

A HEDGE AGAINST POLITICIZATION: AN IMPARTIAL INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY FOR AMERICA

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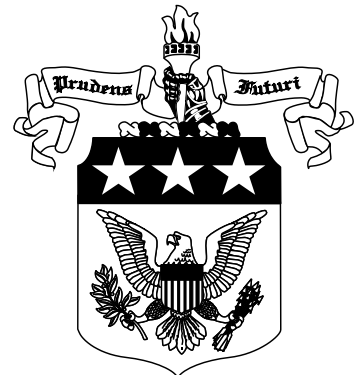
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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**A HEDGE AGAINST POLITICIZATION: AN IMPARTIAL INTELLIGENCE
COMMUNITY FOR AMERICA**

by

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ABSTRACT

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Today the National Intelligence Community (IC) is mired in a dilemma that challenges the credibility of our national policymaking process. Intelligence assessments inconsistent with policymaker political objectives have often been subjugated by partisan second guessing. Policymakers who tailor raw intelligence to fit their needs, coupled with intelligence leader's complicity have cast serious doubts on the intelligence community's analytical independence. The IC's failure to predict the 9/11 terrorist attacks and its inability to accurately determine the viability of Iraq's WMD program are not illustrations of ineptitude, but instead, an indictment of a deeply flawed system prone to manipulation and analytical gerrymandering. This paper will dissect the relationship and challenges that exist between the intelligence community and policymaker. It argues for an impartial intelligence enterprise free of analytical biases and preconceived partisan political dispositions. This paper proposes modeling the IC after the Federal Reserve or Congressional Budget Office in order to create a nonpartisan institution free to provide sound intelligence advice to policymakers based on unblemished analysis.

A HEDGE AGAINST POLITICIZATION: AN IMPARTIAL INTELLIGENCE COMMUNITY FOR AMERICA

The role of the National Intelligence Community (IC) must change to meet new and unprecedented global threats that we will undoubtedly face in the future. The 21st century has ushered in complex challenges that defy our traditional approach to intelligence and its ability to inform policymaking and strategy development. Many modern-day scholars and pundits argue that a major overhaul is required to change the way intelligence is used to influence our national policies and strategic interest.¹ This paper investigates charges that the intelligence community's organizational structure is flawed and prone to an ineptitude that rewards cultural parochialism. It presents a case study that looks into the IC's role in the intelligence failures associated with the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and its complicity in the lead-up to the war in Iraq. The case study examines how the IC strayed from analytical objectivity to speculative ambiguities based upon pressures spawned by the political tenor that carried the day. It also looks at the relationship between policymakers and the Intelligence Community, and it exposes the bureaucratic, cultural and political challenges the policymaking process must overcome to get true reform.

In order to give strength to our national policy decision making process the relationship between the policymaker and Intelligence Community must be resilient and transparent. The policymaker must play an active role throughout the intelligence process by clearly communicating requirements and providing feedback to analysts.² The policymaker must also be willing to accept evaluated intelligence even if it does not support the preferred political position on a national strategy or policy issue.³

Consequently, the intelligence community must be universally perceived as an entity capable of providing intelligence assessments to policymakers free of external partisan pressures. Persuasive arguments suggest that with this analytical autonomy the Intelligence Community will be better positioned to inform national strategy and policy,⁴ putting intelligence on par with the Diplomatic, Information, Military and Economic (DIME) instruments of the national power. This is not to suggest that our intelligence leaders should assume the role of as co-policymaker, but as unbiased producers of intelligence that meets the policymaker's informational requirements. To create an organization void of partisan influences the IC must be viewed as a truly independent enterprise immune to cognitive predispositions, analytical biases and politicization.⁵

A number of political scientists believe varying degrees of politicization has always existed between the policymaker and intelligence community. In most instances the policymaker takes an agnostic view that his actions toward the IC are politicized. Professor Richard Betts provides a basis of thought on this issue. He reasons that the greatest risk of intelligence politicization is derived from the inability to maintain boundaries between the two realms.⁶ Betts states that "in one sense intelligence cannot live with politicization but policy cannot live without it."⁷ Betts goes on to declare that the "problem is frustrated by the unwillingness of any [policymaker], on any side of the debate, to see their own approach as politicized."⁸

Looking back at the mistakes made in assessing Iraq's WMD threat, there is a consortium of thought that strongly support the IC's analytical sovereignty when it comes to assessing intelligence and advising decision makers on matters related to intelligence. Numerous accounts of intelligence "cherry picking" during the aftermath of

the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the lead-up to the war in Iraq infer a manipulative pattern of political pressure.⁹ This tampering was an attempt to bend the intellectual integrity of intelligence assessments in an effort to create the perception of consensus between the IC and policymaker, thereby strengthening the case for war. The following case study focuses on the politicization of intelligence in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the hunt for WMD in the lead-up to the war in Iraq.

Intelligence Politicization after the 9/11 Terrorist Attacks

The Intelligence failures in predicting the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon began the IC's odyssey toward its complicity in the politicization of intelligence. It is important to note that condemnation of the intelligence community's failure to predict the 9/11 attacks are partially based on a set of false dichotomies. Perhaps the most relevant is "hindsight bias". A phenomenon where people falsely believe they would have predicted the outcome of an event after the outcome is known.¹⁰ In his testimony before the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence (HPSCI), Robert L. Hutchings, former chairman of the National Intelligence Council (NIC) eloquently puts this psychological observation in perspective. He states...

Because outcome information affects the selection of evidence, a critic falling victim to hindsight bias tends to see clear lines of causation where such clarity was in fact lacking before the fact. It is easy to say that the intelligence community should have "connected the dots," but in reality it is only after the fact that one can know which dots, out of a vast universe of them, to connect.¹¹

Notwithstanding the "hindsight bias" effect, and solely reflecting on the intelligence mistakes made before and after 9/11, it is easy to understand why the IC fell under intense scrutiny from policy makers and influencers of national security strategy.

After 9/11, the IC's future was predestined mainly because of the unilateral zeal to relegate blame, and the capricious political nature of finding solutions to our national intelligence problems. The events of 9/11 opened the door to an unimaginable level of political oversight on the intelligence community. The hunt to determine causation would be unyielding; so would the desire to affix blame and find a political solution to remedy the IC's failures. The efforts of our national leaders were well intentioned, but paradoxically it placed the IC in a zero defects situation. There was no room for error in assessing threats to the US, so the IC became a political bedfellow in an atmosphere built more on fear, and less on fact. The rush to impose fixes to the IC in the aftermath of 9/11 created both good and bad intelligence policies designed to protect the US from future attacks. Unfortunately those bad policies aided in arguably some of the most misguided national policy decisions made during the last decade.¹² Many of these policy decisions were aided by political entities pressuring the IC into collusive support for predetermined political objectives.¹³ The following case study will examine why the IC was drawn into a predicament that ostensibly allowed it to lose its objectivity regarding its intelligence assessments after September 11, 2001.

Prelude to Failure. The groundwork of the 9/11 intelligence failures was set long before that dreadful day in September. Despite numerous threat warnings and a spate of terrorist attacks predating September 11, 2001 the US Intelligence Community's culture left it woefully unprepared for the 9/11 terrorist attacks.¹⁴ The 9/11 attacks brought to light the IC's inability to hypothesize about the range of possible terrorist attack scenarios that could occur in the US.¹⁵ Melvin A. Goodman, director of the National Security Program at the Center for International Policy argues that the CIA's

inability to conduct strategic analysis in considering terrorist operations in the US caused it to ignore a threat scenario where commercial airplanes could be used as terrorist weapons.¹⁶ This neglectful behavior occurred despite repeated threat indicators corroborating courses of action where such terrorist acts were a distinct possibility.

Goodman supports this contention when he writes:

The fact that al Qaeda had planned such operations in the mid-1990s in Europe and Asia did not jar CIA's complacency. Without the benefit of classified information and foreign liaison, however, the Congressional Research Service of the Library of Congress and University of Pennsylvania Professor Stephen Gale anticipated such hijackings and warned both the CIA's National Intelligence Council and the Department of Transportation.¹⁷

The IC's insular organizational structure and "stove piped" proprietary systems created the perfect conditions for pundits to criticize its ineffectiveness and demand changes to its operations.¹⁸ It was this demand for change that abetted the political rush to institute the problematic policies intended to reform the IC.

Fear and Politics drove Intelligence Reform - Post 9/11. Almost immediately following the terrorist attacks of 11 September, a political outcry for accountability and reform of the intelligence community ensued. After extensive media coverage, congressional inquiries, independent bipartisan commission studies, and innumerable think-tank recommendations, sweeping changes within the intelligence community were inevitable. Harsh criticisms toward the IC's failure to predict the terrorist attacks inflamed passions and created the "perfect storm" to enact intelligence reform.¹⁹ The politicization of the IC had begun, and its aftermath would leave a legacy of flawed policies, many of which our nation still struggle with today.

Intelligence reformists influenced by both real and unfounded fears ushered in an era where reasoned intelligence was held captive to political fears. At the core of these

concerns was the potential for political backlash if another terrorist attack occurred on US soil.²⁰ Politicians feared that a lack of aggressive action to immediately reform the IC would be seen by the media as being complacent. No political entity or leader wanted to be the media's "poster child" on the blame line for not acting proactively to fix the intelligence community's problems. This reality, although thinly veiled, played out in media outlets daily. In his article *Politics, the Media and 9/11*, Eric Boehlert argues that the Bush administration's politicization of terror will be one of the enduring legacies of 9/11.²¹ Boehlert goes on to assert that the media, particularly cable television outlets, acted as a megaphone instead of a filter by hyping the "chilling" terror scare with endless, excited saturation coverage.²²

Even in the wake of the Administration's clear record of distorting intelligence for political gain news organizations remained more willing to cheerlead terror warnings than seriously question them or put them in proper political context.²³ The media was not alone in its dereliction to methodically question the validity of second-hand intelligence. Lawmakers were also guilty of not examining intelligence that many argue was manipulated by the Bush administration for political gain.²⁴ This eagerness to follow the political status quo blinded many decision makers in their support of questionable threat assertions misrepresented to achieve political means. Perhaps the best illustration of this is the decision to go to war in Iraq, based in part on the infamously flawed intelligence assessments of Iraq's WMD programs.

Manufactured Realities: Faulty Intelligence of Iraq's WMD Program. Having failed to connect the dots to predict the attacks of 9/11 the IC made the opposite mistake on Iraq.²⁵ Professor Richard Betts of Columbia University opines that the IC's mistaken

estimate in assessing Iraq's WMD program was "the worst intelligence failure since the founding of the modern intelligence community."²⁶

So, why did the intelligence community totally miss the mark in its assessment of Iraq's WMD program? First, before attempting to answer this question, it is important to acknowledge that there were numerous factors that contributed to the flawed WMD assessments. However, to remain focused on the overarching theme of this paper, discussion will be limited to examining the politicization of intelligence and its impact on influencing the analytical judgments of Iraq's WMD program. Poet and philosopher George Santayana once stated: "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it."²⁷ In the context of Santayana's truism it is essential to examine what went wrong in Iraq if similar mistakes are to be averted in the future.

With the enlightenment of hindsight, it is clearly evident that the failures made in assessing Iraq's WMD program were influenced by a set of mistaken political assumptions. These misplaced assumptions permeated the reasoning of officials within the administration of President George W. Bush. Many of these same officials served in President George H. Bush's administration, and they felt strongly that leaving Saddam Hussein in power after the first Gulf War was a major mistake.²⁸ After the attacks of 9/11, several senior officials in the administration falsely believed there was a linkage between the perpetrators of the attacks and Iraq. In the book *"Against All Enemies: Inside America's War on Terror,"* Richard Clark confirms this belief. Clark states that the day after the 9/11 attacks President Bush directed him to "see if Saddam did this...see if he's linked in any way." Even as Richard Clark reassured President Bush that Al-Qaeda was responsible, the President responded by saying, "I know, I know, but see if Saddam

was involved...I want to know any shred.”²⁹ On another occasion President Bush actually told Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Hugh Shelton and National Security Council Advisor, Condoleezza Rice “I believe Iraq was involved.”³⁰

The belief that there was an Iraq/Al-Qaeda linkage strengthened the fear that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction. This notion was amplified by growing concern that Al-Qaeda could obtain WMD from Saddam. With a nuclear weapon in terrorists’ possession the devastation that could be inflicted would make the losses of 9/11 pale in comparison³¹. With a core group of political elites fixated on proving the existence of an Iraqi/Al-Qaeda connection and engrossed in determining Iraqi’s WMD capability the intelligence community would soon be usurped into helping the administration do its bidding. The ardent belief that Iraq had a connection to the 9/11 perpetrators drove national decision makers to connect the dots even if intelligence was manufactured ever so slightly to support political objectives.

Most cases of intelligence politicization regarding the Iraqi WMD program are not blatant. Examinations of allegations that political influence played a role in intelligence judgments reveal that varying degrees of manipulation were present. In fact, most cases show that in the majority of instances politicization of intelligence occurred in subtle ways. Former national intelligence officer Paul Pillar supports this contention when he states: “Any intelligence analyst would be reluctant to make the damning admission that his paper had been politicized, and ...in my experience, the great majority of cases of actual politicization – successful politicization – are invariably subtle.”³² A classic example of this type of subtlety was used in the manipulation of the intelligence community by senior officials in the Bush administration. For instance, Vice President

Richard Cheney reportedly questioned his CIA briefers aggressively, pressing them to the wall when he saw intelligence from other agencies that portrayed a more somber picture than that in CIA reporting.³³ Dr. John Prados, states that Vice President Cheney sent briefers back for more information, including times when they checked with headquarters and returned with the same information.³⁴ Based on his personal accounts of talks with Paul Pillar, Dr. Prados intensifies his assertions of intelligence politicization when he writes:

Cheney was especially acerbic on CIA's rejection of claims that one of the 9/11 terrorists had met with Iraqi intelligence officers in Prague. On a number of occasions, Cheney sent his chief of staff, I. Lewis Libby, to CIA headquarters to follow up on his concerns. Mr. Cheney went there himself, not just once but on almost a dozen occasions. The practice encouraged the CIA to censor itself, driven, as Pillar put it, by "the desire to avoid the unpleasantness of putting unwelcome assessments on the desks of policymakers.

Manipulative behavior from senior officials pushed the IC ever closer to complicity in the Iraq WMD assessment. A political atmosphere soon emerged where it was not conducive to provide analysis critical of the intelligence preferred by the administration. In fact, analysts and intelligence managers knew that any suggestion that questioned the validity of Saddam's WMD capabilities would immediately draw contempt from their superiors.³⁵ Even Columbia University Professor Robert Jervis, who disagrees that intelligence analysts were bowing to political pressure and telling senior administration officials what they wanted to hear - admits that:

In this political climate it would have been hard for anyone to ask if the conventional wisdom about Saddam's WMD programs should be reexamined. Thus when at the last minute an agent questioned the use of information from 'Curveball' in Secretary of State Powell's speech, his boss replied: 'Let's keep in mind that this war's going to happen regardless of what Curveball said or didn't say, and that the Powers That Be probably aren't very interested in whether Curveball knows what he's talking about.'³⁶

Jervis goes on to surmise that the intelligence community's desire to skirt the painful value trade-off between pleasing policy-makers and following professional standards created what psychologists call 'motivated bias' in favor of producing estimates that would support, or at least not undermine, policy.³⁷ There is a strong argument that suggests intelligence analysts were not inclined to challenge the administration's position on Iraq WMD because of a concern for their careers. Dr. John Prados supports this assertion by stating that "analysts working on Iraq intelligence could not be blamed for concluding that their own careers might be in jeopardy if they supplied answers other than what the Bush administration wanted to hear."³⁸

Reflecting on the circumstances leading up to the war in Iraq one gets the impression that the IC insulated itself against the dangers of attack from senior administration officials through a process of self-censorship.³⁹ The irony of George Santayana legendary quote has an eerie familiarity to former CIA Director George Tenet's comments when he concedes that "in many ways, we were prisoners of our own history."⁴⁰

If fear, mistaken assumptions of Iraq's WMD capabilities, and politicization of intelligence created one of the worst intelligence scandals in US history – then, what steps should be taken to prevent the same mistakes from reoccurring in the future? To answer this, we must seek to resolve three questions. What effect has the post 9/11 reforms had in reforming the IC? What is required to truly reform the intelligence community? How can the intelligence community be modeled to resist politicization in the future? The remainder of this paper will seek to answer these questions.

The Intelligence Community Today

Throughout many institutions within government and academia a great debate continues about needed reforms in our National Intelligence Community. Ultimately this debate centers on what role the IC should play in policymaking. Today the National Intelligence Community (IC) is still immersed in a quandary that challenges the credibility of our national policymaking process. At issue is whether intelligence should remain in its traditional role as a conduit to inform on matters of national security policy and strategy development, or be regarded as an element of national power, like the DIME. Many scholars and observers of the policymaking process consider the current relationship between policymaker and the Intelligence Community to be flawed. Since September 11, 2001 the national intelligence community has come under intense scrutiny and criticism for its parochial organizational structure. Charges of the intelligence community being stove piped, insular and uncooperative were just a few of the 9/11 Commission report findings that contributed to the IC's failure to detect one on the most deadliest attacks ever to occur on American soil. ⁴¹

Eight years after the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, and five years after the release of the 9/11 Commission Report, much still needs to be done to better integrate the intelligence community into the policymaking process. The zeal of policymakers to tailor raw intelligence to fit their needs, coupled with intelligence leaders complacency in properly informing the policymaking process led to critical mistakes being made after 9/11, particularly in the build up to the war in Iraq. Many of these missteps occurred because of the dysfunctional relationship that existed between policymakers and the IC. Today we are still grappling with the aftereffects of national security policy decisions that were made almost a decade ago. One of the most notable

accusations against the policymaking process was that intelligence analysis was not relied upon to make important national security decisions. Critics also rightfully argue that in the lead up to the invasion of Iraq, intelligence was misused publicly to justify decisions already made.⁴² They further point out that because this misuse resulted in the IC's work being politicized, significant suspicion and mistrust still exist between policymakers and intelligence leaders today.⁴³

What Effect Has Post 9/11 Reforms Had in Transforming the IC? There is broad consensus that post 9/11 congressional reforms of the intelligence community have fallen short of intended objectives. The Intelligence Reform and Terrorist Prevention Act of 2004 (IRTPA) was thought to be congress's panacea to fixing an intelligence system that was considered badly broken. IRTPA is best known for creating the office of the Director of National Intelligence (DNI). IRTPA gave the DNI a mandate to supervise, coordinate and manage agencies within the intelligence community. Although the jury is still out on what effect IRTPA will eventually have in reforming the Intelligence Community, to date, its integration is judged to be minimally effective.

Authorities familiar with IRTPA have assessed it to be a flawed document that paid lip service to reforming the IC. They suggest it was contorted by conservatives in congress and ignored by the White House during legislative negotiations.⁴⁴ Arthur S. Hulnick, Professor of Intelligence and International Relations at Boston University contends that IRTPA was designed to fix the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), but adds that key aspects of the law pertained to fixing the IC and FBI's intelligence capability.⁴⁵ Professor Hulnick further purports that while IRTPA has allowed the DNI and DHS to make gradual inroads into rectifying the IC's intelligence problems the FBI

has languished because of cultural stagnation. Mr. Hulnick's argument is predicated on the FBI's long history as an investigative and law enforcement agency that has found incorporating domestic intelligence into their operational portfolio difficult to accomplish.

He states:

FBI agents are eager to stop crime, to make arrests, to bring criminals to justice, and they are very good at that kind of work. But intelligence requires a different approach: following leads, developing sources, pursuing criminals and suspects before they commit a crime. – An old saying holds that the CIA wants to string people along while the FBI wants to string them up.⁴⁶

An additional concern about the reform act is that the DNI is organizationally structured under the executive office of the President. Critics contend that organizing the DNI in this manner risks the politicization of intelligence, gives the White House more direct control over covert operations, and blurs the line between foreign and domestic covert operations.⁴⁷ Even Congress has acknowledged the potential difficulty in conducting oversight of the DNI because of its proximity to the White House. Of concern is the possibility that the White House could raise the issue of executive privilege on intelligence matters Congress deem appropriate for investigative hearings.

The Road to Intelligence Reform - What is Required to Reform the IC?

While acknowledging that the IC has much work ahead of it, the office of the DNI should be credited with moving the community in a direction that may someday live up to the intent of IRTPA and the 9/11 Commission Report recommendations. A critical milestone toward meeting this intent is the IC establishing a strong relationship with policymakers free from coercion and politicization. Timely, relevant and reliable information tailored to inform national policy and strategy decisions must be synonymous with the U.S. national intelligence community. As an enterprise, the IC

must be viewed as impartial in its assessments, and its credibility identified as a core competency amongst policymakers and the American public. Richard Haass, President of the Council on Foreign Relations advocates that building a trustworthy relationship with policymakers is the first step toward true intelligence reform. Haass states that members of the IC “have a responsibility to engage policymakers, understand their intelligence requirements, and tell them what they should be paying attention to.”⁴⁸ He goes on to assert that it is fundamentally important for the IC to tell policymakers “what they need to hear and not what they want to hear”.⁴⁹

Building Trust with the Consumer. As simple as this seems, building a trustful relationship is perhaps the most important, and yet the most elusive tenet required in reforming the intelligence community. Our leadership, and more importantly the American public, should have the confidence that its national intelligence structure is beyond reproach from partisan mingling and political interference. Former Director of the CIA, and current Secretary of Defense, Robert Gates aptly captured the essence of trust and credibility when he stated:

Unless intelligence officers are down in the trenches with the policymakers- understand the issues and know what US objectives are, how the process works, and who the people are – they cannot possibly provide either relevant or timely intelligence that will contribute to better-informed decisions.⁵⁰

Experts in the intelligence field vary in their recommendations for strengthening the relationship between the policymaker and IC. Many agree that a way of tackling this issue is by placing a diversified group of intelligence professionals (representative of all agencies in the IC) in the White House Situation Room to provide direct connectivity between the IC and NSC. Michael Donley, Cornelius O’Leary, and John Montgomery also support this contention. They advocate using intelligence analysts to provide daily

intelligence to the NSC, and contend it would garner a close association with the policy staff while simultaneously providing insights into interagency policy deliberations. The trio goes on to suggest that this arrangement would allow the IC to anticipate policymaker intelligence requirements while providing the NSC with a familiar face to coordinate intelligence within the IC.⁵¹ Although building a trustworthy relationship with the policymaker is a key reform measure, it does not retard the temptation to politicize intelligence. The next section seeks to resolve this issue by addressing the underlying thesis of this paper. How can the intelligence community be modeled to resist politicization in the future?

Mimic the Structure of the Federal Reserve, or CBO. Sweeping changes are required to truly reform the intelligence community. The end state is an IC that has reconstructed its image to achieve what I call the “Trifecta Effect”. First, the IC must develop an image as an entity with influence and relevance in the White House; second, it must have credibility with Congress; and third, it must be viewed in high esteem by the American Public. In order for the IC to realize this makeover, concerted efforts must be taken to diminish politicization of the intelligence community’s work and its misuse by policymakers. Essentially, in order for the IC to do its job effectively, it must have a “Declaration of Independence” from partisan influence. The most effective models that have achieved this level of autonomy organizations like the Federal Reserve and the Congressional Budget Office (CBO).⁵²

Reform will begin with restructuring the DNI’s office. Under the current DNI structure the potential for continued politicization remains a real reality. To mitigate this problem from reoccurring in the future, the DNI must be divorced from the Office of the

White House. At a minimum, this move will help diminish the perception of politicization and partisan influence over the IC. The DNI's principal duties and responsibilities, however, would remain unchanged, and authorities given by Congress would continue unabridged. The office of the DNI would be structured as a quasi-autonomous entity incorporating linkages to all IC agencies. It must be empowered with sovereign authority to provide analytical judgments free of coercive influence.

Strengthening congressional oversight of the IC is paramount and arguably the most important of the reforms to be instituted. Congress must consistently have visibility on the activities of all intelligence agencies and report its finding to the full body of the legislature.⁵³ Incorporated in this oversight mandate is congress's inherent authority to subpoena. This is a legitimate function of congress, and one that must routinely be undertaken. The President would appoint the DNI who would act as Chairman of the National Intelligence Board- much like that of the Chairman of the Federal Reserve.⁵⁴ A Board of Governors would encompass the senior intelligence leaders of each of the fifteen agencies that make up the IC. The DNI would serve a four year term with the possibility of reappointment. The DNI appointed term would also overlap transitions of presidential administrations to insure thorough continuity with policymakers. Finally a good criterion for choosing a candidate for DNI should center on nonpartisanship. A good match would be a career nonpolitical professional from the military or the intelligence community, or an elder statesman who does not have ambitions beyond the position of DNI.⁵⁵

Conclusion

Unquestionably the intelligence community has significant reform challenges ahead of it. The relationship between the policymaker and the intelligence community

will always have a shadow of politicization cast over it. Yet, the IC can be remade as an impartial enterprise with influence and relevance in the White House, immense credibility with Congress, and held in high esteem by the American Public. Getting there won't be easy, for the nature of the relationship between the IC and policymaker often resides in the political realm. But it is achievable, and can be accomplished if the Intelligence Community remains true to its mandate of informing policy and not advocating for it.

Perhaps the greatest impediment to realizing true intelligence reform is the challenge of changing a culture where politics reigns absolute. As long as any degree of intelligence politicization is accepted as the status quo, the integrity of our national intelligence community will remain vulnerable. The IC must fight to preserve its analytical autonomy from undue political influences or risk compromising its core competencies to political folly. Although it's principal purpose will continue to be that of providing intelligence support to decision makers (specifically geared toward helping policy makers grasp complex ambiguous strategic issues), intelligence must cease to be captive to a process that currently denies it the freedom to operate in an environment absent from external political influences. Re-organizing the DNI in a model similar to the Federal Reserve or Congressional Budget Office will significantly aid in creating a truly independent intelligence enterprise immune to cognitive predispositions, analytical biases and politicization.

The first decade of the twenty-first century has exposed the disastrous consequences of politicizing intelligence. It has also provided a real opportunity to hedge against politicization by instituting measures that promote an impartial

Intelligence Community for the American people. Consequently the past decade has also provided an opportunity to learn from the past or as Santayana once stated...“be condemned to repeat it.”⁵⁶

Endnotes

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