A partisan Congress could ruin prospects for effective oversight. by Paul R. Pillar. Congressional oversight has an important positive role, especially regarding intelligence, but one that a change to committees would do little to enhance. That role is to ensure that lawmakers are on board with the methods practiced, and limits observed, by executive branch agencies and to see to it that those agencies change their operations if the lawmakers are not on board. Work of the intelligence community on Iraq, for example, that Congress would later pick apart in excruciating detail after the Bush administration's war went sour got very little attention before the war began—and other work even more relevant to the later souring got no attention at all. Congressional Oversight of Intelligence: Current Structure and Alternatives. Summary. The existing committee structure does not allow for effective oversight of crosscutting national security threats, such as WMD proliferation and terrorism. Congress should reform its oversight both structurally and substantively to better address intelligence, homeland security, and crosscutting national security missions. Congress has recently embarked on a number of actions that affect its oversight structure and powers (these are discussed further below). But again, disputes and conflicts—both within the legislature and between it and the executive—have erupted in some of these.