production authorities, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Science and Technology Advisory Board. This raised broader questions: In this new era, does it really make sense to control industrial intelligence? Fundamentally, can total war and total mobilization continue to exist in a world with nuclear bombs? These questions were exposed in the injunction controversy.

This paper examines these issues using the JIC’s regular meeting reports (*J.I.C. Meeting*) and a report submitted to Prime Minister Churchill (*Official History of British War Production* by Professor H.M. Postan, *Report by Joint Intelligence Committee*). Chapter 1 presents the history of the wartime economic history’s compilation, which became the subject of the injunction, and the decision-making processes within the Intelligence Division that led to concerns about its publication. Chapter 2 analyzes the origins of the controversy, drawing on archival records of the JIC’s regular meetings. Chapters 3 and 4, along with the conclusion, review the final report submitted to the Prime Minister and summarize the JIC’s conclusions.

1. Compilation of Official Wartime Economic History and M.M. Postan

Before delving into the details of the injunction controversy, we will first examine the JIC—the setting for the controversy—and provide an overview of the wartime economic history at the center of the debate.

(1) Postan’s Career, Wartime Cooperation, and Civilian Historiography

Postan, the author of *British War Production*, is widely known as a historian of British medieval economic history. Born in Bessarabia (now the Republic of Moldova) in 1898, Postan became a lecturer in history at London University in 1927, a lecturer at Cambridge University in 1935, and a professor at Cambridge University in 1939, a position he held until his retirement in 1965. After his retirement, Postan published many works on medieval economies. He also organized an international conference on economic history with Braudel and others in 1960 before his retirement. He is also credited with the internationalization of the *Economic History Review*, a prestigious British economic

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journal.¹ In addition to his career, Postan's research also included aspects of wartime cooperation, particularly the economic analysis of enemy intelligence.

British War Production was one of a number of government-sponsored official war histories by university researchers that summarized the British wartime production system, resource rationing, research and development, labor allocation, and other aspects of the broader British war effort.² This compilation of official military history³ began in the early 20th century as a project of the Cabinet Office. In 1923, it became a project of a subordinate organization of the Imperial Defense Committee but was reconverted to a Cabinet Office project at the time of World War II. After the war started, K. Hancock took over as the supervisor of this program. A total of 99 volumes of the official military history of World War II were planned, of which 85 were published. Postan's was part of the Civil History (30 volumes), which was separate from the Military History (35 volumes) and the Medical Series (20 volumes) and concerned the area of the civilian sector. The civilian sector covers a wide range of events in the civilian field, from agriculture⁴, studies of overseas supply, and financial policy, to supply and production in rear production areas, to civilian air defense and defense forces. It also dealt with a wide range of civilian issues in the context of total war, from supply and production in rear production areas to civil defense, including civilian air defense and defense units. Postan had been responsible for organizing and analyzing information on Germany's economic mobilization since the war, and the decision to compile an official war history was delegated as a result of such work. At least as of July 1945, Postan was involved in the compilation of the official war history, together with Hancock and others.⁵ When the British government collected wartime economic information on the Nazis in occupied Germany, meetings were held on whether to send staff from their historiography department, which excelled in analyzing economic information.

(2) Exchange of Opinions at Joint Information Committee Meetings

The British counterintelligence community, which began in the 1880s as a police intelligence unit monitoring terrorist activities by the Irish, evolved into a variety of intelligence agencies that conducted surveillance and intelligence activities inside and outside the empire.⁶ In particular, from the turn of the century to the beginning of the 20th century, intelligence agencies were established by region and type, from the Secret Service Branch (established in 1909, hereafter SSB) to the Secret Intelligence Service (hereafter SIS), which was in charge of gathering information abroad, and MI5, which was in charge of domestic intelligence. The JIC, established in 1936, was an organization designed to unify the flow of information among the various bureaucratic and military organizations that governed the British Empire. Although it was under the command of the Chief of Staff Committee (hereafter CoS), its role, according to Kotani [2019], was to collect and analyze foreign intelligence, operate intelligence organizations, coordinate intelligence with the CoS and other committees, make intelligence recommendations to the Cabinet and the Prime Minister, and make centralized consolidation and recommendations. During World

¹ Postan, translated by Hosaka and Sato [1983] p. 346.

² TNA (The National Archives), CAB 158/13: Ministry of Defense and Cabinet Office: Central Intelligence Machinery: Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, later Committee: Memoranda (JIC Series), July–December, 1951.

³ Higham [1964] pp. 240–248.

⁴ Winkler [1957] pp. 901–903.

⁵ TNA, CAB 176/7: War Cabinet, Ministry of Defense and Cabinet Office: Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, later Committee: Secretariat: Minutes (JIC(SEC)), July 7–October 5, 1945.

⁶ See Okuda [2012]; Kotani [2019] for explanations on JIC.

War II, the Churchill Cabinet was in charge of the intelligence and intelligence organization of the country. During World War II, under Churchill's cabinet, it occupied an important position in wartime decision-making. Okuda [2012] evaluated the JIC's centralization role in the intelligence community and argued that it was a good balancer against "colligiality," which is a cooperative relationship among peers. In the 1950s, when the injunction controversy arose, the JIC was under the control of Cabinet Secretary Norman Brook, who took office in 1946, with Prime Ministers such as Attlee and Churchill as his direct superior. Therefore, the JIC's writings were recommendations to the Prime Minister, as described below, and were devoted to the consolidation and evaluation of the opinions of the mandated agencies; it was important that the Prime Minister's decisions, not to mention those of the CoS, were always uppermost in the minds of the JIC.

(3) The Korean War and the Start of the Rearmament Program

The period from late 1951 to 1952, when the controversy over the compilation of military history took place, coincided with a critical period when the United Kingdom embarked on a full-scale renewal of its military forces in response to the Cold War. Over-All Strategic Plan-47 (hereafter OSP-47) clearly stated that the United Kingdom would work with the U.S. military, which possessed nuclear weapons, to secure maritime transportation and defend Europe, while Global Strategy Paper-1950 (hereafter GSP-50) added the following to the OSP-47 and GSP-50 specified that a global strategy would prevent war with the Soviet Union. The Korean War began in June 1950, one month after GSP-50 was issued, and in August 1950, British troops landed on the Korean Peninsula as part of the UN forces, and the United Kingdom was again placed in a state of war.⁷ The Soviet Union's successful nuclear bomb test in 1949 also led to the relative devaluation of the means of relying on the American atomic bomb for defense in 1947. These were significant events for the heads of the armed forces that created the GSP, the Army, Navy, and Air Force, so much so that in 1952, they revised their overall strategy as the Global Strategy Paper-52 (hereafter GSP-52) in light of the Korean War. Even so, there were disagreements over whether conventional war after nuclear war, the so-called "broken backed warfare" advocated by the Navy, would occur or whether the war would end with a nuclear attack,⁸ and the three armed services (Royal Navy, British Army, and Royal Air Force) were not in complete agreement over an all-out conflict with the Soviet Union during this period. The three armies were not in complete agreement over a full-scale conflict with the Soviet Union during this period. Since the dilemma between all-out nuclear war and conventional war had been realized to some extent by the Korean War, the Attlee administration had no choice but to be as conscious of mobilization and control of industry as it had been of nuclear war. The rearmament program, which included these general economic matters, was naturally bloated, especially during Attlee's tenure, when he planned to spend more than 10% of GNP(Gross National Product) for three years.⁹

The third and tenth reports of the Government Sub-Committee on Rearmament, from November 1950 to March 1951, listed agendas dealing with rearmament.¹⁰ The main topics discussed included the rationing of raw materials and resources, the expansion of machine

⁷ Clark [2004] p. 227.

⁸ The debate, centered on the Air Force Chief of Staff, was divided on whether there would be a prolonged conventional war after nuclear war; Baylis [1995] p. 19.

⁹ Clark [2004] p. 227.

¹⁰Third Report [with Evidence taken before Sub-Committee B, and Appendices] (1950 Committee B, and Appendices), (178). Tenth Report of the Commissioners for the Exhibition of 1851 (Exhibition of 1851), 1950–51, Cmd. 8348.

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tools in the domestic industry, and the allocation of human resources. From these agendas, it is clear that the Attlee administration's "rearmament" program was based on the premise of large-scale mobilization, a "two-war" type of mobilized economy that even took industrial mobilization into account.¹¹ Although the Attlee administration was defeated in the general election of October 1951, plans for rearmament and strategic planning continued to be formulated, even after the transfer of power to Churchill. Churchill tried to limit the amount of Attlee's spending decisions for rearmament from one year to the next and instead tried to limit the budgetary damage by doing so over a longer period of time, but the basic policy remained the same.¹²

The protest from the military and intelligence services regarding the publication of government documents on the total war economy occurred against the backdrop of the years 1951–1952, during which the United Kingdom was implementing its rearmament policy and transforming its military strategy. The country was also facing the threat of war in the near future. In particular, the military had to be sensitive to the review of military strategy, as it determined the overall mobilization plan and was an ongoing issue during the period of the injunction controversy. The question was how valid it was, and the JIC was in a heated debate over this point.

2. The Beginning of the Injunction Controversy

The previous chapter provided an overview of the compilation of official military history and the position of the British imperial intelligence community, particularly the JIC. We also discussed the British government's predictions of war against the Soviet Union in the background of the injunction controversy. Based on the above, we will now discuss how the two sides became actors in the controversy.

(1) Discussion at the 128th Regular Meeting

At the 128th regular meeting of the JIC, held on November 30, 1951. At this meeting, it was raised that the contents of *British War Production* might contain information that could measure Britain's war potential. The need for an investigation was emphasized.¹³ Specifically, there was opposition to the publication of the book from the military services, the armed forces, and their respective service ministries, as well as the so-called functional offices of the Ministry of Supply. Given that the official war history itself had been given the go-ahead before the Churchill administration took office, Churchill attempted to resolve this issue by having the CoS and JIC hold discussions and submit a report in an attempt to consolidate their views. The JIC report also mentioned some of the smaller discussions that took place during the day's meeting. Group Captain C. V. Mears, dispatched from the Air Force, argued that if the Soviets produced a similar official war history, it would be an extremely effective source of information for the British, and he feared a leak of information from the British side. Captain W. A. F. Hawkins of the Navy and Colonel T. E.

¹¹Third Report [with Evidence taken before Sub-Committee B, and Appendices] (1950 Committee B, and Appendices), (178). Tenth Report of the Commissioners for the Exhibition of 1851 (Exhibition of 1851), 1950–51, Cmd. 8348.

¹² Baylis [1995] p. 6.

¹³TNA, CAB 159/10: Ministry of Defense and Cabinet Office: Central Intelligence Machinery: Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, later Committee: Minutes (JIC Series). Joint Intelligence Committee, July–December, 1951.

Williams of Army Intelligence agreed. H. R. Gardner, a representative of the Ministry of Supply, argued that while some of the information was important, most of the information in Postan's book was outdated, but he was cautious about such information being leaked. G. L. Turney, Director of Scientific, also pointed out that disclosure was not a wise decision, while Brigadier General E.R. Sword, Joint Intelligence Bureau, did not find Postan's book of much importance. Sword also cited a letter sent by M. Y. Watson, a member of the Joint Intelligence Bureau, to A.B. Acheson in the Cabinet Office's official historiography department as a well-composed argument.¹⁴ In the letter, he pointed out his impressions of the Postan manuscript, its utility, and its problems. G. A. Carey Forster, who was seconded from the Foreign Ministry and chaired the meeting, stated that most of the information here was already open source and that he was comfortable with its release. R. H. Hollos of the Security Service argued that Postan's manuscript only released statistics up to 1944 to avoid information leaks and that it is doubtful that these statistics can be connected to current data. While officers dispatched from the military and bureaucrats from the Ministry of Supply found problems with the publication of information itself, staff from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Joint Intelligence Bureau did not find problems with the publication itself based on how much information itself had already been published. This stance of the military and the Ministry of Supply against publication and the stance of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Joint Intelligence Bureau in favor of publication, saying that the information itself to be released was already available to government agencies and the media, would continue until the report was prepared.

Based on these minor discussions, the following decisions were made at the 128th regular meeting regarding Postan's writings:

- 1) The competent authorities should prepare a memo before the next meeting.
- 2) Attach a letter from Watson to Acheson.
- 3) Atchison continues to call Gardner from the Ministry of Supply to the next meeting.

(2) Watson's Letter and the 132nd Regular Meeting

In a letter from Watson to Acheson dated November 28, 1950, cited by Sword, Watson was consistently favorable to publishing Postan's work.¹⁵ He begins his letter by calling the criticism of Postan by the Ministry of Duties an "invalid assumption." Watson praised Postan's book as a writing about ever-changing supply situations and touching on issues of labor, production technology, and resources. Addressing the Ministry of Duties' sense of crisis over the next war, Watson argued that if the same problems recurred in a future conflict, it would indicate either a failure to improve production facilities, such as machine tools, or an inability to learn from history—both scenarios he deemed unlikely. He further concluded that the various wartime economic factors mentioned in Postan's book, such as lack of information on business management, changes in the war situation, military estimates of weapons requirements, demands for new weapons, and supplies from the United States, would occur in the next war, "expecting a kaleidoscope to produce the same pattern every time you shake it." He emphasized that wartime economic history was shaped by the industrial structure of our country and various factors specific to the time period. In his discussion of economic intelligence, Watson also expressed the opinion that economic information is available through other means and that this work was talking about the past.

¹⁴TNA, CAB 176/33: War Cabinet, Ministry of Defense and Cabinet Office: Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, later Committee: Secretariat: Minutes (JIC(SEC)), November 9–December 31, 1951.

¹⁵TNA, CAB 176/33: War Cabinet, Ministry of Defense and Cabinet Office: Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, later Committee: Secretariat: Minutes (JIC(SEC)), November 9–December 31, 1951.

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Watson also praised the case study of the British wartime economy presented in Postan's book as an excellent one, and even said that if a hypothetical enemy read it, they would think it was a lie. Watson, who did not indicate any problems with strategic disclosure, however, found several problems with operational and tactical disclosure. One was the concern that some of the information in Postan's book about electronic equipment and weapons factories was still in operation after the war as bases for the production of similar products and that this information could be reflected in the enemy's strategic bombing plans.

At the 132nd regular meeting on December 7, 1951, in response to Watson's letter, Acheson first discussed the origins and importance of official military history.¹⁶ He argued that Postan's work was an official war history approved by the Cabinet, as noted above, and that it was also a history book published by an authority, in demand by the private sector and the public. He added that the publication of such a history book was important in responding to U.S. historical writing about wartime economy and that the publication of Postan's economic history of the war economy would have an impact on the injunction against other official histories of the war. In light of these arguments, Acheson argued that the Cabinet should keep the discussion to whether or not to publish Postan's work in limited release, rather than whether or not it should be enjoined. Navy's Wahlworth suggested delaying the publication of Postan's writings for a couple of years. His opinion was that if there were to be a war with the Soviet Union the next year or the year after, it would be detrimental to the war effort to have the entire World War II industrial mobilization plan published at the same time. The Army and Air Force concurred with the Navy's response, while R. E. Mceuen of the JIB and Carey Forster of the Foreign Ministry countered, as in the previous meeting, that Postan's book did not directly represent the contemporary situation. At the meeting, it was decided to continue to delegating the preparation of documents to the relevant ministries. An important point of this discussion was that the opinion of Acheson, a staff member from the Cabinet Office, was respected, and the emphasis was not on the publication itself but on regulating or manipulating the contents of the book and the date of publication. This forced the military to take up the option of delaying the year of publication. On the other hand, what characterizes the military's opinion is a sense of urgency about an all-out war with the Soviet Union. In fact, as discussed in Chapter 1, the British military had already undertaken a comprehensive revision of its strategic documents in response to the Korean War. Against this backdrop, Postan's book, which vividly depicted the real picture of munitions production five years earlier, was regarded as dangerous because it would provide information to the Soviet Union, a hypothetical enemy nation (named "Russian" in the document).

3. 1951 Report (1): Economic Intelligence and Protests on the Part of Economic Historians

In Chapter 3, we will examine the report prepared by the JIC on the injunction controversy. This was a report dated December 14, 1951, prepared by the JIC to conclude its two regular meetings. It was prepared by synthesizing the opinions of the armed forces, the supply

¹⁶ TNA, CAB 159/11: Ministry of Defense and Cabinet Office: Central Intelligence Machinery: Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, later Committee: Minutes (JIC Series). Joint Intelligence Committee, January–June, 1952.

offices, Postan himself, who was in the history department of the Stationary Office, and Professor Hancock, head of the civil history compilation, and integrating analytical documents from the JIB. The report was prepared by the JIC and distributed to the CoS, where it was then made available to Cabinet Secretary Bullock for approval or disapproval by Prime Minister Churchill. The report (Appendix A) includes the following documents: a protest and discussion by Professor Hancock, supervisor of Postan and civil history (Appendix B); a letter from Atchison to Watson (Appendix C); and a letter from the Office of Regulatory Advocacy and the Intelligence Committee pointing out problems in the manuscript (Annex A). Appendix C has already been mentioned. See Table 1 for Annex A. Before looking at the summary and its conclusions, this chapter looks at Annex B and Appendix B. The conceptual explanation regarding economic intelligence can be seen as the logic of the proponents of publication injunctions, while the logic from the historians' side can be seen as the opinion supporting the publication.

(1) Annex B: Concept of Economic Intelligence

First, Annex B provides a detailed explanation of the concept of economic intelligence.¹⁷ In the United Kingdom, there are two main categories of economic intelligence abroad. These two are strategic and operational, and it is clearly stated that there is no strict boundary line between them. Therefore, the information collected can serve only one of two purposes, either strategic or operational.

From Annex A: Section of the manuscript written by Postan that was found to be problematic.

Page	Main theme of the section
74–75	Gun mountings
75	Fire control system
77–78	Armor capacity
93–94	Requirements of escort vessels
97–100	Naval repair work
103–104	Naval construction
104	Vessel repairs and conversion
105	Gun mounting
107–108	Light alloys for aircraft production
110	Aircraft programme
116	Army programme
152	Labour shortages in ship building
165	Production for A. A. defences
199–202	Aircraft programme in 1941
208–216	Army requirements

¹⁷TNA, CAB 158/13: Ministry of Defense and Cabinet Office: Central Intelligence Machinery: Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, later Committee. Memoranda (JIC Series), July–December, 1951.

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236-242	Labour controls and shortage
242-246	Crisis of the drop forgings
259	Fatigue of labour
260-262	German air raids and their influence for production
263	Shortage of aircraft engines
267-274	Statistical methods of measuring the output of aircraft
272	Production of fabricated alloys
275	Ministry of Supply index of production
279-286	Royal Ordnance Factories and individual factories
309-323	Solution for the shortage of machine tools
324-336	Raw materials and the import programmes
336-348	Labour famine
348 et seq	Relation with the United States
378-409	Establishment and functions of the Ministry of Production
438-458	Naval construction after Pearl Harbour
464-484	Aircraft programmes after Pearl Harbour
492-494	Army programmes, war office and Ministry of Supply
501-508	Radio and valve production
512-519	Valve production
Supplement on aircraft repair and spares	Aircraft production line and spare parts line

Source: TNA, CAB 158/13: Ministry of Defense and Cabinet Office: Central Intelligence Machinery: Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, later Committee. Memoranda (JIC Series), July–December, 1951, Annex A.

Strategic economic intelligence infers a nation's military intentions, degree of readiness for war, ability to conduct it, weaknesses, human and raw materials, industrial production, economic mobilization plans, requirements for wartime and peacetime imports, stock quantities, industrial infrastructure, etc. These are national and total warfare in character. In contrast, operational economic intelligence translates strategically developed assessments into operational plans, gathering and utilizing information primarily for use in air attacks. These are specific, individualized, and local in character.

In turn, Britain's own information controls had been improved since 20 July 1945 to make public economic information, including that which had been subject to censorship during the war. These improvements included the monthly submission of key statistics and even the collation of views on the publication of records by ministries. However, Annex A says that this decision itself may be overly open-sourcing. It also states that, apart from the authorities' concern for economic intelligence, the control of records is fraught with difficulties given the public's anger over the control and censorship of information during

the war. Furthermore, in a highly industrialized country such as the United Kingdom, governments and economies can only be well-run if facts and statistics are reliably published. This is also the case for public authorities and business operations. However, given Britain's similar strategic bombing investigations against Germany in the last war and the importance of intelligence at the operational level, he concluded that more intense pinpoint bombing, sabotage, and attacks on maritime commerce were likely in a war against the Soviet Union.

(2) Annex C: Opinion of an Economist

Let's now look at the opinion of Hancock.¹⁸ The protest letter, jointly signed by Hancock and Postan,¹⁹ made clear their concern about the possibility that not only the content of economic intelligence but also civilian military history might be kept from public view. The subject of economic intelligence itself was also, according to them, information that was already publicly available and was therefore meaningless.

The opinion first presented the fact that Postan had already circulated the first part of the contents of his work within the government as early as June 1950 and had already voluntarily reduced the contents of the second part as well. He then mentioned the possibility that the entire series of military history compilations by civilian historians could be subject to future publication as a result of this injunction. Hancock then offered a detailed critique of each chapter of the memorandum summary. First, in response to the section "What the Services Want," Hancock clarified that the criticism of the Office of Professional Responsibility was based on a serious misunderstanding. Based on the fact that Britain's industrial potential for waging war in the interwar period had increased to the level it was in 1945, Hancock pointed out that the military believed it was necessary in the Cold War period to make the same effort to increase the very small "current" scale of production to a level that could withstand a total war effort. Hancock pointed out that there was a misconception: Britain's industrial potential, weapons development, and production efficiency had increased to such an extent in 1952 that we would not repeat the process of building up from the extremely low level of industrial production in the interwar period to the current level. Regarding weapons development, he concluded that the progress made in weapons development during the five years of World War II would not be repeated at the same rate. Regarding production efficiency, he also stated that there had been a 40% improvement over 1938 and a 70% improvement in some sectors (metalworking, machine production, electronics, and chemistry) and that Postan's work did not reflect the current state of the United Kingdom with these advances in means of production and capacity, and therefore it was acceptable to disclose this information. Regarding the publication of information, he stated that the statistics published monthly by *The Times*, *The Economist*, and ministries were more important when it came to showing current potential and that it was not reasonable to ignore them and to withhold Postan's writings. He added that forming a military history has the utility of demonstrating our strength to our enemies and making our allies recognize our value.

Next comes the criticism of "Weaknesses in U.K. War-Making Capacity," and here again Hancock argued that current ministry-issued materials more accurately present weaknesses to the enemy. In response to the military's argument that the inclusion of the damage to

¹⁸TNA, CAB 158/13: Ministry of Defense and Cabinet Office: Central Intelligence Machinery: Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, later Committee. Memoranda (JIC Series), July–December, 1951.

¹⁹ From a contemporary perspective, Postan is an economic historian, but in the original report he is referred to as an economist. For this reason, he is referred to here as an economist.

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workers caused by air strikes in the war history would benefit the enemy's air campaign, Hancock argued that the U.S. Strategic Bombing Survey circulated to the Allied governments in 1946 told in greater detail the damage caused by the massive bombing of Germany, and that it would not be a problem to publish the British air strikes damage now. Hancock argued that it would not be a problem to disclose the damage caused by British air strikes now.

Finally, in "The Dissemination of Experience," Hancock again emphasized the significance of compiling a military history. He argued that intelligence services were concerned only with leaking information to the enemy and underestimated the benefits of knowledge dissemination that the publication of military history would provide to the public and allies. He again pointed out that it was doubtful that the British experience could be applied to the Soviet Union as a communist state and concluded that Postan's book was the first in a series on military history and that withholding it would have a major negative impact on their publication.

4. Conclusions and Controversies of the 1950 Report

Based on the above discussion, what conclusions does the main body of the report reach? This section reviews the finalized information.²⁰

(1) Organizing the Discussion in the Preface

The report begins with a list of the organizations represented by each committee member who spoke at the JIC meeting, roughly grouped into two categories and juxtaposed within one page. The groups are (i) the military and the supply authorities and (ii) the Foreign Ministry, the Intelligence Bureau, and the Directorate of Scientific Intelligence. The former may be simply indicated as the publication control group, and the latter as the publication permissive group. The Ministry of Supply and the armed forces based their argument on the fact that the weapons and production capacity base to be used in the 1939–1945 period and in any war that might occur within the next five years would not change in principle. On this basis, from Postan's work, the hypothetical (Soviet Union) enemy could

- a) know the peak of our industrial capacity and the lead time to get there,
- b) derive solutions to the economic problems necessary for Soviet industrial mobilization, and
- c) know the capabilities and weaknesses of the war effort and derive peacetime and wartime sabotage and bombing targets.

Therefore, the JIC recommended that the Cabinet Committee should control the information in Postan's writings with the cooperation of the press, industry, and other organizations.

On the other hand, the tone of the recommendations of the Joint Intelligence Bureau (JIB, Ministry of Defense), the Scientific and Intelligence Advisory Board, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, listed next, were as follows.

- a) From economic monthly reports and digests of wartime statistics, the Soviet Union had already drawn the necessary information.
- b) Our production had undergone major changes since the last war.

²⁰TNA, CAB 158/13: Ministry of Defense and Cabinet Office: Central Intelligence Machinery: Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, later Committee. Memoranda (JIC Series), July–December, 1951.

- c) The Soviet Union's industrial system was significantly different from ours, so it was doubtful that they would be able to make use of our production experience.
- d) Professor Postan has previously agreed to certain modifications and integrations and has therefore already removed information that could be used by the Soviet Union. Arguing this way, he opposed any injunction against the publication or regulation of the content.

As noted in Chapters 2 and 3, there was no significant difference in their basic attitudes toward the content of the publication or the issues discussed. What was important was that the military clearly stated that the war between the Soviet Union and the West could begin "within five years" and that information control and regulation could be carried out "in cooperation with the media in general." The fact that the negative aspects of economic intelligence can, to some extent, be ignored by the military and the competent authorities is clearly indicated here.

(2) Summary and Discussion Points

With the major authorities now in agreement, the JIC then moved on to a summary of the Memorandum of Security Concerns on the Publication of Economic Information.²¹ The memorandum is divided into a total of 20 sections, from "the basic position of Postan's work" (paragraphs 1–7), to Postan and the JIC's points about "the differences between the British wartime economy and the current war effort" (paragraphs 8–11) and "the weaknesses of the war effort in Britain" (paragraphs 12–18), "diffusion of experience" (paragraphs 19–20), and the conclusion.

In the section about the basic position of Postan's work, the position of *British War Production* in the military history series was described. It is important to note that in 1945, the publication of wartime economic history was not considered problematic. Here, it is noted that in 1945, the British leaders thought they had established peace, and that the short-lived threat of another war was completely unexpected. The argument for or against publication was based on the expectation of a future outbreak of war in 1951–1952, the time when the report was prepared.

With the basics in mind, the first thing to be pointed out was the fact that Postan's book was the first product of a civil history series. The summary acknowledged the difference between the time when the production of the book was sanctioned and the current situation but warned that an injunction against the publication of the book would have a significant impact on the later series. On the other hand, he stated that publishing the book as was could expose the British's ability to conduct the war. The summary then went on to mention how much progress has been made in the current British war effort compared to the past. First, the summary divided the elements of wartime production into two categories. What does the army want? The first was broadly based on strategic and tactical decisions, and the second depended on the basic industrial structure.

Regarding the first, they further pointed to Soviet air strikes, sabotage at key sites and production centers, and damage to maritime traffic. Regarding the second, he said that the basic structure of weapons production had not changed and that future weapons would include guided weapons, atomic bombs, nuclear propulsion, HTP engines (Valter engines), and BC weapons. The major weapons developed during the war, however, would not appear until the end of the war. He also stated that the main technologies developed during

²¹TNA, CAB 158/13: Ministry of Defense and Cabinet Office: Central Intelligence Machinery: Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, later Committee. Memoranda (JIC Series), July–December, 1951.

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the war were jet engines for airplanes, small arms firing rates, and sonar but argued that jet engines were not much different in production structure from piston engines, that the development of small arms firing rates would increase ammunition consumption, and that sonobuoys would place a burden on the electronics industry. It was concluded that the minor differences and the lack of change, if any, in the basic structure between industry and the military increased the importance of the outflow of wartime economic history as packaged experience.

“Weaknesses in the U.K. war-making capacity” to prosecute the war were analyzed in line with this basic thesis that the basic production structure could remain the same. The problems mentioned in Postan’s manuscript, such as the shortage of skilled workers in the shipbuilding industry, the munitions production load on the electronics industry, and engine production, could increase the efficiency of air strikes and sabotage and subversion against these critical points, the summary stated. In particular, the concentration of incitement and sabotage on production sites was expected to cause more severe damage in the electronic components sector, where production has expanded since the end of the war due to the threat of component shortages. Concerns were also raised about how a democratic nation would respond to the demoralization and disruption of its skilled workforce exposed to air strikes. The report also included several paragraphs of commentary on the navy and shipbuilding industries. It argued that the development of block construction and the resulting flexibility of existing labor organizations were important, given that the production capacity of fire control systems, gun mounts, and engines could determine the number of ships produced in the naval program. The report also pointed to the growing demand for armor plate production not on warships, but on tanks. They also argued that the focus on small naval vessels (e.g., frigates) could continue. Other areas mentioned by name only included raw material shortages, drop forging, and tank production. This appeared to be a page-by-page citation of a point made in the appendix.

In the section on “Diffusion of Experience,” in light of these British war-making capabilities as of 1951, Postan’s work was presented as the packaged experience of six years of wartime mobilization of a major industrial nation, the United Kingdom. JIC stated that the managerial experience, important in the task of efficient allocation of resources, was a valuable idea and experience to be absorbed not only by Great Britain but also by the Soviet Union, a major industrial nation, and that disclosure of Postan’s manuscript to the Soviet Union would risk significantly strengthening the Soviet Union’s war effort. As for the discussions contemplated in the manuscript, such as whether to maintain repair lines for old aircraft or to start new production lines for new aircraft, it was concluded that it would not be desirable to disclose the content of these discussions to the Soviet Union, which was facing similar problems. The concluding section warned that Postan’s writings could more conveniently and authoritatively convey to a hypothetical enemy the contours of the British war effort and effective bombing and sabotage targets, thus leaking experience. It also reminds us that this in itself is evident from the fact that Postan himself admitted that his experience of industrial mobilization in 1914–1918 contributed to the industrial mobilization of 1939–1945.

(3) Discussion Points and Subsequent Actions

Overall, the JIC research report was critical of the publication of Postan’s work. This is evident from the fact that the concluding section of the report generally traced the ideas and thinking of regulators. Although Hancock’s protests provided a response to the

regulators' views, as we saw in Chapter 3, the military and intelligence community's conclusion that Postan's work should be withheld to prevent the "dissemination of experience" and the leakage of statistical information was adopted. However, as noted above, this report was an advisory report, so to speak, prepared for the perusal of the CoS and the Cabinet, and Churchill in particular, and was not intended to have a decision-making capacity. This is evidenced by the fact that Churchill gave his permission for publication after having read the report, and in his report of April 25, 1952, he presented the guidelines for economic intelligence in this series of incidents stemming from Postan's writings and Churchill's authorization.²² Although the issue of *British War Production* was ultimately resolved with the Prime Minister's approval, Mitchell of the Security Service argued that it was an overrule by the Prime Minister and that it was not persuasive from a security policy standpoint. Mitchell concluded that the Prime Minister's intervention was overrule and unconvincing from a security policy standpoint. Carley Foster of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), on the other hand, stated that the JIC's role was essentially advisory and that the Postan case was the result of other considerations since the JIC provided security guidance to government agencies, including the JIC. The meeting also concluded that there would be no particular change in the policy on censorship. In fact, censorship was not limited to Postan's work, as the minutes of the March 21, 1952, committee meeting showed that J. Hurtsfield's *Control of Raw Material* had been mentioned on the same grounds as Postan's. It was listed on the chopping block for the same reason.

British War Production was subsequently published in 1952 by the British National Press (HMSO). However, in the preface to the 52nd edition, Postan mentions that the chapter "quality of weapons, dealing with the problems of design, development, research and innovation" was discarded because of "interest of security demand,"²³ but this is believed to be the result of self-imposed restrictions.

Conclusion

The final decision in the injunction dispute rested with Prime Minister Churchill, and it is therefore questionable to what extent the fact that the JIC made the military-leaning argument that restrictions should be placed on publication and content, or the substance of the arguments leading up to it, influenced Churchill's decision to permit publication. Nevertheless, there are some aspects of the JIC's argument itself that are worth examining.

The first point raised was the debate on the extent to which the idea of economic intelligence and total warfare-type intelligence regulation applies to democracies. It is particularly interesting to note that the military, bureaucrats, and academics clashed over the experience of wartime production operations, information about factories, and production know-how essential to the conduct of the war, as well as simple statistical indicators to estimate the war potential itself. The military did not hesitate to oppose the

²² TNA, CAB 159/11: Ministry of Defense and Cabinet Office: Central Intelligence Machinery: Joint Intelligence Sub-Committee, later Committee: Minutes (JIC Series). Joint Intelligence Committee, January–June, 1952.

²³ Postan's original work could have contained far more information than it does today. The preface to *British War Production* states that it has been revised due to changes in current conditions, and the number of pages of items censored by the Ministry of Supply does not match the order of the contents and table of contents of the book as it was published in 1952.

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release of information related to the conduct of the war itself, such as Soviet incitement to sabotage and strategic bombing of key production sites, and the timescale for maximum production of mobilized munitions industries. This opinion can be said to be based on the fact that the strategic bombing of important production sites in Germany occurred during World War II. The military also had a sense of crisis about production control, which itself could be used as a reference by the enemy, regardless of differences in production methods. On the other hand, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Scientific Advisory Board mentioned that the information itself was always made public and that it was significant to make public the overall economic indicators for the execution of the total war. They took issue with the fact that this information was already publicly available and that to block it in the first place would be to interfere with the system as a capitalist and liberal state. They also mentioned the possibility that the development of new weapons, increased production efficiency, and advances in production systems could transform warfare, presenting a scenario in which confrontations based solely on conventional military power, as in the two World Wars, would become a thing of the past. In this view, future wars might share some of the same aspects but would be fundamentally different from those of the past. The historian and the Cabinet Office have presented a forecast of the future of the nation-state. Historians and the Cabinet Office emphasized the importance of building a narrative (i.e., a history book) to counter the United States as a nation-state and make it available to civil society. According to them, the propagation of their people's activities through history books was not compatible with the Soviet Union's socialist mode of production, and the significance of the former outweighed the dangers of the latter, even if disclosing their military historical achievements to society would have led to information leaks. In these disagreements between the military, historians, and other ministries, one can see in a nutshell the dilemma of disclosure and the difficulty of regulating information in a liberal state. The report eventually came to the point of arguing that Postan's work itself should be regulated as a packaged experience, excluding the macro disclosure of information, but Postan and other historians also succeeded in publishing their own works on the basis of self-regulation.

Second, the controversy offers a glimpse into the outlook of various ministries, historians, and the military on the future shape of warfare. The historians and the military differ in their perspectives on this issue, with the military insisting that it was still important to envision total warfare with conventional weapons, albeit with different nuances among the armed forces. On the other hand, historians and the Foreign Ministry were of the view that the advent of nuclear weapons and new types of weapons would render existing conventional forces and production structures a thing of the past. To conclude preemptively, both views were partially realized and partially unrealized. Nuclear weapons and new types of weapons appeared to threaten conventional forces and to replace them in reality, while their production, as the report pointed out, was something that required mass production in numbers, and conventional forces, in addition to nuclear weapons, were also needed in the national defense program. On the micro level, the need for conventional forces made the military right, and on the macro level, the advent of nuclear weapons made historians and foreign ministries right, but the result was a flexible reaction strategy and a "New War" by irregular forces in the Third World, both of which were not fully anticipated. It will be said that neither of them fully predicted this.

As for Postan's work, there is room for research on what he was thinking and what was subtracted from *British War Production* in completing the manuscript. Also, the discussion

of what items should be kept secret in the overall military history of JIC would be interesting to examine in areas other than wartime economics. This is a topic for future research.

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