



Curing Analytic Pathologies: Pathways to Improved Intelligence Analysis

Jeffrey R Cooper, Center for the Study of Intelligence

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FROM THE AUTHOR: As a result of a number of analytic projects for different intelligence agencies, a major focus of my work during the past several years has involved examining the practice of analysis within the US Intelligence Community. This study was prompted by a growing conviction—shared by others, to be sure—that improving the analytic products delivered by Intelligence Community components had to begin with a critical and thorough appraisal of the way those products are created. A conversation with a physicist friend in 2002 had triggered thoughts on several basic differences between the practice of science and intelligence analysis. Shortly thereafter, an invitation to give a seminar on intelligence analysis at Stanford University led me to prepare a briefing entitled “Intelligence and Warning: Analytic Pathologies,” which focused on a diagnosis of the problems highlighted by recent intelligence failures. As Donald Stokes noted in his seminal book on science and technological innovation, *Pasteur’s Quadrant*, “Pathologies have proved to be both a continuing source of insight into the system’s normal functioning and a motive for extending basic knowledge.” The Analytic Pathologies framework yields four insights that are crucial both to accurate diagnosis and to developing effective remedies. First, the framework enables analysts to identify individual analytic impediments and determine their sources. Second, it prompts analysts to detect the systemic pathologies that result from closely-coupled networks and to find the linkages among the individual impediments. Third, it demonstrates that each of these networks, and thus each systemic pathology, usually spans multiple levels within the hierarchy of the Intelligence Community. Fourth, the framework highlights the need to treat both the systemic pathologies and the individual impediments by focusing effective remedial measures on the right target and at the appropriate level.

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