



The Politicization of US Intelligence

The Nixon & Trump Presidency Compared

Master Thesis

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Abstract

Former high-ranking US intelligence officers have claimed that the Trump administration has been engaging in the politicization of US intelligence. They suggest clear parallels with the attitude of President Nixon towards the CIA. Politicization of intelligence remains a relevant problem in the working of today's democratic governments, where the thin line between necessary top-down policy maker influence and the dictation of intelligence conclusions remains a contested debate amongst intelligence and public administration scholars alike. In this thesis the Nixon and Trump presidencies are analysed and compared for the extent of attempted politicization of intelligence and their attitudes towards the US Intelligence Community. The attitudes and behavior of the two presidents towards the US Intelligence Community are looked at through the analysis of their statements and actions in combination with memoirs of ex-intelligence officials and declassified intelligence sources. The foremost potential consequences of President's Trump politicization attempts on the future of the US Intelligence Community are also briefly outlined.

Key words: *politicization, intelligence, Trump, Nixon*

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Abbreviations

ABM-	Anti-Ballistic Missile
CIA-	Central Intelligence Agency
CRP-	Committee for the Re-election of the President, under Nixon
DCI-	Director of Central Intelligence
D/CIA-	Director of the Central Intelligence Agency
DDCIA-	Deputy Director of the Central Intelligence Agency
DHS-	Department of Homeland Security
DI-	Directorate of Intelligence
DIA-	Defense Intelligence Agency
DNC-	Democratic National Congress/Committee
DNI-	Director of National Intelligence
DOHS-	Department of Homeland Security
DOJ-	Department of Justice
FBI-	Federal Bureau of Investigation
FISA-	Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act
HSC-	Homeland Security Council
I&A-	Office of Intelligence and Analysis, falls under Department of Homeland Security
IC-	Intelligence Community (US)
JCPOA-	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action, also known as the Iran Nuclear Deal, or Iran Deal
MIRV-	Multiple Independently Targetable Reentry Vehicle, referring to missiles
MRV-	Multiple Reentry Vehicle, referring to missiles
NIC-	National Intelligence Council
NIE-	National Intelligence Estimate
NSC-	National Security Council
ODNI-	Office of the Director of National Intelligence
ONE-	Office of National Estimates
PDB-	Presidential Daily Briefs
SALT-	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SIS-	Secret Intelligence Service (UK), also known as MI6

Chapter 1: Introduction

'Truth unto power' or 'power unto truth'?

Scott & Jackson, 2004

The bringing of politics into the arguably objective and apolitical domain of intelligence services has been the subject of heated contention for decades amongst scholars. While intelligence workers and officials should be aware of the needs of the policy makers who are the eventual consumers of intelligence products; they must be cautious not to be corrupted by political influence, or let politics dictate the product. This debate stems from the broader discussion within public administration literature and practice on how much control politicians should exert over administration, bureaucracy and expert institutions. As most intelligence services are autonomous bureaucratic institutions, it is generally agreed that policy decisions surrounding intelligence should be made with facts in mind, and that if these facts have been 'altered' to fit certain policy objectives, we talk of politicization of intelligence (Betts, 2002, p. 5).

Politicization of intelligence remains a relevant and significant issue of governments and societies today. In the last months, various news articles have claimed that the President Trump has been engaging in the politicization of intelligence, and also cite this as being a problem. In 2017 two high ranking ex-Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) members, Dennis Gleeson, former Director of Strategy in the CIA's Directorate of Analysis and David Cohen, Deputy Director of the CIA under the Obama Administration came forward to express their concerns about the politicization of intelligence under Trump. In an article published in *The Atlantic*, Gleeson accuses Trump of 'undermining America's national security by trying to shape analysis to support his world view' and warns against the creation of conditions which could commit the US to courses of actions similarly 'costly or disastrous' as the invasion of Iraq (Gleeson, 2017). Referring to the US policy towards the Iran Nuclear Deal in *The Washington Post*, Cohen explains how Trump commissioned a group of White House aides to 'generate a rationale for declaring Iran to be in

violation of the agreement' describing the president directing his staff to 'generate intelligence to support a preferred policy outcome' as the 'very definition of politicization of intelligence' (Cohen, 2017). These are just a few of the examples of Trump's actions which has shown his attitudes towards US intelligence.

The politicization of bureaucracy is a hotly discussed topic amongst public administration scholars. Although debatable, the politicization of the civil service is seen to have mainly negative consequences such as leading to inefficiency in administration compared to the 'neutral competence' associated with the traditional merit system, and leading to loss of confidence in the fairness of government. This remains the prevailing view, even though arguments for increased political relevance and awareness of civil servants seems to be gaining ground (Peters & Pierre, 2004, pp. 8-9). Top-down politicization of intelligence and extensive influence of policy makers on intelligence services is also seen by many intelligence scholars such as Betts and Gleeson as negative and a problem, and is further demonstrated by the fact that politicization is the first thing that is introduced to new analysts at the CIA (Gleeson, 2017). They are taught that there is 'no greater sin than politicizing intelligence' (Sipher, 2019). The intelligence surrounding the US decision to invade Iraq in 2003 is perhaps one of the most infamous examples of heavy top-down politicization in history, marking an all-time low in the way intelligence was handled and utilized by the US administration. The UN Secretary of State at the time, Colin Powell, called his speech to the UN Security Council of February 2003 a 'lasting blot' on his career (Weisman, 2005), after extensive assessments of the pre-war US intelligence concluded that much of the intelligence used was either false or misguided (Pillar, 2011). The immediate consequence of his speech and politicization of intelligence would propel the US into the invasion of Iraq in March of 2003. By 2013, it would cost the US government more than \$1.7 trillion and claim the lives of 4,000 Americans alongside 134,000 Iraqi civilians (Trotta, 2013), not mentioning the lasting destabilization of significant regions in the Middle East and eventually leading to the insurgency and extremist threat we now call ISIS. Politicization of intelligence is therefore not a mere academic or light issue, (Gleeson, 2017) and can have extensive and very real consequences on the world today.

In their article in *Foreign Affairs* on *Trump and the CIA: Borrowing From Nixon's Playbook*, Moran and Aldrich compare Trump's handling of the CIA with that of President Nixon. As stated in their opening paragraph, few have looked at the 'remarkable parallels in their relationship with the US Intelligence Community (IC) apart from the obvious key characteristics such as 'their ability to nurse a grudge, their obsession with conspiracies, their hatred of the press, their professed "outsider" states, and their willingness to fight for the ignored and forgotten "great silent majority"' (Moran & Aldrich, 2017). Moran and Aldrich argue that both presidents' 'war with the CIA', willingness to make critical foreign policy decisions without consulting significant intelligence findings, and their intelligence reform and politicization suggest clear parallels between the two presidents. According to them, their 'inability to command wide loyalty and affection across Washington' and instead focusing on a 'small inner circle of confidants' constitutes the biggest parallel between the two (Moran & Aldrich, 2017). They suggest an analysis and comparison of Trump and Nixon's attitudes and actions towards the US IC is academically relevant as few have taken on this aspect of comparing the two presidents. Furthermore, if this thesis wants to constitute to what extent Trump is attempting to politicize US intelligence and in what ways, it is valuable that the analysis is compared to a previous US president. As the Nixon administration comes across as an obvious and controversial example, it is arguably the most fitting for a comparison. The Nixon administration has been blamed for being 'the administrative presidency' (Nathan, 1983), due to its heavy politicization of the civil service. Yet research into the extent of attempted politicization into the intelligence institutions seems lacking.

It is important to note that this thesis will be looking at the president's attempts to politicize as describes by Betts's typology as hard top-down politicization, and not if politicization of intelligence has actually occurred. This typology will be explained in the theoretical framework section of the thesis, and will be the measuring stick by which assessment can be made. The confidentiality of sources during the current Trump administration would make an analysis on whether politicization within intelligence has occurred purely speculative. The thesis will only look at the respective presidents' public statements and

actions in combination with official declassified sources and memoirs of ex-intelligence officials which have been made available for analysis when looking into the Nixon Presidency. Therefore, the research question this research thesis seeks to answer entails: *in comparison to Nixon's attitudes towards US intelligence, how and to what extent does President Trump attempt to politicize US intelligence?*

To answer this research question, the thesis addresses the following sub questions:

- To what extent, and how, did President Nixon attempt to politicize the US IC?
- To what extent, and how, is President Trump attempting to politicize the US IC?
- To what extent are there parallels between their attitudes and actions towards the IC?
- What are the foremost potential consequences of Trump's attitudes towards the US IC?

(Addressed in the conclusive chapter)

Through the division of the thesis into these sub questions, the answering of the main research questions will become more feasible. As suggested above, looking at the consequences of Nixon's attitudes towards the IC at the time will make a prediction of consequences of Trump's Presidency more feasible.

Chapter 2: Literature and Theoretical Framework

Before looking into the academic literature regarding the politicization of intelligence, it is essential that the broader discussion from within public administrations is considered. Scholars of public administration have long debated how to best study the relationship between politics and bureaucracies and how these links work.

2.1 The Politicization of the Civil Service

A significant amount of literature exists on the wider political administration debate on the relationship between politicians, administrations and experts. As bureaucratic institutions, the politicization of agencies of the US IC falls under a wider problem within public administration, namely

the politicization of bureaucracy and the civil service. This includes questions such as how much control lawmakers and politicians should exert over administration and experts, how this relationship works and to what extent these bureaucratic bodies should have autonomy from political control. It also discusses if politicization is a problem at all.

Defining what exactly politicization entails is an important first step in our theoretical framework and something which has become increasingly difficult due to the vast misconceptions and negative connotations the term '*politicization*' has received. According to Guy Peters and Jon Pierre, the basic definition of the politicization of the civil service entails '*the substitution of political criteria for merit-based criteria in the selection, retention, promotion, rewards, and disciplining of members of the public service*' (Peters & Pierre, 2004, p. 2). Important here is 'political criteria', being used to influence and attempt to control, to a certain extent, the civil service which is traditionally based upon conventional merit values and expertise. As will be shown in the politicization of intelligence section of our theoretical framework, a clear distinction is made between 'top-down', or 'hard' politicization, and 'soft' politicization which is perhaps inherent and useful to bureaucracy to remain relevant to policy makers.

When looking at politicization of bureaucracy, there are some aspects which should be considered carefully, as highlighted by Peters and Pierre. Politicization has received a generally negative connotation in democratic societies as an partisan issue and is widely used as an insult claiming to distort truth (Szalai, 2017). For example, conservatives in the US complain about liberals 'politicizing tragedy' in their responses to shootings such as in Newtown to further their gun control agendas (Cook, 2013). This connotation is not a recent development, as seen by The Times 1971 critique of the Nixon Administration 'injecting politics' into the bureaucracy (Szalai, 2017). While understandable, it is hard to take these accusations seriously when we consider that bureaucracy is inherently political as it is a political creation; essentially existing to deliver services to the public. It is therefore political in its very nature.

As will be shown in the politicization of intelligence section, the main debates revolving politicization of the civil service entails how much political influence is acceptable and appropriate. In

most civil service systems, a certain level of political involvement is seen as appropriate. For example, US presidents have been able to make political appointments within the civil service for decades. Furthermore, politicization could also entail that civil servants are taking on tasks which were formerly political. Some evidence points to ministers who find it increasingly difficult to separate their political life from government life, and may therefore give tasks which are considered political to civil servants (Peters & Pierre, 2004, p. 3). Additionally, while many still believe conventional merit values are irreplaceable when it comes to governing, it should also be considered that perhaps political criteria are just as, if not more, effective in ensuring democratic governance. Permanent careers in the public service can be susceptible to being unresponsive to political changes and priorities, and can lead to ‘closed-off’ conceptions of appropriate policies (Peters & Pierre, 2004, pp. 3-4). Is it therefore a sin to bring some more political awareness into the civil service domain if this could mean increasing policy relevance to election results?

Where then in the political-bureaucratic system is it best to look for potential politicization? Although the study of bureaucracy has been classically approached through a ‘top-down’ or hierarchical structure, leading scholar on public administration, James Wilson, rejects these approaches. Instead of focusing on the politicians and lawmakers, he focuses on the ‘operators’ of bureaucracy. As goals made by policy makers are often vague, the behavior of these ‘operators’ are not always in-line with set goals (Gormley, 2016, p. 2). Due to this, studying bureaucracies by focusing on policy makers ignores the importance of ‘street-level bureaucrats’, which may define their tasks in very different ways from the broader objectives set by politicians. While this approach is certainly interesting and insightful, it is much less practical when it is applied to the examination of intelligence agencies, whereby individuals are rarely allowed to discuss work.

Instead we will look at those who control the bureaucracy, who’s decisions and policies are often more public when compared to workings within intelligence services. There is widespread debate amongst scholars on who controls the bureaucracy. Peters argues that the US civil service essentially has

two 'political masters' - congress and the president (Peters B. G., 2004, p. 127) He argues that while the president maintains the main control over bureaucracy, congress has some level of control due to their ability to limit the president in this process. For example, they can mandate 'reporting and oversight', and 'write detailed procedural regulations' (Peters B. G., 2004, p. 127). Hammond and Knott on the other hand, conclude that there is not one institution out of the president, congress and senate which is primarily in control of the bureaucracy in the US (Hammond & Knott, 1996, p. 163). However, the control over appointments and agency budget submissions, the divisions within congress, and influence over administrative procedures are all strong arguments to why the president might control the bureaucracy. Firstly, they believe that the president 'has a right to build his own administrative team in his own way' and that deference is still 'widely adhered to', meaning the president has great freedom in who he chooses to head executive agencies (Hammond & Knott, 1996, p. 124). Peter agrees that the political appointment of 'several thousand individuals at the top of the pyramids of the federal agencies' remains widely accepted by 'almost all' participants in government (Peters & Pierre, 2004, p. 136). Secondly, evidence seems to suggest that final figures for budgets regarding 'domestic programs and agencies' are 'heavily influenced' by the estimates the president submits to congress (Hammond & Knott, 1996, p. 124). This suggests that the president has significant influence on the budget agencies receive. Thirdly, there are the inherent divisions within congress which make the overall congressional power vis-à-vis the president relatively weak. At least four committees within the US Congress have a say when it comes to agency policies and therefore their potential disagreement weakens their collective power. Lastly, manipulation of administrative procedures even after congress has blocked president's initiatives allows the president to effectively bypass congress in certain situations. Congressional attempts to do the same are 'mostly thwarted' (Hammond & Knott, 1996, p. 124). Therefore, while there is certainly a check on the control of the president over the bureaucracy, the president does control the American bureaucracy to a significant extent through various tools.

The definition of politicization is thus not set in stone, and is difficult to frame out due to the civil service being an inherently political domain. Studying institutions such as intelligence agencies for politicization is challenging as most of these ‘street-level’ bureaucrats strictly adhere to confidentiality. Looking into those who control the bureaucracy, the evidence becomes more accessible and easier to examine. As we are looking into the executive branch, the president’s position in particular, we can define politicization as being *the individual presidents attempt to alter intelligence structure and/or findings due to political or personal motives in a way that is beyond the norm and what is seen as appropriate.*

The literature suggests that the Nixon administration engaged to a significant extent in the politicization of US bureaucracy, marking a key point in the increasing ideological nature of American politics (Peters & Pierre, 2004, p. 130). The Nixon Presidency’s believe in an inherent opposition to his administration from within the bureaucracy effectively created a struggle between the two. These studies however, seem to have overlooked perhaps the most political of government institutions: the intelligence services.

2.2 The Politicization of Intelligence

Academic debate and scholarly interest into the politicization of intelligence is not a new development. While politicization of the intelligence realm appears not to be critically looked at within dictatorial or illiberal regimes, its presence within democratic states has been the matter of debate ever since the founding of prominent intelligence agencies such as the UK’s SIS (Secret Intelligence Service, also known as MI6) and the CIA. In dictatorial regimes, the analytical process of intelligence is usually designed to fit the mindset or political needs of the leader. For example, Soviet leader Josef Stalin was told by his intelligence chiefs exactly what he wanted to hear, that a ‘German attack was an unlikely event in 1941’, despite the many available warnings of a coming German offensive: Operation Barbarossa (Bar-Joseph, 2013, p. 348). When we look at intelligence agencies in democratic states, we see a very different philosophy of what intelligence constitutes, as shown by the CIA’s biblical motto: ‘And ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free’. This suggests that intelligence plays the role of speaking ‘truth

unto power'. Within these agencies, objectivity and providing 'accurate information and estimates to national security decision makers' is stated as being the profound and most important task, regardless of what their leaders want to hear. It is important to realize that these aims are very idealistic and mainly consist of normative statements on how individuals think intelligence services should operate and what values they should protect. As shown by critical public administration studies, the vision that all political influence is considered 'corruption' (Peters & Pierre, 2004, pp. 2-3) and expert bodies such as intelligence services provide politicians with neutral advice who then make decision, is an illusion which has long been criticized. Furthermore, there is ample historic evidence of such expert bureaucratic institutions as the CIA becoming too autonomous and making policy decisions; a role essentially reserved for politicians (Stiefler, 2004, p. 633). It is therefore important to realize that while these normative statements from the CIA are important in determining their value and aims, they remain a bureaucratic body which have their own interests which require control and oversight.

Gentry further outlines why looking into questions regarding politicization of core intelligence institutions such as the CIA are important. 'Bias' within intelligence agencies undermines the primary tasks of intelligence agencies, as the 'first line of defense against external threats' and 'helping senior leaders make better policy decisions' (Gentry, 2018, p. 649). Even if there were no political 'bias' within the agency, the sole belief that such bias exists by policy-makers damages the relationship between administrators and intelligence officers. Policymakers may find a loss of trust in intelligence findings and may be less willing to give intelligence access to policy discussions. Any discussion regarding the extent to which policy-makers are attempting to bring politics into the realm of intelligence is therefore necessary and useful.

According to Bar-Joseph, the CIA stuck to its founding principles for the first two decades of its existence, whereby mainstream opinion 'objected to an overly close relationship between intelligence officers and policymakers', out of fear of compromising intelligence objectivity (Bar-Joseph, 2013, p. 348). However, later failures of intelligence such as the 'Bay of Pigs, the controversial war in Vietnam,

the Watergate scandal, and the House and Senate investigations of the CIA' put into doubt the role of intelligence agencies and their distance from authority. This led to professional and academic experts advocating to bring intelligence closer to the 'President's ear and to gain influence in the policymaking process'. One such expert, Robert M. Gates, who later served as the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) from 1991-1993, called for the need to 'sacrifice' some objectivity to make intelligence relevant and fitting for policymakers (Gates R. M., 1987). Bar-Joseph mentions that the controversial role that intelligence played in the US's invasion of Iraq in 2003 again shifted the main view back towards 'keeping intelligence analysis free from political pressures' (Bar-Joseph, 2013, p. 348). To this day, there remains great debate between those who advocate the importance of influence over objectivity of intelligence (the Robert Gates School) versus those who advocate the traditional, objective role of intelligence (the Sherman Kent school, named after the pioneer of intelligence analysis and intelligence officer for the CIA for 15 years). It is important to take into account that this illustrates that what was perceived as the role of intelligence changed during the second half of the 1900s, including during Nixon's Presidency.

Therefore, the current literature regarding the politicization of intelligence focuses mainly on the strain which occurs in relations between intelligence workers and policy officials. This debate is highlighted by the fact that an exact unanimous definition of politicization of intelligence is difficult to find within the intelligence studies literature. However, most scholars will agree that politicization entails 'a process that fabricates or distorts information to serve policy preferences or vested interests' (Ransom, 1987, p. 26). Most also add a 'deliberate' element to it, seeing politicization as 'deliberately distorting analysis or judgement to favor preferred line of thinking irrespective of evidence' (Gleeson, 2017). This distortive and manipulative connotation leads to general agreement amongst scholars that politicization is a negative process (Riste, 2009, p. 180) and is most in line with the Sherman Kent School of thinking. Richard Betts, Professor at Columbia University, former staff member of the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence and consultant to the NIC (National Intelligence Council) and CIA, agrees with the political

nature of this definition, with politicization being defined as giving ‘political tone or character’ or to ‘bring within the realm of politics’ (Betts, 2002). However, as an advocate for the Robert Gate School, he disagrees that politicization of intelligence is always negative and avoidable, and argues that at times it is necessary. According to him, intelligence should be involved with the realm of politics, and therefore policymakers, as this is where the eventual consumers of the intelligence products reside. As producers should take the concerns and needs of their consumer into account, so do intelligence workers need to take notice of the needs of policy makers. Politicization is therefore, in some sense, inevitable.

Betts provides us with a typology with which we can assess politicization of intelligence services while filtering out politicization processes which are perhaps seen as inevitable or natural to the intelligence-policy maker relationship. The most important type for our research, is what Betts states as being ‘the top-down variety’, whereby policy makers are ‘seen to dictate intelligence conclusions’ (Betts, 2002, p. 5). According to him, policy interests or preferences should never determine intelligence judgements, or significantly alter the intelligence gathering process. Any signs which point towards the presidents attempting to control intelligence conclusions will therefore be taken as ‘hard’ politicization of intelligence. Furthermore, Norwegian historian Olav Riste includes two other aspects of this form of ‘top-down’ politicization. The first entails that of the ‘cherry-picking’ of intelligence products and conclusions, whereby policy officials have received a range of conclusions and assessments from the IC and ‘pick their favorite’ or only those which fit their pre-determined policy objectives. Secondly, he discusses that the ‘politically motivated establishment of separate and competing organs of intelligence collection and analysis’ should also constitute a form of top-down, ‘hard’, politicization (Riste, 2009, p. 181). This is due to the argument that such competing organs challenge the IC in their process and findings.

On the other hand, Betts makes it clear politicization also includes ‘soft’ forms which he argues are natural to the intelligence-policy process and regards these as contextualization rather than politicization; conditions instead of choices. Firstly, he sees the ‘bottom-up coloration of products by the

unconscious biases of the working analysts who produce intelligence analyses' as an inevitable process. Intelligence workers are people who each have their own political biases. This will cause them to lean in certain political directions or make certain choices; this is unavoidable as long as intelligence analysis is done by humans. Secondly, Betts mentions the 'shaping of intelligence products by analysts' managers, acting in their capacity as editors or institutional brokers, in ways that original drafters consider to be inconsistent with evidence and motivated by policy concerns' (Betts, 2002, pp. 5-6). With this, Betts is suggesting that the managers of the raw analysis shape the way in which the product is delivered, in a way which may seem politically motivated by the intelligence gatherers. Information in intelligence goes through a process called the intelligence cycle which includes and starts with a clear statement of requirement from the user or consumer, which is nearly always the policy maker (Hughes-Wilson, 2004, p. 10). Therefore, intelligence personnel start their intelligence gathering process and work based upon the requirements of the decision-maker. As this thesis will only be looking at top-down attempts to politicize rather than if intelligence agencies and products have become politicized, the intelligence cycle and forms of 'soft' politicization are less significant for the analysis.

Glenn Hastedt provides us with several complimentary factors by which to measure top-down politicization of intelligence. While he also uses 'hard' and 'soft' labels to describe different forms of politicization, he describes these in slightly different ways compared to Betts. According to Hastedt, 'hard' politicization involves the 'deliberate attempts to coerce analysts into adopting a certain set of assumptions or conclusions or in the extreme overruling analysts and imposing a conclusion on the analysis' (Hastedt, 2013, p. 10). This is similar to Betts's form of hard politicization whereby policymakers or officials simply seem to dictate intelligence conclusions through direct means. Hastedt also mentions 'soft' politicization, which involves the 'deliberate attempts to alter the assumptions underlying an analysis, the decision rules by which an analysis moves forward, and the institutional setting within which these deliberations occur' (Hastedt, 2013, p. 10). What Hastedt is describing here is how policy officials may change the rules of the game by attempting to influence the intelligence process

by, for example, the creation of competing organizations, or attempting to challenge assumptions the IC might hold. Peters and Pierre agree that politicians can politicize by changing ‘the arenas in which decisions are made as a means of achieving goals’ when exerting direct pressure does not work (Peters & Pierre, 2004, p. 5). Taking into account the importance of appointments as a method of politicization as shown by studies above, it is possible to propose another form of top-down politicization which has not been mentioned yet, namely that of the assigning of specific individuals to positions within the IC, or a position of power over intelligence, due to political or individual motives. This would also constitute the politically motivated removal of individuals from positions of power.

Below are listed the factors which will be used as the criteria by which we can measure and analyze the extent of attempted politicization by Nixon & Trump.

Factors in measuring top-down politicization- criteria for analysis

- Policymakers* seeming to dictate intelligence conclusions by direct and coercive means such as blackmail and the unambiguous ordering of findings;
- Cherry-picking, whereby policymakers are presented a range of intelligence findings and pick those which fit their policy objectives. This also includes the politically motivated ignoring of intelligence findings and challenging of intelligence conclusions;
- The politically motivated establishment of competing organs of intelligence or bureaucracy to challenge the established IC;
- Attempting to challenge underlying assumption or rules within the IC by politically motivated means;
- The political or individual motivated assignment of specific individuals to positions of power within, or over, the IC. This also includes the politically motivated removal of individuals from positions of power.

*As this thesis will only look at attempts by presidents, policymakers or officials here amounts to either President Nixon or President Trump.

Before investigating effects of politicization on US intelligence, it is also essential to clarify what is meant with US intelligence. According to the *Office of the Director of National Intelligence* (ODNI), which is the ‘head of the IC’, oversees the National Intelligence budget and serves as the principal advisor to the President, the NSC (National Security Council) and the HSC (Homeland Security Council), the US IC consists of a ‘coalition of 17 agencies and organizations’ (ODNI, 2019). These include two independent agencies, the ODNI and the CIA, eight Department of Defense elements, such as the NSA (National Security Agency) and seven elements of other departments and agencies, including the US DHS (Department of Homeland Security) Office of Intelligence and Analysis and the FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) (ODNI, 2019). This thesis will look at President Trump and Nixon’s attitudes towards the US IC in general, so any mention of these agencies would fall into its scope. However, previous research has shown that certain agencies had far more significant roles to play and whereby the relationship with the president was especially important. For example, it is commonly regarded that Nixon had an especially strained relationship with the CIA during his presidency. Therefore, Nixon’s statements and actions towards the CIA would constitute the bulk of our analysis of his attitude towards US intelligence.

Chapter 3: Methodology

This thesis will be employing a variety of different methods in its analysis. Generally, the factors of top-down politicization identified in the previous chapter are applied to the statements, actions and general behavior of the respective presidents towards the US IC. If the presidents are found to have engaged in heavy top-down politicization, or have engaged in many forms of top-down politicization, it can be concluded they have attempted to politicize intelligence services to a significant extent. Through this analytical process, also the methods by which the presidents are and have attempted to politicize intelligence services will be identified and eventually compared.

As statements of both presidents will be analysed, the process of discourse analysis will be utilized. As a qualitative method which concerns itself with the study of meaning-making and the use of language, discourse analysis will assist in analyzing the statements and remarks of both presidents. This is especially useful when we look at Trump's use of social media and arguing whether his statements are carefully thought out and strategic, or come from ignorance. By analyzing the language of both presidents when they address intelligence services or intelligence conclusions, or address the public about intelligence, it can be discussed how they view these services and intelligence findings or how they construct realities to make sense of them. Strong use of language or clear opinions coming forward within their statements will be analysed to see if the respective president is attempting to politicize intelligence. Using the top-down politicization factors as stated within the literature and theoretical framework section, meanings behind certain remarks can be discussed and identified. It is important to mention that this analysis will also consider calls by the presidents which seem to be for increased autonomy of intelligence or intelligence agencies as evidence against attempting politicization. Signs which show that the president is in favor of giving intelligence agencies more power at the cost of executive and political power could be seen as a factor against politicization. We must be cautious with this, as it will be exceedingly difficult to determine the exact motives of the presidents in these select cases.

Not all the sources which will be analyzed will be statements or remarks by the respective presidents. They will also include, amongst others, policy documents, memoirs of ex-intelligence officials and policy officials, and sources describing the actions which the respective presidents took. Analyzing these documents allows us to identify emphases, motivations and intentions from which we discern if attempts at politicization is taking place. This will be done in combination with discussing if the actions taken by the presidents constitute attempted politicization of intelligence when the factors of top-down politicization are taken into account. This, again, is a challenge as it is often very difficult to determine what the motivation was for certain orders or actions.

We are looking specifically into the statements, actions and attitudes of President Nixon and President Trump in our analysis. Therefore, the actions and statements of their administrations or the US government in general will not be included, unless these are done on behalf of the presidents or if they make suggestions about the presidents attitude towards intelligence. Especially in the case of Nixon, the responses and opinions of the IC will be taken into account as they can tell us more about the actions the presidents undertook and what he has said behind closed doors. Although most sources from the IC during today's Trump Presidency will be classified, hundreds of documents and reports have been declassified from the Nixon era. Additionally, the memoirs and statements of close aides of the presidents will be researched as they can provide us with an inside look into the life of the presidents and what those around them noticed.

Regarding the time frame of the analysis, we will primarily be looking at the statements and actions the presidents undertook during their actual term as president or president-elect (those who have won the quadrennial presidential election in the United States, but who has not yet been inaugurated as President of the United States). For President Nixon this would be from January 1969 to August 1974 and for President Trump this would be January 2017 to the present day. If we happen to come across examples of significant attempts to politicize intelligence during the presidential campaigns or shortly after their presidency, we will count these towards our analysis. There are some exceptions to this rule, such as Nixon's conspiratorial mindset towards the CIA after blaming them for his defeat in the 1960 presidential elections, 9 years before the start of his term as president.

3.1 Structure

This thesis will be structured as follows. Firstly we will look at Nixon and apply our framework on measuring top-down attempts at politicization (as detailed in the theoretical framework section) to measure attempted politicization of intelligence onto his statements and actions to examine the extent of attempted politicization. Certain key themes are identified to guide this process. These include his personal suspicions about the IC (especially towards the CIA) before and during his presidential term, his

controversial relationship with the CIA's Presidential Daily Briefs (PDB), the notable cases whereby he 'ordered' intelligence findings, his political appointments over key intelligence positions and attempts to reform the intelligence structure, the key role which he gave his national security advisor Henry Kissinger in the intelligence process and lastly his relationship with intelligence during the Watergate Scandal coverup. Taking these findings into account, an assessment is made on the extent to which he attempted to politicize intelligence, and what forms of politicization he attempted.

Secondly, we will look at the current Trump Presidency and apply a similar framework to determine Trump's extent of attempted politicization over US intelligence. Again, key themes are identified, including the significance of his statements on social media (with a focus on Twitter), his public disagreements with the IC on foreign policy vis-à-vis Iran, North Korea and his Travel Ban, his statements and actions during the, still ongoing, investigation into Russian involvement during his presidential campaign and lastly his key appointments and dismissals of key individuals within the IC. Just like with Nixon, an assessment is made based on these key themes to analyze the extent, and methods of, attempted politicization.

When we have assessed the extent and methods of their attempts at politicization, a comparison will be made whereby parallels are drawn between the two presidents. This is essential to finding out if the attempts to politicize by Trump are similar to the methods employed by Nixon. Several themes are identified by which to explain this, including their seeming mutual mistrust of the establishment in combination with their conspiratorial mindsets, their hostility and challenge towards the IC eventually leading to the 'ordering' of intelligence, their defensive politicization attempts in the face of threats from investigations into their administrations, their strong reliance on aides and White House confidants and lastly their willingness to attempt to reform the IC through political appointments.

The conclusion will address to what extent Nixon and Trump attempted to engage in the politicization of intelligence, and if there are clear parallels between the attitudes and behavior of the two

presidents. We end with a brief note on the foremost potential consequences of Trump's behavior on US intelligence and the US IC.

3.2 Sources

This thesis will be consulting a variety of sources for its analysis. It is essential to take into account that this thesis does not look into if politicization actually happened, or is occurring. An analysis of this would be difficult due to the confidentiality of the sources and the fact that most of the actual intelligence analysis and findings are classified and therefore inaccessible. Only sources which are public, or have been made public and were classified at the time of production, are to be consulted. It is important to note that due to this restriction, the types of sources consulted will be different when looking at the Nixon era compared to the Trump era. Regarding the Nixon era, plenty of sources showing Nixon's relationship with US intelligence have been declassified, while almost all regarding the Trump Presidency are still strictly classified. This means that the analysis of Trump will be almost solely based on sources which are available to the wider public. Consequentially, scholarly debate regarding the politicization of intelligence by Trump is also severely limited. In the analysis of Trump's attempts of politization, most of the sources used will constitute news, political magazine articles and statements from sources which remain unnamed due to their confidential and sensitive nature. Although this is a clear limitation of our analysis, a future analysis of declassified documents during the Trump era can be seen as a valuable follow up of this study.

A variety of databases and archives will be consulted, including, amongst others:

- The Richard Nixon Presidential Library and Museum, which contains many executive orders issued by President Nixon;
- The CIA online library and archives which includes all CIA documents declassified for the public;

- The National Security Archive, which contains ‘more than 100,000 declassified records documenting historic U.S. policy decisions’ (The George Washington University, 2019), including former intelligence analysis and reports;
- The American Presidency Project, which contains all public statements and remarks made by both President Nixon and President Trump until now;
- The Trump Twitter Archive, containing all of Donald Trump’s tweets, including on his POTUS (President of the United States) Twitter account.

Furthermore, a variety of academic literature, historical analysis and memoirs will be consulted. In his article on the memoirs of the second longest serving CIA Director, Richard Helms, Christopher Moran states the striking nature of the vast quantities of CIA memoirs available. He suggests academic investigation and discussion of this body of literature is ‘surprisingly thin’ (Moran C. R., 2014, p. 70) The extensive memoirs of Helms will be especially useful for this analysis due to his often strained relationship with President Nixon. Although we are not assessing the opinions or interpretations of officials such as Helms, his accounts may prove to be very useful when finding out what President Nixon was saying or doing in regards to intelligence. Memoirs of Nixon himself, and of his closest ally in the White House, Henry Kissinger, will also be very valuable for this analysis.

Chapter 4: President Nixon

President Nixon's turbulent relationship with the US IC, more specifically with the CIA, makes his an especially interesting case to study when talking about the politicization of intelligence. Referring back to the article which probed a comparison between Trump and Nixon in the first place, Moran & Aldrich comment on Nixon's 'remarkable' relationship with 'America's premier spy agency' (Moran & Aldrich, 2017). While the focus tends to be solely on the Watergate scandal and attempted cover-up, which marked a definite low-point in his relationship with intelligence, his attitude towards the IC suggest clear hints of attempted politicization throughout his whole presidency. In this section, we look at both Nixon's statements and actions during his presidency and we discuss the different sources of evidence which attempt to shed light on this complicated relationship with intelligence. We take this into account when measuring the extent, and ways in which, Nixon attempted to politicize the US IC.

We will discover several characteristics of this relationship which can be seen as critical, including his conspiracist tendencies which gave him a deep-rooted suspicion of the CIA from the onset, his willingness to ignore important daily intelligence estimates, his willingness to influence intelligence findings and reform their institutional structures through appointees, his significant reliance on his national security advisor Henry Kissinger and his attempted use of intelligence agencies for the eventual cover-up of the Watergate scandal which cost him his presidency. It will be argued that these factors combined show that Nixon attempted to politicize the US IC out of political and personal conviction gain to a significant extent, constituting all forms of top-down politicization as described in the theoretical framework.

It should be pointed out that significant amounts of evidence points to Nixon having used intelligence services, through 'covert action', to tap his 'political enemies', friends, and even his brother Donald Nixon (Turner, 1973). The CIA defines covert action as any 'operation designed to influence governments, events, organizations or persons in support of foreign policy in a manner that is not necessarily attributable to the sponsoring power' (CIA, 1995). Although Nixon's predecessors had

extensively used wire taps for national security and foreign intelligence purposes, Kissinger and Nixon were the first to use wire taps within the national security organization, as Nixon states himself (Nixon, 1979, p. 389). Although affecting morale of the White House, the motivations behind the taps were not to influence the overall intelligence process, and therefore do not constitute attempts to politicize intelligence services. Nevertheless, this does show that Nixon was prepared to use covert action, which eventually amounted to illegal bugging, for his personal and political agenda. Spying on his aides or family did not fall into the legal definition of covert action and certainly did not further US national interests.

4.1 Nixon's personal suspicions about the US IC

Before assessing President Nixon's rhetoric and behavior, it is essential to firstly explain Nixon's personal resentment and 'deep-rooted suspicions' towards the US IC, which was confirmed by multiple of his aides such as Alexander Butterfield and Special Counsel Charles Colson (Moran C. , 2019, p. 101). Nixon's conspiracist mindset meant his relationship with the CIA, and in particularly its Director of Central Intelligence¹ (DCI) Richard Helms, was bitter and built on suspicion even before the beginning of his presidency.

It is important to realize that Nixon came from the lower to middle classes of society, being the son of a Los Angeles tram driver who did not have enough money to afford a scholarship at Harvard. His opinions of the CIA as a "vestige of the East Coast establishment", which was dominated from descendants of wealthy families, 'expensive prep schools' and Ivy League universities, meant Nixon felt he was fighting against an institution which had opposed him from the very beginning (Moran C. , 2019, p. 101). These views were echoed in his first meeting after his election victory with his future national security advisor Henry Kissinger, where he called the CIA a group of "Ivy League liberals" who "had always opposed him politically" (Andrew, 1995, p. 350). Responding to the failure of the agency to

¹ Before 2005, the Director of Central Intelligence (DCI) was both the head of the US IC and the CIA. The DCI also served as the primary intelligence advisor to the president of the US and to the National Security Council.

predict the overthrow of Cambodian leader Prince Sihanouk in March of 1970, Nixon asked his Secretary of State William Rogers “What the hell do those clowns do out there in Langley?”, a question repeated in his memoirs. (Nixon, 1979, pp. 446-47). In combination with this, he had always been convinced that the CIA conspired against him in the 1960 presidential election which he lost to Kennedy. According to him, the CIA had given secret information regarding the missile gap to Senator Stuart Symington, who had been made head of a special committee on the defense establishment by Kennedy during his election campaign. Richard Helms, who served as DCI from 1966 to 1973, stated that he had ‘never understood’ this conviction by Nixon but that it ‘lingered’ within him (Helms, 1992). While not directed specifically at the IC, multiple sources show how Nixon become more and more obsessed with this ‘liberal conspiracy’ against him during his presidency (Andrew, 1995, p. 376) and how he saw himself as a ‘lone warrior surrounded by enemies’ (Hersh S. M., 1992, p. 76). Special Counsel to Nixon, Charles Colson, highlights how even during times of victory, Nixon would still focus on the ‘conspiracy’ against him. Celebrating the breakthrough in negotiations with the Soviet Union regarding the first Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT) treaty on the presidential yacht *Sequoia* in May of 1970, Nixon commented on “those liberals” on Kissinger’s staff, who he accused of leaking confidential information to the *New York Times*. Nixon stated how he wanted to stop them “at any cost” and that “we’ll get them on the ground where we want them. And we’ll stick our heels in, step on them hard and twist” (Colson, 1976, pp. 43-45).

It was no coincidence that DCI Helms eventually became the victim of the conspiracist mindset of Nixon who suspected him of having links with ‘the liberal Georgetown social set’. Nixon appointed one of his former military aides, Robert E. Cushman as deputy DCI to ‘keep track’ of Helms and even suggested to exclude Helms from National Security Council (NSC) meetings (Ehrlichman, 1982, p. 175). The NSC is the President’s ‘principal forum for considering national security and foreign policy matters’ (The White House, 2019), and excluding the head of the agency responsible for foreign intelligence gathering and maintaining national security is a serious and unusual decision. When convinced this was a

bad idea, Nixon showed what some considered as personal ‘spitefulness’ towards the DCI, constantly challenging Helms on issues of world affairs (Andrew, 1995, p. 353). Helms looks back at these difficult meetings in an interview with Jack Smith in 1982. According to him, Nixon would be constantly ‘criticizing Agency estimates’, ‘pick on the Agency for not having properly judged the Soviets’ and ‘make nasty remarks’. However, this was no surprise to Helms, who states the president ‘had a barb out for the Agency all the time’ due to him holding the Agency responsible for his defeat in 1960 (Helms, 1982). This suggests a clear personal motive behind Nixon’s questioning of the agency, its DCI and its estimates. Although Nixon’s common complaints regarding the lack of communication and coordination between different agencies within the IC was partly justified, his failure to approve Helms to become head of the whole IC (effectively his role as DCI) certainly contributed to this shortcoming. Lastly, on the onset of the Watergate scandal, when Helms had been extremely cautious with getting the CIA involved, refusing to allow it to be used in the cover up, ‘Nixon fired him as DCI, sent him packing to Iran as ambassador...’ (Colby & Forbath, 1978, p. 328) according to William Colby who would become DCI in 1973.

Taking this evidence and these factors into account, we can already see that there are attempts at politicization. Before Nixon even entered the White House as president, he had his prejudices towards the CIA and what he viewed as the ‘East Coast establishment’. He let these personal views and convictions influence him and his behavior towards US intelligence, including attempting to prevent the DCI’s participation in NSC meetings, challenging intelligence estimates during these meetings, and denouncing the CIA on a regular basis. It is important to take these convictions into account when analyzing his behavior towards the US IC when assessing the existence of active politicization attempts.

4.2 Nixon and the CIA’s Presidential Daily Briefs

On multiple instances, Moran & Aldrich highlight Nixon’s difficulty with appreciating CIA assessments, especially when it came to the CIA’s Presidential Daily Briefs (PDB). For example, responding to the failure of the agency to warn him about the coup in Cambodia in 1970, Nixon

reportedly returned ‘a thick package of unopened daily briefs’ to the CIA (Moran & Aldrich, 2017). According to the CIA, the PDBs are ‘the primary vehicle for summarizing the day-to-day sensitive intelligence and analysis... for the White House’ (CIA, President's Daily Brief, 2016) and are therefore the primary means of communicating intelligence findings to the president. Andrew suggests that the ‘overnight intelligence summary from the CIA’ influenced ‘all postwar presidents’ as it was ‘the first document that most...read each morning’ (Andrew, 1995, p. 2). Interestingly enough, the extent to which Nixon considered the information presented in the PDB when making critical policy decisions, or even if he read the briefs at all, is highly contested (Priess, 2016). This is a seemingly important detail, due to its mention in many articles of prominent political magazines to official government documents as an unmissable characteristic which defined Nixon’s relationship with intelligence. Even the CIA itself was unsure if the president was reading any of its PDBs, even though they were ‘deposited each morning with his secretary’ (Helgerson, 1996). Ongoing CIA efforts to declassify president’s intelligence summaries and briefings led the CIA to release 2,500 PDBs it gave Nixon in the 1970s, comprising of more than 28,000 pages (Cloud, 2016). The declassified documents shed some clarity to what extent, and if, Nixon engaged with the intelligence briefings he was receiving. Multiple sources show his engagement with the PDBs was limited at best.

The seeming disinterest in the PDB by Nixon meant that the CIA kept changing and improving the PDBs (Gentry, 2018, p. 657) to try and meet the ‘demands’ and what they thought the president would find helpful. Russell Smith, who served as the CIA Directorate of Intelligence (DI) at the time, suggests that even when the structure of the PDB had been changed to be divided into two sections: fact and comment, to meet the needs of the president, ‘Nixon continued to ignore our publication while relying on a daily compilation of Kissinger’s staff’ (Andrew, 1995, p. 353). Smith suggests that Nixon put more weight on the ‘opinions of a junior analyst on Kissinger’s staff’ than the CIA’s estimates which was especially worrying considering the ability of Kissinger’s staff to ‘second-guess or modify agency estimates’ and ‘prevent the CIA’s own view from reaching Nixon’s desk’ (Andrew, 1995, pp. 353-54). As

will be discussed later, the ‘distinctive’ role of President Nixon’s national security advisor Henry Kissinger in the intelligence communication process should not be underestimated and often led to Kissinger’s cover memos of intelligence findings being ‘far more important’ to President Nixon than ‘whatever the CIA had to say’ (Burr, 2016). It is also important to note that this was not the usual *modus operandi* of presidents before Nixon. Both Presidents Kennedy and Johnson had been regular consumers of the CIA’s PDB’s, with Kennedy giving feedback to the agency frequently (Burr, 2016). In John Helgerson’s study titled ‘*Getting to Know the President: Intelligence Briefings of Presidential Candidates, 1954-2004*’ intelligence officials of the CIA who worked at a special transition office (transition between the Johnson and Nixon administrations) were told by Kissinger that ‘it has been made clear to him that the president-elect had no intention of reading anything that had not first been perused and perhaps summarized by one of his senior staff’ (Helgerson, 1996, p. 68)

The failure of Nixon to take the CIA’s PDB serious in combination with eventually not consulting them at all constitutes attempts at politicization. As stated in our theoretical framework, the ignoring of intelligence findings and ‘cherry-picking’ of intelligence fall under attempts of politicization. We can argue that a process of ‘cherry-picking’ is occurring through the decision of Nixon to assign Kissinger and his staff to read the PDBs and his role in ‘filtering’ the relevant or important information to him. The DI at the time, Russel Smith (as quoted above) verifies this through his personal accounts of the difficulties he encountered when attempting to get intelligence estimates on Nixon’s desk. By deciding not to view the essential intelligence estimates and conclusions, Nixon is inherently dictating the effects intelligence has on policy-making based on the criteria of what, and what the IC thinks, he finds ‘important’. Interestingly enough, the distance which Nixon sought to keep with the CIA’s findings can also be argued to create more space between the policy-maker (the president in this case) and the intelligence analysts. This would follow the Kent School model for intelligence, whereby the objectivity and distance between intelligence and policy-maker is emphasized. However, it is impossible to determine if this was Nixon’s intention. Considering Nixon’s later behavior towards intelligence, it is

unlikely that this was a factor in his decision to entrust Kissinger in ‘filtering’ the relevant information to him.

4.3 ‘Ordering’ Intelligence

Looking back at our theoretical framework on how to measure the politicization of intelligence, the attempt to dictate intelligence findings from the top-down by direct means constitutes one of the ‘hardest’ forms of politicization. Declassified sources and memoirs from different individuals who worked with Nixon during his presidency point to several attempts by Nixon to dictate and ‘order’ intelligence findings.

Apart from Nixon’s suspicions and real belief in a ‘liberal conspiracy’ against him, the Cold War fed Nixon’s belief of a ‘great communist conspiracy orchestrating domestic dissent’ (Andrew, 1995, p. 365). Throughout his presidency, Nixon was convinced that foreign communist agents were actively working within the US, and any intelligence proving otherwise was lacking of quality and scope. In January of 1969, Nixon ordered an in-depth CIA analysis of ‘communist factors in youth disturbance’ (Ambrose, 1987, p. 262). Undergoing such an operation meant that the CIA had to engage in the illegal ground of domestic intelligence gathering, which is reserved for the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Only by also including an investigation of American students was the CIA able to justify the ‘contention that domestic dissent was not part of an international Communist plot’ (Andrew, 1995, p. 354). Commenting on the nature of the report, Helms wrote to Kissinger in February that it included studies “not within the charter of this Agency”, emphasizing how “extremely sensitive” it was and how “it would prove most embarrassing” if anybody found out about it (Select Committee to Study Governmental Operations, 1976, p. 697). The ‘failure’ of the agency to find proof of a Communist conspiracy behind campus revolts only led to further distrust from Nixon, who gave White House aide Tom Charles Huston, or “someone of his toughness and brains”, the “job of developing hard evidence on this” (Ambrose, 1987, p. 264). What we see here is Nixon actively ordering the CIA to find evidence to support his personal believes that an international Communist conspiracy was taking place within the US.

It constitutes the hard top-down attempt to dictate intelligence conclusions by direct ordering of findings, and therefore a significant example showing Nixon's attempts to politicize intelligence findings to his will.

The controversy surrounding the Soviet SS-9 missile constitutes another example of Nixon pressuring intelligence to agree with his inner convictions. While in March of 1969 there were claims that the mammoth Soviet SS-9 missile was a multiple independently targeted reentry vehicle (MIRV) and therefore would allow the Soviet Union to wipe out US defenses in a single strike, the National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) of October 1968 contradicted this and concluded the missile was a less dangerous multiple reentry vehicle (MRV). However, the Nixon administration had used this MIRV claim to start the development of an expensive antiballistic missile (ABM) system (Andrew, 1995, p. 355). When it was leaked to the press that CIA officials were sticking to the NIE findings, Nixon suspected the CIA of trying to undermine the administration's case for the development of the ABM. Voicing his anger towards Helms, the "goddam estimates" of the Agency had "been wrong for years, and they still are" (Helms, 1992). Behind closed doors, the CIA was being pressured to change its assessment of the SS-9. The deputy director of the Office of National Estimates (ONE) at the time, John Huizenga, stated that there was 'no doubt that the White House was determined that there should be an intelligence finding that the Soviets were engaged in MIRV testing' (Hersh S. , 1984, p. 159). Helms suggests that this became another running theme of Nixon during his presidency, whereby the CIA was always underestimating the Soviet military threats, despite the evidence the agency would provide him with (Helms, 1992). Here again we see the attempt to dictate intelligence findings to fit with predetermined policy goals, namely the development of the ABM system. It shows a clear refusal by the president to see the objectivity of the intelligence findings and instead labeling them as incomplete or part of a conspiracy to undermine his administration. Only those which fit along the lines of predetermined policy are 'cherry-picked'.

4.4 Appointments and Attempted Reform

Taking into account the negative views Nixon held towards the IC before even entering the presidency, it is no real surprise that he attempted reform of the intelligence apparatus when he was in a position to do so. What we must assess, however, is if these reforms came out of inner political convictions rather than genuine attempts to improve the efficiency and workings of the available intelligence structures.

Following the ‘failure’ of the FBI to deal with Nixon’s illusion of a great Communist conspiracy orchestrating domestic dissent in June of 1970, Nixon ordered his chiefs of intelligence to set up an interagency committee on intelligence which would be tasked with improving the intelligence collection capabilities of the government on radicals. He made Tom Huston, a former Defence Intelligence Agency (DIA) who was liked by Nixon for his hard-line views on domestic subversion, as one of the men in charge (Nixon, 1979, p. 355). Huston’s position in the new interagency committee allowed him to recommend ‘the strongest options’ when it came to the lifting of existing restrictions of intelligence collection to the president. The ‘Huston Plan’ contained two illegal proposals, namely ‘covert mail coverage’ and ‘surreptitious entry’, which effectively amounted to burglary. The plan was approved by the president in July of the same year, but would be refused shortly after by the FBI (Andrew, 1995, pp. 368-69). The instruction to set up an interagency committee on intelligence could be argued to fall under ‘the politically motivated establishment of competing organs of intelligence to challenge the established IC’ as noted in our theoretical framework, and therefore would constitute an attempt to politicize intelligence. While both the FBI and the CIA had found no real evidence of a Communist conspiracy network working within the USA, Nixon still believed his ‘own conspiratorial imagination’ and set up an ‘competing organ’ to prove it was so. Appointing Huston, who shared similar views with Nixon, took this politicization even further as Nixon knew Huston was probably going to give him what he wanted. It amounts to the politically motivated appointment of individuals to positions of power within the IC.

As mentioned before, Nixon was extremely skeptical towards the DCI at the time, Richard Helms. Although it became a habit to change the DCI at the beginning of each new administration, Kissinger had convinced Nixon to keep Helms on as he was impressed by the DCI's professionalism and 'unflappability' (Andrew, 1995, p. 353). This however, did not stop Nixon from appointing one of his former military aides, Lieutenant General Robert E. Cushman, as Deputy DCI to 'keep track' of Helms (Ehrlichman, 1982, p. 175). Cushman would become known as 'Nixon's man in the CIA' until James Schlesinger took over this 'role' in 1972 (Jeffreys-Jones, 2014)

Following the firing of Richard Helms, the appointment of Schlesinger as DCI in December of 1972 is perhaps one of the more obvious attempts of politicization by President Nixon. Given the mandate to 'shake things up' by Nixon himself, Schlesinger would deliver the CIA 'a bad time' (Gates R. M., 1996, p. 42). Having undertaken a 'Review of the IC' on Nixon's orders 2 years before, Schlesinger had strong views on the future of the CIA and argued for the streamlining and "centralized management of the community" (Schlesinger, 1971) According to Moran, in his time as DCI, Schlesinger represented an 'iconoclastic attack' on the CIA's culture and was in essence, Nixon's 'bulldozing political fixer' (Moran C. , 2019, p. 99). The firing or retiring of 1500 agency staff (1000 from the Directorate of Operations) and the ordering of Colby to assemble a report on past illegal CIA activities are examples of just some of the things he undertook during his short time in office (Colby & Forbath, 1978, pp. 330-42). Ranking as the least popular director in CIA history, his unpopularity amongst CIA staff led the CIA's Office of Security to provide him with 'extra bodyguards' to escort him to and from the headquarters in Langley, and rumors circulated that cameras were installed opposite his official portrait out of fears it would be vandalized by 'disgruntled employees' (Moran C. , 2019, p. 96). According to Andrew, Nixon had chosen Schlesinger for three obvious reasons. To 'shake things up' at the CIA, to make DCI Schlesinger the 'effective head of the whole IC' and lastly to bring the community under 'direct presidential control'. Nixon believed the CIA did not deserve the same independency as State or Defense, and effectively wanted to reduce the agency to 'the covert arm of the White House' (Andrew, 1995, p. 388). The appointment of Schlesinger is

arguably one of the hardest pieces of evidence suggesting Nixon partook in the attempt to politicize intelligence. Knowing Schlesinger would be willing to change the CIA completely and bring it under more presidential control, the appointment is significantly politically motivated. At the time, the position of DCIA was the most powerful position within the IC. Relating back to our theoretical framework, reforming or changing the ‘arena’ of the intelligence cycle due to political motivations also suggests politicization of intelligence.

4.5 Relationship with Kissinger

As mentioned before, the role of Henry Kissinger vis-à-vis Nixon’s relationship with intelligence should not be underestimated. Any assessment of this relationship would be incomplete without taking into account the ‘enormous amounts of time together, three or four meetings nearly every day’ (Ambrose, 1987, pp. 490-91). The position in the White House Kissinger would receive, namely that of national security advisor, would be transformed by Nixon from the moment he became president. Nixon’s suspicion of “the little boys in the State Department” meant he sought to run foreign policy almost completely from the White House, through his national security advisor (Kissinger, 1979, p. 26). Kissinger shared many similar traits with Nixon, including ‘a love of eavesdropping on others (the taps and the tapes), of secrecy, of surprises, of conspiracy, of backbiting, of power plays’ (Ambrose, 1987, pp. 490-91) and these were essential in convincing Nixon to appoint him to the position of national security advisor.

The power-duo relationship which Kissinger shared with Nixon meant that Kissinger, instead of the DCI, became ‘the president’s main intelligence advisor’ (Andrew, 1995, p. 351). As discussed before, the PBD and most other intelligence reports went through Kissinger and his staff before reaching the President’s desk. Kissinger therefore, essentially chose what Nixon got to see from the filtering of the intelligence reports he received from the IC. He made it clear multiple times ‘that no one department or agency of the government would be permitted to present its views directly to Nixon’ (Helgeson, 1996, p.

108). Kissinger's similar mindset meant that Nixon was exceedingly willing to take his intelligence briefings as truth, instead of listening to the intelligence experts.

Together, Nixon and Kissinger would be especially favorable to conducting business through secret back channels. Nixon's 'hot-line' with the Soviet Union was unique to those established earlier by Robert Kennedy and Harry Hopkins, as it passed through the Soviet ambassador instead of a Soviet intelligence officer. Nixon put great importance on this channel, telling Soviet ambassador Anatoli Dobrynin that 'matters of special sensitivity' should be discussed between only Kissinger and himself, effectively bypassing the secretary of state and whole State department. According to Andrew, this wasn't the only back channel which was structured in such a way to bypass not only the State department, but to 'circumvent the IC' (Andrew, 1995, p. 352), effectively rendering them unable to do their jobs. Agency officials often complained "how can we do our job if we don't know what's going on?" (Colby W. , 1994). Kissinger admits that these channels were 'extraordinary procedures' which were 'demoralizing for the bureaucracy' and would not be recommended in 'textbooks on public administration' (Kissinger, 1979, p. 138). Consciously bypassing the IC on discussions between the US and the Soviet Union in the Cold War Era does not only mean they can't do their analysis and tasks properly, it also challenges existing intelligence norms and procedures.

Nixon's appointment of Kissinger to national security advisor due to shared ideals and their willingness to challenge existing intelligence procedures constitutes attempts at politicization. Our framework highlights that the individually motivated appointment of individuals to positions of power over the IC, together with challenging underlying rules within the IC, both provide evidence of top-down politicization of intelligence. Additionally, Nixon's knowledge that Kissinger would carefully review and 'filter' the intelligence reports he would eventually receive, suggests 'cherry-picking' of intelligence. Kissinger knew what Nixon wanted to see.

4.6 The Watergate Coverup

While Nixon had pursued the use of (illegal) covert actions more and more extensively during the length of his presidency and climaxing in the Watergate break-in, the real attempt to politicize intelligence came with his attempt to coverup the consequential investigations. By attempting to blackmail the CIA, Nixon would try to put two different agencies within the IC against each other. Furthermore, the attention that Nixon gave to ‘surviving’ the Watergate scandal would disable the IC through the unwillingness and inability of its executive decision maker to listen, leading to multiple intelligence failures in 1973-74.

The CIA’s refusal to become involved in the cover-up of the covert actions ordered by Nixon and his Committee for the Re-election of the President (CRP) eventually led to Nixon taking several steps to hinder the ongoing investigation of the Watergate break-in by the FBI. In June of 1972, Nixon approved a plan by his Chief of Staff, Harry Haldeman, to get the CIA to persuade the FBI to call off its investigations on the pretext that the break-in had been a ‘CIA operation concerned with national security’ (Andrew, 1995, p. 386). Everette Hunt, one of the plotters of the Watergate burglaries, had a CIA background and Nixon assumed this would distract the FBI investigations away from the White House and towards the agency. Hunt’s CIA background, in combination with his involvement in Cuban operations such as the Bay of Pigs, would blackmail Helms into cooperating with the cover-up, or so Nixon assumed. According to Nixon, investigations into Hunt “would uncover a lot of things” which would “make the CIA look bad” and may lead him to “blow the whole Bay of Pigs thing” which would be very “unfortunate for the CIA”. Using covert action from the White House against his political enemies, and then engaging in a complex cover-up, ‘effectively criminalized his administration’ (Andrew, 1995, p. 386). The blackmailing of intelligence agencies falls under our criteria of top-down politicization through the dictation of intelligence conclusions through direct or coercive means. Ordering one intelligence agency to exert pressure on the other for personal and political purposes, in combination with threatening serious consequences, certainly constitutes a hard form of attempted politicization.

Attempting to blackmail the CIA is perhaps one of the most damning examples of attempted politicization of intelligence services by Nixon. According to the Articles of Impeachment, Nixon had endeavored ‘to misuse the Central Intelligence Agency’ (House Judiciary Committee, 1974).

Arguably, the ‘series of real or alleged intelligence failures’ during the last ten months of Nixon’s presidency were partly as a result of Nixon’s preoccupation with surviving the Watergate investigations resulting in the little interest he showed towards intelligence findings. For example, instead of joining his advisers in formulating an appropriate response to Moscow’s contemplation of taking unilateral military steps in the Middle East during the 1973 Yom Kippur War, which Nixon named “the most serious thing since the Cuban Missile Crisis”, Nixon went to bed due to the strain of Watergate (Israelian, 1993). Nixon responded to none of the intelligence reports following the Cyprus Crisis of 1974, which Nixon would have followed carefully and critically during the first years of presidency (Colby W. , 1994). Kissinger claimed that he had to insist that space had to be found on Nixon’s desk for reports on Cyprus due to the overwhelming amount of Watergate documents. While Nixon was relatively critical and involved with the intelligence process and its findings during the first years of his presidency, his preoccupation with Watergate disabled the IC in his last months as president. This preoccupation can be seen as being politically and personally motivated as he was busy ‘surviving’ the scandal he had created, and led to the ignoring of important intelligence findings which led to major intelligence failures. This therefore also constitutes the politicization of intelligence, as he is refusing to consider important intelligence findings at the time. While it may be argued that Nixon could not have foreseen the mess the Watergate scandal would bring onto his desk, he was very well aware of the significance of events such as the Yom Kipper War, as he states himself. Knowing this, and yet failing to be involved (sometimes at all) as the IC’s executive decision maker due to the mess around Watergate, shows a conscious willingness to prioritize personal motives over US interests abroad.

4.7 Nixon: conscious attempts at politicization?

Taking into account the many sources which show Nixon's deep inner suspicion for 'Langley liberals' and the 'East Coast establishment' which he believed the CIA represented, there must be no doubt that Nixon held a willingness and determination to shake things up at the CIA when he was in the position to do so. While Kissinger may have been a moderating factor in this process in the beginning, when he convinced Nixon not to replace DCI Richard Helms, Nixon's patience with the CIA was short-lived. We see this in his treatment of Helms, who he viewed as a product of an establishment he was fighting his whole life, and regular denouncing of the CIA throughout his presidency. His trust in Kissinger's staff to 'filter' out what was important to him in the CIA's PBD shows a clear break and challenge to the *modus operandi* of presidential-intelligence contact. More direct were Nixon's 'ordering' of intelligence, whereby he tasked the CIA and FBI with findings results which would prove his suspicions about a communist conspiracy operating domestically and his politically motivated appointment of Schlesinger as DCI in an attempt to bring the CIA under his control. These examples, together with attempting to blackmail the CIA into countering the FBI investigation into the scandal, are the most damning cases of Nixon's attempt to politicize intelligence.

Historians agree that both Nixon and Kissinger 'exploited the CIA's lack of stature for their own ends' and partook in the 'manipulation of intelligence' (Jeffreys-Jones, 2014, p. 176). Not only did he engage in manipulation, it was very clear he was also 'prejudiced against it' (Jeffreys-Jones, 2014, p. 177). By the end of Nixon's presidency, the CIA was left 'with an even lower standing' than at the start of his presidency and his behavior had 'endangered the spirit of intelligence reform'. Yet, it must not be forgotten that achievements such as a more stable relationship with the USSR, and the 'general strengthening of the prospects for peace' made some of his actions partially morally and pragmatically defensible (Jeffreys-Jones, 2014, p. 176). While this is interesting to note, we aren't looking into the results of Nixon's behavior for US foreign policy, only whether he attempted to politicize intelligence.

Looking back at our criteria for analyzing top-down attempts at politicization, we can conclude that Nixon partook in all forms in the following ways:

Nixon seeming to dictate intelligence conclusions by direct and coercive means such as blackmail and the unambiguous ordering of findings:

- Ordering of intelligence conclusions from the CIA in the case of the SS-9 missile and evidence of an international Communist conspiracy;
- Blackmailing the CIA and ordering them to help in the cover up of the Watergate scandal.

Nixon engaging in the cherry-picking of intelligence findings which only fit his, or his administration's, policy objectives. This includes the ignoring and/or challenging of intelligence conclusions:

- Continuous mistrust and challenging of CIA findings;
- Extensive disinterest and ignoring of the CIA's PDB;
- Allowing Kissinger and his staff to 'filter' the PDB findings to him every day;
- Ignoring intelligence findings due to his preoccupation with surviving the Watergate investigations, partly leading to significant intelligence failures.

Nixon engaging in the politically motivated establishment of competing organs of intelligence or bureaucracy to challenge the established IC:

- Ordering the setting up of an interagency committee on intelligence tasked with improving the intelligence collection capabilities of the government by removing restrictions, effectively to find proof of a Communist conspiracy within the US;

Nixon attempting to challenge underlying assumptions or rules within the IC by politically motivated means:

- Tasking the CIA with domestic intelligence gathering which is a task reserved for the FBI;
- Suggesting the CIA was political in their motivations due to his blaming of them for his loss in the 1960 presidential election;
- Approving of the ‘Huston Plan’, which contained two illegal methods of intelligence collection;
- Attempting to bring the CIA under presidential control and to make the DCI at the time, Schlesinger, the effective head over the whole IC;
- Making Kissinger, instead of the DCI, his main intelligence advisor;
- The setting up of secret back channels to the Soviet ambassador to effectively circumvent the IC;
- Misusing the IC through attempting to make the CIA work against the FBI during the Watergate investigations.

Nixon’s politically or personally motivated assignment or removal of specific individuals to positions of power within, or over, the IC:

- Unjustified suspicions of DCI Helms from the start of his presidency leading to attempting to exclude Helms from NSC meetings, failing to approve Helms as head of the IC and eventually firing Helms for refusing to let the CIA get involved in the Watergate cover-up;
- Appointing Huston, a close aide to Nixon with very similar views, to one of the men in charge of the ‘Huston Plan’;
- Appointing former military aide, Robert Cushman to Deputy DCI to ‘keep track’ of Helms;
- Appointment of James Schlesinger as DCI in 1972 to ‘shake things up’ and reform the CIA.

Taking these findings into account, we can conclude that Nixon attempted to politicize the US IC, especially the CIA, to a significant extent.

Chapter 5: President Trump

The relationship between US President Trump and the US IC has been turbulent at best, with both Trump and the IC coming forward to criticize the other's conclusions and views on important matters of foreign policy. Trump is often significantly outspoken to the public about his personal views towards certain themes; intelligence agencies and conclusions being one of them. Clashing with intelligence on important issues of foreign policy such as North Korea, Iran and ISIS, in combination with his conspiracy mindset around the Russian involvement investigation, has made Trump no friend of the US IC.

Throughout our assessment regarding the attempted politicization of intelligence by President Trump, we will come across several themes which characterize his relationship with intelligence. These include his public statements on social media, his challenges and disagreement with the IC on key policy issues such as Iran, North Korea and his Travel Ban , the Russian Affair which continues to 'scar' his Presidency and lastly his attempts to reform the IC through appointments and dismissal of key positions within the IC.

We will discover that Trump's behavior and statements suggests strong and blatant attempts to politicize intelligence agencies and findings. However, whether these are conscious attempts to politicize, or come out of mere ignorance, is extremely difficult to uncover.

5.1 Statements on Social Media

While the extensive use of social media by presidents of the United States is not a new phenomenon, Trump's utilization of social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook is unmatched by any of his predecessors and have earned him the nickname of the 'Twitter President'. Claiming it to be the 'most effective way to connect with the country', Trump now boasts over 46 million followers on Twitter (Buncombe, 2018). A June 2019 article from the Washington Post shows how a collection of

political scientists have used Trump's twitter feed to 'explain Trump's strategy' and 'inconsistency' regarding the shooting down of an American drone by Iran. Within just four tweets on the situation, Trump displays Iran as 'a massive threat to the world' to a 'boxed-in has-been', showing remarkable 'intellectual flexibility' (Farrel, 2019). This shows us how Trump voices everything on twitter, including his thought processes and strategies. The White House has stated that his tweets also represent presidential statements, and that they should therefore carry the same weight as a message issued by his press office (Buncombe, 2018). This is quite a significant statement, as Trump's tweets are known to often be controversial and express personal opinions which aren't always shared by the rest of the White House.

When assessing Trump's statements of social media, it is essential that we analyze the motivations behind these comments if we want to assess attempts at politicization. According to cognitive linguist and professor at the University of Berkeley George Lakoff, Trump's history as a 'super salesman' has given him the instinctive ability to manipulate thought through framing. Lakoff clearly states that Trump's tweets are strategic and fall under one of four types:

1. 'Pre-emptive framing' for a framing advantage;
2. 'Diversion' to divert attention away from him when news could embarrass him;
3. 'Deflection' to shift the blame to others;
4. 'Trail balloon' to test how much he can get away with (Lakoff & Duran, 2018).

Lakoff therefore suggests that Trump does actively think about what he tweets, and infers he has clear strategy and intention when posting statements online. This is important to realize, as many see Trump's tweets as coming from a position of ignorance.

Firstly, Trump has engaged in the 'othering' of the IC through several of his tweets. The concept of 'othering' is an interdisciplinary notion which means the creation of groups, an 'us' and 'them' mentality and often comes with moral and political judgement through discourse (Dervin, 2012). On

multiple occasions, Trump seems to talk about the IC as a completely separate entity from the US government which doesn't always seem to represent the US's best interests. In two tweets on the 30th of January 2019, Trump labels the US IC (which consists of 17 separate agencies (Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2019)) as "the intelligence people" (@realDonaldTrump, 2019) and just simply "intelligence" (Trump, 2019). When we consider the US IC as 17 different agencies each representing different interests and parts within the US government apparatus, it is troubling to group them all into one label. By this labelling, Trump is effectively isolating the intelligence agencies away from what he sees as US government and interests, which is a dangerous and political message to convey to the public. When looking back at our criteria for analysis, by 'othering' the IC away from the US government, Trump is challenging the underlying assumptions that the IC belongs to the government and acts on behalf, and in the best interest, of the US government. Furthermore, grouping together 17 different intelligence agencies into 'the intelligence people' challenges to acknowledge the assumption that each agency has their own interests and tasks to fulfill.

More significantly however, is the challenging of the IC and its findings by Trump on social media. In the same tweets mentioned above regarding the Iran Deal, Trump denounces "the intelligence people" as "extremely passive and naïve", referring to "the dangers of Iran". According to him, they are plainly "wrong!" (@realDonaldTrump, 2019). Through this, Trump not only distances himself from the IC and questions their conclusions, he actively calls them out as being incorrect. Using vocabulary such as "naïve" and "passive" to describe the US IC in context of the Iran Deal, in which the IC was and still is highly active (European Leadership Network, 2019). can be argued as being highly offensive and unrealistic. In the same tweet, he states that 'perhaps Intelligence should go back to school', suggesting the IC has a lot to learn. Through these tweets, Trump is actively participating in attempting to politicize intelligence. Looking at our criteria, through this, Trump is engaging in the challenging of intelligence findings directly by calling them out as being 'wrong'. When we consider Trump's policy towards Iran and the Iran Deal, which Trump calls 'a desperate and terrible deal' (@realDonaldTrump, 2019), we can

consider Trump's defiance of intelligence findings as actively attempting to prevent intelligence findings affecting his policy.

Twitter has also been an open platform for Trump to accuse the US IC of many unfounded acts, actively challenging the IC's rules and values by portraying them as a threat not only to his administration, but to the American public. As part of his wider conspiracy mindset in which he views the IC of actively undermining his presidency and campaign (Sipher, 2019), Trump has used twitter many times to voice his concerns about the IC to the American public. Following are just a few examples of these accusations. In a tweet in January of 2017, Trump implicitly compares the IC with the Gestapo (The secret police in Nazi Germany), by asking "are we living in Nazi Germany?" and accusing the IC of taking "one last shot" at him. (@realDonaldTrump, 2017). The tweet came in response to the 'Steele dossier', a private intelligence report by former MI6 intelligence agent Christopher Steele which contained allegations of misconduct between Trump's presidential campaign and the government of Russia during the 2016 elections. Trump accused the IC of allowing the document, which he labels as "fake news", to be leaked to the public (@realDonaldTrump, 2017). Trump's attempt at politicization during the 'Russian affair' will be analyzed in greater depth further into this chapter. A tweet in June of 2018 accuses the IC of a "counter-intelligence operation into the Trump Campaign", calling it "SPYGATE at the highest level" (@realDonaldTrump, 2018). As mentioned before, Trump tends to group the "intelligence people" together in his tweets, but sometimes specifies the target of his accusations. In response to the National Security Agency's (NSA) announcement it would be deleting all call record details that had been collected since 2015 under the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act (FISA) (NSA, 2018), Trump labelled the agency a "disgrace" and accused them of continuing "the Witch Hunt" against him (@realDonaldTrump, 2018). Former senior director of the NSA criticized Trump for attacking the 'NSA and our broader intelligence community' for the same reason that 'criminals attack law enforcement' (Herman & Seldin, 2018).

Ironically enough, Trump has mentioned the politicization of intelligence in one of his tweets, while using the IC for his own political gains to discredit the Democratic party. Further referring to the ongoing investigations regarding the ‘Russian Affair’, Trump tweeted in February of 2018 that “the top Leadership and Investigators of the FBI and the Justice Department have politicized the scared investigative process in favor of Democrats and against Republicans” (@realDonaldTrump, 2018). Through this, Trump is challenging the underlying assumption that the IC must be apolitical in their judgements. Stating that they are actively working against the Republicans in favor of the Democrats suggests they are political in their judgements. By challenging this assumption to the wider public, Trump is engaging in the top-down politicization of intelligence.

Trump’s willingness to openly challenge the findings of intelligence, the ‘othering’ and grouping of the IC, the suggestion that the IC is political in their judgments, and his hostility towards them is clearly brought forward in his favorite means of communication to the American public. As shown by cognitive linguists such as Lakoff, Trump certainly has a degree of strategy in these social media posts, and are attempts to influence not just processes within the public sphere, but bring out change within the American bureaucracy. By calling out the intelligence agencies, Trump’s hopes to mount public pressure and scrutiny against them, and perhaps make them more willing to support his policy objectives, and discontinue their investigations into the ‘Russian Affair’. Taking into account our criteria for analysis, Trump significantly challenges underlying assumptions and rules within the IC by attempting to change how the public views them, while at the same time calling their findings plainly ‘wrong’ and therefore engaging in the challenging of the validity of intelligence conclusions.

5.2 Challenging and Ordering of Intelligence findings: Iran, North Korea and the Travel Ban

While disagreement between President Trump and the IC has occurred at several different instances, the issues surrounding Iran, North Korea and Trump’s executive order regarding the Travel Ban have led to the most controversy both in the public, and within the IC. It therefore makes sense to study these in greater detail. Before looking into these cases, it is interesting to note Trump’s look on the

Presidential Daily Briefs (PDB) he should be receiving from the IC every day. In a post-election interview with Fox News, Trump made it clear that he is a “smart person” and doesn’t need the “same words every single day for the next eight years”, instead stating that his generals and Vice President-elect Mike Pence are being briefed (Tani, 2016). Suggesting that seeing the PDB’s three times a week is sufficient, and questioning the usefulness of the briefs in general, is a clear sign that Trump does not trust the CIA (Moran & Aldrich, 2017). These statements sound oddly similar to Nixon’s view on the PDB, as will be discussed later on in the thesis. By refusing to see the PDB’s every day and letting others view them for him, Trump is effectively politicizing intelligence by ignoring the most important daily intelligence findings, and challenging the underlying assumptions in the IC that presidents are supposed to see these briefs every single day.

5.21 Iran

Policy regarding Iran is perhaps the most significant point of contention between the Trump administration and the IC. Even before leaving the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), otherwise known as the Iran Deal, in May of 2018, Trump has sought to politicize intelligence to support his policy objectives regarding Iran. According to former deputy director of the CIA, David Cohen, Trump demanded intelligence to support ‘his policy preference’ to withdraw from the Iran Deal within the first year of his presidency. Under a 2015 law titled ‘Congressional review and oversight of agreements with Iran’, the president is required to certify and submit to Congress ‘a verification assessment report’ regarding ‘nuclear agreements with Iran’ every 90 days. This is to ensure Iran hasn’t breached the agreement and ‘has not taken any action, including covert activities, that could significantly advance its nuclear weapons program’ (Legal Information Institute, 2015). While this certification is essentially a political call, it is always based upon intelligence assessments by intelligence services who are ‘in the best position to judge’ if Iran is withholding to the agreement (Cohen, 2017). While Trump does understand this due to his reluctant recertification of the Iran Deal in July of 2017 through recommendation of the IC (Baker, 2017), he commissioned a group of White House aides to make a case

for ‘withholding certification of Iran’ at the next review. Sources who were either invited to take part in the process or were briefed on the president’s decision told political magazine *Foreign Policy* how Trump stated that ‘he wants to be in a place to decertify 90 days from now and it’s their job to put him there’ (Winter, Gramer, & De Luce, 2017). Lastly and more recently, the Trump administration has tried to convince Congress that Iran has ‘alarming ties’ with Al Qaeda. Both current and former US officials have stated that there is no public evidence that Tehran ‘has allowed Qaeda operatives to plot attacks’ on the US from Iran, or ‘offered a haven for large numbers of fighters’ (Wong & Edmondson, 2019). The World Threat Assessment of the US IC, released in January of 2019, stated that the IC continued to ‘assess that Iran is not currently undertaking the key nuclear weapons-development activities we judge necessary to produce a nuclear device’ (ODNI, 2019, p. 10). This stands in strong contradiction to the claims Trump made in his speech announcing the US withdrawing from the Iran deal, whereby Iran would “be on the cusp of acquiring the world’s most dangerous weapons” (Trump, 2018). These contradictions show a stark disagreement between Trump and the IC.

According to our criteria, Trump is engaging in at least three points of attempted top-down politicization of intelligence with regards to policy involving Iran. Firstly, he is ignoring intelligence findings as they are not in-line with his, and his administrations, pre-determined policy regarding Iran. Even before becoming president, Trump has seen the Iran Deal as a ‘bad deal’ and was therefore determined to end the US’s involvement with it, he just needed to ‘convince’ the intelligence services of it. Secondly, by commissioning a group of White House aides to ensure he could decertify Iran in the verification assessment report to Congress he engaged in the politically motivated assignment of a group of individuals to a position of power over the IC. Their ‘evidence’ would provide enough ground for Trump to decertify Iran as that call is in essence his to make; intelligence services only play an advisory role in the context. This is also where the third and most incriminating point of politicization comes into play, namely ordering intelligence on a certain policy objective, even when the IC has provided evidence to the contrary. Directing ‘his staff to generate intelligence to support a preferred policy outcome’, going

against the ‘dispassionate analyst judgements of intelligence professionals’ can be argued to by the ‘very definition of politicization of intelligence’ (Cohen, 2017).

5.22 North Korea

Policy surrounding North Korea has been another area of continuous contestation between Trump and the IC. Tweeting in June of 2018 just after visiting Pyongyang and meeting Kim Jong-Un, Trump stated “there is no longer a Nuclear Threat from North Korea” (@realDonaldTrump, 2018). However, a few months later, the Worldwide Threat Assessment by the IC concluded that while North Korea had not conducted any ‘nuclear-capable missile or nuclear tests in more than a year’, it retained its ‘WMD capabilities’ and was ‘unlikely to give up all of its WMD stockpiles’ as North Korean leaders ‘view nuclear arms as critical to regime survival’ (ODNI, 2019, p. 8). What we see is a clear contrast between what Trump is telling the public, and what the IC has concluded. While it is impossible to determine if Trump has simply ignored the intelligence conclusions or had not been briefed fully on the situation, Trump seems to be challenging the intelligence findings publicly by statements contradicting intelligence conclusions. We can therefore argue he is engaging in the politicization of intelligence by challenging intelligence findings, or blatantly ignoring them by stating the opposite on public channels.

Furthermore, the revelation that the brother of Kim Jong-Un, Kim Jong Nam, who was killed in a chemical-weapon attack in the airport of Kuala Lumpur in February of 2017, was a CIA ‘source who met on several occasions with agency operatives’ (Strobel, 2019) also brought about a controversial reaction from President Trump; shocking the IC. Stating that “I would tell him (Kim Jong-Un) that would not happen under my auspices. I wouldn’t let that happen under my auspices”, Trump effectively sends a clear message to any ‘would-be informants’, that the US doesn’t have their ‘backs’ (Graham, 2019). Considering the fact that North Korea remains a ‘global threat’ in the eyes of the IC (ODNI, 2019), Trump’s casual reassurance to its leader that spying won’t happen again, instead of not warning North Korea not to act in such a way again, is an act against the US IC. While such an example does not fall directly into any of our criteria for analysis, the appeasement of foreign leaders while sacrificing loyalty

to the CIA can definitely be argued to be politicization. Trump's reassurance comes at a cost to the IC, while his statements further his policy objectives of staying befriended with North Korean leader Kim Yung-On.

5.23 Trump's Travel Ban

In February of 2017, the Trump White House ordered the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Department of Justice (DOJ) to conduct an 'intelligence review' to build a case for Trump's 'controversial and unpopular' Executive Order 13769, also known as the travel ban (Gleeson, 2017). Although the travel ban had already been blocked by several courts, President Trump effectively assigned both the DHS and DOJ to find evidence to support his executive order. This fact had some intelligence officials worried, who labelled it directly as the politicization of intelligence (Tapper & Brown, 2017). The findings of the Office of Intelligence and Analysis (I&A), which is the in-house intelligence agency of the DOHS, are at odds with Trump's view that blocking immigration from the seven respective countries 'strategically makes sense'. Furthermore, an unnamed senior government official stated that the US National Counterterrorism Center was also tasked with creating such a report, 'separately from DHS and DOJ'. As one can imagine, this has raised questions amongst government officials whether the White house is 'shopping' around different agencies for a report which best matches their policy choices (Tapper & Brown, 2017). While it remains unclear to what extent Trump himself was involved in the ordering of the intelligence review, the assignment certainly constitutes an attempt to politicize intelligence. If we consider that the travel ban came from an executive order, therefore signed by Trump himself, the assignment is likely to involve him as well. It fits three of our criteria for top-down attempts to politicize, namely the ordering of findings, the ignoring and cherry-picking of intelligence results to fit policy objectives and challenging findings of the IC. Ordering the DHS and DOJ to conduct an intelligence review to build a case for the travel ban falls under the direct ordering of intelligence findings. Requesting intelligence reports from different intelligence agencies in an attempt to find intelligence which best support policy objectives shows a clear ignorance towards other agencies'

findings. Furthermore, while intelligence from the IC seemed to have provided enough evidence for the courts to block the Executive Order in the past, Trump is actively challenging these conclusions by reassigning an intelligence review. Dennis Gleeson, former director of strategy at the CIA, agrees; seeing the assignment as an request to intelligence professions to produce analysis that ‘supports a favored policy’ instead of allowing it to ‘inform policy’. According to him, it is ‘anathema’ to the training and values of analysts at the ‘heart of the vocation’ (Gleeson, 2017).

5.3 The Russian Affair

Since his presidential campaign, the ‘Russian Affair’ has arguably created the largest gap between Trump and the IC, leading Trump to bringing intelligence into the political realm on multiple occasions. To create some context, in January of 2017, ODNI released a report titled ‘*Russian Activities and Intentions in Recent US Elections*’, coordinated by the CIA, FBI and NSA. The key judgment of the report stated that ‘Russian President Vladimir Putin ordered an influence campaign in 2016 aimed at the US presidential election’. Russia’s goals included undermining ‘public faith in the US democratic process, denigrate Secretary Clinton, and harm her electability and potential presidency’. The report further states that the Russians ‘developed a clear preference for President-elect Trump’ and ‘aspired to help President-elect Trump’s election chances’ (ODNI NIC, 2017). To take things further, Trump’s campaign and transition teams were accused of conspiring with ‘Russian agents’ to influence the US election in Trump’s favor. This accusation came after it became clear that at least 17 Trump associates had contacts with Russians during the campaign or transition, including ‘at least 100 face-to-face interactions, phone calls or electronic messages’ and ‘at least 51 individual communications’. The special counsel tasked with inquiring into the matter, headed by former director of the FBI Robert Mueller, has indicted more than 30 people, including 4 members of Trump’s inner-circle (BBC, 2019).

Trump has consistently publicly committed himself to his innocence of any form of collusion with the Russians. While he was president-elect, he denied the CIA’s claim that Russians had hacked the email of the Democratic National Committee (DNC) by tweeting that “unless you catch “hackers” in the

act, it is very hard to determine who was doing the hacking” (@realDonaldTrump, 2016). Throughout his presidential term, he has labelled the investigation a “Witch Hunt Hoax” (@realDonaldTrump, 2019) and has continued to insist “there was no Collusion” (@realDonaldTrump, 2019) to this day. These claims went against and challenged the assessments of the IC and were therefore shrouded in controversy. Through the attempt to prevent the loss of political face, he has brought the intelligence community into the realm of politics and has therefore politicized intelligence. According to our criteria of analysis, the challenging of intelligence findings falls under top-down politicization of intelligence. While both the special counsel and the IC has been quite straightforward in their findings, Trump continues to deny any collusion with his campaign existed.

Following Trump’s firing of FBI Director James Comey (which will be analysed in greater depth in the next section), Trump asked two of the government’s top intelligence chiefs to ‘publicly deny evidence of cooperation between his campaign and Russia during the 2016 election’. Both current and former US officials confirmed that Trump had spoken to DNI Dan Coats and NSA Director Michael Rogers to ‘push back against’ the FBI investigation into possible collusion. FBI Director Comey had announced the probe to the House Intelligence Committee two months before. Senior Intelligence officials saw the requests as a ‘threat to the independence of US spy agencies’ who are supposed to ‘remain insulated from partisan issues’ and as ‘an attempt... to tarnish the credibility of the agency leading the Russia investigation’ (Entous & Nakashima, 2017). Here again we see Trump not only bringing the US IC into the political realm, but we see him attempting to interfere with intelligence in a direct way. According to our criteria, the attempt by Presidents to dictate intelligence conclusions by direct means, and the challenging of underlying assumptions within the IC both constitute forms of top-down politicization. By Trump asking the intelligence chiefs to go against the investigation into his administration, he seeks to use them for his political benefit.

In August of 2018, Trump decided to revoke the security clearance of John Brennan, the former CIA Director under President Obama. He threatened to do the same to other former national security and

intelligence officials who ‘antagonized him’ including former DNI James Clapper, former FBI Director James Comey and CIA Director Michael Hayden (Frum, 2019). According to Steven Hall, retired CIA official who spent 30 years at the agency running and managing Russian operation, the decision amounts to Trump ‘using presidential power to retaliate against the critics who have the best understanding of his relationship with Russia’ (Hall, 2018). While it is impossible to determine the motivations of Trump to rescind the security clearance and threaten more, he is using his presidential power to remove individuals from positions of power within the IC. In this case, power means knowing what is going on through security clearance with the IC. While the exact nature of Trump’s decision remains unknown, Trump tweets shows the president’s ‘personal animus against those persons’ (Frum, 2019), suggesting the move seems to be individually motivated. The individually motivated removal of individuals from positions of power within, or over the IC, constitutes an attempt at politicization according to our criteria.

Lastly, in May of 2019, Trump ordered all US intelligence agencies to assist Attorney General William Barr in his review of surveillance issues surrounding Trump’s presidential campaign, after accusing the agencies of abusing their power (BBC, 2019). The memorandum of May 23 states that the ‘heads of each department or agency... shall promptly provide such assistance and information as the Attorney General may request’ and that the Attorney General may ‘declassify, downgrade... intelligence that relates to the...review’ (The White House, 2019). John Sipher, former chief of station for the CIA, declares that giving Barr such authority to declassify secret intelligence ‘directly undercuts Director of National Intelligence Daniel Coats’, who is responsible for both ‘protecting and potentially releasing intelligence’. Sipher sees Trumps directive as ‘eagerness’ to find someone to blame within the CIA for the assessment by the UC IC in 2016. This would support Trump’s goal to persuade voters that the Russian attack was a ‘hoax’ and that he faced a ‘coup’. Furthermore, the inherent confidentiality and secrecy surrounding the IC’s activities makes it ‘easy to spin a conspiracy’ while their ability to respond remains limited (Sipher, 2019). Indeed, this directive seems to be Trump attempting to find evidence to discredit the IC for political gain, and to appear more legitimate to his voter base. It can be argued that by

granting Barr these powers to declassify intelligence, Trump is assigning an individual to a position of power over the IC, undercutting the DNI in the process. This, including ordering the IC to comply, constitutes forms of top-down politicization according to our criteria, namely through challenging intelligence findings and assigning individuals to positions of influence over the IC.

5.4 Dismissal and Appointment

Trump's firing of FBI Director James Comey is perhaps one of the more obvious attempts at politicization during his presidency. After it was revealed during an House Intelligence Committee hearing that an FBI investigation into Trump's National Security Advisor, Michael Flynn, was ongoing in regards to possible contacts with Russia, Trump asked the then FBI Director some remarkable questions in the Oval Office. In a series of memos released by Comey himself in April of 2018 (their existence was known a year prior to release), Comey describes the series of interactions he had with Trump in the months before his firing in May of 2017. A day after Flynn's 'forced resignation' from office in February, Comey was invited to the Oval Office for a homeland session whereby the President wanted to "talk about Mike Flynn" with him personally. According to Comey, Trump told him "I hope you can see your way clear to letting this go, to letting Flynn go. He is a good guy. I hope you can let this go" (Comey J. , 2018). Later on and after his removal from office, during Comey's testimony before the Senate Intelligence Committee on the 8th of June, 2018 Comey stated that he saw Trump's remarks as "a direction" and considered it an order (Comey J. , 2017). Referring to a private dinner he had with the president in January of that year, Comey states how he interpreted Trump's questions about his job to be an effort by the president to "create some sort of patronage relationship" and recalled how the president said "I need loyalty, I expect loyalty" (Comey J. B., 2017). Comey further made it clear he believed that the Russian investigation played a role in his firing, stating he had "seen the president say so" (Comey J. , 2017). Trump himself backs this up, when he admitted in May of 2017 that "this Russia thing" was on his mind when he decided Comey's fate, contradicting the White House rationale that Comey was fired for 'mishandling the Clinton email investigation' (Smith, Borger, & Gambino, 2017). Trump's seeming

efforts to create a patronage relationship, his requests, and the eventual dismissal of FBI Director Comey, are damning pieces of evidence pointing to hard top-down politicization by Trump. Firstly, Trump's request regarding "letting Flynn go" is a clear attempt to dictate intelligence findings (in this case the investigation against Flynn) by trying to halt the investigation in a direct way: through a stated question assumed through a patronage relationship. Comey's interpretation of Trump's discussion regarding his position point to Trump attempting to forge a patronage relationship where he expected full loyalty from Comey, and could be argued to amount to intimidation. Secondly, the removal of Comey from office a couple of months after Comey refused to play along with Trump shows a clear politically motivated removal of an individual from a position of power within the IC, namely that of FBI director. These interactions with Comey, and the eventual firing, constitute significant attempts to politicize intelligence.

While the extent to which political appointments to leadership positions within the IC constitute politicization of intelligence remains an issue of debate amongst officials and academics, it is important to mention the most important appointments by the president. Arguably the most significant is the appointment of Mike Pompeo as Director of the CIA. Pompeo's 'political background and staunch support for Trump during the campaign' together with his harsh criticism of Secretary Clinton had several intelligence officials concerned about 'their new boss' and the affect he might have on the 'Russia probe' (Rovner, 2017). Describing Trump as "a commander in chief who fearlessly puts America out in front" displays Pompeo's apparent trust in Trump ever since the presidential campaign (Kumar, 2016). Although we cannot be sure if Trump chose Pompeo because he wanted a 'plains leader at the CIA', Trump had obvious reason to use intelligence chiefs to 'muddy the waters' around his presidential campaign (Rovner, 2017). Trump's appointment of Pompeo therefore does appear to be politically motivated, constituting an attempt to politicize intelligence.

In July of 2019 Dan Coats, known for his 'impossible job of speaking truth to Trump', having a reputation of being 'willing to offer Trump conclusions he might not want to hear' (Gilsinan, 2019), and his remarkable commitment to the IC, stepped down as DNI. President Trump has nominated Republican

Representative John Ratcliffe, a vocal skeptic of the Mueller investigation into the Russian election interference, to become the new DNI (Gilsinan, 2019). Ratcliffe made headlines last month, on the 17th of July, by his aggressive questioning and criticism of former Special Counsel Robert Mueller during Mueller's testimony before Congress. Ratcliffe suggested that the obstruction volume of Mueller's report "was not authorized under the law to be written" and that it was "in violation of every DOJ principle about extra prosecutorial commentary" (Quilantan & Samuelsohn, 2019). After Trump's nomination announcement, Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer tweeted that "it's clear Rep. Ratcliffe was selected because he exhibited blind loyalty to @realDonaldTrump with his demagogic questioning of Mueller" and that elevating such a "partisan player to a position requiring intelligence expertise & non-partisanship" would be "a big mistake" (Schumer, 2019). Indeed, Trump's nomination seems to be politically motivated and partly due to Ratcliffe's tough stance on the Russian interference investigation and willingness to take a tough stance against the former special counsel. It is very likely that Trump thinks Ratcliffe can further hinder the investigative processes which are still ongoing.

While Trump's exact motives for nominating Pompeo and Ratcliffe are impossible to determine at this point of time, the politically motivated assignment of individuals to positions of power within the IC remains a key part of our criteria of analysis. The positions of director of the CIA and DNI are positions with extensive power over the IC, and Trump's decision to nominate long-time supporter Pompeo and Russian interference investigation critic Ratcliffe is inherently political and therefore constitutes politicization, even if Trump's precise motives for the nomination cannot be uncovered at this point of time.

5.5 Trump: Conscious politicization of intelligence?

Looking back at our factors of measuring top-down politicization, we can conclude that Trump has engaged in all factors of politicization apart from the politically motivated establishment of competing organs of intelligence to challenge the established IC.

Firstly, Trump has sought to dictate intelligence conclusions and findings directly by:

- Commissioning a group of White House aides to make a case for withholding certification of Iran;
- ordering the DHS and DOJ to conduct an intelligence review to build a case for his Travel Ban;
- asking top intelligence chiefs to publicly deny evidence of collusion between his campaign and Russia during the 2016 election;
- Attempting to build a patronage relationship with James Comey centered around his position as FBI Director and,
- Asking (interpreted as 'directing') Comey to drop the investigation into Michael Flynn.

Secondly, Trump has engaged in the widespread cherry-picking, challenging and ignorance of intelligence findings which did not fit his administration's policy objectives, through:

- Questioning the usefulness of the Presidential Daily Briefs;
- Publicly challenging and seeming to ignore existing intelligence findings regarding Iran, North Korea and his Travel ban;
- Consulting different intelligence agencies individually to find evidence to support his travel ban and,
- Continuous public challenging of intelligence conclusions regarding collusion between his presidential campaign and the Russian government.

Thirdly, Trump has attempted to challenge underlying assumptions or rules within the IC by:

- The 'othering' and simplification of the IC through language on twitter;
- Portraying the IC as a threat to his administration and the American public by, for example, implying a comparison to the Gestapo in Nazi Germany;
- Implying the IC is political in their judgements by stating they worked against Republicans and in favor of Democrats during the ongoing investigations and,

- Challenging the assumption that the PBD are to be viewed by the president every single day as a daily summary of the most important intelligence.

Lastly, Trump has engaged in the political or individual motivated assignment or removal of individuals to positions of power within, or over the IC, through:

- Rescinding security clearance of former high intelligence officials such as John Brennan, former Director of the CIA and threatening others;
- Granting Attorney General Barr sweeping powers to declassify intelligence for reviewing the intelligence case made against his presidential campaign, effectively undercutting the DNI;
- Firing James Comey as FBI Director due to “the Russian thing”;
- Nominating long-time supporter and Clinton critic Mike Pompeo to the position of CIA Director and;
- Nominating Russian investigation critic John Ratcliffe to the position of DNI.

While not finding evidence of Trump setting up competing organs of intelligence to actively challenge the IC, the evidence found for the other factors allows for us to conclude that Trump has attempted to politicize intelligence to an extensive and serious extent. In many cases it is extremely difficult to uncover whether Trump’s behavior, actions and statements came due to strategically thought out attempts to politicize intelligence, or out of mere ignorance of the systems and consequences such actions would have. As mentioned before, linguists and intelligence officials tell us not to underestimate the calculating capability of Trump as a ‘sales-man’ and many cases do show Trump’s awareness of the processes at play. The consequences of such behavior will be touched upon in the conclusion of this thesis.

Chapter 6: Intelligence under Nixon & Trump : Parallels

Our analysis shows that both President Nixon and Trump engaged heavily in attempts to politicize intelligence. While Nixon engaged in all forms of top-down politicization, Trump ticks all the boxes except the politically motivated establishment of competing organs of intelligence. Can we however, draw clear parallels in their methods of politicization and attitudes towards the IC as suggested by Moran and Aldrich? To answer this, in this section a comparison is made between the two presidents on the basis of their statements and actions towards the IC, based around several themes. Firstly, we look at the apparent distrust both presidents had towards the establishment and the intelligence services in combination with what appears to be mutual conspiratorial mindsets. Secondly, we consider the presidents outspoken hostility and their willingness to challenge the IC, eventually also leading to both presidents engaging in the ‘ordering’ of intelligence. Thirdly, the similar types of defensive politicization seen in both presidents when they feel threatened by investigation into their administration will be discussed. Fourthly, we look at both president’s extensive reliance on aides over the IC and lastly, their willingness to steer the IC through political appointment, dismissal and attempts at reform. When these factors have been taken into account, the question to what extent there are parallels between the two presidents can be answered.

Before discussing the parallels between the two presidents, it is again important to remember that the accessibility of declassified sources from the Nixon era in contrast to the inability to look into the inner workings of the Trump administration due to confidentiality means there is a clear and significant imbalance in this study. While Trump has been quite vocal about his dealings with the IC, internal documentation revealed in the future could give a very different picture of this relationship. When these documents are eventually declassified, a follow-up study could prove to be very valuable.

6.1 Conspiracy and Distrust of the Establishment

Perhaps the most remarkable factor affecting both Trump and Nixon's views and behavior towards the IC is their conspiracy obsession and general mistrust of the bureaucracy. Both believe and believed respectively that there are elements within the US government which are actively working against them. Nixon's conspiratorial views regarding the CIA, and Trump's views on the Russian interference investigation in combination with his believe in a 'deep state' show they are both easily convinced that institutions are secretly working against them. It is also these mindsets which give them a certain aspect of populism. Nixon's speech in November of 1969 whereby he appealed to 'the Great Silent Majority' who had "lost confidence" (Nixon, 1969) in their government is a perfect example of this. Trump took a similar anti-establishment stance in one of his main campaign mottos, stating he would "drain the swamp" by pledging to "make our government honest once again" and rid Washington D.C. of its 'entrenched bureaucracies' (Harrington, 2016). These statements appeal to the people who feel that their needs are being disregarded by established elite groups within the government, whether justified or not.

While less important for our study, there is considerable evidence regarding anti-presidential convictions within the US bureaucracy and IC in both cases of Trump and Nixon. In the case of Nixon, there was evidence of anti-Nixon sentiment from within the US bureaucracy amongst Democrats from the moment he entered the White House (Peters B. G., 2004, p. 139). Regarding Trump, the opinion of many intelligence officials seems quite clear when looking at the amount of criticism he has received from former high intelligence officers such as James Clapper (DNI 2010-2017) and John Brennan (Director of CIA 2013-2017). While the 'predominant practice' of CIA chiefs upon leaving office is to stay out of public discussions, this changed during the 2016 presidential campaign and after the presidential election (Usowski, 2018, p. 6). Former DDCIA and DCIA Michael Morell came forward in august of 2016 stating he would be endorsing Hilary Clinton in the presidential race, stating "Donald Trump is not only unqualified for the job, but he may well pose a threat to our national security" (Morell, 2016).

Furthermore, unusually large amounts of serving government officials have come forward to complain about the Trump administration (Gentry, 2018, p. 655). This evidence is often used, including by President Trump, as a grounds to declare the existence and back the conspiracy theory of a ‘deep state’ (@realDonaldTrump, 2019). The term ‘deep state’ refers to the theory that a ‘shadowy group of people inside and outside of government are working together to thwart the Trump agenda’ (Feffer, 2018). More likely however, is that these elements within the bureaucracy are simply ‘Democratic holdovers’, individuals who genuinely fear for the security of the US under Trump, or individuals with strong views which are unfavorable to the policy of the respective president. While not disproven, the idea of a ‘concealed web of conspirators, malevolent permanent hidden shadow government’ (Hafford, 2017) remains purely speculative and highly unlikely. These suggestions do show that while both maintained conspiratorial mindsets, their believes of opposition from within the US system weren’t completely unfounded.

Nixon’s lower to middle class upbringing gave him a mistrust of the “East Coast establishment” from the very beginning. His views that the CIA was comprised of descendants of wealthy families, students from expensive prep schools and Ivy League Universities meant that he saw the institution as something which had opposed him from the very beginning (Moran C. , 2019, p. 101). This mindset is best shown by his conviction that the CIA had conspired against him in the 1960 presidential election which he lost against Kennedy. Memoires from his closest aides and our analysis shows that this ‘liberal conspiracy’ he harbored only grew during his presidency. He let this obsession affect his decision making and his actions towards the CIA, effectively engaging in politicization due to his personal convictions. When looking at Trump, we see a similar narrative. Trump’s believe in a ‘deep-state’ which is continuously undermining and working against his administration, in combination with his constant reference to a ‘witch-hunt’ against him through the Russian investigation, shows Trump is not willing to let his conspiratorial convictions rest. We have seen examples of this coming forward, such as Trump claiming that the Democrats have politicized intelligence, that there is a “counter-intelligence operation”

against him from within the government and implicitly comparing the IC with the Gestapo from Nazi Germany.

These conspiratorial mindsets mean that both Nixon and Trump viewed US bureaucracy, and especially the IC, in a similar way. Due to this similar view, there are clear parallels in how they treated the IC from the moment they entered the White House. Both let their personal prejudices, views and convictions about the IC influence their behavior towards the IC as will be displayed next.

6.2 Hostility, Challenge and Ordering

Vocal hostility towards the IC, the ‘othering’ of the IC and neglecting important intelligence findings such as through the Presidential Daily Briefs all show further clear parallels between Trump and Nixon. Our findings show that both presidents engaged regularly in challenging intelligence results and, whether it was to the American public or to close aides, routinely antagonized the IC.

Both President Nixon and Trump do ‘not mince words’ (Moran & Aldrich, 2017) when it comes to attacking the IC. While it is rare to find examples of Nixon ‘name calling’ the IC in public, there are enough examples of his anti-IC rhetoric behind closed doors, especially aimed towards the CIA. Nixon’s ‘deep-rooted suspicions’ of the CIA came forward in his statements to his aides such as Alexander Butterfield (Moran C. , 2019, p. 101). Phrases such as “What the hell do those clown do out there in Langley?”, “those liberals” and how the “”goddam estimates” of the CIA had “been wrong for years, and they still are” show Nixon’s vocal frustrations with the CIA throughout his presidency (Nixon, 1979, pp. 446-47). In comparison, Trump has been more public about his attitude towards the IC, simplifying them as “the intelligence people”, and calling them out for being “extremely passive and naïve”, “wrong” and that they should “go back to school”. These examples show that both presidents were relatively vocal about their disagreements with the IC, only differing in who they voiced their concerns to. For Nixon this included mainly his closest aides like Kissinger, while Trump rants mainly to the American public through social media. An interesting difference between the two is that Nixon seems to be especially

hostile towards the CIA, and clearly makes this distinction from other IC agencies. Trump however, seldom specifies his attacks towards one agency, and groups them together as “the intelligence people”. As will be shown below, this ‘grouping’ politicizes the IC by challenging assumptions within the IC.

Both Trump and Nixon have attempted to politicize the IC by ‘othering’, suggesting the IC is isolated from the rest of the US government and portraying them as a threat to their respective administrations. Nixon portraying the CIA as a “vestige of the East Coast establishment” actively working against him from the very start, and Trump referring to “the intelligence people” partaking into “counter-intelligence” operations into his campaign, both are effectively ‘othering’ the IC, and portraying them as threats to their administrations. This challenges significant assumptions within the IC, namely that the IC is part of the US government and is there to serve the interests of the US. Furthermore, both Nixon and Trump have attempted to politicize the IC through suggesting that the IC is politically motivated in their judgements and assessments and therefore actively challenging the assumption that the IC is neutral in its views. Nixon’s continuous reference to the CIA as “liberals”, together with his conviction that the CIA was to blame for his 1960 election defeat, suggests Nixon believed the CIA was colored in their political views. Looking at Trump, we see him consistently attacking the IC during the November election for ‘sounding the alarm’ on the issue of Russian interference and continuously suggesting the IC is out to get him. His tweet in February of 2018, whereby he accuses the top leadership and investigators of the FBI and the DOJ of politicizing the investigative process “in favor of Democrats and against Republics” further shows how Trump is suggesting the IC is political in their judgements. As discussed before, these remarks are harmful to the IC as they are supposed to be seen as ‘apolitical’ to a significant extent. The challenging of this assumption by both Nixon and Trump shows clear similarities in their attempts to politicize intelligence.

The neglecting of intelligence findings is another clear similarity between Nixon and Trump. Both president’s views towards the CIA’s PDBs show surprising parallels. Nixon always ensured the PDB’s were firstly ‘filtered’ by Kissinger’s staff before they reached his desk, and after a while it became

relatively clear that Nixon took little notice of them all together. For the intelligence officials it became common knowledge that anything from Kissinger or any ‘junior analyst on Kissinger’s staff’ was far more important to Nixon than anything the IC had compiled every morning as a summary of the most important intelligence developments for the president (Andrew, 1995, pp. 353-54). Trump has used a similar method of ‘filtering’, whereby he sees the fact that the briefing of Vice-President Mike Pence and his generals is sufficient for a “smart person” like him, suggesting he does not need “the same words every single day” (Tani, 2016). For him, viewing the PDBs three times a week is sufficient. Considering the extent to which intelligence analysts go to ensure the most up-to date intelligence is on the president’s desk every morning, these remarks and methods can be seen to be deeply insulting to the IC. The ignoring of intelligence findings also constitutes attempts at politicization as shown by our analysis criteria.

Both presidents have actively challenged intelligence findings which did not support their administration’s pre-set policy objectives, eventually also leading to both Nixon and Trump ‘ordering’ intelligence findings. Throughout his presidency, Nixon remained skeptical of most CIA findings, as reported by then CIA Director Richard Helms. Thoroughly convinced that there was an international communist network operating within US campuses, Nixon refused to believe FBI investigations into the matter which showed such a network didn’t exist. This effectively led Nixon to order the CIA to find evidence to match his conspiracy mindset; even setting up an interagency committee on intelligence to remove intelligence collection restrictions to pursue evidence. Not only did this committee in combination with the ‘Huston plan’ propose illegal methods of intelligence gathering, the ordering the CIA to engage in domestic intelligence gathering went against the CIA’s mandate, as domestic intelligence gathering was a job reserved for the FBI. Through this Nixon effectively also tried to put two members of the IC up against each other. Looking back at Trump, we see significant public disagreement with the IC on significant foreign policy issues such as Iran and North Korea, and domestic security issues such as his Travel Ban. He actively calls out the IC on being “wrong” on Iran, and sharply contradicts the IC’s findings on North Korea and his Travel Ban. Just like with Nixon, Trump then assigns a group of White

House aides to make a case for withholding certification of Iran and orders the DHS and DOJ to conduct an ‘intelligence review’ to build a case in favor of his Travel Ban. The fact that the Trump administration seemed to be ‘shopping-around’ different agencies for evidence regarding his travel ban is similar regarding Nixon’s approach to asking the CIA for evidence for a domestic communist conspiracy when the FBI couldn’t deliver. As mentioned in our theoretical framework, the active ordering of intelligence is the most significant form of top-down politicization. Through very similar means, both Nixon and Trump can be argued to be guilty of it.

6.3 Defensive politicization

We see a clear parallel in how Nixon and Trump react to investigations involving the IC into their administration or presidencies. As their politicization seem to be coming from an defensive angle and being more reactive, these actions can be labelled as defensive politicization.

Perhaps the most notable example which comes to mind when talking about defensive action from Nixon is the ‘Saturday Night Massacre’, when in October of 1973 Nixon ordered the firing of independent special prosecutor Archibald Cox. The fact that this did not involve the IC directly means it is not relevant for our comparison. However, it does show that Nixon was prepared to go far to remove those who were investigating his administration. Although Nixon had been suspicious about CIA Director Richard Helms since the beginning of his presidency, Helm’s refusal to get the CIA involved in the Watergate cover up, eventually led to his firing by Nixon (Colby & Forbath, 1978, p. 328). This resounds in Trump’s firing of former FBI Director James Comey due to the “Russian thing”, after he had ‘requested’ from Comey to halt the investigation into his former National Security Advisor, Michael Flynn. In 2018, Trump decided to revoke security clearances of former intelligence chiefs who were most knowledgeable about his ‘relationship with Russia’ (Hall, 2018). Therefore, while Trump did not take the removal of individuals involved in the investigation as far as Nixon did, both show a willingness to remove individuals from positions of power within the IC when they feel threatened by investigations.

Furthermore, both Trump and Nixon show preparedness to put two individual agencies within the IC against each other to hinder the investigative process into their administration. Nixon tried to get the CIA to persuade the FBI to call off its investigations on the pretext that the Watergate break-in had been a ‘CIA operation concerned with national security’ (Andrew, 1995, p. 386). Regarding Trump, former US officials suggested how Trump tried to convince both DNI Coats and NSA Director Rogers to work against the FBI investigation into possible collusion (Entous & Nakashima, 2017). Trump’s decision to give Attorney General Barr the powers to declassify secret intelligence can be argued to ‘directly undercut’ and challenge the position and institution of the DNI who is responsible for protecting intelligence. These actions show that challenging assumptions within the IC, specifically the assumption that all 17 agencies coordinate to further US interests, was a prospect for both presidents.

6.4 Reliance on Aides

Another remarkable parallel between Nixon and Trump’s treatment of the IC is their extensive reliance on aides and inner circle of White House confidants regarding matters of intelligence or the involvement of the IC. While Trump’s reliance on White House Aides must not be underestimated, it does not compare to the role Kissinger played in Nixon’s decision-making.

Trump’s reliance on close aides is displayed by his public opinions of the PDBs, by which he finds the briefing of Vice President Pence and his top generals “sufficient” for a “smart guy” like him (Tani, 2016). Nixon’s views on the PDBs are comparable, as Kissinger and his staff would ‘filter’ the most important findings to him every day. These examples show that both presidents display an extensive amount of trust and reliance on their aides to provide them with the relevant intelligence each day, effectively replacing intelligence officials from informing them directly. Furthermore, both seem to rely on aides when it comes to getting them evidence which supports their policy objectives or to keep an eye out for them within the IC. Nixon assigned Tom Huston, with who he shared very similar ‘hardline views on domestic subversion’ to the new interagency committee on intelligence to effectively find evidence of a communist conspiracy orchestrating domestic dissent. Additionally, his mistrust of CIA Director Helms

meant that Nixon appointed his former military aide, Robert Cushman, to ‘keep track’ of Helms (Ehrlichman, 1982, p. 175), and eventually becoming known as ‘Nixon’s man in the CIA’ (Jeffreys-Jones, 2014). Regarding finding evidence to support policy, Trump is known to have assigned a group of White House aides to ensure he could decertify Iran, stating it was “their job to put him there” (Winter, Gramer, & De Luce, 2017). These examples show that both presidents were prepared to conduct policy almost completely from within the Oval Office, sidelining other departments.

Nixon’s reliance on aides is displayed nowhere better than in his working relationship with his National Security Advisor Henry Kissinger. As mentioned before, all the important intelligence findings would pass through Kissinger before reaching Nixon, and the power couple effectively coordinated US foreign policy together during Nixon’s presidential term. Our analysis shows that this working relationship went as far as ‘circumventing the IC’ through secret back channels with the Soviet ambassador Dobrynin, by which ‘matters of special sensitivity’ were only to be discussed with Kissinger and Nixon himself (Andrew, 1995, p. 352). Our analysis does not seem to suggest that Trump has a comparable aide by which he runs White House foreign policy so extensively. More likely is that Trump relies on numerous individuals to advise him on issues concerning foreign policy and intelligence, such as Vice President Spence and his top generals.

6.5 Appointments and reform

Lastly, our analysis shows that both presidents were and are willing to influence the IC through political appointments. As stated before, the extent to which political appointees suggest politicization is hotly debated in the intelligence studies and public administration literature, mainly due to it being a privilege of US presidents for decades. However, as our comparison will show, some political appointees seem more directed to reforming the IC than other, more general, political appointments.

Trump’s political appointees to positions of power within or over the IC seem more general compared to Nixon’s appointees. While there is speculation about Trump’s nomination of Mike Pompeo

to become Director of the CIA, there is no real evidence to suggest the nomination was directly motivated to instigate reform within the IC or to hinder the ‘Russia probe’. While a staunch supporter of Trump during his presidential campaign and harsh critic of Secretary Clinton, any suggestion that Trump nominated Pompeo to become a ‘plum leader at the CIA’ or to ‘muddy the waters’ around his campaign remains pure speculation by intelligence scholars (Rovner, 2017). On the other hand, Trump’s nomination of John Ratcliffe as the new DNI could be argued to be more directed, due to his vocal criticism of the Russian investigation and especially his attacking of former Special Counsel Mueller in July of this year (Quilantan & Samuelsohn, 2019). Trump’s nomination could be implicitly directed at hindering ongoing investigations into his administration’s links with Russia during the 2016 presidential election.

Due to our privilege of having access to memoirs of ex-intelligence officials and declassified sources from the Nixon era, our analysis shows Nixon’s appointments were more directed at reform of the IC and to further certain policy objectives. As mentioned before, Nixon appointed Cushman to Deputy Director of the CIA to ‘keep track’ of Helms and to be his man at the CIA, a consequence of Nixon’s mistrust of the CIA in general. More damning however, is Nixon’s appointment of James Schlesinger as Director of the CIA after Helms was dismissed. Having conducted a review of the IC on Nixon’s orders 2 year prior to his appointment, Schlesinger had strong views on the future of the CIA and the IC in general, stating he wanted a “centralized management of the community” (Schlesinger, 1971). Indeed, Nixon had chosen Schlesinger to ‘shake things up’ at the CIA, to make the position of DCI (which was occupied by Schlesinger at the time) the ‘effective head of the whole IC’ and to bring the whole IC under ‘direct presidential control’. The CIA would effectively become the ‘covert arm of the White House’, as Nixon believed it did not deserve the same independency as State or Defense (Andrew, 1995, p. 388). These suggestions by Nixon and Schlesinger constitute major reforms of the IC structure, and the relationships between the intelligence agencies and the White House. The sweeping nature of the reforms seem to be partly due to Nixon’s ‘grudges’ against the CIA, in combination with his conviction that the intelligence process was inefficient and needed restructuring.

6.6 Trump & Nixon: Clear Parallels?

Taking into account the above themes, we can argue that there are very clear parallels between Nixon and Trump's attitudes and behavior towards the IC, leading in both cases to serious and significant degrees of top-down politicization. The most remarkable parallel is how both presidents allowed their conspiratorial mindsets and personal convictions to influence their views and decision-making towards the IC, effectively leading to mistrust between the presidents and the IC from the start of their presidential terms. This break in trust is best seen in the way both presidents seem to frame and 'other' the IC as being isolated from the US government and as a threat to their administration, or even to the American public. Both Nixon and Trump show clear similarities in their casual attitudes towards the PDBs in combination with their trust in aides to provide them with the 'relevant' information to them every day, often at the expense of the IC's work. Their suspicions of IC findings is further reflected in their ability to challenge intelligence results which did not fit their personal convictions or policy objectives, eventually leading in both cases to the ordering of intelligence. This constitutes the most direct and serious form of top-down attempt to politicize intelligence according to our analysis criteria. When they are aware that they, or their administrations, are under threat from investigations, both presidents are more than willing to fire individuals which hold power within or over the IC from power. Nixon took this a step further by ordering the firing of the actual individual in charge of the investigation, while Trump kept to intelligence chiefs involved in the investigation. Additionally, this investigative threat meant both presidents were prepared to challenge significant assumptions within the IC by actively attempting to put individual agencies within the IC against each other for their political or personal survival or benefit.

Yet there remain several key differences between their attempts to politicize which should be highlighted. The fact that our analysis has found such extensive attempts by Trump to politicize intelligence just by looking at his public statements shows his vocal public hostility towards the IC is significantly greater than that of Nixon. While both 'don't mince words', Nixon seemed to prefer keeping these opinions between him and Kissinger. Nixon's 'frosty' relationship with the CIA meant he targeted

them far more than other agencies within the IC, while Trump seldom seems to make clear distinctions between the intelligence agency he is referring to, preferring to refer to the IC as “the intelligence people”. While both relied and rely extensively on aides for decision-making, ‘getting’ them evidence they need and staying informed, Trump’s reliance on his aides does not come close to Nixon’s relationship with Kissinger. Nixon and Kissinger effectively formed a ‘power-duo’ from which most US security and foreign policy was being run, often circumventing the opinions of the IC. Again, due to the inability to access classified documents regarding Trump’s communication with his aides at this point of time, this difference remains speculative. Lastly, Nixon’s political appointments of individuals to positions of power within or over the IC seem to be more directed and conscious than Trump’s nominations. Nixon appears to have been more calculative in the reform he wanted to see in the IC through Schlesinger’s appointment to Director of the CIA, while Trump seems satisfied with appointing a strong supporter of his presidential campaign. However, much remains to be seen with Trump’s recent DNI nomination, James Ratcliffe.

Overall, while there are remarkable parallels between the two presidents, Nixon’s attempts at politicization seem to be more targeted than Trump’s. This is especially notable in Nixon’s continuous harsh treatment of the CIA. Trump’s approach seems to be more general and reactive to the idea that his administration remains the subject of intense investigation.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

A study of the literature regarding the politicization of bureaucracy and intelligence has shown us how ‘*Truth to power*’ is too simple as it does not take into account the inherent political nature of the institutions tasked with finding this ‘truth’. Intelligence products are used by policy makers, and intelligence workers must therefore have some sense of the political issues at play to remain relevant. While there is indeed a thin line between remaining politically relevant and useful, and becoming ‘corrupted’ by politics to obscure intelligence products, this is not a black and white dichotomy. As independent institutions within the system, intelligence agencies need checks on their power too. In

response to these findings and with the help of intelligence scholars, we have formulated analysis criteria by which to measure attempts at top-down politicization by presidents. Our assumption remains that these forms of politicization go beyond the accepted and appropriate amount of political and presidential influence over intelligence products, and that these are therefore harmful and dangerous to the intelligence cycle and the workings of democratic government. Dictating and steering intelligence findings by these forms shows the IC itself is no longer able to provide the respective administration, and the American people, with untampered facts.

Having applied our analytic criteria onto both President Nixon and Trump, we have concluded that Nixon attempted, and Trump is attempting, to politicize intelligence to a significant and serious extent. There is clear evidence that Nixon engaged in all forms of politicization in our criteria, while Trump ticks all the boxes except the politically motivated establishment of competing organs of intelligence to challenge the IC. Meeting all, or most, of these points of this criteria means that the presidents actively attempted to dictate intelligence findings or steer the IC in ways that would benefit them or their administrations.

By putting their attempts to politicize side by side, we have compared Nixon and Trump in their attitude and actions towards the IC, and concluded that there are indeed remarkable parallels between the two as first suggested by Moran and Aldrich. Their conspiratorial mindsets and defensive politicization attempts seem to show the clearest similarities between the two. To what extent Trump is actually looking into the Nixon era to influence his handling of intelligence is impossible to determine, although it is known Trump evidently admires Nixon; as seen by Nixon's letter displayed in Trump's Oval Office, predicting that if Trump would ever run for office, he would be a 'winner' (Hensch, 2016). While clear parallels exist, the main difference between the two seems to come from Nixon's targeting of the CIA in specific, while Trump remains more general in his behavior towards the IC. Nixon's active mistrust of the CIA from the beginning, partly due to his election loss in 1960, seem to explain the active attempts to undermine the CIA and eventually trying to bring it fully under his control. Trump's politicization

attempts on the other hand appear less directed towards individual agencies and are more reactive to the ongoing investigations into his presidential campaign.

Knowing whether presidents consciously attempted to manipulate and change intelligence due to personal motivations or political will is impossible as we will never be able to look into their heads directly, yet their actions and statements speak volumes. We must assume that behind these words and actions is enough strategic planning and thought that we can constitute a considerable attempt to politicize intelligence.

7.1 Potential Consequences for US intelligence

In Christopher Andrew's book on the relationship and history between the US presidency and the US IC, Andrew concludes that 'intelligence and the intelligence community have transformed, and been transformed by, the presidency of the United States', 'for better, and sometimes for worse' (Andrew, 1995, p. 5). The consequences of Nixon's Presidency on US bureaucracy are generally regarded as being serious; marking a key point in the increasing ideological nature and therefore political control over the American public service (Peters & Pierre, 2004, p. 130). His administration has been labelled 'the administrative presidency' (Nathan, 1983) due to the use of administrative means of overcoming opposition from Congress, the use of the Executive Office of the President and the appointment of loyalists within the civil service to overcome opposition from within the bureaucracy. Nixon's willingness to attempt to reform the IC through political appointments and his reliance on aides marked a clear break from the presidents before him. His attempts to misuse the intelligence agencies for his own interests not only undermined the trust of the IC in the Presidency, but also the trust of the American people. To conclude, we can use several of the lessons learned from Nixon's legacy on US bureaucracy to outline the foremost potential consequences of Trump's behavior on the IC:

- A widening gap between the IC and the Trump administration due to continuous hostility and mistrust. This deep mistrust is already being shown by US intelligence officials withholding

sensitive information from President Trump due to their concerns of it being ‘leaked or compromised’ (Harris & Lee, 2017);

- Further indeliberate ‘leftwards’ politicization of intelligence due to the growing entrenched resentment within the IC institution against the Republican government, creating a politicized climate which is likely to grow and linger (Gentry, 2018);
- Trump is likely to become increasingly reliant on his ‘inner-circle’ of White House confidants which are arguably ‘out of the loop’ on important intelligence topics due to their willingness to neglect intelligence findings;
- Trump likely to continue ordering the investigation and challenging the IC for the origination of the ‘Russian Affair’ and may therefore attempt to reform the IC. Trumps new nominee for DNI could be seen as an example of this;
- This in turn will increase the chances of politicized covert action occurring, as shown by ‘bizarre’ CIA activities in the last century not originating from Langley but from the West Wing in the White House (Moran & Aldrich, 2017);
- Trump’s public statements regarding ‘alternative facts’ and conspiracy theories involving the ‘deep state’ will undermine public trust in government, and in intelligence services providing ‘actual truths’. These statements also amplify the ‘false notion that public servants in the IC are involved in partisan political warfare’ (Sipher, 2019) This will make the IC’s job considerably harder and consequentially undermine America’s national security (Gleeson, 2017) and,
- Trump’s use of ‘politicized intelligence’ to withdraw from the Iran deal undermines the US’s ability to generate international support for steps the administration may want to take in coordination with others due to allies ‘doubting the validity of US intelligence claims’, making it more difficult to address a range of national security challenges (Cohen, 2017).

These forecasts show that not only could Trump’s actions further undermine US public trust in government , it may end up hurting the very thing the IC stands for: national security.

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