Chapter One

What It's All About

SUMMARY

No magic formula will transform someone into a good writer, much less an intelligence professional, but there are hints to help one along the way.

- First, consider your reader and be a reader yourself. Read intelligence publications. Note how many of them start with the most important points: the bottom line up front.
- Don't start a paper by "defining methods," using trite phrases that might define what you will do but that avoid getting right to the point and waste the reader's time. Get right to the point.
- Next, think like an analyst by looking not only at what happened but also what it means. Then keep in mind three missions that are common to all analysts: make judgments about the future; interpret foreign cultures and alien problems; and support decision makers.
- With those missions in mind, apply the four essences that distinguish other writing from analytical or intelligence writing: Intelligence writing focuses on the future; it is written for generalists facing real problems; it is the act of meaningful characterization; and intelligence writing begins with conclusions then explores their implications.
- Analysts are the voice of the intelligence community, responsible for turning volumes of collected information into usable finished intelligence.

Consider that writing finished intelligence is a process, and as such it can be viewed in four steps to facilitate finished production:

- Identify the intelligence issue within the topic.

- Identify the questions that need to be addressed.
- After completing the research, identify the two or three key points the policy maker is to take away from the paper.
- Draft, using questions to organize the paper.

Finally, remember that good intelligence *supports* decision makers and policy makers; it does *not prescribe* policy.

Grounded with these basic principles, an aspiring analyst—or even one who has worked in the field for years—is ready to write. But keep in mind that the basis for all intelligence writing is an *argument*, and practice on the job will always help to round out the experience.

GETTING STARTED: GOOD WRITING HABITS

Writing is hard work. It requires a great deal of time and effort if it's to be any good, but writing skills can be developed through study and practice. If that hasn't scared you away from this chapter, then I hope you'll bear with me in this book as I get you started on a writing project, walk you through it, and help you polish it to perfection.

Probably the best writing habit you can practice from the start is prewriting, which will be covered in detail in chapter 5. In addition to prewriting, though, you should develop some other good habits in your writing. Among those habits are considering your reader, being aware of your own reading and writing, and understanding the unique writing style you should use.

READER CONSIDERATIONS: BASIC TRUTHS OF COMMUNICATING

Messages sent are not always the same as meanings received. Consider the plant manager who walked through the factory one day. As he passed one of the welders, he remarked, "I think we should clean up around here." The welder immediately began to tidy up his work area. The manager said the same thing to the next three welders he passed. The second man was embarrassed and decided he was probably due a shower. The third wondered how the boss found out he had been telling dirty jokes. And the fourth one smiled and thought, "Yeah, we're making a pile of money."

Meaning Is in the Mind

Words are just the symbols we use to communicate. Meaning arises as a receiver filters the words, the linguistic symbols, through his or her experience. Let's work through an example together. When you hear the word *pedigree*, what comes to your mind? Write your answer on a separate sheet of paper.

Some people might not even understand what a pedigree is. If you own an AKC-registered dog, you might have thought about the papers that came with it. You might have thought about the Pedigree brand of dog food. Some people might have even associated the term with a person or an organization with a distinguished lineage.

Communication Is Imperfect

Consider the different meanings the words below could have under various circumstances. Think about them not only as nouns—they all are—but also as verbs and adjectives, which they can also be.

bug draft drive frame form file paper plant time

Meeting the Needs of Your Audience

Before drafting and during the revision stage as well, you need to crawl into the socks of your reader. Ask yourself three basic questions to get started:

1. Who are the most likely readers for my work?
2. What do my readers need to know about this subject?
3. What do my readers *already* know?

You'll see more about these important considerations in chapter 3, the discussion of reading intelligence publications. Remember that you want to think about *who* will be reading your product, *why* they will be reading it, and *how* they will *use* the information you give them. This simple act of thoughtfulness toward the reader will pay dividends in the final product. It will be more targeted, more readable, and probably have a greater impact on your audience. And it really requires very little of your time to accomplish that simple task.

Reader consideration will also have an important influence on the way you write your paper. Generally, the higher the rank of the intended recipients, the more formal your product will be. If it's a fact sheet or a background paper for a flag rank officer or senior civilian, you'll want to be sure that you adhere to the proper format, and keep it short. If it's a "think piece" to be circulated among peers in your section or division, then you can afford to be less formal. As a student, you'll want to be certain that your thesis or your course papers meet the criteria of your institution and the individually imposed requirements of your professors. In *any* of these cases, don't use the excuse of not knowing the requirements. Ask!

READING: A BASIC COMPLEMENT TO WRITING

Your *reading habits* are basic to the way you will write. The Greek philosopher Epictetus said: "If you would be a reader, read; if a writer, write." In the intelligence and national security community, that might be paraphrased to say: "If you want to do either, do both."

If you want to write a readable intelligence product, then you must spend some time reading the publications of other intelligence writers. Look for the details that make their products most readable, and try to emulate those things. At the same time, avoid the techniques that cause you to lose interest in the writing or simply make you consider it bad writing. The subject of reading intelligence publications is so important that I devoted chapter 3 of this book to the topic. Keep that chapter at hand if you want to refresh your memory on the importance of good reading habits.

THE STYLE OF GOOD INTELLIGENCE WRITING: BOTTOM LINE UP FRONT

Don't bury your lead! By now you might have noticed from the table of contents that most chapters in this book begin with a "Summary." That summary is intended to encapsulate the main points made in the chapter. Such a style conveys to my audience those elements of the chapter that I think are most important. And that is a key point in writing with intelligence. The summary, in this case, *is* the bottom line up front for each chapter. Of course, if you read *only* the summaries in this book or the first section of any intelligence product, you will miss many details that you need for your purpose.

What Is Style?

I've used the term "style" five times already in this chapter without defining it. The *Merriam-Webster Dictionary* (online edition) defines *style* as "a distinctive manner of expression (as in writing or speech)." For intelligence writing, that translates, quite simply, as "bottom line up front." This means that you lead with your knockout punch, putting your most important information in the first sentence of the first paragraph on the first page.

DEFINING METHODS: TELLING THE READER NOTHING

I am often asked about one of the toughest parts of any paper: the introduction. Faculty members, students, and professionals alike have trouble getting started and telling the audience what the paper is all about. Typically their

approach is the familiar academic lore of defining methods. Writers spend much of the first page or two telling readers what they are going to tell them in the pages ahead.

Do not open your paper by explaining methodology. Openings such as the following are trite, and they only delay getting to the point: "The purpose of this paper is to. . . ."; "My paper will look at the diverse components of. . . ."; or, "This study will examine. . . ." Instead, come right to the point. Remember that you are writing a paper as an intelligence professional. Ask yourself this question: "What does my reader want to know about the content of my paper?" Then answer that question on the first page, in the first paragraph. For example, let us suppose that you are writing about a recent coup attempt in Panaragua. Which of the two following openings do you think your reader would rather see?

Opening One: A Description of What I Will Tell You Later

Coup Attempt in Panaragua

The purpose of this paper is to describe the events surrounding the recent coup attempt in Panaragua. The study will enumerate the possible reasons for the abortive coup, followed by a discussion of the current situation there and a look at the military leadership. Finally, the paper will provide a forecast for the future.

Opening Two: What It's All About

Abortive Coup in Panaragua Breeds Turmoil, Uncertainty

The Christmas lull provided the perfect opportunity for the disgruntled military to try to seize power in Panaragua. At first light on 25 December, Colonel Chase Chandler, commander of the elite Panaraguan Paratroop Brigade, led a contingent of 1,000 to 1,500 men in an armed attack on the Presidential Palace in the capital city, Ciudad Panaragua. After almost six hours of bloody fighting, President Manuel Nowayjose announced that his loyal military leadership had crushed the revolt and that Colonel Chandler is in custody. Conditions are unsettled, and a dusk-to-dawn curfew remains in effect as Nowayjose tightens his grip on the country. The regional situation appears calm, but the neighboring countries, Nicador and Costa Pobre, are watching events carefully.

A colleague told me of a friend who worked with him at the Central Intelligence Agency years ago. Behind his desk was a huge sign that read "So what?" We could all profit by that example. Find the meaning in all your

intelligence writing. Zero in on the essence of the topic, and then state that essence up front in the paper.

After reading the first lines of opening one, see if you can answer any of the following questions: What recent events in Panaragua will be discussed? Will the paper deal only with internal events in Panaragua, or will it relate those events to the situation in the region? How *has* the coup changed the situation there? Who attempted the coup? What does this writer believe will happen in the future?

You probably can't answer *any* of those questions. All this writer has done is to define methods. That is, he has told you what approach he will take in the paper, but he has not given you a *clue* about its content. That example might seem far-fetched, but I have seen introductions like that more than I like to admit. These types of introductions to intelligence or academic papers often tend to be laden with stodgy, prodding prose. If you are a student, though, keep in mind that you are writing academic papers *with the mindset of an intelligence professional*. Once the distinction is clear in your mind, you should have fewer problems with this approach.

The first example never really says much. You know that a coup was attempted in Panaragua and that it failed. You know that the country has "military leadership." Or was it the coup that had military leadership? Reread the first paragraph and you'll see that you're not really sure from this context. What else do you know? By comparing the two examples, you can see that substantially more information is contained in the second illustration.

See the difference between the two papers? Now at least you know what the writer is going to tell you. You still know that a coup was attempted, but you also know the substance of the analysis, its conclusions, and possible implications in the region. Now you are writing it with style—intelligence style.

MAKING THE DISTINCTION CLEAR—ESPECIALLY FOR STUDENTS

The most difficult point for most students to understand—faculty members and intelligence professionals, too—is that you are writing intelligence papers in an academic environment. For that reason we need to ensure that students leave the course with a clear idea of what constitutes a well-written intelligence paper.

The focus on the past so common in many academic papers is one reason students tend to linger so long in the introduction. They feel an obligation to cover the "historical background" of a crisis, beginning with the establishment of the current government. The paper was to have been 10 pages, but before you know it, the introduction alone is already 15 pages. The intelligence paper, on the other hand, looks toward the future. Certainly it has its contextual roots in history and experience, but the analytical thrust of the intelligence discipline demands a forward-looking paper.

Since you are writing papers for professors who are experts in their field of scholarship, you might perceive a need to provide great detail about the methods you are employing. Perhaps you see that as a "safety valve" that will convince the professor early on that you do really know what you are talking about. Intimidation is a powerful motivator. More often, though, the early and strong statement of your conclusions will be far more convincing. The technique also will keep you in tune with the "real world" of the intelligence community out there, where your readers, for the most part, are *not* subject-matter experts and where they genuinely want the most important points up front so that they can make decisions, determine policy, or command their organizations.

The details are important. Don't think that you have to boil every paper down to a set of bullets. Your professor must be able to determine your depth of knowledge and your understanding of the paper's subject. So do provide that information, but do it by sticking to the essentials. Don't bog the professor down in superfluous detail. Focus on your topic, narrow it down to its essence, and stay focused on the topic throughout the paper. It might help to write the main subject on a Post-It note and stick it up in front of you where you can see it in order to stay on subject. I've done that myself for almost every writing project, including this book. There's more about this topic in chapter 6.

If your subject is an attempted coup in Panaragua, you probably do not need to write about the history of the region unless it bears directly on your conclusions. *Begin* with those conclusions, and then follow through with your assessment of what it *means*. To appreciate these distinctions, it might be helpful to understand the three basic missions of intelligence writing, from the perspective of an intelligence analyst.

THE THREE MISSIONS OF INTELLIGENCE WRITING: JUDGE, INTERPRET, AND SUPPORT

Imbedded in all intelligence writing are some basic truths. When a student makes the transition from an academic mindset to that of an analyst, it is important that he or she recognize those truths, expressed below as the three "missions." Accomplishing each of these missions is essential to the production of a well-written intelligence product.[1]

Mission 1: Make Judgments About the Future

The new analyst often has difficulty accepting the idea that we are less concerned about what actually happened than we are in determining the significance of the event for U.S. interests. Moreover, conditioned by college to search for "truth"—artistic and scientific—the new analyst is sometimes slow to believe that what people *think* is true is often more important than what is *actually* the fact. And then there is that dogged determination to get all the facts, a compulsion reinforced by the mistaken notion that our job is to know everything. The new analyst must understand that:

- Judgments will invariably be made based on incomplete and conflicting information.
- Unlike college, there are no "incompletes" given here. The analyst never has the luxury of asking the consumer to wait until additional information becomes available.
- Strange as it always sounds, our job is not so much to be right as it is to provide the best answer possible, given the time and information available.

Mission 2: Interpret Foreign Cultures and Alien Problems

As such, our job is to expose the logic behind the actions of a Middle East terrorist or to render intelligible to the general reader the motivation behind a madman's attack on children in a grade school, for example.

Mission 3: Support Decision Makers

New analysts readily accept this concept. Indeed, for many, the prospect of being part of the policy process is one of the strongest selling points of the job. But (there is always a *but*), it is a concept that many new analysts have difficulty putting into practice because they are confused about what constitutes support.

Many believe that if they add to the policy maker's knowledge, they have done the job. But the point of analysis is the interpretation of information, not its presentation. Analysts must be taught to grasp the distinction between providing answers to real problems and expanding the body of knowledge on some subject. Supporting the policy maker comes down to three related functions:

- Providing answers to specific questions, only some of which might be asked by the policy maker;
- Providing a framework that allows the policy maker to understand an issue and to process new information; and,

- Where appropriate, to warn.

DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ACADEMIC AND INTELLIGENCE WRITING: THE FOUR ESSENCES

The four "essences" of intelligence writing flow clearly from the three missions. The following paragraphs discuss four distinct differences between academic and intelligence writing.

Essence 1: Focus on the Future

A new analyst who was struggling to make the transition from academe captured this problem best. In college, she just gathered all the facts and "the conclusions just fell out." Many are under the misimpression that the primary goal of intelligence writing is to discover truth or set the record straight, and, as a result, the first instinct is to lay out in detail how the present situation evolved.

Because what people believe to be true is often more important than what is true, new analysts must learn that discovery of the facts alone is insufficient for and occasionally immaterial to the real job of analysis: thinking about the future. Students become analysts when they stop thinking in terms of what happened and start thinking in terms of what the facts *mean*. Many just never seem to make that transition.

Essence 2: Write for Generalists Grappling with Real Problems

One of the hardest things for new analysts to grasp is the nature of their audience. New analysts are accustomed to writing for professors and academics who welcome detail and who are under no obligation to do anything with the information, unlike the situation in which they now find themselves. New people are also slow to realize and often doubt another truth—that after a few months on the job they are among the most knowledgeable people in the government on a particular issue, and, for the first time in their lives, they are writing for an audience who knows less than they do. They must learn that their new audience does not judge the value of a product by its length, devotion to detail, or complexity. Nor is a well-told tale enough. In fact, the value of a paper is directly proportional to its clarity, brevity, and focus on issues. You'll read more about these important "tools" in chapter 4.

Essence 3: Intelligence Writing Is the Art of Meaningful Characterization

New analysts resort to "data dumps" for two basic reasons: They do not know what is important, so they include everything; or they believe piling up detail is the best way to demonstrate their expertise—a lesson learned in college. They need to understand that the "art of intelligence" is identifying the important data in the mountain of detail. While reporters describe the situation, analysts characterize it by making meaningful generalizations that help the reader put events in perspective and think about them. Analysts reconcile conflicting information, isolate the principle in a sea of data, and recognize the exception that demands a reevaluation.

You can recognize these differences by reading your daily newspaper—critically. That does not mean that you should criticize the writing, although that might be called for occasionally. What you must do is read the "hard news" stories from the headlines and observe the way the facts are laid out; then try to discern whether the reporter has gone beyond the information and has attempted some *analysis* of what is clearly information. Pay particular attention to the words used in the article, especially if they tend to elicit emotion or characterize events. For example, a situation called "terrorist violence" elicits a different reaction than one referred to as a "rebel uprising." If the distinctions are unclear in what you are reading, turn to the paper's op-ed section and read an article or two there. By comparison, you should be able to note considerable differences in the way the information is characterized.

Essence 4: Begin With Conclusions; Then Explore Their Implications

The idea of going beyond the evidence is new for most analysts. Academic writing rarely reaches this point; what passes for conclusions in academia is more often than not a summary of the preceding pages. In college, good students learn by design or default to focus on how situations develop and fit the evidence into intellectual constructs that are more descriptive than predictive. As an analyst, you must retrain yourself to think in terms of, "This is the situation; these forces are at work; this is what it means."

ANALYSTS: THE VOICE OF THE INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY

Ask intelligence analysts what they do. You'll probably get as many answers as the number of analysts you interview. Somewhere in each answer you might even hear the word "analyze"—like the dictionary definition that defines a word by repeating it in the definition: "An analyst analyzes." In fact,

many analysts come to the job hoping to find that there is some manual that covers the subject of doing analysis.[2] They are likely to be disappointed.

This section tries to deconstruct that answer by getting to the root of the question: What *does* an intelligence analyst really *do*? The perspective we take is that of students and professionals in the national security field, with a specific focus on the intelligence community. Those who are fresh out of academic lives and ready for their first serving of reality might find particular benefit in this section. Seasoned veterans of the community might find some refreshing review.

In their report to the President titled "The Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction" (2005), Senator Charles S. Robb and Judge Laurence H. Silberman wrote, "Analysts are the voice of the Intelligence Community" (page 388).[3] Analysts are indeed the ones who form the backbone of the community. They compile and review often massive amounts of raw data and information, study it, and try to find some meaning in it. In essence, they are the people who turn information into intelligence. But until they have communicated that intelligence to someone who needs it to make a decision, formulate a plan or policy, or carry out a military operation, they have wasted their time. That is the focus of this book.

THE FIRST STEP IN THE ANALYST'S LEARNING PROCESS: UNLEARN AND RELEARN

The analyst's first task is akin to deprogramming—undoing habits formed in 4 to 10 years of college-level work. This comes down to a manager impressing upon the would-be intelligence analyst a sense of what the job is and a thorough discussion of the nature of intelligence writing. The seven key concepts that the new analyst must absorb are enumerated in the previous pages as the "three missions and the four essences" of the intelligence profession and of intelligence writing as well. For this section we will take the perspective of a new hire in the community, an eager 22-year-old who has just finished his or her master's thesis, with a focus on East Asia.

A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS: THE MANAGER'S PERSPECTIVE FOR A NEW ANALYST

In addition to driving home what the new analyst is supposed to be doing and how it differs from what he or she has done in the past, the manager needs to provide a concise and simple scheme of how to produce analysis. A "how to" diagram accomplishes a number of things. It helps reduce anxiety by giving the new hire a crutch to lean on. It starts the individual off in the right

direction. It reinforces the message of the three missions and the four essences. And it gives the manager and the analyst a common vocabulary and a framework for critiquing fledgling efforts.

The production of finished intelligence can be viewed as a four-step process:

- Identifying the intelligence issue within the topic;
- Identifying the questions that need to be addressed;
- After completing the research, identifying the two or three key points the policy maker is to take away from the paper; and
- Drafting, using questions to organize the paper.

Step 1: Identify the Intelligence Issue Within an Intelligence Topic

Ask a new analyst what he or she is writing about and, odds are, you will get a reply along the lines of "corruption in China," "terrorist strategy in the 21st century," or "North Korean activity in the Third World." And what you get is *everything* about North Korean activity in the Third World, from Afghanistan through Zimbabwe.

The sad fact is that most new analysts really don't know what they are writing about. They are researching a title given to them—a problem compounded by the fact that most titles are constructed more with an eye to snagging the reader's interest than conveying the substance of the paper. More papers go wrong for this reason than any other.

The solution is for the analyst to learn that the first step is to identify specifically what he or she is writing about. Introducing the concept of a difference between an intelligence topic and an intelligence issue is helpful in this regard. An intelligence *topic* is a broad question of interest, such as North Korean activity in the Third World. An intelligence *issue* is a development of something new and different that narrows the topic and gives a focal point to the paper. There is a simple test: an issue phrase conveys a sense of change or movement or activity; a topic does not.

Examples might help clarify this subtle, but important, distinction. Sino-Russian relations is an intelligence topic but is not an issue. The significance of China's expanding economic relations with Russia for Western investors in China or the implications of the Putin succession for Russian policy toward China are issues. Sino–North Korean relations is an intelligence topic; the improvement in Russian–North Korean relations and what it means for China is an intelligence issue.

The purpose of making this fine distinction is for the analyst to stop and think about what he is attempting to do before he attempts to do it. The new hire is not going to be able to make this distinction; the ability to identify

intelligence issues is one of the things that separate the apprentice analyst from the adult of the species.

Step 2: Identify the Questions

An intelligence issue is still too broad to provide the new analyst much help. He needs something to guide him as he reads, files, and gathers information. One answer is to break the intelligence issue into a series of general questions.

To do this, the new analyst should be encouraged to step into the policy maker's shoes and ask him- or herself, "What do I want or need to know about this issue?" The questions should flow from the intelligence issue; if they do not, the purpose of the paper is probably not clear. Using the Sino–North Korean issue as an example, a policy maker probably would want to know: Have warmer Russian–North Korean relations caused cooler Sino–North Korean relations, or is it more complicated than that? Are the Chinese concerned? What steps has Beijing taken to change the situation? Is the Chinese leadership divided on the issue? What would China like to have happen? What is Beijing doing about it? Is it working? What do the Chinese expect from the United States? The first cut at this should be a spontaneous, stream-of-consciousness exercise. The analyst can then weed and consolidate the list.

The list of questions serves to sharpen the focus of the paper. The new analyst now knows "what's in" and "what's out"—for instance, whether it is necessary to be concerned about Russian–North Korean economic relations. The list also tells what should be looked for as the files are read; once that is done, it helps identify intelligence gaps and write requirements. Because the analyst now knows what information is relevant, it should also speed up the research and prevent the indiscriminate collection of data. The questions might change as the analyst does the actual research, but this only serves to define the paper more precisely. The analyst must take the first cut and actually put the questions down on paper with three goals in mind: It gets the analyst thinking in terms of an audience; it heightens sensitivity to policy relevance; and it causes the analyst to think in terms of something besides what happened. With the questions at hand, the analyst can do the research.

Step 3: After Completing Research, Identify Two or Three Key Points

This is the most important step in the process. At this point, the new analyst must: (1) digest the research, (2) decide what is known, and (3) put down in a short paragraph or as bullets the two or three key ideas to impress upon the reader. Point 3 is the analytical bottom line, the essence of the paper, and

probably the heart of the prospects or outlook section. If an analyst cannot concisely summarize his bottom line, the analysis has not been done. If writing starts before the bottom line is determined—and he or she hopes that the conclusions will fall out of the facts—there almost certainly will never be one.

It's a very big step from (2) what you know to (3) what it means. The analyst cannot get there unless he or she first decides what it is he or she knows. The manager's function is to get the novice to answer explicitly—if only in his mind—the questions outlined in step 2.

That done, the analyst is in a position to go beyond the evidence—to think about what the answers mean. The preferred methodology is to use questions to think the issue through, questions designed to bring out the implications of the facts. There is a set of generic questions that can be used. Having digested the research, the analyst reflects on some questions:

- What is new, or what is being done differently?
- Why is it occurring?
- What are the goals and broader concerns of the principal actors?
- What factors influence success or failure? Are the actors aware of these factors? Do they have a strategy or program to deal with the factors?
- What are the prospects for success, and, more important, what are the implications for the actors, their broader concerns, the United States, and other countries?
- Where do the principal actors go from here?

By concentrating on these questions, the analyst can focus on the "big picture." The questions cannot—must not—be answered by restating the facts. The questions get at the processes and call out for generalizations, the essence of good finished intelligence. The key points the analyst wants to impress on the reader are a distillation of this thought process. An example might help clarify this. An analyst working on the Sino–North Korean paper might ask:

- What has changed in Chinese–North Korean relations?
- Why has it changed? Is it just because North Korean–Russian relations have improved, or is there something else that accounts for both developments?
- What would Beijing like to have happen?
- Does Beijing have a strategy for achieving its goals? What factors will shape success or failure? Does Beijing appreciate these factors?
- What are China's chances of success? What happens if the Chinese succeed? If they fail? What is the U.S. stake in this? Other nations?
- Where do the Chinese go from here?

Step 4: Draft, Using Questions to Organize the Paper

The final step should be the easiest. Once the analyst knows the two or three key ideas he wants to convey, the task is to organize the material in a way that makes the points most effectively. The best papers are those that are organized into sections that address what policy makers want to know and need to know. The questions used in step 3 often can be used to organize the draft. Chapter 6 of this book has more detail about writing the first draft.

DOES IT WORK?

Yes and no. The four-step process will not make bad analysts adequate, but it does help the learning process:

- It provides a common framework and language for managers and new hires. By helping new people think about the process of writing finished intelligence, it improves their ability to master what is an art rather than a science.
- It can be used to explain to analysts why a particular draft is deficient and to offer guidance on how to fix a sick draft.
- It gets the new analyst focused on the consumer and U.S. policy questions.
- It stresses that intelligence is *interpretation* of fact, not simply *recitation* of fact.

Whatever system or tool an analyst develops, a number of other things might make the tool useful. It is especially important to understand the differences between academic writing and intelligence, discussed earlier. A new analyst should learn what the manager looks for in a good piece. This personal philosophy of intelligence plants a notion that there is indeed a method in the manager's madness and that not all he or she does is managerial capriciousness. The discussion also serves to establish the standards that the manager will hold the new analyst to. Mentors are fine, but the new analyst needs to know what the manager thinks.

There is no substitute for practice. The more a new analyst writes, the sooner he will master intelligence writing. This has to be coupled with a careful reading of the finished product for style and organization rather than substance. The new analyst should be given examples of particularly good papers, and the manager should discuss with the novice what makes the paper exceptional.

Correctly handling the first paper is also critical. The manager should go over each of his editorial changes with the new hire, explaining clearly why each was made. This might be more guidance than the analyst wants at times, but it is an essential part of the teaching process.

A FINAL THOUGHT ABOUT THE MISSION

This chapter laid out three missions and four essences of intelligence writing, designed to point you—whether student or professional, analyst or manager—toward writing a better product. You read that one of the three primary missions of an intelligence professional is to support decision makers. Your work in that regard is important in support of national security. But you must always be careful as you write that you *do not prescribe policy*. You can certainly give the policy maker your best estimate of what is about to occur, whether that constitutes a national perspective or an operational military command. But do not tell those policy makers, those decision makers, what to do next. That is simply not in your job description as an intelligence professional.

GETTING TO THE ARGUMENT

With these principles in mind—the three missions and the four essences of intelligence writing—the analyst is now prepared to tackle an essential component of writing in the community: persuading the reader of the veracity of his position on the issue. Intelligence papers should present a logical, reasoned *argument* on an issue. That is the subject of the next chapter.

EXERCISES IN THE FOUNDATIONS OF ANALYSIS

The exercises for this chapter have multiple possible answers. For that reason, no answers are provided for these exercises.

Exercises for Groups

1. Discuss with your group the distinct meanings that might be attached to the following words, with an eye toward how miscommunication might be attached to ambiguity (for example, what percentage of probability would you assign to each word?):

likely might probable may can could possible will

2. Are there analysts in your group (or students who aspire to be analysts)? Let each of them describe his or her own experiences with the analytical process and their perceptions of analysis. What problems or challenges do they face in their own work? What could be done better or more efficiently? How have they employed the three missions and/or the four essences in their own work?

Exercises for Individuals

1. Write a short paragraph (four to six sentences) about a current news event—something that "grabbed" you from today's newspaper or television news. Reread the paragraph with an eye toward the discussions in this chapter. Is the bottom line up front—in the first sentence? Are all other sentences in the paragraph directly related to the first sentence? Do they provide support, evidence, back up, or further information?

2. Look again at the paragraph you have written, and consider the earlier discussion of a *topic* versus an *issue*. Is your paragraph focused solely on information (Who? What? Where? When?) and lacking in analysis? Is there an *issue* inherent in your topic—some change, movement, or activity?

NOTES

1. This section will be of particular interest if you work in intelligence analysis or are pursuing a course of study in that field, especially if you write or review analytical papers. Portions of this section are based on an article by Martin Petersen that appeared in the fall 1986 unclassified edition of *Studies in Intelligence* under the title "Managing/Teaching New Analysts." We include it here because of its importance to anyone who writes in the intelligence community. Despite its vintage, it remains relevant.

2. Many excellent references exist. See, for example, the following books published by the Scarecrow Press division of Rowman & Littlefield as part of the Security and Professional Intelligence Education Series: Hank Prunckun, *Handbook of Scientific Methods of Inquiry for Intelligence Analysis* (2010); Jerome Clauser, *An Introduction to Intelligence Research and Analysis* (2008); and Don McDowell, *Strategic Intelligence: A Handbook for Practitioners, Managers, and Users* (Revised Edition, 2008). See also Roger Z. George and James B. Brown, eds., *Analyzing Intelligence: National Security Practitioners' Perspectives*, 2d ed. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2014).

3. "The Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction," Report to the President of the United States by Senator Charles S. Robb and Judge Laurence H. Silberman, dated March 31, 2005, accessed via https://www.fas.org, on 18 November 2013.