

The CIA had been created to wage the Cold War. Its steady focus on one or two primary adversaries, decade after decade, had at least one positive effect: it created an environment in which managers and analysts could safely invest time and resources in basic research, detailed and reflective. Payoffs might not be immediate. But when they wrote their estimates, even in brief papers, they could draw on a deep base of knowledge.

When the Cold War ended, those investments could not easily be reallocated to new enemies. The cultural effects ran even deeper. In a more fluid international environment with uncertain, changing goals and interests, intelligence managers no longer felt they could afford such a patient, strategic approach to long-term accumulation of intellectual capital. A university culture with its versions of books and articles was giving way to the culture of the newsroom.

During the 1990s, the rise of round-the-clock news shows and the Internet reinforced pressure on analysts to pass along fresh reports to policymakers at an ever-faster pace, trying to add context or supplement what their customers were receiving from the media. Weaknesses in all-source and strategic analysis were highlighted by a panel, chaired by Admiral David Jeremiah, that critiqued the intelligence community's failure to foresee the nuclear weapons tests by India and Pakistan in 1998, as well as by a 1999 panel, chaired by Donald Rumsfeld, that discussed the community's limited ability to assess the ballistic missile threat to the United States. Both reports called attention to the dispersal of effort on too many priorities, the declining attention to the craft of strategic analysis, and security rules that prevented adequate sharing of information. Another Cold War craft had been an elaborate set of methods for warning against surprise attack, but that too had faded in analyzing new dangers like terrorism.⁷⁷

Security. Another set of experiences that would affect the capacity of the CIA to cope with the new terrorism traced back to the early Cold War, when the Agency developed a concern, bordering on paranoia, about penetration by the Soviet KGB. James Jesus Angleton, who headed counterintelligence in the CIA until the early 1970s, became obsessed with the belief that the Agency harbored one or more Soviet "moles." Although the pendulum swung back after Angleton's forced retirement, it did not go very far. Instances of actual Soviet penetration kept apprehensions high.⁷⁸ Then, in the early 1990s, came the Aldrich Ames espionage case, which intensely embarrassed the CIA. Though obviously unreliable, Ames had been protected and promoted by fellow officers while he paid his bills by selling to the Soviet Union the names of U.S. operatives and agents, a number of whom died as a result.

The concern about security vastly complicated information sharing. Information was compartmented in order to protect it against exposure to skilled and technologically sophisticated adversaries. There were therefore numerous restrictions on handling information and a deep suspicion about sending infor-