Information abundance vs. the intelligence community

many leaders and strategists dating back to biblical times. Despite the advances in technology and the different political and economic state that currently exists within the world, the basic principles of intelligence are the same today as they were thousands of years ago.

People or organisations – be they policy makers, government ministers, CEOs or generals – all require information, or more specifically intelligence, in order to make better-informed decisions or execute different actions so as to dominate an adversary at a strategic and/or operational level in economic, political and/or commercial arenas.

While the concepts of and the necessity for intelligence have remained constant over time there have been changes in the methodologies used to manage the intelligence cycle that have come as a result of the transformation of the information environment. Historically, the amount of information sources available to information gatherers was significantly less than it is today, and due to technological limitations with information and communications technology (' CT), it was usually necessary for the information gatherers to rely upon having a physical presence at the source in order to access the required information.

The amount of information was also significantly less, once again attributed to the absence of ' CT, which made the analysis and reporting process arguably easier due to the comparatively less amount of information or data available. While the gatherers role was comparatively easier from an information management perspective, it came at a cost being a reduction in

the quality of the coverage and accuracy of the information being presented to the client/consumer.

The Basic Intelligence Cycle Over time, different intelligence methodologies have been developed and adapted to uit the level of maturity of the technical environment in order to try and meet the increasing demand for intelligence. For the purposes of this paper, the following basic intelligence collection methodology or cycle will be used in order to provide a consistent terminology and understanding upon which further discussion and comparisons can be made.

The following basic intelligence cycle is a 4 phase repetitive or cyclical process, which would have been applied in pre-ICT times, and is intentionally simplistic, to demonstrate how times and approaches have changed. Basic Intelligence Cycle Phase Description/Activity .

Direction The client/consumer identifies a need for intelligence and directs the gathers accordingly. 2. Collection The information gatherers collect and collate raw information. 3. Analysis The information gatherers convert the raw into intelligence. .

Dissemination The provision or delivery of an intelligence product to the client/ consumer. This step feeds back to the first to complete the cycle, from where it begins again as needed. (" UNODC Criminal Intelligence Training Manual", n. d. , p. 3) The Modern Day Intelligence Cycle The following diagrams serve to provide a basic demonstration of how intelligence ollection methodologies have changed over time.

While the basic cycle remains, an additional role has been introduced, being that of an analyst.

The addition of this role is relatively recent and has come about as a result of the massive amounts of information that is collected from a variety of sources which can be grouped into the following 4 categories " Human Resources (HUMINT), Signals (SIGINT), Imagery (' MINT) and, Measurement and Signatures (MASINT)" OMIC Intelligence Essentials, p. 10) and Open Source (OSINT) many of which are created, transported, accessed and stored using various ICT systems and applications.

The role of intelligence analyst has been introduced in an attempt to address what is considered to be the predominant issue faced by the modern day intelligence communication – simply being the sheer amount of data that exists. The following table describes the basic modern day intelligence collection cycle, which includes an additional phase titled All Source Analysis & Production.

Modern Intelligence Cycle Intelligence Cycle Phase Description/Activity 1.

Planning and Direction The client/consumer identifies a need for intelligence and directs the gathers accordingly. 2. Collection The information gatherers collect and ollate raw information. 3. Processing Converting the vast amounts of information collected to a form usable by analysts through decryption, language translations, and data reduction.

4. All Source Analysis & Production The conversion of basic information into finished intelligence 5.

Dissemination The provision or delivery of an intelligence product to the client/consumer. This step feeds back to the first to complete the cycle, from where it begins again as needed. (" The Intelligence Cycle", n.

d.) This issue – being abundance of information and associated technologies available oday – has been acknowledged by many academics and intelligence professionals and will be discussed further in the following sections of this report.

Technology = The Problem and the Cure The following section of this report will focus upon what can be described as the high-level problems that currently exist with the use of technology within the Intelligence Community, noting that these problems are not only confined to the Intelligence Community, but to any organisation that uses Information Technology in even the most minimal way. The following topics will be covered in more detail and ill aim to demonstrate that technology is the underlying and interwoven cause of many of the issues that exist today: 1. Information Abundance 2. Information Management Issues 3.

Bureaucratic and Organisational Issues 4. Humans versus Technology 5. Generational Issues in a Technologically Abundant Environment 6. Battleground 7. Abundant Technology = Abundant Targets Information Abundance The Modern In addition to some of the more traditional issues and challenges faced by the modern day intelligence community such as " how to foretell what is going to happen" and " how to get statesmen and generals to accept information that they do not ike" (Kahn, 2005, p. 87-88),

there exists a comparatively new problem being the presence of electronically available information.

Today, the amount of data and information that is available in real time to information and intelligence collection organisations around the world – both commercial and government – is astounding when compared to only 10 years ago. In a somewhat ironic manner however, the technology that can be used to assist in the management of information is also resulting in an overwhelming amount of it. As stated by Lefebvre: " The amount of data stored electronically follows Moore's Law and, like CPU power, oubles every eighteen months.