an especially important point. Assuming that the actions identified in the “Processes” column are ultimately the responsibility of the intelligence analyst, the steps of the process move from a heavy reliance on information coming in from sources outside the analyst’s control to a heavy reliance on the analyst to produce and manage the final submission of the product.

Another important defect in this analysis is that steps in the cycle do not accurately represent the differences in the cognitive complexity involved in preparing a long-range assessment or a national intelligence estimate and that required for a two-paragraph brief on a current situation. The same can be said about the process required to develop each of the products.

The Intelligence Cycle depicts a sequential process and does not provide for iterations between steps. This is not an accurate reflection of what happens, particularly in the collection and production steps, where the challenges of defining policymaker needs and shaping collection necessitate repeated refinement of requirements by policymakers or of inferences by the Intelligence Community. A more accurate picture of the steps in the process and their iterative tendencies may be seen in Greg Treverton’s model, which he terms the “Real” Intelligence Cycle (above).  

Mark Lowenthal proposes another model. Although presented in a more linear fashion than Treverton’s, it focuses on the areas where revisions and reconsiderations take place, representing iteration in a slightly different light. Both models provide a more realistic view of the entire process. In addition, assuming that the analyst’s role is represented by the “Processing, Analysis” box, the Treverton model allows us to focus visually and conceptually on the demands that the process can place on the analyst. However, neither model

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7 Gregory F. Treverton, Reshaping National Intelligence in an Age of Information.
8 Mark W. Lowenthal, Intelligence: From Secrets to Policy.