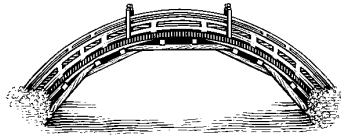


SPECIAL ROUNDTABLE

Bridging the Gap Between the Academic and Policy Worlds



*Andrew D. Marble*

*Kenneth Lieberthal*

*Emily O. Goldman*

*Robert Sutter*

*Ezra F. Vogel*

*Celeste A. Wallander*

## Bridging the Gap with Market-driven Knowledge: The Launching of *Asia Policy*

*Andrew D. Marble*

This Roundtable brings together a stimulating collection of essays from five experts—Kenneth Lieberthal, Emily Goldman, Robert Sutter, Ezra Vogel, and Celeste Wallander. Drawing on his or her own unique combination of policy and academic experience, each participant presents personal insights into how to integrate the fruits of academic research more effectively into the policymaking process. This essay summarizes the main findings offered up by the Roundtable panelists and draws implications for how *Asia Policy* can best help bridge the gap between the worlds of academia and policymaking.

### *Challenges to Bridging the Gap*

One clear insight to emerge from the Roundtable is that academic research findings are seldom translated directly into policy action. The policymaking process is determined by the interplay of a wide array of factors—e.g., the numerous policy priorities that compete for a fixed number of policy resources, the logistics of coordinating different bureaucracies, the time pressure involved in responding to events, the impact of partisan and electoral politics, and the personalities of the individuals involved in the policymaking process. Information—be it academic or otherwise—is simply one of many determinants of policymaking. Moreover, what may appear as an opportunity for scholarly input may sometimes simply be efforts by policymakers to gather support for a predetermined policy direction, to collect sound bites for a speech, or to create the appearance of interest in soliciting policy advice.

Despite limited opportunity for scholarly research findings to impact policy, there still exists a crucial need for such academic input. First, there are indeed many instances when policymakers require, and actively seek, scholarly advice on policy issues. As Kenneth Lieberthal and other participants in this Roundtable point out, policymakers are overloaded with information. What makes scholars so uniquely positioned to offer “value-added” analysis of the data is that they possess a wide array of key qualities: a broad and deep

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understanding not only of general political phenomena but also often of a specific region, country, or issue; methodological training that aids in extracting lessons from the exploration of ideas and historical events; the freedom to pursue ideas that might challenge the existing frameworks within which policymakers are compelled to work; and often the language training that can facilitate a more nuanced understanding of events.

Despite the clear need for the input of academic research into policy-making, a host of factors intervene to impede efforts to bridge this gap. The Roundtable participants collectively touch upon many of these problems:

- the increasingly disciplinary-based demands of a career in academia, which act as strong disincentives for younger scholars to produce policy analysis
- that scholars interested in policy analysis can sometimes be unclear regarding what type of information policymakers need, how such information should be packaged, or when decisionmakers require such input
- that policymakers tend to be dismissive of the “academic dressing”—abstract theories, citations, and academic terminology—characteristic of much scholarly research
- the lack of venues and other opportunities for interaction between academics and policymakers.

### *Asia Policy as Bridge-builder*

The goal then for *Asia Policy* is to take creative advantage of journal processes, content, and format to help overcome the above barriers to bridge-building. There are a number of strategies that the journal can utilize in order to act as a bridge for the fruitful exchange between academia and policymaking circles on policy issues related to the Asia-Pacific. This section will outline several of these strategies.

*Presenting select, yet unbiased, information*  Ezra Vogel notes that information overload makes policymakers feel that they are “drinking from a fire hose.” The goal then for the journal is to become a more specialized “drinking fountain.” But how can the journal stake claim to being a reliable source for the most important information? The Platonic approach to enlightened thought is to listen to the select few capable of producing knowledge (*episteme*) rather than opinion (*doxa*); Aristotle, however, warned of the dangers of only heeding the advice of a chosen minority, arguing that a state’s rulers

must instead draw from a “marketplace of ideas” and take into account various opinions of different groups of citizens.<sup>1</sup> The journal’s approach is to focus on a value-added strategy that combines these two schools of thought.

*Asia Policy* is a marketplace of ideas in the sense that the journal is open to all submissions regardless of the background of the author, the methodological approach of the research, or the political implications of the argument. In order to identify from this pool of submissions the research that is best at producing knowledge, as opposed to mere opinion, the journal will employ a review process in which articles are subject to critique from fellow experts.<sup>2</sup> *Asia Policy*’s peer-review mechanism is a strict “triple-blind” anonymous process: not only are author and reviewer unaware of each other’s identity, but the Editor and Editorial Board also do not know the authorship of submitted articles under review. This anonymity is achieved by requiring all incoming submissions to be sent to <submissions@nbr.org>, whereupon editorial staff will assign all submissions an anonymous reference number before forwarding the paper to the Editor. This process of complete anonymity reinforces the journal’s role as a neutral arbiter within the marketplace of ideas. *Asia Policy* will devote at least half of the space of every issue to publishing these peer-reviewed essays (including research notes). The remainder of the journal space will be comprised of various other formats, such as roundtables and debates, that highlight different views held by a variety of academic, policy, media, business, and other experts on issues related to Asia-Pacific policy.

*Overcoming disciplinary disincentives* ≈ The high academic bar set by *Asia Policy*’s review process means that articles published in the journal meet the peer-review criteria so important in the “publish or perish” tenure system under which disciplinary-focused scholars labor. Scholars thus have an incentive to draw policy implications from their research and seek to publish policy-relevant arguments. Moreover, by targeting today’s graduate students, *Asia Policy* can join forces with other organizations in helping to train a new generation of policy-interested social scientists. In addition, the journal’s open submissions process will allow *Asia Policy* to choose the best of all such policy-related research for publication.

*Producing policy-relevant and policymaker-accessible research* ≈ Although social science scholarship—whether theoretical, case-specific, or empirically


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<sup>1</sup> For an interesting discussion of approaches to “truth” and the role of think tanks in the foreign policy process, see David M. Ricci, *The Transformation of American Politics: The New Washington and the Rise of Think Tanks* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1993), especially the introduction.

<sup>2</sup> The review process includes input from academics, specialists within the policymaking community, and those whose experience straddles both worlds.

focused theoretical analysis—can be policy relevant, Emily Goldman and others note that scholars are more accustomed to producing general propositions linking broad classes of empirical phenomena than using their research to draw policy-relevant implications. Ezra Vogel also points out that academics have traditionally not been trained to compress their thinking and express ideas in a precise and concise way. The journal has devised a number of strategies that can help overcome such problems and ensure that the academic research is written in a policy-relevant and policy-accessible format:

- By including input from those with experience in policymaking and policy analysis, the journal’s peer review process helps to ensure that the author directly addresses the concerns of the policymaking community.
- A one-page Executive Summary—required for all submissions—succinctly lays out the *topic, main argument, policy implications, and organization* of each article. Such one-pagers allow busy policymakers and staff to quickly grasp the main points of the research, yet maintain confidence that the peer-reviewed article following the Executive Summary provides strong support for these one-page bulleted conclusions.
- The journal’s review and editing process can ensure a concise introduction, a clear article structure, and non-jargonistic writing. In the months and years ahead, *Asia Policy*’s editing department will work closely with authors, reviewers, and readers to further develop this “policymaker-friendly” article style and format.

*Building an extensive network of experts*  Celeste Wallander and other participants in this Roundtable emphasize the importance of building up a network of relationships that link experts within and across academic and policy communities. The academic experts who comprise the journal’s Editorial Board (many of who also have solid policy experience) are *Asia Policy*’s baseline in this endeavor. Adding to this network are both the authors who submit their work to *Asia Policy* and the reviewers whose participation in the review process constitutes an important, although anonymous, exchange of ideas.

Moreover, the journal’s other formats—such as roundtables and debates—allow for the direct exchange of ideas among academics, policymakers, and those whose experience straddles both worlds. These additional formats are excellent vehicles to perform what Goldman identifies as an important function: allowing policymakers to personally frame the parameters of de-

bate—whether by shaping the agenda, informing the research process, or providing direct feedback. As such, these supplementary formats are the perfect complement to the peer-reviewed academic research section of the journal that allows scholars their turn to take the initiative in “bridging the gap.”

The journal’s readers—many of whom will hopefully be motivated to quote the article, build on the research contained within (either by supporting or critiquing the scholarship) in their own publications, or get in touch personally with the various authors—will also constitute a crucial, ever-widening ring of contacts.

Robert Sutter’s contribution to this Roundtable nicely sums up the value of *Asia Policy* as a potential bridge for networking: as the journal becomes a trusted venue for introductions and initial sharing of ideas, policymakers and their staff—who often prefer to deal with things in person—can begin to identify academics for later follow-up when the need for policy input arises; for their part, academics seeking to influence policy can use their work in *Asia Policy* as a first step in making the necessary personal connections that will allow for carefully tailored forays into direct policy advising. The goal then for the Editorial Department and Editorial Board is thus to make careful and creative use of the journal’s format, processes, and content to make *Asia Policy* the foremost venue for drawing policy-relevant knowledge from the marketplace of ideas.

## Initiatives to Bridge the Gap

*Kenneth Lieberthal*

I write these comments from the perspective of a long-time academic who had the privilege of serving as Senior Director for Asia on the National Security Council and Special Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs from 1998 through 2000. The position of NSC Senior Director is an operational staff post (as opposed to a primarily analytical or advisory position).<sup>1</sup> Therefore, the comments below reflect the policy world at a senior executive level in the White House. Although my government responsibilities encompassed policy toward northeast, east, and southeast Asia, my own academic background has focused primarily on China, as will most of the examples in this essay.

### *What Can Scholarship Contribute to the Policy World?*

The government and the academic communities have very different strengths that they bring to bear in understanding China. The government possesses ongoing access to information on concrete developments that academics cannot hope to match. This access particularly concerns information that is current and specific. A portion of this information, not surprisingly, is in the military arena, but much also concerns actions and individuals who are engaged in economic, domestic political, and foreign affairs. What policymakers are in need of is assistance in refining this flood of information into a form that is useful in informing policy needs. Here is where scholars can make a substantial contribution.

*Rich understanding of context*  $\approx$  Scholars have the time, skill, and incentives to develop a far richer understanding of context. For example, the

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<sup>1</sup> By contrast, intelligence analysts must studiously avoid trying to influence policymakers' decisions. While these analysts have built up a deep understanding of various situations, their task is to provide the necessary information that will enable policymakers to reach conclusions independently. When I once offered to be interviewed by an intelligence analyst who was working on a net assessment, for example, the analyst explained to me in no uncertain terms that my very first access to this assessment process would actually only be when I received a briefing on the final results—an explanation that conformed to the essential distinction between the intelligence and policy worlds.

academic arena has devoted far more attention than government analysts to a systematic study of how the Chinese political system itself operates: its structure, policymaking process, bureaucratic matrix dilemmas, operating principles, annual rhythms and rituals, document and other communications systems, purposes and roles of various types of meetings and institutions, and ways of thinking about itself.


This type of knowledge concerning the Chinese *system* has at various times played an important role in understanding the real significance (or lack thereof) of specific information that comes in. An example from 2001 illustrates this point. Secretary Powell thought that he had established a good relationship with Qian Qichen when Qian visited Washington, D.C. in March 2001. When the EP-3 incident occurred in April, Secretary Powell quickly placed a phone call to Qian in an early effort to gain control over this serious crisis. When Qian refused the call, however, Powell was miffed and reportedly took this refusal as an indication of China's unwillingness to cooperate. In reality, China's system is such that there is no way Qian could have accepted the call before the Politburo Standing Committee had reached consensus on how to respond to the crisis. The U.S. system easily tolerates individual initiative to get out ahead of an issue and potentially defuse a crisis. The new administration did not understand that the Chinese system will not permit this type of approach. Without such knowledge of the inner workings of the Chinese system, policymakers sometimes lack the proper context and subsequently draw the wrong implications.


Another example comes from the mid to late 1990s, when U.S. officials tended to shun contact with Li Peng, primarily due to his notorious role in the Tiananmen Square incident. There was too little appreciation of the fact that, at the time, Li headed the Foreign Affairs Leadership Small Group, an important body that does not appear on the organizational charts but has nonetheless been well documented by scholars. Li did not, however, hold a public official position that indicated a foreign affairs responsibility. U.S. policy should have been more sensitive to the role that Li played in China's foreign policy decisionmaking.

Most issues in China have a unique political history and a specific policy community that has formed around them (often at the bureau level in the central government). In various cases, academics have traced the history of particular issues (such as the Three Gorges dam construction project). When such a history has been traced, ongoing debates and the significance of the words and actions of major players at each level of the system are enormously easier to understand. This type of deep historical research, however, is rarely



conducted in the government. Indeed, at a senior policymaking level, issues typically arise in response to concrete policymaking needs. These needs largely preclude a deep understanding of the issue, especially as viewed by the Chinese (e.g., prospects for securing international loans for the Three Gorges project). Yet looking at current issues without a sense of the domestic political environment can make Washington miss out on how the U.S. position will “play” in China.

*Broad biographical analysis*  In addition, over the past two decades government analysts have reduced the attention they give to broad biographical analysis. Many academic scholars, on the other hand, follow closely not only who is rising through the ranks of foreign governments (which the government also does very well) but also any changes in a wide variety of other areas: the rules governing appointments to major posts, the types of career patterns that produce upward mobility, the nature of skills that key groups of elites bring to the table, and the deep historical personal networks (i.e., *guanxi*) that provide the context for understanding particular promotions or other personnel changes. These types of information can be critical to understanding the evolving distribution of power in Beijing as well as the attitudes of key elites. All serious policy-level people in the U.S. government have this depth of knowledge in terms of the Executive Branch in which they serve; scholars tend to do a better job than the government, in my experience, in examining this same phenomenon in China.

*Linguistic skills*  Scholars also possess greater linguistic sensitivity than policymakers, a fact that should not be underestimated. Many policymakers hold responsibility for countries whose language they do not speak. More fundamentally, the flood of information that inundates both government analysts and policymakers is so great that virtually no one has the available time—even if they have the skills—to examine sources in the original language.<sup>2</sup> Anonymous translators thus become key intermediaries between a large quantity of information and what government officials actually see.

I recall one time when I was very anxious to see a new item that the CIA had indicated as having just come in. I was told that the text would be translated and sent over as quickly as possible. Given time pressures on my end, I asked that the original Chinese be faxed over by secure fax so that I could move ahead on the issue more rapidly. This request produced some real consternation. Someone I subsequently asked at the CIA could not recall the

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<sup>2</sup> My understanding is that intelligence officers are increasingly encouraged to use source materials in the original language.

last time they had received a request for the original Chinese language text for an item.

Nobody who has dealt extensively with information in a foreign language can fail to appreciate how much nuance and meaning is often distorted in translation. To use a recent Korean case, Tong Kim, the former top translator for all negotiations with North Korea, wrote an op-ed in the *Washington Post* on September 25, 2005, about misunderstandings due to linguistic differences. His examples regarding the just-signed resolution at the 4th Round of the Six Party Talks included, *inter alia*, “North Korea made a commitment to ‘abandoning all nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs’—but its translation used the Korean verb *pogi hada*, which could be interpreted to mean leaving the weapons in place rather than dismantling them.”

In a well-known case from the history of U.S.-China relations, in the Shanghai Communiqué of 1972 Washington affirmed that the United States “acknowledges” the Chinese position vis-à-vis Taiwan. The United States again stated that it “acknowledges” the Chinese position in the 1979 communiqué on normalization of U.S.-China relations. The problem, however, is that in the corresponding Chinese versions, the translation of the word “acknowledges” in the 1972 document (*renshi dao*) carried the connotation of “noting” but not accepting the position, while the translation of the same word in the 1979 document (*chengren*) carried the connotation of “accepting” the validity of the position.

One wonders how large was the group of policymakers in Washington who were aware of this crucial difference. Few scholars missed it.

### *The Unique Analytical Environment of Policymaking*

In sum, the academic community has a great deal of knowledge and perspective that is not generated within the government itself. The very strength of the academic community in its approach to issues is, however, also one of the biggest obstacles in bringing scholarly analysis to bear fruitfully in governmental decisionmaking. Scholars undertake rigorous analysis on big issues—e.g., the evolving bureaucratic structure of the Chinese state, basic factors in China’s political economy, driving forces shaping cross-Strait relations, and the rise and fall of different elite cohorts—in order to understand the core issues and forces that shape outcomes. Though often resulting in deep insights, this method of research requires a level of analysis that government policymakers almost never have the luxury of engaging.

High-level policymakers are in fact overwhelmed by the demands of making policy. Though perhaps sounding trite, that statement is profoundly important. Policy demands at the top of the system are unrelenting. Many days are dominated by issues that first became apparent only that morning and must be resolved before the close of business that day. Even on days when policy issues are relatively calm, there is an extraordinary busyness and concreteness to the policymaking arena.

Enormous amounts of policymakers' time and energy are spent on developing an understanding of the U.S. policy interest and the pertinent forces at play on the foreign government side, developing recommendations that speak to an issue in ways the president can support, taking the necessary steps to obtain the required level of bureaucratic consensus in order to adopt the approach the policymaker wishes to recommend, and then finally doing the work necessary to achieve effective implementation (such as setting up phone calls and meetings, drafting memoranda, tasking various issues, etc.).

In this extremely concrete and busy context, there is an understandable tendency to view all relevant information within the context of a key concrete policy issue and a related forcing event at the moment. In reality, however, the issue from the perspective of the other side is often one that is driven by forces mostly unrelated to the U.S. dimension of the issue. For example, the U.S. focus on China's peg of the *renminbi* (RMB) to the U.S. dollar as a central issue in our bilateral trade deficit largely ignores the reality—which is very apparent to China's leaders—that substantial upward revaluation of the RMB would, among other things, increase regional differences in wealth between the coastal provinces and the interior. Since entering office, however, the Hu Jintao leadership has sought to make decreases in regional differences a centerpiece of its national domestic policy. Merging this broader context into the U.S. deliberations on how to change China's currency policy can be very difficult.

The reality is that even a relatively specific issue in the mind of a scholar is quite literally broken down into dozens or more specific issues for the policymaker. Typically the policymaker does not have the luxury of sitting back and asking how best to handle cross-Strait relations over a coming period of time. Rather, he or she needs to deal with how to handle a series of specific events—such as consultation and consensus building in the U.S. government (USG), protocol for each activity, participation, talking points for the participants, collateral information to provide to other governments, press treatment, congressional relations, and briefing packets. Each of these steps is

subject to a distinct set of rules and norms, participants, a history that must be taken into account, and other particular sensitivities.

For example, simply to set up a presidential phone call, I had to undertake a series of steps: clear the idea with the National Security Advisor, fill out a form that provides the rationale for the call, get approval from the presidential schedulers (who wanted to protect the president's time), have the appropriate people liaise with the Chinese side so that they could set things in motion on their end, work up detailed talking points for the president (and gain the necessary internal consensus on these points), work the timing of the call—given the Chinese side's constraints—through the schedulers again, and then brief the president on the call. The call itself would also require that I type the follow-up official transcript for the archives. All of these steps require a great deal of time and consume capital with schedulers and others.

Managing to accomplish the above tasks and move strategically in the right direction, therefore, always requires enormous attention, time, and energy. There are also the inevitable leaks (from the other side as well as from within the USG) and other problems (such as actions by certain members of Congress) that may throw a monkey wrench into parts of the process with which others take issue.

Thus, where a scholar might see one analytical issue, a policymaker will see several dozen concrete operational tasks. The fact that many of the pertinent players capable of addressing these various tasks are people whose cooperation will be needed sooner or later on some other, unrelated issue, simply increases the nature of the effort required. Very few scholars who have not had policymaking experience as high-level staff truly understand just how profound is the differential between the scholarly and policy worlds. In brief, each side has an agenda that the other side rarely comprehends.

### *Bringing the Fruits of Scholarship to the Policymaking World*

How then to help bridge this gap between scholarly and policy mindsets and agendas? If left to the natural course of events, very little cross-fertilization will occur. Thus, each side needs to take some initiative.

*Strategies for academics*  $\approx$  Academics who seek to influence policy need to make a concrete effort to engage policymakers. This requires making the time and seizing (or creating) opportunities to do so. Gaining policy influence typically requires engaging in both public and private advocacy that brings to bear the policy-relevant fruits of serious academic research.

Scholars should be aware that most policymakers do not have time to read books and rarely read academic articles. They *do* read op-eds, in part because their boss may read them and in part because they may need to provide a response to issues raised in them. Op-ed pieces that essentially say that the policymakers have it all wrong, however, are unlikely to exert positive influence. The policymaker's issue in such cases often becomes: how do I show that this author is dead wrong? The pieces that not only convey appreciation that the issue is difficult and information is imperfect but also suggest an additional way to further the president's admirable goals are far more likely to be taken seriously. Every op-ed must have a specific "peg," and each must remain sufficiently focused to make one key point. An op-ed that tries to cover the waterfront is unlikely to leave any imprint (and also unlikely to be published).

An academic who wants to influence policy should also pursue interview opportunities with the print and even broadcast media. Depending on the administration, various outlets may receive particular attention, and they provide good opportunities to give voice to an idea or perspective that may enhance scholarly efforts to influence policy.

There are many other places to publish, including a small array of journals that are read widely enough in the policy community that they make good launching pads for policy input. *Foreign Affairs* is probably the best example. Hopefully, *Asia Policy* will become another. In any particular administration, one or another think tank may attain particular visibility and thus provide a channel (through its meetings and publications) to key policy players.

Those academics who seek to influence policy privately need to recognize some of the elements of successful policy advocacy. My own short list includes the following basic points:

- Try to understand the key policy dilemmas facing the administration as well as the specific upcoming events (leadership changes, visits, anniversaries, domestic and international meetings, major speeches, etc.) that will drive decisions. If possible, link your academic insights to specific suggestions regarding how to handle problems associated with those specific events.
- Appreciate the fact that suggestions to the effect that the administration's policies to date have been idiotic will create too much negative feeling to allow policymakers both to embrace your suggestions and to sell them within the government. Keep in mind that in order to be successful you must provide positive assistance to solving the problems a policymaker faces.

- Accept that, in government circles, plagiarism really is the highest form of flattery; your goal is thus to convince a policymaker to plagiarize your research findings and their implications. No administration will ever openly admit that it is adopting an idea proposed by an academic. Your goal is to make the government official feel comfortable in adopting your idea as his/her own—you even should hope that he or she will want to take credit for it!
- Earn trust by always being responsive to short-term requests for information or advice. Recognize that you are more likely to be asked if you possess the following credentials: your advice is consistently reliable, you are viewed as someone who is not too critical of the administration, you do not insist on asking too many questions about why you are being asked for advice, and you do not inform other academics or the media about the advice that you are providing to the policymaker.
- Practice (through writing op-eds, etc.) boiling advice down to clear, simple bullet points that can easily be turned into actual talking points. Citations, mentions of competing theories, etc. will tag you as being (pejoratively) “academic”—i.e., as someone who does not understand the needs of policy. Analytical sophistication can and must exist without academic dressing.
- Actually visit the officials you want to influence. If a key person will not see you, then see his or her pertinent subordinate. Do not hesitate to leave behind a set of bullet points that capture the key points you want to make. That sheet of paper may well turn out to be the most important product of your visit.

*Government action* ∼ Even the most skillful efforts by scholars to bring their insights to bear may fall on deaf ears if the administration categorically regards such advice as either suspect or naïve. An administration that makes an effort to reach out to the scholarly community, however, will benefit from such efforts primarily because consultation with scholars can lead to a deeper understanding than that produced by the day-to-day press of work in government. There are also other side benefits to such exchanges.

During the two Clinton administrations, for example, I know that many high-ranking decisionmakers—such as Al Gore, Larry Summers, Madeleine Albright, Tony Lake, and Sandy Berger—on various occasions convened groups of academics and think tank people that their respective China staffs had assembled in order to discuss key issues on the U.S. agenda with China. Such discussions tended to be wide ranging, and those invited were not cho-

sen on the basis of the extent to which their political positions were in synch with that of the administration. These consultations helped to insert fresh ideas and perspectives into the top of the system, typically with follow-on tasking carried out by staff. These contacts also had the side benefit, I think, of making the scholars involved feel less of a need to be openly critical of administration policies.

### *Conclusion*

In sum, though both academics and policymakers engage in their tasks wholeheartedly, these tasks are quite different. Influencing policy requires a conscious effort on the part of academics to understand the policy arena and to take initiatives to build public (through the media and journals) and private lines of communication into the administration. Good scholarship provides the “value-added” insights that academics bring to the policy table, but that scholarship needs to be distilled into its concrete issue relevance and problem-solving value in order to be of use to policymakers. Scholars who want to influence policy must invest time and learn the skills required to communicate effectively across this divide. In turn, policymakers who desire to formulate better policy will provide opportunities to learn from what interested academics have to offer.

## Closing the Gap: Networking the Policy and Academic Communities

*Emily O. Goldman*

### *The Gap as Culture*

Attempting to “bridge the gap” that exists between those who produce academic scholarship on international relations and those who are charged with formulating and carrying out foreign policy is a worthy enterprise. A reasonable consensus exists on the sources of the gap between the academic and policy arenas—namely, the marked differences between the cultures and the incentive structures of the two worlds.

*The culture of academia* ∼ A culture is defined by the beliefs, behaviors, and practices of a particular group. In the academic community, nothing epitomizes academic culture and priorities better than the tenure system. Most U.S. universities and colleges, and virtually all research universities, have a tenure system. In 1998, 66% of all institutions had tenure systems in place, as did 100% of public research, private not-for-profit research, and public doctoral institutions.<sup>1</sup> Tenure is an innate part of academic culture, and represents a faculty member’s rite of passage into the professoriate.

The faculty reward system based on advancement toward tenure enshrines the professional academic culture. This system rewards research above all other types of academic output, warning young scholars to “publish or perish.” Tenure is linked most closely to research in the service of scientific inquiry that is published in peer-reviewed venues. The mission of scientific inquiry that has come to dominate U.S. institutions of higher learning can be traced back to the German research model, which took hold in the United States in

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<sup>1</sup> Tenure systems were still present in the majority of private comprehensive (58%), private liberal arts (66%), and public two-year institutions (61%). See Andrea Berger, Rita Kirshstein, and Elizabeth Rowe, “Institutional Policies and Practices: Results from the 1999 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty, Institution Survey,” Department of Education (NCES 2001–201), 2001 ∼ <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs2001/2001201.pdf>; and Rita Kirshstein, Nancy Matheson, and Zhongren Jing, “1993 National Study of Postsecondary Faculty (NSOPF:93): Institutional Policies and Practices Regarding Faculty in Higher Education,” Department of Education (NCES 97–080), 1993 ∼ <http://nces.ed.gov/pubs/97080.pdf>.



the nineteenth century. The Johns Hopkins University, founded in 1876, was the first institution in the United States set up expressly for the purpose of advancing science and promoting the research mission.<sup>2</sup> Emergent with the research university was an increasing emphasis on professionalism. For the university scholar, professionalism quickly came to mean the advancement of knowledge in one's chosen field, the attainment of which has often come at the expense of teaching and community service. In *Making a Place for the New American Scholar*, R. Eugene Rice observed that by 1974 a consensus had emerged on what it meant to be an academic professional:<sup>3</sup>

- research is the central professional endeavor and focus of academic life
- quality in the profession is maintained through peer review and professional autonomy
- knowledge is pursued for its own sake
- the pursuit of knowledge is best organized by discipline
- reputations are established in national and international professional associations
- professional rewards and mobility accrue to those who persistently accentuate their specialization
- the distinctive task of the academic professional is the pursuit of cognitive truth

The cumulative social forces at work over the past century and a quarter have worked to embed deeply into the academic psyche the belief that research and scholarship are more prestigious endeavors than teaching and service. Equally important, the incentive structure of the academy encourages scholars to engage in a particular type of research and scholarship, namely highly theoretical and abstract analyses that produce general propositions linking broad classes of empirical phenomena.<sup>4</sup> This trend toward advancing general theoretical propositions was reinforced by the scientific revolution in political science and international relations in the 1960s. The study of “poli-

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<sup>2</sup> For an overview of the scientific mission of the John Hopkins University, see John M. Barry, *The Great Influenza: The Epic Story of the Deadliest Plague in History* (New York: Viking Adult, 2004).

<sup>3</sup> R. Eugene Rice, “Making a Place for the New American Scholar,” American Association for Higher Education, Working Paper, no. 1, May 1996.

<sup>4</sup> Joseph Leppgold and Miroslav Nincic, *Beyond the Ivory Tower* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 68.

tics” became the study of “political science.” The scientific paradigm dictated that “politics should be studied through the presentation and testing of explicit, falsifiable hypotheses, and that the methods of testing should emulate those employed by the natural sciences.”<sup>5</sup>

*The culture of government* ≈ It is an oversimplification to say that there is one dominant culture in the policy world. The culture at the Department of State differs markedly from the culture at the Department of Defense (DoD). Across these institutions, however, high-level policymakers are burdened with demanding day-to-day pressures to respond to their “in-box” under tight time constraints, have little time to absorb and reflect upon the more general issues and the long-term outlook, and are under continual pressure to articulate concrete courses of action that they can both justify to their superiors and that can advance the organization’s goals in the inter-agency process. The focus is on that which is practical, can be fed into the policy process, and can be implemented in the real world.

### *The Gap as Perception*

Though scholars do produce research that is intellectually compelling, such research will have no direct or indirect impact on policy unless its publication coincides with an inter-agency decision point or key initiative that is underway so that the finding of the research can be integrated. Because most scholars are not attuned to the rhythms of the policy world (nor should they necessarily be), and because most research is not written for a policy audience (i.e., is not concise and jargon-free), much of the political science and international relations scholarship that is valued in the academy is deemed by practitioners to be so removed from the policy world as to be irrelevant.<sup>6</sup>

There are different types of academic scholarship, however, some further removed from the “real world” than others. Leggold and Nincic propose the following typology of scholarship: least related to policy concerns is general theory; more closely related is empirically-focused theoretical analysis, followed by case-specific analysis; and most closely related is direct policy analysis and advice.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Leggold and Nincic, *Beyond the Ivory Tower*, 12.

<sup>6</sup> Leggold and Nincic make the persuasive case that much of this research is in fact relevant. Be that as it may, because most practitioners do not perceive this to be the case, such research does little to bridge the gap.

<sup>7</sup> Leggold and Nincic, *Beyond the Ivory Tower*, 68.

Even the most general theory may be relevant, albeit not in the direct and instrumental manner that, for example, a study of the effectiveness of economic sanctions might be. Theory may provide contextual knowledge (e.g., identifying the conditions under which multiethnic states are likely to break apart and thus the institutional context necessary for them to remain intact)<sup>8</sup> or consequential knowledge (e.g., identifying the consequences for U.S. foreign policy of launching a preventive war).<sup>9</sup> Theory has important diagnostic value in helping policymakers figure out what sort of phenomenon they are facing (for instance, was Saddam Hussein an irrational aggressor who could *not* be deterred, or a risk-acceptant rational leader who could be deterred?).<sup>10</sup> By helping policymakers not only evaluate the “success” of their policies mid-stream<sup>11</sup> as well as assisting in post-mortem investigations, theory can be critical to evaluation. The inquiries launched by the U.S. and British governments to investigate the failures and misjudgments of their respective intelligence communities regarding Iraq’s weapons of mass destruction program<sup>12</sup> made methodological errors that professors strive to ensure their graduate students avoid. Investigating committees frequently assumed that incorrect intelligence assessments were the result of flawed procedures. The investigating committee also made inferences regarding the causes of failure based on an examination only of cases of failure without comparing them to cases of success. Only by comparing success with failure will we know whether the hypothesized causes of failure are both present in cases of failure and absent in cases of success, which would thereby increase our confidence that we have correctly inferred the causes of failure.<sup>13</sup>

Nevertheless, the suggestion that even very general theory holds relevance to the policy world is likely to fall on deaf policy ears, just as calls

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<sup>8</sup> Henry Hale, “Divided We Stand: Institutional Sources of Ethnofederal State Survival and Collapse,” *World Politics* 56, no. 2 (January 2004): 165–93.

<sup>9</sup> Leggold and Nincic, *Beyond the Ivory Tower*, 175.

<sup>10</sup> Stephen M. Walt, “The Relationship Between Theory and Policy in International Relations,” *Annual Review of Political Science*, vol. 8 (June 2005): 29–30.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>12</sup> Report of a Committee of Privy Counsellors, *Review of Intelligence on Weapons of Mass Destruction* (London: The Stationery Office), July 14, 2004 ~ <http://www.archive2.official-documents.co.uk/document/deps/hc/hc898/898.pdf>; Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, *Report of the Select Committee on Intelligence on the U.S. Intelligence Community’s Prewar Intelligence Assessments on Iraq* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office), July 7, 2004; and Report to the President of the United States, *The Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction*, March 31, 2005 ~ [http://www.wmd.gov/report/wmd\\_report.pdf](http://www.wmd.gov/report/wmd_report.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> Robert Jervis, “Reports, Politics, and Intelligence Failures: The Case of Iraq,” *Journal of Strategic Studies*, forthcoming.

to make policy relevance a criterion in the academic personnel process<sup>14</sup> are similarly likely to be ignored by scholars.

### *The Gap as Bridgeable*

The challenge thus remains: how do we nurture not only the transmission paths for theoretical knowledge from the academy to government, but also (not inconsequentially) the transmission paths for experiential knowledge from government to the academy?<sup>15</sup> I would argue that this challenge is not only surmountable, but that there have already been many instances in which the gap has been successfully bridged.

*Education*  $\approx$  Policymakers come to their positions with only the intellectual capital they have accrued to date—they do not have the time to recapitalize while in government. Thus, one of the most important services the academy can provide is to educate the students who will become future leaders, before they enter office. Case studies, problem-solving exercises, and simulations can put students into the shoes of practitioners.<sup>16</sup> These pedagogical techniques are used most in professional schools and schools of public policy, but “active learning” is increasingly being incorporated into undergraduate classes at research universities. Yet even when academics train and educate students in a graduate program that focuses on a highly theoretical curriculum, they are teaching students how to construct rigorous scholarship and to dissect and critique the theories and arguments of others. By honing their critical thinking skills, these students become better consumers (and more expert producers) of research and policy analysis. This supply of human capital, and the substantive knowledge it brings, is one of the major vectors for transmission of academic research from the academy to the policy arena.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice is only the most recent and highly visible example of the scholar-practitioner. In her September 30, 2005 address at Princeton University’s Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs, Rice remarked, “As a professor myself, I understand how important it


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<sup>14</sup> Walt, “Theory and Policy in International Relations,” 42; and Bruce W. Jentleson, “The Need for Praxis: Bringing Policy Relevance Back In,” *International Security* 26, no. 4 (Spring 2002): 182.


<sup>15</sup> Particularly to students, who are our future policymakers.

<sup>16</sup> Steven L. Lamy, “Bridging the Gap: Teaching Analytical and Policy Lessons with Foreign Policy Case Studies” (paper prepared for the 2002 ISA Annual Convention, March 23–27, 2002, New Orleans).


is to root the practice of statecraft in the study of statecraft, in the systematic examination of politics and history and culture ...”<sup>17</sup>

*Outreach*  Academics can also channel their research more directly, but this advice must be supplied only on demand. Government agencies can reach out to academic experts for assistance on broad or specific issues, and for problems that are near term or in the distant future. In reaching out, these government agencies must go beyond the Washington think tanks and consulting community. One problem is that those “inside the building” often do not have the available time, or have not developed the necessary networks, to move beyond the “usual suspects” and tap into the academic community. Yet as policymakers respond to current issues and explore new approaches in the post-September 11 world, access to an expanding pool of intellectual capital is of increasing importance.

One of the best examples of a policymaker reaching out to the academic world is Andrew Marshall at DoD. Having served as the director of the Office of Net Assessment ever since its inception in 1973, Marshall has cultivated what has come to be known as DoD’s internal “think tank.” This internal think tank sponsors studies that shed light on the complex nature of military competitions, with particular emphasis on long-term trends and developments that will affect the capabilities and military effectiveness of the United States and its potential adversaries. Marshall’s task is to project ahead ten to twenty years in order to understand future threats and how best to meet them. Toward this end, Marshall has consistently sponsored academic research, particularly those historical studies that shed light on the political, social, cultural, and ideological dynamics that affect military developments. No other government agency houses a think tank that consistently conducts research on the future security environment, taps academics to opine on these issues, and is comfortable with sponsoring academics to produce scholarship of the highest “academic” quality that is often briefed up the chain of command and fed into policy debates.

*Timing*  The academic-policy gap can also be spanned during critical periods of time when certain academic ideas find particular resonance with practitioners. One recent example is Robert Kagan’s 2002 article in *Policy Review* entitled “Power and Weakness,” which was subsequently expanded into the book *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World*

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<sup>17</sup> For the full text of Secretary Rice’s remarks, see  <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2005/54176.htm>.

*Order*.<sup>18</sup> Kagan observed that “the United States is from Mars and Europe is from Venus,” and concluded that, intellectually speaking, Europeans inhabit a realm ruled by international law and the Kantian vision of “perpetual peace.” By contrast, “the United States remains mired in history, exercising power in an anarchic Hobbesian world.”<sup>19</sup> By capturing the glaringly different attitudes toward global events across the Atlantic and offering a framework for understanding the extreme bitterness over Iraq, Kagan’s thesis struck a chord both in Washington and European capitals. Other examples of the importance of timing in the release of policy-relevant academic research include Paul Kennedy’s *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers*,<sup>20</sup> which resonated with concerns over the decline of the United States, and Samuel Huntington’s *Clash of Civilizations*,<sup>21</sup> which provided a post-Cold War framework for thinking about global conflict.

### *Further Closing the Gap: Asia Policy and Networking*

Thus, while the gap certainly exists, it is bridgeable. The main challenge today in bringing the two sides together in a more effective and comprehensive fashion is to redesign the way academic institutions “network” with practitioners. For years, the U.S. government sponsored work in which researchers received their tasks and embarked on their efforts with little subsequent contact between the two sides. After months or even years of laborious research and writing (and often long after the topic had faded from view within Washington), the researcher would deliver a final report. After World War II, contractors and think tanks developed a new intellectual format that was tailored to the accelerated pace of the nuclear age: they presented their results in the form of briefings. Though this arrangement allowed academics to maintain closer contact with the policymaker through periodic, costly trips to Washington, as well as through the establishment of satellite offices, this arrangement never exploited the analytical power of the country’s academic institutions.

The most pressing issues of today—questions of purpose, mission, identifying key global challenges, and setting priorities—are very different from

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<sup>18</sup> Robert Kagan, “Power and Weakness,” *Policy Review*, no. 113 (June 2002) ≈ <http://www.policyreview.org/JUN02/kagan.html>; and Robert Kagan, *Of Paradise and Power: America and Europe in the New World Order* (New York: Knopf, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Kagan, “Power and Weakness.”

<sup>20</sup> Paul Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers* (New York: Random House, 1987).

<sup>21</sup> Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Touchstone, 1996).

those that occupied policymakers during the Cold War. Today's questions concern the meaning of fundamental security concepts, and tend to be located in the areas where data is more readily accessible; interpretation of this data, however, requires the help of academics. Many of the principles and concepts that constituted the heart of the Cold War paradigm are no longer relevant. Yet by pooling the specialized knowledge and insights of theoreticians and operators, and of scholars and practitioners of international affairs, the necessary "re-tooling" of this paradigm can be achieved.

If the editors of *Asia Policy* want to increase the chances that the fruits of academic research are both absorbed by policymakers and utilized in policymaking, a beneficial strategy is to strive to expand the policymaker's pool of intellectual capital. More concise versions of the journal's content could appear in a virtual environment where policy staffs could gain ready access to the articles, essays, theses, and current research projects on topics that fall within the domain of the print journal. The National Bureau of Asian Research's website already performs a similar service by hosting a database that includes the biographies of researchers and descriptions of current research areas, as well as a search engine that enables policymakers to easily identify scholars working on topics of relevance. The editors could also provide a dedicated forum with access to information (such as bibliographies, articles, think pieces, limited distribution policy papers, and solicited essays) and debate on issues of interest to targeted practitioners. Such a forum would also need to include a channel of communication that would allow policymakers and their staffs to communicate their current research needs.

The purpose would be to offer the policymaker a vehicle with which to make his or her questions the center of debate, to personally frame the parameters of the debate rather than allowing academic concerns or private foundations to do so, and to access large segments of the scholarly community—particularly those academics who produce relevant work yet lack the means and access to share their research. This set-up would enable the policymaker to consult with a broad pool of participants beyond the beltway and traditional think tanks. The tailored nature of support to the policy community that such a technological concept could provide would be fundamentally different from other electronic media. By allowing the practitioner to become a participant in the research process, allowing feedback from practitioners to be easily incorporated, and ensuring that academic research remains attuned to the ongoing concerns of the policy community, this type of forum could empower the policymaker.

There are a few additional strategies that *Asia Policy* could employ. For instance, the journal could piggyback on the outflow of students from the academy into the policy arena by positioning the journal as indispensable reading material for graduate students, some of who will move into policy. Habits are formed early, and graduate students that come to identify *Asia Policy* as essential to their area of knowledge will presumably ensure that the journal remains on their radar screen throughout their career.

Finally, the journal could make its content more accessible to policymakers by giving out free copies to relevant staff members. Because principles have far less reading time, they must depend on their staff members to bring ideas to their attention. Admittedly, identifying who the relevant staff members are may be difficult. The journal could invite policymakers to submit essays for publication, or even sponsor conferences that include both policymakers and scholars, the results of which could then be published.



## Bridging the Gap Between Academia and Policy on Asia: Some Examples from Personal Experience

*Robert Sutter*

The ability to carry out fruitful and effective interchange between government officials and academic specialists often depends on personalities, competing priorities, and other circumstances. The record of interchange between academia and the U.S. policy realm on sensitive issues dealing with Asia, for instance, was active at various times during the Cold War and has grown since that time. Congress' increasing role since the end of the Cold War in formulating U.S. foreign policy has opened many more avenues for constructive interchange between academic specialists and often influential policymakers in Congress. At both senior and lower levels, academic specialists have entered U.S. administrations in order to help chart policy, and have returned to scholarly pursuits following their government tenure. The influence of important scholars such as Henry Kissinger, Zbigniew Brzezinski, and Joseph Nye is well recognized. Congress has often been more open than the executive branch to various academic and other viewpoints, and such expertise has been sought out for congressional staffs and in hearings and other deliberations over policy.

This brief essay will recount some of the multifaceted ways that the administration and Congress have sought out academic insights in the conduct of U.S. foreign policy since the late 1970s. Most of this analysis is based on personal experience regarding interchange at working levels involving Congress or the administration on one side, and academic specialists, either in person or through their writings, on the other. As an analyst, specialist, and then senior specialist in Asian affairs with the Library of Congress' Congressional Research Service for over 20 years, and having undertaken shorter tours of duty as an Asian affairs specialist with two Senate committees, the State Department's Bureau of Intelligence and Research, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Intelligence Council, I have had extensive experience at working-level interchange involving Congress and, to a lesser de-

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gree, the administration. I have occasionally had the opportunity to deal with senior congressional leaders as well as more routinely with committee chairs and other members of Congress seeking influence in areas of Asia policy. I have dealt extensively with Assistant Secretary-level interaction in the Clinton and George W. Bush administrations, yet interactions involving Cabinet-level policymakers (apart from U.S. intelligence leaders) were rare.

### *Close Personal Support*


Perhaps the greatest payoff in scholarly-government interchange comes when academic specialists are called upon, as a result of their writings and reputations, to provide close personal support to administration or congressional officials. When addressing issues important for U.S. Asia policy, it is common practice on the part of a number of congressional members with responsibility for salient aspects of policy to solicit the advice of knowledgeable academic specialists. The specialists often are called to the member's office to meet and discuss issues, perhaps in the presence of others—including the experts on the member's staff, some of whom might come from an academic background. The academic specialists are also asked to provide briefing papers based on their academic writings, insights, and knowledge that would be of use to the member in deliberating over policy. Even more common is the practice of top congressional staff members—on committee staffs or on members' staffs—to solicit the advice of relevant academic specialists, whether in person or in writing. The fruits of this kind of work often assist members and committees as they prepare for policy initiatives, conduct investigations, or carry out hearings or other oversight activities.

Also relatively common is for congressional members with new responsibilities concerning Asia to include academic specialists among those experts that they consult. The insights of these academic specialists are useful in a variety of ways, as they familiarize the member with the important issues facing the United States and provide useful assessments of ways to deal with those issues. A similar process is followed by the Department of State when preparing new ambassadors for postings abroad, including Asia. Academic specialists play a role in these briefings.

Some congressional and administration leaders also seek personal advice and written support from academic and other specialists in preparation for a trip to Asia, especially if it is the first such visit or if important issues are to be addressed during the visit.

An example of this kind of close personal support came on one occasion late in my government career, when I was corralled in a hallway by a frequent participant in the so-called “principals meeting” that determined U.S. administration policy toward China during the last years of the previous decade. This person had access to all sorts of information and government expertise on China, yet wanted more. Known for his direct, sometimes gruff manner, he put his arm around me, grabbed my tie, looked me right in the face and said, “I want you to make me smart on China!” After careful deliberations with his staff and other government China specialists, a series of four meetings over lunch were arranged for this “principal” and his top deputies with some of the leading academic specialists in Chinese history, politics, economics, society, and defense. The principal was a very quick study, and took advantage of these resources (as well as a wide variety of other government and non-government inputs) to become very knowledgeable concerning issues facing China and U.S.-China relations.

### *Workshops and Seminars*

*Congress*  At times, congressional budgets and priorities have allowed for the sponsorship of in-depth workshops, seminars, and conferences that include academic specialists. The Congressional Research Service and other congressional support agencies, as well as the many think tanks and other groups seeking to support Congress, routinely provide such seminars designed to build congressional understanding and expertise.

Congressional committees during the transitions in U.S. relations with China in the 1970s and 80s received sufficient funding and saw fit to sponsor and print academic and other expert papers and presentations delivered at various workshops, seminars, and other meetings. The topics included U.S.-Soviet-Chinese relations, U.S.-China military ties, U.S.-China economic relations, the status and outlook of the Chinese economy, U.S.-Taiwan relations after the Taiwan Relations Act, and other China-related issues. Less attention was devoted to other Asian issues, though Congress did issue important publications dealing with Japanese government decisionmaking, the impasse in U.S.-Vietnam relations, tensions on the Korean peninsula, and Congressional-Executive Branch relations over Asian and other policy issues.

The motives of the congressional members who sponsored these events varied. Many of the sponsors and their staffs were seeking more information and competing perspectives from academic and other participants that would help them in their work. Knowledge gleaned from these endeavors also as-

sisted in the preparation for hearings. The congressional sponsors were aware that hearings had limitations. These events tended to be formal and allow for questioning only by the members to the academic or other specialists, while not allowing for fruitful cross-questioning among the academic and other government and non-government specialists. Some congressional sponsors had motives a bit more base, including members with lax interest in the issues who were more concerned with creating the image that they were doing worthwhile investigations into areas important to the U.S. national interests.

*The executive* ∼ The executive branch at times has seen important interests on issues involving Asia served through the sponsorship of workshops, seminars, and other meetings. In recent years, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research has held several such annual seminars on Asian topics featuring the work of leading academic and non-government specialists that have won the praise of senior Department of State officials. Various components of the Central Intelligence Agency sponsor seminars and events that bring together academic and other non-government experts with their government counterparts. The government sponsors always thank the participants for deepening and broadening their understanding.

As the National Intelligence Officer for East Asia in the National Intelligence Council at the turn of the last decade, my superiors strongly encouraged me to engage in “outreach” to academic and other non-government specialists—a practice I had followed at the Congressional Research Service. This resulted in conferences, seminars, and workshops sponsored by the National Intelligence Council on a range of Asian-related issues. Some of these initiatives resulted in substantial publications and are still featured on the National Intelligence Council website.

Such outreach reinforced the emphasis of the National Intelligence Council, which was then seeking closer interaction with academic and non-government specialists on a variety of topics, most notably in the preparation of an unusual National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) that posited world trends in 2015. That product was based on the views of academic and non-government specialists more than on those of U.S. government intelligence community specialists.

Specifically on Asia, the conferences and seminars sponsored by the National Intelligence Officer for East Asia allowed U.S. government specialists to assess in a first-hand manner some of the very best academic work on areas of mutual concern. Cross-questioning and informal consultations at these events deepened the understanding of U.S. government specialists. The deliberations included leading academic and government specialists who sometimes chal-

lenged prevailing views among the government staff, thus prompting the latter to shift their stance on sensitive issues.

This process was particularly useful in preparing U.S. government specialists to write and coordinate a NIE. Before such an estimate was to be undertaken, an unclassified conference would be held involving prepared papers and deliberations by academic and non-government as well as government specialists, and the participants would discuss the relevant issues of controversy. One of the many benefits of these exercises was that extreme positions held by some in the government would often be modified in the face of the academic and other arguments. As a result, the intelligence community gained a more coherent voice on Asian issues.

An additional approach along these lines included the forming of various advisory groups on sensitive issues such as China's foreign policies and the implications for the United States. The late 1990s was a period of great internal debate in the United States over policy toward China. Many in Congress were upset with the administration's engagement policy toward China, and some judged that the U.S. intelligence community was too accommodating to the administration's view. The council set up a "working group" of academic and other non-government specialists representative of very different views on China who would review National Intelligence Council products and offer assessments on current issues in U.S.-China relations. By creating this group, the National Intelligence Council was better able to justify its assessments in the face of congressional skepticism.

### *Conclusion*

NBR and its new journal, *Asia Policy*, are in the midst of a dynamic and competitive environment that strives to inform U.S. policy. The government has many institutions and specialists who inform policy, and there is an abundance of other interest groups and think tanks doing the same. The record clearly shows, however, that there is a need for more constructive interchange between academia and policy. Through carefully tailored publications for policymakers, frequent briefings for administration and congressional policymakers by scholars and other specialists, and other activities dealing with Asia, NBR has shown that there is a strong desire on the part of government officials and academic specialists to have such effective and fruitful interchange.

This launching of NBR's new journal, *Asia Policy*, will thus further NBR's mission to bring some of the best academic specialists on Asia to the attention

of policymakers. Some administration and congressional policymakers are avid readers and may well be influenced by what they read. Most are politicians, and thus prefer to deal with things in person; academics thus seeking to influence policy would be wise to maintain enough flexibility to carry out in-person consultation or carefully tailored communication over the phone or e-mail, using their work in *Asia Policy* as a first step in seeking greater influence in the policy realm.

## Some Reflections on Policy and Academics

*Ezra F. Vogel*

Over thirty years into my career as an academic scholar, I had the opportunity in the early 1990s to serve as a National Intelligence Officer for East Asia. Of the many insights I garnered during my two years of service in Washington, D.C., I was particularly struck by the differences between how academics and policymakers operate.

### *The Demanding Environment of Policymaking*

Most immediately obvious to me was how busy policymakers are—political appointees, who care deeply about their boss's next election, are especially harried. Policymakers are under the constant pressure of messages that must be answered, reports that must be written by the end of the day, meetings that must be cancelled for another meeting called by a higher-up, unreasonable demands by important superiors, colleagues who must be informed of new inside decisions, and upcoming deadlines for drafting someone's speech. During the small window of opportunity these busy policymakers have to read, they have no choice but to look at one-page summaries rather than longer, more in-depth arguments. In conversation, they have no choice but to demand a quick answer in lieu of a thorough explanation. Moreover, policymakers must accept the policy framework in which they work, exclude ideas that do not fit into the framework, and avoid spending time on less relevant information. The careers of many policymakers and political appointees depend upon their bosses getting re-elected, which necessitates time spent on helping to keep that person popular.

Policymakers adopt various strategies—such as selecting personnel, garnering a consensus for a document, making a persuasive presentation, and bringing along dissenters—that are familiar to seasoned academics. Some games, however—such as how to control access to some important high official, how to appeal to Congress, and how to put a positive public spin on an issue—are beyond the ordinary experience of those of us cloistered in the

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university. In the world of the policymaker, the question of who created which idea is not relevant. The source of ideas is not footnoted. It is better to have a higher official identified with an idea that an underling may have thought up. At the same time, however, many of these policymakers are bright in their own way, and clever and thoughtful about the issues with which they wrestle.

### *The Luxury of Academia*

By contrast, we academics who have passed the tenure hurdle have remarkable freedom to work on problems that interest us. We can set our own timetable for completion of a research topic, and can often even extend deadlines. We have our own standards for what constitutes new knowledge, what approaches should be deemed creative, which ideas are more valuable than others, and who should receive attribution for a creative contribution. We want to discern the truth, and not merely work toward what is politically expedient. We have much more time to gather what information we think is relevant and bring this information together in ways that shed new light on an issue—or at a minimum meets the standards of our academic colleagues. We also enjoy the luxury of being able to work for many years on problems of particular interest to us, whereas policymakers in Washington must concentrate only on their latest assignment.

We academics who go to Washington, D.C., like everyone else there, possess instincts that draw upon our years of experience, intellectual perspectives, and knowledge. This influences how we approach a given assignment, even when we operate in the same framework as everyone else. As mentioned above, those who have worked for any length of time in Washington are more likely to accept unreservedly the framework of their superiors, because long years of service have taught policymakers to suppress ideas that go beyond the framework. We academics, however, are more willing to express our personal views than long-time bureaucrats, and we also know that our careers are still safe if our deepest values move us to challenge the accepted policy framework. In such circumstances, we have the luxury—and actually the duty—to let people know what we think.

### *The Gap*

Bridging the gap between university-bred intellectuals, who are devoted to ideas and originality, and policymakers, who are focused on taking timely action and ensuring the re-election of their superior, is not easy. The plethora of available information from government information collections and vari-



ous government organizations often lead policymakers to feel they are “drinking from a fire hose.” Generally speaking, the last thing these decisionmakers need from intellectuals is more information.

When policymakers bring in outside academics, the prime motivation is sometimes merely to drum up support for ideas they already have. Occasionally policymakers are looking to find either quotes or supporters for a speech they are preparing. Policymakers sometimes are simply going through the motions of soliciting outside opinions as part of an effort to cultivate better relations with the public. Once in a while policymakers desire to obtain some broader perspectives on issues they really want to learn about or to see if these outside views match the perspectives offered by subordinates. When preparing a briefing book for a high official going overseas, subordinates will on occasion include not only the latest op-ed pieces on the subject along with the official policy papers but, with certain open-minded and intellectually curious superiors, longer articles or even books by academic scholars that might provide a broader perspective.

Generally speaking, however, academic books and articles are useless for policymakers. Even if they were not filled with what policymakers consider arcane theories and esoteric details written solely for other academics, these publications are simply too lengthy for policymakers to go through the haystack looking for the needle they might use. Academics are not necessarily very good judges of what policymakers are interested in; even when trying to write brief papers, academics do not usually frame such reports in ways useful for the policymaker. This can lead policymakers to often look down on academics as being hopelessly unaware of realities.

### *Bridging the Gap*

Bridging this gap between the academic and policy communities requires go-betweens. Sometimes academics inside the government can suggest brief articles or especially relevant books by outside academics that are relevant to issues policymakers confront, or at least summarize the key arguments for other policymakers. Sometimes scholars working in think tanks around Washington can take ideas from the academic community and, with their knowledge of daily thinking inside the beltway, help channel the results of academic studies to key decisionmakers.

Unfortunately, many think tanks exist only to serve a political agenda rather than to search for the truth. This shift to ideologically focused think tanks began with the rise of conservative think tanks during the Reagan ad-

ministration. Since then many other interest groups have followed suit. Moreover, many think tanks address issues such as security rather than improving living conditions for the poor, thus limiting the range of issues on which policymakers can consult them.

There is still room, however, for academics familiar with the issues confronting the policymakers to get timely information to the policymakers. There are even opportunities for academics to help policymakers rethink their basic approach. Sometimes we scholars can say what policymakers are afraid to say when such views do not fit their political agenda.

When I went to Washington and first had to write one-page briefs, I despaired of substituting sound bites for real thinking. I came to appreciate, however, that one pagers can force intellectual discipline. Such space limits impel us to think about what is the absolutely most important idea or two that we want to communicate, and to decide how to communicate those ideas in the most effective way. As a result, I returned to the university and began to encourage students to spend more time compressing their thinking and to work harder to express ideas in a precise and concise way. Occasionally I still have a chance to meet with policymakers; as they tell me the issues they are wrestling with, I am able to suggest what perspectives academics might have to offer concerning these issues. For academics who have not worked in Washington and want to communicate key ideas to policymakers, however, I would suggest the value of first finding a go-between. The go-between may convince you that your idea is unrealistic in the current climate, or you may occasionally be able to convince the go-between that perhaps his idea has not been adequately thought through.

## Borderlands and the Value of Academic Research for Policy: A Case Study

*Celeste A. Wallander*

Without a doubt, the realms of academic research and policymaking in the United States are worlds apart. The mission of universities is to understand and teach fundamental knowledge that is important over time without regard to fashion or political acceptability. The mission of the policy realm is to conceive and execute the strategies and actions of government in order to achieve national objectives and secure national interests, which in turn means that the work of policymakers and analysts must be detailed and pragmatic. These differences in mission lead the two circles to foster vastly divergent skills, demands, and modes of work.

Between these real differences in province, however, lies a potentially promising borderland of interaction. In order for a policymaker to know what works and what fails, the lessons of history or comparison across cases can serve as a useful guide and remind policymakers that political and economic systems may determine policy success to a greater degree than seemingly powerful foreign leaders. And though academics face strong incentives to develop and test elegant deductive theory that cuts across time periods and specific events, good scholarship also requires the rigorous testing of theory that is attainable only when academics descend from the ivory tower for regular forays into field research and data gathering. This need for field investigation puts academics in an excellent position to provide up-to-date, practical, and well-grounded empirical evidence and information that can prove vital to immediate policy issues.

Thus the residents of both worlds can benefit by traveling to the borderlands occasionally, or even regularly, to ask questions and learn something new. Much like visitors to a foreign country, these travelers need help with transportation, infrastructure that facilitates meetings and encounters, and communication across different languages. Though likely to feel somewhat uncomfortable in encountering a different culture, all visitors must be tolerant and open to other ways of speaking and thinking. These travelers must

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also feel confident that they will not be punished back home for speaking to foreigners.

What follows is an effort to assist *Asia Policy* in its new venture to bridge the gap. This essay offers suggestions gleaned from a short case study of one such effort to create an infrastructure and support system in the borderland between scholars and policymakers in the area of post-Soviet studies: the Program on New Approaches to Russian Security (PONARS).

### *Why the Need for a PONARS Borderland?*

The political change that began to sweep across post-Soviet Eurasia in the mid-1990s created a pressing need to understand the causes of Russia's difficult transformation and the political and economic role the country plays in the larger post-Soviet space. During the Cold War, the existence of the Soviet Union necessitated the funneling of U.S. policy resources toward pursuit of a strategy to contain a global competitor. The generation of U.S. scholars of Soviet affairs who played roles in U.S. policy was comprised largely of defense and security experts. Although knowledgeable both on the Soviet system as well as traditional security issues, their seniority has not necessarily translated into expertise on post-Soviet developments and issues, which are now increasingly shaped by post-Communist economic, political, and social dynamics.

The gap in training and expertise is all the more a problem because the post-Soviet era has created new opportunities and demands for cutting-edge research in the field. Scholars can now engage in research projects that are based on systematic interviews, field research, the building of data sets, and systematic surveys. Moreover, this new research is being conducted by junior scholars and newly-minted Ph.D.s who are not well tied into the policy world.

Because young academics rationally respond to professional (i.e., disciplinary) standards and demands, these scholars are generally focused on individual achievement and high theory rather than either scholarly collaboration among peers or speaking to the policy community. Tenure is not achieved by networking among, or sharing one's ideas with, other junior scholars (although networking among tenured faculty who may review one's application for tenure is quite important). In a professional environment where the greatest rewards and most prestigious tenured positions go to scholars known for conducting research with a strong theoretical bent and relevance across the broadest scope of history and comparisons, being viewed as policy-relevant or policy-responsive can prove fatal to one's professional aspirations.

In sum, while post-Soviet Russia has been transformed by a variety of new forces, the scholars who study these changes are mostly younger scholars with a strong disciplinary focus and little connection to each other or to policy networks.

### *The PONARS Borderland Network*

The Program on New Approaches to Russian Security was founded in 1997 upon the twin premises that poorly informed policies toward Russia are costly to the United States, and that a great opportunity might be lost to build a new generation of experts whose work can contribute to good policy. Funded by the Carnegie Corporation of New York and the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation, PONARS has two simple objectives: to build a scholarly network of the leading social scientists in the United States and Russia (and other post-Soviet countries) in order to allow members to produce the best possible scholarly work, and to make that scholarship known and useful to the policy world.

PONARS has been successful in creating a transnational network of scholars, using various means to keep this network internally active, and expanding this network by reaching out to policy and other elite:

- From twelve U.S. members at its inception in 1997, PONARS is now a network of 80 scholars spanning the United States, Canada, Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus.
- The Program's one-day policy conference in Washington D.C. now attracts over 250 participants, including 40 or so PONARS members; officials from the Department of State, Department of Defense, Department of Justice, Department of Treasury, the National Security Council, the Office of the Vice President, and intelligence agencies; Congressional staff; analysts and activists from non-governmental organizations; and representatives of business.
- PONARS works to expand its network through a variety of publications, including over 400 five-page policy memos to-date on the issues and research that members have been working on in their scholarly research. These policy briefs have been cited in U.S. government reports, have had impact on Congressional legislation, and are used extensively in course syllabi at universities in the United States, Europe, and Asia.
- The Program's website is another key resource. The policy briefs, for instance, are posted, making them accessible to a much broader audi-

ence. Though now a common practice, PONARS pioneered the web-based dissemination of policy-relevant briefs.

- PONARS members are regularly invited by other organizations to write papers or serve as panelists for policy-related conferences.

### *The Five Strategies of PONARS' Success*

The main reason that the Program has been so successful in creating a network of scholars, policymakers, and other experts is because the organization has utilized a variety of strategies to demonstrate that research by academics can be of interest and accessible to policymakers, in effect proving that scholars can have an impact on policy. The Program's success has stemmed from five factors—scholarly insight, academic excellence, targeted communication, electronic outreach, and networking, each of which is examined below.


*Scholarly insight* ≈ The first strategy upon which PONARS works is scholarly insight. The assumption of the Program is that, in the scholarly realm, individual scholars are self-motivated and know best what to research and how to conduct such research. PONARS does not assign topics, research, or areas of expertise. Though we have over time sought to find new members with scholarly expertise that is underrepresented by current members, in the end PONARS conferences and publications are shaped by the expertise of its members and not on what the policy community might deem important. Because PONARS strives to produce research useful to the U.S. policy community, such freedom of research direction is a potential weakness in meeting this goal. In practice, however, this process has never resulted in conflict. The PONARS conference programs, which are based largely on the research-in-progress, have all been comprehensive, varied, and of high quality.


*Academic excellence* ≈ The second principle is *academic excellence*. PONARS members are the best in their field, and members are expected to live up to the highest professional standards. Membership is by invitation only, with the program's Executive Committee overseeing a process of internal nomination and approval.

*Targeted communication* ≈ PONARS seeks to speak in the language of its audience. Standing in the policy borderlands complaining loudly that government officials do not understand academics is somewhat akin to an American tourist standing in Paris complaining that the French will not speak English. Better is to learn some French, try to use a phrasebook, or at the very least hire an interpreter.

Written with an eye toward bridging this communication gap, PONARS policy memos are brief, jargon-free, without footnotes or scholarly citations, written in clear English, and focused on two or three key points. Producing these memos has constituted a learning process for the members and staff. PONARS members have learned how to write more effectively for a policy and non-specialist audience, and are learning to accept a more intrusive editorial process for the policy memos than would ever be the case in the realm of scholarly publications. Though this process is one of the more contentious and difficult aspects of cultural adaptation that academics will encounter during a visit to the borderlands, such editorial output has been essential to the impact of PONARS members and their research within the policy realm.

If policymakers want to be lectured at, they can visit the university world; the purpose of the borderland is instead to create discussion and interaction. Therefore, during policy conferences PONARS panel members are given 10 minutes to summarize the key points from their memos. With an average of three panelists, presentations thus only total 30 minutes out of a 90 minute session. The bulk of the time that is allotted for each session is reserved instead for lively interaction among members and guests. Similarly, during the discussion period PONARS members are expected to answer questions or react to comments within the space of approximately 2 minutes or less, with panels usually chaired by PONARS members who can be counted on to enforce this expectation.

*Electronic outreach*  As a fourth strategy, electronic outreach is epitomized by an effective and useful website that has proven key to PONARS outreach and the success of its policy impact. The website lists members, their areas of expertise, and contact information. All policy memos are posted in an easily downloadable PDF format, and the program freely grants outside permission to use these memos. The program also produces a working paper series that aims to disseminate more traditional scholarly work-in-progress so that authors can receive feedback. The website also includes a resources page with links to research on post-Soviet affairs, and many Russia-related websites in turn provide links to the PONARS website and PONARS publications.

*Network*  Lastly, the fifth and final strategy instrumental to the success of our public outreach effort and interaction in the policy borderland is rooted within the strong scholarly community created by the PONARS network. In addition to the policy conference, PONARS members meet annually for

an academic conference as well as dinners at larger professional conferences.<sup>1</sup> In addition, the PONARS listserv, a closed and unmoderated e-mail virtual network of PONARS members, averages ten to twenty posted messages daily, and peaks at several times that number during crises, unfolding events, or particularly heated scholarly exchanges. PONARS members discuss their research, argue over how best to explain current events, explore alternative theories concerning democratization or the Soviet collapse, ask for help and research resources for themselves or for students, post job openings and funding announcements, and swap advice on survival strategies for field research.

### *Implications for Asia Policy*

PONARS has shown that, by creating infrastructure in the borderland for regular travel between the two separate worlds of the university and government, scholarly-policy interaction is indeed possible. The success of PONARS certainly suggests that the community of scholars who research Asian affairs should consider exploring—in tandem with the Washington, D.C. policy community—a similar borderland on Asia. Many of the conditions are similar, as systemic and historic changes both in international affairs and the political, economic, and social systems have recently occurred or are presently occurring within many of the countries of the region. The Asia field is also experiencing a generational change within U.S. universities, as a new cohort of regional experts is being trained in the rigorous methods of social science. There is certainly a need in the policy community in Washington for ideas and knowledge of the region. The new global powers of the 21st century will likely be located in Asia, and modern security challenges—such as global health pandemics, energy politics, terrorism, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction—are increasingly connected to the evolution of that region's states and societies.

To be successful, *Asia Policy*—as well as PONARS or any other effort to create a successful borderland community—must respect the different missions of the scholarly world and the policy world in addressing Asian affairs. Maintaining the high professional standards of each world is the primary responsibility of the professionals and leaders within it. Efforts in the borderland should focus upon supporting publications by academics that allow scholars to communicate their findings in ways that are accessible and useful to policymakers. Any such effort must be long term and exhibit patience: one

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<sup>1</sup> Such conferences include the American Political Science Association, American Association for the Advancement of Slavic Studies, and International Studies Association meetings.



does not learn to read and write a foreign language overnight. The success of PONARS demonstrates that the most productive borderlands are those where a community of scholars is able to meet easily with a community of policy-makers. Those who venture to the other side alone rarely meet with success.