

# Arrogance

by [G. Murphy Donovan](#) (March 2022)

*“It gets harder the more you know. Because the more you find out the uglier everything seems.” – F. Zappa*



I have observed the national security circus now for fifty years or more. Most of it as a deep state Intelligence denizen. Not necessarily well paid for my efforts, but a career enthusiast nevertheless.

Practicing my craft in Vietnam (twice), at HQ USAF Intelligence, DIA, UN, CIA (on detail), and NSA; I have often thought about motives for and the character of policy.

Indeed, what really drives national security policy?

I sought, over the years to understand that nexus between the lion and the lamb, the policy beast and Intelligence lamb. If I have learned nothing else, I know that the US Intelligence Community is a buffet, so big now that a policy maker can have almost any plate he/she/they/them wants.

Intelligence reports are killing more trees today than pine

beetles. All of which any deep state apparatchik understands. We go along to get along, usually in triplicate.

In government, when you raise problems, challenge policy, or rock the boat; you become the problem. And to abuse a metaphor, what you know is never as important as who you b-w. Reality literally bites. Just ask Jeff and Alli, over at CNN.



And here, the comparison to Orwellian journalism is painfully relevant. US Intelligence and American media are kissing cousins in Washington, if we can bleed an analogy. Too many confuse TOP SECRET with truth. Like journalism, Intelligence often twerks behind a burka of confidentiality, classification, or “sources and methods,” especially when truth or evidence are in short supply. Recent [“false flag”](#) allegations about Russian plans for Ukraine speak to the sources and methods dodge, projection – and the fake Intelligence phenomenon.

“Trust Me” should be the new national motto for our currency. Given recent domestic chaos in Washington, it’s easy to think that team Robinette might be promoting the Ukraine phantasm just to change the subject ahead of mid-term elections.

Cooked Intelligence, like fake news, doesn’t just frame arguments, it shapes the *character* of public opinion and public policy. In short, truth in journalism and Intelligence is relative, if not hostage to self-interest, bias, existing policy, or the conventional wisdom. When the facts and science changes, policy and opinion don’t necessarily follow.

Indeed, the policy lion often has the Intelligence lamb for lunch. The Cold War with Russia provides 100 years of testimony to American foreign policy stasis.

In theory, the Intelligence Community, as a whole, works for the chap in the Oval Office. Notable exceptions might be US Army officers like Alexander Vindman or USAF mandarins like James Clapper who answer, apparently, to media gods. We are also told that Intelligence is “nonpartisan,” unless, of course, the crosshair is on the “other” or outsiders like Donald Trump. In the real world, the IC is captive to prevailing urban and Washington politics inside the Beltway.

And these days, ground zero is well [left of impartial](#). Intelligence czars and the classified cloister would like to keep it that way.

If we know nothing from the continuing Trump soap opera; we know that the average American civil servant, urban or national, serves personal ideology best; not law, policy, or elected officials. Possibly the most iconic shibboleth undone by Trump hate is the “Intelligence speaks truth to power” cliché. Alas, Intelligence today is to truth as science is to Fauci, moving targets. Messrs. Clapper, Brennan, Comey, and Pinocchio are icons now in the candor void.



Gruesome Threesome

Ever wonder why failures never get fired from the US Intelligence Community? The answer is wrapped in the ass

kisser conundrum. Who fires yes men, lackeys who tell the President, Congress, or the public for that matter what they want to hear, even if it's *bravo sierra*? The revolving door only swings for team players. Ask any Pentagon veteran, contractor, or Beltway camp follower.

The best tools in the Intelligence kit are wet index or raised middle fingers.

Clearly, policy bias, partisanship, [corruption](#), and inertia speak to motives, all of which get a lot of ink over time. Nevertheless, the scrutiny of motives alone doesn't necessarily say much about net results. And what, pray you, is a typical outcome from corrupt Intelligence that poisons the policy well? I would argue that dicey Intelligence, like fake news, produces, not just bad policy, but a unique variety of profound and persistent arrogance.

Take the current Russia/Ukraine [standoff](#) as a hemorrhagic example.

For more than 25 years now, Moscow has expressed legitimate [concerns](#) that Brussels is "cultivating" former Russian satellites with EU/NATO memberships; literally, all along Russia's western flank. Machinations in Yugoslavia and now Ukraine speaks volumes about NATO's "defensive" meddling. In spite of improbable claims by Brussels that imperial expansion is benign, the Kremlin has made it clear that the dissolution of the Warsaw Pact was not a green light for the West to create a hostile *cordon sanitaire* around Russia.

Moscow also sees the not so invisible hands of Uncle Sam pulling EU/NATO strings in East Europe. Here too, there's ample evidence that Washington sees Europe as a [surrogate](#) at best, a pawn at worst, in the now millennial Cold War between the United States and Russia.

America's foreign policy hubris is insulated and isolated by two oceans East and West and subservient neighbors north and

south; ethereal socialists in Canada and endemic criminal corruption in Mexico. Neither polity has the inclination, the grit, or the resources to challenge Washington's high-handed hegemony in any serious way. America is also buffered by a [Monroe](#) Doctrine that, in theory, proscribes any European power from meddling in the Americas, enforced as necessary by gunboat diplomacy. See Cuban missile crisis.

Compare then, Russian foreign policy and United States foreign policy on a virtual 21<sup>th</sup> Century humility scale.

Ignore if you can, all the American sponsored [regime change fails](#) in the Third and Muslim worlds. Consider only that Russia, since the 1980s; departed Afghanistan, equipage and pride intact, dissolved the Warsaw Pact, relinquished control of its European and Muslim republics and signed a number of conciliatory arms controls treaties. Consider also that in the same period, Russian rocket boosters continued to enable, if not make the American manned space program possible.

If the last 30 years represents Russian "aggression," then the first priority for the US State Department ought to be a rewrite of the definitions for aggression, "[imminent](#)," and stupidity for Webster and Wikipedia. A question here also for perennial cold warriors; do you really want to play nuclear chicken with team Robinette at the wheel in Washington? If recent history is precedent; remember the [Kabul fiasco](#) and the rebirth of the Taliban vampire.

Arrogant and condescending American foreign policy makes chaps like Putin possible. As H. Higgins might say, the difference between a lady and a tramp is how a lady is treated, not she he behaves.

Worse still, Russophobia drives Moscow towards Beijing. Indeed, while US intelligence paints Russians as genetically deficient, the Chinese and Islamic threat is whitewashed. We no longer speak of "reds," "Communist" China, or "Chicoms."

Likewise, terms like jihad, mujahidin, Islamist, and Islamofascism have been purged from the US Intelligence lexicon. Officially, the archipelago of global Muslim terror wars has nothing to do with theology. Realpolitik is better served by viewing Muslim [theocracy](#) as toxic in Kabul and Tehran as it would be in London or Toronto.

Withal, a different foreign policy might make Putin a different man or even make Russia an ally. Putin knows how to deal with seditious Islamic terror. Recall the fate of [Shamil Baysejev](#). In spite of what James Clapper tells us, Russians are not “genetically” aggressive and they probably make better allies than enemies.

National security arrogance is not a policy. Arrogance is now a perilous national American character flaw.

### Playing the War Card

Washington and Brussels are now reaping the whirlwind of strategic incompetence. Putin knows that NATO is a paper tiger, a chimera now led by a weak White House. Humiliated by Afghanistan, America threw in the Ukraine towel early by saying it would not fight. Now Putin has taken a page out of the American playbook. If NATO can send “peacekeeping” or “humanitarian” bombs and troops to East Europe or North Africa, the Kremlin feels free to use the same rationale for intervention closer to the homeland.

Putin also has *some* of facts on his side; Kiev is a corrupt, unstable neighbor, where significant Nazi or fascist thugs are [thriving](#) with the assistance of a clueless CIA and US State Department.

Washington wrote [the book](#) on undermining national sovereignty since WWII. Those chickens have now come home to roost. As it has been for the last 75 years, Washington is playing Whack-a-Mole while Moscow plays chess, team Biden looks to use Ukraine as they used the pandemic, for another four years in the White

House. The Kremlin, in contrast, sees Ukraine as a strategic line in the sand, a chance to stem the tide of EU/NATO hegemony.

Putin should be the underdog in this fight, outnumbered thirty to one. The odds on the match, however, are about even.

President Biden has yet to land a solid punch.

Note: For a more complete discussion of Russian concerns and the Kremlin perspective on the Ukraine crisis see Vladimir Putin's 24 February [address](#) at link.

## [TABLE OF CONTENTS](#)

---

G. Murphy Donovan writes about Intelligence and the politics of national security.

Follow NER on Twitter [@NERIconoclast](#)