

INTERVIEW WITH FORMER CIA DIRECTOR JOHN DEUTCH

John Deutch is an Institute Professor Emeritus at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where he has been a faculty member since 1970. Dr. Deutch has served in various prominent government and academic roles, including as the Under Secretary of Defense for Acquisitions and Technology from 1993 to 1994, Deputy Secretary of Defense from 1994 to 1995, and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency from 1995 to 1996. A scholar and prolific writer, Dr. Deutch has composed and published over 140 works in physical chemistry, in addition to his vast array of publications concerning technology, energy, international security, and public policy issues. Mr. Deutch's books include *The Crisis in Energy Policy* (Harvard University Press, 2021) and *Making Technology Work: Applications in Energy and Environment* (Cambridge University Press, 2003). In addition to his contributions to the academy and government, Mr. Deutch has served as a director for several private sector companies, including Citigroup, Raytheon Technologies Corporation, and Perkin-Elmer.

The Thayer School of Engineering and the John Sloan Dickey Center for International Understanding hosted Dr. Deutch at Dartmouth on April 18-19th, 2022. Editors Ian Gill '23, Sathvik Rayala '24, Adam Tobeck '25, and Maddie Shaw '25 conducted the following interview with Dr. Deutch on April 18th. The interview was edited for clarity and content.

WHAT PARTICULARLY PROPELLED YOUR INTEREST IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND SECURITY POLICY?

Well, I was born abroad, and I came to the United States just at the beginning of the second World War. So, I was always in a family in circumstances where international issues were important. I always had an interest in them right from the time that I was in high school. When I came to the U.S. and entered the first grade, I couldn't speak a word of English, so I had to reorient myself to become an American.

THERE'S BEEN DISCOURSE CONCERNING A DISCONNECT BETWEEN ACADEMIA AND FOREIGN POLICYMAKING. WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THIS? DO YOU THINK THERE IS INDEED A DISCONNECT BETWEEN THE TWO AND, IF SO, WHAT DO YOU THINK ARE THE DRIVERS OF THIS DISCONNECT?

Is it a disconnect with regard to all international matters, or is it a disconnect with climate? My general answer would be that the United States has always encouraged good relationships with individuals who have gone from universities to government work and back. There has always been an open door, but not as many individuals as we would like to see use it. The U.S. has always welcomed and understood the value of having academics involved in their work and I think that's still the case, although I think there may be cases where there's divisiveness or where there's an administration that's difficult. For example, the most recent case is the government wanting to constrain U.S. university activities regarding China and Chinese students.

AMERICA IS WITNESSING WHAT THE WALL STREET JOURNAL HAS CALLED A “NEW APPROACH TO PUBLIC INTELLIGENCE SHARING.” THE WHITE HOUSE HAS CALLED THIS NEW INTELLIGENCE APPROACH “DOWNGRADE AND SHARE.” WHAT ARE YOUR THOUGHTS ON THIS NEW APPROACH. WHAT IMPACT DO YOU BELIEVE IT WILL HAVE ON THE RUSSIAN INVASION OF UKRAINE AND FUTURE INTELLIGENCE SHARING PROCEDURES?

I will tell you that I believe the premise of the WSJ article is not correct—there’s always been sharing of information with allies in times of conflict, depending upon the circumstances, for example, in the Serbian-Bosnian conflict. Sharing is always taking place and the way it’s done depends upon the circumstances at the moment—so I don’t think that there’s any real change in direction there. You’d want the U.S. government to share information with allies as circumstances warrant it. Broader sharing with the public requires a balanced judgment about the effect that public discourse has on private peace negotiations that might be taking place.

SINCE YOUR TENURE AS THE DIRECTOR OF THE CIA, OPEN-SOURCE INTELLIGENCE (OSINT) HAS HAD A GROWING PRESENCE IN INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL INTELLIGENCE. DO YOU THINK THE INCREASING IMPORTANCE OF OSINT MAY PLACE PRESSURE ON AMERICAN INTELLIGENCE AGENCIES TO BE MORE TRANSPARENT?

It is a fact in the world that open source info has been exploding for the last 20-30 years, so fast that you can hardly mention how exponential it is. It is inevitable that intelligence communities or people that study intelligence matters will make larger and larger use of that open source info. It’s a compelling trend that’s a reality for every intelligence agency.

GIVEN YOUR ROLE AS DIRECTOR OF THE CIA DURING THE MID-1990s, COULD YOU DISCUSS SOME PERSONAL INSIGHTS INTO THE BOSNIAN WAR, PARTICULARLY REGARDING THE U.S.’S DECISION TO TAKE AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE CONFLICT RESULTING IN NATO AIR STRIKES AND AN EVENTUAL PEACE SETTLEMENT. WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO LEAD THE CIA DURING THIS TIME?

I was both in the Defense Department and Director of the CIA during the Bosnian conflict that had only unfortunate human consequences. It took longer than it should have to be resolved into a politically stable solution. The Dayton accords were successful in achieving that, but dealing with the three governments – the Bosnians, the Serbians, and the Croats – was very hard. They’re very different and not friendly with each other, so it was a real challenge and took a lot of effort by the United States working with its NATO allies to bring some sort of peace. There was some change in the allied position from time to time. The original proposal made by the former Secretary of State [Cyrus] Vance and former Foreign Minister of the UK [Lord David] Owen said move people – change the boundaries and move the people. And there was a great reluctance to do that. It reflected a much more rapid and less painful solution.

DURING THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION, THE UNITED STATES WITHDREW FROM THE 2015 PARIS CLIMATE ACCORDS. ALTHOUGH THE BIDEN ADMINISTRATION HAS REJOINED THE ACCORDS, THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY'S DISAPPROVAL OF THE WITHDRAWAL HAS RAISED DOUBTS ABOUT AMERICA'S LEADERSHIP ON THE ISSUE OF CLIMATE CHANGE. WHAT SHOULD AMERICA DO TO EARN BACK THE TRUST OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY ON THIS ISSUE?
I'm going to take a different approach to the question. What you have here is a lesson that the U.S. policy can completely change, in this case, dramatically, due to an election. We have elections every 4 years, in the matters of congressional elections every 2 years – when you look back at history you have to expect that there will be these changes in U.S. political system.

THE RISE OF CHINA AND THE TRUMP ADMINISTRATION HAVE CONTRIBUTED TO THE WEAKENING OF AMERICA'S INTERNATIONAL LEADERSHIP. WHAT WOULD YOU RECOMMEND TO AMERICAN POLICYMAKERS SEEKING TO REINFORCE AMERICAN LEADERSHIP ON THE INTERNATIONAL STAGE IN THIS DECADE, PARTICULARLY CONCERNING THE INFLUENCE OF CHINA?

My response to China's continuing economic success and advancement is that it should warn the U.S. to pay attention to its economic expansion efforts. The lesson from the increase in Chinese influence due to their very aggressive innovation efforts should lead the U.S. to strengthen its innovation efforts. It's not so much that China has been doing evil or wrong or illegal things, it's that I think we have not been paying attention to our own needs to strengthen our own economic innovation capability. The bout of technical, illegal, illicit activities of the Chinese acquiring U.S. technology is a small fraction of the amount of success they've had at exploiting the open U.S. research and innovation system. So the question should be: What should we do about the fact that there's open access? Many things about access to the U.S. open system lets them become stronger and avoid efforts and expense that they would require, what we should do about that is a difficult question because it's not illicit. We have not paid enough attention to our own homework in these areas.

GIVEN YOUR VAST ARRAY OF EXPERIENCES IN GOVERNMENT, ACADEMIA, AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR, WHAT ADVICE WOULD YOU GIVE TO UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS LOOKING TO HELP SHAPE INTERNATIONAL POLICY BUT ARE UNSURE ABOUT WHICH OF THESE FIELDS WOULD BEST ENABLE THEM TO DO SO?

I have great confidence that the young people in this country here, MIT, and Stanford, where I've just been for 3 months, are going to make decisive differences in government, the private sector, the economic sphere... There are examples in the past, but they're only examples. I'm sure the youth of today will make smarter, fairer, more equitable ways of doing thing.