

## THE ROLE OF THE POLICY MAKER

Many authors and experts in the area of intelligence do not consider the policy maker to be part of the intelligence process. In their opinion, once the intelligence has been given to the policy client, the intelligence process is complete. The view in this book is that policy makers play such a central role at all stages of the process that it would be a mistake to omit them. Policy makers do more than receive intelligence; they shape it. Without a constant reference to policy, intelligence is rendered meaningless. Moreover, policy makers can play a determining role at every phase of the intelligence process.

### THE U.S. NATIONAL SECURITY POLICY PROCESS

Although much of this book is intended to be a generic discussion of intelligence, the main reference point is the U.S. government. Therefore, a brief discussion of how national security policy is formed in the United States is appropriate.

*Structure and Interests.* The five main loci of the U.S. national security policy process are

1. The president, as an individual;
2. The departments, the State Department and the Department of Defense (DOD), which has two major components: the civilian (the Office of the Secretary of Defense) and the military (the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or JCS, the Joint Staff, and the four military services), and on certain issues, other departments will also be involved, including Justice, Commerce, Treasury, Energy, Agriculture, Health and Human Services, and, after the September 2001 attacks, the newly created Department of Homeland Security (DHS);
3. The National Security Council (NSC) staff, which is the hub of the system;
4. The intelligence community; and
5. Congress, which controls all expenditures, makes policy in its own right, and performs oversight.

The main national security structure was remarkably stable from its inception in the National Security Act of 1947 until the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA), which radically changed the top management structure of the intelligence community.

The five groups that carry out the intelligence process have varying interests. Presidents are transient, mainly concerned about broad policy initiatives and, eventually, their place in history. Richard M. Nixon (1969–1974), who was intensely suspicious of the permanent bureaucracy, argued—correctly—that a gulf exists between the president's interests and those of the bureaucracy. Sometimes they work together; at other times they are at odds. The bureaucracy tends to be more jaded and, on occasion, to take the view that it can outlast the president, presidential appointees, and their preferred policies.

The principal interest of the State Department is maintaining diplomatic relations as a means of furthering U.S. policy interests. Critics of the State Department argue that Foreign Service officers sometimes forget which nation they represent, becoming advocates for the nations on which they have expertise instead of for the United States.

DOD is concerned primarily with having a military capability sufficient to deter hostile nations from using force or, if that fails, being able to bring to bear an overwhelming preponderance of force so as to terminate the conflict quickly and on favorable terms. Critics of DOD hold that the department overestimates its needs and threats and requires too large a margin against any potential foe. In response to the Vietnam War, the unofficial but influential rules for the use of force promulgated by Secretary of Defense Caspar W. Weinberger (1981–1987) and JCS chairman Gen. Colin L. Powell (1989–1993) set high requirements for domestic political support and force preponderance before any troops are committed. The protracted struggles in Afghanistan (2001–) and Iraq (2003–2011) will probably result in a renewed debate over the Weinberger and Powell requirements. Disagreements over how and when to use force were also reflected in the debate between Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld (2001–2006) and Army Chief of Staff Gen. Eric Shinseki (1999–2003). Shinseki argued that more troops would be needed to occupy Iraq than had been allocated; Rumsfeld ignored Shinseki.

DHS is responsible for coordinating the activities of many long-standing agencies, including the Coast Guard, Immigration and Naturalization, the Border Patrol, the Secret Service, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). It has also established new components, such as the Transportation Security Administration (TSA). DHS seeks to prevent new terrorist attacks in the United States and serves as a bridge between the federal government and state and local law enforcement agencies on domestic security issues. It is also responsible for critical infrastructure protection, most of which belongs to the private sector, and for much of the cyber policy enunciated by the Obama administration. DHS has had to deal with a difficult structure, as it tries to meld together the activities of several former independent agencies or offices taken from other departments, as well as the issue of determining what it is that DHS is responsible for. (See chap. 12 for a broader discussion of the intelligence implications of this doctrinal issue.)

The NSC, as constituted by law, consists of the president, the vice president, the secretaries of state and defense, and, more recently, the secretary of energy. The chairman of the JCS serves as the military adviser; the director of national intelligence (DNI) is subordinate to the NSC and serves as the intelligence adviser. That said, it has been the practice since the first DNI in 2005 to have both the DNI and the director of the Central Intelligence Agency (DCIA) present at NSC meetings. This may seem redundant given that the DNI is the senior intelligence adviser, but it must be recalled that the DCIA controls most of the all-source analysts in the intelligence community and has direct day-to-day responsibility for the two most politically dangerous intelligence activities, espionage and covert actions. This underscores, once again, an inherent weakness in the DNI's position and the importance for the DNI to have good relations with the DCIA. As noted in chap. 3, the Trump administration initially wanted to limit the attendance of the DNI and chairman of the Joint Chiefs to NSC meetings in which issues relevant to their expertise were being discussed. There may be issues that have no military component, but it is difficult to conceive of issues where some intelligence input would not be useful, if not necessary. What made this decision more unusual was the inclusion of Trump's chief strategist, Stephen Bannon, as an NSC member. All of these decisions were later reversed; Bannon was fired a few months later.

As a corporate group, the full NSC meets irregularly. The Principals Committee (called the PC) is made up of the NSC members (less the president) and is presided over by the national security adviser. The Deputies Committee (DC) meets more often. Below the DC are Interagency Policy Committees (IPCs) and Sub-Interagency Policy Committees (Sub-IPCs), dealing with specific issues at a lower level. According to press accounts, National Security Adviser John Bolton (2018–) has replaced some PCs with “paper PCs,” where options and views are circulated among members but there is no actual meeting. This reduces the number of meetings but also makes it more difficult to have vigorous debates. In addition, it enhances the role of the national security adviser in controlling policy discussions.

Day-to-day, the National Security Council staff (NSC staff) reports to the national security adviser. This is a key position, as the national security adviser sets much of the tone for the overall process of policy deliberation. This position does not exist in law and is not subject to Senate confirmation. The national security adviser can be either civil or military. There are two major models for conducting this job. One might be called the Brent Scowcroft model. Scowcroft was national security adviser twice, under President Gerald Ford from 1975 to 1977 and under President George H. W. Bush from 1989 to 1993. Scowcroft operated as an “honest broker,” making sure that all points of view were brought before the president but not acting as a policy advocate. The other model might be called the Henry Kissinger model. Kissinger was national security adviser under Presidents Nixon and Ford, from 1969 to 1975. Kissinger operated as a policy maker in his own right and came to dominate nearly all aspects of national security policy. For two years, Kissinger served simultaneously as secretary of state and national security adviser. Regardless of the model, the national security adviser serves at the pleasure of the president and it can be a volatile relationship. Ronald Reagan had six national security advisers in his eight-year tenure. Donald Trump was on his third national security adviser after fifteen months as president.

The NSC staff consists of career civil servants, military officers, and political appointees who have day-to-day responsibility for conveying the wishes of the president to the policy and intelligence communities and for coordinating among the departments and agencies. The NSC staff consists of regional and functional offices. The NSC staff is interested primarily in the execution of policy as defined by the president and senior presidential appointees. The size of the NSC staff has been an increasing point of concern as it has continued to grow—going from 20 staffers under President John F. Kennedy to more than 40 under President George H. W. Bush to roughly 100 under President Bill Clinton to more than 400 under President Barack Obama. This expansion has not only made the NSC staff unwieldy, but it has also meant that more and more policy development has been concentrated in the NSC staff rather than in the departments. For example, under previous administrations, IPCs and Sub-IPCs had been chaired by lead departments or agencies. In the Obama administration, these were brought under the NSC. Although it is usual for departments to complain about “White House micromanagement” in each administration, there now seems to be genuine concern, to the point where the Obama administration recognized the problem and said that it would reduce the size of the NSC staff. The FY2017 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 114-328, December 23, 2016) limits the professional staff of the NSC to 200, a substantial reduction but still a large staff.

The intelligence community has no policy interests *per se*, although it wants to be kept informed about the course of policy to make a contribution to it.

*Policy Dynamics.* Policy makers often refer to the “interagency process” or “the interagency.” The term reflects the involvement of any and all necessary agencies and players in the process. The ultimate goal of the U.S. policy process is to arrive at a consensus that all parties can support. But consensus in the U.S. bureaucratic system means agreement down to the last detail of any paper being considered.

The process has no override mechanism, that is, no way of forcing agreement, of isolating an agency that refuses to go along. This safeguards the rights and interests of all agencies, because the agency that does not agree with the others on an issue today may not be the one that objects tomorrow. To ensure that an agency is not coerced, the interagency process emphasizes bargaining and negotiation, steering away from dictating from above or by majority rule. Bargaining has three immediate effects. First, it can require a great deal of time to arrive at positions that everyone can accept. Second, the system gives leverage to any agency that refuses to reach an agreement. In the absence of any override process, the agency that “just says ‘no’” can wield enormous power. Third, the necessity of reaching agreement generates substantial pressure in favor of lowest common denominator decisions.

On controversial issues, the system can suffer inertia, as agencies constantly redraft papers that never achieve consensus or that one agency refuses to support, effectively bringing the system to a halt. The only way to break such logjams is for the NSC staff or someone higher—meaning the president and senior appointees—to apply pressure. Without their intervention, the system would spin endlessly if an agency continues to hold out. Senior pressure renews the impetus to reach a conclusion or raises the prospect that officials in the holdout agency will be told to support

what the president wants or to resign. But without pressure from above, holdouts suffer no penalty.

Neither the policy community nor the intelligence community is a monolith. Each has multiple players with multiple interests, which do not always coincide with one another. It is important to remember that executive departments are also not monolithic. DOD is clearly divided between the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) and the JCS. Even though the concept of civilian control of the military is a deeply ingrained value, the two parts may not agree. As noted, in the period just before the invasion of Iraq, Army chief of staff General Shinseki held the view that the number of troops that would be needed to occupy Iraq was far larger than what Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld had planned. Under the doctrine of civilian control of the military, the secretary prevailed. But Shinseki's effectiveness as Army chief of staff was at an end. Also, within Defense each of the four military services has distinct interests. The State Department is famously divided between the regional bureaus and the functional bureaus, with the regional bureaus tending to dominate. The Foreign Service, that is, the career diplomats, also see themselves apart from the political appointees with whom they work or to whom they report. DHS has yet to forge the agencies that were placed together into a coherent whole; many seem to acknowledge that they are part of DHS only by sufferance. A similar internal dichotomy can be described for virtually all other departments.

*The Role of the Intelligence Community.* Policy makers accept the intelligence community as an important part of the system. But the role of intelligence varies with each administration and sometimes with each issue within an administration. The way in which an administration treats intelligence is the key determinant of the role it plays.

Everyone accepts the utility of intelligence as part of the basis on which decisions are made. Again, translating this generality into practice is the important issue. Policy makers have many reasons to find fault with or even to ignore intelligence. They do not necessarily view intelligence in the same way as those who are producing it.

Policy makers also understand that the intelligence community can be called on to carry out certain types of operations. Again, the willingness to use this capacity and the specific types of operations that are deemed acceptable vary with the political leadership. These elected or presidentially appointed leaders must make the final decisions on operations and are held accountable, in a political sense, if the operations fail. To be sure, intelligence officers can and do get their share of the blame, but policy makers perceive that their own costs are much greater. But the nature of the relationship is captured in a rueful saying among intelligence officers: "There are only policy successes and intelligence failures. There are no policy failures and intelligence successes."

Finally, the intelligence relationship with most new administrations begins somewhat tentatively. Richard Kerr, a former deputy DCI and acting DCI, noted, "We sometimes know more about foreign governments than we do about our own government. We sometimes know more about foreign leaders than we do about an incoming administration." Even though the mechanics of presidential transitions are well-established, there will always be some uncertainty, driven to a greater or lesser

extent by personalities and expertise, or lack thereof, on the part of the new administration's senior officials.

## WHO WANTS WHAT?

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The fact that the government is not a monolithic organization helps explain why policy makers and intelligence officers have different interests. At a high macro level, everyone wants the same thing—successful national security policy—but this statement is so general that it is misleading. Success can mean different things to policy makers and intelligence officials.

The president and an administration's senior political appointees define success as the advancement of their agenda. Even though a broad continuity had existed in U.S. foreign policy until the Trump administration, each administration interprets goals individually and fosters initiatives that are uniquely its own. The success of an administration's agenda must be demonstrable in ways that are easily comprehended, because its successes are expected to have a political dividend. This is not as crass as it sounds. National security policy is created within a political system and process, the ultimate rewards of which are election and reelection to national office. Finally, policy makers expect support for their policies from the permanent bureaucracy.

The intelligence community defines its goals differently. Recall the three wishes posed by Sherman Kent. (See chap. 6.) The intelligence community also wants to maintain its objectivity regarding policy. Intelligence officials do not want to become, or even to be seen as becoming, advocates for policies other than those that directly affect their activities. Only by maintaining their distance from policy can they hope to produce intelligence that is objective. But objectivity is not always easily achieved. To cite one example, Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) George J. Tenet (1997–2004) was intimately involved in the Israeli–Palestinian negotiations in October 1998. The Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) took responsibility for creating a security relationship between the two sides. As a result, the CIA had a vested interest in the outcome of the agreement, not because of any intelligence it had produced but because it had become a participant. In this sort of case, legitimate questions can be raised about the potential effect on subsequent analyses of the implementation of the agreement. Will analysts feel free to report that security arrangements are failing, if that is the case, knowing that their own agency is charged with implementing these same arrangements? The answer may be yes, but it is subject to serious question.

In 2008, DNI Mike McConnell (2007–2009), in *Vision 2015*, stated that the intelligence community's mission was to provide policy makers with “**decision advantage**.” This concept, first developed by Jennifer Sims, a professional intelligence officer and scholar, seeks to provide policy makers with intelligence that will give them an advantage over adversaries, allowing them to act with greater confidence and greater likelihood of success. In many respects, decision advantage is a variation on opportunity analysis discussed earlier. (See chap. 6.) Like opportunity analysis, decision advantage runs the risk of getting too close to the policy–intelligence line. The inherent risk for intelligence officers is that the action will not play out advantageously and much of the onus for failure will then fall on the intelligence officers.

The policy maker–intelligence community relationship changes the longer the policy makers stay in office. At the outset of their relationship, most policy makers tend to be more impressed and more accepting of the intelligence they receive. Even for policy makers who are returning to government service, albeit in different and usually more senior positions, this tends to be true. However, as the policy makers become more familiar with the issues for which they are responsible and with the available intelligence, they tend to have higher expectations and to become more demanding. There is also an interesting dichotomy between the attitudes of most incoming presidents and their immediate subordinates in terms of how they view intelligence. Very few incoming presidents have any working familiarity with national intelligence. If we look at the presidents since World War II, only three (Dwight Eisenhower, Richard Nixon, and George H. W. Bush) had any significant exposure to national intelligence before taking office. But many of their subordinates will have worked with intelligence agencies earlier in their careers, as they moved up the policy ladder. Thus, senior and mid-level political appointees are likely to be more familiar and more comfortable with intelligence than their presidents—and perhaps more jaded about it as well.

The Trump administration transition was something of an exception. Resentful that allegations of Russian interference during the 2016 election undermined the legitimacy of his victory, Trump compared U.S. intelligence agencies to Nazis and accused them of being part of a “deep state,” a phrase more often used to describe authoritarian or semiauthoritarian governments where the security services have a largely independent existence and can dictate the course of policy and even change governments. (The details of the investigations into Russian interference are beyond the scope of this book. Russia’s actions are discussed in chaps. 8, 12, and 15.) These comments did little to start relations between the new administration and the intelligence agencies on a sound footing.

After taking office, Trump continued to take public exception to intelligence community positions. He repeatedly questioned the view that Russia had interfered in the 2016 election. In a joint appearance with Russian president Vladimir Putin in Helsinki, Finland, in July 2018, Trump said he accepted Putin’s claim that Russia had not interfered. In October 2018, Trump refused to accept the intelligence community assessment that dissident Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi was killed on orders of the Saudi government in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul and not by accident. The April 2019 report of special counsel Robert Mueller found no collusion between the Trump presidential campaign and Russia but reaffirmed that Russia took steps to influence the outcome of the election. Again, there is nothing wrong or novel about policy makers disagreeing with or rejecting intelligence. Presidents Kennedy, Lyndon Johnson, Nixon, and George W. Bush all took issue at various points with the support they received from intelligence agencies.

In February 2019, after DNI Dan Coats (2017–2019) and other leaders in the intelligence community had delivered their annual *Worldwide Threat Assessment* testimony, Trump publicly took issue with some of their views, in particular those on North Korea and Iran (see chaps. 11 and 12). Trump called the intelligence community leadership “naïve” and said “perhaps they should go back to school.” After a meeting and photo opportunity in the Oval Office with Coats, DCIA Gina Haspel, and FBI director Christopher Wray, Trump claimed that the intelligence chiefs said they had

been misquoted and taken out of context. However, news reports of their testimony were accurate. Trump could not distinguish between differences of opinion on how other states might behave versus opposing policy, which would be out of bounds. This type of disagreement very rarely happens in public or repeatedly.

In May 2019, Trump gave Attorney General William Barr authority to declassify intelligence agency documents as part of Barr's examination of how U.S. intelligence agencies investigated relations between the Trump campaign and Russia during the 2016 election. Some observers argued that Barr could "cherry pick" among classified intelligence and that he might put intelligence sources and methods at risk, depending on which documents he chose to release. The DNI is responsible in law for protecting intelligence sources and methods, and typically agency heads decide which documents can be declassified. These various incidents suggest that there is little trust between Trump and the intelligence community, which is extremely problematic.

To some, the nature of the relationship between the DCI or DNI and the president also is a factor. George Tenet enjoyed what was probably the closest relationship of any DCI to a president, usually seeing George W. Bush at least five or six days a week, and sometimes several times a day. This began on the president's taking office in 2001, when he said he wanted daily briefings from the DCI. This was a dramatic change from the situation under Clinton, when the DCI saw the president much less often. Clinton's first DCI, R. James Woolsey (1993–1995), left office in frustration over his lack of access. As DCI Richard Helms (1966–1973) observed, a great deal of the DCI's authority derived from the perception that he had access to the president when he needed it. So, for Tenet, the increased access to President Bush was a great gain. But some observers questioned whether such increased access had an effect on the DCI's objectivity. Critics cited Tenet's enthusiastic report on the likelihood of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) in Iraq. However, the report by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence said no evidence existed that the intelligence had been politicized.

The same questions are relevant for the DNI. Like the DCI, the DNI needs to have access to the president. In some respects, this may be even more important for the DNI because, unlike the DCI, the DNI has no large institutional base (the CIA) on which to fall back. The DNI may have to put more effort into keeping abreast of what the intelligence community is doing and which parts of it are also communicating with the president. This was one of the issues, with specific reference to covert action and espionage, that created a rift between DNI Dennis Blair and DCIA Leon Panetta in 2009–2010. There is no definitive answer. Frequent contact between the DNI and the president is bound to run risks, but no DNI would be likely to choose the alternative relationship. The DNI should trust his or her instincts and rely on professionalism to maintain the proper bounds on the relationship. Once the Trump administration understood that it had to appoint a DNI, despite its preference not to do so, it was not clear how much access to Trump DNI Coats had, as opposed to DCIA Mike Pompeo (2017–2018). Pompeo clearly had great influence as DCIA, as shown when he, rather than Secretary of State Rex Tillerson or Coats, was sent to Pyongyang to feel out the North Koreans on possible talks. Pompeo replaced Tillerson at State in 2018, and it has been reported that Coats attends Trump's intelligence briefings.

Proximity to the president can also have a cost within the ranks of the intelligence community, especially if the DNI is not a professional intelligence officer. Like any other group of professionals, intelligence officers prefer to be directed by one of their own, someone who understands them, who shares their values and cultures, and who shares some of their experiences. Remember that only three DCIs were professional intelligence officers (Richard Helms, William E. Colby, and Robert M. Gates) and two had wartime intelligence experience (Allen Dulles and William Casey). (Since then, three DCIAs have had intelligence experience. Porter J. Goss served in the Clandestine Service, as has Gina Haspel; John Brennan was an analyst and manager for many years.) The other DCIs tended to be treated skeptically at first by the intelligence community or, more specifically, by the CIA, with some gaining acceptance and others not. Therefore, a DCI who was seen as being too close to the policy makers and was also not a career intelligence officer could be seen as perhaps being more suspect by the rank and file. The same may run true for the DNIs, whose only legal requirement for the job is “extensive national security experience.” The added liability for the DNI is separation from all intelligence agencies, including the CIA. Again, much will depend on the nature of the DNI’s relationship with the president and how DNIs conduct themselves vis-à-vis the rest of the intelligence community. To date, two of the five DNIs, McConnell and James Clapper, have been professional intelligence officers, in both cases serving in the military and eventually heading major defense intelligence agencies—the National Security Agency (NSA) for McConnell, and the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) and National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) for Clapper. Clapper was also the under secretary of defense for intelligence before becoming DNI.

The intelligence community also wants to be kept informed about policy directions and preferences. Although this would seem obligatory if the intelligence community is expected to provide relevant analysis, it does not always happen. All too often, policy makers do not keep intelligence abreast below the most senior levels, either by design or by omission. Such behavior not only makes the role of intelligence more difficult but also can lead to resentment that may be played out in other ways.

Another difference between the two groups is that of outlook. As a senior intelligence officer observed, policy makers tend to be optimists. They approach problems with the belief that they can solve them. After all, this is the reason many of them have gone into government. Intelligence officers are skeptics. Their training teaches them to question and to doubt. Although they may see an optimistic outcome to a given situation, they also see the potential pessimistic outcomes and likely feel compelled to analyze them as possible outcomes.

A revealing indication of the potential costs of the difference in outlook emerged in 2004, when relations between the Bush administration and the CIA deteriorated seriously. Differences over the progress being made in containing the insurgency in Iraq appear to have been the main stimulus. Leaks of intelligence analyses, which some White House officials characterized as being written by “pessimists, naysayers, and handwringers,” exacerbated the problem. At one point, President Bush said the CIA “was just guessing” about potential outcomes in Iraq, a remark that some intelligence officers found demeaning. It became customary to say that the CIA and the White House were “at war.” The fact that the exchange took place in the middle of

a presidential election undoubtedly added to the tension. Indeed, the relationship deteriorated to the point where the acting DCI, John McLaughlin, felt it necessary to go to President Bush and assure him that the CIA was not covertly supporting Democratic nominee Sen. John Kerry of Massachusetts in the election.

Similarly, in March 2011, early on during the Libyan civil war and before either the United Nations (UN) or the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) decided to intervene, DNI Clapper assessed the military situation in Libya as a stalemate but with the Muammar Qaddafi regime prevailing over the longer term. Later that same day, President Obama's national security adviser made a conference call to reporters, stating that the president continued to have confidence in the DNI but also expressing the view that Clapper's analysis was "static and uni-dimensional" when it should be "dynamic and . . . multi-dimensional," a polite way of saying the policy makers disagreed publicly with the DNI's assessment.

Several lessons are derived from this byplay. First, war or warlike situations—especially those that may be inconclusive—tend to increase the overall tension, as can be easily understood. Second, in such circumstances both parties can forget the nature of their relationship, although this is probably more likely for the policy makers. The combination of uncertainty and casualties, with the attendant political costs, raises the policy makers' anxiety. Third, the leadership of the intelligence community understands that it can never win this sort of struggle with policy makers and therefore will seek to avoid such confrontations. The professional ethos and training of senior intelligence officials work to preclude such an outcome. Even if their analyses prove to be correct, the costs to their relationship with senior policy officials would be so great as to result in a Pyrrhic victory. This does not mean that analysts should temper their views or hedge what they write but that intelligence officers are unlikely to engage in gratuitous and overt hostility to policy makers.

Finally, the policy makers' expectation of support from the permanent bureaucracy extends to the intelligence community. But policy makers may be seeking intelligence that supports known policy preferences, thus running the risk of politicization. Politicization can also work in the other direction. The intelligence officer's desire to be listened to (Kent's second wish) may lead to analysis that is meant to please the policy makers, either consciously or unwittingly. In either case, the desire for a good working relationship can directly undermine the desired objectivity of intelligence. This aspect of the relationship was exacerbated by Congress's increasing practice of levying requests for national intelligence estimates (NIEs) that were essentially progress reports on the war on terrorists or the situation in Iraq and then also insisting that the Key Judgments (KJs) of these NIEs be declassified and published. Congress is entirely within its right to request NIEs, although these progress report estimates appear to have had political agendas behind them. Publication of the KJs certainly increases the likelihood that the estimates will be used by one or both sides in the political debate. It also increases the likelihood that either the president or Congress or both will assume that unpalatable judgments were written to please opponents in the debate. In October 2007, DNI McConnell decided that NIEs would not be made public any longer because of his concerns about the effect this had on the quality of the analysis. However, as noted, he reversed this decision seven weeks later in the case of the Iran nuclear NIE and

allowed the KJs to be published in declassified form. Interestingly, in his memoirs, President George W. Bush argues that the Iran estimate limited his options for dealing with Iran and said that the NIE made him “angry.” The requirement to publish the KJs from certain NIEs receded after President Obama took office in 2009 and as the United States ended its military involvement in Iraq. This again suggests that much of the motivation for requesting that KJs be published was political in nature.

## THE INTELLIGENCE PROCESS: POLICY AND INTELLIGENCE

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The differences between the policy and intelligence communities—and the potential for tension—appear at each stage of the intelligence process.

One of the ways in which the difficulties of the policy-intelligence relationship surface is through terminology. Policy makers refer to the intelligence community as such. But intelligence officers use an interesting range of words to describe the policy makers: consumers, clients, customers. Of the three, “consumer” may be the most accurate and least charged. A consumer is someone who uses some commodity, in this case, intelligence. The word says nothing about how the consumer obtains the commodity or any relationship to the provider of the commodity. But “client” and “customer” both suggest some economic relationship with the provider of the service or commodity, with varying degrees of volition on the part of the client or customer. (For example, someone with serious injuries has little choice but to engage a doctor but a decision about cosmetic surgery is more volitional.) The words “client” and “customer” also suggest more mutual interdependence than exists between policy makers and intelligence officers. Although most intelligence officers use the various terms interchangeably and mostly as a means of occasionally saying something shorter and other than “policy maker,” they do convey a degree of uncertainty about the exact nature of the relationship.

*Requirements.* Requirements are not abstract concepts. They are the policy makers’ agenda. All policy makers have certain areas or issues on which they must concentrate as well as others on which they would like to concentrate. Some issues are of little or no interest to them but require their attention either occasionally or regularly. This mixture of preferences is important in forming the agenda and thus the requirements. For example, Secretary of State James A. Baker III (1989–1992) was clear, on taking office, that he was not going to spend a lot of time on the Middle East. His decision was based not on a view that the region was unimportant but that he was unlikely to achieve much in the Middle East and therefore his time would be better spent elsewhere. Senior subordinates could handle the Middle East. Iraq’s 1990 invasion of Kuwait undermined his choice. Ironically, the war also helped lead to the 1991 Madrid conference—presided over by Secretary Baker—at which Israel and its Arab foes met together openly for the first time.

The intelligence community wants guidance on the priorities of the agenda so that its collection and reporting can be as helpful as possible. At the same time, the

community tends to understand that it rarely has the luxury of ignoring a region or issue entirely, even if it is not high on the agenda because of the global coverage requirement. Sooner or later, one region or issue is likely to blow up. That said, the intelligence community regularly makes resource choices that lead to some regions or issues receiving little attention.

The degree to which each administration formally communicates its requirements—versus relying on the intelligence community to know which issues matter—also varies. President Clinton was willing to go through a formal requirements exercise only once in eight years. Under the National Intelligence Priorities Framework (NIPF) instituted under President George W. Bush and continued under Presidents Obama and Trump, the requirements are reviewed annually by the president and the NSC and then quarterly by the intelligence community, with ad hoc adjustments made when dictated by events. Regardless of which method is used or the frequency of formal requirements, the intelligence community is held responsible for ensuring that it has collection and analytical resources on the most important issues. Policy makers also tend to expect that the intelligence community anticipates the emergence of new issues. After all, isn't this one of the main functions of intelligence? The answer is not a firm yes if you take into account the fact that surprises occur: assassinations, coups, elections, reversals of policy. Not everything can be anticipated.

The difference in the approaches of policy makers and intelligence officials to requirements is not played out entirely in formulating the requirements themselves but in the ensuing phases of the intelligence process.

**Collection.** Policy makers tend to be divorced from the details of collection unless they involve political sensitivities. In such cases, policy makers can have direct and dramatic effects. (See box, “Policy Makers and Intelligence Collection.”) Their practical concerns lie, first, in the budget, as collection is one of the major intelligence costs, particularly technical intelligence. “Large-ticket items” are always attractive targets during budget-cutting exercises, but policy makers tend to understand that there is not a surplus of collection systems on which to rely. However, the policy makers are often being asked to approve the initiation of programs for very expensive collection systems that will not be of any use to them, given how long it takes to build large overhead systems. Therefore, the normal political calculus that is used to evaluate programs may not work.

Policy makers also tend to assume, incorrectly, that everything is being covered, at least at some minimal level. Thus, when one of the low-priority issues explodes, they expect that a certain low level of collection and on-the-shelf intelligence already exists and that collection can be quickly increased. Both assumptions may be strikingly false. Collection priority decisions tend to be zero-sum games—collect more here and less there, and not all collection assets are easily fungible.

The intelligence community would rather collect more than less, although intelligence officials recognize that they cannot cover everything and hope to get policy makers to concur in the areas to which few resources are devoted. That

is the entire purpose of a requirements or priority system. Still, collection is the bedrock of intelligence. But when policy makers place limits on collection, the intelligence community obeys, even if its preference is to collect. Like the policy makers, intelligence officials are aware of the costs of collection, but they cannot spend more on collection than the policy makers (the president and Congress) are willing to allocate. The customary practice is for the policy community to set budgetary limits on collection resources that are lower than the intelligence community would like, although there have been cases in which Congress mandated collection that the executive branch did not believe was necessary. In 1988, President Reagan was about to conclude the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty with the Soviet Union and was still negotiating the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (START). Sen. David Boren, D-OK, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, insisted on the acquisition of new satellites to help monitor these treaties, which the Reagan administration—which otherwise was not averse to spending on intelligence—did not believe was necessary. Agreement on the new satellites was one of the political requirements to get the INF Treaty through the Senate.

The intelligence community has a greater understanding, as would be expected, of the limits of collection at any given time. Intelligence officials know that they are not collecting everything. They make decisions on a regular basis to omit certain regions or issues in favor of more pressing ones. In their own budget requests, intelligence officials also determine how much of the collection to process and exploit, which is always far less than is collected. The intelligence community sees no reason to convey these facts to the policy makers. At one level, doing so is unnecessary. A region not receiving much collection allocation may stay quiet, which is the bet that the intelligence managers are making. At another level, it may undermine their relationship with policy makers. Why arouse concerns about collection coverage over an issue that is not expected to be a significant priority? Their choices can lead to even worse relations should one of the regions suddenly become a concern and collection be found wanting.

Finally, policy makers may have preferences for or against certain types of collection. For example, it has been reported that Trump does not trust human intelligence (HUMINT) because these are people, in his view, who have betrayed their country and therefore are unreliable.

*Analysis.* Policy makers want information that enables them to make an informed decision, but they do not come to this part of the process as blank slates or wholly objective observers. Already in favor of certain policies and outcomes, they would like to see intelligence that supports their preferences. Again, this is not necessarily as crass as it sounds. Policy makers naturally prefer intelligence that enables them to go where they want. This attitude becomes problematic only when they ignore intelligence that is compelling but contrary to their preferences or if they attempt to prescribe certain “supportive” analysis.

Some policy makers also want to keep their options open for as long as possible. They may resist making important decisions. Intelligence can occasionally serve to limit options by indicating that some options are either insupportable or may have

## POLICY MAKERS AND INTELLIGENCE COLLECTION

In several instances, policy makers have intervened in intelligence collection for political reasons.

In Cuba, at the onset of the missile crisis in 1962, Secretary of State Dean Rusk opposed sending U-2s over the island because a Chinese Nationalist U-2 had recently been shot down over China and an Air Force U-2 had accidentally violated Soviet air space in Siberia. The need for imagery of possible Soviet missile sites in Cuba was great, but Rusk had other—also legitimate—concerns about avoiding further provocation.

In Iran, several successive U.S. administrations imposed limits on intelligence collection. Basically, intelligence officers were not allowed to have contact with those in the souks (markets and bazaars) who were opposed to the shah, because the shah's regime would be offended. Instead, U.S. intelligence had to rely on the shah's secret police, SAVAK, which had an institutional interest in denying that any opposition existed. Thus, as the shah's regime unraveled in 1978–1979, policy makers denied U.S. intelligence the sources and contacts it needed to better analyze the situation or to influence the opposition.

Again, regarding Cuba, President Jimmy Carter unilaterally suspended U-2 flights as a gesture to improve bilateral relations. Carter came to regret his decision in 1980, when he faced the possibility that a Soviet combat brigade was in Cuba and he required better intelligence on the issue.

dangerous consequences. The imposition of such limitations serves as yet another area of friction.

Intelligence often deals in ambiguities and uncertainties. If a situation were known with certainty, intelligence would not be needed. (See box, “*Intelligence Uncertainties and Policy*.”) Honestly reported intelligence highlights uncertainties and ambiguities, which may prove to be discomforting to policy makers for several reasons. First, if their desire is intelligence that helps them make decisions, anything that is uncertain and ambiguous is going to be less helpful or perhaps even a hindrance. Second, some policy makers cannot appreciate why the multi-billion-dollar intelligence community cannot resolve issues. Many of them assume that important issues are ultimately “knowable,” when in fact many are not. This attitude on the part of policy makers can serve as an impetus for intelligence analysts to reach internal agreements or to try to play down disagreements.

Policy makers may also be suspicious of intelligence that supports their rivals in the interagency policy process. They may suspect that rivals have consorted with the intelligence community to produce intelligence that undercuts their position. Again, the increased political use of NIEs was a case in point. Finally, policy makers are free to ignore, disagree with, or even rebut intelligence and offer their own analyses. Such

## INTELLIGENCE UNCERTAINTIES AND POLICY

In 1987 U.S.-Soviet negotiations were drawing to a close on the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. The U.S. intelligence community had three methods for estimating the number of Soviet INF missiles that had been produced—all of which had to be accounted for and destroyed. Meanwhile, any final number given by the Soviets would be suspect.

Each of the three major analytic intelligence agencies advocated its methodology and its number as the one that should go forward. But the senior intelligence officer responsible for the issue decided, correctly, that all three numbers had to go to President Reagan. Some agency representatives argued that this was simply pusillanimous hedging. But the intelligence officer argued that the president had to be aware of the intelligence uncertainties and the possible range of missile numbers before he signed the treaty. That was the right answer, instead of choosing, perhaps arbitrarily, among the methodologies.

actions are inherent to a system that is dominated by the policy makers. (See box, “*The Limits of Intelligence and Policy: Hurricane Katrina.*”)

This behavior on the part of policy makers can become controversial. Although policy makers are free to disagree with or to ignore intelligence, it is not seen as legitimate for them to set up what appears to be intelligence offices of their own and separate from the intelligence community. In the period before the onset of the war in Iraq (2003–2011), Under Secretary of Defense for Policy Douglas Feith (2001–2005) set up an office that he claimed was a permissible analytic cell. Critics argued that it was charged with coming up with intelligence analysis that was more supportive of preferred policies than was being

## THE LIMITS OF INTELLIGENCE AND POLICY: HURRICANE KATRINA

Hurricane Katrina is an excellent example of the limits of intelligence and the role of policy makers, even though it was not a foreign intelligence issue. The intelligence on Katrina was nearly perfect: The size and strength of the storm, the likely track of the storm, and the unique nature of the threat that it posed to New Orleans in particular because of that city’s topography were all known. In fact, these were known for days before the storm hit New Orleans. However, policy makers in New Orleans and at the state level in Louisiana reacted much too late, thereby increasing the effect of the storm on an unprepared population. The lesson is that even perfect intelligence is useless unless someone acts on it.

written by the intelligence community. Without admitting any fault, the office ultimately was disbanded. In February 2007, DOD's inspector general (IG) released a report on the role played by this DOD policy office, an investigation requested by Sen. Carl Levin, D-M. The IG found that the office had developed and disseminated "alternative intelligence assessments" on al Qaeda's relationship with Iraq that disagreed with the assessments of the intelligence community. The IG found this to be inappropriate (although not illegal) because the DOD-produced assessments were intelligence assessments but they failed to highlight for policy makers the disagreements with the intelligence community. In some cases, DOD-produced papers were presented as intelligence products. According to the IG, a version of the assessment shown to DCI Tenet and DIA director Vice Adm. Lowell Jacoby also purposely omitted material that was used when the briefing was given to senior officials in the White House. Feith disagreed with the IG's findings.

A similar issue arose during the Senate hearings over John Bolton's 2005 nomination to be ambassador to the United Nations. Critics, including Carl Ford, the former assistant secretary of state for intelligence and research, charged that Bolton objected to intelligence analyses that ran counter to his policy preferences and that he substituted intelligence analysis with views of his own without making clear what he had done. During his confirmation hearings, Bolton told the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that a policy maker should be allowed "to state his own reading of the intelligence" but agreed that policy makers should not purport that their views are those of the intelligence community.

The intelligence community tries to maintain its objectivity. Some policy makers raise questions that can undermine the ability of the intelligence community to fulfill Kent's wishes to be listened to and to influence policy for the good as well as to be objective. Some conflicts or disconnects can be avoided or ameliorated if the intelligence community makes an effort to convey to policy makers as early as possible the limits of intelligence analysis. The goal should be to establish realistic expectations and rules of engagement. (See box, "Setting the Right Expectations.")

## SETTING THE RIGHT EXPECTATIONS

During the briefings that each new administration receives, an incoming under secretary of state was meeting with one of his senior intelligence officers on the issue of narcotics. The intelligence officer laid out in detail all the intelligence that could be known about narcotics: amounts grown, shipping routes, street prices, and so forth. "That said," the intelligence officer concluded, "there is very little you will be able to do with this intelligence."

The under secretary asked why the briefing had ended in that manner.

"Because," the intelligence officer replied, "this is an issue where the intelligence outruns policy's ability to come up with solutions. You are likely to grow frustrated by all of this intelligence while you have no policy levers with which to react. I want to prepare you for this at the outset of our relationship so as to avoid problems later on."

The under secretary understood.

Policy makers are the main driver behind the emphasis on current intelligence. Their days and inboxes are filled with near-term issues and concerns. Despite their occasionally stated desire to read longer term intelligence, in reality they have little time—and sometimes little inclination—to do so. The intelligence they receive reflects the reality of the majority of their days.

Finally, policy makers can and do act as their own intelligence analysts. There are several reasons for this. First, they tend to have confidence in their ability and their judgment. Second, the longer they are in office, the more facile they become with certain problems, and their perceived need for intelligence—especially background information—decreases. Third, at a certain point, senior policy makers may actually have more experience dealing with their opposite numbers in various countries and certainly more direct contact than the intelligence officers writing about that nation or about that foreign policy maker. Indeed, policy makers have sometimes expressed frustration with the intelligence they have received on foreign leaders, believing that it did not accurately reflect or capture the people they had gotten to know. One secretary of state said to his advisers, “I have met the Soviet foreign minister twenty times. Can anyone else say that?” He knew the answer and later said that the biographical briefs he read on his Soviet counterpart were not particularly useful even after the secretary had sat down with intelligence analysts to share with them his impressions and experience.

**Covert Action.** Covert action can be attractive to policy makers because it increases available options and theoretically decreases direct political costs because of plausible deniability. Policy makers may assume that an extensive on-the-shelf operational capability exists and that the intelligence community can mount an operation on fairly short notice. The assumptions are, in effect, the operational counterpart to the assumption that all areas of the world are receiving some minimal level of collection and analytical attention.

Policy makers of course want covert actions that are successful. Success is easier to define for short-term operations, but it may be elusive for those of longer duration. As a result, tension may arise between the intelligence and policy-making communities. Most senior policy makers tend to think in blocks of time no longer than four years—the tenure of a single administration. The intelligence community, as part of the permanent bureaucracy, can afford to think in longer stretches. It does not face the deadline that elections impose on an administration. Indeed, there can be risks involved in operations that overlap a change in administrations. Planning for what became the Bay of Pigs operation began in the last months of the Eisenhower administration (1953–1961). When Kennedy took office, the plans already had a fair degree of bureaucratic momentum behind them. Also, Kennedy was a novice in national security, unlike his predecessor, so he relied more heavily on the advice he received from CIA and the Joint Chiefs. Still, Kennedy made some changes in the plans that were detrimental to their ultimate success—although the overall likelihood of success remained questionable, relying as it did on a popular anti-Castro uprising that was extremely unlikely.

The intelligence community harbors a certain ambivalence about covert action. A covert action gives the intelligence community an opportunity to display its

capabilities in an area that is of extreme importance to policy makers. Covert action is also an area in which the intelligence community's skills are unique and are less subject to rebuttal or alternatives than is the community's analysis. However, disagreement over covert action is highly probable if policy makers request an operation that intelligence officials believe to be unlikely to succeed or inappropriate. Once the intelligence community is committed to an operation, it does not want to be left in the lurch by the policy makers. For example, in a paramilitary operation, the intelligence community likely feels a greater obligation to the forces it has enlisted, trained, and armed than the policy makers do. The two communities do not view in similar ways a decision to end the operation.

*Policy Maker Behaviors.* Just as certain intelligence analyst behaviors matter, so do certain policy maker behaviors. Not every policy maker consumes intelligence in the same way. Some like to read, for example, while others prefer being briefed. Policy makers are better served if they convey their preferences early on instead of leaving them to guesswork.

Policy makers do not always appreciate the limits of what can be collected and known with certainty, the reasons behind ambiguity, and, occasionally, the propriety of intelligence. They sometimes confuse the lack of a firm estimate with pusillanimity when that may not be the case. Intelligence officers sometimes liken this problem to the difference between puzzles and mysteries. Puzzles have solutions; these may be difficult but they can be found. Mysteries, on the other hand, may not have a knowable solution. This distinction may be lost on policy makers, but it is very real in the minds of intelligence officers. They expect to be asked to solve puzzles; they know they may not be able to solve mysteries.

Given the range of issues on which they must work, senior policy makers probably are not fully conversant with every issue. The best policy makers know what they do not know and take steps to learn more. Some are less self-aware and either learn as they go along or fake it.

The most dreaded reaction to bad news is killing the messenger, referring to the practice of kings who would kill the herald who brought bad news. Messengers—including intelligence officers—are no longer killed for bringing bad news, but bureaucratic deaths do occur. An intelligence official can lose access to a policy maker or be cut out of important meetings.

Policy makers can also be a source of politicization in a variety of ways (see chap. 6): overtly—by telling intelligence officers the outcome the policy maker prefers or expects; covertly—by giving strong signals that have the same result; or inadvertently—by not understanding that questions are being interpreted as a request for a certain outcome. Again, the repeated briefings requested by Vice President Richard Cheney in the period before the start of the war in Iraq were seen by some, mostly outside the intelligence community, as a covert pressure on the intelligence community for a certain outcome—agreement that Iraq was a threat based on its possession of weapons of mass destruction. Even though this was the ultimate analytic conclusion, an investigation by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence that was highly critical of the analytic process found no evidence of politicization.

*The Uses of Intelligence.* One of the divides between policy makers and intelligence officers is the use to which the intelligence is put. Policy makers want to take action; intelligence officers, although sympathetic and sometimes supportive, are concerned about safeguarding sources and methods and maintaining the community's ability to collect intelligence.

For example, suppose intelligence suggests that officials in a ministry in Country A have decided to arrange a clandestine sale of high-technology components to Country B, whose activities are a proliferation concern. The intelligence community has intelligence strongly indicating that the sale is going forward, although it is not clear whether Country A's leadership is fully aware of the sale. The State Department, or other executive agencies, believes that the situation is important to U.S. national interests and wants to issue a *démarche* to Country A to stop the sale. The intelligence community, however, argues that this will alert Country A—and perhaps Country B as well—to the fact that the United States has some good intelligence sources. At a minimum, the intelligence community insists on having a hand in drafting the *démarche* so as to obscure its basis. This can result in a new bureaucratic tug of war, because the State Department wants the *démarche* to be as strong as possible to get the preferred response—cessation of the sale.

Similarly, talking points—internally agreed-upon official statements used to explain a policy, decision, or event—are often sources of tension between policy officials and intelligence officers. Talking points can be issued by either. The tension comes in clearing the talking points, that is, vetting them and coming up with an agreed text before they are used. Remember the necessity within the policy process of getting complete agreement on everything in the text. The policy maker wants to be able to show that a policy or decision is correct or well handled and wants intelligence that is supportive or that does not call into question the policy or decision. The intelligence officer wants to show that useful intelligence was provided, regardless of the policy outcome. There may be several points of contention. The policy maker may want more intelligence or more precise intelligence than the intelligence officer believes can be provided safely. Or the policy maker may prefer not to use intelligence if it calls into question the decision. Now the intelligence officer may want to use the intelligence to show that he or she gave good support despite the outcome. The result in each case is a negotiation seeking to meet all concerns and needs to the extent possible. However, as always, the policy makers remain in charge and determine the final outcome.

This type of situation arises so frequently that it is accepted by both sides—policy and intelligence—as one of the normal aspects of national security. The struggle is analogous to the divide between intelligence officers and law enforcement officials: Intelligence officers want to collect more intelligence, whereas law enforcement officials seek to prosecute malefactors and may need to use the intelligence to support an indictment and prosecution. On occasion, policy officials cite a piece of open-source intelligence that makes the same case that the classified intelligence does, and they then argue that it can be used as the basis of a specific course of action. However, the intelligence officers may not agree, contending that the open-source intelligence is validated only because the same information is known via classified sources. Thus, the intelligence officers may argue that even using

open-source intelligence can serve to reveal classified intelligence sources and methods. In the case of imagery, at least, the greater availability of high-quality commercial imagery may obviate the entire debate.

However, there can be occasions when the specifics of the situation reveal deeper policy-intelligence tensions. The events surrounding the attack on the U.S. mission in Benghazi, Libya, on September 11, 2012, which resulted in the deaths of U.S. ambassador J. Christopher Stevens and three other Americans, is illustrative. Two issues were at stake: the intelligence warnings prior to the attack and the drafting of talking points that UN Ambassador Susan Rice later used on television to explain how the attacks happened and whether they were spontaneous or planned, which also went back to the issue of warnings. Coming as the attacks did during a presidential election campaign, the issue also took on a partisan tinge.

Within a very short time, there were multiple investigations of the Benghazi incident. There was general agreement in several of these that the threat environment in Benghazi was high, although this was not acknowledged in all quarters, and that security was not robust. However, as the State Department's Accountability Board noted, Ambassador Stevens was the leading State Department expert on Libya and as such his own decisions on travel times and arrangements carried additional weight.

The issue of Ambassador Rice's talking points is more complex. Rice said in several television interviews that the attacks were spontaneous. The trail of released e-mails remains difficult to follow, but it would appear that several parties were involved in editing the talking points. The draft originated at CIA. State Department officials objected to references to CIA warnings about extremist activities at Benghazi as it might put the State Department in a bad light. It appears that after much fairly typical bureaucratic back and forth, CIA deputy director Michael Morrell edited the talking points and took out the more controversial points about warnings and extremists. This then became the position of the Obama administration, including White House press spokesman Jay Carney: that the CIA provided the draft, even though, in the end, it was a negotiated document.

The Benghazi incident is instructive for several insights into the policy maker-intelligence relationship:

- First, this all came up in the aftermath of the event, not during it.
- Although CIA did provide the final draft, there was a great deal of back-and-forth between policy makers and the CIA as to what should or should not be said.
- The goals of the two groups, in terms of the language, were not identical. Policy makers did not want to contradict past versions of events and also did not want to be too far in front of investigations. CIA, in the early drafts, provided more information than the policy makers wanted or with which they felt comfortable.
- Finally, at a certain point, the policy-making community closed ranks and blamed the CIA for the final talking points, which is fair at the drafting level but not necessarily at the negotiating level.

In January 2014, the Senate Intelligence Committee released a report on the Benghazi attack. The report did not address the issue of the talking points but did find that the attacks were avoidable, placing most of the blame on the State Department for failing to increase security after intelligence warnings about potential threats.

There is no correct answer to this debate. The intelligence exists solely to support policy. If it cannot be used, it begins to lose its purpose. However, policy and intelligence officials must balance the gain to be made by a specific course of action versus the gains that may be available by not revealing intelligence sources and methods, thus allowing continued collection. Usable intelligence is a constant general goal, but which intelligence gets used when and how is open to debate.

*Tensions.* The relationship between policy makers and the intelligence community should be symbiotic: Policy makers should rely on the intelligence community for advice, which is a major rationale for the existence of the intelligence community. For the community to produce good advice, policy makers should keep intelligence officers informed about the major directions of policy and their specific areas of interest and priority. That said, the relationship is not one of equals. Policy and policy makers can exist and function without the intelligence community, but the opposite is not true.

The line that divides policy and intelligence—and the fact that policy makers can cross it but intelligence officers cannot—also affects the relationship. Policy makers tend to be vigilant in seeing that intelligence does not come too close to the line. However, they may ask intelligence officers for advice in choosing among policy options—or for some action—that would take intelligence over the line. If intelligence officers decline, as they should to preserve their objectivity regardless of the outcome, policy makers may become resentful. The line also can blur at the highest levels of the intelligence community, and the DNI may be asked for advice that is, in reality, policy.

In the United States, partisan politics has also become a factor in the policy-intelligence relationship. Although differences in emphasis developed from one administration to another (such as the greater emphasis on political covert action in the Eisenhower administration and even more so during the Kennedy administration), general continuity has existed in intelligence policy. Moreover, until 1976, intelligence was not seen as part of the spoils of an election victory. DCIs were not automatically replaced with each new administration, as were the heads of virtually all other agencies and departments. President Nixon (1969–1974) tried to use the CIA for political ends in an attempt to curtail the Watergate investigations. But it was the Carter administration (1977–1981) that ended the political separateness of the intelligence community. Jimmy Carter, in his 1976 campaign, lumped together Vietnam, Watergate, and the recent investigations of U.S. intelligence. When Carter won the presidency, DCI George H. W. Bush (1976–1977) offered to stay on and eschew all partisan politics, saying that the CIA needed some continuity after the investigations and four DCIs in as many years. President-elect Carter said he wanted a DCI of his own choosing. This was the first time a serving DCI had been asked to step down by a new administration and a change of partisan control. Similarly, Reagan made “strengthening the CIA” part of his 1980 campaign and replaced Carter’s DCI, Stansfield Turner (1977–1981), with William Casey (1981–1987). In a presidential transition within the same party, President George H. W. Bush kept on DCI William H. Webster (1987–1991) for most of his term, but Clinton

took office and replaced DCI Robert M. Gates (1991–1993) with James Woolsey. Thus, a partisan change in the White House came to mean a change in DCIs as well. However, in 2001, President George W. Bush retained DCI Tenet, who had been appointed by Clinton, despite some advice from within Bush's own party to remove him. Tenet thus became the first DCI since Helms to survive a party change in the presidency. Many observers have wondered if President George W. Bush's decision to retain Tenet was influenced by what happened to his father and President Carter. The 2001 retention of Tenet notwithstanding, it is not clear that a new practice has been established. DNI Mike McConnell stepped down at the end of the George W. Bush administration but did so for reasons of his own. DCIA Michael Hayden's tenure ended at the same time, but he apparently was willing to stay on and was replaced. A new DNI and DCIA came in after Trump's inauguration. Thus, it is not clear that senior intelligence posts are once again seen as being separate from other political appointments, as was the case through 1977.

The argument made in favor of changing DCIs (now DNIs) when a new administration takes office is that presidents must have an intelligence community leader with whom they are comfortable. But back in the days of a nonpartisan DCI, many people in Washington, D.C., emphasized the professional nature of the DCI (even for DCIs who were not career intelligence officers) and had the sense that intelligence is in some way different from the rest of the structure that each president inherits and fills with political appointees. An objective intelligence community was not to be part of the partisan spoils of elections. The shift since 1977 has affected the policy-intelligence relationship by tagging DCIs—and now, presumably, DNIs—with a partisan coloration. The shift also meant a movement, at least for the period 1977 through 2001 and now with the Trump administration, away from professional intelligence officers serving as DCIs. As noted, two of the five DNIs have been intelligence officers; the other three—Ambassador John Negroponte, Admiral Blair, and former senator and ambassador Dan Coats—clearly had the “extensive national security expertise” required in legislation.

Finally, external intrusions, particularly that of the electronic news media, can have an effect on the relationship. Contrary to popular belief, television news does not foster major changes in policy. It does serve as a means of communication for states and their leaders, and it competes with the intelligence community as an alternative source of information. The media do occasionally scoop the intelligence community. This is not because they know things that the intelligence community does not. Instead, the electronic media—especially the twenty-four-hour news networks—put a premium on speed and have the capacity and willingness to provide updates and corrections as necessary. The intelligence community does not have the same luxury and tends to take more time in preparing its initial report. Being scooped by the media can lead policy makers to believe, mistakenly, that the media offer much the same coverage as the intelligence community—and at greater speed and less cost.

Although a number of issues are likely to create tension between policy makers and the intelligence community, conflict has not been the mainstay of the policy-intelligence relationship. Again, this changed to a certain degree between Trump and the intelligence community. But continued close and trusting working relationships prevail between policy makers and intelligence officers at working levels. A good working relationship is not a given, and it cannot be fully appreciated without understanding all of the potential sources of friction.

## KEY TERM

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decision advantage 258

## FURTHER READINGS

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