14 Conclusions

In the introduction, the central research question was presented:

How can the quality of intelligence and security agency reports be measured, what factors influence the quality of a report, and how can high quality reports be achieved?

To answer this question, this study was structured as follows. First, criteria were formulated for intelligence and security agency reports to meet. These criteria were derived from literature on methodology, on the practice of research by professionals, and on intelligence – with a reference to relevant Dutch laws. With the help of these criteria, it was intended to do more with intelligence and security agency reports than to conduct the usual post mortem analysis. Post mortem investigations have the problem of hindsight biases in its evaluation of intelligence and security agency reports. These biases are caused because – once an event has occurred – it is impossible to erase it from your mind, therefore it is not possible to reconstruct your thought process for a point earlier in time. The criteria of chapter 5 do not fit a post mortem evaluation. These criteria do not have as a starting point the available intelligence and information – typical of post mortem evaluations – but rather their starting point is correct design, research approach, processing, and representation of data. For this the criteria derived are from insights found in literature on methodology, the practice of research by professionals, and intelligence.

Second, two case studies were carried out. One case-study was on a private non-profit organization, the Shipping Research Bureau (SRB). The second case-study was on a public agency, the BVD. The functions of these case studies were twofold. First, the criteria of chapter 5 were investigated to discover how they would work in practice, when applied to an evaluation of genuine intelligence and security agency reports. Second, the criteria were used to assess the quality of the investigated reports.

Third, the factors that contributed to a higher or lower quality were investigated. To trace these factors and to gain an understanding of how an intelligence product could be improved not only required assessing the quality of an intelligence and security agency report, but also to attend to the conditions under which the report was produced. If you know which factors influence a high or a low quality, you can learn from it and improve your product.

Accessing material was different in both case studies. In the BVD case-study the sample of information gathered was so accidental that only conclusions can be drawn on the reports investigated, rather than the entire agency itself. To investigate the quality of BVD-reports in general was not the aim of this study.

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The aim was to trace factors that influence the quality of single reports. In the case of the SRB, it was possible to investigate all the main reports. This made it possible to evaluate the influence of factors on a succession of similar reports.

Finally, the issues of openness and of discovering a policy of deception received special attention in the research. There are lively, but also to some extent inconclusive debates on these issues in the intelligence literature. To further this debate, hypotheses were formulated on these issues. It was expected that information could be obtained, which would generate new insights for the ongoing intelligence debate.

14.1 TO MEASURE QUALITY

To answer the first part of the central research question – *how can the quality of intelligence and security agency reports be measured* – criteria were developed. Within these criteria, specific indicators are embedded to ensure a more precise assessment.

With the help of these criteria and specific indicators, it was possible to assess the quality of reports. It was assessed that the main reports by the SRB were of a good quality, whereas the BVD’s 1981-survey was of a poor quality. The assessment of the quality of those reports was confirmed by the outcomes of chapters 8 and 11 on supplementary elements – including the between-case elements of these two chapters.

The criteria and their specific indicators functioned in such a way that even within one case it results in leads of factors that influenced the quality of a report. In the BVD’s 1981-survey, for example, it results in a lead caused by the tension between the excellent information position (criterion 2), and the poor final text (other criteria). Furthermore, in some parts of the 1981-survey many mistakes were made (on MANE), whereas scarcely in others (on Red Youth/Red Help). These outcomes, within the context of the single case study, could directly be used to discuss hypotheses 4 and 5.

14.2 QUALITY INVESTIGATED REPORTS

In the two case studies on the SRB and the BVD, reports were judged on their quality. The scores on the six criteria for the two cases are presented in the following table 14.1.
Table 14.1 Criteria met by the reports central in the case studies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>SRB’s main reports</th>
<th>BVD’s 1981-survey</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Preliminary designing</td>
<td>criterion was met, including specific indicators</td>
<td>criterion was not met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Different angles of investigation</td>
<td>criterion was met, constant effort of improvement</td>
<td>criterion was met for descriptive element (excellent information position), but not for explanatory element</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Correct, complete, and accurate</td>
<td>criterion was met (hung to perfectionism). Except: not mentioning all data in the second and third main report</td>
<td>criterion was not met, eight of the nine specific indicators were not met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Plausible and convincing</td>
<td>criterion 4 was met. Except: not mentioning all data in the second and third main report</td>
<td>criterion was not met, none of the nine specific indicators were met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Of relevance for the consumer</td>
<td>criterion was met. Minor point: confusion on the explained terms ‘call’ and ‘delivering oil’ in the first report</td>
<td>criterion was not met, none of the applicable specific indicators were met</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Warning</td>
<td>not applicable</td>
<td>not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Concerning the quality of the reports, some complementary elements were identified. The quality of the SRB-reports was higher than most reports that were produced by other groups active in this field. This was the case with the research by the Erasmus University and reports by the UN IGG and the UN Khalifa-lists.

The SRB had a good cost-benefit rate. This not only refers to the Bureau’s low budget in comparison to its contribution to the high extra costs South Africa had to pay to obtain oil, but it also refers to its low budget, small size, and staff in comparison to the key role its reports played in international debates.

When all the elements – quality of the reports, political influence and authority, and size and budget of the organization – are taken into account, the SRB is very likely one of the top intelligence analysts of the 1980’s. Especially the fourth, fifth, and sixth main report were of a very high quality.

An opposite outcome of the complementary elements was identified in the BVD’s 1981-survey. It was apparently a mandatory ‘rush job’ which was carried out by a less prominent analyst at Directorate B. It was not the best report of that period. During the same period the ministers of Home Affairs and of Justice wrote a letter about Dodewaard 1981. In it, some superior and more relevant assessments were made concerning escalation and the functioning of the protest movement in question.

It was also not the best report produced by Directorate B. The report on the hidden factor in the debate, concerning nuclear arms, was of a much better quality. Both the 1981-survey and the hidden factor report were written for external consumers. The 1981-survey was intended for the domestic market. The
hidden factor report, which was produced for the international market, was positively received. Also reports by the BVD’s Foreign Policy Staff were judged as high quality – including in the international comparison.

14.3 FACTORS AND QUALITY - PRIMARY AND SECONDARY PROCESSES

In the case studies, the quality of the reports was assessed. Between the reports analyzed, there were significant differences. In this section, factors that influence the quality of a report are discussed.

To present these factors so that they can be transformed into recommendations to improve the quality of reports, they are reorganized in two types of factors. First, there are factors that condition the primary processes. These processes are directly related to the research process concerning the production of an intelligence and security agency report. In addition to these primary processes, there are secondary processes. The factors that shape the secondary processes do not directly concern the research process, but rather deal with issues such as organizing the collection and storage of data, the size of an organization, lines of warning, and management. These factors will exert – although mostly indirect – their influence on the quality of intelligence products and the research process.

At first sight, there are some striking differences between Directorate B of the BVD and the SRB and the BVD’s Foreign Policy Staff. The last two units – in comparison to Directorate B – were small in size, defined more or less their own object of investigation, managed their information input themselves, and had a similar intellectual culture (stimulated by a tradition of peer review). A superficial evaluation could lead to the conclusion that these factors consequently contribute to a higher quality. This is only true to a limited extent. Also at Directorate B, reports of a fairly acceptable quality were produced. There is more to this issue. In the following sections, co variations are evaluated. Where possible the results of the case studies are related to expectations that are more general from the literature.

As said, the two case studies are reports of a different nature, produced by organizations that differed in structure – and the SRB published its reports whereas the BVD did not. In evaluating issues such as the role of feedback, these differences gave rise to a broad spectrum of alternative types of feedback. More can be discussed than when only secret reports are researched. Each identified type of feedback is assessed in terms of the contribution it makes in the production of a high quality report. The presented results will be exploratory in nature and indicate factors that apparently influence the quality of reports in a positive and a negative way.
Primary processes

The case studies resulted in the following outcomes that influence the primary processes.

*Feedback and forum-function*

To produce high quality products, feedback during – or after – the production of a report is crucial. Feedback and forum-function can be established in three ways. First, as a peer review from within the unit the analyst is working. Second, there are different kinds of management feedback. This can be by the actual involvement of the manager, or by other organizational measures, such as the installation of a Review Section. The third type of feedback is external criticism, after a report is published, leaked, or has reached its consumers.

In the literature on intelligence, feedback and forum mechanisms are addressed. This ranges from the installation of a Review Section, which is judged as positive, to the discussion on the openness of reports as a starting point. It is argued that releasing reports allows for independent external criticism and as a result additional expertise is elicited.

From the case studies, the reports of the highest quality were all products in which feedback and forum mechanisms occurred at more than one level (SRB: peer review and outside criticism. Foreign Policy Staff: peer review and the critical assessment by its director). This is in contrast to the 1981-quarterly survey (by Directorate B) in which feedback was potentially absent on all three levels (peer review, management, and outside criticism).

Besides a comparison between the cases, there is also a within case argument. In the case of the SRB, publishing reports contributed to an increasingly higher quality. The successive reports gained in quality as a result of the public forum function. This supports the statement from the literature that the release of reports leads to additional expertise.

Nevertheless, this development is not without problems. For a while – in its second and third main report – the SRB, because there was a conflicting interest, presented some data on oil producing countries that supported the ANC politically in a veiled way. This veiled reporting was the result of political pressures on the SRB, through the ANC, by certain oil producing countries. The principle of openness resulted in that this veiled way of reporting was abandoned – mainly because of the criticism that was received by oil transporting countries. This latter criticism could have affected the credibility of the reports. Finally, the SRB presented data on all countries from which oil originated from – as in the first main report – combined with the additional knowledge as a result of the feedback it received by its policy to publish reports. Ultimately, the fourth and successive main reports, could take advantage of the additional knowledge caused by the external forum function that prevailed over diplomatic and political pressures.
In the cases investigated, the active application of a well-developed principle of feedback and forum-function was likely to have contributed to high quality intelligence products being produced. This conclusion is not only derived from literature on intelligence. It is also supported by the between case comparison and the within case analysis. It can be explained in a self evident way and it is also conforming to scientific methodological theory.

The principle of protocol

The principle of protocol includes the active use of methods and procedures. To protocol methods implies a discussion on the methods that will be chosen. Methods are standardized. The gathering of data and analyses are protocoled so others can check them – as intersubjectively testable. Protocol procedures are part of current management insights. They indicate the more general need to protocol methods and procedures.

In the literature on intelligence, scientists with an intelligence background – such as Steele – advocate, more in general, for a system of criteria and standards. In the intelligence literature, the way decisions are taken in order to reject or accept hypotheses is discussed, such as the Analysis by Competing Hypotheses, that is advocated by former CIA-official Richard Heuer. Furthermore, attention is paid to protocol procedures that focus on how to quote sources. The literature highlights that a non-documentation system is a form of job protection for the mediocre analyst.

In the case studies, the methods utilized, did not follow a fully written form of protocol. If you look at the units, which produced high quality products, the following comments can be made. The SRB extensively discussed methods with advisors, before the research phase began. An overview of the method of investigation was presented in the SRB-reports. Later, additional elements were released in Embargo. In the BVD’s Foreign Policy Staff, the analysts devoted time to develop methods to process incoming information. Both units produced high quality reports.

This differed from the situation at Directorate B, in the case of the 1981-survey. The survey was seen as a mandatory ‘rush job’. It was not possible to discover whether the author in question used any established method. However, to write the 1981-survey, some kind of narrative method was used. Second, this report was an example in which the conclusion actually should have been a hypothesis that needed to be tested. Moreover, some data presented in the report contradicted this hypothesis. Third, sources were quoted inaccurately, in some cases to an extent that resulted in forms of deception. Following protocol in terms of documentation – even if it had occurred through a number reference to protect sources – would have avoided this issue of non-documentation. Following protocol would have helped, because it opens the way for an objective evaluation – objective in the sense that statements can be checked by making comparisons with the method embraced, or the sources used.
In the case studies, there is a relation between high quality reports and an (informal) protocol concerning the method, of how sources should be checked and a notion of how to evaluate hypotheses. When these three elements were absent, this was accompanied by a poor quality report.

The conclusion is that establishing a protocol in terms of methods and procedures will enhance the overall quality of reports. This relation can be derived from intelligence literature – especially concerning issues such as evaluating hypotheses and documenting sources. It also conforms to scientific tenets and is supported by the between case comparison. This comparison draw attention to the advantages of even an informal protocol procedure concerning method.

Operations

Concerning the collection of information, one issue is typical for intelligence. This is the issue of operations. There are a variety of ways by which operations affect the quality of reports. This issue is unique to the field of intelligence. Operations do not only serve to collect information, but also to control a target – for instance by preventing that person from committing violence.

In the literature on intelligence it is argued that units tend to report too positively about their own operations.

In the case studies, however, also aspects concerning operations were traced that were different from those described in the literature. Operations led to a lot of noise in the incoming information. These operations changed the acts of, or the reality around, the research target which ultimately created an artifact – a validity problem caused by measuring something different than the reality, as a result of the measurement itself. The effect is that the readership could not rely any more on the information. This is for some part also caused by the other function of an operation – controlling the target.

Presentation of a report in relation to the reception by consumers

This issue is composed of several aspects. The intelligence literature addresses aspects of presentation, such as structure, recommendations, and what or what not to emphasize on. However, the literature does not weigh these aspects against each other. Special attention is given to raising awareness of the audience you are writing for.

First, the structure and how the presentation of a report influences its reception. The literature on intelligence – and in intelligence manuals – provides examples of how reports should be structured.

In the case studies the reports with a clear structure were the most accessible. This relation is best shown between the low quality of the BVD’s unstructured 1981-survey, and the high quality of the very structured SRB-reports, and the high quality of the well-structured reports by the BVD’s Foreign Policy Staff.
This relation is also present in the within case explanation. The high quality reports of the SRB used a fixed structure for all their reports. Its last main report was the only one without a clear structure and the least accessible.

The literature and the case studies support each other in advocating that the structure of intelligence and security agency reports should be clear and logical.

Another issue concerns the analyst’s attitude about how to report. In the intelligence literature, two ideal types of approaches are described – the traditionalist and the activist approach. Traditionalists advocate for reports that respond to requests for data and analysis rather than initiating direct interactions with consumers. They want to protect their objectivity. The activists advocate for a closer relationship through a two-way flow of information and feedback. They think this is needed to provide consumers with relevant reports and analyses. Through the decades, there has been a shift towards a somewhat more activist approach.

In the case studies, the two units of the BVD, Directorate B and the Foreign Policy Staff, represented a more traditionalist model. This distanced approach changed after 1990. The SRB was even beyond an activist approach, it was political activism. Based on these three intelligence units, no relation was found between the quality of reports and an activist or a traditionalist approach. One issue of influence was only of a related nature – diplomatic and political pressures tended to decrease the quality of intelligence products.

Although there has been, through the decades, a growing preference for the activist approach – it does not relate to the quality of intelligence and security agency reports. This absence of a relation may be explained by that both approaches do not so much address the primary process of collecting and analyzing the data, but are more concerned with a secondary process concerning the presentation of the conclusions.

One last aspect is related to the above. In the literature, it is argued that reports must be policy relevant and future oriented. Reports must meet the specific information need of the consumers.

The issue of being future oriented did not apply to the SRB-reports, as these concerned encyclopedic data. Nevertheless, comments on the element to report on the specific needs of the consumers can be made. After 1990, the policy of the BVD, in order to improve the quality of its products, was to report on specific needs. Publishing reports on specific topics was also a practice at the SRB. Recommendations were made, so the anti-apartheid lobby could apply more pressure. In some cases, this had political results. In both cases, there is a notion of quality in focusing on the specific need of the group of consumers in question.

Another relationship was also present in the case studies. The 1981-survey of Directorate B was written, without a specific group of consumers in mind. Within the BVD, many saw these reports as an obligatory exercise, and
consequently put little energy into them. In this case, a lack of dedication – caused by an unspecified audience – may have contributed to a lower quality.

In a communication strategy, some aspects do matter while others are of lower importance. In relation to quality, a positive relation, in the limited number investigated, was found in reports 1) with structure, 2) which informed policy relevant and were future oriented, and 3) which made recommendations. In the case studies no relation was found between quality and a traditionalist or activist approach.

**Secondary processes**

The secondary processes are related to the organization of the collection and storage of data, lines of processing intelligence, management, and size and structure of an organization. These factors have an indirect effect on the quality of reports, mainly by influencing the conditions of the research process.

**Management of data**

In the intelligence literature, the issue of organizing data collection and management is mainly limited to large-scale networks that they apply only, in a very limited way, to the investigated Dutch organizations. Within the Netherlands, information on Dutch related literature and research was very limited. The main source was a report on the BVD by the management consultation agency Andersson, Elffers & Felix.

In the case studies, there is a relation between the way data is collected and the quality of the report. Both of the high quality units – SRB and the BVD’s Foreign Policy Staff – collected, managed, and processed their own input. Reports of both high and low quality were traced at Directorate B in the BVD. Based on the incidental information of these case studies, it is not possible to draw the straightforward conclusion that collecting data and the subsequent processing of reports had to be organized in one small unit.2

The division of work in an agency, that is the collection, management and processing of data, and the analyses process, requires a high degree of coordination. The general idea appears to be that supply and demand between collectors and analysts needs to be synchronized. Analysts must know how data is collected and they must be able to inform collectors what their requests are. Collectors must record the reliability and the origins of a source, and they must be able to inform analysts about peculiarities of sources. This general idea is maintained when it is supported by a protocol, from the collection of data to the research process itself. It helps the different actors obtain insights. In addition, the way collectors and analysts inform each other could be supported by a

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2 Besides, to put all collecting activities in one small unit is often also impossible in practice if, for example, a combination is needed of signal intelligence (SIGINT), human intelligence (HUMINT), and open source intelligence (OSINT).
protocol. At a very small agency – such as the SRB – these insights do not seem to be applicable.

In the case studies, the main problems were at Directorate B. The lack of recording the reliability and the origin of sources was a major problem. This was partly caused by a lack of commitment to do so and partly by the task of data collection and analysis being separate. A further complication was the old BVD-tradition of employees developing their own collection based on issues they preferred. This led to a jigsaw puzzle of personal preferences and hobby’s. Even after collection was centralized, biases remained which diminished the relevance of the collection. Towards the end of the 1980’s, there was, at last, an archivist appointed at the agency. This resulted in a lack of uniform and professional structure to explore existing data.

Coordination between and the management of two core activities – collection and analysis – in an agency is necessary to create the preconditions of producing high quality reports. This management and coordination direct themselves to the issues of the primary processes. From the literature and the case studies, it has been shown that attention has to be paid to prioritizing what should be collected and recording the origin and reliability of sources.

External aspects of sources

The issue of sources is also interesting from another point of view – shielding data and manipulating data by third parties. In the literature on intelligence, this issue is discussed in relation to a different aspect. One of which is the disclosure of reports. It is feared that through disclosure an opponent may know which sources are used, and as a result manipulate or shield these sources. At the same time, no clear support or denial is found that this will lead to a lower quality of reports.

In the case studies, no relation was found between shielding or manipulating data and the quality of reports. On the contrary, the only report in which all the relevant sources – except for one unimportant minor detail – were open and not manipulated was the one with the lowest quality (the 1981-survey by Directorate B). Reports based on information that was more difficult to get access to were of better quality (Foreign Policy Staff).

There is also no relation, even not at the level of the within case comparison. Although South Africa tried to shield more and more of its sources and oil-transporters were increasingly manipulating their data concerning shipments, the SRB increased the quality of its reports, including the number of unveiled shipments. The fact that general information about shipments was accessible could have influenced this. Because the reports were made public, they played

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3 Within the BVD, however, it was argued that this structure was of no influence on the quality of reports, because – if needed – employees were in touch with each other. Yet, the research results do not support this (poor report by Directorate B).

4 Within the CIA, the opinion is already secrecy is superfluous in most cases of economic information needed for policy formulation (Casey, “Economic Intelligence for the Future,” CIA/SII, 94-3).
a central role in the public debate. This increased the market value of an intelligence or a security agency.

This leads to the hypothesis that manipulation and shielding sources is not a decisive factor for the quality of a report – at least as long as general information concerning an issue remains accessible.

In the literature on intelligence, it is stated that absence and redundancy of information can lead to biases. This is especially the case when it stems from one source.

In the case studies, no relation was found between the quality of a report and the issue of absence and redundancy of information. Again, the report of the lowest quality (1981-survey) was the one in which a possible absence, or redundancy, of information – also in relation with the one source issue – played hardly or no role.

**Management and control**

Management influences the quality of reports. It affects the agency as an information factory. In turn, this affects the quality of reports. In the literature, almost every aspect of management is mentioned. In the BVD-case, a management consultation agency identified the factors that affected practice – the strategic concept, the formulation of activities and products, the criteria for the employment of people and means, progress reports, planning priorities, and steering information.

A special issue is personnel management. In the literature on intelligence, the importance of recruiting highly qualified personnel is highlighted. Attention is also paid to networking with universities.

In the case studies, the two units almost exclusively composed of academics produced the reports of the highest quality. An explanation may be that academics are better trained in analyzing techniques and methods, especially in regarding new situations and phenomena. For a long period, the BVD had difficulties in recruiting the academics it wanted.

In the literature in intelligence, emphasis is placed on the need to recruit highly qualified personnel as a precondition for high quality intelligence products. This relation is supported by the results of the between case study and the within case analysis.

In the literature and in the case studies, examples are found of consumers (politicians) that distorted or simply denied the contents of a report. Responsible politicians even reported incorrectly – and did not correct afterwards – who the targets of the intelligence community were. Within the Dutch context, politicians view agencies primarily as unavoidable, rather than the backbone of the democratic legal order. This coincides with the attitude of not compromising themselves with agencies and of lacking control. The factors cited were found at all levels of political involvement – ministers, the parliamentary watchdog
committee, and – with the exception of a very few, very critical – members of parliament. These factors coincide with a long lasting problem of attracting the academics agencies needed. It had a negative effect on the quality of reports, although it deals only remotely with the line of cause-and-effect pattern. It partly and indirectly contributed to the development of a company culture which was not sufficiently familiar with academic research methods and intellectual attitudes.

In the intelligence literature, it was explained that more interaction with politics – for example triggered by an intensified political control – leads to a greater appreciation of these consumers. In the case study on the SRB, such a positive chain was present. Information was highly appreciated by the political environment, and the SRB had no problem in attracting highly qualified staff members, even in spite of poor payment. The Bureau could still recruit highly qualified employees even when one SRB-employee did resign when, within the Netherlands (but not the UN), attention decreased. The attention and appreciation of their work was a direct influence on the ability to recruit skilled employees.

**Size**

In the literature on intelligence, attention is paid to the large potential of small intelligence units. Small intelligence units have the potential to deal with any analytical aspect crucial for an agency, including a negative warning, that is a warning that is difficult to produce. Small units are also effective as an analytical catalyst in enhancing the quality of the whole intelligence organization (Review Section).

One small unit assessed future developments very accurately, also when compared with larger units. Assessments were not limited to small issues, but also concerned major events such as the Foreign Policy Staff’s assessment of the Chinese Cultural Revolution and the China-Soviet conflict. A small unit (SRB) also assessed, very accurately, encyclopedic intelligence, also in comparison to larger organizations (UN). Nevertheless, smaller units, (BVD’s Department E IX), had serious problems. In the case studies, the large potential of small units is only present in part. Apparently, some preconditions need to be met first – such as the quality of the employees in question – before size can play a role as a factor.

In closing one explanation for the supposed benefits of small units is that coordination and communication is easier. However, an opposing argument is that a large organization can employ more specialists. A consistent explanation was absent.
Summary

When you look at the directness of the relationship between quality and the strength of evidence, the following elements show the most dominant effect on the quality of intelligence and security agency reports:

- Feedback and forum-function.
- The proper use of established methods and hypotheses (a precondition seems to be the education of the analyst).
- To present reports in a clear structure and to inform on the specific needs of the consumer.
- To use a documentation system to quote sources.
- To record and to check the origin and the reliability of sources.

The most remarkable factors that were not of influence on the quality of a report were:

- Third parties that shield of data.
- Third parties that manipulate data.

It seems to be of far more importance that a sound method to judge the reliability of data is used rather than whether data is reliable. The underlying explanation seems to be that in cases where deception is discovered additional or different activities within an agency are triggered. Consequently, a better analysis is produced than when an opponent did not employ a policy of deception.

Agencies in their traditional secret setting appear to be 0-2 down from the start. First, their forum function is seriously reduced by the secret nature of their work. Second, what is left of this eviscerated forum is often, for a considerable part, composed of political and diplomatic feedback, including their associated pressures. And exactly these political and diplomatic pressures have a serious destructive potential on quality.

In this context, agencies struggle their way through, hoping to make the best out of it. Recommendations are made in the following section to improve this disadvantageous situation.

14.4 Recommendations

In this section, recommendations are made regarding how to produce high quality reports. This links with the third part of the central research question – how can high quality reports be realized.

To make recommendations for reports that are obsolete may appear extraordinary. Situations have altered. While one agency has been dissolved, the other has been completely reorganized. Nevertheless, the mentioned factors, to some extent, still have an influence on the quality of reports. Agencies, in their
traditional setting, continue to suffer from their disadvantageous position. There are some limitations in implementing them without reflection, but while the traditional setting does not change, the recommendations are helpful in improving the quality of intelligence and security agency reports.

These recommendations are mainly based on the conclusions. Because the relations identified in the primary processes were the strongest these are the focus of the conclusions. Besides these primary processes, other factors contributed to an environment that facilitates the production of high quality reports. As these factors are more indirect in nature these are presented as secondary.

The following measures are strongly recommended.

*Evaluation and feedback on reports*

Feedback on reports is crucial and it was shown that it works best when it takes place at more than one level. The three levels that can be distinguished are: 1) peer review; 2) management type measures, including the installation of a Review Section; and 3) disclosure of reports as a starting point to obtain additional expertise and criticism. Disclosure is possible for reports concerning past issues and produced with past, non-sensitive methods and techniques. To reach this, also a political discussion should take place that focuses on the relation between the quality of reports and their disclosure (2.4.3).

Within the Dutch context, it is not likely that the disclosure of reports, as a starting point, will become the established policy of public agencies in the near future. Therefore, peer review, internal evaluation by managers, and the installation of a Review Section are three options that can be carried out by public agencies themselves, without having to wait for a change in policy, of establishing a policy of openness. For peer reviews, it is recommended that management facilitate the surfacing and working out of conflicting views, among participants, in the process of analysis. When a wider scope can be incorporated, outsiders such as scholars and consultants, who can provide an impartial perspective and consumers, can complete the evaluation.

A separate issue is the possible negative impact that political and diplomatic feedback and pressure exerts on the quality of reports. One remedy could be to reorganize the political and diplomatic forum to one that reflected different backgrounds. One element of this could be that the legislative power would also commission and consume reports alongside the executive. Within the Dutch situation, an extra advantage is that the legislative is composed of a number of parties, rather than being dominated by two. Subsequently, the number of different backgrounds that this gives rise to is a promising condition for a triangulation of feedback in this field.

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6 If consumers think intelligence is not useful, it is better to know that than to ignore it (Hulnick, “Controlling Intelligence Estimates,” *Controlling Intelligence*, 1991, 95).
In general, the policy needed is one which diversifies the channels through which feedback is obtained and which includes informed outsiders.  

**Establishing a protocol for using methods**

To obtain a stable and high quality of reports, a protocol for utilizing established methods and techniques can be developed.  

In the protocol, attention needs to be paid to the design of the research. After having defined the consumers and their needs, the goal of the intelligence issue, at hand, is then formulated. This leads to the definition of the problem. In turn, this indicates which methods and techniques are useful to carry out the investigation. This avoids using fixed patterns of analyses to analyze a changing world.

In the protocol, special attention needs to be paid to hypotheses, in terms of both the generation and the evaluation of hypotheses. However, there is a difficulty in establishing a protocol for working with hypotheses. Although the literature discusses how to evaluate hypotheses within protocols (ACH), such an approach is not present concerning how to generate hypotheses. Although some elements concerning how to generate hypotheses are mentioned in the intelligence literature, this is an area that has for the large part still to be developed, arranged and protocoled.

In the protocol, attention is paid to 1) empathy, 2) the prevention of mirror imaging, and 3) awareness of absent data. Attention is also paid to the structure of the argument (for example, according to the Toulmin-model), the structure of reports and how to inform consumers about their specific needs. Assessments need to be both policy relevant and future oriented.

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7 Compare: Wilensky, *Organizational Intelligence*, 1967, 175.

8 To protocol, however, can not be dealt with as an universal rule of thumb. In the literature, it is emphasized that methods used must be fit in the notion of a changing world. To understand a new situation – in which old methods and procedures only lead to blunt analyses – empathy is needed. This notion of a changing world is not only described in the literature, it also was present in the case studies (most present and traceable at the SRB, but also at the Foreign Policy Staff). The intelligence units with the best outcomes were those that both protocoled (although informal) and improved on their method continually. For this, empathy is needed.

9 Not aiming to deny hypotheses can be illustrated by more than the 1981-survey. Until the mid-1950’s, the BVD worked with exaggerated estimates on some activities of the CPN. On the interpretation of data by the BVD, Engelen wrote ‘Furthermore, it was natural in the climate of the Cold War to consider almost on beforehand statements and acts by the communists to be subversive, and to interpret any data on it in accordance with it.’ (Engelen, *Geschiedenis van de Binnenlandse Veiligheidsdienst*, 1995, 249-251) It seems that the cause of these exaggerated estimates was that the BVD judged data on its value of confirming hypotheses instead of denying them. The agency did not analyze according a certain theory or method. The idea of starting an investigation was ‘beginning from the known’ (Interview with Dick Engelen by the author, 14 March 1996).

10 The analyst assumes the opponent wants to achieve his aims, in the best way he conceives. The rationality referred to must be the opponent’s rationality, and not the one of the analyst (Ben-Israel, “Philosophy and methodology of intelligence,” *Intelligence and national security*, October 1989, 712).
To establish protocol procedures concerning sources

The establishment of protocol procedures about sources comprises three aspects. The first is to establish a protocol for the management and collection of data, and to set priorities. An element of this is to record the origin and the reliability of sources.

The second is to develop a protocol for all phases of the process, when and how to check and double check sources.

The third involves establishing a documentation system to quote sources, or to refer to sources in intelligence and security agency reports. This can be achieved by a number system that does not lead to the nature of the source. However, this system is connected to another document, which retains a full list of sources to carry out a quality check.

The need of a standard for analysis

A standard is helpful in assuring quality. The criteria of 5.3 could inform such a standard. As shown in the case studies, this kind of quality check was helpful to indicate where things went wrong in (processing) a report. Assessing where things go wrong, is the first step in implementing improvement measures. A standard can be a helpful instrument to solve problems and to implement improvement measures. Furthermore, standardizing a desired quality, by formulating criteria that have to be met, has the potential to contribute to the professionalization of intelligence.

These criteria are not only useful in determining, internally, whether a report meets a certain standard, but also they are useful in addressing outside pressure in order to alter reports. The experience of the SRB shows that a sound method is not sufficient in all cases to reach the best possible quality. Not naming the individual countries in the Gulf area was – according to the criteria of 5.3 – the only serious oversight. If a standard had been developed for SRB-reports the Bureau could have defended itself against outside pressures by using the standard as a shield. In such occasions, analysts can argue that they are not able to meet these kinds of requests for change since the report has to meet set criteria. The openness of the SRB-reports, which led to a temporary imbalance, illustrate that they had, in the long term, a self-refining capacity. To avoid problems in the short or medium term, it is advisable to implement a standard to guide the process of openness of intelligence and security agency reports.

The combination of establishing a protocol for methods and developing a quality standard for a report to meet is likely to be a robust combination to achieve quality and to prevent or to resist manipulation.

Some recommendations are not aimed at the primary processes. However, some of these recommendations will facilitate or promote the production of high quality reports, even when the relationship is an indirect one. Recommendations of this order include the following.
Organization

The management consultation agency Andersson, Elffers & Felix already made recommendations that were largely implemented by the BVD. These will not be repeated here. These especially concern problems in terms of filing and management at the BVD during that period. Most of these recommendations have already been implemented in the agency.

For larger organizations in which top management may be out of touch, it is important to develop interpretive skills, and to integrate collection and evaluation at every point where important decisions are made.\textsuperscript{11}

Education\textsuperscript{12}

Extra attention needs to be paid to education. This is relevant to establishing intelligence studies within the Dutch university context, for all who want to be involved with intelligence professionally, such as employees of agencies, politicians, scientists, journalists, and lobbyists.

Education provides a vehicle to develop examples of how reports ideally should be structured and present alternative paradigms and methods, which can be used to achieve a high quality intelligence output. It also allows for the discussion of intelligence failures, analytical obstacles, and practical problems. In particular, these last aspects include exploring psychological and sociological aspects of research and analysis\textsuperscript{13} and different types of bias.

There is also more need for conceptual, analytical, and scientific literature as opposed to memoirs, histories, and polemics. For example, data on foreign intelligence systems, strategies, publications on international legal rights and responsibilities, studies on how information is transformed into intelligence analysis or how covert operations may be treated in an unbiased way, and information on how to manage an intelligence collection.

\textsuperscript{11} Wilensky, \textit{Organizational Intelligence}, 1967, 175.

\textsuperscript{12} During the 1980’s, there was a relatively large intake of new staff at the BVD. Until that time, the agency offered only three introduction courses (the same courses for its own staff, for police officers working in the [police] local intelligence sections, for similar officers of the Royal Military Police, and for staff of other intelligence or security agencies). After these courses, a six month rotation scheme over the main organizational elements followed for analysts and future agent runners. Finally, a varying period of on the job training closed off the training (and probation) period. New agent runners were send abroad to follow specialized courses with sister agencies. This system of decentralized, on the job training became inefficient in the eighties, and the need became apparent to increase the level of training. So the Training Section EO of Department E created and organized two levels of general introductory courses and a number of specialized courses. In these specialized courses, the actual teaching and counseling was in the hands of experienced BVD-staff, having both a good theoretical and practical understanding of the subject, including middle management. In the courses for analysts, extra attention was paid to the value and practical use of open sources. Keller – head of the Training Section EO at the BVD during 1980 to 1986 – put that it would be interesting to compare the quality of reports before and after the introduction of these courses. He wonders if a direct relationship can be traced between internal education and the quality of reports (Letter by Peter Keller to the author, 26 June 2000).

\textsuperscript{13} - , “Teaching Intelligence,” CIA/SII, 42, 43, 46, 48.
An education program needs to not only address the quality of intelligence products, but also organizational aspects, for example, strategic concepts, the formulation of activities and products, the criteria for the employment of personnel and means, progress reports, planning on priorities, and steering information.\textsuperscript{14} Management, communication and coordination need to be addressed from the angle of secrecy.

\textbf{Research}

Intelligence studies is an emerging discipline. Research needs to be carried out on many issues and topics. In relation to this study, some issues are of special interest.

Reflective research is promoted through a partnership between practitioner-researchers and research-practitioners. Attention is paid to frame analysis, repertoire building, action science, and to the study of reflection-in-action.\textsuperscript{15} Best and worst cases analyses need to trace success and failure. Self-evaluating organizations can learn and prosper from their experiences. The possibility to act depends on the climate of opinion that favors experimentation.\textsuperscript{16}

A striking point for further research is the relationship between operations by an agency, and their influence on quality – including potential biases that may result from such an operation. In particular, the employment of agents is of interest. Agents may transform the reality that is reported, to an extent that sometimes results in escalation. However, this could also reveal additional information concerning intentions. This is an effective means to control violence – especially when there is an active agent in every cell. Internal education for case-officers, who run agents – covering in particular ethical issues – is very much needed.

\textit{To establish an institutionalized platform for the intelligence community}

In one Dutch research that focuses on ‘practice as science,’ Van Strien pleads for an institutionalized platform to debate and think about the sound exercise of a profession. He argues that complaints about the activities of a professional will have three characteristics. First, there are mistakes concerning knowledge. Knowledge refers to the correctness and accuracy of the statements that are made, and the care from which these are derived from the available information. Another aspect includes awareness of developments in the profession. Second, there are mistakes concerning skills, such as inappropriate advice. Third, there are mistakes concerning choices made such as irresponsible or careless actions in which danger is not taken serious enough, or not undertaking a thorough investigation.\textsuperscript{17}

\textsuperscript{15} Compare: Schön, The Reflective Practitioner, 1983, 323.
\textsuperscript{17} Van Strien, Praktijk als wetenschap, 1986, 146.
**Conclusions**

Those who finance agencies should create more competition. Research should also be contracted out to other parties. Through competition, agencies are forced to deliver quality reports in order not to lose their share of the market.

Although research can be contracted out to parties outside the Netherlands – theoretically even to foreign public agencies – caution is needed to prevent investigations from being carried out beyond the mandate allowed by Dutch law.

Inside an agency, constructive rivalry could be established.\(^{18}\)

**Control**

It is important that agencies are accountable to a competent – strong and independent – authority.\(^{19}\) External control has to be improved. In the Netherlands, the control of public agencies was poor on all levels. The lack of control applies to the committee on the intelligence and security agencies, the responsible ministers, and the top officials responsible to steer the agencies. There was a serious lack of commitment.

As agencies cooperate more and more internationally, control at the level of the European Community also needs to be established. The European Parliament could play a central role in this process of control.

**14.5 Discussions**

To conclude some comments are made to set this study within the larger context of developing intelligence as a discipline. As stated in the introduction, this study is only one step in the process of moving towards a qualitative framework for analysis.

Specifically concerning the ex ante instrument, three additional comments need to be made. The first is an obvious one and concerns the sixth criterion – concerning warning. This sixth criterion was not tested in the cases because the reports did not involve warnings. Subsequently, no assessment could be made as to whether this criterion would work.

Second, this study contained post mortem elements, for instance the reports belonged to past events. They were dead cases, and sources could be consulted after the events. This can be an acceptable approach when developing an ex ante instrument, especially in the field of intelligence in which research about actual events could lead to security issues. In this study, the ex ante instrument was

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\(^{19}\) Wilensky, *Organizational Intelligence*, 1967, 176.
tested on dead cases. Now, it is ready to be tested on living reports for which the outcome of the events is still open. This implies, that the ex ante instrument may need to be adjusted.

Third, the focus of intelligence and security reports may concern issues other than quality. For instance, reports could be used to intervene in events, such as influencing an opponent’s behavior by showing what is known about them and their intentions. It could be argued that the ex ante instrument is limited in its scope when this is the focus. Indeed, the ex ante instrument is focused on assessing quality and not at its effectiveness to intervene in events. Nevertheless, quality is an important aspect, because when a report is misleading, its credibility is at stake. As is argued by Sherman Kent, the credibility of its producer will be ‘dead for good’ if this happens two or three times. The limitations to manipulate were also shown in the SRB-case. The Bureau was sharply criticized when it referred in a vague manner to countries in the gulf area.

This other focus of reports – to intervene in events – may be object of future research. There may be a class of reports, in which quality plays a role of a different nature. In such future research, the emphasis will be on psychological and political dimensions. The impact of reports on the target groups will be measured. If research is carried out on the effectiveness to intervene, it will complement the results of this study on the ex ante instrument.

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