CHAPTER 3

THE NATIONAL SECURITY COMMUNITY, REVISITED

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At the time of this writing, a search on Google.com for “national security community” registers about 62,500 hits. The abstract to a 1998 National War College paper entitled “U.S. National Security Structure: A New Model for the 21st Century” defines the national security community as the Department of Defense (DoD), Department of State, and the National Security Council (NSC). In a chapter titled “Strengthening the National Security Interagency Process” by John Deutch, Arnold Kanter and Brent Scowcroft, they add the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Interestingly, a group called the National Security Network addresses a so-called “progressive national security community,” highlighting a partisan political divide in making national policy. In site after site, authors use the term without definition, indicating the authors assume the reader knows its definition. Who are the major players in the national security community today? The Congress, think tanks, interest groups, and the media all exert significant influence over American security policy and strategy formulation. How do they formally and informally interact? To whom are they accountable and from whom do they get their feedback? Answering these questions will illuminate potential opportunities and barriers to successful policymaking and strategy formulation.

THE CONGRESS

The first and arguably most direct role player to be considered is the Congress. While the Constitution vests the President with executive powers, it gives the Congress the legislative responsibility to make the laws of the land and wield the power of the purse. Additionally, the Constitution allows the President to make treaties with foreign governments “by and with the Advice and Consent of the Senate. . . .” When the executive branch implements foreign policy, expenditure of government funds is usually involved, so the Congress has a formal role to play in the appropriations process.

One vivid example of struggle between these two branches occurred in May 2007 as President Bush vetoed an Iraq War supplemental appropriation. When this legislation was introduced, the policy of the United States was to use military forces in Iraq to train Iraqi security forces, provide security to the Iraqi people, and to support reconstruction efforts. Critics frequently labeled the President’s policy “stay the course,” and he rejected calls for a scheduled withdrawal of U.S. troops. The supplemental appropriation language called for establishing a timetable for withdrawal of U.S. combat troops from Iraq as conditions for providing supplemental funding to continue the war effort. The President repeatedly stated his intention to veto the bill as it was being drafted.

Leaders of the Democratic majority in Congress also clearly stated their intention to carry out what they saw as the will of a majority of the American people. Their intent was to begin the process of disengaging American combat forces from what congressional Democrats were labeling an Iraqi civil war. On May 2, 2007, the House of Representatives failed to override the President’s veto and then set to work trying to develop another legislative vehicle that would accomplish a transition of responsibility from U.S. to Iraqi forces. They also wanted to encourage the Iraqi government to take further responsibility for political reconciliation. On July 11, the Washington Post reported on various efforts by Democrats and Republicans to force the administration’s hand, either to amend the mission and focus of the troops in Iraq or to pull out the combat troops entirely. Those congressional actions were directed squarely at changing U.S. policy in a national security area.
While this power struggle illustrates direct conflict, how does the Congress routinely influence policy and strategy formulation in the national security community? The answer is through appropriations and oversight. Congress provides appropriations as well as oversight for all the players in U.S. foreign policy—including the Departments of State and Defense and the CIA. While not enumerated in the Constitution, congressional oversight logically flows from its appropriations role. The leaders of the foreign policy agencies routinely go to Capitol Hill to testify before various committees and to answer questions, both in and out of committee sessions. Members of Congress also have individual, direct access to the executive agencies by sending letters of inquiry. Operating beneath the level of public awareness, but arguably no less important, are the relationships between mid-grade professionals in these agencies and the professional staffs of the House and Senate. Separate from the personal staffs of Members, these professional staffs exist to provide expertise to committees in drafting legislation. To that end, committees frequently hire staffers with former service in and around the executive agencies. Informal communication between the executive and legislative branches is continuous at the staff level. Agency staffers and congressional staffers can frame the debate and set the stage for successful legislation. They also provide early warning to their superiors when a confrontation appears likely. Much of the effective give-and-take between the branches is concentrated at this level, while the Members and agency senior executives work more directly in the media spotlight.

As a body within the Executive Office of the President, the NSC is largely immune from direct congressional pressure. At the same time, the primary members of both the principals and deputys committees—the Secretaries and Deputy Secretaries of Defense, State and Treasury, the Director and Deputy Director of the CIA, and the Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff are each subject to congressional oversight in their roles within their respective organizations. The President ultimately determines the extent to which the NSC formally cooperates with Congress. The NSC Staff is also mostly immune from direct congressional pressure. The President can claim executive privilege to protect NSC staff members from congressional scrutiny. At the same time, the NSC Staff must remain cognizant of the role and power of Congress, even as they serve the President. Similar to the previous discussion of relationships, the working-level relationships between Congress and the NSC Staff can foster harmonious or acrimonious interactions that help or hinder the advancement of U.S. policy. When the executive and legislative branches come into direct conflict and neither is prepared to compromise, the opportunity may arise for the Judiciary to involve itself in settling issues of Constitutional powers.

In asking the question, “Who is the Congress accountable to?” a researcher turns to the Constitution. All Constitutional legislative powers are vested in the Congress. In their role as legislators, Members advance the interests of the Nation, thereby supporting and defending the Constitution. At the same time, the Constitution makes Members accountable to their constituents via regular elections. These legislative and representative roles are generally complementary, yet there are occasions where Members are forced to choose between these two interests. For the purposes of this paper, it is sufficient to recognize there can be significant tension between the two roles. The People provide regular feedback to the Congress in a variety of ways. The most obvious method is through elections. Every 2 years in the House and every 6 years in the Senate, Members wishing to continue their service must stand for reelection by their constituents. Between elections, Members receive feedback from their constituents and other interested citizens through written or electronic contact with Members’ offices, personal visits in Washington or in the home district, and through financial contributions. Members may occasionally receive contradictory feedback from their constituents and the rest of the country, reflecting conflict between their twin roles.
In their Constitutional role as legislators, Members also receive feedback from both the executive branch and the judiciary. The executive branch feedback process includes the staff-level communication previously described, as well as formal proposals or draft legislation the President may send to Congress. Additionally, the executive provides the Congress feedback via the People. The President can use the bully pulpit to connect with the American electorate via the media. If he is successful, the electorate can increase or modify the feedback they provide the Congress. The Judiciary provides feedback to the Congress by ruling on challenged laws, with the Supreme Court as the final arbiter. When considering controversial legislation, Congress always has an eye on the likely Constitutionality of the legislation, as well as on the various ways opponents may choose to challenge the Constitutionality of the law through the courts.

With two formal lines of accountability, Members of the House of Representatives are always in a race for reelection and Senators are finding they have less and less time where reelection does not impact everything they do. This introduces a tangled web of relationships that usually operates just below the public consciousness. The most logical result of this perpetual campaign scenario is strengthening of the representative role (accountable to the People) vis-à-vis the legislator (accountable to the Nation) role. Also becoming increasingly visible with each new campaign is the growing impact of money.

While any campaign organization is expensive to operate, for truly competitive races the desired level of media saturation can cost enormous sums. To comply with ethics restrictions while also raising the required resources to compete, Members must separate their personal schedules and their staffs into congressional and campaign foci. Interest groups can help fill the fundraising need. These organizations attempt to educate Members and hopefully improve resulting legislation. At the same time, they bring various financial resources to bear in ways that can benefit a Member (or the opposing candidate). Members receive direct, although informal, feedback in the levels of campaign contributions being steered their way by these interest groups, especially as compared to contributions to their opponents. Interest groups are the focus of a separate section later in this paper. While many writers have lamented the perceived connections between politicians and money, the national security professional needs to recognize the numerous influencers operating behind the scenes attempting to sway the course and content of legislation that may impact national security policy.

As noted earlier, the high cost of media advertising drives ever more time and effort into campaign fundraising. While serving various roles, the presence and actions of the media complicate the numerous relationships involved in U.S. policymaking. The media is the focus of the final section of this chapter.

THINK TANKS

Of the many influences on U.S. foreign policy formulation, the role of think tanks is among the most important and least appreciated. A distinctively American phenomenon, the independent policy research institution has shaped U.S. global engagement for nearly 100 years. But because think tanks conduct much of their work outside the media spotlight, they garner less attention than other sources of U.S. policy—like the jostling of interest groups, the maneuvering between political parties, and the rivalry among branches of government.11

—Richard N. Haass, Dir, Policy Planning
U.S. Department of State
A think tank is an organization that conducts policy-oriented research. Think tanks provide ideas and analysis on myriad foreign and domestic policy issues. They further serve to assist the public in making informed decisions about these subjects. According to Richard Haass, their primary contribution is to bridge the gap between academia and government. While government bureaucrats are too busy in their day-to-day roles to “take a step back and consider the broader trajectory of U.S. policy,” academicians are generally focused on “arcane theoretical and methodological debates only distantly related to real policy dilemmas.” Much of the academic research in any policy field does not end up in a form useful to policymakers. Think tanks serve a useful function as they review the extant literature and distill or synthesize these material into a useful format. More broadly, think tanks serve civil society in five ways: generating ideas, providing talent to government, offering venues to gather policy professionals, engaging the public, and serving as a middle ground between opposing parties.

Think tanks, operating outside the government bureaucracy, have the freedom to challenge the conventional wisdom. They may be independent or associated with interest groups. Observing the modus operandi of the administration, think tanks develop new approaches to policy challenges as well as innovative concepts. At the same time, think tanks may also determine that the current administration’s approach to an issue is right on target. Recognizing emerging trends and problems, think tanks can translate the challenges into actionable policy issues. During World War II, the Council on Foreign Relations initiated a project entitled War and Peace Studies that ultimately generated 682 memoranda for the State Department. It was their flagship publication, Foreign Affairs, which published “The Sources of Soviet Conduct” in 1947, providing the intellectual foundation for the strategy of containment. Think tanks also serve as intellectual support for political campaigns, generating policy papers and providing advice to candidates on a wide range of issues. In their role as idea generators, they also serve as recyclers. As the number of information sources and paths of information transfer explode, gatekeepers of that process gain power. As R. Keohane and Joseph Nye noted in 1998, “To understand the effect of free information on power, one must first understand the paradox of plenty. A plentitude of information leads to a poverty of attention. Attention becomes a scarce resource, and those who can distinguish valuable signals from white noise gain power. . . . Brand names and the ability to bestow an international seal of approval will become more important.”

In addition to their work generating ideas, think tanks also make available a wide range of intellectual talent, with appropriate policy focus, for incoming administrations to draft into government service. Almost as important, think tanks also provide fertile ground for outgoing public servants to remain engaged in the policy realm. Stepping back from the day-to-day grind of government service allows these professionals time to ponder their experience from a wider perspective. Snaring a retiring high-profile public servant can add luster to a think tank’s reputation and possibly enhance donations. One of the latest examples of the revolving door between government and think tanks is the move of former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld from his post at the helm of the DoD to a visiting fellowship at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University. Figure 3-1 below gives some idea of the prevalence of this trend. An extensive list is available in Appendix Two of Donald Abelson’s 2006 book, A Capital Idea: Think Tanks and U.S. Foreign Policy. Consider one cautionary note about the revolving door. Individuals who may consider moving in either direction may constrain their policy research or innovation, or worse yet, moderate their actions or the report of their findings with a view to remaining in the good graces of their possible future employers.

Think tanks also serve as hosts for gatherings of policy professionals. Whether hosting a single-issue lecture or convening a multiday symposium, these gatherings foster debate and understand-
ing. While they shape opinions, these meetings can also lay the foundation for new ideas to successfully enter the policy arena. Just as importantly, these meetings can also serve to demonstrate why some new ideas need more time for thought before being implemented. Think tanks can also provide nonpartisan venues for government officials to announce new initiatives or for foreign officials to engage the wider U.S. policy community.²²

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<tr>
<th>Think Tank</th>
<th>Government Position(s)</th>
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<tr>
<td>John Bolton</td>
<td>American Enterprise Institute US Amb to UN, Undersecretary of State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zbigniew Brzezinski</td>
<td>Center for Strategic and International Studies National Security Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paula Dobriansky</td>
<td>Council on Foreign Relations Undersecretary of State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Leslie Gelb</td>
<td>Council on Foreign Relations Dir, Policy and Planning, State Dept</td>
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<td>Richard Holbrooke</td>
<td>Council on Foreign Relations Asst Secretary of State</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zalmay Khalilzad</td>
<td>RAND US Amb to UN, Afghanistan and Iraq</td>
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<tr>
<td>Henry Kissinger</td>
<td>Council on Foreign Relations Secretary of State, National Security Advisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jessica Matthews</td>
<td>Carnegie Endowment For International Peace Deputy Undersecretary of State, Director of Global Issues at NSC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard Perle</td>
<td>American Enterprise Institute Asst Secretary of Defense</td>
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<tr>
<td>George Schultz</td>
<td>Hoover Institution Secretary of State, Secretary of Treasury, Secretary of Labor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Strobe Talbott</td>
<td>Brookings Institution Deputy Secretary of State, Senior Director at NSC</td>
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**Figure 3-1. The Revolving Door.²¹**

Using both the public media and their own publishing resources, as well as the Internet, think tanks attempt to engage and educate the public. While some reflect the philosophical leanings of associated interest groups, others serve as independent judges of public policy and government performance. In fulfilling this role, they also build confidence in public policy and public officials. Even where government fails to deliver sufficient results, think tanks help shine light on policy failures and suggest corrective actions. The appearance of independence from government is vital in this role. Additionally, these organizations serve as interpreters of current events for citizens, providing various viewpoints on the issue of the day.²³ Researcher Diana Stone suggests, however, that think tanks’ engagement with the public is a one-way relationship. That is, there is little formal structure in most think tanks to receive and process public feedback. She also notes that think tanks are focused heavily on policy elite and around governmental centers of power, effectively limiting their engagement mission.²⁴

Similar to their role in providing venues for professionals, think tanks can also provide venues for mediation between opposing groups. The United States Institute of Peace occasionally serves as a conduit for behind-the-scenes political negotiations, while also providing negotiation training to U.S. diplomats. The Carnegie Endowment hosted meetings over 8 years on South Africa, establishing an ongoing dialogue focused on South Africa’s future and helping enable its political transition. Additionally, the Center for Strategic and International Studies has been involved in mediating divisions between Greeks and Turks and ethnic groups in the former Yugoslavia.²⁵ In this role, think tanks can serve an important support function for the U.S. Government in lessening tensions.
At this point, it is apparent that think tanks must maintain some level of positive reputation among both the public and the policy community to have any broad impact. Indeed, many think tanks strategize about garnering media attention through seminars, conferences and public lectures. They also reach out widely to academics, policymakers, and journalists to get the message out. These events bring credit to the think tank as well as educate others about their work. Some think tanks pursue academic audiences through university lectures or pursue a more formal influence through congressional testimony. Virtually all think tanks now have Internet home pages making their products widely available for download. While Donald Abelson argues that think tank influence is quite difficult to assess accurately, he notes that some think tank directors use media coverage as a gauge of their own organization’s policy influence.26

While the word “independent” is frequently used in describing think tanks or their roles, most often, the word refers to the relationship between think tanks and the government. It should not be construed to mean that think tanks are necessarily impartial, nor that they come to their conclusions or operate in the policy world without outside influence. Looking internationally, Stone claims that the term think tank brings a certain prestige to an organization, and that the definition has become very elastic, especially in a non-Anglo-American setting. Think tanks reflect their native political environment, and the independence from government influence expected of a U.S. or U.K. think tank should not be assumed for others.27

To be able to afford all of the activity related above, and the amount of professional expertise at their fingertips, where do think tanks get their funding? There are four primary avenues of funding think tanks in the United States. Many, if not all, think tanks accept donations from private individuals. Considered separate from these individual donations are endowments or major contributions of wealthy individuals. Private foundations provide another source of funding, as do government grants and contracts.28 These funding sources are also a source of feedback. As an organization produces results that are favorable to a donor, the tendency would naturally be for that donor to consider maintaining or increasing the funding stream. Similarly, if the think tank fails to deliver significant enough results, or somehow works against the values and interests of the donor, the natural tendency would be to eliminate or decrease future funding.

At the same time, donors can choose to overlook short-term results in making funding decisions, while think tanks can also choose to operate without regard for the opinions of their funding sources. Human nature suggests that these situations would be exceptions to the rule. This fact should not be construed to be a guarantee of partisanship on any given issue, but simply a cautionary note not to assume impartiality. Indeed, James McGann, Senior Fellow at the Foreign Policy Research Institute told a Foreign Press Center audience, “...most people don’t talk about it, most institutions will rail against what I’m about to do, because they don’t want to be pegged in being one quadrant or another in terms of left, center, right, but the reality is those people who are in the know know what — where think tanks fall.”29 Knowing this, donors select the think tanks they choose to support, and think tanks tend to generate ideas and products that reflect their employees and donors. This polarization of some think tanks toward ideological positions can provide utility where they balance each other, but this tendency can also leave the ideological center with less of a policy voice.

Think tanks as organizations have no direct line of accountability. As mentioned above, they are indirectly accountable to their funding sources. Losing a funding source could lead a think tank to find other sources of revenue which, in turn, may or may not lead to a change in organizational focus. In a broader sense, think tanks are also accountable to their target audience(s), as losing a significant portion of their audience will reduce their perceived influence. This loss of influence may, in turn, also affect their funding. At the individual level, think tank scholars are directly accountable to their boards of directors.
INTEREST GROUPS

In 1787, writing in Federalist #10, James Madison defined faction as “. . . a number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or a minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse of passion, or of interest, advered [sic] to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interests of the community.”30 Today an interest group can be broadly defined as any group of nonelected individuals that organize themselves in an attempt to influence public policy. While focused on the national security community, this paper nevertheless recognizes that interest groups not claiming any interest in security policy can have impacts on policy and strategy formulation.

An About.com web page entitled “Issues, Organizations, and Interest Groups” gives some feel for the Wild West nature of the world of interest groups. At the time of this writing, the website contained 211 links to interest groups from across the political sphere. From well-known groups like the National Rifle Association and Greenpeace to polar opposites such as National Right to Life and Planned Parenthood to lesser-knowns such as Stewards of Family Farms, Ranches, and Forests, this website barely scratches the surface of interest groups vying to impact policy. To illustrate the scope of such groups, the Encyclopedia of Associations lists 22,200 U.S. national organizations; 22,300 international organizations; and 115,000 regional, state, and local organizations.31 (Note that under an expansive reading of this definition, some Federal agencies such as the Department of Veterans Affairs and Office of National Drug Control Policy could be considered interest groups—and these executive branch organizations’ websites are listed on the About.com website. This paper does not consider government agencies as interest groups.)

Interest groups obviously vary significantly in terms of size, focus, influence, and name recognition. On one end of the spectrum is Asian Pacific Americans for Progress (APAP), a little-known, liberal-leaning group based on the U.S. West Coast. In May 2007, this group hosted a conference call with Elizabeth Edwards, wife of presidential candidate John Edwards. For 30 minutes, she took questions from 65 call-in sites—mostly people’s homes. APAP, begun in 2004 to support candidate Howard Dean, claims no more than 7,500 members nationwide.32

At the other end of the spectrum reside well-known groups such as the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP). A visit to the AARP website shows they are open to anyone over 50 years old and claim over 37 million members. The organization is well known for their advocacy on behalf of seniors for affordable prescription drugs and protection of Social Security or Medicare from changes that would decrease benefit payments to seniors. Their other interests are wide-ranging, from homeowner insurance to the Taxpayer Bill of Rights to telecom deregulation and liability issues for volunteer drivers.33

Neither of these groups is primarily interested in or directly related to foreign policy. However, virtually all interest groups play at least an indirect role in the foreign policy process. For example, the national security professional might see the greatest impact of AARP in their tenacious defense of spending in the Social Security and Medicare accounts. Foreign policy funding of all types competes with other spending in the budget process. Thus, any argument for resource growth for the DoD or the State Department will require either a tax increase or a reduction in other government spending (or both). The case for discretionary spending growth is problematic, as AARP (among others) stands ready to mobilize 37 million seniors to oppose any resulting spending reductions or tax increases.

A significant majority of the American public agrees with the statement, “Congress is too heavily influenced by interest groups.”34 While political scientists across the spectrum cannot agree on the extent of interest group influence over the Congress, they uniformly reject “as crude and exaggerated” the public view of an interest group stranglehold on Congress.35 At the same time,
the American system of government has several facets that tend to increase the influence of interest groups when compared to other forms of government. Perhaps most importantly, the First Amendment to the Constitution guarantees the right of American individuals or groups to be heard through freedoms of the press, speech, and assembly. The diffusion of power in the American political system also serves to increase the power of interest groups. The separation of powers into three branches enhances the influence of interest groups by preventing excessive accumulation of powers in any single branch. Further diluting the centralization of power is the concept of Federalism, or reserving power to the states that is not explicitly granted to the Federal government. Furthermore, the limited power of any single political party in the American system tends to raise the relative influence of all actors in the system. Finally, the independent judiciary gives interest groups a route of appeal when legislative or executive actions stifle minority rights or harm group interests.36

Interest groups play important roles in representative government. They tend to organize either around broad public policy issues or narrowly focused issues. Organizing is easier for small groups that share a significant stake in a given issue. Because of its small size, the impact of any policy change will be more keenly felt, meaning individual motivation and energy are easier to come by and maintain as the interest group advances its agenda. With small size, however, usually comes small influence. The amount of time and energy involved in organizing a large public policy interest group is more extensive. Likewise, the potential impact of any given policy will be more diluted as it reaches across a larger population, meaning the individual motivation and energy level is more difficult to sustain.37 At the same time, the influence of a large group is likely to be greater than of a small group, since larger membership represents a larger constituency, and generally, access to a greater pool of resources. Interest groups formed to represent other groups (e.g., business groups, labor organizations, associations of like-minded groups) have similar dynamics.

An example of interest group engagement in governance is the effort to bring greater transparency to the congressional practice of earmarking. Earmarks are specific appropriations inserted into legislation by a single Member of Congress that benefits his or her state or district. Referring to earmarks, the President of Americans for Tax Reform stated, “Transparency is the next big thing.”38 A Wall Street Journal article asserts that this trend has accelerated at the state level—Kansas, Minnesota and Texas are among 19 states that have passed or are considering laws mandating public transparency of government spending. In the 2006 election cycle, congressional democrats campaigned on bringing greater transparency to earmarks. Legislative progress on the issue has been spotty, however, as some 32,000 earmark requests are working their way through the 2007 legislative session.39

In addition to their efforts to implement change, interest groups’ expertise can be an important asset to Members of Congress, the executive branch and the judiciary. The arcane and technical aspects of much of American business, agricultural, and scientific life, for example, are generally outside the experience and expertise of Members and their staffs.40 Interest groups step forward to fill the void, educating Members and theoretically helping to improve the final legislative product. Members frequently reach out to those interest groups with which they have established trusted relationships. According to research from as far back as the 1960s, these relationships may form the basis for much of the sway interest groups have over policy.41 Clearly, relationships continue to matter.

At the individual level, interest groups often hire lobbyists to represent their views to the government. As lobbyists work to educate Members, they, and the interest groups that employ them can become sources of financial support Members can tap for campaign expenses. The image of a congressman receiving money from a lobbyist gets to the heart of the public’s troubled percep-
tions. In many cases, however, the public perception is misguided, as the greater power in the relationship often belongs to the Member. As needy as each Member of Congress is for campaign funds, the universe of available lobbyists with funds is so large that Members can afford to be somewhat choosy. This inverts the relationship, forcing lobbyists to compete and to bring value beyond their money to the table.42 While not dependent on interest group money, members of the President’s administration are also recipients of interest group lobbying. This lobbying attempts to steer Federal policymaking as well as the content of legislation the administration may propose to Congress. Finally, interest groups can also directly lobby the administration to threaten a presidential veto of legislation.

In addition to hiring lobbyists, interest groups also can form Political Action Committees (PACs) to collect and disburse money on behalf of political candidates or specific issues. PACs are limited to accepting no more than $5,000 from an individual, political party committee, or other PAC within any given calendar year. PACs may give no more than $5,000 to any candidate’s reelection committee or more than $15,000 to any national party committee annually.43 These PACs serve as conduits for the “soft money” that has replaced direct contributions to candidates over the years. As Congress tightened campaign contribution laws in an effort to head off ethics crises and the worsening of public perception, limits on these direct contributions, known as “hard money” weakened their overall impact. PACs and soft money emerged out of the resulting political environment, and efforts to control or limit PACs have suffered from limited congressional enthusiasm as well as Constitutional issues regarding limiting free speech.

When working to influence policy, interest groups can adopt an inside strategy, an outside strategy, or some combination of the two. Inside strategies focus their efforts on influencing change from the inside the organization. This strategy requires connections with centers of power and influence inside the organization, which will then change the direction of the whole institution. Lobbying is an example of an inside strategy, wherein an interest group pays an individual or lobbying firm to communicate directly with select Members of Congress in order to influence their votes on a piece of legislation or more broadly across a range of bills impacting their interests. An inside strategy is the most direct approach and when correctly planned and executed, is more effective than an outside strategy. An inside strategy also has the possibility of being executed with less public scrutiny than an outside strategy. Ultimately, however, an inside strategy requires access to resources such as money, a substantial membership list or perhaps established relationships that facilitate access. Without such resources, interest groups have little hope of effectively working inside the organization.

An outside strategy attempts to bring external pressure on the organization. The use of public pressure, shame, protest actions and civil disobedience are samples of tools of an outside strategy. The appeal of the outside strategy is that is does not necessarily require large sums of money, a large membership or any direct connection at all to the target organization. Before the advent of the Internet, the media was a primary tool of the outside strategy, especially for resource-poor groups. Groups such as Earth First—an environmental action group known to use protest actions to garner media attention—hope to receive free publicity through news coverage. Just as terrorists attempt to communicate to their target audience via media coverage of their attacks, some interest groups create disruptions to garner public attention to their interests. Fortunately, these groups are a tiny minority, and a more common outside strategy is a simple media campaign that relies on repetition and a wide reach of press releases and “talking head” opportunities to get the message out. This is one avenue where PACs excel. Their large monetary resources, limited in terms of direct contributions to favored candidates, are available for wide ranging media campaigns on behalf of both candidates and issues. Additionally, a University of Michigan study concluded that
a media-based outside strategy is generally only effective for those groups with enough resources to also attempt an inside strategy.\textsuperscript{44} It appears that in addition to relationships, size also matters.

While PAC money buys expensive media campaigns, the increasing ubiquity of the Internet has dramatically reduced the cost of Internet-based campaigns. With the lowered financial bar to entry comes a vastly more congested public space, in which it becomes ever more difficult to make a message stand out. It is clear that both large national interest groups and narrowly focused groups can now mobilize their members with little resource outlay. At the same time, the media still plays an enormous role both in political campaigns and in governance.

**THE MEDIA**

In the absence of a functioning media, much of the foregoing discussion about the national security community would become moot. The executive branch would make policy, the Legislature would make laws, and the Judiciary would continue to interpret them as before. In that case, however, all three branches would be more isolated from the People, and think tanks and interest groups would be hard pressed to generate the influence they enjoy today. The media serves as a conduit energizing the informal connections highlighted elsewhere in this chapter. Complicating the picture is the fact that the media cannot cover these issues without also affecting them, both directly and indirectly. The media impacts the national security environment in many ways. Most importantly, the media serves as a communications channel between the government and the People. It also serves as a democratic watchdog over government, guarding against the inappropriate accumulation and exercise of power. Somewhat less recognized outside of journalistic circles, but arguably no less important, is the media role of framing.

Framing can represent the context within which the media presents information. Given the finite news cycle, how much space or time does any single news item deserve? Editors are always challenged to maximize a story’s accuracy, depth, and context while minimizing the time or space allotted. Limiting context, however, affects the framing and ultimately the consumer’s interpretation of the story. For example, is a news item presented with enough context to allow the consumer to distinguish a conspiracy just unmasked from a simple case of human error? Was this news event even out of the ordinary? Framing can also relate to whether or not an item is covered at all. When an editor reaches the limit of a given news cycle’s coverage, any remaining lower-priority stories, according to his sole judgment, are left out—many never to be reconsidered. In choosing not to cover one story, while covering another, the editor has in a small way personally framed the larger public debate. A familiar example in military circles is the media’s perceived predilection to report daily U.S. casualties in Iraq as well as the body count from insurgent attacks. A source of contention for military professionals is the editorial choice to ignore information contained in Coalition press releases documenting progress in security, civil society, and basic services. The military professional grouses about the preponderance of negative coverage, while the media editor laments that most press release information, while perhaps valuable to the overall context, simply is not news. This media framing presents the war as a recurring drumbeat of costs paid without also providing the balancing compilation of benefits purchased in part through the efforts and sacrifices of those paying the costs.

In any close observation of the media and the government, it is helpful to remember that they share the same ultimate customer—the People.\textsuperscript{45} While on the surface, relations between the government and the media frequently appear strained, there are institutional continuities working beneath the surface that make for a symbiotic relationship. These continuities include the media’s ongoing need for access to information and the government’s need for the means to communicate with the People. While both parties want more control over the relationship, they make extensive
use of each other to achieve their objectives. The media exerts pressure on the government to provide greater access to information—in some cases information that the government does not want to release. The government, in turn, devotes resources both to crafting strategies to communicate its message to the People via the media and to responding to media requests for information. In that relationship, both parties hold some power.

The news cycle drives the media’s recurring appetite for information. Theoretically, the government has the power to grant or withhold access. (Notwithstanding the idealized picture of the investigative journalist digging through the system looking for a sympathetic source.) If the government wants to fulfill the media’s request, it generally must do so on the media’s timeline. If it fails to do so, the story may not get the extent of coverage the government desires. Likewise, if the government does not want the story to get wide coverage, delaying a response until after deadline can have that effect. For stories that editors feel have sufficient impact, however, such government delays do no good. In fact, the media can report on the government’s lack of responsiveness, and thereby contribute to heightening public attention to a subsequent story.

When compared with the government-media relationship, the relational dynamic between the media, think tanks, and interest groups is somewhat more one-directional. Here, the pull of the media news cycle is enhanced by the push of these groups’ desire to generate media coverage for their ideas. Indeed, it may be more accurate to portray a media responsibility of filtering in this relationship. In today’s fast-paced and crowded news environment, not every think tank or interest group press release or report is worth a slice of finite media coverage, and the media therefore decides what receives coverage and what does not.

The proliferation of Internet websites and satellite/cable television channels containing news and commentary have led to saturation of the media marketplace. Newspaper circulation is declining around the country, and the ability to turn a profit is more problematic. Conventional wisdom asserts that pursuing high quality journalism costs additional resources, and these added resources detract from the profit margin of a news organization. With shareholders always looking over the shoulder, the pressure for profits frequently leads to cost-cutting measures, which in turn degrade the quality of in-depth reporting. The Chairman of the Tribune Company, Jack Fuller, spoke on the tension between business and journalistic priorities:

... those of us who put out newspapers are important ... participants in the system of public governance. If we take that seriously, as we should, our jobs as leaders of newspaper enterprises is to find the sweet spot where we can fulfill both our fiduciary obligation to the shareholders and our social obligation to provide communities the kind of information they need in order for people to make their sovereign choices wisely.

To determine if objective measures of newspaper quality are available, Koang-Hyub Kim and Philip Meyer began by reviewing a study published in 1989 by Leo Bogart. In his conclusions, Bogart declared that indicators such as accuracy, civic-mindedness and impartiality in reporting were too subjective to be measured. What Kim and Meyer went on to find, however, was that for seven quality indicators they isolated, quality was indeed directly related to profitability. (Higher quality led to higher profits.) But they noted, “Quality journalism, in the minds of some, is more cost than gain.” Perhaps more ominously for newspapers in general, the researchers’ final conclusion was that those focused on cutting costs were achieving short-term gains while masking the long-term costs in terms of reduced readership as quality inevitably suffers.

How does this phenomenon affect the national security community? As pressures build on newspapers, and media more generally, to generate additional profits to justify stock price increases, the time, effort and resources devoted to news collection and quality reporting will likely
decline. Reporting may depend more and more on inside sources cuing reporters to evolving is-
issues. Perhaps the various interrelationships in the community will become more complicated as the Internet opens up ever wider spaces for individuals and groups for report news, leak information, or opine on the issues of the day. The Internet will certainly increase the relative power of any connected, enterprising individual. It remains to be seen if it will lead to more in-depth, quality reporting.

**CONCLUSION**

While the executive branch bears the primary burden for national security policy, it functions in an environment with other actors clamoring for influence. The Congress wields significant sway in policy debates. In a movement gaining momentum over many years, think tanks have greatly increased in number. While their direct influence remains difficult to measure, there is little contention over the idea that their influence continues to grow. Metaphorically elbowing their way onto the stage are interest groups, large and small, that sometimes bring access to tremendous resources—resources that are important to the Congress for the almost-perpetual campaigning required. Providing much of the discussion space for each of these parties to interact is the media. The national security community is a morass of intersecting relationships of feedback and accountability. Whether forecasting the second-order effects of a policy proposal or attempting to shepherd policy changes through the process, the national security professional needs to remain attuned to the many players involved, and to choose his sources wisely.

**ENDNOTES - CHAPTER 3**


7. Snow and Brown, p. 119.


9. Ibid., Art. 1, Sec. 2-3.


13. Haass.


15. Haass.


17. Haass.


22. Haass.

23. McGann.


25. Haass.


27. Stone, pp. 262, 265.


29. Ibid.


42. Lee, p. 294.


44. A. Trevor Thrall, “The Myth of the Outside Strategy: Mass Media News Coverage of Interest Groups,” *Political Communication*, Vol. 23, October-December 2006, pp. 407-420. In a review of television, magazine, and newspaper coverage of four public policy areas, he found that of all groups attempting to impact policy, the single most frequently covered interest group in a policy arena averaged 41 percent of the newspaper coverage, 36 percent of the news magazine coverage, and a staggering 43 percent of all TV news coverage.


49. *Ibid*. 