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Research on the Basic Logic of the National Intelligence Assessment System under the Overall National Security Concept: Postprint

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Abstract

[Purpose/Significance] The Overall National Security Concept endows the construction of national governance capacity with entirely new connotations. Therefore, exploring the national intelligence assessment system under the framework of the Overall National Security Concept can provide important references for establishing an efficient, rational, and era-adaptive national security governance system.

[Method/Process] On the basis of re-clarifying and defining the connotation and functions of the national intelligence assessment system, this study analyzes the necessity of the national intelligence assessment system according to the Overall National Security Concept, and systematically examines the theoretical, institutional support and development requirements of national intelligence assessment.

[Result/Conclusion] This paper proposes that the analytical framework for the national intelligence assessment system comprises three aspects: logical starting point, constituent logic, and operational mechanism, which can thereby explain the fundamental logical principles and specific working mechanisms of the national intelligence assessment system.

Full Text

Research on the Basic Logic of the National Intelligence Assessment System under the Overall National Security Concept

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Abstract: [Purpose/Significance] The Overall National Security Concept endows national governance capacity building with new connotations. Exploring the national intelligence assessment system under this concept provides an important reference for establishing an efficient, rational, and adaptive national security governance system that responds to contemporary developments. [Method/Process] Based on re-clarifying and defining the connotation and functions of the national intelligence assessment system, this paper analyzes its necessity according to the Overall National Security Concept and systematically examines its theoretical foundations, institutional support, and development requirements. [Result/Conclusion] The proposed analytical framework for the national intelligence assessment system comprises three dimensions: logical starting point, composition logic, and operational mechanism, which can explain the basic logical patterns and specific working mechanisms of the system.

Keywords: Overall National Security Concept; National Intelligence Assessment; National Security Governance System; Institution

Classification Number: G250

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The contemporary world is characterized by unpredictable changes, with countries continuously adjusting their domestic and foreign strategies and policies. The international landscape and order face reshaping, which not only foreshadows future complexity but also serves as an urgent warning for sudden incidents that may threaten China's national security [1]. Indeed, as accurately assessed in the 18th Party Congress report, the world remains far from tranquil. Precisely for this reason, General Secretary Xi Jinping has emphasized the importance of maintaining strategic initiative in safeguarding national security [2]. Meanwhile, the Overall National Security Concept, proposed at the Central National Security Commission meeting in April 2014, represents not only a major theoretical innovation in national security but also a crucial ideological weapon for maintaining and strengthening national security under new circumstances. It provides important guidance for the intelligence community to adapt to national development and security needs, innovate existing research paradigms, and reconstruct national intelligence strategic thinking.

As a critical link in the intelligence chain, intelligence assessment is the key step to realizing intelligence value and an indispensable part of the entire process. From the perspective of intelligence assessment, national intelligence assessment involves the comprehensive exploitation and deep extraction of intelligence resources under the coordinated management of core organizations, conducting prospective analysis and strategic forecasting on the capabilities, vulnerabilities, and courses of action of foreign entities related to national core security

affairs. Under the guidance of the Overall National Security Concept, constructing a national intelligence assessment system not only helps grasp international order patterns for comprehensive planning and risk prevention but also holds significant meaning for ensuring the sustainability and development of national intelligence system capabilities.

However, current research on national intelligence assessment systems remains limited. Existing studies primarily examine the role of national intelligence assessment at the strategic level and in governance, such as M. Mayer's research on U.S. national intelligence assessment reports, which analyzed the background and environment of past assessments and evaluated international developments over the previous 15 years to propose solutions for strategic uncertainty and defense deployment decisions [3]. Other studies have proposed new methods and approaches, including the empowerment assessment concept [4], outcome-oriented control [5], and theoretical frameworks centered on uncertainty reduction [6]. Domestic research has focused on U.S. and U.K. national intelligence assessment issues, concentrating on American intelligence assessment theory and practice [7], report reviews [8], and working systems [9]. These studies demonstrate that scholars both domestically and internationally have approached national intelligence assessment from perspectives of national governance and assessment methodologies, analyzing the theories and institutions of major countries like the U.S. and U.K. However, theoretical frameworks and practical research on China's national intelligence assessment work and institutional construction remain insufficient, and whether research conclusions based on other countries' political and cultural contexts can be adapted to China still requires verification.

Given this context, from the strategic perspective of the Overall National Security Concept, this study re-clarifies and defines the connotation of the national intelligence assessment system while clarifying and positioning its functional value. Based on the Overall National Security Concept, it analyzes the necessity of the national intelligence assessment system and proposes that its basic logical analytical framework includes three aspects: logical starting point, composition logic, and operational mechanism, thereby refining a national intelligence assessment theory with Chinese characteristics. This will enable intelligence to fulfill its "advisory" function in strategic decision-making, optimize the national governance system, effectively prevent and resolve risks to national security, and safeguard the long-range goals for 2035.

1. Necessity Analysis of the National Intelligence Assessment System

1.1 Overview of Major Countries' National Intelligence Assessment Systems

The conception and establishment of national intelligence assessment systems is a lengthy process, during which the United States and the United Kingdom

developed systematic national intelligence assessment models and relatively complete institutions earlier. As the world's sole superpower, the U.S. intelligence community has achieved remarkable results in both intelligence theory and practice [7]. In 1950, the Central Intelligence Agency established the Office of National Estimates and produced its first National Intelligence Estimate, marking the initial formation of the national intelligence assessment system. Since then, whether during the Cold War's bipolar confrontation or in the current unipolar world, national intelligence assessment has played a crucial role. The current U.S. system is relatively mature, with responsibilities primarily vested in the Director of National Intelligence and the directly subordinate National Intelligence Council, establishing an organizational structure where the intelligence community leader coordinates, the assessment department operates specifically, and community members participate collectively. This structure sets systematic assessment processes including material collection, product production, and agency coordination [10].

The United Kingdom has long been an active participant in world affairs, and its national intelligence assessment system has become a model for the Western world and globally. In 1936, Britain established the Joint Intelligence Committee to coordinate its intelligence community and produce national intelligence assessment products [7]. After World War II began, the Joint Intelligence Committee's status was continuously strengthened, and the national intelligence assessment system centered on it became increasingly perfected. Agencies including the Secret Intelligence Service, Security Service, Government Communications Headquarters, and Defence Intelligence Staff provide intelligence materials, while the Foreign Office, Treasury, and Ministry of Defence provide resource support. Under this organizational structure, a five-stage national intelligence assessment process was established, comprising assessment requirement formulation, drafting, review, coordination, and distribution [9].

1.2 Necessity Analysis under the Overall National Security Concept

1.2.1 Theoretical Foundation of the National Intelligence Assessment System In October 2017, General Secretary Xi Jinping further emphasized the need to uphold the "Overall National Security Concept" in his report to the 19th Party Congress and incorporated it into the Communist Party of China Constitution [13]. The Overall National Security Concept advocates a governance system centered on security, and practicing this concept means following a national security path with Chinese characteristics, which aligns with national intelligence assessment theory's focus on security-centered event evaluation and forecasting. China's Overall National Security Concept has constructed a five-in-one security system based on China's current and long-term complex situation and judgments, providing guidance for addressing new problems and challenges facing various national security issues [14].

Examining the evolution of national intelligence assessment theory, the U.S. system took shape during the Cold War, when security had strong ideological

coloring. Considering national sovereignty maintenance, the U.S. established national intelligence assessment procedures encompassing both routine and emergency processes, conducting assessments across political, economic, military, and diplomatic domains. Since then, National Intelligence Estimates have become authoritative strategic analysis products whose most important task is to assist national decision-makers in formulating security policies and safeguarding security interests in all aspects.

In summary, the Overall National Security Concept theory has consolidated and enriched the security-centered governance system. However, improving national security capabilities and perfecting the national security institutional system urgently require intelligence assessment to provide pioneering, decision-making, and supportive services. National intelligence assessment, focusing on analyzing and forecasting issues concerning national core security affairs, can most effectively balance external and internal security, territorial and citizen security, traditional and non-traditional security objectives under sound coordination mechanisms, adapting to new tasks facing national security and meeting new requirements for intelligence work to safeguard national security. Therefore, national intelligence assessment theory can integrate with the theoretical system of the Overall National Security Concept to construct a national intelligence assessment system with Chinese characteristics.

1.2.2 Legal and Institutional Support for National Intelligence Assessment Since the proposal of the Overall National Security Concept, the Party Central Committee has elevated national security work to a new strategic height. In firmly practicing the national security path with Chinese characteristics, China has successively promulgated a series of policies and laws, including the National Security Law and National Intelligence Law. These national security-related laws represent inevitable measures to advance the modernization of national security governance capabilities and mark the initial formation of the national security legal framework [15]. Subsequently, to strengthen working mechanisms, China implemented the National Intelligence Law in June 2017, which legally endowed intelligence work with more responsibilities, rights, and guarantees. Meanwhile, the Central National Security Commission was formally established in November 2013, responsible for formulating national security strategy and improving the national security system to ensure national security. Under the Commission's unified leadership, national intelligence work at all levels and in all fields can be coordinated overall, maximizing the avoidance of inter-departmental interest conflicts and achieving unprecedented integration from foreign to domestic affairs and across economic, military, and political domains.

Under the Overall National Security Concept, the National Security Commission, as a national-level standing institution for national security and crisis management, should become the senior user of national intelligence assessment products. Participating agencies in national intelligence assessment should de-

termine intelligence requirements and priorities based on the Commission' s strategic planning. With the deepening of the Overall National Security Concept and national intelligence security concepts, the national security strategy will further strengthen the functions of security intelligence departments, which will gradually shift from being led by administrative departments to being directly overseen by the central authority and become the intelligence hub of the National Security Commission [16]. This will provide organizational support for achieving central coordination and departmental collaboration in national intelligence assessment. The promulgation of a series of national security and intelligence laws not only marks the maturity of China' s security governance system and the establishment of the initial national security legal framework but also standardizes national intelligence management in law, enabling systematic intelligence work construction and implementation. In this context, national intelligence assessment, as a highly complex knowledge product, can obtain organizational, legal, and policy support under the Overall National Security Concept, ensuring its smooth operation.

1.2.3 Historical Opportunities and Era Requirements China has entered a new era accompanied by major adjustments in the international landscape. During this period, great power competition and game-playing have accelerated rapid changes in the global economic governance system, which will not only profoundly alter China' s external development environment but also bring new opportunities and challenges. What cannot be ignored is that external instability and uncertainty factors are complex and intertwined, and national security risks accompanying national interest expansion are becoming increasingly prominent. Western countries still control the international power structure in areas such as politics, economy, technology, and ideology [17], so China' s upgrading of global value chains and enhancement of international competitiveness and political influence will inevitably create conflicts of interest with Western nations [18].

In this context, we must fully recognize the suppression and security threats that foreign entities pose to China' s industrial, technological, economic, and market development, understanding that development must be based on security. The process of maintaining security cannot hinder development, meaning security and development are unified within the theory and practice of the Overall National Security Concept. Meanwhile, existing research indicates that decision-making and action to address security risks require rigorous risk assessment [19]. To obtain maximum information value from limited data and ensure scientific and accurate assessments, effective intelligence processing methods are essential [20]. National intelligence assessment focuses on evaluating possible courses of action, capabilities, and vulnerabilities of adversarial nations and threatening entities. Under the Overall National Security Concept, it can enable intelligence to lead and serve major decisions on national security and development.

2. Conceptual Definitions and Connotations of the National Intelligence Assessment System

2.1 Concept and Differentiation of National Intelligence Assessment

Before defining national intelligence assessment, it is necessary to review and clarify the two core concepts of “national intelligence” and “assessment,” and then examine “national intelligence assessment” as an integrated research object to discuss its connotation and related theories, laying the foundation for integrating the national intelligence assessment system under the Overall National Security Concept.

The concept of national intelligence was specifically proposed in the U.S. National Security Council’s “National Security Council Intelligence Directive 3” (NSCID 3) in 1948. National intelligence is closely related to national security; as the extension of the security environment expands, so does the scope of national intelligence, encompassing all government intelligence related to national and homeland security [21]. From a functional perspective, national intelligence serves the highest decision-making institutions in planning and policy formulation, striving to address the problem of incomplete information in national decision-making, providing important references for national decision-making [22]. From an all-source intelligence perspective, national intelligence takes the integration of intelligence activities as its overall architecture, on the one hand practicing the overall goals of national security governance and economic-social development, and on the other hand possessing the overall function of maintaining national security and coordinating various intelligence systems [23]. Undoubtedly, national intelligence is born from and serves national security.

Regarding assessment (evaluate/estimate), it generally corresponds to value, risk, and trend, with results often expressed as more or less, high or low, and degree. Kent once proposed that assessment is our quest for knowledge when facing the unknown [24]. In the intelligence community, because estimative intelligence cannot be obtained through direct search, it often becomes the rarest and most important part of numerous intelligence products [10]. Kent pointed out that producing good estimative intelligence requires exceptional capabilities: expertise in the research field, impartial examination of all evidence regardless of personal preferences, creative application of techniques and full development of hypothetical arguments, and skill in presenting conclusions [24]. Precisely for this reason, national intelligence assessment should hold a pivotal position in national intelligence work, and constructing a corresponding national intelligence assessment system can effectively realize the value of national intelligence resources. In summary, this study defines “national intelligence assessment” as prospective analysis and strategic forecasting of intelligence concerning national core security affairs. In this definition, several points merit clarification: First, “national core security affairs” typically refers to adversarial nations and related threatening entities, making national intelligence assessment a thorough evaluation of foreign situations related to national security; second, “prospective

analysis and strategic forecasting” indicates this is an assessment of possible changes and conclusions about probability; third, national intelligence assessment should be a national-level estimative intelligence product with authority and decision-support functions for top leadership, thus requiring collaborative completion by relevant agencies.

2.2 Concept and Differentiation of Institution

To better clarify the connotation of institution, this study reviews its origin and content from a genealogical perspective.

Institution research has a long history. In the *Cihai* dictionary, institution is defined as behavioral norms commonly observed by all, also referring to laws, regulations, and customs formed universally under certain historical conditions. Institutions are the norms and procedures that regulate organizational behavior, explaining the legitimacy of actions, stipulating participants’ responsibilities and obligations, and determining social members’ behavior patterns [25]. As social behavior norms and standards, institutions are the glue of groups, acting not only within organizations but also between different organizations. This understanding emphasizes rules and structures, showing that institutions possess both functional and structural characteristics.

The relationship between the related concept “system” (体制) and institution remains somewhat controversial, leading to frequent interchangeable usage without distinction in existing research. To better understand the research object, this study differentiates these concepts.

The widespread use of “system” is closely related to economic structural reform. It is not a concept borrowed from foreign fields but proposed by Chinese reformers and scholars. Zhou Bing argues that the essence of proposing the concept of economic system (or system) is to confirm the scope of reform objects and define the nature of reform, thereby distinguishing reform objects from the socialist system and establishing reform legitimacy [26]. In its initial connotation, system was typically understood as the concrete form of institutions, giving institutions a “skeleton” —institutions are fundamental, while systems are determined by institutions. However, as research on the system concept deepened, scholars discovered that due to relativity between system and institution, their boundaries are rather blurred. In reality, any institution that plays an actual role is not an abstract idea but a concrete system. Therefore, when more institutional arrangements are incorporated into the system category and basic institutional boundaries continuously shrink or even disappear, institution becomes a term without practical substance. Consequently, the logic that system is the concrete manifestation of institution has been questioned. With the introduction of comparative economics and other perspectives, the system concept has been reorganized.

From a public management perspective, system is a systematic concept. It is generally considered the integration of institutional rule systems, organizational

structures, and operational mechanisms [27], resembling an ecosystem in form. Thus, the scope of the system concept is larger than institution–systems contain institutions but are not limited to them, also including organizations and mechanisms beyond institutions. It should be noted that an organization is an entity with its own interest objectives and behavioral capabilities. Mechanism refers to the inherent necessary connection between a system’s structure and function, the specific ways and means of system function realization, which can be understood as interactions among actors under a specific organizational structure and their results. In contrast, although institutions define the scope of actors’ actions, they do not directly determine how actors behave [26].

Summarizing the above discussion, this study considers “institution” to generally refer to formal institutions, including laws, regulations, and provisions of organizations at all levels, with characteristics of compulsion, publicness, and stability [28]. The reason for choosing the institutional perspective rather than the system perspective is that existing research and practice on national intelligence assessment remain weak. The institutional perspective better enables this study to focus on specific paths for constructing the national intelligence assessment system, avoiding losing direction in macro-level exploration lacking foundation. Through institutional construction, we can arrange the relationships of responsibilities and rights among various participating actors, enabling them to operate under an effective set of institutions.

2.3 Connotation of the National Intelligence Assessment System under the Overall National Security Concept

During the maturation of national intelligence assessment theory, many intelligence scholars have made outstanding contributions, mostly from the American intelligence community, notably George S. Pettee and Sherman Kent.

George Pettee early proposed the concept of intelligence assessment in 1946’s *The Future of American Secret Intelligence*, arguing that an excellent nation should possess outstanding intelligence assessment capabilities. Unlike intelligence collection, this is the ability to synthesize large amounts of economic and political intelligence into assessment products—such intelligence is the cornerstone of decision-making, helping nations navigate major events smoothly. Additionally, Pettee conducted profound thinking on the organizational structure and production process of intelligence assessment at the theoretical level, arguing that national intelligence assessment should be completed by professional teams with reasonable organizational structures and coordinated production and use agencies. Specifically, he advocated establishing a central intelligence agency to plan intelligence assessment work at the strategic level to better produce intelligence assessment products and utilize them effectively [29]. Kent put national intelligence assessment theory into practice, attaching importance to estimative intelligence and organizing the completion of National Intelligence Estimates. As a senior official in the intelligence community, he was able to implement relevant theories in actual work and comprehensively elaborate his

understanding of national intelligence assessment theory based on the combination of theory and practice [7], continuously improving the U.S. national intelligence assessment system. Additionally, scholar H.J.D. Philip proposed that the national intelligence assessment system includes both the institutional setup for national intelligence assessment and the normative system for conducting assessment activities [30].

Meanwhile, reviewing current national intelligence assessment systems worldwide, American and British models are relatively typical. The U.S. National Intelligence Estimates (NIEs) system corresponds to the Director of National Intelligence' s overall management, with the Intelligence Council primarily responsible for producing assessment products. The British national intelligence assessment model features the Joint Intelligence Committee system, with the Assessment Staff (AS) as the main body and cross-departmental coordination as its characteristic.

In summary, combined with strategic requirements and necessity analysis under the Overall National Security Concept, this study defines the national intelligence assessment system under the Overall National Security Concept as the institutional setup and normative system for conducting activities that enable better prospective analysis and strategic forecasting of national security core affairs.

3. Basic Logic of the National Intelligence Assessment System

Logic summarizes objective laws [31], and institutional logic is typically used to explain self-consistent patterns constructed under specific conditions, thereby helping institutional actors organize time and space to realize and reproduce their existence [32]. Yang Kaifeng proposes that a system' s “hard core” is its most fundamental logic, as this is the decisive feature distinguishing it from other systems [33]. When describing an institutional logic framework, logical starting point, composition logic, and operational logic are important components. The logical starting point explores the system' s overall positioning and objectives, reflecting the qualitative attributes of the research object and continuing throughout the operational mechanism. Composition logic explores the system' s constituent elements, such as what levels and contents it includes and what relationships exist between them. Operational logic explores the standards for system design and development—these operational bases are the driving forces for institutional operation.

Combining Yang Kaifeng' s research [33] with the characteristics of the national intelligence assessment system, this study proposes an analytical framework for the national intelligence assessment system comprising logical starting point, composition logic, and operational mechanism to describe its basic logical patterns.

[Figure 1: see original paper] Analytical Framework of the National Intelligence

Assessment System

3.1 Logical Starting Point of the National Intelligence Assessment System

As a disciplinary research direction, the study of the national intelligence assessment system has its inherent logical system and scope, and consequently should have its own logical starting point. This logical starting point should be understood as the initial link in constructing the national intelligence assessment system, the foundational category of its knowledge system, and should run consistently through subsequent concepts. Under the Overall National Security Concept, the logical starting point of the national intelligence assessment system is maintaining national security, which not only demonstrates the basic rationality of establishing this academic direction but also contains the academic basis for constructing and improving its knowledge structure. Specifically, it is divided into three aspects:

First, the purpose of the national intelligence assessment system is to achieve security valued by development. The Overall National Security Concept coordinates security and development, indicating that security must be security that promotes development, and development must be development based on security guarantees. Security and development need to be unified in the theory and practice of the Overall National Security Concept. This can effectively answer the security objectives that the constructed national intelligence assessment system should achieve—security with development as its value. Under such objectives, the traditional security paradigm must be transformed, national intelligence work thinking reshaped, and national intelligence assessment tasks clarified to systematically plan the national intelligence assessment system to adapt to strategic requirements under new circumstances.

Second, the national intelligence assessment system should act according to “national security” needs. According to the Overall National Security Concept, the national intelligence assessment system should prioritize “national security” as its referent object. As the foundation of national survival and development, national security generally refers to the state where national interests are threatened or endangered. Under the Overall National Security Concept, the scope of national security has been further clarified and enriched, with political security, economic security, and international security being particularly emphasized and incorporated into an organic whole for comprehensive consideration. This means the national intelligence assessment system must achieve horizontal development across diversified security fields, as the specific content of different security needs will change, requiring corresponding adaptation from the national intelligence assessment system. Moreover, the essential meaning of the national security path with Chinese characteristics is proceeding from China’s special national conditions—compared with other major world powers, China’s most special national condition is its socialist system. Therefore, the basic principle that the national intelligence assessment system should adhere to is exploring

national security issues from the perspective of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Finally, the national intelligence assessment system should fulfill the principle of “active defense.” The Overall National Security Concept focuses on long-term national stability and the perpetual prosperity of the Chinese nation, necessitating vigilance in times of peace and emphasizing enhanced awareness of potential dangers. This requires fully leveraging the predictive and pioneering functions of national intelligence assessment for timely intelligence warning and risk intervention, paving the way for national security development in complex future environments. Simultaneously, national intelligence assessment is essentially deep exploitation of intelligence resources. Through systematic analysis by professional teams of threats and hidden dangers in the current environment, it serves not only security decision-making but also risk management. Through national intelligence assessment, once the degree of potential harm is identified, targeted resistance and effective early warning and defense can be implemented to control possible risks within acceptable ranges [34-35], which plays a vital role under the theoretical framework of the Overall National Security Concept. Therefore, the national intelligence assessment system adopts active defense as its basic principle.

3.2 Composition Logic of the National Intelligence Assessment System

The national intelligence assessment system has its own composition logic because it is not merely an institution concerning specific issues but a systematic framework through which participating entities can achieve vertical coordination and comprehensive development. Referencing the composition of U.S. and U.K. national intelligence assessment systems, this study explores the constituent entities and inter-entity relationships affecting the national intelligence assessment system to better understand its different hierarchical contents and relationships, thereby proposing a systematic composition logic.

First, it is necessary to understand the participating entities in national intelligence assessment, including their hierarchical structures and their legal identities and role functions in administrative work or tasks, to propose a complete organizational system for national intelligence assessment. Li Jinglong argues that participating entities in the national intelligence assessment system mainly include three levels: intelligence community leadership, assessment departments, and participating agencies [10]. Among them, intelligence community leadership is the primary responsible party for national intelligence assessment work. For example, U.S. legislation clearly stipulates that the intelligence community leader is the overall responsible party for national intelligence assessment, with the leadership institution successively being the Central Intelligence Agency and later the Office of the Director of National Intelligence. Research by Liu Shuai and Liu Zhiliang shows that the Joint Intelligence Committee, as the British intelligence community’s leading body, performs central coordination functions

like a bearing that reasonably unifies the British national intelligence assessment system and plays a crucial hub role, serving the Prime Minister, Cabinet, and National Security Council [9]. Assessment departments are the specific operational institutions for national intelligence assessment work, generally responsible for producing specific national intelligence assessment products under the guidance and support of intelligence community leadership. They should gather extensive information, including not only secret intelligence data provided by national-level intelligence agencies but also confidential reports from diplomatic channels and shared intelligence obtained through cooperation with allies. British assessment department members consist of both intelligence and policy personnel, while assessment participating agencies include intelligence community agencies from various fields that typically participate in actual intelligence production. They generally conduct assessments in their respective fields according to authorization and produce analysis reports, which are then submitted to assessment departments.

Based on the above research, this study believes that entities participating in China's national intelligence assessment work can also include intelligence leadership institutions, national intelligence assessment departments, and subordinate departments for national intelligence assessment in various fields. Simultaneously, it is necessary to clarify the hierarchical attributes among these three entities. The three participating entities should achieve layered alignment through specific policy measures for connection and matching, enabling top-level design to be precisely implemented, thereby fully leveraging institutional effectiveness [33]. General Secretary Xi Jinping once pointed out when discussing state governance methods that "it is necessary to understand the relationship between systematic policy chains and specific policy links, and between top-level policy design and hierarchical policy alignment" [36]. In other words, we must not only determine the overall planning and operation of national intelligence assessment work but also understand the relationships, rights, and responsibilities between actors at different levels, thereby achieving maximum efficiency in national intelligence assessment product production through rational institutional design rather than simply viewing it as a superposition of various intelligence agencies' assessment systems, as specifically shown in the composition logic part of [Figure 2: see original paper].

3.3 Operational Mechanism of the National Intelligence Assessment System

The vitality of the national intelligence assessment system lies in its operation. How can the system operate effectively? How can it ensure maximum effectiveness? It must operate according to objective laws along established tracks, enabling actual national intelligence assessment work to follow the original intention of institutional design. Based on this, combined with operational logic thinking and national intelligence assessment work characteristics, this study explores how to implement national intelligence assessment work in realistic

contexts from a procedural perspective. Specifically, referencing existing national intelligence assessment models and China's institutional characteristics, it proposes a working mechanism for the national intelligence assessment system with Chinese characteristics, enabling specific work to be fully demonstrated in institutional design and helping participants understand their functions, responsibilities, and standards.

First, the division between routine and emergency process requirements. Institutional construction originates from requirements, which provide direction for institutions, influence service objectives and subjects, and form the basis for resource allocation. Under different temporal, spatial, and environmental conditions, requirements surrounding national security exhibit characteristics of difference, complexity, and relativity. No universally applicable institutional framework can satisfy all requirements. Therefore, constructing the national intelligence assessment system according to the essential differences in requirements holds important value.

The main difference in national intelligence assessment work requirements lies in serving routine work or emergency work. As two major areas of government management, routine government management and emergency government management are both highly connected and distinctly different [37]. Under normal social conditions, national intelligence assessment work proceeds according to established procedures to ensure smooth completion of target tasks through meticulous operation. Under abnormal social conditions, special means must be implemented to achieve maximum effectiveness in the shortest time with minimal cost. Emergency states always accompany threats to self-interest, requiring improvement of previous inaction or *laissez-faire* states within short timeframes, which differs from routine state requirements for repeated deliberation and cumbersome, meticulous processes in national intelligence assessment. Therefore, national intelligence assessment work should be discussed separately according to routine or emergency requirements.

Second, the establishment of efficient and meticulous procedures. When the definition of institution extends to the micro-level, it can be understood as daily routine operations and the specific operational procedures of participants. From a legal perspective, procedure means a series of specific methods, steps, and formalities—a technical process. In this study, national intelligence assessment is essentially intelligence management. Besides requiring non-procedural resource integration and coordination across various levels, it needs to establish structural procedures to make national intelligence assessment an efficient and meticulous intelligence management method. Referencing Li Jinglong's perspective [10], this study believes that procedural design for national intelligence assessment can include the following steps:

First, confirm the assessment task. Before national intelligence assessment work begins, it is necessary to clarify national requirements and initiate assessment tasks to ensure the project proceeds in the correct direction from the start. This task should be initiated by relevant leaders of intelligence leadership institutions

based on specific requirements of decision-makers or according to their own judgment, and then select a responsible person from the assessment department to undertake the entire national intelligence assessment work.

Second, select the assessment team. After determining the assessment task, it is necessary to determine the participating team. The assessment department head should widely select participants within the department and across the intelligence community based on professional expertise to jointly assist in completing the national intelligence assessment work.

Third, formulate the assessment plan. After the assessment team is determined, formulating an assessment plan is essential work. As the ancient adage states, “preparation ensures success, while unpreparedness courts failure,” illustrating the necessity of advance preparation and planning. In this study, this specifically refers to detailing the national intelligence assessment task, clearly identifying the core questions the assessment must answer to help participants from all fields focus on assessment issues.

Fourth, receive and submit reports. According to the detailed assessment task, correspondingly receive assessment reports from various intelligence agencies or entities.

Fifth, produce the initial draft. Summarize and analyze all received assessment reports to form an initial manuscript.

Finally, revise, coordinate, and review. Initial report generation does not signify the end of national intelligence assessment work. Subsequent multiple consultations and revisions can avoid low-level repetitive research that fixed procedures might cause. Specifically, the task leader should distribute the initial assessment draft to representatives of intelligence agencies participating in the task and repeatedly deliberate different viewpoints and wording with them. In multi-party discussions, representatives should consider national and public interests, revising national intelligence assessment results through rational discussion rather than pursuing private interests or policy control. Therefore, when disagreements arise over the report, representatives can directly provide feedback to the assessment leader. If disagreements cannot be resolved, they should report to their agency leaders for coordination, even seeking participation of think tank members in relevant fields for consultation until final consensus is reached. The revised draft should then be submitted to leaders of participating intelligence agencies for review and supplementary opinions, with the assessment leader coordinating disagreements until a final version is produced.

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