Strategic Foresight in the US Intelligence Community

PSFN / FFCOI Annual Meeting
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IC’s Mixed Relationship with Foresight

• All intelligence is foresight

• “Consider the essence of intelligence work: at the top of the game, it requires knowing what your enemy will do before he has reached a decision himself. It means developing a visceral understanding – a knowledge beyond reason – of your opponents.” – Ralph Peters
IC’s Mixed Relationship with Foresight

• Foresight by Many Names: Long-Range Analysis, Strategic Analysis, Warning Intelligence, Anticipatory Intelligence, Estimative Intelligence

• Futures Analysis or Foresight – contains some negative connotations in the IC
  • Not analytically rigorous or backed by solid tradecraft
  • Collection bias

• Some intelligence analysts see themselves as Futurists, without the drama and angst
Introduction to the IC, E Pluribus.....Pluribus

• The United States Intelligence Community
  • Office of the Director of National Intelligence
    • NIC
    • ODNI Centers
  • Independent Agency – CIA
  • DoD Intelligence Enterprise
    • DIA, NSA, NGA, NRO
    • Combatant Command Intelligence Centers – CENTCOM, EUCOM, STRATCOM, etc
    • Service Intelligence Organizations – Army, Navy, Marines, USAF
  • Departmental Intelligence
    • State – INR
    • Justice – FBI & DEA
    • DHS – I&A & Coast Guard
    • Treasury
    • Energy

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Types of Foresight Organizations

• Externally-Oriented Analytic Forecasting / Foresight Entities
  • National Intelligence Council – Strategic Futures Group
  • Central Intelligence Agency – Strategic Insight Department
  • Defense Intelligence Agency – Defense Technology & Long-Range Analysis
  • National Counterterrorism Center – Strategic Issues Group

• Internally-Oriented Strategic Planning Entities
  • Each IC Agency has strategic planning efforts for their own resource, budget, and acquisition decisions
  • CIA – Center for the Study of Intelligence, Emerging Trends: Identifies how emerging changes will impact agency equities/missions

• Hybrid – ODNI/NCTC/Directorate of Strategic Operational Planning/Net Assessments
ODNI – National Intelligence Council

• National Intelligence Council – Strategic Futures Group
  • Established by ODNI to coordinate and participate in IC agency efforts
    • As time went on, some agency efforts withered and died and SFG became more central to IC efforts
  • Directors for Geopolitics, Security, Economics, Governance & Stability, Global Health
  • Focused on longer-term futures, 20+ years

• Global Trends flagship publication (Unclass, Unlimited Release)
  • Latest Global Trends: Paradox of Progress, published January 2017
  • Three scenarios for World Order – Islands, Orbits, or Communities
• **CIA – Strategic Insight Department** (Office of Strategic Programs), created above the Mission Center Construct
  
  • **Mission:** We develop products in multiple mediums that provoke fresh thinking, explore interactions of global trends, and identify the strategic implications for US interests
  
  • **Values:**
    • Great Story Telling – we tell analytically rigorous, multifaceted, and multidisciplinary stories that go beyond the “what and so what” to focus on second- and third-order implications
    • Partnership – we enhance the value of our products by gaining insight from collaboration with partners inside and outside the USG
• SID Organization
  • **Creativity & Outreach** – *Discover, develop,* and *apply* analytic methods to generate and deliver unique and original assessments
  • **Red Cell** – *Stretch* the analytic spectrum, *provoke* thought, *challenge* conventional wisdom, and think the unthinkable
  • **Strategic Perspectives** – *Identify, explore,* and provide *cutting-edge* insights on global and regional trends, dynamics, crises, and shocks
    • Distills unique, strategic insights from multi-disciplinary analysis of complex, global phenomenon
    • Engages in horizon scanning to identify potential strategic shifts
Our main substantive focus is on the primary strategic challenge facing senior policymakers today: securing US interests in a world where power is shifting in significant and far-reaching ways.

**Strategic Perspectives**
- Looming Disruptions from Automation
- The Future of Global Governance
- Intelligence Planning Scenarios
- “Big Idea” Visions and Grand Strategies
- Escalation and Deterrence Dynamics
- Shifting Nature of Sovereignty and Identity
DA/OSP/SID Products

• **Red Cell**
  • North Korea as an inflection point
  • Can religion solve Afghanistan?
  • Imagining the Next Generation of Global Troublemakers
  • How “X” might surprise us
  • How “Y” might turn against the US

• **Creativity & Outreach**
  • National Academies of Science
  • Columbia University/SIPA
  • The Usual Suspects
DA/OSP/SID

• Where Does the Work Come From?
  • Tasked: NatSecAdv/NSC, OSD, State/Policy Planning, CIA Leadership
  • MC Generated: Support to Mission Centers on identified issues
  • Self-Generated: What we think is important

• Tools & Techniques
  • Alternative Futures / Scenario Analysis
  • What If? / High-Impact, Low-Probability / Backcasting / Day After
  • Modelling, Gaming & Simulation

• Internal Dynamics
  • SID Sixty, SID SubFest, SID Salon, Idea-Palooza, Red Reads
  • Analysts are experienced thought leaders in the DA, work across the mission areas
Challenges

• The 800 Pound Gorilla in the Room
• Tailoring strategic analysis for an Administration that is moving from formulation to execution (the 4-8 year cycle)
• Carving out operating space / preserving uniqueness in a bureaucracy