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# OBAMA VS. BUSH: PUBLIC PROTECTION AND PERCEPTION

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**P**ublic opinion in the United States is divided about the performance of the Central Intelligence Agency (C.I.A.) and the National Security Agency (N.S.A.) during the Bush and Obama presidencies.

The revelation of intelligence “failures” such as lack of warning of the 9/11 attacks, the incorrect assessment of Iraqi nuclear weapons activity prior to the 2003 invasion, and leaks to the media about operations against Iran contribute to a negative judgment.

The December 2014 Senate Intelligence Committee majority report that fiercely attacked the planning and execution of the C.I.A.’s enhanced interrogation and detention program following 9/11 suggests to the public that the C.I.A. is a rogue agency that misleads the White House and Congress, and covers up its misconduct.

The C.I.A.’s unmanned aerial vehicle strikes against suspected terrorists in Southwest Asia and the Middle East during the George W. Bush and Barack Obama administrations – as reported by the press – which many might consider a legitimate use of military force, are viewed as immoral and illegal when carried out by an intelligence service. If these reports are true, the Pentagon is more appropriate and capable to carry out such continuing operations.

On the positive side, the absence of successful major terrorist attacks against the United States and its allies since 9/11 suggests that something is going right. The hallmark of an intelligence service is silence – successes are not known, but everyone sees the failures.

Americans recognize that they are vulnerable to physical and cyber terrorist attacks, and they expect – indeed, demand – that the C.I.A. and other intelligence agencies intensify efforts to warn and defend against, and disrupt such attacks. The recent terrorist attacks in Paris and Denmark will certainly encourage similar sentiments in Europe.

The new security reality blurs traditional distinctions between foreign and domestic threats, national security and law enforcement, and foreign and U.S. entities. It is difficult to locate the origin of a cyberattack, or to know whether it was launched by a criminal organization or a hostile state. This implies a difficult balance between intelligence collection, law enforcement, and respect for the rights of U.S. citizens.

But it is not only the United States that questions the competence and performance of its intelligence service. France is in turmoil after the Islamic terrorist attack that took 17 lives in Paris in January. Although less visible, there are likely concerns about the performance and behavior of security services in Russia and China as well.

Concerns about past performance mask a deeper uncertainty about what methods of intelligence are effective and justifiable at a time of changed security concerns due to terrorism.

Under both the Bush and Obama administrations, the C.I.A. has spent more effort and dollars carrying out interdiction operations than on its core mission of collecting and analyzing information in order to better advise the president and the nation's foreign policy leadership. This needs to be reversed. National leaders everywhere need to have the best information available when they make decisions that involve the safety and security of their citizens.

Intelligence information is not obtained only by clandestine collection. The exploitation of the massive explosion of open "big data" sources provides important insights as well. Both the Bush and Obama administrations have improved technical collection by satellites, for example, which is an important and unique U.S. capability.

The most important change under the Bush and Obama presidencies is the creation, in 2004, of the Office of the Director of National Intelligence (D.N.I.), which has jurisdiction over the C.I.A. Previously, the director of central intelligence both coordinated foreign intelligence activities for the president and served as the director of the C.I.A.

Since 2004, the D.N.I. has served as principal adviser to the president and the National Security and Homeland Security Councils, and has overseen the National Intelligence Programs.

This change was a response to shortcomings identified by the 9/11 Commission about the lack of coordination and cooperation between the C.I.A., the N.S.A., and domestic security agencies such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation, immigration, customs, and border patrol.

At the time, I testified to the 9/11 Commission in support of this change. But I have a different view today.

The Office of the Director of National Intelligence has added a vast bureaucratic layer, which by all accounts has increased administrative expense with little noticeable improvement in interagency cooperation. Certainly, this new structure makes it more difficult for the C.I.A. to do its job with foreign partners.

Unlike the United States, many countries maintain a foreign intelligence service under the supervision of the ministry of foreign affairs, a domestic security service under the interior

ministry, and a judicial system that is not part of the security apparatus, but is responsible for seeing that the nation's laws are obeyed. There is much to admire about this arrangement.

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