THE U.S. INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY AND FOREIGN POLICY

Getting Analysis Right

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ABBREVIATIONS

AOR	Area of Responsibility
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
DIA	Defense Intelligence Agency
DNI	Director of National Intelligence
DoD	Department of Defense
FBI	Federal Bureau of Investigation
HEU	Highly Enriched Uranium
IC	Intelligence Community
ICB	Intelligence Community Brief
INR	Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Department of State
IRTPA	Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (2004)
NIE	National Intelligence Estimate
NIC	National Intelligence Council
NIO	National Intelligence Officer
NIU	National Intelligence University
NGA	National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency
NSA	National Security Agency
ODNI	Office of the Director of National Intelligence
PDB	President's Daily Brief
SCI	Sensitive Compartmented Intelligence
WIRE	Worldwide Intelligence Review
WMD	Weapons of Mass Destruction

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Intelligence analysis seeks to provide necessary information in a timely manner to help policymakers from the president on down make better decisions. The information and judgments must be pertinent to what policymakers need to know but not skewed to support a particular policy outcome. In reality, this is more of an art than a science, especially because the manner and means of most effectively informing the president and other senior policymakers changes with the preferences and working style of each new administration.

The Intelligence Community (IC) of the United States has been undergoing major reforms since 2005 when President George W. Bush signed the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act. Under the new Director of National Intelligence, the shortcomings in intelligence analysis that came to light in the wake of the 9/11 and Iraq WMD intelligence failures are being addressed through revamped analytic standards, increased resources for the IC, and numerous organizational and procedural changes. These analytic transformation initiatives seek to reduce barriers among organizations and individuals across the IC and to more effectively prioritize missions.

As of now, many of these innovative initiatives are in the development stage. Once completed, given their conceptual and technological complexity, it will be important to continually assess whether these initiatives result in a significantly improved analytic product. Mindsets and cultures of various IC components may prove serious obstacles to the kind of open

and collaborative environment envisioned in these efforts; these new capabilities may prove most effective among digitally-savvy analysts in their twenties rather than among more senior analysts and managers.

Against this background of ongoing reform, this study assesses the current state of play, identifies systemic concerns, and offers practical ideas to improve analytic transformation and make the interactions between the analytic community and policymakers more effective. Extensive interviews with current and former policymakers and intelligence community analysts and managers reveal that there are flaws in the current system that require dedicated attention. The most consequential include:

- **Overemphasis on the President's Daily Brief (PDB)** – President George W. Bush elevated the PDB to an unprecedented level of importance, which had the unintended effect of skewing intelligence production away from deeper research and arms-length analysis to being driven by the latest, attention-grabbing clandestine reports from the field.

- **Disappointing National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs)** – NIEs are meant to be one of the major products of the IC, yet they are frequently too late, too long, and too detailed to serve high-level policymakers well. Moreover, NIE analytic quality is often compromised by the effort to present a unified analytic position, producing reports that can become the lowest common denominator statement that is able to achieve agreement across the IC silos.

- **Analytic Risk Aversion** – In the wake of the Iraq WMD fiasco, the pendulum has swung decidedly toward a tendency for analytical products to focus on amalgamating all potentially relevant data and to present only that to policymakers—leaving it up to them to draw the analytic conclusions. DNI Dennis Blair has recently made a welcome commitment to having opportunity analysis— the identification by analysts of unanticipated windows

of opportunity to advance U.S. policies—become a key component of intelligence products.

- **Insufficiently Deep Country Knowledge** – Many of the young IC analysts are trained to follow a particular stream of information from "their" country but lack the deep immersion in the country's political system, economy, and modern history necessary to produce nuanced, insightful analytic products. Moreover, very burdensome security constraints make it extremely difficult for them to build that kind of analytic depth.

- **Overemphasis on Classified Sources** – IC analysts tend to gravitate to information obtained by clandestine means. Yet much of that information lacks context and is substantively rather marginal. As a consequence, analyses overly driven by classified sources may suffer from ignorance of important information in unclassified sources. This is especially notable with the explosion of unclassified material now available on key targets such as China.

This report's recommendations to address these shortcomings fall into three broad categories.

On improving the capabilities of analysts:

- **Recruit a greater percentage of the incoming class of analysts from those in their late twenties and early thirties who have had extensive experience related to the country of concern** – This change can present a security challenge but the added benefits in terms of maturity, life experience, and deeper country knowledge are worth the additional effort and attention needed to clear these individuals.

- **Establish a National Intelligence University with its own campus and faculty** – If the vision of a truly integrated analytic corps is to be achieved, there needs to be an academy that allows the IC to not only establish cross-

agency relationships and cultivate common standards and procedures, but also to better draw lessons from its own historical successes and failures and to incorporate those into training programs.

- **Devote greater time and attention to formal training** – To address the question of analytic depth, special short-term courses that draw in specialists from outside of the IC and that test participants' learning in the course should be conducted on a regular basis. Moreover, analysts should be encouraged to attend programs held by various Washington-area think tanks, not (as is now the case for many) discouraged due to security concerns.

- **Nurture and reward area specialists** – There is no substitute for the key analyst with deep substantive knowledge and experience on a single country or issue. The IC may wish to consider assigning some analysts to conduct in-depth studies of major long-term issues in key countries such as China (e.g. study of the long-term evolution if civilian-military relations in the PRC) in order to help a cohort of analysts develop such depth.

- **Break stovepipes in analytic assignments** – On National Intelligence Estimates and other key products, consideration should be given more often to assigning individuals from two different disciplines joint leadership in developing the analysis. This would foster, for example, greater integration of political and technical analysis of missile development.

On improving the utility of IC analytical products for policymakers:

- **Provide formal introductory briefings for incoming policymakers on IC capabilities and limitations** – Often, new policymakers come into office with very impressionistic and misinformed views on what the IC is able to produce. Senior IC managers should develop introductory

briefings that help policymakers think critically about their intelligence needs and how they can best utilize the IC.

- **Assign IC analysts systematically to provide on-site support to policymakers at and above the assistant secretary level** – This not only can help the policy maker but also can provide invaluable feedback to the IC about the policy maker's actual intelligence needs.

- **Develop regular feedback mechanisms from the policymaker to analysts** – Periodic meetings can greatly help the IC understand the look-ahead intelligence requirements of policymakers and garner critical feedback on materials sent over since the last such meeting.

- **Allow for NIEs with formal dissenting opinions, similar to Supreme Court decisions** – In such NIEs, dissenters can write specific dissenting opinions and even those who agree can pen concurring opinions that articulate a distinctive analytical approach.

- **Train analysts in the power dynamic between analysts and policymakers** – The desire of analysts to please the most senior intelligence consumers who are driving to a decision based, in part, on intelligence judgment can lead analysts unintentionally to overstate their confidence in the intelligence. Analysts need to be better trained and equipped to understand the subtle effects of power dynamics between analysts and policymakers, and policymakers need to keep in mind that their power and positions are intimidating to many analysts who brief them.

On improving the ability of policymakers to elicit and utilize high quality IC analysis:

- **Encourage policymakers to better articulate their intelligence questions and priorities** – Taking the time to think through the analytic question they want answered will pay

dividends for policymakers. Requests that do not assume the form of analytical questions too often fail to motivate IC analysts to think through the implications of their data, debate the relative significant of different factors, and make explicit their levels of confidence in their responses.

- **Elicit what analysts know, what they don't know, and what they think is likely to happen** – Former Secretary of State Colin Powell told his IC briefers that they would be responsible if he took action based on what they said they know and do not know but that he would be responsible if he took action based on what analysts said when asked what they think is likely to happen. As a result, he incentivized analysts to be both rigorous and thoughtful.

- **Provide the IC with the insights the policymakers themselves gain from their meetings with foreign officials** – Presidents and many other senior policymakers are experts at "reading" other political leaders—a skill most IC analysts understandably do not share. If such insights are routinely shared they may improve the quality of intelligence analysis, especially as regards elite politics.

- **Avoid as much as possible the temptation to declassify NIEs** – When NIEs are likely to be declassified, analysts are prone—either consciously or subconsciously—to pull their punches and hedge their analysis. Moreover, the impulse to declassify NIEs or to leak selectively from NIEs is often based on the faulty assumption that the IC's analysis can and should authoritatively settle a policy debate.

In the wake of failures early in this decade, the Intelligence Community today has both the opportunity and obligation to transform itself. With fifty percent of the IC workforce hired since 9/11, there is now a large pool of young, technology-savvy talent that is eager to be shaped into a superior new IC. Indeed, cultural shifts based on the information age almost guarantee that many important changes will happen simply because of the nature and talents of this younger generation.

Ongoing IC cultures of insularity and secrecy, though, present major obstacles to realizing the IC's full potential. For example, some IC managers continue to deny information to other parts of the community because they do not utilize identical security screenings, such as the polygraph. To cite another example, the need for a National Intelligence University has been understood for some time, but the IC's sixteen disparate agencies still resist merging their educational and training programs. This resistance highlights that the IC still has some distance to go in terms of individual agency cultures and mindsets if it is to be truly unified under the leadership of the DNI.

The division of labor and of tasking among the major components of the IC should remain a concern. Post 9/11 changes created the ODNI and repositioned the CIA and the NIC, among other shifts. In short, key pieces have been moved on the IC chessboard, and such major changes inevitably require a substantial period of time to gel fully. This report does not, therefore, provide specific recommendations on additional changes in the distribution of responsibilities and authorities among the major IC players. But the research suggests that a thoughtful review of current relationships—especially those among ODNI, the NIC, CIA, DIA, and INR—might prove of considerable value again in about two to three years.

Finally, the task of analytic transformation cannot fall on the IC alone. Policymakers can affect the quality of analysis if they do take the time to provide clear and candid feedback to the IC. Policymakers also should understand the process of intelligence analysis to the point that they can read products as well-informed customers. It would be helpful to good analysis if policymakers realized their own value as IC sources. They should in particular inform analysts of relevant discussions with foreign leaders that may shed light on intentions and motivations. Too often policymakers simply assume that analysts know what the policymakers themselves know, and that comes at some cost to insightful IC analysis.

PREFACE

Despite the very different perspectives of many of the individuals interviewed for this project across an array of issues, there was extraordinary compatibility among their views regarding the key strengths and shortcomings of the IC analytical current system. Each interviewee typically added something of unique value, but in almost no case did one interviewee's contribution prove simply incompatible with the assertions of any other interviewee. This unanticipated level of convergence among very diverse individuals suggests that the key issues identified in this report are valid and significant.

The author served as Senior Director for Asia on the National Security Council and thus has been a consumer of IC products. His background on China focused the initial work for this report especially on analysis and policy related to China. But it became quickly apparent that many of the insights pertaining to China also have far broader applicability. Indeed, in some salient areas the China-focused part of the IC analytical community does better in managing the problems this report identifies than do other sectors of the community. The author feels, therefore, that the issues raised and proposals suggested in this report can be generalized and should be tested for their applicability and utility across the full spectrum of IC analytical work.

The Brookings Institution produces only unclassified work. This report, therefore, focuses on the author's conclusions about the U.S. Intelligence Community's analytical processes,

products and contributions without in most cases providing supporting examples, as most are still classified. As an unclassified effort, therefore, this study neither delves into a detailed assessment of the state of analysis in individual components of the IC nor provides explicit examples other than those available in the public record. The report's value lies in the extent to which its conclusions and recommendations speak realistically to the possibilities for producing concrete improvements across the IC.

INTRODUCTION

The analytical products of the intelligence community are intended to provide the information necessary to help policymakers from the president on down understand developments and make better decisions. The United States has invested heavily in creating a wide-ranging set of IC capabilities, providing resources for both sophisticated collection capabilities and high quality analytical expertise. The budget for National Intelligence Programs, which includes all intelligence spending except that done by the separate military service arms, has risen markedly from $26.6 billion in 1997 to about $45 billion this year.[1] In particular, the China analytic effort has benefitted greatly from a shift in resources away from the former Soviet Union as China's prominence has grown dramatically in regional and world economic and political affairs.

There are inevitable challenges that arise in any effort to provide top quality intelligence support to policymakers. How should the intelligence analysts be managed to maximize their understanding of the needs of individual policymakers and the types of presentations that best suit the customers' backgrounds and styles? How should the analytical system be structured to provide the best balance of hard facts, interpretive analysis, and insights about possible future developments?

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[1] Media roundtable with Dennis Blair, Director of National Intelligence, March 26, 2009, McLean, Virginia. Available at: http://www.dni.gov/interviews/20090326_interview.pdf.

How should materials from different agencies, or separate analytic programs within one agency, best be integrated and how much emphasis should be placed on identifying areas of disagreement as well as on arriving at consensus opinions? How should the balance between use of classified materials and of outreach efforts and open sources be optimized? To what extent should capabilities be organized around particular transnational problems versus around countries or traditional disciplines? How can IC analysis be made highly relevant to policymakers' concerns without permitting policy preferences to seep into the IC products?

There are no enduring "correct" solutions to these questions. What works best changes as new individuals, issues, and capabilities become a part of the equation. It is worthwhile, therefore, to review periodically where things stand and consider reasonable changes that would improve upon current practices. This report is written in that spirit and with that objective.

In ideal conditions, policymakers will have a solid understanding of how the IC operates and how best to utilize its resources. Analysts and issue managers in the IC will understand current and emerging policy requirements and pull together pertinent information in a timely fashion to provide policymakers with the data and insights they require to do their jobs very well. In addition, the personal interface between the policymaking community and IC analysts will work effectively to build mutual understanding around a set of common objectives for high quality, effective IC input to the policy process.

In the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks and the serious misjudgments regarding the status of Iraq's alleged nuclear weapons program in the 2002 National Intelligence Estimate (NIE), the United States has allocated substantial new resources to the IC and put new processes in place to enhance the quality and utility of its analysis for policymakers. For example, in November 2004, President George W. Bush publicly directed CIA

Director Goss to oversee fifty percent increases in fully qualified intelligence analysts and operations officers within the CIA. In response to the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004, and the key findings of the 9/11 and WMD Commissions (see box), the new Director of National Intelligence in June 2007 promulgated an Intelligence Community Directive (Number 203) that established the analytic standards governing the production and evaluation of national intelligence analysis. These new standards (see Appendix) were sent to every analyst within the IC. Moreover, managers in the sixteen intelligence agencies that comprise the IC have been made responsible for ensuring that their analytic evaluations use these standards rigorously.

In addition, under the leadership of the Director of National Intelligence's (DNI's) Deputy Director for Analysis, the IC has mapped out and is now ramping up sophisticated programs to improve its performance over the coming years. These programs seek to integrate information across the IC, make it available to all pertinent analysts, and enhance opportunities for individuals to contribute their insights and critiques, more clearly prioritize missions, and increasingly shape IC organizations and efforts around mission priorities.[2]

These programs shape change in the IC along the right directions. A major part of the effort consists of developing technologically sophisticated electronic systems that permit much greater information sharing and opportunities for comment than has traditionally been the case. As outlined by the DNI in a report last September, some of the most innovative initiatives seeking to leverage the emerging tools of the information age include:[3]

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[2] For more on these initiatives, see "Analytic Transformation: Unleashing the Potential of a Community of Analysts," Office of the Director of National Intelligence, September 1, 2008. Available at: http//www.dni.gov/content/AT_Digital%20 20080923.pdf.

[3] Ibid.

A Library of National Intelligence – The goal of the LNI is to create an authoritative repository for all disseminated intelligence products. In the past, there was no effective mechanism to monitor the IC's total efforts against any intelligence topic and gauge more effectively whether the gaps in aligning IC production against national intelligence priorities. As of September 2008, 750,000 products had been placed in the repository with the IC adding 20,000 per week.

A-Space – The goal of A-Space is to create a common collaborative workspace where IC analysts in diverse locations can work together, in a new simultaneous fashion, on common projects. The most transformative aspect of A-Space is analysts' ability to post emerging insights during the course of their research—allowing other analysts to see and to comment on analytic work in progress. As of September 2008, A-Space was open to 9,000 analysts.

Intellipedia – The goal of Intellipedia is to create an IC version of the world's user-annotated online encyclopedia, Wikipedia, at three levels of classification—Top Secret SI/TK/Noforn, Secret/Noforn, and the controlled Unclassified level. Unlike A-Space, Intellipedia is available to policymakers for their own use and participation. As of September 2008, Intellipedia had over 40,000 registered users and 349,000 active pages.

Analytic Resources Catalog (ARC) and Analyst Yellow Pages – The goal of the ARC is to capture basic contact data on all IC analysts, as well as information on their skills, expertise, and experience. The Yellow Pages is a classified web-based phone book derived from the ARC that contains contact information for analysts throughout the IC. As of September 2008, the ARC had information on approximately 18,000 IC analysts.

These initiatives also involve innovations in training intended to instill new professional norms of information sharing and analysis more closely tied to mission needs that are

standardized across the various IC organizations. DIA, for example, has created a two-week analytic training course called 'Analysis 101" that is open to analysts from across the IC. This is a deliberate effort to instill common norms, vocabularies, and methods in analysis. The program plans to train 1,320 analysts in 2009 but, in a sign of the continuing barriers to common practices, the CIA has opted to rely on its own training curriculum and not to have its young officers participate in this course.

As of the time of this writing, most of these innovative initiatives are in the development stage. Given the conceptually and technologically complex nature of the tasks, it will be important to follow these initiatives to determine the extent to which the resulting products provide the capabilities envisioned. A concern is whether the new capabilities will be used effectively by pertinent analysts and mission managers. Mindsets and cultures of various IC organizations may prove serious obstacles to the kind of relatively open and collaborative platforms that the technology will make available, and many of the habits that will make these new capabilities most effective are likely far more prevalent among people in their twenties than those forty and over.

In sum, a lot is being developed. The underlying strategy and innovations in process, tools, and training are very impressive. Much remains to be done and obstacles overcome before the envisioned systems can be fully worked out and then about their impact on the cultures and processes in the IC over time. Over a period of years, these new initiatives hold out considerable promise, especially if there is ongoing pressure from the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (ODNI) to move them into place and a spirit of critical self-evaluation to make adjustments as unintended consequences reveal themselves.

Against this background, the current report examines the state of play today. It attempts to identify systemic issues among the

all source agency[4] analytical efforts and to recommend realistic approaches to reducing the problems noted in this analysis. The recommendations focus especially on processes and human behavior rather than on sophisticated technological innovations. In reality, all three facets are necessary to optimize the long-term effectiveness of the analytical effort of the all source IC agencies. In that constructive spirit of assisting the process of analytic transformation, this report assesses the current situation and looks to the future of analysis, specifically addressing four major issues:

- Despite serious efforts to improve the analytic product, are there identifiable areas in which the analytical corpus produced by the IC falls short?

- Why do these shortcomings exist?

- Are there workable reforms that should significantly improve the quality of the product and its utility to policymakers?

- Does a part of the problem lie on the policy maker's side and, if so, are there specific actions that might allow policymakers to better elicit and utilize the information they need from the IC?

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[4] All-source analytic units are those that use information from available classified and open source materials to produce briefings and intelligence reports as opposed to those analytic units that produce products based on a single source stream such as imagery or signals intelligence. Within the U.S. Intelligence Community the largest all-source analytic units are the Directorate of Intelligence within the Central Intelligence Agency, the Directorate of Analysis within the Defense Intelligence Agency, and the Bureau of Intelligence and Research within the Department of State. According to the ODNI, there are approximately 18,000 analysts within the Intelligence Community, but the percentage of these that are considered to be all-source is unavailable.

Key Intelligence Reviews Since 9/11

On July 22, 2004, the Independent National Commission on Terrorist Attacks Upon the United States (better known as the 9/11 Commission) issued its Final Report recommending changes to the Intelligence Community based on its review of the failures leading to the terrorist attacks on the United States. Its recommendations, *inter alia*, included:

- The creation of a National Intelligence Director, separated from the CIA, to improve joint intelligence work by overseeing all the agencies which contribute to the national intelligence program.
- An effort to break down the barriers to information sharing across the IC and to "bring major national security institutions into the information revolution."

In December 2004, the U.S. Congress passed and President Bush signed the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA). A major provision called for the creation of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence with a staff of up to 500 new positions and more than 100 rotational positions. It also authorized the creation of a new national Counterterrorism Center to be a prototype for organizing intelligence support to at least some national missions.

On March 31, 2005, the Independent Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction (better known as the WMD Commission) handed its findings to President Bush. It found that the Intelligence Community's performance in assessing Iraq's pre-war weapons of mass destruction program was a failure not merely because the assessments were incorrect but also because of the way these assessments were made and communicated to policymakers. The Commission offered sixteen recommendations on analysis including:

- Greater attention to the exploitation of open source materials.
- The walling off of some all-source analysis from the press of daily demands so that some analysts can engage in long-term research and analysis.
- Developing more diverse and independent analysis by encouraging alternative hypothesis generation as part of the analytic process.

Since the first Director of National Intelligence took office in April 2005, the ODNI has issued a series of Intelligence Community Directives designed, in part, to address the criticisms and recommendations found in the ITRPA and the 9/11 Commission and WMD reports.

PERSISTENT PROBLEMS WITH THE ANALYTICAL PRODUCTS AND PROCESSES

The all-source analytic components of the Intelligence Community seek to produce objective analyses that enable policymakers to make well-informed decisions. Ideally, while the information and judgments presented must be pertinent to what policymakers need to know, it must not be skewed to support a particular policy outcome. Policymakers decide issues taking into account both the merits of the issue itself and other appropriate considerations; the IC provides policymakers with the objective information and analysis needed to reach informed policy decisions.

In various situations, the types of information the IC must provide to policymakers can be quite diverse. Its analytical products may seek to provide:

- Warning of and instant information on a rapidly unfolding situation, such as a political crisis in a country of interest.
- In depth background information on a major issue to enhance policymakers' understanding of a situation.
- Inside political information on debates and cabals among political leaders in a foreign country.
- Analytically-based judgments that look to the future—in the case of many NIEs, that future may extend for a decade.
- Technical information on such matters as capabilities of weapons systems, what can be learned from intelligence on foreign forces' military exercises, or the scope and nature of the threats posed by foreign cyber warfare capabilities.

- Real time information on the movement of specific individuals or materials of national security concern.
- Counterintelligence information on threats to U.S. technology and classified information.
- Biographical information helpful to leaders when they meet foreign officials.

In sum, the demands are diverse and, inevitably, the intelligence capabilities required differ significantly across this set of demands. In addition, the many consumers of IC analytical products bring different skills, styles, and needs to the table; IC products must be sensitive to these differences in order to be used effectively by extremely busy policymakers.

Producing good analyses for a diverse policy community and presenting them in a form that is most useful to each policy maker are thus very difficult, complicated tasks, and there is no one model that will suit all occasions. Furthermore, as key consumers change, the IC must adjust to the styles and capabilities of the new incumbents. But even taking into account these challenges, there are some identifiable flaws in the current system that require dedicated attention. The most consequential are the following.

IC Products

The President's Daily Brief (PDB)

Ever since the first issue was handed to President Lyndon B. Johnson on December 1, 1964, the President's Daily Brief has always been the flagship publication of the IC analytical community. Each morning the president receives a classified written briefing marked "For the President Only" and, if he wishes, an accompanying oral briefing from the Director of National Intelligence (DNI).[5] Each president has handled this

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[5] Until April 2005, when President George W. Bush instructed the first Director of National Intelligence John D. Negroponte to take over the production and briefing of the President's Daily Brief, it was typically produced and presented by the Director of Central Intelligence.

daily brief in his own fashion. President Reagan, for example, liked simple briefings and preferred audio-visual presentations. Others, reportedly including President Obama, prefer written material and want to read without interruption. For all, the PDB contains the most critical information that the IC assesses the president needs to have as of that moment. It can cover rapidly breaking events as well as address some more fundamental issues (such as the two-page PDB item given to President Bush on August 6, 2001 titled "Bin Laden Determined to Strike in U.S." warning of a possibility that Al Qaeda would hijack U.S. civilian airplanes as part of a terrorist attack).[6]

While the PDB has always been the premier analytical product of the IC, the degree of its prominence has varied over time. President George W. Bush in particular elevated the PDB to unprecedented levels of importance after 9/11. The regimen for preparing the PDB is known as the "First Customer Process." President Bush focused very seriously on the PDB briefing every morning, spending as much as an hour on it, and probed in detail with the briefer the various items raised in the PDB. In fact, he often used the intelligence briefing as an opportunity to review and explore policy options with some of his principal advisers, typically the Vice President, National Security Advisor, and Chief of Staff, who regularly sat in on the briefings.

After the DNI began presenting the PDB, a new innovation was added. Analysts working the issue began presenting verbal "deep dives" into an issue of high concern (such as Iraq or Afghanistan) directly to the President.[7] Typically, President Bush asked top policymakers to join him for the deep

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[6] This PDB was declassified and released to the public by the CIA on April 10, 2004. Available at: http//fas.org/irp/cia/product/pdb080601.pdf.

[7] Dr. Thomas Fingar, former Deputy Director of National Intelligence for Analysis, estimated that almost 100 deep dives with over 200 analysts participating were given to President Bush by September 2008. See Keynote address by Dr. Fingar, INSA Analytic Transformation Conference, Orlando, Florida, September 4, 2008. Available at: http://www.DNI.gov/speeches/20080904_speeches.pdf.

dives, and not infrequently the briefings and surrounding discussions by key players would produce immediate policy decisions.

President Bush assigned such importance to the PDB that, within the IC, getting an item into the PDB became a major goal of analysts. In the CIA, analysts who got an item into the PDB that President Bush found interesting or useful were rewarded, and the IC community as a whole came to see much of their *raison d'être* as centered on the PDB product each day.

> *"President Bush assigned such importance to the PDB that, within the IC, getting an item into the PDB became a major goal of analysts."*

Even before 9/11 the PDB rightly had pride of place among IC analytical products. But the PDB must be regarded as only one among an array of important products the IC produces. Especially when the focus becomes too heavily centered on the PDB, as it did after 9/11, various problems arise:

- Rewarding analysts for successfully attracting favorable presidential comment on PDB items can skew incentives in terms of both topic selection and treatment in the analytical community.

- Analysts may define issues in sharper terms than warranted and use somewhat hyperbolic language in order to make the item "sexy" enough for inclusion in the PDB.

- The PDB format allows only short items on specific topics. It therefore can skew the type of analysis done in the IC away from the more complex and thoughtful work and presentations that are critical to policymaking below the level of the president himself.

- Analysts tend to gravitate to information gleaned from classified sources in writing up the PDB items because they perceive this to be their added value. But such

information is often incomplete, may be less timely than open source materials, lacks important context, and is occasionally of dubious reliability.

- When the president has clear policy preferences, these can drive IC work, while other important issues receive short shrift. This was the case, for example, regarding the paucity of coverage of climate change issues under President George W. Bush.

"When the president has clear policy preferences, these can drive the IC work, while other important issues get short shrift."

- In some unfolding situations, IC analysts sometimes "save" useful information for PDB use, and only disseminate it to non-PDB policy users later. While some information should perhaps be exclusive for the president, withholding less sensitive information for hours or days so it appears first in the PDB is dangerous, if understandable. In addition, this practice has in some instances intensified problems around the issue of information sharing and multiple-agency participation.

The PDB will rightly remain the premier product of the all source analytical work of the IC. Most of the above problems existed to a greater or lesser degree, before 9/11 and persist to some extent in the less-PDB-focused environment of the Obama administration to date. All require conscious attention if the PDB is to both meet the president's daily intelligence needs and also avoid producing pernicious spillover effects within the IC community itself.

National Intelligence Estimates

National Intelligence Estimates are meant to be one of the major products of the IC. They are designed to present the net judgment of the entire IC on key issues of importance and, in some cases, project trends out over a decade or more into the future. These are relatively in-depth analyses that are reached

via a process that specifically requires interagency coordination. The National Intelligence Council, with its National Intelligence Officers (NIOs) in charge of specific parts of the world or particular functional issues, was formed in 1973 specifically to produce the NIE and other community products such as the shorter Intelligence Community Brief, drawing on the entire IC analytical community. The president, a senior executive branch official, or a member of the Congressional leadership can request that an NIE be generated or they can be self-generated by the National Intelligence Council (NIC) with the authorization of the DNI.

NIEs have at times played very important roles in the policy-making community, but on the whole they have relatively little impact. The key problems, based on the author's interviews with present and former policymakers, appear to be the following:

- Many NIEs run to a length of upwards of 90 pages. At the highest policymaking levels, very busy people do not have time to read a document of that length. Too often, policymakers receive NIEs, skim the key judgments, and put them in a safe to turn to when they have time. But they then do not find the time to read these pieces.

- There is a gap between policymakers' expectations of what NIEs can do and the realities. Analysis of technical issues is typically more definitive, whereas analysis of less sharply defined issues like leadership, stability, and religious influence is typically more tenuous. Many policymakers, however, expect the IC to predict with precision future developments in foreign (even closed) countries that are inherently unpredictable even in the United States. For example, many policymakers find it frustrating that the IC is unable to say with certainty whether China has a grand strategy behind its current military buildup. They find statements such as the following from the 2009 China Military Power Report

unfulfilling: "China's leaders appear to have adopted a set of enduring strategic priorities, which include perpetuating Chinese Communist Party (CCP) rule, sustaining economic growth and development, maintaining domestic political stability, defending China's national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and securing China's status as a great power. Less clear are the specific strategies and plans Beijing has developed to achieve these objectives, the decision making structures that guide strategy development and execution, and the manner and direction in which these priorities may adjust in response to changes in the security environment."[8]

- NIEs are supposed to represent the highest quality analytical judgment of the IC on an issue, but they in reality too often become the lowest common denominator statement that is able to achieve agreement across IC silos. Indeed, many NIEs are regarded by officials who work with the issues as an elaborate restatement of Washington conventional wisdom. NIEs are drafted under the leadership of the appropriate NIO, who puts together an inter-agency group to study the issue and typically defines the terms of reference for the study. The NIE process ideally brings together representatives from across the IC to participate fully in laying out the analysis and identifying both conclusions and areas of irresolvable disagreement. But the reality is often significantly different. Some participants may find that they are not allowed access to the full set of sources being used by others in the discussion. In addition, dissent in many cases triggers a process of wordsmithing to smooth over the disagreement, sometimes at the cost of highlighting important analytical edges.

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[8] See "Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2009," Office of the Secretary of Defense. Available at: http//www.defenselink.mil/pubs/pdfs/China_Military_Power_Report_2009.pdf.

- Participants in the NIE process represent their agencies and not themselves. This sharply constrains the capacity for highly knowledgeable individual analysts to voice their own opinions and judgments, particularly if their views run counter to long-held agency analytic positions.

- NIEs lend themselves to partisan political manipulation. Their length, scope and "room" for dissenting voices create a document from which political operators may be able to seek ammunition for a particular effort they favor or oppose and to leak a narrow part of the overall assessment to support their position. The NIE on Iran's nuclear intentions and capabilities published in November 2007 that concluded Iran had not pursued nuclear "weaponization" since 2003, for example, also made clear that almost all of what Iran had done since 2003 could be used effectively once Tehran decided to build a nuclear weapon.[9] This contextual framing was ignored by those who spun the conclusions of the NIE to the press before the unclassified key judgments were released to demonstrate that Iran had halted its nuclear weapons program.[10]

> *"...the finished NIE itself frequently is too late, too long, and too detailed for high level policymakers."*

In sum, the process that produces NIEs creates serious incentives to smooth over disagreements and blunt critical individual insights. According to the interviews of former senior policymakers, the finished NIE itself frequently is too late, too long, and too detailed for high level policymakers. Indeed, as a general rule, the higher the level of the policy maker the less time there is to read anything that is more than a few pages long. NIEs can be very useful for technical consumers, such as actual

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[9] See the declassified key judgments from "Iran: Nuclear Intentions and Capability", National Intelligence Estimate, National Intelligence Council, December 4, 2007. Available at: http://www.dni/gov/press_releases/20071203_release.pdf.

[10] See Gareth Porter, "Cheney Tried to Stifle Dissent in Iran NIE," November 9, 2009. Available at: http://www.ipsnews.net/news.asp?idnews=39978.

war planners and war fighters who read NIEs that focus on particular military developments and capabilities of an adversary. But for high-level civilian policymakers, the NIE process often falls short of playing the role for which it was designed. Indeed, many top policymakers focus on a particular NIE primarily to anticipate political difficulties it might create on Capitol Hill or to respond when some part of it has leaked to the press and created a public issue. Some policymakers commented to the author that the only useful purpose served by NIEs was to produce an intra-IC process to pull together views on a topic—the system would be better if the effort stopped there and did not then lead to issuance of an actual NIE.

Sourcing and Analysis

A perennial dilemma for the leadership of U.S. all-source intelligence agencies is striking the right balance between relying on documented sources of information to draw intelligence judgments and drawing analytic conclusions that go beyond the specific available information to take advantage of the expertise, insight, and wisdom resident within the intelligence community. The experience with fundamentally wrong judgments in the IC about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction effort has produced in general an overcorrection in the IC analytical work. The problems that plagued the IC analytical product in the period before 9/11 were twofold. First, both across different silos in the IC and even within individual analytical units, there was a failure to find the needles pointing to an attack in the haystack of information on potential terrorist plots and ploys. Second, there was too much reliance on single-source, classified information and not enough attention paid to scrutinizing carefully the reliability of each source.[11]The first problem, in part, led to 9/11, and the second

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[11] Most famously, in the information provided by British intelligence—which turned out to be in part forgeries of Niger documents—that produced the conclusion that Iraq had sought to purchase yellowcake in Africa beginning in 1999.

problem fed the fundamental misjudgments about Saddam Hussein's WMD capabilities.

Major reorganizations of the IC after 9/11 have tried to address the need to break down barriers to the flow of information across the various IC silos. This included, *inter alia*, creation of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence, the National Counterproliferation Center, the Open Source Center, and the FBI's National Security Branch—all designed to increase information integration across the IC.[12]

The problem of unreliable sourcing has produced changes that have significantly affected analytical quality in the IC, albeit not in ways that fully address the original problem. Now, it is a rare analyst that risks being called to account for making assertions that cannot be supported with specific data.[13] There is currently, therefore, extraordinary caution among analysts to identify every open or classified source that is relevant to a piece of writing and to provide sourcing for that information. This has produced a tendency for analytical products to focus on amalgamating all potentially relevant sourced information and to present only that to policymakers—leaving it up to them to draw the analytic conclusions. In a sense, analysts become research assistants to policymakers rather than experts.

This has left two problems. First, the fact that each item is sourced does not necessarily mean that each item is true. Analysts typically must work with information regarding which they lack sufficient understanding of how that information was

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[12] For a full description of the initial steps taken by the DNI to reform national intelligence capabilities, see "The National Intelligence Strategy of the United States: Transformation through Integration and Innovation," Office of the Director of National Intelligence, October 2005. Available at: http://www.dni.gov/publication/NISOctober2005.pdf.

[13] For a look at the concerns about sourcing in the aftermath of the Iraq/WMD controversy, see "Continuous Learning in the DI: The May 2004 Review of Analytic Tradecraft Fundamentals," *Tradecraft Review*, Volume 1, Number 1, August 2004, Sherman Kent School for Analytic Tradecraft, Directorate of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency.

acquired and the context of the information acquisition to permit the analysts to judge the reliability of individual sources. While all analysts appreciate the need to protect sources and methods, therefore, there are ongoing problems with analyzing the credibility that should be assigned to each piece of information.

More fundamentally, policymakers favor both analytical judgments and parsimony in presentations, and exactly these qualities tend to be lost in the effort to present and source all potentially relevant pieces of information. It should, of course, be possible to both rigorously cite sources and build on those sources to produce analytical judgments and insights. But in reality the post-9/11 IC products have shifted emphasis from analytical judgment and insight to making sure no source is left unreported. In a continuum from being judgment heavy and light on sourcing evidence to being comprehensive on evidence but light on analytical judgments, current IC products have moved overall too far toward the latter end.

"Analytic risk aversion can rob policymakers of an extremely useful form of information often referred to as "opportunity analysis.""

A related problem is that analytic risk aversion can rob policymakers of an extremely useful form of information often referred to as "opportunity analysis." Opportunity analysis offers the policymakers some ideas, based on analysts' insights, into policy options that might meet with success and advance U.S. objectives. For example, Dr. Henry Kissinger credits a RAND Corporation analyst with having helped him understand the depth of the deterioration in Sino-Soviet relations that helped set the stage for the U.S.-China rapprochement in the early 1970s.[14] Because opportunity analysis is sometimes perceived as coming close to recommending policy, analysts and managers are often wary of including it in their products.

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[14] "Asia Society Center on U.S.-China Relations Launch with Henry Kissinger and Orville Schell," January 30, 2007, Columbia International Affairs Online. Available at: http//ciaonet.org/wsp/asoc9787.

The concept remains highly controversial among IC managers and analysts. In late March, DNI Dennis Blair told reporters at a press conference that he had mandated that every piece of analysis on an important issue would have "not only a threat section but also an opportunity analysis section." He described opportunity analysis as helping policymakers "find the levers… which will enable us to advance our interests and our common interests."[15] Despite his pronouncement, skepticism remains. In particular, the leadership of INR in the Department of State has traditionally held the view that this kind of analysis crosses the line between analysis and policy prescription.

The DNI has addressed other concerns head-on through the promulgation of IC-wide analytic standards, and managers and analysts throughout the IC have taken them to heart. There is great attention being paid, for example, to structured analytic techniques that can help surface alternative analysis and avoid group think, and these efforts are commendable. But the pressures in the wake of 9/11 and the Iraq WMD disaster have led to analyses that still focus too much on sourcing and not enough on either the reliability of the sources or pertinent context and thinking. While understandable, this is producing types of products—analyses that are extensively footnoted but contain few conclusions—that are less useful for supporting good policy decisions.

TECHNICAL MILITARY ISSUES

The IC does a very professional job of understanding the physical assets available to the militaries of potential adversaries and the technical capabilities of these assets. It also does very good work on preparing what is called "Order of Battle" data, including identification of even minor military units along with related communications systems, exercise patterns, and cyber warfare capabilities. This high skill level reflects in part the

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[15] Media roundtable with Dennis Blair Director of National Intelligence, March 26, 2009. Available at: http//www.dni.gov/interviews/20090326_interview.pdf.

enormous resources—technical and human—available to the pertinent parts of the IC for this type of analysis. While most IC military analysis is classified, the previously cited annual report to Congress on China's military power provides an excellent overview of the detailed understanding that the Department of Defense, and therefore the IC, has of China's military assets.[16] It is considered among experts to be the most authoritative source available for information on the Chinese military.

There are, though, several problems with the technical analysis system. First, the abundance of human and technical resources has produced an extraordinary level of stove piping within the system. In examining the capabilities of a single new missile system, for example, in those all-source analytic units under the Department of Defense, there typically is no single analytical unit that looks at the entire missile system itself. Rather, different specialized units do distinct detailed analyses, and each is encouraged to stay in its own lane. But there are too many lanes, and the resources devoted to putting top expertise to the task of integrating the specialized products are insufficient.

There is a related problem in that the IC is not typically able to wed the hard technical with the softer related economic and political issues to provide an integrated assessment. Particularly in the DoD-affiliated intelligence agencies, there are entire intelligence groups that are world-class at such subjects as particular types of engines or other subsystems. But often to gauge real future intentions and capabilities, it is important to look farther afield—not only to related systems development but also to particular types of investments in the economy.

The technical analyses also tend to be divorced from deep knowledge of the different ways that other political and

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[16] See "Annual Report to Congress: Military Power of the People's Republic of China 2009", Office of the Secretary of Defense, . Available at: http//www.defenselink. mil/pubs/pdfs/China_Military_Power_Report_2009.pdf.

military leaderships may think about deploying and using their capabilities. Too often, the analytical framework applied is based on what support the U.S. military would require in order to utilize a particular kind of capability and on how the U.S. military would likely use that capability. This mirror-imaging analytical problem can produce serious problems. Each military has its own risk tolerances, standards for judging whether a weapon has proved itself to be good enough to use in operations, expectations about levels of necessary support facilities, and so forth. To extrapolate from American best practices ["If they have developed that capability, they must be intending to use it for X because that is the only reason we would have that capability"] can lead to fundamental errors.

The judgment that Saddam Hussein had weapons of mass destruction and maintained an active nuclear weapons program reflected in part his statements to that effect, in part his past efforts (as uncovered during Desert Storm), and in part his refusal to permit the types of inspections that might have resolved the uncertainties once-and-for-all. This combination led U.S. analysts to relatively confident assertions that Saddam must still have such weapons and related programs. The analysts did not give sufficient weight to the possibilities that: 1) this was a bluff to deter both Iran and the U.S.; and 2) within the Iraqi system underlings were so afraid of Saddam that they told him they were developing capabilities that in fact did not exist. In short, the IC analysts thought like Americans and not like someone raised in the brutal political culture of Saddamist Iraq.[17]

PUBLIC AND CLASSIFIED

Analysts in the IC are swamped with the flow of open source and classified information. For a country like China, the

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[17] The conceptual problem was, of course, made worse by poor tradecraft. Too much confidence was placed in Iraqi exile sources that had a vested interest in encouraging America to invade Iraq.

volume is high enough to make it difficult for many analysts to keep up on everything within their area of responsibility. Each day they are inundated in their computer inboxes by such classified materials as Embassy cables, CIA, DIA, NSA, NGA and FBI reporting and liaison reporting. Moreover, the Open Source Center provides them with a huge volume of unclassified material from the Chinese and other worldwide media outlets that is either already published in English or is translated by the Open Source Center—with the vernacular often attached as a .pdf version. One unfortunate side effect is that even where analysts initially had solid language competence, the demands of the workplace and thus the relative time savings of reading the easily available translated materials in English produces over time deterioration in the ability to handle original-language materials.[18]

A second problem stems from relying on translated text to decipher nuances that may well have been altered inadvertently in translation. For example, while still recovering from the Tiananmen massacre debacle and in the wake of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping admonished his colleagues to maintain a modest stance internationally. As part of this admonition, Deng used a classical Chinese four-character expression, *tao guang yang hui*. This phrase conveys the need to avoid sticking out and attracting attention to yourself, but the translation that immediately became standard in U.S. government circles conveyed instead the notion of disingenuously hiding your capabilities to prepare to spring a surprise at a later date. What was thus likely simply an admonition to remain modest was remodeled into something sinister and the latter framing has had a significant impact on U.S. analytical work ever since. Once such a translation finds

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[18] On May 29, 2009, Director of the CIA Leon Panetta announced an ambitious program to double the number of analysts proficient in mission-critical foreign languages—such as Arabic, Chinese, Russian, Pushto, Urdu, and Persian. We applaud this effort but additional attention needs to be given to the difficult problem of how to maintain language proficiency once it is attained.

its way into the public discourse, it becomes extremely difficult for either analysts or policymakers to change it to a more accurate rendition.

This is not to take away from the tremendous and critical work of the Open Source Center.[19] The Open Source Center has personnel with deep language capability that cull through and translate an enormous amount of print, broadcast, and internet-based foreign media. These products are invaluable and heavily relied upon, by the all-source analysts. But that very reliance means that all-source analysts can miss the nuance of language and context that only comes from reviewing the original sources in Chinese or other foreign languages.

A comparable problem can occur in other areas in which backlogs of untranslated material may develop. Intelligence users have little sense when such problems occur despite potential effects on fluid situations.

In the age of the internet, an unprecedented amount of information is available in unclassified form on the web. In the case of China, this includes everything from websites (nearly every significant unit—both official and unofficial—has its own website) to blogs (of which there are several hundred million), to chat rooms, to media outlets, and so forth. Many official sites have English as well as Chinese versions of the site, but typically the English version leaves out much of the information available in the Chinese site. There are, in addition, major publically available search engines that provide outstanding access to much of the Chinese materials available on the web.[20] Put together, these various sources can provide enormous insight into a vast array of important issues in the economic,

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[19] The Open Source Center replaced the Foreign Broadcast Information Service after the creation of the office of the DNI in 2004. For more details, see Intelligence Community Directive Number 301, "National Open Source Enterprise, July 11, 2006. Available at: http//www.dni.gov/electronic_reading_room/ICD301.pdf.

[20] See, for example, information on CNKI at http://china.eastview.com.

political, social, and security realms. Again, the Open Source Center is working hard to mine these new sources of valuable information, but their resources are limited. More important, due to the many demands on their time, most IC all-source analysts are rarely are able to tap into this rich array of data.

A more fundamental problem is that classified materials are, by their nature, stolen goods. They typically provide bits and pieces of information—parts of conversations, patterns of communications, odd pieces of data that have been obtained, and so forth. Much of it is substantively marginal material. Yet, because it was obtained through clandestine means, this type of material is accorded special value and occupies the overwhelming majority of the attention of most IC analysts. A great deal of analysis is based on what can be obtained clandestinely—"looking where the light shines"—rather than being guided by an initial definition of the issue and the information that would be needed to understand it fully. As a consequence, analyses driven by classified information may be well wide of the mark of an understanding based on a fuller reading of open source materials, combined with an understanding of the context for the issue.

Clandestinely acquired information also is more subject to manipulation than is open source data. The latter typically comes from multiple sources and is sufficiently detailed and complex that it permits a great deal of cross-checking for consistency and for establishing track records to test reliability over time. In the clandestine world, if the other side gains some understanding of where the IC is tapping into its system, it has excellent opportunities to skew information to lead IC analysts to wrong conclusions, especially at critical junctures.[21] Clandestine information is, of course, very important. But it is too easy to become overly reliant on this particular set of sources, and

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[21] A classic study is Barton Whaley's examination of Barbarossa, the German surprise attack on the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941: Barton Whaley, *Codeword Barbarossa* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974).

that problem is compounded when rigorous delimitation of source reliability is not sufficiently emphasized. Both are real problems in the IC today.

Context and Meaning

The problems with classified sources are compounded when analysts do not have a good understanding of the basic contextual framework that shapes the information from those sources. All political players act in the context of the dynamics of their own system, with its rules, assumptions, rhythms, and habits. Seeking to interpret political information without having a good feel for that rich context is unlikely to yield keen insights and very successful integration of data.

An American analogy may prove instructive. If Chinese intelligence analysts happen not to understand the separation of powers in the American system, they may gain access to very sensitive political data but be unable to understand its real significance—for example, that something is being framed in a certain way by the executive branch primarily as part of a strategy to get its way with the Congress. This may sound absurd—the separation of powers is so core to the American system that most would assume that Chinese analysts must be fully familiar with the concept and at least its basic consequences.

But equally fundamental aspects of the Chinese political system—for example, the roles of bureaucratic ranks or of different types of documents ("orders" versus "instructions" versus "circulars," etc.)—are poorly understood by many of the IC analysts who work on China. This is despite the fact that there is a readily available literature on these topics and that the evidence of their importance is everywhere once you have this analytical framework in mind.[22] Without understanding these

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[22] See, e.g., Kenneth Lieberthal, *Governing China*, 2nd revised edition (New York: W.W. Norton, 2004).

fundamentals of how power is organized in China, it is difficult to draw accurate judgments in many cases from particular pieces of information that come to the attention of analysts through classified channels.

Culture and Craft

Analysts often are individuals who have been trained to follow a particular stream of information from China but have never had deep immersion in the country's political system, economy, and modern history. But such knowledge is highly relevant to understanding what is posturing and what is serious, what the leaders really worry about, and what will provoke a sense of outrage.

If asked, for example, about the impact that public criticism of China's human rights record while American leaders visit China has on perceptions of the United States among China's intellectuals, the IC ought to be able to provide an informed response. In the author's view, that response would note that intellectuals are very well aware of the abuses in their own system, generally admire the better human rights records of the United States and other countries, and deeply resent American officials' publicly raising the issue while in China. Why is this last point true?

Because this public criticism is viewed as American officials' either:

- Assuming that Chinese intellectuals and the public in China are too dumb to realize that they are suffering from abuses; or

- Wanting to humiliate Chinese in public (in a country that attaches great value to face) by gratuitously pointing to flaws in the system that are already widely known and understood.

In addition, the overwhelming majority of Chinese feel that America and other Western countries have not uniformly respected human rights in developing countries, and thus it is hypocritical for them to criticize the leaders of China and imply that they themselves are models.

Whether one agrees or disagrees with this assessment is irrelevant. What is relevant is that IC analysts of China should have sufficient knowledge of the country's modern history and of popular and elite sentiment to be able to provide this type of assessment to policymakers if asked. Unfortunately, too few are able to do so.

In fact, for reasons examined below, few analysts in the IC who work on China have spent much time there interacting with Chinese. As a consequence, the level of "finger feel" for styles of expression and modes of interaction is relatively low. To take the simplest type of example, people with actual experience in negotiating with the Chinese know that when Chinese respond that they will "study" (*yanjiu yanjiu*) a question, they typically are communicating that the answer is "No."

This relative dearth of direct experience in Chinese society can cause problems. For example, it is the style in China in many settings for officials to present what are planned accomplishments as if they were current realities. Everyone in the Chinese audience understands the distinction and recognizes that they are hearing about things the leadership has decided to do, not things that are already a reality. But analysts who obtain the text of such presentations may not understand this style and therefore fail to appreciate what is being communicated.

The combined effects of relying heavily on classified information; having deficient training in historical, political system, and social contexts; and lacking substantial experience in dealing directly with Chinese make nuanced, balanced and

insightful analysis rarer than it should be. It appears that similar problems plague IC work throughout the Middle East (other than Israel) and in many other parts of the non-Western world.

Silos

A number of measures have been adopted, as noted above, to address the problem of lack of information sharing among different parts of the IC that became such a glaring issue in the postmortems on 9/11. This produced major structural reforms, including the integration of various databases, creation of ODNI, establishment or enhancement of various centers and other agencies defined around problems rather than around traditional divisions of labor, and admonitions to work more effectively together.

But information sharing remains a very nettlesome issue in the IC, and the system remains overall heavily skewed toward protecting narrow analytical silos. There are multiple reinforcing factors that contribute to this outcome: analysts' and collectors' desire to closely protect their most secret sources, budgeting processes, career patterns, and the general culture of the community. In the very technical areas of collection and analysis, moreover, the problems of integration tend to become even more difficult to overcome. Especially in more technical fields, there is far greater commitment of funds and personnel to collection versus analysis.

Regional (geographic) officials sometimes clash with functional specialists, such as in non-proliferation. Complex problems require the expertise of both sets of specialists, but turf concerns can interfere. The net result is that there remains a long way to go to achieve good integration in analytical products across the IC. For example, few analytical products focused on the Chinese political system integrate deep pertinent knowledge of the economy and how it interacts with the political system. The same is true for analyses of the

Chinese economy. But the integration of economics and politics in China has reached such an extraordinary degree—the Chinese Communist Party functions in reality as a Chinese Bureaucratic Capitalist Party and generates economic growth as a key product of political structures and processes—that failure to integrate these two spheres necessarily makes for thin analysis.

"...the integration of economics and politics in China has reached such an extraordinary degree...that failure to integrate these two spheres necessarily makes for thin analysis."

Similarly, the IC does not do well in integrating analysis of developments across countries in a region. The basic organization remains country focused. Thus, for example, there has been little treatment of the development since 2000 of a regionally integrated manufacturing system in East and Southeast Asia with China generally serving as the point of final assembly, even though that development has had major consequences for the politics of U.S. trade policy toward China.

CONCLUSION

A great deal has been done to improve the analytical product of the IC in the wake of 9/11. But, as the author found from interviewing current and past policymakers, that product still suffers from some systematic weaknesses. These include, in broad terms:

- Overemphasis on production for the PDB to the neglect of products better tailored to the needs of other high level policymakers
- Products not well suited to the actual practical needs of many policymakers
- Analytic risk aversion that leads to products that try to present all of the pertinent sources of information but lack analytic depth and conceptual strength

- Failure to integrate adequately information that resides in different parts of the analytical community
- Using streams of information without sufficient appreciation of pertinent context—political, bureaucratic, social, and cultural
- Insufficient balance between use of classified and unclassified sources.

Reasons for Deficiencies

Problems previously noted do not stem from either lack of dedicated effort in the IC or failure to recruit talented individuals into the system. To some extent, they derive simply from the inevitable trade-offs that are inherent in dealing with issues that cut across functional and geographical boundaries, along with the related problems of sorting through the explosion in information that is now available from a dynamic fast-changing country like China. And the IC analysts must, of course, always guard against the reality that each new information stream it accesses is also another avenue through which the other side can perpetrate strategies of purposeful deception. The task is not easy.

But there are specific obstacles to better IC analytical performance that warrant attention and careful efforts to reduce. The most important of these are the following.

Security Mitigates Mission

Security must always be a very serious concern within the IC. The dangers of penetration, of having adversaries blackmail or otherwise leverage IC employees, and of leaking secrets are real and important. In this regard, the Chinese intelligence services represent one of the most potent threats as they are aggressively trying to steal secrets through traditional espionage techniques and cutting edge methods such as cyber intrusions. The National Counterintelligence Executive in its most recent annual report to Congress notes that, since 2002,

China-connected computer network intrusions have compromised "thousands of hosts and hundreds of thousands of users accounts and exfiltrated terabytes of data from U.S., allied, and foreign government, military, and private-sector computer networks."[23] All of these require security measures built into the system to prevent problems or identify them early and limit the resulting damage.

"Security considerations... sharply impact the ability of the IC to hire, fully train and utilize analysts on China."

However, suffocating security concerns can do serious damage to analytical capabilities. Within the IC, perhaps the most prominent (and controversial) example historically is the role and impact of James Jesus Angleton when he had charge of counterintelligence in the CIA. Angleton had such deep suspicions and firm convictions that he largely prevented the CIA from leveraging intelligence gained from key Soviet defectors and ruined the careers of analysts and operatives who questioned his conclusions.

There is no James Jesus Angleton in today's IC. But there should be serious concerns about the extent to which internal security considerations are reducing the capacity of the IC to produce the quality of product necessary to justify the expense of the effort and to protect the nation from harm.

Security considerations, for example, sharply impact the ability of the IC to hire, fully train and utilize analysts on China, and this problem is even more severe regarding the Middle East outside of Israel. Anyone with a close relative living in the PRC, for example, is unlikely to obtain the Top Secret Sensitive Compartment Information (SCI) clearances necessary for doing analytical work in the IC—or the process of obtaining

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[23] "Annual Report to Congress on Foreign Economic Collection and Industrial Espionage, 2007," September 10, 2008, Office of the National Counterintelligence Executive. Available at: http://www.ncix.gov/publications/reports/fecie_all/fecie_2007/FECIE_2007.pdf.

those clearances will stretch out over such a protracted period of time that the individual will likely withdraw rather than spend, literally, years in limbo.[24] There are legitimate reasons to worry about China's capacity to pressure someone in the IC by threatening harm to relatives in China—but in practice this has been applied out to a degree of separation that stretches credulity that the operative standards are appropriate. The result is to protect the security system from a potential breach but to deprive the analytical community of potentially very valuable talent.

Increasingly, American students have the opportunity to study and travel in China. Those who develop the best feel for the country are often those who begin language and area studies in the United States, then spend a few years at a Chinese educational institution, and also travel extensively to various parts of the country during their stay. The types of people who get outside of the highly structured programs that attract many foreign students and immerse themselves in Chinese society off the beaten track typically are those who develop the keenest understanding of the country, its aspirations, and the ways people think and operate there. Those are precisely the people whose experiences in China are most likely to disqualify them from working as analysts in the IC on China because they cannot pass the post-9/11 security requirements.

Once in the IC analytical community, moreover, security concerns prevent all but a few from achieving serious direct exposure to Chinese society. The fear is of subversion of the individual—through entrapment or some other device—if s/he is allowed to get beyond the bubble of the American mission while in country. Opportunities to spend time in country are, moreover,

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[24] On October 1, 2008, the DNI issued an Intelligence Community Directive (Number 704) that allows, for first time, the provision of SCI clearances to those who have immediate family members who are not U.S. citizens. It remains to be seen, however, whether this change will affect those with close Chinese relatives. Available at: http://www.dni.gov/electronic_reading_room/ICD%20704.pdf.

surprisingly limited for most IC analysts on China. Thus, to the IC analyst China—even as it has opened up to an unprecedented extent—is overwhelmingly a place that exists on paper but not one that provides personal experiences that generate real insights.

In sum, those numerous Americans who have had enough exposure to China to gain deep personal insights are almost systematically excluded from bringing those insights to bear in the IC analytical community. Indeed, should they be one of the few such individuals that come into that community, they will have to give up their ability to keep their understanding fresh through the types of exposure to Chinese realities that they have learned to master.

Security concerns have also sharply reduced the ability of most IC analysts to benefit from interaction with the non-IC academic, think tank, NGO, and business communities. CIA analysts must now, for example, as a matter of policy receive specific clearance to attend any event at a downtown Washington, D.C. think tank. This approach appears to run counter to the intent of the DNI's Intelligence Community Directive of July 16, 2008, encouraging analytic outreach and the recommendation of the WMD Commission that IC analysts broaden their information horizons by collaborating with individuals in academia.[25] Indeed, it has become increasingly difficult for most IC analysts to get outside of the increasingly strong security bubble that has been thrown up around the IC. But it is the people on the outside of that bubble who garner enormous information and understanding from their direct exposure to China and Chinese and from their own analytical work on the flood of unclassified information that gushes forth on a daily basis from the PRC.

There is always a balance to be struck between the demands of analysis and the concerns for internal security in the IC. But

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[25] See Intelligence Community Directive Number 205, "Analytic Outreach", July 16, 2008. Available at: http://www.dni.gov/electronic_reading_room/ICD%20205.pdf.

in the wake of 9/11 the line has shifted decisively in the direction of primacy of the security side to the point where it appears that few IC analytical managers any longer try seriously to challenge the restrictions the security people impose. The stringency of those security-driven restrictions, moreover, often makes careers in the IC less attractive for the brightest and most talented recruits—many of whom move to other agencies such as the State Department or into the private sector after a few years as IC analysts.

The problem is that the security people have no responsibility for having the IC produce useful or relevant analysis. Their overriding concern is to make sure the IC is not penetrated from outside or undermined by bad apples on the inside. Taken to an extreme, the way to assure absolute security is to impose restrictions so Draconian that the IC analytical community becomes incapable of producing products of real value. That certainly has not occurred, but restrictions such as those noted above have become so significant—particularly when dealing with a nation such as China that has opened up tremendously over the past three decades—that they have significantly and negatively damaged the capabilities of the IC to produce the product that the system is intended to foster.

Deficient Country Knowledge

Many IC analysts need good overall knowledge of the country they are working on, in addition to specific knowledge pertinent to a given problem or issue. But a concatenation of circumstances has reduced available country knowledge in the IC below necessary minimums. This situation in part results from the security concerns noted above, which create obstacles to appropriate recruitment and exposure to information and reality once in the IC. Additional factors include the following.

Area studies programs have declined across the U.S. higher educational system. The social sciences in particular have trended overall toward prioritizing methodology and theory

over empirical work and deep immersion in individual cases. In political science, large N studies, game theory, and formal modeling play very prominent roles, while country and regional specializations often do not provide an adequate basis for obtaining tenure. In economics, formal modeling has moved to a central place in the discipline, while studies that build in actual institutions and policies have shifted to schools of public policy and to think tanks. Even anthropology now no longer prioritizes actual field work—theoretical constructs are more highly valued in the discipline. Where these are the priorities in the disciplines, the teaching programs inevitably follow suit.

To some extent the reduction in deep multidisciplinary study of particular countries or regions is being made up by greater ability of American students to go abroad to obtain that kind of immersion. China is a very good example of this. But this type of experience, as noted above, creates crippling obstacles to such students' then entering the IC analytical community.

The severity of this problem can be made up through mentoring and training. But in reality neither one works sufficiently well in the post-9/11 IC.

First, there has been a vast expansion of analytical billets in the IC on China and a number of other countries in the wake of 9/11. This rapid expansion has driven down the average age and experience of analysts to the point where most are well under thirty years old. Moreover, a lack of hiring during the 1990s because of the "peace dividend" has left the community with a lost generation of senior analysts (those who would currently be in their forties to mid-fifties) with the kind of deep expertise needed to guide the new analysts. There are, therefore, too few mentors with appropriate background to bring young analysts up to speed on the broader contextual understanding they should bring to bear, and those that serve in this role also have other major management, Community, and interagency responsibilities.

Second, the IC has moved away from a former system in which it sought to have key analysts specialize in one country for virtually their entire careers. Now the typical assignment runs closer to three years, at which point the analyst may move to an unrelated area. This type of rotation has some advantages in training broad-based analysts for the future, but it comes at the cost of imposing almost purposeful lack of depth. The result shows in the quality of analysis.

Against this background, the above-noted incentives to get an item placed in the PDB in effect encourage analysts to focus on specific items at the expense of developing deep understanding of major issues. That does not serve the overall goals of the IC well.

Finally, in the wake of 9/11 analysts are increasingly being put close to operational officers and are being tasked with coming up with analytical support for particular actions and requirements of the clandestine collection components of their organizations. This is redirecting many analysts away from primarily serving the policy community, at a cost to the value of the analytical product available to policymakers.

Training might be an antidote for the above problems, but in reality it is deficient in both content and extent. At the end of a twenty-year career the typical military personnel has spent three to five of those years in various forms of training. Historically, at the end of a twenty-year career as an IC analyst, the typical individual has spent less than a year in training. Most of that training, moreover, comes at the point of entry to the career and is focused on introducing the budding analyst to tradecraft, ethics, and how to write intelligence products. There is virtually no such formal training on the country that the analyst will actually study. Most of that is left to on-the-job acquisition of knowledge, along with mentoring. But mentors are generally assigned on the basis of their having reached GS –12/13 rank, not because of their deep knowledge of the country or proven mentoring skills.

Given the above set of circumstances, it is not surprising that appropriately contextualized analysis is not the norm.

The Policy-IC Interface

Ideally the system should work so that policymakers are able to elicit the best possible input from a policy-neutral IC analytical cadre and then be able to utilize that input in decision making effectively. Sometimes this takes place and works very well. Especially on relatively "objective" targets such as North Korea's preparation to launch a missile and the actual performance of that missile, the IC input to policymakers is typically excellent—timely, technically competent, and presented in terms that are easy for policymakers to digest. But this type of issue represents only a small percentage of the intelligence needs of policymakers, and on many types of "softer" concerns, such as the political decision making behind North Korea's decision to explode a nuclear weapon in May 2009, the IC analytical results are often disappointing.

"...most policymakers have rarely if ever thought about how best to elicit and utilize the information and insights from the IC."

In the research conducted for this report, interviews of members from the IC analytical community often produced careful, thoughtful, analytical responses as to the strengths and weaknesses of the system. Interviews of policymakers more often produced vague, impressionistic, and highly anecdotal responses. It became clear that key people in the IC have thought long and hard about how to make the analytical product most effectively serve the legitimate needs of the policymaking community, but most policymakers have rarely if ever thought about how best to elicit and utilize the information and insights of the IC. One factor is the isolation of most analysts from policy officials. This is also part of the problem of effectively managing the policy maker-IC interface.

To be sure, policymakers ask for IC input all the time. Much of this runs according to standard practice and consists of:

- The daily PDB and WIRE (World-wide Intelligence Review)
- Periodic products such as NIEs and ICBs (Intelligence Community Briefs)
- Institutionalized IC participation in Principals and Deputies meetings
- Regularly scheduled morning briefs for certain policymakers
- Efforts by the IC to market an analytical product among policymakers

"...policymakers are not sufficiently knowledgeable about what they should seek from the IC analyst and how best to obtain it."

Policymakers often will communicate to the IC that they need information on a certain topic, such as North Korean elite politics or a possible clandestine highly enriched uranium (HEU) program in North Korea. Or they will indicate that a particular issue is on their radar and want to get pertinent information on it. Or a meeting or trip is coming up and they request biographical information on key interlocutors, along with information on particular issues that will be discussed.

All of these are, of course, serious matters on which the IC should be able to provide useful information. But few policymakers seem to have considered rigorously how they can get the IC to go beyond putting together pieces of information and presenting a lowest-common-denominator analytical gloss. And even fewer appear to have thought critically about the types of questions that the IC analysts should be able to respond to effectively and those on which the IC in reality has very little to offer. For understandable reasons, the IC itself seeks to respond as best it can to any question posed by the policymakers; it is loathe to say that it cannot deal with a substantive request.

In sum, in many cases policymakers are not sufficiently knowledgeable about what they should seek from the IC analyst and how best to obtain it. This problem is especially prominent in the early stages of a new administration, when even very

intelligent policymakers typically do not have substantial experience with the IC and have only vague impressions as to its quality and capabilities.

There is an additional missed opportunity in the policy maker/analyst interface that warrants attention. Policymakers participate in meetings with foreign officials that can provide information of major importance to IC analysts. Policymakers should, therefore, be viewed in the IC as sources and not solely as consumers and they should be regularly debriefed. This would provide policymakers with a better idea of what the IC has to offer and what it does not know. It would also contribute potentially vital insights to the IC analysts.

Recommendations

This report's recommendations fall into three broad categories:

- Improving the capabilities of analysts in the IC
- Improving the utility of IC analytical products for policymakers
- Improving the ability of policymakers to elicit and utilize high quality IC analysis

While progress in each of these spheres will contribute to a somewhat better set of outcomes, the nature of the task is such that progress in all three together will produce a synergistic set of improvements that bring the effort far closer to meeting the objectives all agree it should attain. Doing significantly better in each sphere depends to some extent on progress in the other two.

Improving the Capabilities of Analysts in the IC

As noted above, current practices in recruitment, training, mentoring and career paths are having a significant impact on IC analytical capabilities. The problems that exist are in general not ones of material resources. The IC analytical community has added substantial human and other resources since 9/11. Having expanded very rapidly over the past eight years and instituted many new practices in the wake of 9/11, it is now appropriate to ask what adjustments are warranted in

order to gain full value from the resources being invested in IC performance.

Addressing Country Knowledge

A very serious concern that grows out of this research is the dearth of broad and deep country knowledge among the analysts working on a particular country. This conclusion stems primarily from focused inquiries about coverage of China, but it appears to be a problem that goes well beyond the China area.

Recruits into the IC who will deal with China typically have recently (within the past one to two years) graduated from a Masters program in international relations or a related area. They often have an interest in China and have taken courses on it. Most have some training in Chinese, and some have spent a year or more in the PRC, primarily working on language acquisition. For those who have spent actual time in China, the period between their recruitment and their receiving a security clearance that actually allows them to start work in the IC is often a year or longer.

Such recruits enter a standard training program once they begin work in the IC. This program, which lasts about four months, focuses on ethics, tradecraft, and writing intelligence products. It addresses such issues as remaining policy neutral in the development of intelligence products and how properly to identify sources for the information brought into an analytical product. It provides an introduction into the vocabulary and methods used in the IC, how to compose and clear analytical products, and the structure and processes of the intelligence community.

Recruits move directly from this training program into a substantive analytical position in which they will concentrate primarily on one issue concerning the PRC. At that point, they gain access to the flood of classified and unclassified

information pertinent to their issue and are expected to have a comprehensive knowledge of what is contained in those data at all times. On this basis, they are both to call the attention of managers to anything they see that they view as particularly significant and to respond to specific requests for information and analysis as those requests are made. Given the volume of incoming information, this effort is often described as "sipping from a fire hose."

Most new recruits who work on China will spend three-to-five years in their position before rotating to a new assignment. While some will remain on China accounts, particularly at INR in the Department of State, many are rotated to other issues or geographic areas. They may at some point in their careers return to work on China again, but that might be only quite a while later. Even those who during their careers do additional work on China are unlikely to receive more than a smattering of formal China-focused training while they are in the IC. For example, one of the most popular courses for analysts run by the CIA's Sherman Kent School is called the "China Realities Course." This is a two-week survey course of China taught by a variety of speakers from within and outside the Intelligence Community. While valuable, the course only provides the analyst with an overview and imposes no course requirements on the participants.

"...new recruits receive very little training on how the Chinese political system is structured and operates or on other aspects of China's culture, history, economy, and policymaking..."

The bottom line is that most such new recruits receive very little training on how the Chinese political system is structured and operates or on other aspects of China's culture, history, economy, and policymaking beyond what they might have picked up in a college course a few years earlier. While they typically know the locations of key places on a map of China they often do not have the kind of knowledge that would enable them to differentiate, to use a U.S. example, the culture of California from the culture of Louisiana (cultural differences across localities in China are generally more pronounced than

they are in the United States). In short, they quickly become immersed in the minutiae of a particular issue area but have no exposure to—or reinforcement of past exposure to—the contextual elements that are typically required for high quality interpretation of political and economic data.

There is a mentoring system within the IC, and sometimes that can help to fill in the gaps. But it is fairly hit-and-miss. Analysts become mentors by attaining a rank of GS-12/13, not by themselves demonstrating exceptional mentoring capabilities and superior insight into a country's dynamics. There are no well-articulated expectations of how mentors should perform their jobs, the additional types of training they should provide informally to their charges, or performance criteria for those who have mentoring responsibilities.

To address these problems, this report makes the following recommendations:

Recruiting

Recruit a certain percentage of the incoming class from people who are in their late twenties or early thirties who have had extensive experience related to the country of concern. This may include having spent years working in the country in a business, academic or other capacity or it may have involved doing analytical work on the country for an institution or firm located in the U.S. or elsewhere. These individuals must be offered good enough salaries to make an IC career attractive.[26]

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[26] In the FY 2010 intelligence authorization bill, DNI Dennis Blair has proposed a new Intelligence Officer Training Program modeled on the Reserve Officer Training Corps run by the United States military. The goal is to create a stream of first- and second-generation American analysts, who already possess critical language and cultural knowledge, by paying undergraduates take specialized courses to prepare for careers in intelligence. We applaud this new initiative, which has the potential to increase the flow of well-prepared entry-level analysts. This new initiative does not, however, address the ongoing lack of in-country experience and deep expertise on countries like China. For details on the proposal see the draft bill: http://www.fas.org/irp/congress/2009_hr/fy2010bill.pdf.

Recruiting people who have been out of university for five to ten years before joining the IC and who have spent a good portion of that time acquiring country knowledge has multiple benefits. It brings in individuals who have gained some experience with life and some insights into how the "real world" functions. It thus provides for the type of seasoning that may produce more mature judgments—seasoning that even the brightest recent graduates are unlikely to have. It also captures the insights that come from real-world engagement with China—insights that make far clearer how to interpret the data they must analyze in their IC jobs. These individuals can, moreover, bring vital skills for mentoring younger analysts fresh out of university—they can likely relate more easily to them because of the relatively small age differences and yet bring real world experiences to explain particular types of considerations that should inform data interpretation.

There are two obvious objections to recruiting the cohort recommended here. One is that they might not fit into the normal salary scale in the IC. But modifications to that scale are sometimes employed on the technical side of the IC. If necessary, similar types of flexibility might be considered if absolutely necessary to recruit the right cohort on the analytical side. Of course, in difficult economic times and with patriotic sentiment quite strong, it is possible that the normal salary scale will prove sufficient.

The second type of objection is from a security standpoint. It clearly becomes more difficult to fully ensure that an individual has not been recruited by the other side (or has not developed some vulnerabilities that can be used by an opposing intelligence agency) if that individual has spent years engaged in activities concerning the other country. Here as elsewhere, this report suggests that almost eight years after 9/11 it is time to reconsider the balance between security measures within the IC and the successful recruitment of individuals with the knowledge and expertise required for successful accomplishment of the IC analytical mission. Very rigorous security checks

should, of course, be the norm, but the pendulum appears to have swung too far. One method to ensure some balance in the hiring process is to give senior analytic managers a greater voice in the ultimate hiring decisions. Today, the final decision on hiring almost always rests with the leadership of the security processing unit. What may be needed is a refined process in which the decision on individuals with extensive overseas exposure is taken with greater weight given to the opinions of senior analytic managers with an understanding of the opportunity cost associated with not hiring that individual.

That said, an all-source analyst secretly working for a foreign intelligence service can be devastating to national security. For example, Ana Montes, a senior DIA analyst for sixteen years, was convicted in 2002 of working for Cuban intelligence and reportedly passed a considerable amount of classified information to Cuba's government, including the identities of four spies. It bears repeating, therefore, that this report is not advocating a reduction in our attention to sound security practices, but it is recommending that the IC review its practices with a view to making screening before employment more realistically compatible with meeting the core analytical requirements expected of the IC to properly serve policymakers.

Training

More attention should be devoted to producing a professional analytical cadre in the IC that is capable of building on past accomplishments, regularly refreshing and enhancing analytical capabilities, and sharing best practices. A variety of changes can potentially produce significant results, especially given the dearth of current formal training programs for members of the IC analytical cadre.

Current training opportunities in the IC vary greatly from agency to agency and are heavily weighted in the direction of training that helps analysts and managers learn the leadership, tradecraft, and communications skills required of them

as they move to the next higher level of responsibility. In addition to these, this report recommends two major efforts.

First, establish a National Intelligence University with its own campus and faculty. The DNI in 2007 announced the creation of a virtual NIU but each element of the intelligence community still maintains its own training and education programs. This is in sharp contrast to the Department of State's Foreign Service Institute and the military's National Defense University and National War College. Such a disparate system of training severely limits the professionalization and cohesion of the Intelligence Community because there is no institution that houses a distinguished faculty of professors ready to teach and conduct research on the history, culture, ethics, management and analytic tradecraft of the profession.

Such a university would have several major advantages. It would create an opportunity for research within the IC to better draw lessons from its own history, successes, and failures and to incorporate those into training programs. It would also establish both personal ties and a greater common culture among the more than fifteen constituent parts of today's IC, with likely numerous payoffs in the capacity of the IC to produce future products that effectively utilize knowledge and insights across the community. In this fashion, it would complement very effectively the Analytic Transformation initiatives noted in the Introduction to this report. It would also potentially create a vehicle of the IC to reach out more effectively to people in the academic, military, business, and policy worlds and utilize them in training programs to impart their insights to IC members. And it would create the potential for a system that requires periodic training of IC members at various stages in their careers to upgrade their grasp of developments relevant to their professional responsibilities.

Second, allocate time for periodic formal training opportunities. As noted above, a typical U.S. military career will entail about 20-25% of the time in formal training. There is no

counterpart to this in the IC, despite the dramatic changes in contextual global events and in information technologies that constantly reshape the landscape the analysts are trying to interpret for policymakers. While ideally this would take place in a new Intelligence University, it could also be developed by each constituent part of the IC on its own if establishing a university for the IC proves unworkable.

Country knowledge should be part of the training program. This might consist of special short-term courses (even weekend intensive courses) that draw in specialists from outside of the IC to provide instruction on core aspects of the country being studied—the kinds of things that most serious country specialists take as fundamental assumed baseline expertise and that relatively few members of the IC are proficient in. It would make sense to require every IC analyst—or at least those in their first three-to-five year rotation—to attend such a program annually or at least every eighteen months and to pass a written examination on the information taught at the end of the program.

Analysts in the IC should also be encouraged to attend (if not actively participate in) programs related to their areas that are held by various Washington think tanks. The D.C. area is unusually rich in its offerings, many of which include as speakers former policymakers or IC analysts. Currently, many IC analysts must clear various bureaucratic obstacles in order to attend any such events. The presumption should shift in favor of the value of attending, and appropriate opportunities and encouragement should become a part of the IC culture.

The fundamental point is that the IC should more effectively leverage knowledge available outside the IC bubble. This should entail a mixture of various initiatives, from formal training programs to participation in external events to inviting external people to participate in focused discussions and reviews with members of the IC. Scholars, business people, visitors and others with ongoing relevant real world experience are valuable

sources of information and judgment that are not sufficiently tapped by the current rules governing the IC.

The IC should also continue to build on recent efforts to create a specialist track within the analytical community that offers key individuals the opportunity to continue for a long period to work on a single country or issue, essentially becoming over time a deeply knowledgeable specialist on that subject area. One practice, no longer used in the IC, was to have analysts work on creating comprehensive reference books on key countries, such as China. The rigors of producing and updating these volumes helped analysts learn in detail about their accounts and, in turn, provided a reference volume for others. While technical advances now make basic information about countries readily available, there may be considerable value in assigning some analysts to focus long term on addressing a major analytical issue so as to explore it in depth and gain full appreciation of related factors and questions. As such a cadre of senior specialists is developed, they can be inserted in the analytical and mentoring processes to leverage their judgment and capacity to identify contextual issues that need to be considered.

> *"The IC should also continue to build on recent efforts to create a specialist track...that offers key individuals the opportunity to continue for a long period on a single country or issue"*

Analytical Conventions

The typical analytical problem in the IC is assigned to one unit to take the lead on producing the response. This is true on everything from short-term questions to NIEs, where one NIO is given the lead on the assignment. Given problems of working across office boundaries in production of analytical products, on appropriate questions it is worth considering whether to assign individuals from two units joint leadership in developing the analysis. This change would run strongly against existing modes of operation and undoubtedly would require a period of adjustment before it produced full benefits. But it is precisely the difficulty of putting together insights from

different perspectives—for example, elite politics and economics—that makes dual leadership sometimes necessary. Otherwise, the unit with the lead almost certainly will dominate the framing of the analysis, giving insufficient attention to the perspectives and framing that other units can bring to bear. That is especially true when the two units differ in terms of type of work they do (e.g., politics versus economics) instead of merely in where they reside (e.g., CIA versus INR).

An additional way to address this problem is, time permitting, to add a layer of review of a draft product in which the reviewing agency comes from the most pertinent *additional* functional area of expertise. This device again inserts different but relevant framing into the analytical process, potentially identifying relationships and considerations that should bear on the conclusions presented.

Improving the Utility of IC Analytical Products for Policymakers

Reviewing what policymakers need from the IC provides a helpful starting point for understanding how to improve the utility of IC analytical products for policymakers. Policymakers ideally seek the following from the analytical community:

- Pertinent insights in addition to relevant data.

- Opportunity analysis that utilizes the expertise in the IC to identify policy opportunities going forward.

- Clear understanding not only of what we know but also of what we do *not* know with regard to an issue.

- Contextual information that enables the policy maker to evaluate appropriately information that may have been gleaned from a signals intelligence intercepts or other clandestine efforts.

- An understanding of what is in the heads of the key players in other countries—not only their biographical backgrounds and agendas but also "where they are coming from."

- Analytical products whose delivery system (length, format, vocabulary, framing) is tailored to the style and needs of the particular policy maker.

No set of products will perfectly meet all of these needs. Indeed, it is not easy to ascertain the best set of products to meet policymakers' intelligence needs. The policymakers themselves often have not thought systematically about this issue, and most of them already suffer from a surfeit of materials crossing their desks. Merely providing a slew of analyses that address the issues in the AOR of the policy maker risks, therefore, simply irritating the already-overwhelmed policy maker. Three measures might help to bridge the gap between policymakers' needs and IC capabilities:

First, the IC should provide a serious initial briefing to each incoming policy maker on IC capabilities and limitations. It is clear from the research for this report that many new policymakers come into office with very impressionistic and often seriously misinformed views on what the IC is able to produce and of how best to utilize those products. The introductory IC briefing must be thought through carefully and tailored, if possible, to each policy maker's background and responsibilities. It should, if done well, provide the basis for having the policy maker think personally about his/her intelligence needs and how s/he might best be served by the IC. Part of this briefing process should include discussion of the new policy maker's own expectations of what s/he can glean from the IC so that both sides develop realistic expectations. Senior IC managers are in the best position to provide such briefings.

Second, the IC should assign an analyst to work in the offices of policymakers at and above the Assistant Secretary level.

This person might serve as an in-house briefer who maintains constant liaison with his/her base in the IC. There are major potential benefits to this arrangement. The individual who is seconded can provide invaluable feedback to the IC about the actual intelligence needs of the policy maker. The seconded analyst, moreover, will come to appreciate what "works" in terms of analytical product—the length, format, degree of technical specificity, issues of timeliness, and so forth that make something a valued product. Our research suggests that a problem that can arise from this arrangement is in retaining the analysts once his/her stint in a policymaking office has ended. It can be difficult within the IC to duplicate the excitement experienced in a major executive office. The IC needs to consider how best to leverage the understanding that its "returned" analysts have gained and how to keep them satisfied with the challenges if their analytical work in the IC.

Third, there should be a regularly scheduled meeting (perhaps weekly) with the policy maker to learn about look-ahead intelligence requirements and to garner critical feedback on materials sent over since the last such meeting. The results of any such meeting should be conveyed not only to IC managers but also directly to analysts—and good analysts should be permitted to contact policymakers directly about that feedback. Indeed, in general the system would be well-served by increasing the opportunity for direct contacts between policymakers and analysts and generating very candid feedback from policymakers on the quality and usefulness of IC products.

Voluminous products reflecting huge effort are regularly offered to the policy community, often in advance of a presidential journey, and will sometimes include information of both higher and lower levels of classification. But, since many senior officials outside of the White House compound itself are constrained by security needs and can only see more sensitive products at certain times and places, there may hardly be time to scan the material. A solution may be to edit more carefully so that only critical information is included.

The difference in experience, age and responsibilities between senior policymakers and analysts is important to keep in mind in such meetings. Policymakers can too easily intimidate analysts and skew future products by inadvertently signaling their irritation or impatience with certain topics. Analysts need to be better trained and equipped to understand the unconscious effects that the power dynamics can have on how they approach the policymakers and policymakers need to keep in mind—particularly when dealing with the young analytic workforce of today—that their power and positions are intimidating. Several policymakers noted that they regularly observed that, as the same analytic briefing was given to higher audiences and policymakers came closer to an action-forcing event, the analysts would strip out of the briefings their analytic uncertainties in order to appear to be more succinct and more authoritative. The desire of the analysts to please the most senior intelligence consumers who were driving to a decision based, in part, on the intelligence judgments typically led the analysts to overstate their confidence in the intelligence. But as the briefings went higher, the lower level policymakers who fully understood the earlier caveats explained by the analysts were not necessarily in the room. Thus, briefings too often gave senior policymakers who made the ultimate decisions a misleading picture of the certainty of the intelligence.

There is, in short, no magic bullet that will address the intelligence needs of all policymakers. Requirements will vary with the background and style of the individual policy maker and may also change as that individual gains more personal experience on the job. The fundamental needs are to encourage the policy maker to think specifically about his/her intelligence needs, to make IC members knowledgeable about the world in which that policy maker works, and to maintain a flow of two-way communication between the IC and the policy maker about the nature and requirements of the product (and not just about details of any particular analysis).

The above will work effectively only if it is made clear by IC management that analysts are rewarded for serving policymakers

well at all levels of the hierarchy. Certainly, the President is the most important single customer and must always command the resources necessary for him to do his job best. But the real value of the IC is to provide pertinent information in forms that are timely and easy to use across the policymaking community. This will only occur if meeting the needs of the broader policymaking community is valued and rewarded by IC management.

Improving the Ability of Policymakers to Elicit and Utilize High Quality IC Analysis

Many incoming policymakers have little understanding of what types of information they can reasonably expect from the IC and the types of questions that will effectively utilize IC capabilities. The IC always seeks to be highly responsive to policy maker needs. Policymakers who are better informed on how best to specify and articulate those needs will impact the performance of the IC analysts to the benefit of all sides.

Policymakers should be briefed, as noted above, on IC capabilities and given opportunities to suggest ways (including not only substance but also timing and format) to make IC products more useful to their particular needs.

Policymakers should also be mindful of the reality that the products they receive are unlikely to be better than the questions they ask. Requests that amount to asking for a briefing on a *topic* feed into the least effective tendencies in the IC. Such requests often produce a relatively standard bureaucratic process that pulls together pertinent information and lays it out without serious attention being given to priorities, underlying uncertainties, and real insights. The resulting products can be useful, especially when the policy maker involved is not particularly well-grounded on the matter at hand and essentially needs something to bring him/her up to speed rapidly.

But wherever possible policymakers will be better served if they articulate their requests in terms of an analytical *question* that forces analysts in the IC to think through the implications of their data, debate the relative significance of different factors, and make explicit their levels of confidence in the responses they produce. Such requests present more interesting, stimulating challenges for the IC analysts and are more likely to tease out policy-relevant tensions and trade-offs. They also force the IC to address what necessary information it does *not* have to provide a confident response to the question.

"...wherever possible policymakers will be better served if they articulate their requests in terms of an analytical question that forces IC analysts to think through the implications of their data..."

Colin Powell, in testimony before the U.S. Congress in 2004, said the following about his philosophy in interacting with the IC:

> An old rule that I've used with my intelligence officers over the years, whether in the military, or now, in the State Department, goes like this: Tell me what you know. Tell me what you don't know. And then, based on what you really know and what you really don't know, tell me what you think is most likely to happen. And there's an extension of that rule with my intelligence officers: I will hold you accountable for what you tell me is a fact; and I will hold you accountable for what you tell me is not going to happen because you have the facts on that, or you don't know what's going to happen, or you know what your body of ignorance is and you told me what that is. **Now, when you tell me what's most likely to happen, then I, as the policy maker, have to make a judgment as to whether I act on that, and I won't hold you accountable for it because that is a judgment; and judgments of this kind are made by policymakers, not by intelligence experts.** And I think this has been a rule that's been very useful to me over the years, and it allows my intelligence organizations to feel free to give me the facts, but also feel free to

give me the most likely occurrence, knowing that I bear responsibility for making decisions on the basis of that middle-range of information on what is most likely to happen.[27]

This statement captures the essence of what policymakers should be getting from the IC. They need to know what the IC can tell them about a particular issue and, importantly, need to understand the limits on what the IC knows about the issue. Without asking explicitly for the latter, there is a natural tendency not to highlight this important information in a briefing. In addition, analysts often have keen insights that for various reasons do not make it into the formal briefing. They are normally very reluctant to convey these, as this can be seen as both violating normal rules and can also put too much responsibility on the individual analyst. But such views, especially expressed face-to-face with time to ask some follow-up questions, can be enormously important in deepening the insights of individual policymakers. The best way to elicit them may be the approach that Colin Powell used—ask for them explicitly and make clear that the policy maker recognizes that the resulting information is not official, should be used only if it seems compelling, and will not under any circumstances impair the career of the IC briefer.

There is also currently a missed opportunity in terms of having policymakers provide the IC with the insights they gain from their meetings with foreign officials. The president, especially, inevitably is someone with sharply honed political instincts and a very good ability to "read" other political leaders. Those are qualities that are for understandable reasons not characteristic of the analysts in the IC. Presidents and other top policymakers should establish a process through which they can provide the analytical community with their insights into

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[27] Secretary Colin L. Powell, Testimony before the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee, September 13, 2004. Available at: http://www.fas.org/irp/Congress/2004_hr/index.html.

what makes the leaders with whom they deal tick. If properly handled, such insights may have a very useful role to play in improving the quality of intelligence analysis, especially as regards elite politics.

Improving NIEs

Some NIEs are both very high quality and very useful for policymakers, some are high quality but largely left unread, and some are substantively disappointing. It is hard to generalize rigorously about the types that fall into each of these broad categories, but the reality that all three categories exist means that there are improvements that should be made in the NIE system.

A very commonly-voiced sentiment is that NIEs are simply too long. As a general rule, the higher up the policymaking ladder one goes, the less time the policy maker has for reading any particular analytical product. Very few high level policymakers will find time to read through something that runs more than ten to fifteen single-spaced pages, but most NIEs are very considerably longer than that.

NIEs on highly technical issues, such as missile development in North Korea or Iran, may be valued precisely because of the great detail they can present in the course of the analysis. The key consumers may be technical specialists and war fighters rather than top policymakers, but the NIE process in such instances can produce products of great value.

Most NIEs, though, are on less technical matters, and in many cases process seems to inhibit producing the most effective product. Typically, one NIO takes the lead and puts together an interagency group to draft the NIE. This from the start gives a single framing of the approach to the issue priority (it can make a big difference, for example whether the lead on an evaluation of China's nonproliferation behavior is given to the functional or geographical NIO). Co-leadership by two

pertinent NIOs may in some cases produce a better-informed and balanced product.

The assembled interagency team has formal equality in producing the product. In reality, of course, some agencies/individuals have far more expertise and commitment and play a commensurably larger role. But every agency has an equal right to raise issues and voice dissent.

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Typically, dissenting opinions produce efforts to change the language so as to obscure the dissent behind less crisp analytical judgments. There is value attached to having unanimity or near-unanimity when the final NIE comes out. Where there is remaining dissent, in many cases locutions such as "most agencies agree" or "almost all agencies conclude that" are used. This can at times obscure the bonafides of the dissenting agencies and the clarity of their concerns. Perhaps the NIE should more closely resemble the form of Supreme Court decisions, where dissenters can write specific dissenting opinions and even those who agree can pen concurring opinions that agree with the outcome but indicate a different analytical approach or other distinction. Any such approach must be tempered by practices which limit concurring and dissenting opinions to very important issues.

In addition, the pressure to source all information and not to miss any potentially pertinent item drives the product to lengths greater than most intended consumers can manage. NIEs come with executive summaries for those who need to gain quick control over the major conclusions and a one-page summary exclusively for the president. But the current structure tends to encourage people at the top to at best read only the executive summary and leave it to those pretty far down the policymaking hierarchy to read the entire document.

NIEs might have more impact if those at the top could read something that filled out the argument more than the executive summary typically does but still remained less than ten pages long. This type of piece might begin with a statement of the issue, provide a synopsis of the argument, and lay out the conclusions. Everything else would be reduced to supporting appendices.

Permitting particularly knowledgeable participants the opportunity—to be used very sparingly—to indicate their individual views if those differ sharply from the overall NIE may warrant serious consideration. Sometimes individual analysts can bring to bear insights that prove critical but do not command consensus support at their home agency. NIOs would at all times have to retain discretionary judgment on use of such individual insights. If the individual wants to ride the same hobby horse across a set of estimates, that should not be permitted. But being able to argue for the occasional critical point may be an exercise and produce a product that justifies the additional complications this avenue might create.

A final issue is the temptation for politicians to demand the declassification of NIEs or to selectively leak from NIEs. There are obviously times where the declassification of intelligence products is essential to good governance, such as in the case of the 9/11 Commission Report, but such declassification decisions must be weighed against not only the danger to sources and methods but also the very real damage it can inflict on the integrity of the analytic process. Analysts and managers, if they believe that their products are likely to be routinely declassified and become part of the public debate, are likely—either consciously or subconsciously—to pull their punches and hedge their analyses. This runs contrary to the expectations of policymakers that the analyses will not be hedged judgments but as much truth, provided to power, as feasible. Moreover, the impulse to declassify NIEs or to leak selectively from NIEs is often based on a faulty assumption that the Intelligence Community's analysis can and should authoritatively

settle a policy debate. As explained in this report, however, the role of intelligence analysis is to inform and hopefully elevate the level of discussion over policy decisions. But at the end of the day intelligence analysis is only one of many critical inputs into the policy process. Thus, there is a need to re-instill a greater sense of responsibility in both the Executive and Congressional branches for protecting the integrity of the estimative process and to consider declassifying current NIEs only on extremely rare occasions.

Ongoing Dilemmas That Have No Clear Solution

A key dilemma of the intelligence-policy nexus is how thick a firewall there should be separating analysts and policymakers. Opinion among those interviewed was highly divided.

- Some felt strongly that interaction should be highly regulated and limited because the dangers of analysts becoming captives of the policy process and skewing their analysis to please the policy consumer. They argued that CIA and DIA headquarters are rightly placed a good distance from downtown Washington to protect the integrity of the analytic product.

- But others were equally adamant that separation of analysis from the policy process leads to stilted and uniformed analysis that does not benefit sufficiently from the insights gleaned by the policy maker in their day-to-day interactions with foreign governments. They argue that the best solution to these problems is to have analysts well integrated in policy agencies since it is unlikely that busy policymakers will make the time to provide the IC with meaningful readouts of their meetings and the key issues with which they are wrestling.

The author agrees that the dangers that analytic integrity can be compromised are real but believes the solution cannot be

to hermetically seal the analysts off from the policy process. It is incumbent on IC managers to train their analysts to see the warning signs of subtle and not-so-subtle attempts to compromise their analytic integrity and defend the analytic product strongly against politicization. But this is an issue that will require constant review and attention and is unlikely ever to be resolved to everyone's full satisfaction

A second dilemma is whether or not, on balance, it is an advantage to have the largest all-source IC component, the Directorate of Intelligence at CIA, embedded within the premier clandestine intelligence gathering agency. Some argue that the culture of secrecy that surrounds the CIA limits the opportunity for the all-source analysts to interact with the outside world and that those analytic resources should be placed elsewhere, perhaps directly under the DNI. They note that analysts with INR, for example, are far freer to interact with academics and others outside the IC because of the culture of openness that exists within the Department of State. Others argue that the synergy created by co-location of clandestine operators and the all-source analysts helps to more effectively target intelligence collection resources against the key intelligence priorities. This imponderable, too, is not easily solved because there are strong arguments on both sides of the question.

CONCLUSION

I n the wake of the intelligence failures early in this decade, the Intelligence Community today has both the obligation and the opportunity to transform itself. With fifty percent of the IC workforce having been hired since 9/11, there is now a large pool of young, technology-savvy talent that is eager to be shaped into a superior new IC. Indeed, the cultural shifts based on the information age underway in the world of analysis, as elsewhere, almost guarantee that many of these changes will happen because the younger generation is already there. Younger generations instinctively think more collaboratively because of their experience with on-line gaming and instant information sharing tools such as Facebook and instant messaging. The DNI and the other heads of the intelligence community recognize this opportunity and are making important strides in this direction based on the recommendations of the various Presidential and Congressionally-mandated commissions that have assessed the intelligence shortcomings of the recent past.

Even with these initiatives, however, many of the persistent shortcomings of analysis described in this report will not be solved easily because of the cultures of insularity and secrecy. For example, the need for a National Intelligence University has been understood for some time but, even with the establishment of a virtual NIU and calls for greater collaboration, resistance is great from the IC's sixteen desperate agencies to merging their education and training programs. Moreover, some IC managers continue to believe that other parts of the community are less trustworthy because they do not employ

identical security screenings—such as the polygraph—on their employees. This resistance reminds us that the IC still has some distance to go in terms of individual agency cultures and mind-sets if it is to be truly unified under the leadership of the DNI.

The division of labor and of tasking among the major components of the IC should be an ongoing concern. Post 9/11 changes created the ODNI and repositioned the CIA and the NIC, among other shifts. In short, key pieces have been moved on the IC chessboard. Such major changes inevitably require a substantial period of time to fully gel. This report does not, therefore, provide specific recommendations on additional changes in the distribution of responsibilities and relationships among the major IC players. But the research suggests that a thoughtful review of current relationships—especially those among ODNI, the NIC, CIA, DIA, and INR—might prove of considerable value again in about two to three years.

"The task of analytic transformation, moreover, cannot fall on the IC alone... Policymakers do not have the right to complain about the quality of analysis if they do not take the time to provide clear and candid feedback..."

The task of analytic transformation, moreover, cannot fall on the IC alone. As discussed in this report, the policy maker-analyst nexus involves complex human interactions that need to be consciously studied and monitored by both sides. Policymakers do not have the right to complain about the quality of analysis if they do not take the time to provide clear and candid feedback to the IC on its programs of analysis. Policymakers also need to make sure that they understand the process of intelligence analysis so that they read products as well informed customers. Moreover, while it is incumbent on the IC to work hard to keep informed on policy priorities, it is also the responsibility of policymakers to make sure that analysts are informed of relevant discussions with foreign leaders that may shed light on intentions and motivations. Too often policymakers assume that analysts know what they know without making the effort to communicate the necessary information.

IC ANALYTIC STANDARDS

On June 21, 2007, the DNI promulgated the first community-wide analytic standards to govern the production and evaluation of national intelligence analysis. These standards are to be used as guidelines and goals for analysts and managers throughout the IC in order to "strive for excellence in their analytic work practices and products". The IC Analytic Standards are:

- **Objectivity** – The standard requires that analysts and managers perform their analytic and informational functions from an unbiased perspective. Analysis should be free of emotional content, give due regard to alternative perspectives and contrary reporting, and acknowledge developments that necessitate adjustments to analytic judgments.

- **Independent of Political Considerations** – Analysts and managers should provide objective assessments informed by available information that are not distorted or altered with the intent of supporting or advocating a particular policy, political viewpoint, or audience.

- **Timeliness** – Analytic products that arrive too late to support the work of consumers weaken utility and impact. Analysts will strive to deliver their products in time for them to be actionable by customers. Analytic elements have a responsibility to be aware of the schedules and requirements of consumers.

- **Based on All Available Sources of Intelligence** – Analysis should be informed by all relevant information that is available to the analytic element. Where critical gaps exist, analytic elements should work with collectors to develop appropriate collection, dissemination, and access strategies.

- **Exhibits Proper Standards of Analytic Tradecraft, Specifically**:

  - Properly describes quality and reliability of sources.
  - Properly caveats and expresses uncertainties of confidence in analytic judgments.
  - Properly distinguishes between underlying intelligence and analysts' assumptions and judgments.
  - Incorporates alternative analysis where appropriate.
  - Demonstrates relevance to U.S. national security
  - Uses logical argument.
  - Exhibits consistency of analysis over time, or highlights changes and explains rationale.
  - Makes accurate judgments and assessments.

Excerpted from Intelligence Community Directive Number 203, "Analytic Standards", June 21, 2007. Available at: http//www.dni.gov/electronic_reading_room/ICD%20203.pdf.

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