

Lessons Learned for Effective Research Translation



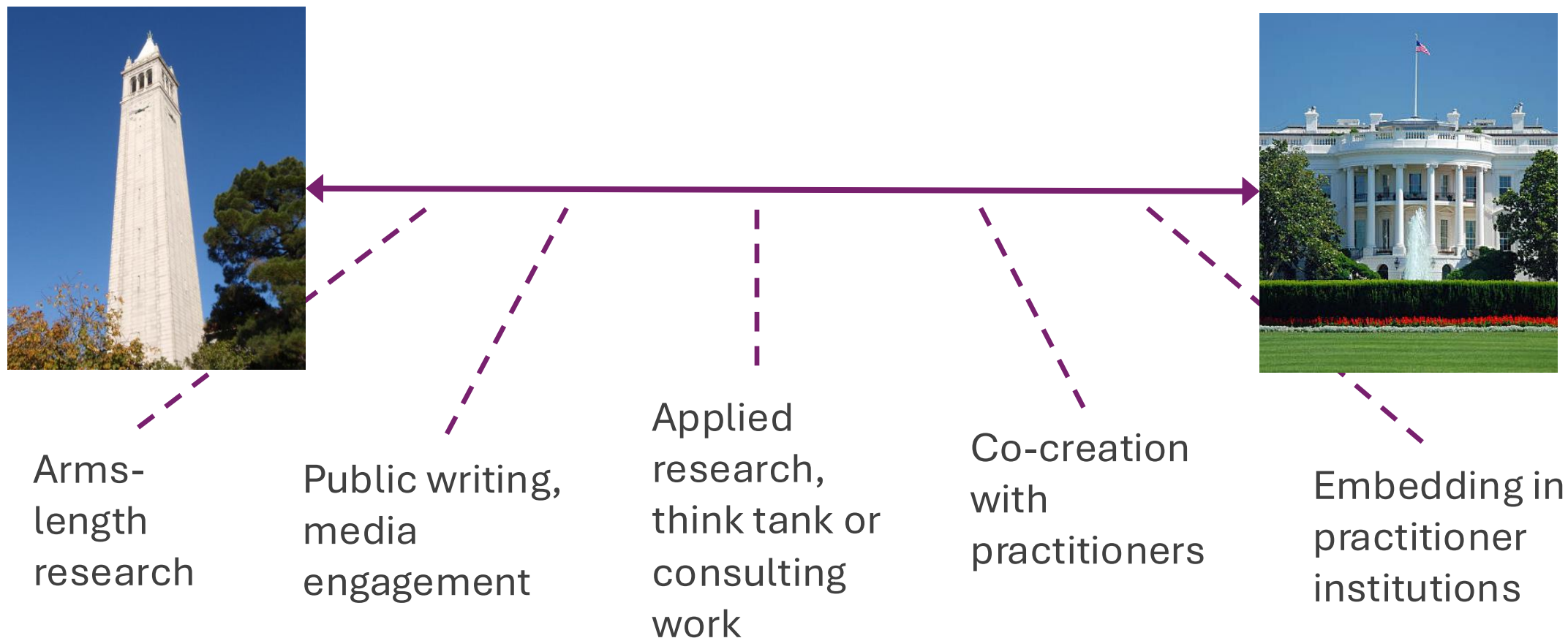
Jordan Tama
SOAR Seminar
American University
December 4, 2024



What is Research Translation?

- Any effort that seeks to connect research to the needs or interests of institutions or people beyond academia, including:
 - Conveying research findings to public or practitioner audiences
 - Involving potential end-users of research in the research process
 - Potential end-users may be government agencies, non-profit organizations, private sector firms, community groups, others

A Spectrum of Engagement



Note: This diagram is adapted from a diagram originally created by Naazneen Barma for Bridging the Gap.

Key Obstacles to Research Translation

- Many practitioners want new knowledge but find much academic work inaccessible or irrelevant to their needs and concerns
- Many scholars would like to engage with policy makers but don't have incentives, training, or opportunities to do so

My Research Translation Work

- Disseminating research to public and policy audiences
- Developing policy recommendations based on research
- Formulating research questions with practitioner input
- Partnering with practitioners in conduct of research
- Convening scholars and practitioners to exchange knowledge and ideas
- Training scholars in public and policy engagement



Note: There also exist other important approaches to research translation. This presentation is only meant to reflect lessons from my own experience.

Dissemination to Public Audiences

- Often more effective when:
 - Adds insight to current events or public concerns
 - Challenges conventional wisdom
 - Highlights compelling stories or data points
 - Avoids academic jargon

MONKEY CAGE

Members of Congress want a commission to investigate the Capitol invasion. Here's when these work.

MONKEY CAGE

So Congress is challenging the president about sanctions? That has a long history.



How Is Congress Involved in Foreign Policy? (...)

Episode 39 • 2nd October 2023 • Understanding Congress • AEI Podcasts

Captivate



00:00:00

00:26:40



NOTES LINKS FOLLOW SHARE

Opinion

OP-ED CONTRIBUTOR

In Defense of the Back-Room Deal

By Jordan Tama

Oct. 18, 2011

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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The Surprising Bipartisanship of U.S. Foreign Policy

Even in Times of Polarization, Consensus Has Prevailed

By [Jordan Tama](#) July 6, 2023



Niskanen Center - The Science of Politics

Why foreign policy is still bipartisan

SOUNDCLOUD

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BIPARTISANSHIP AND US FOREIGN POLICY

BASED ON THE BOOK BY JORDAN TAMA



Script: **Tom Mason** Art: **Minerva Fox**
Colors: **Darick N. Ritter** Letters: **Reed Hinkley-Barnes**

PRESENTED BY
SPCOMICS.com

Anti-Presidential Bipartisanship

When Democrats and Republicans in Congress challenge the President.

I CAN HANDLE DIPLOMACY MYSELF AND FOREIGN AID IS A WASTE. I'M CUTTING THAT BUDGET!

WE NEED A STRONG STATE DEPARTMENT TO KEEP AMERICA SECURE!

WE NEED A STRONG STATE DEPARTMENT TO ADDRESS ALL KINDS OF GLOBAL CHALLENGES!

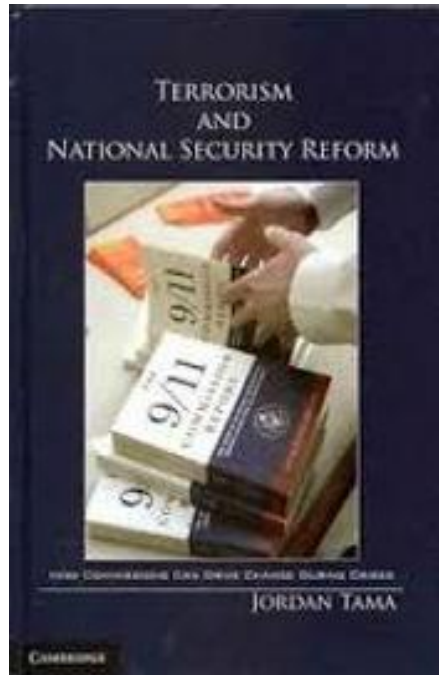
PUSH BACK AND SAVE ME FROM BUDGET CUTS OF 33%!

STATE DEPT
BUDGET



Dissemination to Practitioners

- Often more effective when:
 - Highlights clear implications or recommendations for policy or practice
 - Shows understanding of political or bureaucratic realities
 - Includes executive summary
 - Avoids academic jargon



Executive Summary

The conventional wisdom sees blue-ribbon commissions only as devices used by politicians to pass the buck or avoid blame. In *Terrorism and National Security Reform*, I overturn this standard view by demonstrating that ad hoc commissions can be powerful catalysts of policy change.

The book's argument

In the book, I explain how commissions can provide the president and Congress with critical help in making policy on important issues. Unrelenting partisanship, extreme polarization, and fierce turf battles often prevent our elected officials from adopting badly needed reforms. The distinct political credibility of commissions makes them valuable tools for overcoming these policy making obstacles. Commissions have a special ability to forge bipartisan consensus because a unanimous report by a politically diverse, prestigious, and independent panel signals to a wide range of policymakers and the public that its proposals are both sound and politically acceptable.



Recommendations to the White House and Congress

Recommendation Five: The White House and Congress should harmonize quadrennial review and strategic plan requirements

The requirements for existing quadrennial reviews are not directly linked to the GPRA Modernization Act requirements for agency strategic plans. As a result, agencies conducting quadrennial reviews treat these efforts as separate exercises. Moreover, as noted above, the development of agency strategic plans tends to get short shrift in these agencies because strategic planning fatigue sets in by the time the quadrennial review is completed and the strategic plans are treated as something of an afterthought.

In cases where quadrennial reviews are authorized by law, the administration should ask Congress to revise the legislative requirements for the reviews so those requirements include the development of the agency strategic plans mandated by the GPRA Modernization Act.

In cases where quadrennial reviews are not authorized by law, the Office of Management and Budget should issue guidance stating that the review processes should include the development of the agency strategic plans mandated by the GPRA Modernization Act.


Partnering with Practitioners

- Often more effective when scholar(s) and practitioner(s):
 - Are invested in effort
 - Have shared understanding of goals
 - Collaborate closely throughout project
 - Complement and respect one another's strengths



Foreign Policy Analysis (2020) 16, 118–129

Multilateralism and the Use of Force: Experimental Evidence on the Views of Foreign Policy Elites

JOSHUA BUSBY 
University of Texas Austin

CRAIG KAFURA
Chicago Council on Global Affairs

JONATHAN MONTEN
University College London

AND

JORDAN TAMA
American University



LESTER
CROWN CENTER
ON US FOREIGN POLICY

Cooperation or Coercion? The Views of US Opinion Leaders on Foreign Policy Approaches

Jordan Tama, Associate Professor, School of International Service, American University

Craig Kafura, Assistant Director, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Dina Smeltz, Senior Fellow, Public Opinion and Foreign Policy, Chicago Council on Global Affairs

Joshua Busby, Associate Professor of Public Affairs, Lyndon B. Johnson School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin

Joshua D. Kertzer, Professor of Government, Harvard University

Jonathan Montén, Associate Professor in Political Science, University College London

March 2021

Bridging the Gap's New Voices in National Security Program

- Brings together scholars and practitioners to share knowledge and ideas on important international issues
- Format: workshops convened in partnership with policy institutions



Center for a
New American
Security



BROOKINGS



UNITED STATES
HOLOCAUST
MEMORIAL
MUSEUM

New Voices Workshop Model

- 1) Choose workshop topic on which practitioners need expertise
- 2) Identify partner with strong practitioner network on topic
- 3) Collaborate with partner to identify policy-relevant questions for participants to address
- 4) Identify and invite scholars to write memos on policy-relevant questions
 - Prioritize scholars who are not already well-known to practitioners
 - Ensure that memos address the policy-relevant questions
- 5) Identify and invite practitioner participants
 - Prioritize practitioners with important responsibilities on issue

New Voices Workshop Model

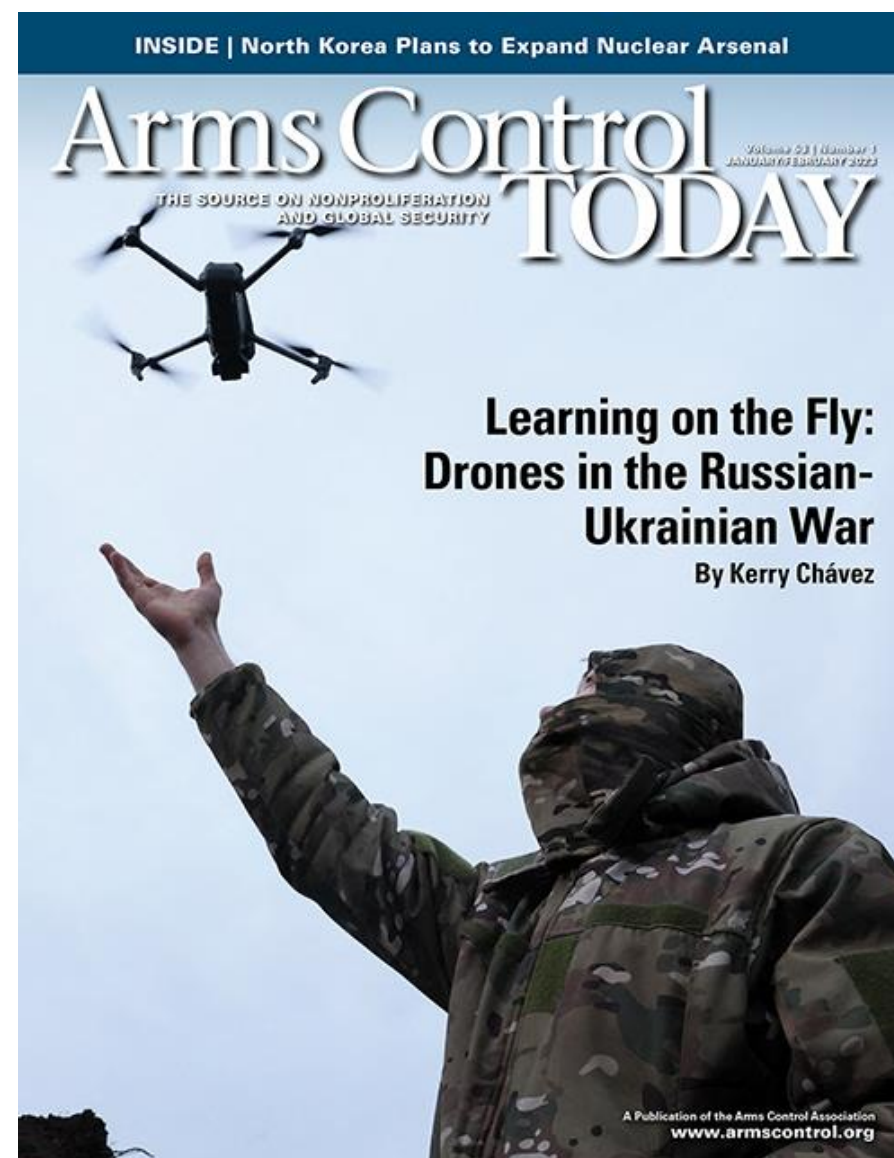
- 6) Convene workshop
 - Use scholar memos as jumping off point for moderated discussions
 - Foster mutual learning between scholars and practitioners
 - Encourage networking and relationship building
- 7) Prepare and disseminate report highlighting workshop takeaways
- 8) Facilitate follow-up meetings and publications



This report highlights several areas for action by U.S. policymakers:

Make U.S. sanctions-removal assurances more credible: U.S. offers to lift sanctions on a country if it makes certain concessions send an effective signal only if the United States has a track record of backing up its commitments. In recent years, this signal has been severely weakened by U.S. failures to follow through on some significant sanctions-removal agreements, notably with Iran and Cuba.

- Congress and the president should seek, to the greatest extent possible, to uphold diplomatic agreements that involve the lifting of U.S. sanctions in return for concessions by the target of the measures, providing the target has complied with the agreement.
- Treasury and State Department officials should more clearly delineate a credible path for delisting every sanctions designation, and should consult closely with congressional leaders when negotiating with a target for delisting.





Strengthening the Role of Congress in Foreign Policy

A New Voices in National Security Workshop

December 12 and 13, 2024
Washington, DC

Adaptability of New Voices Workshop Model

Easily adaptable to different settings

- Policy areas
 - Foreign policy
 - Domestic policy
- Institutional contexts
 - National
 - State
 - Local
 - International
- Practitioner identities
 - Government
 - Think tanks
 - Non-profits
 - Community groups
 - Private sector

Strengthening UK Sanctions Implementation and Enforcement (WP3377)

17 - 19 January 2024

Wilton Park, Wiston House, Steyning, West Sussex, BN44 3DZ



Foreign, Commonwealth
& Development Office

Read Ahead Materials

**Edited by
Dr. Bryan Early and Dr. Jordan Tama**

Conclusions

- Many ways to pursue research-based public and policy engagement
- When communicating with non-academic audiences, important to strip away jargon and speak to public or practitioner concerns
- When partnering with practitioners, important to ensure mutual investment in collaboration and shared understanding of goals
- Pursuing public and policy engagement can enhance research impact and catalyze new research that addresses important questions