

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

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

DA/OSP/SID

- **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

DA/OSP/SID

- 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

DA/OSP/SID Products

- 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