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**Missing the Forest for the Trees: US Intelligence, Threats, and Inter-Agency
Disunity**

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I. Introduction

In early March 2003, former President George W. Bush addressed the United States to announce the invasion of Iraq. From the Oval Office, Bush argued that Americans could not “live at the mercy of an outlaw regime that threatens the peace with weapons of mass murder.”¹ In that moment, the intelligence assessments telling Bush that Saddam Hussein was secretly harboring weapons of mass destruction were believed to be credible. Only later were the false conclusions realized. The intelligence community’s failure, contributing to an eight-year war, invoked broad criticism and institutional reform.² But critical policy work on the US intelligence community continued to conceal one crucial factor: in major historical moments, including leading up to the Iraq War, the intelligence community faced internal division. Existing scholarship has not addressed the process of intelligence analysis in times of inter-agency disunity, like in the Iraq case. Before scholars turn to evaluating intelligence successes and failures, we must first understand how intelligence agencies behave in cases of contestation. This disunity’s historical prevalence and the resulting political implications require that we take a closer look at intelligence production when the intelligence community faces inter-agency division.

What is the nature of intelligence analysis in the event of inter-agency disunity? What kinds of indicators do individual agencies rely on when we observe this internal division? Indicator selection is critical because different indicators may contradict one another, play into pre-existing organizational biases, and determine the kinds of analytical expertise an agency develops. The result: analytical conclusions that may have deadly consequences. I examine six

¹George W. Bush, “President Bush Addresses the Nation,” <https://georgewbush-whitehouse.archives.gov/infocus/iraq/news/20030319-17.html>.

²Nomaan Merchant, “Iraq WMD failures shadow US intelligence 20 years later,” <https://apnews.com/article/iraq-war-wmds-us-intelligence-f9e21ac59d3a0470d9bfcc83544d706e>.

cases of inter-agency division to determine the nature of intelligence analysis in instances of disunity. The cases are: the bomber gap, the missile gap, Team B on the Strategic Arms Limitations Talks (SALT), the Vietnam War, the Agreed Framework negotiations, and Iraq's supposed development of WMDs. I offer an in-depth case study of the Agreed Framework based on previously unreviewed declassified intelligence summaries. Then, I use secondary scholarship to review two shadow cases, Iraq WMDs and Team B, through my theoretical framework. Ultimately, I provide a theory of how intelligence agencies translate information about an adversary into analytical conclusions.

I argue that the intelligence community relies on two major types of indicators: objective and subjective indicators. The type agencies exhibit a preference for is influenced by two contextual factors: the question about the adversary and the nature of the conclusion in the immediate political context. First, I code question about the adversary as "war-related" versus "diplomatic." Requests for intelligence involve two types of scenarios. A war-related scenario indicates that the state's interaction with the adversary regards potential or ongoing military involvement or necessitates a direct evaluation of military capabilities. A diplomatic scenario indicates that the state is considering or engaged in bargaining with the adversary.

Second, I examine the nature of the conclusion in the policy context—whether the agency's conclusions contradict or support the conventional wisdom at the time. I code the conclusions as either "maverick view" or "majority view" based on whether the conclusions contradict or reinforce the beliefs of the broader policy community. I propose a theoretical framework based on the above factors to illuminate how an agency's preferences for certain kinds of indicators change based on context. In war-related scenarios, agencies promoting a maverick view tend to rely on quantifiable, objective indicators, whereas in diplomatic scenarios

they turn to qualitative, discourse-based, subjective indicators. However, when the conclusion is a majority view, agencies rely on a combination of both types in a more balanced fashion.

My findings hold theoretical implications for both organizational theory and state signaling. I show that the indicators chosen by intelligence agencies in their analysis are not only a function of availability or agency preference. Instead, the nature of the question about the adversary and the political context in which the conclusion exists both shape intelligence analysis. Thus, beyond an agency's position within the bureaucracy or organizational incentives, I demonstrate that external contextual factors matter for understanding the behavior of actors within a bureaucracy. Second, I complicate existing understanding of signals interpretation; my results show that certain signals, such as public statements, may be perceived as more or less credible depending on domestic political attitudes and the nature of the interaction. Additionally, I show that signals interpretation is not only about credibility, but the receiving state's *preference* for certain kinds of signals.

First, I review alternative theories and situate my work in organizational theory and signaling literature. Second, I present my argument based on my examination of six historical cases. Third, I outline and justify my methods. Fourth, I provide an in-depth case study of the Agreed Framework negotiations. Fifth, I present two shadow cases, Iraq WMDs and Team B, based primarily on existing literature and declassified National Intelligence Estimates. Finally, I discuss the theoretical implications of my findings, political relevance, and offer suggestions for future research. Many factors, including organizational culture, organizational mandate, and political pressure, play a role in shaping how individual agencies make analytic conclusions. I offer another factor to consider: the role of domestic and international political conditions.

II. Literature Review

a. Alternative Perspectives

At present, the most prevalent argument regarding the behavior of intelligence agencies comes from Yarhi-Milo's "selective-attention thesis." The thesis posits that the intelligence community relies primarily on material indicators to interpret signals.³ Her thesis predicts that the intelligence community will focus on collecting and analyzing data about the adversary's military capabilities.⁴

The limitations of Yarhi-Milo's hypothesis are twofold. First, she treats the intelligence community as a monolithic whole; the logic of her thesis suggests that all agencies prefer military-based indicators equally. Second, she assumes that the preferred indicator is military-focused. Agencies such as the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) no doubt regularly use capabilities-based observations in their analysis. Yet, the preference for military indicators is by no means overwhelming. For example, the Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) is known for close readings of foreign media and conducting covert foreign public opinion polls.⁵ I situate Yarhi-Milo's thesis in a broader discussion of the diversity of indicators: when do we see a preference for capabilities-based indicators? When do we not?

Robert Schub's "Informing the Leader" provides an alternative perspective. Schub examines theories of bureaucracy to argue that bureaucratic roles inform the type of information and the extent of uncertainty that advisors express to state leaders.⁶ Schub divides the type of

³Yarhi-Milo, "In the Eye of the Beholder," 9.

⁴Yarhi-Milo, 14.

⁵"U.S. National Intelligence: An Overview," Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 24-25, https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/USNI%202013%20Overview_web.pdf.

⁶Robert Schub, "Informing the Leader," 1460-1476.

information conveyed to leaders into “political attributes” and “military attributes.”⁷ What are the implications for intelligence agency behavior? According to Schub’s framework, the State Department, including INR, expresses political attributes of an adversary and higher levels of uncertainty to state leaders than other parts of the bureaucracy.⁸ The CIA expresses a mix of military and political judgements with moderate certainty levels.⁹ While Schub implicitly treats the uniqueness of individual intelligence organizations (e.g., INR vs. CIA), he does not address inter-agency diversity in depth.

Additionally, Schub’s argument focuses on the kinds of information communicated to political leaders. My research is meant to illuminate how intelligence agencies come to their conclusions in the first place. Nevertheless, Schub’s framework is important to complicate the outcome of my proposed theory. I provide a theory of how intelligence agencies translate raw information about an adversary into analytical conclusions. Schub provides a theory of communication: the communication of these analytical conclusions to political leaders.

b. Organizational Theory

Schub touches on organizational theory, an important body of literature for situating my work. He responds to Graham Allison’s Bureaucratic Politics Model noting that the model “stresses a preference-based theory of bureaucracies; I suggest an informational one.”¹⁰ Schub joins a series of scholars critical of Allison’s model.¹¹ One critic, Robert J. Art, argues that the bureaucratic model is insufficient because it discounts the influence of generational mindsets and

⁷Schub, 1463-1462.

⁸Schub, 1461.

⁹Schub, 1467-1468 and 1471.

¹⁰Schub, 1461.

¹¹See Stephen Krasner, “Are Bureaucracies Important? (Or Allison Wonderland),” 159-79; Amos Perlmutter, “The Presidential Political Center and Foreign Policy: A Critique of the Revisionist and Bureaucratic-Political Orientations,” 87-106; Ernest Yaranella, “Reconstructed Logic’ & ‘Logic-in-Use’ in Decision-Making Analysis: Graham Allison,” 156-172.

domestic politics on bureaucratic dynamics.¹² In other words, Art acknowledges that external factors, which shift over time, may alter bureaucratic dynamics. Thus, he proposes a shift toward evaluating evidence of bureaucratic processes via issue area.¹³ Art discusses three “issue categories,” each a different type of political decision. My analysis follows the tradition of bureaucratic analysis presented by Art and continued by Schub. Rather than attempt to isolate the influence of organizational culture for the respective agencies, I acknowledge that culture shifts temporally, based on leadership, and may be contingent on issue area. Thus, I categorize the agencies’ analytical *conclusions* in reference to the immediate policy context, as opposed to categorizing the organizations themselves.

This categorization is also useful because most academic work focused on intelligence agencies is conducted through the lens of organizational culture.¹⁴ Historically, intelligence failures are responded to with attempts at institutional reform,¹⁵ as officials and scholars alike point to organizational problems as the source of failure.¹⁶ As a result, efforts to understand flawed analytical conclusions fall quickly into discussions à la Allison’s maxim that “where you stand depends on where you sit.”¹⁷ My approach offers a new method of examining decision-making in intelligence by focusing on the relationship between the conclusion itself and its immediate historical context.

c. Signals Interpretation

¹²Robert J. Art, “Bureaucratic Politics and American Foreign Policy: A Critique,” 486.

¹³Art, 480.

¹⁴See Jack Davis, “Why Bad Things Happen to Good Analysts,” in *Analyzing Intelligence* 157-170; Robert Jervis, *Why Intelligence Fails*; Joshua Rovner, *Fixing the Facts*; Rob Johnston, *Analytic Culture in the U.S. IC*.

¹⁵Glenn Hastedt, “CIA’s organizational culture and the problem of reform,” 249.

¹⁶See Hamilton Bean, “Organizational Culture and US Intelligence Affairs,” 479-498; Amy B. Zegart, *Spying Blind: The CIA, the FBI, and the Origins of 9/11* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007).

¹⁷Graham Allison, “Conceptual Models and the Cuban Missile Crisis,” 711.

A second body of literature relevant to my work centers on state signaling. My work interacts with signaling literature from the interpretive perspective—how do dynamics of intelligence analysis facilitate signals interpretation? To situate my analysis in the broader work on signaling I begin with Schelling’s *Strategy of Conflict*. Schelling highlights not only the importance of signaling, but the need for a signal to be correctly identified. In his discussion of bargaining and limited war, Schelling asserts that when “some signal is desperately needed by *both* parties and both parties know it, even a poor signal and a discriminatory one may command recognition, in default of any other.”¹⁸ For Schelling, the more necessary coordination becomes, the more likely parties will recognize each other’s signals. But recognition is not enough—a correct interpretation of the signals is required to facilitate coordination.

Fearon and Kydd both approach signaling from another angle: (dis)trust. Whether or not states can identify each other’s signals is moot if they regard those signals as untrustworthy. Fearon argues that states can resolve the problem of distrust through costly signaling.¹⁹ Either *ex ante* (“sunk costs”) or *ex post* (“tied hands”) costly signals are credible to the receiving state because the sender makes it materially difficult for themselves to renege on the commitments they signaled.²⁰ Kydd focuses on costly signaling from a threshold perspective: how much cost is enough to demonstrate a credible commitment? Kydd argues that, because a signal must be costly enough to be credible, the “trustworthy” state must be willing to shoulder more risk for

¹⁸ Thomas C. Schelling, *The Strategy of Conflict*, 79-80.

¹⁹James Fearon, “Signaling Foreign Policy Interests: Tying Hands versus Sinking Costs,” 68-90. Much of signaling literature expands on the concept of costly signaling. See Jessica L. Weeks, “Autocratic Audience Costs: Regime Type and Signaling Resolve,” 35-64; Austin Carson and Keren Yarhi-Milo, “Covert Communication: The Intelligibility and Credibility of Signaling in Secret,” 124-156; Seth Weinberger, “Institutional Signaling and the Origins of the Cold War,” 80-115; James D. Morrow, “Signaling, Commitment, and Negotiation,” in *Strategic Choice and International Relations*, ed. David A. Lake and Robert Powell (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 77-114.

²⁰Fearon, 82.

peace than the “untrustworthy” state.²¹ Both Kydd and Fearon’s theories apply indiscriminately to state signaling and interpretation—war-related scenarios and diplomatic scenarios both should lead intelligence agencies to interpret signals as credible based on the type and magnitude of cost the signaling state bears. My theory, however, treats signaling in those respective scenarios as distinct.

Jervis connects signaling and the resulting interpretation in *How Statesmen Think*. Jervis points out that “information is interpreted with the framework established by preexisting beliefs,” meaning that a state’s preconceived notions about itself and the signaling state colors its ultimate interpretation of the signal.²² Likewise, scholars have found that the effectiveness of costly signaling holds water for those who are already motivated to search for evidence of cost, but not for those who do not want to update their beliefs.²³ Thus, signals interpretation is largely contingent on the actor interpreting the signals. However, Jervis argues that policy makers, rather than intelligence agencies, most often fall prey to the biases that problematize interpretation of a signal; the intelligence community does not face direct political pressures and so analysts will not feel obligated to draw conclusions consistent with a particular worldview.²⁴ Nevertheless, Jervis acknowledges the presence and diversity of cognitive predispositions among the intelligence community. I take this acknowledgement as a starting point for my research.

Signals interpretation by the intelligence community is affected by factors beyond cognitive biases. I isolate war-related scenarios and diplomatic scenarios to examine the circumstances in which intelligence agencies rely on one kind of signal over the other. I find that

²¹Andrew Kydd, “Trust, Reassurance, and Cooperation,” 326.

²²Robert Jervis, *How Statesmen Think: The Psychology of International Politics*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 120.

²³Joshua D. Kertzer, Brian C. Rathbun, and Nina Srinivasan Rathbun, “The Price of Peace: Motivated Reasoning and Costly Signaling in International Relations,” 97.

²⁴Robert Jervis, *How Statesmen Think: The Psychology of International Politics*, 154.

signals interpretation changes between the two scenarios. In the intelligence case, interpretation is not solely contingent on the characteristics of the signal—costly versus uncostly—but the characteristics of the immediate political context.

Thus, my argument enriches the conventional notions of state signaling because it compels a reconsideration of costly signaling from the point of view of the interpreter. Costly signals may carry greater weight in a war-related scenario than in a diplomatic scenario, or vice versa. My work extends Jervis’s treatment of cognitive bias in signals interpretation by exploring intelligence community patterns of analysis in depth. My methods—which differ from Schelling’s, Fearon’s, and Kydd’s—produce robust findings grounded in specific historical evidence. My theoretical findings themselves not only contribute to traditional understandings of signaling and interpretation, but call for engaging with highly theoretical signaling literature through specific issue areas, historical moments, and the realities of government bureaucracy.

III. Argument

a. Theory

My theoretical argument proceeds in two steps. First, I organize six cases of inter-agency disunity based on the agency’s viewpoint and the type of interaction with the adversary. Second, I analyze the intelligence conclusions produced in each instance to determine patterns of agency dependence on objective and subjective indicators.

I categorize each agency’s intelligence conclusions as “maverick view” or “majority view.” Maverick indicates that the intelligence conclusion contradicts administration expectations and conventional wisdom. Majority viewpoints are intelligence conclusions consistent with the expectations of the policy community and conventional wisdom. Importantly, I categorize *viewpoints*, not organizations, as majority and maverick. Factors such as

organizational culture and sensitivity to political pressure may lead particular agencies to consistently produce either maverick or majority viewpoints. However, because agencies may change based on leadership, institutional reform, and the political environment, my theory is better served by categorizing the particular conclusions as opposed to the agencies.

I bifurcate the type of question about the adversary that the agency is answering—in other words, the type of scenario the agency faces—into “war-related” and “diplomatic.” “War-related” indicates that the state’s interaction with the adversary regards potential or ongoing military involvement or military capabilities. A “diplomatic” scenario regards potential or ongoing non-military interactions with the adversary, such as negotiations. The type of scenario that the intelligence community confronts is important because it shapes the relative importance of available indicators. For instance, capabilities-based indicators are more directly relevant to analysis in a war-related scenario than in a diplomatic scenario.

Table 1: Viewpoint and context

		Nature of the question about adversary	
Nature of the conclusion		War-related	Diplomatic
Maverick view	Iraq WMDs (INR) Vietnam (INR) Bomber Gap (Army, Navy, CIA) Missile Gap (CIA)		Agreed Framework (INR) Team B—détente/SALT (CIA, INR)
Majority view	Iraq WMDs (CIA) Bomber Gap (Air Force) Missile Gap (Air Force) Vietnam (CIA)		Agreed Framework (CIA) Team B—détente/SALT (Team B, Air Force, Army, DIA)

From these two factors, four scenarios result: maverick viewpoint + war-related scenario, maverick viewpoint + diplomatic scenario, majority viewpoint + war-related scenario, majority viewpoint + diplomatic scenario. Next, I look for evidence of preference for certain indicators in

each of the four scenarios. When asking a question about war, we can expect intelligence agencies to focus on objective indicators. I define objective indicators as quantifiable data, such as evidence of military build-up or economic data. In a diplomatic scenario, ascertaining the adversary's true intentions cannot as easily be derived from objective indicators. The key to bridging the gap between intentions and objective indicators is understanding how the state's leadership will interpret and react to ongoing or future events. Thus, objective indicators become less valuable for intelligence analysis in a diplomatic scenario. At the same time, subjective indicators, which I define as qualitative and inherently semantic data, will become more valuable. An adversary's willingness to engage in diplomacy cannot be determined by looking exclusively at objective indicators. Instead, public discourse analysis, close readings of official statements made by the adversary, and any preconceived notions the agency holds about the adversary in question often better inform the resulting analysis.

Table 2: Indicators²⁵

Nature of the conclusion	Nature of the question about adversary	
	War-related	Diplomatic
Maverick view	Objective indicators favored	Subjective indicators favored
Majority view	Split; objective -favored	Split; subjective - favored

This is not to say that there are no other factors that influence the behavior of agencies making analytical conclusions. First, availability of data is likely the largest determining factor in

²⁵See Appendix A for a table indicating which cases relied on which type of indicator.

the kind of data agencies utilize in their analysis. Agencies may rely more heavily on certain indicators simply because they are more accessible. Second, organizational culture influences an agency's sensitivity to political pushback, as well as its comfort when resisting attempts at politicization.²⁶ Thus, an agency may rely heavily on objective indicators solely because it anticipates its conclusions will face political resistance and believes that objective indicators provide the conclusion a sense of normative legitimacy. Third, organizational expertise can internally bias the kinds of intelligence viewed as trustworthy and thus more heavily relied on. My theory does not attempt to dispute the weight of these additional factors; agency behavior is the result of an amalgamation of temporal, organizational, and political factors. My theory offers a previously unconsidered, contextually-based approach to understanding intelligence analysis.

b. An Illustrative Case

Apart from my six categorized episodes, the Soviet War Scare case in 1983 illustrates of the relevance of contextual factors. The war scare episode was tense period during the Cold War when Soviet leaders were seriously concerned that the US was planning a nuclear first-strike. Because the case informed US military decisions, most importantly decisions regarding the 1983 Able Archer military exercise, I code it as a war-related scenario. In anticipation, the Soviets engaged in major war preparations that the CIA, along with other intelligence agencies, branded as mere propaganda, arguing the US had no reason to be seriously concerned:

We believe strongly that Soviet actions are not inspired by, and Soviet leaders do not perceive, a genuine danger of imminent conflict or confrontation with the United States. This judgement is based on the absence of force-wide combat readiness or other war preparation movies in the USSR, and the absence of a tone of fear or belligerence.²⁷

²⁶See Joshua Rovner, *Fixing the Facts*.

²⁷President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board. *The Soviet "War Scare" 1990*, (Accessed April 15, 2024) <https://www.archives.gov/files/declassification/iscap/pdf/2013-015-doc1.pdf>, 12.

The CIA's judgement draws broadly on both objective and subjective indicators. The conclusion cites capabilities-based indicators (objective) and Soviet tone in public statements (subjective).²⁸ Under my framework, the CIA's relatively balanced dependence on both types of indicators is characteristic of a majority view.

This view not only set the intelligence consensus but was already in-line with administration expectations. According to Bud McFarlane, Reagan's National Security Advisor, "in the President's view, either the Soviets were paranoid in strange ways we could not let bother us, or they were fabricating the appearance of fear to intimidate and sway us, which we should be even more prepared to ignore."²⁹ Likewise, the National Security Council's Soviet expert at the time believed the USSR was "not overly nervous about the immediate prospect of armed confrontation with the [US]."³⁰

The minority view in this case was not posited by a specific intelligence agency, but by CIA director William Casey in a memo to President Reagan. In the memo, Casey warns Reagan against dismissing Soviet behavior as mere propaganda. As evidence, he lists a series of indicators: USSR media, security procedures, rates of political harassment, a new Soviet initiative to improve transportation, the USSR economy, military activity and behavior, and the cancellation of a "long-standing" commercial agreement with the US.³¹ Of the indicators listed,

²⁸See also Central Intelligence Agency. *Soviet Thinking on the Possibility of Armed Confrontation with the United States* December 1983, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB428/docs/5.b.Soviet%20Thinking%20on%20the%20Possibility%20of%20Armed%20Confrontation%20with%20US.pdf>; Director of Central Intelligence. *Implications of Recent Soviet Military-Political Activities* May 1984, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB428/docs/6.Implications%20of%20Recent%20Soviet%20Military-Political%20Activities.pdf>; Director of Central Intelligence, *Soviet Policy Toward the United States in 1984* 1984, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB428/docs/11.SNIE%2011-9-84%20Soviet%20Policy%20Towards%20the%20US%20in%201984.pdf>.

²⁹Simon Miles, "The Mythical War Scare of 1983," *War on the Rocks*, March 16, 2021, <https://warontherocks.com/2021/03/the-mythical-war-scare-of-1983/>.

³⁰Miles, "The Mythical War Scare of 1983."

³¹Director of Central Intelligence, *Memorandum for the President: US/Soviet Tension* June 1984, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB428/docs/8.US-Soviet%20Tensions.pdf>.

media is the only subjective indicator. Additionally, Casey is explicit that the most important indicator for arriving at his conclusion is Soviet military moves: “The behavior of the armed forces is perhaps the most disturbing... The military behaviors we have observed involve high military costs... None of these are trivial costs, adding thereby a dimension of genuineness to the Soviet expressions of concern that is often not reflected in intelligence issues.”³²

Casey’s behavior is characteristic of a maverick viewpoint. Casey was no doubt aware that his memo pushed back against the dominant narrative inside and outside of the intelligence community. Further, the Team B episode in the late 1970’s made the CIA sensitive to the consequences of advocating politically unpopular conclusions. Thus, we observe Casey drawing primarily from objective indicators which, due to their quantifiable nature, may be more resistant to skepticism from Reagan. In a war-related scenario, capabilities-based objective indicators are likely perceived as the most legitimate type of indicator. Casey’s memo illustrates this normative perspective because he justified a maverick viewpoint in a war-related scenario through objective, especially military-based, indicators.

In contrast, the broader CIA viewpoint was comfortably consistent with administration expectations at the time. Why didn’t the CIA follow Casey’s lead? Post-Team B, the entire CIA was sensitive to political expectations. During the Reagan administration, the CIA consistently felt political pressure from the right;³³ CIA conclusions about Soviet intent during 1980s closely reflected the hawkish stance of senior officials in the Reagan administration.³⁴ However, because the CIA was producing a majority view, it did not have to fight to gain normative legitimacy the

³²Director of Central Intelligence. *Memorandum for the President: US/Soviet Tension* June 1984, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB428/docs/8.US-Soviet%20Tensions.pdf>, 9.

³³Diamond, John. *The CIA and the culture of failure : U.S. intelligence from the end of the Cold War to the invasion of Iraq* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2008), 52.

³⁴Buckholz, Quentin. “The 1980’s “War Scare:” Misperceptions, Mistaken Beliefs, and Missed Signals in US-Soviet Relations.” *Strauss Center*, accessed April 15, 2024. https://strausscenter.org/wp-content/uploads/Quentin_Buckholz_-_Submission.pdf, 26.

way Casey's memo would have. The CIA, absent worries of political pushback because of the nature of its conclusion, would not have felt compelled to over-rely on a certain type of indicator over another.

Two contextual factors influenced intelligence analysis in the Soviet War Scare. First, the war-related scenario likely contributed to Casey's heavy reliance on objective indicators and his explicit emphasis on capabilities-based indicators. Second, external expectations influenced the extent to which each viewpoint relied on objective versus subjective indicators. In this case, sensitivity to political pressure likely contributed to Casey's decision to draw mostly from objective indicators, and emphasize military-based indicators in his memo. The CIA's view did not anticipate a skeptical response to its analytical conclusions and thus was freer to rely on both types of indicators as it saw fit. The mechanisms that underlie the results of my theory hold implications for understanding when certain indicators hold more or less normative legitimacy in the eyes of agency "customers," the extent to which the external policy community can influence intelligence behavior, and how the specific kind of interaction with the adversary shapes the use of objective and/or subjective indicators.

IV. Methods

I engage in archival research and synthesize a variety of secondary sources regarding each case to categorize them accurately and analyze the results. I present an in-depth case study of the Agreed Framework negotiations and two shadow cases. My case study draws from a comprehensive review of over 200 declassified documents, oral archives, and heavily references Leon Sigal's *Disarming Strangers* which contains extensive first-hand testimony from a wide variety of administration officials regarding the negotiations. I explore one war-related shadow case—Iraq WMDs, and one diplomatic shadow case—the Team B episode/SALT. The

intelligence in both cases has been extensively analyzed, and I rely on pre-existing scholarly work to support my discussion of both.

My case selection purposely draws from a wide temporal range, from the Vietnam War to early 2000s. The temporal range is important for two reasons. First, much of existing literature is focused on intelligence during the Cold War period. Second, over time organizations themselves change—internal cultures shift, institutional changes are implemented, and the agency-policy community relationship varies. My cases are balanced between war-related and diplomatic scenarios and span a multitude of intelligence agencies. My findings are not meant to be agency-specific nor period-specific; the range of my case studies serves this purpose. Nevertheless, my case selection was limited by available evidence—first-hand accounts and primary documents from the intelligence community are rare due to the covert nature of intelligence work.

In order to maximize the robustness of my findings and because my argument draws exclusively on archival research and historical studies, I employ the four strategies proposed by Lustick in “History, Historiography, and Political Science.”³⁵ First, Lustick suggests the researcher explicitly acknowledge the present “historical terrain.”³⁶ Current work on intelligence focuses largely on intelligence failures and organizational disfunction, especially in reference to the CIA. Academic work on intelligence relies heavily on declassified documents and archival research, meaning that intelligence during the Cold War era is often the exclusive temporal framing. I attempt to expand beyond the traditional framing, by incorporating the Agreed Framework (1993-1994) and Iraq WMD (2003) cases.

³⁵Ian Lustick, “History, Historiography, and Political Science,” 605-618.

³⁶Lustick, 615.

Second, Lustick advocates sourcing from a variety of historians that present conflicting accounts to avoid biasing a specific theoretical commitment.³⁷ I primarily rely on declassified documents to ascertain the indicators used and resulting conclusions of individual intelligence agencies. For example, my conclusions regarding the Vietnam War episode use declassified CIA and INR documents, *ex post facto* firsthand accounts, and media reporting. Nevertheless, the secondary sources I reference all present different theoretical framings from one another and myself.³⁸ This reflects Lustick’s third strategy, of “quasi-triangulation.”³⁹ I corroborate accounts of each case by identifying convergence between secondary analysis and primary documents.

Finally, Lustick notes the importance of explicitly acknowledging conflicting accounts or gaps in the historical narrative to expose the extent of narrative “stylization.”⁴⁰ While much of my work is dependent on primary documents rather than secondary stylized accounts, I make note of gaps in the analysis. This is especially relevant because my work uses declassified archival documents and declassification is an inherently selective process. I acknowledge that the narrative I present for each case, including my in-depth case study of the Agreed Framework, may be partial and should be rearticulated in the event of further declassification of relevant documents. Nevertheless, each historical episode I present relies on extensive collection and analysis of crucial archival material, such as National Intelligence Estimates. Thus, my discussion of each episode and the resulting theoretical argument is analytically rigorous and allows my conclusions to carry substantial weight.

V. The Agreed Framework

a. Background

³⁷Lustick, 615-616.

³⁸For instance, Robert Jervis, *Why Intelligence Fails* and Joshua Rovner, *Fixing the Facts*.

³⁹Lustick, 616.

⁴⁰Lustick, 616.

On March 1, 1993, North Korea announced its intended withdrawal from the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT). The announcement sparked a series of deliberations between the US and Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) that culminated in the 1994 Agreed Framework. The DPRK reached an initial agreement with the US to freeze the process of NPT withdrawal while US-DPRK deliberations took place. A crucial piece of NPT compliance is, and was, allowing inspections of nuclear facilities by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA). In March of 1994, while deliberations were still ongoing, IAEA inspectors arrived in North Korea only to be prevented access to its nuclear facilities. In the following months, the DPRK escalated tensions by removing spent fuel from its nuclear reactor at Yongbyon without IAEA monitoring. Since the spent fuel could be reprocessed into weapons-grade plutonium, the move stalled US-DPRK talks.

Amidst the gridlock, former President Jimmy Carter accepted an invitation to visit North Korea and meet with Kim Il-Song.⁴¹ The negotiations were restarted thanks to Kim's surprisingly quick commitments to Carter to allow IAEA inspectors to remain in the DPRK. The next month, Kim Il-Song's sudden death shook the negotiations once again. Yet, the succession of leadership by the younger Kim Jong-Il did not interrupt progress. Three months after assuming power, in October 1994, the Agreed Framework was signed under the younger Kim's authority.⁴²

The Agreed Framework itself, a non-legal document, included three major aspects. First, it committed the US to the provision of Light Water Reactors (LWRs) to North Korea in partnership with Japan and South Korea through the Korean Peninsula Energy Development

⁴¹I use the same romanization of names used in the INR intelligence reports.

⁴²*Chronology: The United States and the Two Koreas, Part II, 1969-2010*, Digital National Security Archive collection: Korea II, 1969-2010, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/encyclopedias-reference-works/chronology-united-states-two-koreas-part-ii-1969/docview/1679142848/se-2>.

Organization (KEDO).⁴³ The LWRs responded to the dire status of North Korea's energy production and the US agreed to provide interim energy assistance to North Korea during the LWRs' construction. Second, the document outlined steps towards economic and political normalization of US-DPRK relations, beginning with the establishment of liaison offices in each country. Ultimately neither side opened liaison offices, which lead negotiator Robert Gallucci attributes to financial difficulties on North Korea's part.⁴⁴ Finally, the Agreed Framework included a North Korean commitment to engage in North-South dialogue.⁴⁵

b. The Intelligence Community: INR's Maverick View

Throughout the negotiations, pessimism among intelligence analysts and policy experts alike ran rampant. Ashton Carter, Assistant Secretary of Defense during the Clinton Administration, noted of North Korea, "the prevailing view was that they were playing for time, trying to find out some way to keep this [nuclear] program going."⁴⁶ The policy establishment shared those doubts. An internally circulated communication of three expert policy opinions painted North Korea as "bellicose," to the extent that the US should prepare to "use all means at its disposal to defeat aggression," suggested "quietly stepping up efforts to strengthen...U.S. military capabilities in the region," and speculated that "North Korea never wanted agreement or, even if willing to 'cap' its program for the right price, never intended to reveal [its nuclear] history."⁴⁷

⁴³"KEDO," The Nuclear Threat Initiative, October 13, 2021, <https://www.nti.org/education-center/treaties-and-regimes/korean-peninsula-energy-development-organization-kedo/>.

⁴⁴"Interviews - Robert Gallucci | Kim's Nuclear Gamble | Frontline," PBS, April 10, 2003, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kim/interviews/gallucci.html>.

⁴⁵"Agreed Framework Between the United States of America and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea," (Geneva: October 1994), https://peacemaker.un.org/sites/peacemaker.un.org/files/KP%20US_941021_Agreed%20Framework%20between%20the%20US%20and%20DPRK.pdf.

⁴⁶Sigal, *Disarming Strangers*, 64.

⁴⁷National Security Council, Stanley Roth, and NSC Asian Affairs Office, "Korea, January-June, 1994 [1]," *Clinton Digital Library*, accessed November 17, 2023, <https://clinton.presidentiallibraries.us/items/show/72531>.

A 1993 leaked National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) revealed that intelligence analysts were similarly skeptical. According to the NIE, there was a “better than even” chance that North Korea already had one or two nuclear weapons.⁴⁸ The CIA’s determination, characterized as the “majority view” of the intelligence community, further predicted that North Korea would not permit the IAEA to inspect its nuclear facilities—an integral goal of the negotiation efforts.⁴⁹

Not all intelligence agencies were happy with the NIE’s conclusions. INR analysts argued, according to a Pentagon official at the time, that “the North Koreans, by their behavior, were giving *every indication* that they wanted to deal [emphasis added].”⁵⁰ One INR analyst called the CIA’s view “very speculative,” based mostly on beliefs about North Korea’s inherent nature as a Stalinist regime and the notion that a rogue state *must* be making nuclear weapons if it had the technical capabilities to do so.⁵¹ These conclusions were not only the minority in the broader bureaucracy, but directly contradicted the broader intelligence community’s judgements about North Korean motivations and behavior. The cleavage between INR and other intelligence agencies is important to note. This internal bureaucratic division, evidenced by INR’s intelligence reports and response to the conclusions of the NIE, holds theoretical implications for how government organizations interpret an adversary’s intentions.

A comprehensive analysis of 177 Morning Intelligence Summaries produced for the Secretary of State by INR reveals that INR consistently read North Korea as a willing and eager actor in the talks—directly contradicting conventional wisdom at the time. INR’s sanguine

⁴⁸Stephen Engleberg and Michael R. Gordon, “Intelligence Study Says North Korea Has Nuclear Bomb,” *The New York Times*, December 26, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/12/26/world/asia/intelligence-study-says-north-korea-has-nuclear-bomb.html?searchResultPosition=15>.

⁴⁹R. Jeffrey Smith, “U.S. Analysts are Pessimistic on Korean Nuclear Inspection,” *Washington Post*, December 3, 1993, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1993/12/03/us-analysts-are-pessimistic-on-korean-nuclear-inspection/bdca975f-6bb3-4682-89f9-831b00a71b84/>.

⁵⁰Sigal, *Disarming Strangers*, 92.

⁵¹Sigal, *Disarming Strangers*, 93.

perspective manifested in two ways: First, INR found that North Korean short-term signals throughout the course of negotiations continually indicated a sincere desire on the DPRK's part to engage with the "outside world," including the US. Second, INR predicted an encouraging long-term trajectory for North Korea. Their judgements hinged on the projection of an impending "China-style" economic opening which would serve to integrate the isolated state into the international community, providing economic leverage in the case of the Agreed Framework's failure.

INR's intelligence reports reveal that analysts relied heavily on subjective indicators. Radio and television broadcasts and official announcements by North Korean officials were often cited in the conclusions about DPRK intentions. Objective indicators such as economic data or satellite imagery were not referenced. INR was clearly advocating a maverick view; its determinations consistently contradicted the view of fellow intelligence agencies, the Clinton administration, and the broader policy community. Thus, the Agreed Framework exemplifies the increased reliance on subjective indicators under maverick view + diplomatic conditions. In the following two sections, I demonstrate INR's almost exclusive reliance on subjective indicators in its analysis.

1. Short-term Signaling: North Korea Wants Engagement

1A. South Korea and the International Atomic Energy Agency

Prior to North Korea's announcement of NPT withdrawal, INR's intelligence already portrayed a North Korea that desired dialogue with its Southern counterpart—an unintuitive conclusion considering the belligerent nature of the DPRK towards the Republic of Korea (ROK).⁵² Intelligence analysis of DPRK-ROK economic talks in the spring of 1992 concluded

⁵²Charles K. Armstrong, "Inter-Korean Relations in Historical Perspective," *International Journal of Korean Studies* 14, no. 2, (2005): 4-8, <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/31065567.pdf>.

that “the relatively swift narrowing of differences” on both sides indicated mutual desire to move forward on inter-Korean cooperation.⁵³ Soon, analysis singled out the DPRK as especially eager to engage: despite North Korean frustration at the performance of the yearly US-South Korea Team Spirit military exercise, the reports predicted that “the North may be preparing to move dialogue forward.”⁵⁴ INR argued that an ostensibly negative statement by the North Koreans actually constituted the DPRK giving “itself a rationale to proceed with JNCC [Joint Nuclear Control Commission] talks despite the exercise,” especially because “Pyongyang has not portrayed differences in the talks as irreconcilable.”⁵⁵ INR reports “Containing the DMZ Clash” and “Spy-Ring Fallout” both indicated that, despite various crises, the DPRK wanted to prevent escalation and continue engaging with the South.⁵⁶ Finally, the report “Good Vibes,” optimistically noted, “small and symbolic signs of progress—such as more frequent contacts—have often preceded larger compromises.”⁵⁷ In the above intelligence reports, INR cites a variety of subjective indicators: press reports, press conference statements, North Korea’s official news agency, and the results of a DPRK-ROK meeting over inter-Korean dialogue. Objective indicators are not cited.

⁵³*ROK/DPRK: Progress in Economic Talks*, April 29, 1992, United States Department of State Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR). *Secretary Baker's Morning Intelligence Summary*. Digital National Security Archive collection: Korea II, 1969-2010,

<http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretary-bakers-morning-intelligence-summary-rok/docview/1679141774/se-2>. All following Morning Intelligence Summaries can be located in the same collection.

⁵⁴*DPRK/ROK: North Reaches Out*, December 30, 1992, INR, *Secretary Baker's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk-rok/docview/1679131111/se-2>.

⁵⁵*DPRK/ROK: North Reaches Out*.

⁵⁶*ROK/DPRK: Containing DMZ Clash*, May 25, 1992, INR, *Secretary Baker's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretary-bakers-morning-intelligence-summary-rok/docview/1679129911/se-2>; *DPRK/ROK: Spy-Ring Fallout; ROK: Neutral Cabinet Well Received*, October 10, 1992, INR, *Secretary Baker's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk-rok/docview/1679143103/se-2>.

⁵⁷*ROK/DPRK: Good Vibes*, July 3, 1992, INR, *Secretary Baker's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretary-bakers-morning-intelligence-summary-rok/docview/1679142616/se-2>, 4.

INR reports regarding DPRK-IAEA relations were similar in their reliance on subjective indicators and resulting positive outlook. The same year that North-South talks through the JNCC took place, the DPRK government was intensely focused on IAEA inspections. One analysis of DPRK statements concluded that, “the North is moving with unusual speed to allay concerns about its position on such sensitive questions as its IAEA inventory and challenging inspections.”⁵⁸ The following month, North Korean officials “reportedly” promised IAEA Director General Hans Blix that “he can see whatever facilities he wants.”⁵⁹ Based on these conclusions, the report surmised that the DPRK’s concern about complying with inspections was linked to its desire to improve relations with the US.⁶⁰

Despite signs that North Korea would move forward with IAEA inspections, one year later North Korea announced its withdrawal from the NPT. The corresponding INR report acknowledged the sudden move and speculated that the withdrawal was motivated by the North’s desire to involve the US in its nuclear “predicament.”⁶¹ Nevertheless, the report simultaneously took a closer look at the North’s statement; a close reading revealed that the it was “tempered with careful rhetoric” and intentionally accused only certain IAEA officials, rather than the IAEA itself, of lacking impartiality. Thus, INR’s reading suggests the withdrawal announcement was a

⁵⁸*North Korea: Flexibility with Inspection*, April 4, 1992, INR, *Secretary Baker's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretary-bakers-morning-intelligence-summary/docview/1679130726/se-2>.

⁵⁹*DPRK/IAEA: Coming Clean on Reprocessing?* May 6, 1992, INR, *Secretary Baker's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretary-bakers-morning-intelligence-summary/docview/1679131415/se-2>, 3. See also *DPRK/Nuclear: Parliament Ratifies Safeguards* April 10, 1992, INR, *Secretary Baker's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretary-bakers-morning-intelligence-summary/docview/1679131571/se-2>.

⁶⁰*DPRK/IAEA: Coming Clean on Reprocessing?*

⁶¹*North Korea: Withdrawal from the NPT*, March 12, 1993, INR, *The Secretary's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-north/docview/1679129205/se-2>.

calculated move. It was not, according to INR, meant to preclude the possibility of nuclear diplomacy with either the IAEA or the US.

In March, prospects for DPRK cooperation with the IAEA and the US appeared dire—in addition to preventing IAEA access to its nuclear facilities, North Korea began making military moves indicating it was preparing for war. Yet, INR’s assessment of North Korea’s aggression in a report entitled “Hoping for Best, Bracing for Worst,” concluded that “despite escalating rhetoric about threatening moves by ‘US imperialist aggression forces’” the North Koreans were intentionally referring “in neutral terms to President Clinton” in order to keep open the possibility of resuming talks.⁶² Again, INR reads between the lines of official statements to interpret DPRK signaling. In April, the IAEA-DPRK and US-DPRK stalemates continued. As time passed, INR maintained that the DPRK was “still signaling” that it “wants to make its way back to the table” based primarily on statements made by a DPRK foreign ministry spokesman.⁶³

That May, after an unsuccessful meeting with the IAEA, the DPRK began rapidly defueling its Yongbyon nuclear reactor, further escalating tensions. The rapid defueling was an extremely public and objective indicator: defueling not only violated DPRK promises according to the NPT, but the physical act limited the extent to which future inspections would be able to accurately determine the state of North Korea’s nuclear program. Yet, INR’s analysis of the move uses a subjective indicator: a foreign ministry statement. Its reading lead INR to conclude that the DPRK was still signaling that “it wants to get to a third round of talks with the United

⁶²DPRK: *Hoping for the Best, Bracing for Worst; Heavily Excised*, March 29, 1994, INR, *The Secretary's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk/docview/1679143113/se-2>, 11.

⁶³DPRK: *Waiting for a Sign*, April 5, 1994, INR, *The Secretary's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk/docview/1679128634/se-2>, 1.

States.”⁶⁴ In the following days, INR cited a commentary published in the DPRK party newspaper to argue that the DPRK was already looking for a “technical” solution to the political blowback from the IAEA and international community.⁶⁵ Notably, INR went so far as to interpret relative silence from North Korea as a signal of internal divisions ahead of a major policy shift.⁶⁶ INR analysis aggregated findings from the party newspaper, a foreign ministry statement, and a period of non-statements to find that the DPRK was facing internal conflict over its next policy move.⁶⁷

Even during the largest roadblock in the negotiations—North Korea’s sudden decision to prevent IAEA access to nuclear facilities and defuel its Yongbyon reactor without IAEA monitoring—the INR reports maintained that the DPRK wanted to negotiate. Reports consistently reference DPRK media, public statements, press releases, and even lack thereof. Exclusive reliance on these subjective indicators prevented INR from reading North Korean provocations as plain indicators of North Korean priorities. Instead, close readings and rhetorical analysis resulted in reports that consistently emphasized the DPRK’s desire to address its nuclear problem through dialogue.

1B. The United States

Perhaps the most consistent conclusion the reports drew was North Korea’s desire to engage with the US and normalize relations. Based on Kim Il-Song’s 1993 New Year’s speech,

⁶⁴*DPRK/IAEA: A Crack or a Chasm?* May 29, 1994, INR, *The Secretary’s Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk-iaea/docview/1679129904/se-2>, 2.

⁶⁵*DPRK: Moving to the Starting Gate*, May 24, 1994, INR, *The Secretary’s Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk/docview/1679141775/se-2>.

⁶⁶*DPRK: Calm Before the Storm?* May 31, 1994, INR, *The Secretary’s Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk-calm/docview/1679141759/se-2>, 1.

⁶⁷*DPRK: Calm Before the Storm?*

INR identified US engagement on the peninsula as one of Kim's personal goals.⁶⁸ During talks, the reports suggest that the regime was continually sending signals to communicate its willingness to engage with the US.⁶⁹ In April 1993, responding to the US's first indication that it would engage North Korea in high level talks, the DPRK released a short statement that INR interpreted as a "serious sign of the North's interest in meeting."⁷⁰

In fact, Kim Jong-Il not only directed North Korea to the Agreed Framework's signing, but according to INR, "by associating himself with the agreement, Kim...put his prestige on the line" which "squashes any immediate criticism of the deal within the leadership."⁷¹ How did Kim associate himself with the agreement? A communique issued by the DPRK foreign ministry stated that Kim ordered the DPRK delegation in Geneva to sign the framework. INR's analysis focused specifically on the fact that the foreign ministry released a communique rather than a statement; INR argued that a communique, as opposed to a statement, demonstrated an attempt to draw attention to Kim's role in the success of the talks.⁷²

Two months after the signing in Geneva, North Korea shot down a US military helicopter, killing one of the pilots—another unexpected bump in US-DPRK relations.⁷³

Remarkably, the INR assessment of North Korean intentions towards the US remained positive.

⁶⁸DPRK: *Dogs that Don't Bark*, January 4 1993, INR, *The Secretary's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk-dogs/docview/1679142013/se-2>.

⁶⁹DPRK/U.S.: *Let's Talk*, April 22, 1993. INR, *The Secretary's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk-u-s/docview/1679142041/se-2>. See also DPRK/U.S.: *"Changing" Relations with U.S.*, July 15, 1993, INR, *The Secretary's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk-u-s/docview/1679142029/se-2>.

⁷⁰DPRK/U.S.: *Let's Talk*, 2.

⁷¹DPRK: *Green Light for Signing*, October 21, 1994, INR, *The Secretary's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk/docview/1679143151/se-2>, 4.

⁷²DPRK: *Green Light for Signing*, 4.

⁷³*Chronology*.

Reports acknowledged North Korea's heightened rhetoric in its statements regarding the incident, but cited the statements' refusal to directly charge the US with intentionally causing the incident and only blaming particular "bellicose elements," as evidence that the DPRK wanted to keep the Agreed Framework on track.⁷⁴ Subsequent reports indicated that North Korea backed even further away from its harsh rhetoric.⁷⁵ INR analysts, by looking past rough and aggressive North Korean rhetoric for particular signs of restraint, found for themselves a North Korea genuinely concerned about endangering its newfound relationship with the US.

INR's interpretation of subjective indicators reveals the precariousness of such indicators. Unlike objective indicators, subjective indicators provide more room for the individual analyst or agency to insert its own perceptions into its analysis. On the surface, North Korean rhetoric—whether in the news or official statements—was aggressive, especially towards the US. Nevertheless, INR read between the lines. Looking closely for mentions or abstentions, examining the style of report, and watching for cleavages between different DPRK sources led INR to advocate a maverick view: that North Korea genuinely wanted to engage in the negotiations.

2. Long-term Path: North Korea's Impending Economic Opening

INR analysis did not limit itself to interpretations of short-term signaling. The reports also predicted North Korean integration into the global economy, an economic opening that would give the international community significantly more economic leverage if the DPRK reneged on its nuclear promises. Pre-negotiation analysis held that North Korea's economy was

⁷⁴DPRK: *Put on a Nasty Face*, December 27, 1994, INR, *The Secretary's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk-put/docview/1679128779/se-2>, 3.

⁷⁵DPRK: *Setting the Stage*, December 29, 1994, INR, *The Secretary's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk/docview/1679130584/se-2>.

in dire straits barring any major economic policy shift. A 1987 Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) analysis of North Korea's energy problems suggested a dire energy shortage and grim prospects for improvement barring major domestic policy change.⁷⁶ A 1992 INR analysis concurred.⁷⁷ Both the CIA and INR reports used objective indicators such as imports and exports, coal mining and hydroelectric power projects, and DPRK agricultural policies to reach their determinations.

A year later INR changed its tune, suggesting, "North Korea may be on the verge of abandoning the extreme definition of self-reliance that has been a hallmark of Kim Il-Sung's *juche* philosophy for four decades."⁷⁸ Despite signs of division among DPRK leadership over North Korea's potential economic shift,⁷⁹ INR reports throughout 1993 and 1994 indicated that North Korea was undoubtedly moving towards an opening.⁸⁰ The reports cite one objective indicator, the DPRK's new immigration regulations for its special economic zone, and various subjective indicators, such as a radio report on topics discussed at the party plenum. Notably, one report argued that "Pyongyang hopes the nuclear issue can be resolved before it gets in the way

⁷⁶United States Central Intelligence Agency, *North Korea: Energy Scene*, 1987, *Freedom of Information Act Electronic Reading Room: General CIA Records* (accessed November 19, 2023), <https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp88t00539r000500760002-1>.

⁷⁷*North Korea: Economic Troubles*, June 11, 1992, INR, *The Secretary's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretary-bakers-morning-intelligence-summary/docview/1679117627/se-2>.

⁷⁸*DPRK: Redefining Self-Reliance*, July 17, 1993, INR, *The Secretary's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk/docview/1679130204/se-2>.

⁷⁹*DPRK: Contradicting the Great Leader?* January 18, 1994, INR, *The Secretary's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk/docview/1679142871/se-2>.

⁸⁰*DPRK/U.S.: Yet Another Signal* December 8, 1993, INR, *The Secretary's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk-u-s/docview/1679130723/se-2>. See also United States *DPRK: Party Plenum*, December 19 1993, INR, *The Secretary's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk/docview/1679131454/se-2> and *DPRK: Assembly to Convene*, March 17, 1994, INR, *The Secretary's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk/docview/1679143316/se-2>.

of Pyongyang's plans for a limited, Chinese-style economic opening."⁸¹ The report draws solely on an interpretation of Premier Kang Song San's speech in the DPRK legislature. It highlights a reference Kang made to foreign investments that INR characterizes as unusual, as well as Kang's emphasis on the role of the state administration council for setting economic policy. In doing so, INR demonstrates a strong preference for subjective indicators as the basis for its analysis.

c. INR's Maverick Stance: Policy Consequences

The INR reports demonstrate that, at least in one pocket of the US government, there was cause for optimism regarding the success of nuclear diplomacy with North Korea. Despite substantial reasons to avoid engagement, INR offered US officials a North Korea eager to talk with political elites willing to take personal risks in advocating for US-DPRK cooperation. Nevertheless, as discussed above, US leadership was deeply divided over the efficacy of engagement throughout 1993 and 1994. Across the Clinton administration, Department of Defense, and Department of State it would have been easy for INR's conclusions to get lost in the shuffle.

To what extent did INR and its positive portrayal of North Korea actually influence the talks? One incident highlights the close coordination between the State Department Korea desk, INR, and lead negotiator Robert Gallucci. Stuck, after Gallucci's unsuccessful first meeting with the North Korean delegation in New York, the Korea analysts in INR played an instrumental role in moving the talks forward:

Robert Carlin of INR recalled that North Korea, in its statement announcing its intent to renounce the Nonproliferation Treaty, had hinted at conditions for remaining in the treaty, conditions that might serve as the basis for a deal. Charles Kartman, director of Korean affairs at the State Department, told Carlin to draft talking points for the next day's

⁸¹DPRK: *Turning a Corner on Reform*, April 7, 1994, INR, *The Secretary's Morning Intelligence Summary*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/secretarys-morning-intelligence-summary-dprk/docview/1679142511/se-2>, 5.

negotiating session quoting that and subsequent North Korean statements. Gallucci recited them [to the North Koreans] *word for word* [emphasis added].⁸²

According to Thomas Hubbard, Assistance Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, Gallucci's verbatim reading of INR talking points paid off: "It was as if an electric current ran through the North Korean delegation. A day later Kang started from the premise that they could go back to the NPT."⁸³ Communication between INR, the Korea desk, and Gallucci's negotiating team offered an important opportunity for INR's hopeful perspective to make its way into the negotiations.

The reports' implicit and explicit confidence regarding the DPRK's impending economic change offered further reason for negotiators to pursue engagement. A State Department policy paper, written during Agreed Framework implementation, was explicit that "openness and economic reform" was one of four "important U.S. goals" for North Korea.⁸⁴ INR's intelligence thus offered a major incentive for the US pursuit of the Agreed Framework: the prospect that North Korean economic policy change was contingent on the successful provision of LWRs through the negotiations.

It was important that the predictions entailed a "fundamental" policy shift for North Korea. If the US could not provide sufficient funding for LWRs—a real concern given widespread Congressional opposition to the effort⁸⁵—or other roadblocks appeared, North Korean economic dependence on the international community could offer insurance against

⁸²Sigal, *Disarming Strangers*, 64.

⁸³Sigal, *Disarming Strangers*, 64.

⁸⁴United States Department of State, *State Department paper on U.S. policy toward North Korea - the next steps*, n.d. *U.S. Declassified Documents Online* (accessed November 19, 2023). https://link-gale-com.proxy.uchicago.edu/apps/doc/KGWHGQ839377786/USDD?u=chic_rbw&sid=bookmark-USDD&xid=658298e9&pg=1, 7.

⁸⁵United States Department of State, *Initial Legislative Strategy--DPRK Alternative Energy 1994*, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/initial-legislative-strategy-dprk-alternative/docview/1679097395/se-2>, 1.

reneging. Robert Carlin and John Merrill, two INR analysts at the time, were tracking North Korean moves such as its 1991 seating at the UN. Based on these moves, they determined that North Korea was engaging in “major policy shifts with long-term implications, not just tactical maneuvering.”⁸⁶

Negotiators Robert Gallucci and Thomas Hubbard concurred. Hubbard recalls that when the DPRK delegation initially proposed LWRs, they “told us it had Kim Jong Il’s blessing and was designed to open up North Korea.”⁸⁷ A 2003 interview with Gallucci, following the Agreed Framework’s collapse, underscores the negotiators’ convictions about North Korean economic aspirations: “They don’t wish to be isolated economically. They would like, in other words, an economic opening without having to suffer through a political opening...That’s what they wanted then. That’s what they still want. That’s what they wanted through the 1990s.”⁸⁸ In short, negotiators and INR analysis echoed one another, underscoring the belief that North Korea, nudged along by the Agreed Framework negotiations, was headed in the right direction.

d. INR’s Conclusions in Theoretical Context

INR’s conclusions throughout the Agreed Framework negotiations demonstrate one agency’s heavy reliance on subjective indicators under maverick view + diplomatic conditions. INR relied almost exclusively on subjective indicators throughout its reports. The subjective indicators, under INR’s interpretation, painted a consistently optimistic picture of North Korean signals. Beyond contextual conditions, two factors likely contributed to INR’s methods and behavior during the negotiations.

⁸⁶Sigal, *Disarming Strangers*, 23.

⁸⁷Sigal, *Disarming Strangers*, 68.

⁸⁸Interviews - Robert Gallucci | Kim’s Nuclear Gamble | Frontline,” PBS, April 10, 2003, <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/kim/interviews/gallucci.html>.

First, INR primarily analyzes foreign media and foreign public opinion polls rather than signals intelligence or human intelligence.⁸⁹ In other words, INR's *modus operandi* favors subjective indicators over objective indicators. Second, INR is staffed by area experts. In the words of a former INR analyst, "There is no point in sending an analyst to INR to learn; he or she must have considerable knowledge of a specific country and the area."⁹⁰ Thus, analysts are expected to rely not just on the indicator in front of them, but to cross-reference the indicator with their accumulated country-specific knowledge. It is unsurprising, then, that personal perceptions and preconceived notions easily bleed into intelligence conclusions.

Second, INR's organizational culture may have facilitated its advocacy of a maverick viewpoint. The oldest US intelligence apparatus, INR has developed a reputation of dissent and being right when everyone else is wrong.⁹¹ INR is also the smallest agency by far, with roughly 300 analysts. Its history of dissent, expertise of analysts (the average analyst has 11 years of experience in her area), and small size all contribute to an internal culture that may be more tolerant advocating maverick viewpoints than other agencies. Analyst expertise, a culture of dissent, and the kinds of intelligence collection at INR are alternative factors to consider when evaluating INR's reliance on subjective indicators over objective indicators during the Agreed Framework negotiations. Nevertheless, INR has exhibited a preference for objective indicators in other historical circumstances.

⁸⁹"U.S. National Intelligence: An Overview," Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 24-25, https://www.dni.gov/files/documents/USNI%202013%20Overview_web.pdf.

⁹⁰Teresita Schaffer, "Intelligence, Research, God and Country: A Tour in INR," interviewed by Thomas Stern, *Association for Diplomatic Studies and Training*, September, 1998.

⁹¹David Ignatius, "Spy World Success Story," *Washington Post*, May 1, 2004, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/opinions/2004/05/02/spy-world-success-story/17c8eeb1-9642-4a17-805f-72aa62eefcc7/>; William Burr, "Questions Pondered by State Department Intelligence in Recently Declassified Reports from the 1960s," Wilson Center, accessed March 20, 2024, <https://www.wilsoncenter.org/publication/questions-pondered-state-department-intelligence-recently-declassified-reports-the-1960s>; Douglas Jehl, "Tiny Agency's Iraq Analysis Better than Big Rivals," A10.

VI. Shadow Case 1: Iraq WMDs

When the intelligence community falsely judged that Saddam Hussein secretly pursued WMDs, INR was again a dissenting voice. However, unlike the case of the Agreed Framework, INR relied on objective indicators to support its analysis. INR began to diverge from the consensus viewpoint in 2001, broadly skeptical of assertions about Iraqi efforts to obtain required materials and speed at which Saddam Hussein could develop nuclear weapons.⁹² The major indicator INR used to justify its view was objective: the physical properties of the aluminum tubes purchased by Iraq.

INR accepted Department of Energy judgements that the specific properties of the purchased aluminum tubes suggested that the tubes are not meant for use in centrifuges.⁹³ Additionally, INR noted other objective indicators: the large quantities of tubes purchased, the Iraqis' method of testing the tubes, and Iraq's inattention to operational security when buying the tubes.⁹⁴ Based on the above, INR concluded that the aluminum tube purchase—the crux of the argument by other agencies that Saddam Hussein was pursuing WMDs—was not clearly indicative of an effort to develop nuclear weapons.

In this case, a maverick view + war-related scenario, INR relied exclusively on objective indicators. INR's view was maverick because it contradicted conventional expectations of Hussein's behavior. Because the question about the adversary, in this case Iraq, directly hinged on an evaluation of military capabilities I categorize it as war-related. INR's behavior

⁹²United States Department of State Bureau of Intelligence and Research, Assistant Secretary, *INR Assessments of Iraqi WMD/Missile Programs since 1996* 2003, <http://proxy.uchicago.edu/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/government-official-publications/inr-assessments-iraqi-wmd-missile-programs-since/docview/1910232704/se-2, 2>.

⁹³Director of Central Intelligence, *National Intelligence Estimate: Iraq's Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction* October, 2002, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB129/nie.pdf>, 9.

⁹⁴Director of Central Intelligence, *National Intelligence Estimate: Iraq's Continuing Programs for Weapons of Mass Destruction*, 9.

demonstrates that, while agencies may harbor specific indicator preferences, agencies are not permanently tied to one type of indicator. Instead, contextual factors and available information may determine the extent of dependence on certain indicators. In a war-related scenario, capabilities-based evaluations are a central factor in intelligence analysis because capabilities-related content is directly relevant for policy decisions. Demand for accurate understandings of the adversary's military capacity requires that intelligence collection and analysis focus on capabilities. Maverick view + war-related conditions produce intelligence behavior consistent with Yarhi-Milo's selective-attention thesis. Capabilities-based indicators are one subset of objective indicators and are most consistently relied on in maverick view + war-related scenarios.

Whether or not an agency advocates a maverick view, we should expect that objective indicators will be more prevalent in a war-related scenario. Why might a majority viewpoint in a war-related scenario incorporate more subjective indicators? One possible explanation is that, because the results of the analysis are already largely accepted by the policy community, agencies are freer to incorporate the subjective interpretations often associated with subjective indicators without fear of backlash from the administration or policy experts. The Team B episode demonstrates one instance of this. In Team B, substantial incorporation of preconceived notions and subjective interpretations of adversary intentions was actively encouraged because it led to conclusions consistent with the most prevalent policy attitudes at the time.

VII. Team B

During the Ford Administration, the intelligence community faced internal conflict over the extent of Soviet force capabilities and Soviet motivations for pursuing the Strategic Arms

Limitations Talks (SALT). The CIA posture largely supported the US policy of détente.⁹⁵ These findings faced considerable political criticism. As a result, the CIA director commissioned a panel of outside experts to reevaluate the CIA findings based on a new analysis of the same intelligence.⁹⁶ The panel was called Team B.

Team B's findings sharply contrasted the CIA's original conclusions in NIE 11-3/8. Team B "assumed the worst about Soviet intentions" and determined that "the Soviets viewed détente as a mechanism for penetrating the West while strengthening control over socialist countries."⁹⁷ According to Team B, the CIA was majorly underestimating the Soviet threat.⁹⁸ Because Team B's conclusions were consistent with expectations of Soviet behavior—Team B itself arose due to political pressure against the NIE—its analysis falls under majority view + diplomatic conditions. What indicators did Team B rely on in its analysis?

Team B used a combination of subjective and objective indicators, slightly favoring the subjective indicators. Team B cites objective indicators, particularly regarding Soviet military capabilities to draw conclusions about Soviet intentions. For instance, the report cites growing numbers and improvements of ICBMs, SLBMs, and MIRV warheads.⁹⁹ Nevertheless, the report's usage of objective indicators takes a backseat to subjective indicators—in this case, preconceived notions about Soviet intent based on "theoretical pronouncements of Communist leaders."¹⁰⁰ The section "Soviet Strategic Objectives" uses the stated Communist goal of the

⁹⁵Rovner, *Fixing the Facts*, 128.

⁹⁶Micah Zenko, "Red Team: How to Succeed by Thinking Like the Enemy," interview by Richard Haass, *Council on Foreign Relations*, November 5, 2015 and Rovner, *Fixing the Facts*, 127.

⁹⁷Rovner, *Fixing the Facts*, 128.

⁹⁸"171. Intelligence Reports of Team B," Office of the Historian, *Department of State*, accessed March 20, 2024, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1969-76v35/d171>.

⁹⁹Director of Central Intelligence, *Intelligence Community Experiment in Competitive Analysis: Soviet Strategic Objectives An Alternative View*, December, 1976, <https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu/NSAEBB/NSAEBB139/nitze10.pdf>, 21.

¹⁰⁰Director of Central Intelligence, *Intelligence Community Experiment in Competitive Analysis*, 41.

global expansion of socialism to recast previously cited objective indicators under a hardline stance:

Because the Soviet Union ultimately wishes to destroy...its opponents'...capacity to function as organized political, social, and economic entities...Soviet strategic objectives cannot be accurately ascertained and appreciated by an examination of the USSR's strategic nuclear or general purpose forces alone. Indeed, even an understanding of these military forces requires an appreciation of the leverage they can provide to attain economic and political objectives. "Power" in the Soviet strategic understanding is perceived not merely as serving specific objectives (for example, "deterrence"), but as negating the enemy's ability to survive. The grasp of this fact is fundamental for the understanding of Soviet strategy and Soviet strategic objectives.¹⁰¹

Team B takes the same intelligence used in the first NIE to draw starkly different conclusions. Although Team B uses a combination of objective indicators—the same indicators used by the CIA in the first NIE—it favors subjective indicators. As a result, the objective indicators are reframed to support Team B's preconceived perceptions about the motivations driving present and future Soviet behavior.

One possible explanation for increased reliance on subjective indicators in a majority view + diplomatic scenario is that analytic conclusions supported by an existing majority view contain an element of political privilege. This privilege allows the analysts to incorporate a broader reliance on subjective indicators because the conclusions are less likely to be critically questioned by the administration. Rovner argues that the Team B episode was an attempt at indirect politicization of the intelligence process.¹⁰² While the first NIE was intensely questioned based on its conclusions, the alternative Team B findings represent an instance in which policy-makers put pressure on the intelligence community to (re)produce findings they approved of. In doing so, Team B was free to incorporate subjective analysis based on Soviet rhetoric.

¹⁰¹Director of Central Intelligence, *Intelligence Community Experiment in Competitive Analysis*, 42.

¹⁰²Rovner, *Fixing the Facts*, 114.

VIII. Discussion and Conclusion

a. Theoretical Considerations

My investigation contributes to existing scholarly conversations twofold. First, I began with a premise of disunity between intelligence agencies. I acknowledge that internal division and active contestation between intelligence agencies is far from rare. Existing scholarship tends to either treat the intelligence community as a generalizable whole, or focus on the CIA over the other 17 US intelligence agencies. Acknowledging internal disunity complicates our picture of how intelligence functions within the US bureaucracy. It allows for a richer, more accurate picture of internal dynamics. When scholars confront signaling problems and state-to-state interactions it is important to scale down the theoretical and incorporate increasingly nuanced understandings offered by bureaucratic theorists. I suggest that future work on the intelligence community start by confronting the realities of internal intelligence competition.

Second, I move beyond the commonly-used institutional culture framework when critically examining intelligence production. Instead, my approach takes analytic conclusions in their individual historic and political contexts. To further the understanding of how intelligence moves from indicator to analytic conclusion, I argue that certain conditions are relevant to the choice analysts make on a daily basis: which indicators to trust, and to what extent to rely upon them. In the intelligence world, indicators may be limited, contested, or contradictory. Indicators are instrumental in shaping intelligence conclusions. These conclusions result in material political implications. For instance, the Agreed Framework cost the US over \$401,000,000 in funding LWRs—a major financial commitment for an uncompleted project, while North Korea ultimately developed nuclear weapons—a major security risk for the US.¹⁰³

¹⁰³“The Korean Peninsula Energy Development Organization,” KEDO, 2002, 15, http://www.kedo.org/pdfs/KEDO_AR_2002.pdf.

I show that indicator usage is not only a function of availability or agency preference. Instead, the nature of the question about the adversary and the political context in which the conclusion exists both shape intelligence analysis. Through an examination of six cases, I demonstrate under which conditions intelligence agencies prefer subjective or objective indicators. In a war-related scenario, agencies promoting a maverick view tend to rely on objective indicators. In a diplomatic scenario, they tend to use subjective indicators. For both scenarios, agencies with majority view conclusions use both types, with only a slight preference towards one over the other.

What could explain this behavior? First, the question about the adversary (war-related versus diplomatic) may be the main determinant. In a diplomatic scenario, adversary intentions and motivations are harder to gauge. Military and economic conditions are part of the picture, but the mindset of a leader cannot be immediately extrapolated from those objective factors. As a result, agencies may necessarily turn to semantic indicators such as public statements and public discourse analysis. On the other hand, a war-related scenario is more conducive to reliance on objective indicators such as military capacity and force posture. The very question agencies are tasked with could be quantitative in nature: how many tanks does X state have? How quickly is X state producing missiles? Thus, war-related scenarios require agencies to focus on objective indicators over subjective indicators.

Second, the political consequences of advocating certain conclusions over others may explain why majority viewpoint-analyses rely on a relatively even mix of both types of factors compared to maverick viewpoint-analyses. For a maverick view + war-related scenario, the agency, anticipating criticism, may be incentivized to over-rely on objective indicators. Objective indicators can more directly address the question asked about the adversary in a war-related

scenario, as described above. Thus, an agency may be giving itself more insurance against anticipated criticism by using primarily objective indicators. In contrast, as discussed above, subjective indicators may better answer questions about diplomatic scenarios. When the key is to ascertain intentions, motivations, and mindset of an adversary, subjective indicators offer insight that capabilities-based or economic data can only supplement. Thus, maverick + diplomatic conditions may incentivize increased reliance on subjective indicators for the same reasons maverick + war-related conditions incentivize reliance on objective indicators.

Nevertheless, alternative factors inevitably influence individual and agency-wide decisions. Two relevant factors are *modus operandi* and organizational culture. The functional operations of an agency, such as the CIA's use of human intelligence as opposed to INR's covertly conducted foreign public opinion polls, likely alter an agency's perceptions of certain indicators: which indicators are believed to be credible? Which are not? Second, organizational culture influences an agency's comfort promoting certain conclusions. INR, a small agency with a history of dissent, is probably more comfortable acting as a maverick than other agencies. Thus, whether or not INR's conclusions are maverick views may not significantly alter its process of analysis. The DIA, located in the Department of Defense (DOD), may be less comfortable backing intelligence conclusions that contradict DOD or administration-wide political stances. It may be eager to promote conclusions that favor increased defense spending or hardline military postures as opposed to dove-ish stances. The types of analysts—civilian versus military versus former-military—inevitably contribute to the organizational culture as well. Thus, heightened sensitivity to political criticism may cause DIA to alter its reliance on certain indicators.

My analysis does not address whether the resulting conclusions are proven correct, nor do I examine the process of analysis in the event of inter-agency unity. I do not confront the relationship between indicators, contested analysis, and action by state leaders in relation to the intelligence conclusions. Further scholarly work on the intelligence community can and should explore diversity and contestation (or lack thereof) across agencies. Potential research questions include: how does inter-agency unity change indicator-reliance? How does dissent in the intelligence community manifest in the decisions made by state leaders? Which indicators are granted more or less normative legitimacy by analysts, organizations, and state leaders under what kinds of conditions?

b. Conclusion

The present state of intelligence analysis underscores the value of my proposed framework. The intelligence reaction to the Russia-Ukraine war demonstrates that the US intelligence community is already grappling with the problem of balancing between subjective and objective indicators. The intelligence community's underestimation of Ukraine stemmed from an overreliance on objective indicators; Sue Gordon, former Deputy Director of National Intelligence, says of the flawed focus on Russia's military capabilities over the Ukraine's will to fight that the intelligence community will "learn a little bit about how we think about capability and use as not one and the same."¹⁰⁴ In a war-related scenario, the emphasis on Russian capability (objective indicator) over Ukrainian public sentiment (subjective indicator) is unsurprising. Gordon's response to the underestimation of Ukraine illustrates that the intelligence community is consciously confronting its patterns of reliance on certain indicators to produce

¹⁰⁴U.S. Intelligence Agencies Review What They Got Wrong on Russia's Invasion of Ukraine," PBS News Hour, PBS, June 4, 2022, <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/nation/u-s-intelligence-agencies-review-what-they-got-wrong-on-russias-invasion-of-ukraine>.

more accurate assessments. Further, years after the outbreak of COVID-19, the US intelligence community remains divided on its source.¹⁰⁵ This disunity underscores the continued necessity of understanding the dynamics of inter-agency contestation, beyond questions of signals interpretation and interactions with an adversary.

When we consider the process of intelligence analysis, contextual factors are relevant to shaping the ultimate analytical conclusions. Yet, the question about the adversary (war-related versus diplomatic) and political nature of the conclusion (maverick view versus majority view) are two factors of many. Taking my framework and findings as a starting point, critical examination of intelligence analysis should introduce new factors and reevaluate previously explored themes such as organizational culture and dynamics of international contestation. Perhaps most crucially, future research should begin by acknowledging persistence of disunity and diversity among intelligence agencies.

The covert nature of intelligence operations and analysis poses a challenge for scholars. Nevertheless, an expanding historical archive of declassified materials invites further reflection. Intelligence findings directly influence policy, as in the case of the Agreed Framework. Further, the internal dynamics of the intelligence community hold theoretical implications for our understanding of state signaling and interpretation, bureaucratic and organizational theory, and inter-state cooperation. By taking a look behind the curtain, we can complicate present scholarly work, add nuance to existing theories, and better understand major policy decisions past and present.

¹⁰⁵Michael R. Gordon and Warren R. Strobel, "Lab Leak Most Likely Origin of Covid-19 Pandemic Energy Department Now Says," *Wall Street Journal*, February 26, 2023, <https://www.wsj.com/articles/covid-origin-china-lab-leak-807b7b0a>.

Appendix A

Nature of the question about adversary

Nature of the conclusion

War-related

Diplomatic

Maverick view	Iraq WMDs - OI Vietnam – SI Bomber Gap – OI, OI, OI Missile Gap -OI	Agreed Framework – SI Team B—détente/SALT – SI, OI
Majority view	Iraq WMDs - OI Bomber Gap - OI Missile Gap – OI + SI Vietnam – OI + SI	Agreed Framework – OI + SI Team B – SI, SI + OI, SI +OI, SI +OI

OI + SI = one agency relied on both types of indicators in conjunction

Commas indicate distinctive intelligence organizations. For example, Bomber Gap – (Army) OI (Navy) OI, (CIA) OI

Appendix B: Acronyms

CIA: Central Intelligence Agency

DIA: Defense Intelligence Agency

DMZ: De-militarized Zone

DOD: Department of Defense

DOE: Department of Energy

DPRK: Democratic People's Republic of Korea; North Korea

IAEA: International Atomic Energy Agency

ICBM: Inter-continental Ballistic Missile

INR: Bureau of Intelligence and Research

JNCC: Joint Nuclear Control Commission

KEDO: Korean Energy Development Organization

LWR: Light Water Reaction

MIRV: Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle

NIE: National Intelligence Estimate

NPT: Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty

PAVN: Vietnam People's Armed Forces

ROK: Republic of Korea; South Korea

SALT: Strategic Arms Limitations Talks

SLBM: Submarine Launched Ballistic Missile

WMD: Weapons of Mass Destruction

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