Improving the Intelligence Product

by Fred Feer

INTRODUCTION

The issue this article addresses is how to improve the intelligence product. That is, how to make it more acceptable to those who use it as an input to the policy and decision-making process. The most senior officials responsible for making policy determine, to a large extent, what the priorities are. They have the responsibility and the power to insure that resources are applied to answering their questions. Thus, the central principle of intelligence as practiced today in the United States is that the president is the most senior policy maker and therefore the most important consumer of the intelligence product. The chief executive asks the questions that get the highest priority.

Intelligence is valuable to policy makers because it has the potential for supplying insights into international affairs that may be of great value to the policy makers. Crises are especially fruitful for the study and practice of intelligence because they narrow the problem space and enable many resources to be concentrated and coordinated in ways difficult to achieve otherwise. Whatever improvements in the intelligence product may be contemplated, they must accomplish two goals. First, they must make it more likely that crises will be anticipated. Second, they must indicate what changes would be required if a crisis rose up in the policy maker's path.

NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATES

The most written about intelligence product of the intelligence community (IC) is the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE).[1] Although many have studied NIEs, they have concentrated heavily on strategic nuclear matters, especially whether the estimate was correct or not and whose systematic bias turned out to be the correct one. Nearly everyone who has discussed NIEs has been critical of them.[2] They are too often compilations of that which no one objected to, rather than pointed analysis of the likely course of events. In order to understand whether there is a genuine possibility of overcoming the flaws in the process that produces NIEs, one must look to the discipline of cognitive psychology to discover how the mind works at perceiving and organizing our knowledge of the world. A recent and comprehensive work dealing with the subject is Y.Y. Vertzberger, *The World in Their Minds: Information Processing, Cognition and Perception in Foreign Policy Decisionmaking.*[2] He is not optimistic. He might have had NIEs in mind when in his conclusion he wrote:

> Whenever ambiguity and uncertainty are high, the definition of the situation is more likely to be
> a function of the person than the objective stimulus. When ambiguity and uncertainty increase,
> the information becomes more open to competitive interpretations and choosing among them
> becomes more complicated.[4]

Vertzberger's prescriptions are rather disappointing in the end, not to say Utopian. The first is "restricting the access of top political positions" to people with demonstrated competence using the panoply of modern decision-making techniques. He recognizes the unlikelihood of that. The other is to truly professionalize intelligence and other supporting bureaucracies to insure competency on their part, and to help constrain, educate, and enlighten political leaders who have achieved their positions by the exercise of their very different competency. It does seem that there are opportunities in the way NIEs are constructed and presented to make them more honest and directly useful to the people who must make decisions and establish policies in the face of uncertainty and risk.

Before examining how this might be done it is necessary to note that any measure of improvement in the NIEs must be based on why NIEs exist. NIEs deal with the future and must be judged thereby. However, not in terms of correct prediction, but rather in terms of identifying and exposing the significant variables that will affect any outcome and presenting them in a way that is useful to the policy maker. If an NIE is being written in the context of a significant upcoming election, it would be nice if the estimate picked the winner(s)

and a prediction undoubtedly would be advanced. But, the IC could do that no better than the local pollsters and pundits. The IC would provide some useful information on major issues and other parties and personalities as part of the explanation of the political context. But, they almost certainly would not have provided alternative scenarios in decreasing order of likelihood, given that the main prediction proved wrong, together with indicative events or signs that one or another possible outcome were becoming more or less likely.

Improving the intelligence product, then, involves some analytical effort that is carried out on a consistent basis and that is treated as an essential part of the NIE production effort. The nearest approach by the IC to matching prediction against outcome has been the 'post-mortem,' usually conducted after a significant intelligence failure."[1] Seldom, if ever, has a post-mortem been held to study success and never as a normal part of the process. But, it is essential that self-assessment and reinforcement of success be made a normal part of the process at the highest level. If it cannot be established over time that NIEs have anticipated the major causes of observed outcomes, even if the outcome that eventuated had been thought one of the less likely outcomes, then serious thought has to be given to the value of the enterprise at all.

A CASE STUDY: THE 1967 ARAB-ISRAELI WAR

To illustrate the argument made above, an intelligence estimate on the likelihood of war between Israel and its Arab neighbors in May 1967 will be reconstructed. The inferred estimate draws upon declassified information and is presented in an informal fashion that highlights what would be its main conclusions. This estimate will then be critiqued using contemporary open source information. On the basis of this critique several suggestions will be put forward for improving the form and content of NIEs as well as their evaluation.

Israel

- Since 1956, Israel has known that American support is conditional. Israeli leaders believe that the durable core of American interests in the region is access to oil for itself and the non-communist world and security for oil producers. Thus, Israeli leaders know that their interests will always be in a state of tension with the American desire for stable, friendly relations with most Arab states.[6]

- The Israeli armed forces are superior to and can defeat any combination of Arab forces. Only the direct intervention of a major power, such as the USSR, could upset this superiority.[7]

- The United States does not control Israeli policy, but it does have significant influence. Israel has been told in the most straightforward terms that the US will not commit itself to supporting Israel if it initiates hostilities or tries to change territorial borders. We believe, therefore, that Israel will consider its course very carefully.[8]

- Israeli concerns about terrorist raids across its Syrian, Lebanese and Jordanian borders are real. Beyond the casualties suffered, the raids are damaging to Israel psychologically while encouraging to Israel's enemies.[9]

- The closing of the Straits of Tiran is unacceptable to Israel. Sooner or later Israel will fight for free access to the Gulf of Aqaba.[10]

- Israel is capable of initiating major hostilities with little or no prior warning.[11]

Egypt

Egypt is determined to retain, if not strengthen, its positions as regional leader and as major spokesman and leader of the Third World.[12]

Inter-Arab disputes are a feature of the region. Nevertheless, all states will unite around certain causes, such as opposition to Israel and all supporters of it. Thus, while wrangling is frequent, serious fighting is rare among Arab states. In the current context this is manifested in the unification of Arab military forces under nominal Egyptian command. This can be expected to continue only as long as the current crisis continues, however.[13]

- However heated his rhetoric may become. Nasser is a rational leader well

aware of the dangers that face him and his hold on power. He will endeavor to win as much as he can via non-violent means. We believe he is aware of the relative capabilities of his own vis-a-vis Israeli military might.[14]

Nasser's motives are mixed. On the one hand, he may believe he has already achieved his major aim: restoration of the status quo ante 1956 at Aqaba. Now, he is concerned to keep his gains without hostilities. On the other hand, however, the blockade is a step the Israelis have said they will not tolerate. Nasser would not take such a step without substantial assurances. It is possible that Nasser has greater Soviet support than previously believed or that he has been drawn along further than he may have wished, or even realized, by his desire to restore his position as regional and Third World leader.[15]

Constraints on Both

- Unconventional weapons pose a potential threat to both sides. Egypt has used lethal chemical agents in Yemen. The Israeli nuclear program maybe sufficiently advanced to provide a militarily useful capability, if not a fully developed weapon. Both sides are well aware.[16]

- Maintaining a state of mobilization is expensive for both sides, but more so for the more sophisticated and export oriented Israeli economy. We believe they can maintain the current posture for a matter of weeks to a few months.[17]

Soviet Motives

- The Soviets are playing a double game: assuring us in private that they are urging restraint on Syria and Egypt, while publicly supporting them and providing them with arms and advisors. We believe the Soviets do not want to see a war and would not wish to see Israel defeated. They are, however, strongly committed to their regional allies and have little influence over them aside from its arms aid.[18]

CRITIQUE

The question now is, which of these propositions is flawed and what improvement to the estimative product and/or process is suggested thereby?

Israeli Propositions

First, one would have hoped for sufficient insight for someone to have suggested that the often reiterated conditional support for Israel would have made it highly likely that the Israelis would frequently test the nature and extent of this support. While the 26 May visit of the Israeli Foreign Minister was expected to entail entreaties and pressure for the US to provide something, it was never suggested that these requests might be instrumental for Israeli policy; that diffidence in supplying support might induce stronger Israeli action than they otherwise might have wished to take. Thus, Johnson's often repeated warning to the Israelis that they should not initiate hostilities when combined with American unwillingness to engage in any coordination beforehand reinforced the Israelis' feelings of isolation as the days passed, especially after the closing of the Strait of Aqaba on 22 May. That an outside observer might easily conclude that war was virtually inevitable by 29 May is shown by a memo from Walt Rostow to the president saying that "Gene Black" (presumably the then-Director of the World Bank) after a briefing by senior staff members had concluded that war was certain if the US did nothing, given the impasse between Egyptian and Israeli minimal demands.[19] This is an example of what I mean by answering the real question even if it is not asked.

The second proposition with regard to the Israelis was their absolute military superiority. The Israelis did not share American optimism. They may have believed they could win a war, but the prospect of a war was terrifying. Israeli newspapers were reporting extreme preparations, including the consecration of public parks as burial grounds. Fear of chemical weapons, which Egypt was known to have used effectively in Yemen, was widespread in Israel.

The sin here is approaching Israel with American models in mind, and with a lack of sensitivity to

time. Israel might indeed be superior to the Arabs individually and collectively. The American assumption was that Israelis should draw confidence from this rather than a sense of deepening dread.

A similar mistake was made with respect to Israeli casualties and losses resulting from the armed raids by Arab terrorists/freedom fighters. Although hardly more than pin pricks by American standards, they were a source of widespread worry. Again it was a matter of the small size and close connection among Israeli communities. The names and photographs of victims appeared in the national press bringing the story home to the country as a whole. Something Americans could hardly imagine at the time. Since then, however, the American hostages held in Iran and Lebanon have shown that even a few victims can twist the perceptions and policies of even the greatest of superpowers.

The one thing we had unambiguously right was that Israel would fight to open Aqaba. Let us hope that Rostow's memo to President Johnson was actually read by him.

The last proposition is the most frustrating to everyone concerned in a crisis. When a crisis is recognized, everyone develops a mental picture of what must be going on. Intelligence officers turn those imaginings into collection guidance. 'If the Israelis are going to fight for Aqaba, they will have to mobilize. Send people out to look for signs of mobilization.' As time goes on and more information is acquired the guidance becomes more and more sharply focused until, typically, one or all sides have done everything imaginable to prepare for the predicted event. Intelligence then confronts the policy maker's most demanding questions. 'I don't want to know what they might do, I want to know what and when.' As it happens Johnson's demand was met in the nearest thing to a perfect estimate. During the NSC meeting on 24 May. Johnson ordered a fresh look at the military balance question. He used the result in this talk with Abba Eban two days later.

To the success of the N1E, Richard Helms, the Director of Central Intelligence, attributed his being invited to attend Johnson's Tuesday lunches at which senior advisors discussed the major issues of the day, a significant boost in his access and stock with Johnson.[20] It is still on the short list of things cited to show the IC can occasionally get things right.

The Egyptian Propositions

Nasser's ambition to regain his standing as undisputed leader of the Arab nations and leading spokesman for the Third World were well-known and remarked upon, but were never seen as a prod to war. That conclusion was left for the reader to draw. Similarly, the internal divisions among the Arabs were the feature highlighted. Their unity in crisis was seen as a response to a perceived crisis and would disappear as the crisis cooled. That the Arabs might know this and take it as incentive to maintain and escalate the crisis even if it led to war was not articulated. Again, the customer was left to draw their own conclusion.

The third proposition, that Nasser was a rational man and therefore would not engage in a war he knew he could not win, again left the real question unaddressed. Was it really irrational to wage wars that could not be won? And if it was, had no rational leader ever led his country to a war that could not be won? How quickly the organization that was created to prevent future Pearl Harbors forgot the chief lesson of Pearl Harbor — that a nation could be placed in **a** position where a war that could not be won was undertaken for a lesser evil than passive submission — that leaders in hopeless positions often overestimate their strength or grasp for straws or just plain hope for miracles. Nasser knew he could not win against Israel, yet he was hoping that someone, somehow would prevent it coming to that. They had it right in a passing remark at the 24 May NSC meeting when the Secretary of the Treasury said that it looked as though Nasser were looking for someone to hold him back; to which Rostow retorted **that it** was more likely he was looking for someone to hold Israel back. Yes, and no one took the remark seriously or considered what, if anything, might have influenced either side.

Thus, rather than giving the president the ability to consider the cost of deterring one or the other, a cost he might well have decided was too great, the president was left with a simple dichotomy: maintain at least the appearance of American neutrality in the Israel-Arab dispute by pursuing the strategy of creating an international naval force to test the Egyptian blockade, or commit the US directly to the Israeli cause and alienate all the Arabs, especially the oil producers.

The Constraints on Both

The last constraint raises a frequently encountered issue: the question of time. The formulation used with reference to Israel was that they could maintain mobilization for some period. Again the 24 May NSC meeting was illustrative. General Earle Wheeler, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, responded to Johnson's question about what the US should do after it had relied on the Israelis to take care of themselves. Wheeler said that a long war would hurt the Israeli economy. 'At that point' we would have to decide what to do. That static view was precisely the sticking point. The Israelis could not wait until after their economy had been spent in a long war to then see what the US might do. The Israelis *might,* have been willing to stretch themselves if they had assurances of a US commitment at some point. But lacking such, the Israelis could not afford to expend too much of their resources. Their entire military strategy was build around minimizing the impact of a war by taking the war to Arab territory and to adopting tactics and strategies designed to insure that any war would be a short one. Just as Johnson wanted assurances about what his advisors would do if matters turned against the US, the Israelis wanted assurances for the same reason. Not getting them induced Israel to initiate war sooner rather than later. Again, the customer was left to draw his own conclusion.

Soviet Motives

Yet again, the next logical question went unaddressed. Indeed we can see that the USSR was deeply committed to its Arab clients, but how committed? Committed enough to directly participate in the war? Committed enough to ensure the Arabs a victory? The closest approach to dealing with the issue was US Ambassador to Egypt Lucius Battle's comment on 24 May that Nasser might have more Soviet support than we knew. The universal opinion was that the Soviets would not risk direct confrontation with the US. That remained the opinion until the Soviets actually did intervene directly in early 1970, risking conflict with the US and courting confrontation with Israel in the air about the Suez Canal. That crisis broke on 31 July when in aerial combat between Soviet and Israeli fighters the Soviets lost five Soviet-manned, first-line aircraft to the Israelis" none. A ceasefire was arranged within a week, after months of wrangling.

What was not considered was the almost entirely instrumental relationship between the USSR and Egypt. The Soviets had weapons at prices Egypt could afford. Egypt was willing to go to great lengths to obtain weapons. But weapons, once supplied, reset the clock to 'what-have-you-done-for-me-lately'? Lacking a real basis, the relationship left the Soviets in danger of being manipulated in 1967 as they were in 1970.

SUGGESTED IMPROVEMENTS

What, then, might be suggested by way of improvements to the intelligence product that might open the possibility of analysis more responsive to the chief policy maker's needs?

Stretching the NIE

Analysts in the IC responsible for producing estimates resist taking responsibility for the correctness of their prediction on the grounds that prediction is an inherently error prone activity. Yet the customers expect prediction from them. Prediction is the IC's unique contribution based on the unique information available to it. Not to predict would be to evade the mandate of the community's customers. The drafters of NIEs know, and expect their customers to know, that the uncertainties are very great and that they will often be wrong.

One can empathize without buying the whole package. Analysts may not know what will happen, but they have a fair idea of what the range of possibilities may be. They may not be able to predict a coup, but they probably could say who might stage and lead a coup if one were to happen, and given the 'who' they could make good guesses about the 'how' and the 'why.' And given all that the collection managers could make some shrewd guesses, given the who, how and why, about the 'where' and for 'what' they should be alert. This leaves only the 'when' as the great unknown.

The policy maker may insist on a prediction, but that need not prevent the presentation of alternative scenarios and reinterpretations of the evidence. Indeed. I would argue that such a presentation is more likely to be what the policy maker would find useful. The problem is how to prevent the development of these

alternatives from becoming a routine, bureaucratic exercise in itself. I would suggest making them the work of individuals rather than the coordination process. These individuals would be held to high standards of intellectual honesty and rigor in use of evidence, and there would be some judgment exercised as to how many and which alternatives would be presented. One could make the preparation of such an alternative view a high honor awarded to the leading analyst espousing the view. It would be both a means of recognizing outstanding ability and exposing a maturing analyst to the challenge of writing for his most demanding audience.

Substance is important in these alternative views. They would not be merely arguments in favor of one or another position. They would be required to identify and relate events for which intelligence collectors could watch and whose occurrence would indicate to policy makers how the trend of events was altering the estimated likelihoods of the alternatives presented in the NIE.[21]

Verifying that the change proposed here had the desired improving effect would require a consistent program of post-mortems. The post mortem is an honorable, if problematic, tradition in the intelligence business. Usually associated with compromises of classified data or operations to determine causes and the extent of damage, post-mortems are also occasionally conducted to determine why an analytical judgment turned out poorly.[22] The purpose of the proposed postmortems would not be to fix responsibility for error, but to determine the extent to which an NIE had reflected all the major influences affecting the outcome. It can be argued that the writers of NIEs already do that in their footnotes and alternative opinions.[23] True, but what the IC could do that might be more informative and helpful, even for themselves, would be to first, make the dimensions of the disagreement clear by stating the competing positions in comparable terms.

Most important would be to make clear the relative impacts of each alternative. For example, in the 1988 NIE 11-3/8 Soviet Capabilities for Strategic Nuclear Conflict there was a dissent from the consensus by the Army and the State Department with respect to anticipated Soviet air defenses. Essentially the Army assessed the improvement would be less than the consensus and the State Department assessed that the improvement, whatever it might be, would not affect the strategic relationship. But the implications of these dissents were not addressed.

Even granting that these sentences summarized a complex argument, it would take only a few more sentences to summarize the impact of the disagreement. This is the kind of clarity non-technical and higher-level decision makers need in order to be able to understand arguments made in the NIEs. As the highest-level policy-relevant intelligence documents that have had and will have resource allocation implications, such clarity is indispensable. The ability to verify that such clarity is being introduced, maintained and expanded is no less so.

Deal fully with the implications of the analysis and the question

This is an extension of the previous argument. Drafters should walk a fine line between merely responding to the question asked and inflicting their own opinions on the harried consumer. Not only should disagreements among the IC members be made apparent, but the NIE should anticipate the consumer by addressing the anticipatable implications of its own analysis and the consumer's concerns expressed by the request for the estimate.

The major innovation advocated here is to give NIE drafters opportunity, means and motive to go beyond the confines of a series of questions or terms of reference to deal with the full implications of their work. The style of estimate advocated above provides them with their opportunity. The motivation would come from assigning individuals who strongly advocate alternative positions to write these sections. The means must be an intellectually responsible piece of work; not a coordinated one, but one that respects the evidence and the honesty of the IC coordinated view. I do not believe this would result in scattershot estimates. I do believe that individual responsibility will enhance the sharpness of the views expressed and better expose alternative risks and consequences for the benefit of policy makers.

Tighten production of the schedule

The more time available, the more editorial polishing will be done, leading to rounded edges and finessed compromises. The 1967 SNIE that has so impressed later writers had the advantage of having to be

written in less than a day. Shortened time would not lead to ill-considered estimates. The substance of most estimates is under active consideration all the time. And we sometimes forget that crisis responses are always time-stressed. It is a question of determining what style of response is appropriate to a particular NIE. A regularly scheduled NIE on a topic characterized by consensus or one characterized by great technical unknowns may tempt the sin of over-coordination if allowed too much time. I would argue for short deadlines even in such cases.

Sensitization/Education

If a common effect of crisis is to narrow the receptivity' of policy makers to the full range of relevant information and if the primary mission of intelligence is to provide such information to policy makers, especially in crisis, then it is incumbent on intelligence producers both to resist the effects of crisis on themselves and to try to assure that its input to policy makers gets through to them with all its nuances and complexity. In short, intelligence must try to hold open the door to the policy maker's mind.   How to do that?

Analysts and policy makers alike might be educated to recognize when their own work began to exhibit the narrowing focus that typically results from the stress of crisis situations. A self-analysis would help intelligence producers meet one of their major responsibilities — to maintain flexibility and nuance of expression in their products during crisis situations. This would aid senior policymakers by insuring they were presented with challenging input. As a principle means of situation tracking for senior policy makers, such intelligence support would help them to resist the effects of stressful circumstances.

The problem for senior officials, especially at changes in administration, is lack of direct experience with intelligence, leaving them at the mercy of whatever novels or press reports they might have read. It is too true that expectations of exotic collection systems are often grossly out of line with reality. Even worse may be notions about the effectiveness and desirability of significant intelligence capabilities based on misapprehensions culled from various open media, which is not to say that a critical attitude toward intelligence organization. mission and methods is not justified. At least some of Admiral Stansfield Turner's early difficulties stemmed from such attitudes.

Without specifying modalities, what is needed is an academy for newly elected and appointed policy makers. The major purpose of a Leaders' Intelligence Academy is to bring home to senior elected and appointed officials their fiduciary responsibility to their intelligence support. Intelligence support is not a free good. Their demands for information drive the system. Given the high priority accorded them, their requests could become disruptive. Senior officials, therefore, need to acquire knowledge about the methods and practices of intelligence collection and analysis so that they can form effective expectations of intelligence. They must understand their own central role in providing feedback and direction to the intelligence process. It is imperative that senior leaders acknowledge that they have a deep responsibility toward their intelligence support.

In addition to information about systems and their capabilities, and organizations, the president-elect is given options on how to receive intelligence. Is he also informed of his role as the most powerful requirements driver and what effect this can have on the IC? Is he informed about the characteristics of the various 'INTs' that can affect or even bias reporting from them? Is he given a map of the political minefield he is about to enter — old wounds still sensitive, current issues and positions — so that he does not enter the White House with faulty expectations about intelligence?

A cognitive-psychological mechanism

Finally, a mechanism is needed with which the openness to information of both intelligence producers and intelligence consumers can be analyzed and tracked, and both communities can be made self-aware to support an effort to resist the tunnel vision that afflicts small group decision-making under stress. One technique for doing so grows out of the concept of integrative cognitive complexity. This approach holds that to the extent decision-making depends upon the search for and recognition of relevant knowledge, the speech and writings of those responsible will reflect their state of mind. This proposition has been tested on speeches at the UN on Middle East problems between 1947 and 1976. Findings indicated that the level of complexity displayed by Arab and Israeli speakers varied from relatively complex during periods of low

hostility to low complexity during times of rising hostility, hitting a low point just before hostilities broke out. The level of complexity of the US and USSR varied with the fortunes of their respective allies in the region, although they never reached the low levels of complexity of the Arabs and Israelis. Essentially, this study made the case that there was order and predictability in the complexity levels of speech and writings of diplomats in peace and crisis. Moreover, the variations were similar despite language and cultural differences. The authors suggested the possibility of teaching participants to recognize such changes in their performance.[24]

A recent study shows that before, during and after the Gulf War the content of George Bush's and Saddam Hussein's speech showed the contrary patterns. Bush's pattern went from moderately complex to very simple just before the combat phase of the war, and back to more complex levels shortly after the beginning of combat. The pattern of Saddam Hussein's speech showed the reverse pattern, peaking just before combat. These changes were closely associated with the perceived changes in the fortunes of the two sides over the course of the conflict. Changes in the integrative complexity of Hussein's speech was a good early indicator of his intent to attack Kuwait. However, the study also showed that the level of complexity in Bush's speech was lower than the content of some leaders who were less directly involved, e.g., Mitterand and Mubarak.[25]

There are advantages to pursuing this line of inquiry. The greatest is that this technique measures directly one of the worst effects of crisis-related stress: the focusing of attention evidenced by the narrowing of openness to relevant information and alternative problem solutions. This may be the most important substantive role of intelligence on behalf of senior policy makers.

I believe that a study of intelligence produced for the use of senior officials before, during and after crises compared to the leadership's spoken and written communication over the same period would be worthwhile. The object would be to determine what the relationship between the two may have been. Three hypotheses are posed. First, the complexity scores of the intelligence product will prove to be consistently higher than those of the leadership because the intelligence mission is to present the most accurate possible picture of reality in all its variability, while policy makers function to reduce complexity in order to reach decision. Second, if the complexity scores of the intelligence product and the leadership's communication varied in a similar manner three conditions are possible. If changes in the complexity scores of the IC precede those of the leadership it suggests the leadership is responding to the intelligence received. If the complexity scores vary together, it may be that non-intelligence sources of information available to policy makers were as influential as the intelligence output; or, alternatively, due to the crisis, the relationship between intelligence and leader had become extremely close because there was no alternative. If the complexity scores of intelligence lag behind those of the leadership, it would suggest that intelligence needed to assess its presentation to policy makers. Finally, a random divergence between the scores of the two would suggest that a problem exists and that training, sensitization and familiarization would be worthwhile for both intelligence and policy makers.

CONCLUSIONS

The chief flaw in NIEs identified was that they did not present complete, rounded analyses. They presented one or a few alternatives and did not address the full implications of them. Too often the readers were left to form their own conclusion. The picture of President Johnson on 24 May is haunting.

This is not to say that the contribution of intelligence is trivial. Clearly, the most important contribution of the US intelligence community to foreign policy in the pre-1967 war crisis was the conclusion that Israel was militarily superior to any combination of Arab enemies. Nearly all the rest was situation tracking and had no real impact on the formation of policy. American policy was proceeding on traditional lines — preserve relations with conservative Arabs, especially oil producers, for strategic reasons; maintain Israel's existence for a complex set of ideological and domestic political reasons; and keep the Soviets out of. or at least minimize their presence in. the Mediterranean and Middle East. Nothing intelligence supplied altered any of this.

Improvement in the product may come from improvements in collection of information. New techniques, sources and methods of analysis are always to be sought. But intelligence is most dependent on its analysts. The best data inadequately exploited is not worth much. The drafters of products like NIEs

have to be given the challenge and opportunity to put a complete picture before the policy maker. Presenting one's best guess as to the most likely eventuality should not prevent strong arguments being made for plausible alternatives.

The measure of merit for NIEs should be not the accuracy of their predictions but whether they conveyed a well argued case that included consideration of all the factors which, in the light of hindsight, can be seen to have been influential on the outcome.

Difficulties, however, lie in two directions. First, how to insure that strong, sharp arguments are made. I suggest empowering working analysts of proven ability to write their alternatives as individuals, subject only to the rules of honest debate and logical reasoning. Counterposing such alternatives to the coordinated view may spur both sides to consider the full implications of judgments and may better catch the interest of readers.

In the other direction, there is a need for better training and preparation of both analysts and policy makers to resist the effects of crisis-related stress, e.g., narrowing of the search for new information and too rapid convergence on immediately available 'solutions.' I have suggested a cognitive psychological technique aimed at analyzing the content of both the intelligence presented to top policy makers and the communications of such policy makers for its cognitive complexity. The technique has the advantages of relevancy, directness and simplicity. Senior personnel on both sides may, with some education, be able to maintain a self awareness such that if any future president at a future NSC meeting says. 'What do we do if our preferred option fails?,' it will be a thunderclap mandating a response, not the repetitions that Johnson got.

Finally, I have suggested a leadership academy, with a tutorial of a few days duration, intended to supply newly elected/appointed policy makers with a basic understanding of what intelligence is, how it can be made to serve them and what their role and responsibilities are in making it work. The details of how it would work are not as important as recognizing that the end of the Cold War, with its comfortable budgets and paradigms, has put renewed emphasis on the necessity for responsive, informative intelligence. Not a mere reorientation or expansion of the apparatus in being, but a rethinking of what we expect of intelligence in a future which is certain to be unfamiliar and challenging.

Endnotes

1. See Joseph S. Nye. Jr.. "'Peering into the Future." *Foreign Affairs.* 73 (1994). pp. 82-93; Angelo Codevilla. *Informing Statecraft: Intelligence for a New Century* (New York: The Free Press. 1992): Harold P. Ford. *Estimative Intelligence: The Purposes and Problems of National Intelligence Estimating* (Latham. MD: University of America Press. 1993); Lawrence Freedman. *U.S. Intelligence and the Soviet Strategic Threat,* 2nd ed., (London: Macmillan. 1986): and Thomas L. Hughes. *The Fate of Facts in a World of Men: Foreign Policy and Intelligence Making* (New York: The Foreign Policy Association. 1976).

2. See. in particular. Loch K. Johnson. *America's Secret Power: The CIA in a Democratic Society* (New York: Oxford University Press. 1989). pp. 59-75: and Codevilla. *Informing Statecraft.*

3. Yaacov Y Vertzberger. *The World in Their Minds: Information Processing, Cognition, and Perception in Foreign Policy Decisionmaking* (Stanford. CA: Stanford University Press. 1990).

4. Ibid., p. 343.

5. Richard Shryock, "The Intelligence Community Post-Mortem Program. 1973-1975." *Studies in Intelligence.* (Fall 1977). pp. 15-28.

6. "Memorandum of Conversation (Memcon), Secretary of State Dulles. Senator George, and Mr. McArthur: Subject The Middle East. March 30. 1956." *Declassified Documents Index,* #1056/ 83 (Woodbridge. CT: Research Publications Inc.): "Memcon. President Eisenhower and Israeli Prime Minister Ben Gurion." *Declassified Documents Index.* #1042/84: and "Memcon. President Johnson. Secretary of Defense McNamara. et. al. with Israeli Foreign Minister Eban and Ambassador Harmon." *Declassified Documents Index.* #3515/94.

7. "The Arab-Israeli Problem-Relative Capabilities and the Prospects for Control." *Declassified Documents Index,* #773/83: "Memorandum for the Record. National Security Council meeting on 24 May 1967." *Declassified Documents Index,* #1994/84 and 984/93: "The Arab-Israeli Arms Race and Status of US Arms Control Efforts. 1 May 1967." *Declassified Documents Index,* #3264/93: and "Memcon. President Johnson. Secretary of Defense McNamara, et. al. with Israeli Foreign Minister Eban and Ambassador Harmon," *Declassified Documents Index.* #3515/94: "Memorandum of Conversation between President Johnson and Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban. 26 May 1967," *Declassified Documents Index.* #546/93.

8. "Memorandum of Conversation between President Johnson and Israeli Foreign Minister Abba Eban. 26 May 1967," *Declassified Documents Index,* #546/93.

9. "Israeli Views regarding the Middle East Crisis. 19 May 1967." *Declassified Documents Index.* #2138/84.

10. Ibid.

11. "Urgent Message to Eshkol, 17 May 1967." *Declassified Documents Index,* #2136/84.

12. "NIE 36.1 -66, The Outlook for the UAR. 24 May 1966," *Declassified Documents Index,* #3046/ 92.

13. Ibid.

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18. Ibid.: "State Department Telegram 5016 from Moscow reporting a conversation between US Ambassador Thompson and Soviet Ambassador to the US Dobrynin," *Declassified Documents Index.* #1139/84.

19. "Memo from WAV. Rostow to President Johnson reporting his conversation with Gene Black. 29 May 1967." *Declassified Documents Index,* #2147/84.

20. Rhodri Jeffrey-Jones. *The CIA and American Democracy* (New Haven. CT: Yale University Press. 1989). p. 165; and Thomas Powers, *The Man Who Kept the Secrets: Richard Helms and the CIA* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 1979), p. 176-77.

21. Nye. "Peering into the Future." *Foreign Affairs,* 73, no. 4 (July 1994). pp. 82-93 presents a variation of this argument that relies on coordinated rather than individual assessment of alternative views.

22. Shryock. "The Intelligence Community Post-Mortem Program. 1973-1975."

23. See, for example, "Volume I: Key Judgements and Summary." NIE *11-3/8: Soviet Capabilities for Nuclear Conflict, 1983-1992* (Washington. DC: Central Intelligence Agency. 18 February 1983), p. 7.

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