

# The relationship between intelligence and policy making politics essay



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The intelligence-policy maker PM relation is at critical part of modern government, PM rely in intelligence professionals for data about broad international trends and their potential consequences, information about the intentions and capabilities of friends and foes alike, and specific warnings needed to avert disaster.

One might thus expect that it would be relatively easy for intelligence and PMs to maintain smooth and productive working relationship, but variety of problems can emerge that could change the way these communities.

This essay will explores the tensions and pressures that shape the interaction between intelligence professionals and PM as they go about the business of informing, making, and executing foreign and defense policy, it will also explore the normative theories of relations between intelligence professionals and PM should be organised., and how to Establish effective Analyst-Policymaker Relations

What is intelligence

The latest Dictionary of Military defines intelligence as:

The product resulting from the collection, intelligence, analysis, evaluation and interpretation of available information on concentering foreign countries.

Information and knowledge about the adversary obtained through observation, investigation, analysis or understanding (1)

Intelligence is knowledge and foreknowledge of world around us- the prelude to decision and action by US PMs

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And last but not least, a study commissioned by the Council of Foreign Affairs for the American intelligence in 1996, stated that:

Intelligence is information not publicly available, on analysis based in part on such information, which has been prepared for the policymakers or other actors. (2)

### Management of intelligence

At first glance, the problem appears simple: intelligence collects and analyses all data related to a certain political issue, prepares a report, and submits it to the PM. The PM makes a decision which is implied or recommended in the report, acting under the assumption that the intelligence collectors and analysts are first-class professionals devoid of selfish or political motives, and that the PM is a reputable statesman whose only concern is the safeguarding of national interests.

This is, of course, the ideal situation; from time to time, however, intelligence reports are either ignored or not been questioned by a PM.

To illustrate this here are two classical examples first which concerns a memo from the board of national Estimates to the Director of Central Intelligence (DI) in response to President Lyndon Johnson in relation to the domino thesis, which stated that the fall of Vietnam would herald the spread of communism throughout Asia.

The CIA's Board replied " We do not believe that the loss of South Vietnam and Laos would be followed by the rapid, successive communisation of the other states of the Far East" (3), Ignoring the analysis of its principal  
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intelligence agency, the White House continued to use the domino thesis to justify a massive escalation of the war.

but this note had no effect on the president or his advisors decision, and it simply considered as “ it is noteworthy”

Where the second example is On October 1, 2002, a National Intelligence Estimate declared that “ Iraq has continued its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programs in defiance of UN resolutions and restrictions. Baghdad has chemical and biological weapons as well as missiles with ranges in excess of UN restrictions; if left unchecked, it probably will have a nuclear weapon during this decade.”(4)

In both cases the PM never seriously questioned the intelligence it received. The result was that vague intelligence was presented with too much certainty to policymakers who were unwilling to ask the simple questions that could have blown apart the rationale for war. Critics tend to focus on the wisdom of U. S. strategy in Vietnam and Iraq, but both cases were also failures of intelligence-policy relations.

The relationship in theory

In order to have effective intelligence-policy relations, it is necessary to establish a baseline. What are the elements of ideal intelligence-policy relations?

First, intelligence must feel free to work objectively. Freedom from political pressure is crucial if analysts are to remain honest and unbiased.

Policymakers have strong motivation to manipulate intelligence, especially if <https://assignbuster.com/the-relationship-between-intelligence-and-policy-making-politics-essay/>

they believe that support from intelligence officials is necessary to carry out their plans.

Second, policy needs intelligence to answer the right questions. If intelligence demands analytical freedom, then policy demands relevant analyses. Policymakers must feel that the intelligence community is providing answers to timely questions, the former DCI Robert Gates, who argued forcefully that analysts must offer forthright answers to important questions, Gates warned that “ If we ignore policymaker interests, then our information become irrelevant in the formulation of our government’s foreign policy.”(5) policymakers demand timely answers on issues of specific concern, and to challenge intelligence findings without being accused of politicisation, is one in which intelligence is politically neutral yet clearly relevant to policy requirements. Gregory Treverton argues that intelligence should adjust its analysis to practical policy questions, and stresses that even good analysts will have little impact if they do not work closely with their policy counterparts. “ Questions that go unasked by policy,” he observes, “ are not likely to be answered by intelligence.” (6)

Failed relations mean that decision makers lose a vital intellectual check on their own assumption and beliefs, and strategic narrow view leads to strategic blunder.

The nature of intelligence-policymaker relations

Having described the ideal type, we can now turn to the nature of intelligence-policymaker relations; policymakers have three basic options when dealing with intelligence products, and their choices define the scope <https://assignbuster.com/the-relationship-between-intelligence-and-policy-making-politics-essay/>

and character of intelligence-policy relations. They may accept intelligence in good faith, even if it is the bearer of bad news. In other cases, they may politicise intelligence by pressuring agencies to bring their positions in line with policy preferences. Finally, they may search only for favorable estimates or ignore intelligence altogether.

Policymakers' first option is to accept intelligence in good faith

This is not always easy, as estimates can challenge the wisdom of policy preferences and threaten the domestic position of the policymaker. Leaders often have little personal motivation to accept intelligence reports.

There are a host of other reasons why policymakers do not easily accept intelligence. Policymakers complain that intelligence focuses on details while losing sight of the broader strategic context.(7) Meanwhile, intelligence analysts complain that decision makers are unwilling to examine the crucial attributes of each case, instead falling back on false correlation.(8)

Policymakers favor current intelligence over long-term forecasting, raw data over speculation, and short reports over long ones; analysts complain that this removes their core competency.(9) Policymakers seek sincerity and unambiguous estimates, but analysts view international politics as inherently uncertain, and use conditional language rather than making point predictions.

Best example of this relationship is come in 1973, when Syria and Egypt unexpectedly attacked Israel. Before the war, Israeli policymakers had great faith in its military intelligence service, which had cultivated a well-placed

Egyptian source. Based on intelligence from this source, Israeli strategists  
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drew a picture of Egyptian intentions that became known as the Concept. It assumed that Egypt would not attack without the ability to strike Israeli targets with long-range bombers and SCUD missiles, and that Syria would not attack without support from Egypt. This analysis became accepted wisdom, and prevented Israel from mobilizing more quickly when indications of an impending attack emerged.(10) Front-line commanders issued warnings as early as September 24, but Israel did not take preliminary steps towards mobilization until October 5, one day before the war began.

Post-war investigations concluded that policymakers and intelligence analysts had become wedded to the Concept, and failed to challenge the basic assumptions that led to complacency.(11)

### Politicisation

Politicisation involves fitting intelligence analysis to preferred policies. This means reversing the rational decision-making process, which uses information objectively in order to calibrate means and ends. Intelligence ought to factor in near the beginning of this cycle, providing analysis before the fact of policy making. Politicised intelligence occurs after the fact, serving as a post hoc rationalization for decisions already made. As one long time intelligence official put it, policymakers “ are not necessarily receptive to intelligence, for what they often look for is not so much data on the basis of which to shape policy but rather support for pre-formed political and ideological conceptions.”(12)

Among the pathologies of intelligence-policy relations, politicisation receives the lion's share of public scrutiny.

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But this type of relation is more complex; and often could have a negative impact on intelligence when policies go awry. Intelligence agencies are in the business of prying secrets from people who desperately want them to remain hidden. Because unrealistic expectations are applied to extraordinarily difficult tasks, intelligence is continuously at risk of becoming scapegoat.

Two recent cases illustrate this option.

The September 11 Commission blamed the intelligence community for failing to connect the data points that might have led them to thwart the terrorist attacks.(13) While the community certainly made errors, this critique smacks of hindsight bias.(14) Connections that look obvious today were not so clear at the time, especially considering extraordinary number of data points involved. Moreover, even if the community had connected the dots, it is likely that a flexible organization like al Qaeda would still have been able to pull off the attack.(15)

Intelligence is also blamed for wrongly estimating Iraq's WMD capabilities. A Senate committee investigation concluded that policymakers were given faulty intelligence because of " a combination of systemic weaknesses, primarily in analytic trade craft, compounded by a lack of information sharing, poor management, and inadequate intelligence collection."(16)

Irrelevance

It is important to highlight the difference between utter neglect and the selective use of intelligence. Policymakers may ignore intelligence completely or choose selectively, searching out the intelligence community



for answers consistent with their prior beliefs. This sort of cherry picking can be a form of politicisation or a symptom of intelligence irrelevance. Policymakers may be selective in order to let intelligence analysts know what is acceptable and what is not; this is politicisation. On the other hand, policymakers may cherry pick simply because they need at least one supporting analysis to justify their decisions. In these cases, they do not ignore intelligence in order to apply pressure. Policy simply rejects intelligence products until it finds the right answer.(20)

Explanations for why policymakers ignore intelligence lie at several levels of analysis.

First, policymakers are psychologically biased towards their own predispositions. This tendency is exacerbated under the highly ambiguous conditions that characterize intelligence work.

Policymakers tend to be confident about their own ability to understand changing events. They do not rise in government by accident, and professional success reinforces existing self-images and worldviews. As Gregory Treverton explains, "Politicians live in a world of people, not analysis. A few politicians are analytic, but that is not what got them where they are in politics."(21)

Second reason policymakers ignore intelligence has to do with the organizational diversity of many intelligence communities. The sheer number of agencies and analysts in modern states, especially superpowers, practically guarantees that decision makers will be able to pick among a variety of analyses.(22)

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Third, policymakers have domestic reasons for committing to specific findings.

### Establishing effective Analyst-Policymaker Relations

Is hard to diagnose. Ideal intelligence-policy relations balance the need for independent intelligence with the demands of policy. This is only possible when intelligence and policy communities interact on a regular basis, but such interaction may kindle fears of political pressure. The basic paradox of intelligence-policy relations is that movement towards the ideal increases the likelihood of friction. Sincere efforts to improve relations end up producing discontent on both sides.

Sherman Kent observed some 50 years ago that the most important relationship for analysts, that with the policy officials they seek to inform, does not fall naturally in place, but requires careful thought to set right and constant efforts to keep effective (Strategic Intelligence for National World Policy, 1949) (23). Kent articulated the basic challenge to effective ties when he observed that if analysts get too close to their policymaking and action-taking clients, they would be in danger of losing the independence of mind and the substantive depth and analytic expertise that enabled them to make a distinctive professional contribution to national security, Yet if they stay too far apart from those they are charged to serve, they would be cut off from the feedback and other guidance essential for making that contribution.

For effective relations per se,

The analytic and policymaking communities must become better informed on the other's needs.

Increasing the general utility of analysis for the policymaking, this method already being implemented in the early 1990s and have been employed more extensively since. Director of Intelligence (DI) analysts serving as personal briefing officers, sent on rotational assignments to policymaking units, and posted as intelligence liaison officers for executive branch departments are ever increasing in number.

Analysts need to increase their direct contact with the policy community generally-including one-on-one on the telephone and interacting with small groups at Interagency Working Groups and such.

Define the analysts' mission realistically. The standard of " Delivering Truth to

Power" is an essential but often symbolic standard. On complex issues where analysts are not fully informed on US intentions, much less those of adversaries and other players, the more realistic standard for analysts is to " Tell It like They Think It Is."

Analysts must become expert on how the government works as well as the foreign governments and groups they track abroad, especially regarding where key policy clients are on their decision cycles and learning curves. How? Debrief senior colleagues who attend interagency meetings and have other direct contacts.

For policymakers as well as analysts, crisis shortens the line of communication regarding what analytic support is needed and whether the deliverable did the job. Drawing on personal experience, or that of a colleague or a case study, assesses what kinds of questions policy officials ask and what kinds of answers experienced analysts find appropriate.

Delivering analytic support to policy officials directly-telephone exchanges, teleconferences, briefings, interagency meetings-also adds the efficiencies of instant guidance, feedback, and follow-up. Not only can the analyst gain a better measure of what his client needs, but the policy official also gains a better measure of what the analyst knows that can help get the policy job done. If these exchanges are deemed both professional and effective when delivered orally, why not adopt when appropriate the underlying techniques for written assessments.

Mutual understanding of professional values and modes of behavior will be tested most when the policy stakes are highest. Analysts, therefore, face a recurring challenge in maintaining both their professional standards and effective relations with policy clients on the issues that matter most to both parties. Knowing when to call foul will always be difficult