

Change and Continuity: The National Intelligence Council, 2009–2014

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Introduction

Government institutions change in response to the times. And so it was at the National Intelligence Council (NIC) during the five years (2009–14) I had the privilege to serve as its chairman. Those changes related to the unfolding impact of the 2004 Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA) that reorganized the Intelligence Community and created the director of national intelligence (DNI).¹ Three changes had significant and positive impact on the NIC:

First, in 2010, in the sixth year after the implementation of the act in 2005, General James R. Clapper became the DNI and took the spirit and intent of the IRTPA to its logical conclusion. He directed intelligence integration (what the 9/11 Commission called “unity of effort”²) across all mission areas. His creation of National Intelligence Managers in 2010 led to some internal controversy at the outset,³ but, as I will argue, his reforms resulted in a significant increase in both the quantity and value to policymakers of the NIC’s analytic products.

Second, the DNI’s strong relationship with the White House meant a continuous and powerful demand for the Intelligence Community’s

(IC’s) best analytic judgments. As the director’s analytic arm, the NIC became the focal point for production for deputies’ and principals’ meetings. Over time, the number of taskings from these meetings for the IC grew appreciably. The ability of the NIC to meet this rising demand rested on two conditions: the willingness of analysts across the agencies (above all, CIA analysts) to draft community products, and the ability of national intelligence officers and their deputies to concentrate on the analytic mission. The director’s focus on intelligence integration made both possible. His insistence on mission integration gave impetus to powerful positive trends already underway. His creation of National Intelligence Managers (NIMs) liberated NIOs from a multitude of managerial tasks that drained time and attention from analytic work.

Third, the IRTPA’s emphasis on analytic integrity and quality gave a powerful boost to reforms in the structure and presentation of analysis, especially National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs). The report of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence on the 2002 NIE on Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction built political momentum for the creation of the DNI,⁴ who was then charged to ensure analytic integrity in the future. The law requires the DNI—and those

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who work for him, including the NIC chairman—to take steps to ensure analytic integrity.⁵

In addition to significant reform efforts since 2004 by my predecessors to restore the integrity of NIEs, I wanted to restore their utility. I wanted to return them to their central role in framing key issues for policymakers. Every editorial reform during my time in office was intended to improve clarity of presentation, accessibility, and utility of the NIC's products for the policy customer. I wanted to make NIEs shorter, more readable, and therefore more useful for our senior readers.

Director Clapper and Intelligence Integration

Director Clapper took his oath of office on 9 August 2010 and his first meeting with ODNI senior staff followed soon thereafter, on 12 August.⁶ It was memorable: normally in such introductory meetings, everyone around the table briefs the new boss; however, Director Clapper decided he would be the briefer. He gave a slide presentation with a single overarching theme: intelligence integration. For the DNI, the spirit, intent, and purpose of the IRTPA could not have been more clear: fostering unity of effort across the community. The statute itself had created the National Counterterrorism Center⁷ and the National Counterproliferation Center.⁸ His predecessors created mission managers for Iran, North Korea, and Cuba/Venezuela. It was now his turn.

Director Clapper created NIMs across the board. He wanted managers for all regional and functional topics—to unify collection, analysis, budget, resources, personnel, and training across every mission area. Under his model, one officer took on responsibility and accountability for the entirety of the community's effort. The goal was not to replace individual agency efforts on any given topic, but to guide, shape, and ultimately integrate those efforts, so that the totality of the community's intelligence support was far more than the sum of its parts.

Change is always hard, and so it was with the director's initiative. In one respect, the director's plan was an homage to the NIC. His presentation of 12 August explicitly referenced the 30-year history of the NIC—leading analysis, coordinating products, and building community. Throughout the transition, he reiterated this vision. In many respects, he wanted to extend the NIC model to the world of collection and the totality of IC effort.

Not surprisingly, some NIOs and others on the NIC saw the director's plan as a threat to the NIC's traditional role. They expressed outright opposition to the NIM concept. Would the new model diminish the stature of NIOs and their access to policymakers? Would analysts simply become cogs in the wheel of another bureaucratic process? Could the NIC even survive?

I had long conversations with the vice chairman of the NIC, Vaughn Bishop. We were keenly aware of

the NIOs' doubts and anxieties. We pondered the right course and acted in the interests of the NIC: we embraced the director's vision. From the outset, Vaughn and I were convinced the director's reforms and the integrity of the NIC were compatible. But the burden of persuasion was on us, internally and outside the NIC, to make it so.

There were many bumps along the way. I think none of the participants in the ensuing restructuring—including its leader Robert Cardillo, the director's choice for deputy director for intelligence integration—would want to relive that first year. The questions were many: who would report to whom? Who would speak for the community? What organizations would be collapsed or repurposed? Where would people sit? Who was in charge of reviewing and approving analysis?

Robert Cardillo and his deputies, Didi Rapp and, later, Andrew Hallman and Mike Dempsey, were masterful in finding ways forward. The NIMs formed their own council, and the NIC remained intact. Matrix management ensured fair evaluation of NIOs by NIMs, as the raters, and the chairman of the NIC as reviewer. The NIC remained in the spaces it had long inhabited, and TANDBERGs (classified Skypes) helped foster continuous communication between the two organizations.

Lanes in the road sorted themselves out as well. Managers had their hands full drafting and implementing unifying, community-wide intelligence strategies. The successful managers—and most were—looked to NIOs to not only lead and produce analysis in accordance with the strat-

egy, but to be a partner in developing it as well. Managers served on the selection panels for NIO, and the NIC chair served on the selection panel for NIMs. The rotation of officers and managers ensured fresh perspectives and growing acceptance of the new model.

The most sensitive question remained, “Who would speak for the IC’s analytic line on an issue and who would represent the IC at downtown policy meetings”? Since most policy questions relate to analytic judgments rather than to collection postures, the NIO seemed to be the natural leading figure for inclusion. In point of fact, managers would defer much of the time to NIOs, but the ability of NIMs to decide that they themselves should be at the table instead of an NIO did rankle and still does. In either case, it is the wide and immediate sharing with the relevant communities of information obtained from such policy meetings that matters most. And that is exactly what is taking place.

The NIC: the DNI’s Analytic Horsepower

The real test of any restructuring is whether it changes behavior and outcomes. What have been the results of the director’s initiative on intelligence integration? I will leave it to others to assess its overall impact, especially with respect to collection, but I can speak with confidence to its impact on analysis.

In short, there has been a significant and positive benefit. This is the case in terms of both the demand signal and the community’s capacity to

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produce analytic products. Under the IRTPA, the NIC became the DNI’s analytic arm, preparing him and his deputies to represent the IC’s position in deputies’ and principals’ committee meetings.⁹ What began in 2005 under Director John Negroponte has accelerated during DNI Clapper’s tenure.

From 2010 to 2014, there was a three-fold increase in the production of NIC analysis in support of those policy meetings. Policymakers came to rely increasingly on IC support to assist in their decisionmaking process. Community-coordinated analysis became the coin of the realm, for both the *President’s Daily Briefing* as well as the materials prepared for downtown policy meetings. The NIC could not have met this three-fold increase in demand without greater contributions from analysts at individual agencies—first and foremost, from the CIA. The NIC serves as the bridge between analysts and the policy community, and provides analysts with important insights into the policymaking process that they might not otherwise get. In turn, analysts have a greater incentive to contribute because they can make a more informed—and therefore more valuable—contribution.

NIMs also have been key to the increase in analytic production. They have taken on responsibilities for collection and other essential but time-consuming management tasks that detract from time spent on analysis (before the creation of NIMs, these responsibilities defaulted to NIOs in areas where mission managers were not specified).¹⁰

The DNI’s emphasis on intelligence integration both accelerated cultural change at agencies in favor of community production as a valued outcome and provided direct relief for overtaxed NIOs so that they could concentrate on their core competency: quality analysis pursued with rigorous application of quality tradecraft. These positive trends made possible an overall doubling of NIC production between 2010 and 2014—during the same period of time in which staff was reduced by 6 percent.

The NIC also developed into a more flexible production shop. While the NIE is, and will likely remain, the single best-known and most important product of the NIC, other publications have risen in importance. Shorter publications, with shorter turnaround times, now predominate. These include Intelligence Community Assessments; Sense of the Community Memoranda (exactly the length of the front and the back of a single piece of paper); and NIC memos (normally just a few pages) requested by single customers, later turned into disseminated products for a wider policy audience. Altogether, these shorter publications now represent most of NIC production.¹¹

The advantage here is self-evident: shorter products can address a wider range of topics with far quicker turnaround times, meeting policymakers’ urgent requirements. What is important to note, however, is that from 2010 to 2014 there was no diminution in the production of National Intelligence Estimates. Their numbers actually increased since 2010, and held steady over the next three

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years at a level 50-percent above 2010 levels. Production of long-term strategic analysis increased at a time of rapid expansion of other, shorter product lines. Such an outcome became a reality only because of the benefits intelligence integration made possible.

Changes to the National Intelligence Estimate

As I prepared to come to the NIC in 2009, I spoke to senior intelligence and policy officials, past and present. One point was mentioned again and again: NIEs are too long. The argument put to me was simple: length was a major obstacle to the NIE's utility and thus undermined its credibility. Senior policymakers simply would not take the time to read them; in fact, a former vice chairman of the NIC, Mark M. Lowenthal, wrote in an Op-Ed in March 2009 that estimates are "long, ponderous, tortuously written, and largely lacking in influence."¹² It was troubling to come into an organization when one of my respected predecessors had labeled its flagship publication as irrelevant.

Just two months after I started, a Brookings Institution study wrote 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. . . . According to the

*interviews of former senior policymakers, the finished NIE itself frequently is too late, too long, and too detailed . . .*¹³

I was discouraged by what I heard and read. After I arrived, I directed a short survey that showed, indeed, that the length of NIEs had drifted upward over time, from an average length of 36 pages in 2006 to an average length of 68 pages in 2009.¹⁴ Even more discouraging, I learned that several long and complex NIEs had "Volume IIs" of equal or greater length. While I had no particular question about their quality or their utility to technical experts, I felt certain that no senior policymaker would ever read them. It became a question of opportunity costs. The NIC's work should always make a difference: I was committed to redirecting talent, expertise, and resources to those products that the nation's most senior policymakers would read.

I started to think about form and structure. I read a published estimate on an East Asia topic that had intriguing key judgments, and I wanted to learn more about them. However, as I went inside the document, I had great difficulty finding the analysis in support of those judgments. In the case of one judgment, such analysis was altogether absent. There was no clear link between the underlying analysis and the key judgments. Given that the key judgments are the only part of an estimate that we know all senior policymakers are likely to read, I thought we had an obligation

to structure our documents in a way that would better inform them and accurately reflect the voice of the community.

If the three pages of the key judgments are the most important part of an estimate, then the rest of the document should be in support of those key judgments. It seemed to me that the entirety of the NIE should be structured, in sequence, in support of those key judgments. If the topic or material didn't support the key judgments, it did not belong in the body of the estimate.

This formulation, I knew, would help with the problem of length, because it provided a method for streamlining the NIE. But how long is the right length?

Many outside of government appealed to the model of the United Kingdom's Joint Intelligence Committee (JIC), whose papers are typically five to seven pages. I thought that model was inexact, insofar as JIC papers are a mix of policy and intelligence judgments, and they do not purport to be analogous to the NIE as a comprehensive estimative treatment of a given topic.¹⁵ In any event, they serve a different system of government and a different set of policy masters.

I thought a limit of 10 pages or less was too severe—that it simply would not meet the test of credibility, much less the community's rigorous tradecraft standards adopted in the aftermath of the 2002 Iraq WMD NIE debacle. It was just not plausible to provide skeptical Cabinet officers or members of Congress controversial analytic judgments on the nation's most important national security

questions with just a couple of pages of supporting material.

So, if fewer than 10 pages was insufficient, it certainly seemed that 30 pages was too much. For me, the argument was settled when I met with Denis McDonough, then the National Security Council chief of staff and director of strategic communication. I explained to him what I was doing, trying to find the sweet spot, balancing rigor of analysis with accessibility for the policymaker. It seemed to me that 20 pages of analysis in support of three pages of key judgments was the outer limit. Denis said that, on an important topic, the president would read 20 pages. His comment was enormously helpful in helping to push internal reform forward.

In addition, a 20-page limit would play a constructive forcing function—making the community differentiate between what was interesting and what was essential knowledge for the policymaker. A page limit would impose additional rigor on internal discussion and drafting. I appreciated this would not make the process any easier: as Mark Twain said, “I didn’t have time to write a short letter, so I wrote a long one instead.”¹⁶

Of course, there is always skepticism about the necessity of change. As the newcomer in a room full of experienced and distinguished NIOs, I approached the question of change in an indirect fashion, posing more questions at the outset than prescribing outcomes. After a series of council sessions, some saw where I was trying to go and the rationale for trying to get there. I am forever grateful to NIO for Military Issues

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John Landry for blurting out his support for page limits—that the time was right for change. After an officer of his experience and stature agreed, persuading the rest of the room became easier.

While the 20-page limit was one I enforced strictly, I did support the concept of liberally adding annexes to NIEs. On any given estimate topic, there is additional relevant material of value—economic statistics, military orders of battle, demographic and polling data, leadership profiles, etc. While it might not figure into the storyline of the key judgments of the estimate, the material can be of significant interest to a particular reader, and can provide additional context.

The question was not whether to exclude such material from the estimate, but how to organize it in such a way as to maximize its utility for the busy policy reader. Hence, annexes were broken into short, discrete, one- or two-page topics, organized in the order of the topics they addressed as they arose in the text of the NIE itself. I did not try to limit the number of annexes—the alphabet has 26 letters, after all. A typical estimate might have six to 10 annexes. The DNI often commented favorably on annexes, saying that he learned a lot from them. I would add that careful organization and presentation of material made them accessible in a way that simply was not possible—or had been too frustrating—under the old model.

Changes under the IRTPA also contributed to better NIEs. Because NIOs were now so deeply involved

in support for deputies’ and principals’ meetings, they had constant access to policymakers. They came to intimately understand policy priorities and information needs. Therefore, they were able to refine each NIE’s key questions and insure their relevance and utility. This continuous interchange also meant that NIOs had the opportunity to provide emerging key judgments whenever the question was ripe for policy consideration and decision. This iterative process made the questions better and the answers more timely. The process and the product were thereby both improved.

In estimates and in all products, I placed great emphasis on the use of graphics. For example, because key judgments always begin on a right-handed page, the facing page on the left is almost always available for the placement of a graphic to underscore visually the message or messages that appear on the right. For busy policymakers who are bombarded with information and overwhelmed with meetings, it is often the graphics they will find most accessible and may best remember. Particularly with economics, a storyline linked to graphic data is essential.

Looking ahead to the day when not only short pieces but NIEs will be read exclusively on tablets, we need to think about links to videos and interactive graphics as part of the estimate—no different from hyperlinks common in stories on the web today.¹⁷ Just as the newspaper business changed in the transition to web-based news, estimates, too,

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will need to adjust to the way a rising generation of policymakers interface with other sources of information. The goal will always be to present information in ways that are brief, clear, and accessible to policy readers, enabling them to maximize the value of their always scarce time.^a

The National Intelligence Board

I served with three outstanding vice chairmen—Steve Kaplan, Vaughn Bishop, and Joe Gartin. They had the same authority as I to approve for dissemination and release all NIC products, save one—the NIE. All estimates must go before the National Intelligence Board (NIB), which is chaired by the DNI, for adjudication and approval. Individual community agencies and elements are represented at the board, and my role was to run the meeting on behalf of the DNI. Estimates are published under the name of the DNI and, as such, they must ultimately meet with his approval. That said, the director always encouraged an open process of give-and-take and discussion at board meetings.

The role I adopted in these meetings reflected my experience as a committee staffer on Capitol Hill, working to prepare for a committee mark-up. That role, in short, was to take the pulse of all agencies and

those officials who would represent them at the NIB, to identify points of contention, and to work out beforehand, insofar as possible, points of difference.

This did not mean “watering down” judgments or papering over differences.¹⁸ Quite the contrary. In the aftermath of the 2002 Iraqi WMD estimate, the IRTPA spelled out in statutory language the importance of identifying and highlighting analytic differences. I recognized not only a legal but an institutional responsibility to do the same—to be an honest broker, ensuring that all voices were heard and that all points and supporting data were discussed. The community would either come together based on discussion and common understanding—or it would not. If not, I felt it was my obligation to ensure that those differences were presented with clarity, and to highlight those differences in the key judgments if they were important.¹⁹

Even with our best efforts to work out differences beforehand, a substantive discussion around the table almost always took place. The point here is that effort, beforehand, to resolve differences meant that discussion did not sprawl across several topics of contention, but rather centered on just one or two points—and therefore principals were able to resolve them. I would not seek to schedule an estimate if there were too many unresolved questions. On two occasions, I canceled NIB meetings because the gaps became too large for resolution at the table.

The Role of the National Intelligence Officer

The role of the NIO has been shaped by history, culture, and law. The concept originated with Director of Central Intelligence William Colby. He took office in 1973 and commented in his memoir, “how badly the machinery was organized to serve me.”²⁰ He decided to dissolve the half-vacant Board of National Estimates and “use the 12 positions thus made available to appoint 12 senior assistants to report directly to me on each of the main issues facing me.”²¹ He called these assistants national intelligence officers. In 1979, these officers were assembled into a group under the leadership of Richard Lehman, and thus began the National Intelligence Council.

While experience with collection is always a welcome benefit, the central requirement for an NIO is to be the community’s lead analyst—and to communicate that expertise effectively. The IRTPA retained the 1992 codification of the National Intelligence Council²² and its existing practices of officer selection, stating that the NIC

*shall be composed of senior analysts within the intelligence community and substantive experts from the public and private sector;*²³

[and] “*the members of the National Intelligence Council shall constitute the senior intelligence advisers of the intelligence community for purposes of representing the views of the intelligence community within the United States Government.*”²⁴

a. For a discussion of the use of tablets for the presentation of the *President's Daily Briefing*, see Lawrence Meador and Vinton Cerf, “Rethinking the President’s Daily Intelligence Brief,” *Studies in Intelligence* 57, No. 4 (December 2013).

As lead analyst, the NIO has responsibility for planning, assigning, drafting, editing and representing analysis, in both written and oral form, to the most senior policymakers in the US government. The NIO is the bridge to the policy world, and is responsible for insuring analytic standards and integrity. The position was viewed, in 1979 and now, as highly desirable and as a career aspiration for all intelligence analysts.

Diversity of Backgrounds among NIOS

At the outset, the NIOs principally came from the CIA, even as Colby made clear he wanted the door open to others.²⁵ Over time, officers came from increasingly diverse backgrounds. Ellen Laipson from the Congressional Research Service served under Director of Central Intelligence Gates as his NIO for the Near East and South Asia; she later served as vice chair under Chairman John Gannon (1997–2001). Chairman Joe Nye (1993–1994) appointed Richard Neu from RAND as the NIO for Economics, Enid Schoettle from the Ford Foundation as the first NIO for Global and Economic Issues, and Ezra Vogel, a Harvard professor and noted Japan and China expert, as the NIO for East Asia. Ezra was followed by Richard Bush, a China expert from Capitol Hill. Gannon appointed David Gordon from Capitol Hill and academia as the NIO for Economics; David later served as vice chairman under Chairman Bob Hutchings (2003–2005) and Vice Chairman Tom Fingar (2005–2008). Tom appointed senior foreign service officers as NIOs for South Asia and Africa. The culture and expectation became that the very best experts and analysts—not just from inside the IC, but from

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elsewhere in government or outside government—would come to serve for a period of time as NIOs.

Also, there came to be an appreciation, especially after the end of the Cold War, of the importance of outreach and expertise beyond the confines of the IC. Especially under John Gannon's leadership, the NIC took on a significant outreach role, expanded by each of his successors.²⁶ The growing need to synthesize information from a wide variety of sources placed a premium on diverse perspectives and on officers with a wide variety of backgrounds and expertise.

During my time, I saw my role to build on the strong record of my predecessors in expanding diversity of backgrounds and perspectives. For every NIO position, we posted a vacancy notice that was open to applicants both inside and outside of government. We spent a lot of time on outreach, making sure the word got out in the academic, think-tank, and policy communities, with the result that we saw a great increase in the number of applicants for NIO positions. For example, for a Russia-Eurasia position, we had over 20 applicants; over 30 for a Europe NIO; and over 70 applicants for the new position of a technology NIO. And the numbers corresponded to quality: frequently panel interviews spanned two days, often with as many as 10 candidates.

The accomplishment of which I am most proud during my time at the NIC is attracting people of the exceptional quality needed to serve there. CIA officers still make up the

single largest share of the NIC and NIO workforce—approximately 40 percent. I am also pleased that three DIA officers became NIOs and, for the first time, an officer from the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency. Both State and Defense Department officers came on board as NIOs. Several deputies came from State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR). This was an exceptional contribution, in that only three deputies from INR represent some two percent of its overall analytic workforce—a far larger contribution to the NIC, proportionately, than by any other agency. Deputies came from eight of the 16 agencies, in addition to several from the ODNI cadre.

This breadth of perspective across the agencies was complemented by the wide range of experience brought by those hired as term appointments. The first-ever NIO for Cyber Issues possesses not only deep technical expertise but also New York City law firm experience with IT mergers and acquisitions, and strong ties with IT industry and trade associations. The first-ever NIO for Technology came from a position as research professor and director of outreach for a technology and applied science institute at a leading technology university. NIOs for Economics have come from Wall Street and the Federal Reserve Bank of New York in one case, and from the West Point faculty, National Defense University, and economics briefer for the chairman of the joint chiefs in another. NIOs for Europe have come from the German Marshall Fund and from the State Department.

We wanted officers who were widely recognized inside and outside of government, and respected for their expertise.

In addition, the NIO workforce became more diverse. When I started, there were three female NIOs. When I left, there were six, plus women held senior leadership positions, as counselor and as director of the Strategic Futures Group. Minority representation increased from one to three, out of a total of 16 NIOs.

Peer Review

This diversity of backgrounds and perspectives played out time and again to good effect in discussions around the NIC table, particularly in peer review. The process of compulsory peer review was mandated by my predecessor, Bob Hutchings, as a reform in the aftermath of the Iraq WMD estimate. All estimates must go through a process in which their terms of reference (outlines) are read and discussed by the council, and then drafts of the estimate are reviewed as well. The process can be quite bracing, as NIOs don't stint in their efforts to comment. NIOs accept the criticism because they know it is in the spirit of preparing the best possible document on behalf of the NIC and the IC as a whole. The NIC consciously fosters and encourages critical questioning, from concept to publication.

This process of constant review is a powerful one. For example, the NIO for Economics brought forward perspectives from the investor community, vastly improving draft articles on Russia, Egypt, and numerous other topics. An officer detailed from the National Center for Medical Intelligence ensured that discussion of HIV figured prominently in drafts

relating to Africa. An officer with little experience on a given topic nonetheless provided great insight, because his strong public diplomacy background helped drafters better understand the evolving narratives and storylines adversaries sought to propagate. In short, the wealth of diverse background and experience around the table is one of the NIC's great strengths.

Qualifications

The qualifications for NIO, as I saw them, were really two distinct sets of skills. First, there was substantive expertise. We wanted officers who were widely recognized inside and outside of government, and respected for their expertise. Yet expertise was only the first cut. It was a threshold for consideration—a high bar, for sure—but expertise alone was insufficient. We also gave great prominence to leadership—the ability to bring together a fractious community of analysts on difficult topics; the ability to build productive relationships with counterpart agencies and with policy customers; and the ability to serve as an honest broker and ensure that alternative views were represented fairly. Leadership also entailed a willingness to contribute to the NIC's collective best efforts through the peer review process and collaboration with NIC colleagues. Those sets of skills—expertise and leadership—were not always easy to find in the same person, and a few times we had to re-do the job vacancy and selection process. But we would not proceed unless the selection panel was convinced the candidate excelled at both.

Renewal

A final point about personnel at NIC is the importance of turnover. There is no greater contributor to fresh perspectives, new energy and enthusiasm than new personnel. I participated in the hiring of 21 NIOs during my five years; only four NIOs both pre-dated and post-dated my time of service. Time and again, I saw a fresh burst of energy with the arrival of a new officer and new deputies.

Before I came on board, some advised me to replace the longest-serving officers at the NIC. When I arrived, I decided to just have an open mind and evaluate what I saw: I was frankly impressed with their performance. I did not act on the advice I was given. In the case of all officers, the vice chair and I would perform an evaluation each year, seeking to learn whether officers were continuing to produce at the very highest level and generating the quality of analysis required to serve well the most senior policymakers in the US government. We wanted to make sure that they—and we—continued to discharge that duty.

While I never asked an officer to leave, I spoke out on many occasions about the importance of leadership renewal. The ideal tour of duty for an NIO should be three to four years. Officers who return to their home agencies—or go on to positions of importance in the policy or professional world—become part of the close mesh of networks and contacts so important for the NIC's work. These “formers” help foster and build a sense of community as they return to their home agencies, or become well-informed users of intelligence in their policy jobs, or become part of the NIC's network of expert outreach.

While a few people encouraged me to seek a waiver to extend my generous five-year appointment at the NIC, I made no such effort. I felt strongly I needed to live up to my own guidance, that the NIC is always improved by the quality of the new people who walk through the door.

The Role of the Chairman

The head of any organization has multiple roles and responsibilities. While a successful officer has to carry out each of these functions, each chairman decides where to emphasize time, attention, and resources.

I believed—and still believe—that the chairman's most important function is to ensure that a steady stream of superior and diverse talent continually refreshes and energizes the NIC. Closely related to this function is that of enabling talented officers to succeed. Sometimes the requirement is as banal—and as crucial—as getting the creaky human resources process to work, such that new officers and deputies are able to come on board. Sometimes the requirement is working information-sharing issues. Sometimes it is helping to mediate agency differences. Sometimes it is counseling—and most often, it is simply listening.

Outreach

Historically, the NIC chairman also has played the role of the community's lead advocate for outreach. I did so happily, and with great conviction. Because of the press of business and inherent limits on time and resources, there could never be enough outreach. Therefore, I felt I had to always lean hard against those

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limits—to speak up for outreach, to invite outside speakers, to attend NIC-sponsored seminars and conferences, and to defend the budget. While other voices joined with the NIC in making the case for outreach, there was just no doubt in my mind that all in the IC looked to the NIC to lead in this area.

With respect to outreach, the NIC's *Global Trends* publication is perhaps the most powerful example. There are no classified sources that can tell you what the world will look like 15 years from now. It is only through a process of intense engagement with experts in academia, think-tanks, government, and the business community that such a report can be created. Moreover, the dialogue with interlocutors in Brussels, Brasilia, Johannesburg, Moscow, New Delhi, Singapore, Shanghai, and many other great cities and capitals is just as important.²⁷

Thought Leader

Some NIC chairs see themselves as thought leaders, driving the agenda on foreign policy and national security issues to put before the policy community. I saw that as an aspect of my role, but not necessarily the central one. During my time, the NIC did take up serious analytic work on several topics that it had not examined previously—the national security implications of water issues,²⁸ global atrocities prevention,²⁹ and multiple emerging cyber issues, to name just a few. I thought it important to take on at least one or two groundbreaking topics for NIEs each year, as well as to revisit important countries and

topics that had not been examined in recent years.

Still, I was circumspect about this aspect of my role. Most of the NIC's work is, in fact, in direct response to or in anticipation of policymaker requests. While I believe that the NIC should retain the ability to shape its own analytic workplan, only a few of its major pieces each year are truly self-initiated.

Giving Voice

I also saw my role as one of giving voice to the NIOs, and to the IC. The US government spends a great deal of taxpayer money collecting and analyzing information. It hires thousands of analysts who spend their careers looking at important questions, including those relating to Russia, China, North Korea, and Iran. I never thought my role was to substitute my judgment for theirs; rather, my role was to help them present their views in the most effective way possible so that their voices would be heard.

Looking to the Future

Today's National Intelligence Council would certainly be recognizable to its first officers from 35 years ago. Its structure, with NIOs as the focal point for the community's coordinated analysis, is essentially unchanged.

The mission of the NIC is also recognizable and today more urgent than ever: to provide the Intelligence Community's best analysis, to help

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policymakers understand a complex and messy world, to help them make better decisions.

To fulfill that mission, the NIC has changed with the times. Embracing intelligence integration has brought considerable benefit to the work of

the NIC, enabling it to meet the ever-increasing demand for the community's analysis of the hardest national security problems facing our leaders and our country. With the support of the director, the NIC will continue to fulfill that role in the future.



Endnotes

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18. PL108-458; 118 STAT. 3650-1; 50 USC.
19. *Ibid.* I kept in my pocket at National Intelligence Board meetings the relevant text from the IRTPA statute: "(h) Analysis—To ensure the most accurate analysis of intelligence is derived from all sources to support national security needs, the Director of National Intelligence shall implement policies and procedures to . . . ensure that differences in analytic judgment are fully considered and brought to the attention of policymakers."
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21. *Ibid.*
22. PL 102-496, Section 705; 106 STAT 3191.

Endnotes (cont.)

23. PL 108-458; 118 STAT.3657; 50 USC 403-3b.
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