The role of intelligence agencies' international relations in foreign policy

An interaction framework

Stefanie Kirchweger (iD)

stefanie.kirchweger@gmx.net

&

Franz Eder (iD)

franz.eder@uibk.ac.at

Abstract

Intelligence agencies, despite their secrecy, maintain a wide array of international relations simultaneously with their states' official foreign policy relations. Yet we lack a theoretical understanding of the intricate dynamics between a state's foreign policy and its intelligence agencies' international relations. Drawing on Foreign Policy Analysis (FPA), this study addresses this gap. We propose three analytical dimensions to analyze these dynamics and the role of intelligence agencies' international relations in foreign policy. *A structural dimension* examines the extent to which policymakers control intelligence entities engaging in external relations. *An dispositional dimension* investigates how intelligence entities tend to interpret their mandates. *An interactional dimension* traces interaction effects within intelligence entities' international relations. We scrutinize these analytical dimensions through Israeli-Austrian intelligence relations between 1970 and 1990.

INTRODUCTION

Intelligence agencies maintain a wide array of relationships involving *multiple actors*, serving *a variety of functions*, and appearing in *various forms* (Tuinier, 2021; Herman, 1996). They engage in *knowledge-based* relationships, and also maintain *operation-oriented* relationships, such as in covert action or counter-terrorism. Occasionally, they engage in *peripheral* functions, such as clandestine diplomacy. The primary partners or targets are other governments' intelligence services, but relations may also extend to security agencies and unusual state or non-state actors (Ben Jaffel et al., 2020; Buuren, 2014; Oldrich, 2012; Aldrich, 2011; Guttmann, 2023; Scott and Jackson, 2004; Shpiro, 2003). We call this overall array of relations *international relations of intelligence agencies*, a term recently coined by Hoffmann (2021).

Michael Herman, a pioneer of Intelligence Studies (IS) and former intelligence officer, highlighted the complex interaction dynamics between the foreign policy of states and the international relations