

# Intelligence Gathering and Analysis: Spy Game Politics

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Many policymakers and lawmakers are critical of the intelligence analysis reports they receive, and both intelligence consumers and producers often share a frustration over its perceived lack of utility and hence lack of impact. This includes local law enforcement commanders who -- more than ever -- depend on solid information in order to deploy their resources in post-9/11 America.

The best way to ensure high-quality analysis is to bring high quality analysts into the process. Here it helps to think of the challenge as one of improving both the stock and the flow of personnel. Certain stock (career personnel) need to be encouraged to specialize in a geographical area or function and rewarded for excellence. Not everyone need pursue a career with a management component.

This is not meant to diminish the value of management skills. To the contrary, the CIA in particular needs to place much more emphasis on formal management and leadership training as well as demonstrated competence as a prerequisite for promotion for those headed for senior levels.

But better analysis will also require reducing the isolation of the intelligence community. A greater flow of talented people into the agency from academia and business is essential. Greater provision ought to be made for lateral and mid-career entry as well as for short-term entry (measured in weeks, months, or years) or even for just a single, short-duration project. In this way the intelligence community could attract and exploit some of the best minds from academia and other sections of society that would otherwise not be available.

The danger of politicization -- the potential for the intelligence community to distort information or judgment in order to please political authorities -- is real. Moreover, the danger can never be eliminated if intelligence analysts are involved, as they must be, in the policy process. The challenge is to develop reasonable safeguards while permitting intelligence producers and policymaking consumers to interact. The need to protect intelligence from political pressure and parochialism is a powerful argument for maintaining a strong, centralized capability and not leaving decisions affecting important intelligence-related questions solely to the policymaking departments. (Centralization raises the risk of politicization stemming from the DCI. Only the president, senior officials involved in national security, and Congress can help guard against politicization, although they too can try to politicize intelligence.)



Unlike business, in the intelligence the customer is not always right.



The intelligence community can protect itself from political pressure through competitive analysis of controversial questions. Guarding against politicization is also a useful function for Congress and the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. One option to consider in this regard would be to reconstitute to make it selected by and responsible to Congress as well as the president. Perhaps most important, the leadership of the intelligence community should reinforce the ethic that speaking the truth to those in power is required-and defend anyone who comes under criticism for doing so.

Irrelevance is a related and arguably bigger problem for analysts than politicization. Intelligence analysis rarely impresses itself upon policymakers, who are inevitably busy and inundated with demands more important to their political survival.

Intelligence officials must draw attention to their product and market their ideas. This is especially true in the case of any early warning or intelligence-related development that has potentially significant consequences for important interests. A phone call, a personalized memorandum, a meeting --any and all are required if the situation is sufficiently serious.



Involving relevant policymakers and other consumers in the regular personnel evaluations of the analysts who serve them would underline the importance of such an effort and provide an incentive to individual analysts.

Another serious problem to be avoided is mindset or "groupthink." Any organization, and the CIA or any intelligence agency is no exception, can fall into the trap of not questioning basic assumptions that affect much subsequent analysis. It is essential that competitive or redundant analysis be encouraged. Currently and

historically, less than a tenth of what the United States spends on intelligence is devoted to analysis; it is the least expensive dimension of intelligence. Not all duplication is wasteful. This country could surely afford to spend more in those areas of analysis where being wrong can have major adverse consequences.

The most important function of the clandestine services-mostly found in the CIA Directorate of Operations -- is the collection of human intelligence. Such intelligence can complement other sources and, in certain instances, be the principal or sole source of information.

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