

the Walker spy ring, Ronald Pelton, Harold Nicholson—were motivated largely by greed, not ideology. Some exceptions were Julius Rosenberg and Alger Hiss (both for the Soviet Union), Larry Wu-tai Chin (for China), and Ana Montes and Kendall Myers (both for Cuba). By contrast, many involved in the worst espionage cases in Britain—Kim Philby and his associates or George Blake, for example—spied because of ideological devotion to the Soviet Union.

Although espionage cases of either type (greed or ideology) can arise in either country, some observers have been struck by the difference. It can be explained, in part, by the fact that Britain has had (and still has) a class system that makes ideology a more likely reason for betrayal, although the most serious British spies have come from the upper class. In the United States, the main competition has always been based on economic status, not social class.

Spies may also be motivated by vengeance toward superiors or agencies, by blackmail against themselves or family members, by thrills, or by involvement with a foreign national. Still, until recently, most of the spies suffered by the United States have been motivated primarily by money. However, a Defense Department study released in April 2008 found that “divided loyalty” between the United States and the nation enlisting the spy had greatly increased as a motive for espionage.

Counterintelligence officers summarize the possible motives for espionage as MICE:

Money

Ideology

Compromise (or coercion)

Ego