

January 24, 2003

Dr. John White, Chair
S&E Infrastructure Task Force
National Science Board - NSF
4201 Wilson Blvd.
Arlington, VA 22230

Dear Dr. White:

I am writing to provide an additional response to your request for public comment on the draft Report on Science and Engineering Infrastructure for the 21st Century concerning needs and opportunities for fast discovery science that would benefit from new investment.

I propose that the NSF infrastructure budget allocate funds to create and operate twelve Centers for Comparative Foreign Policy at international observation sites during the next decade.

The United States is entering a new national security environment. Social scientists have built an initial foundation of hypotheses concerning perception and misperception in international relations that are ready for testing: The next step is to create new, multidisciplinary observation sites in other countries, with international collaborators.¹ These Centers for Comparative Foreign Policy also can help us to understand evolving foreign policy as countries seek to engage new destructive and constructive forces, global issues (including perceptions and policies involving science), and options.² And to understand the range and changing ability of professional diplomats to bridge gaps between cultures and political systems.

An obvious focus for the Centers is the bilateral relationship of each foreign country with the United States. Theory-informed datasets can be developed with focused elite interviews, oral histories and case studies, and use cognitive modeling and other research methods: One of the legitimate research issues - of interest to foreign collaborators and their governments - will be whether

American foreign policy is ethnocentric and/or based on ethnocentric misperception, and the Centers will have funds to invite former American diplomats to participate in retrospective conferences.³ However, the broader focus will be each country's full range of regional and international relationships.

Chase *et al.* have made an initial forecast of nine "pivotal states" in the developing world that are likely in the 21st century to become major forces for good, or ill, in their regions: Algeria, Brazil, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Pakistan, South Africa, and Turkey.⁴ To these nine sites, I suggest adding three countries in the developed world, with greater cultural distance from the United States where, as a result, misperceptions are more likely candidates to shape the regional and international future: China, Japan, Russia.⁵

When fully operational, I think these twelve Centers would have strong programs that would justify \$1 million/year to build and use research resources and for training. We are beginning at a low level, and it will probably require three years at 25% funding to establish relationships with interested institutions and researchers and begin to build the Centers and their programs (\$9 million). For the remaining seven years, \$1 million/year (including overhead) would add \$84 million.⁶

How important are misperceptions as a cause of international conflict? We do not know. But the estimate of the distinguished political scientist, Karl Deutsch, was that they were a major contributor of the resort to violence, even among great powers with the most professional and cosmopolitan diplomatic capabilities:

"When a hungry cat concentrates his attention on a mousehole, there usually is a mouse in it; but when the government of some great country has concentrated its attention and efforts on some particular foreign policy objective, the outcome remarkably often has been unrewarding. . . . During the half century from 1914 to 1964, the decisions of major powers to go to war or to expand a war, and their judgments of the relevant intentions and capabilities of other nations, seem to have involved major errors of fact, perhaps in more than 50% of all cases."⁷

It is possible that, to prevent unnecessary international violence, this investment is the most productive that NSF could make.

I, and other social scientists with a professional interest in international conflict and peace, only have recently become aware of the draft Report. I fear

that, by comparison with the fully developed proposals the NSB Task Force may have received from the physical sciences, this is still an initial contact letter. May I have the benefit of your guidance about what you need from us, how quickly?

Your sincerely,

Dr. Lloyd S. Etheredge

1. Of special importance in building upon the work of Kahneman and Tversky in psychology is Robert Jervis, Perception and Misperception in International Politics (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1976) - e.g., the key biases may be beginner's biases, common across many fields and activities. See also the recent and suggestive case studies of cultural differences in negotiating styles from the United States Institute of Peace. For example: Raymond Cohen, Negotiating Across Cultures: International Communication in an Interdependent World (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1997). Revised edition; Jerrold L. Schechter, Russian Negotiating Behavior: Continuity and Transition (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1998); Richard H. Solomon, Chinese Negotiating Behavior: Pursuing Interests Through 'Old Friends' (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1999); Michael Blaker, Paul Giarra, and Ezra Vogel, Case Studies in Japanese Negotiating Behavior (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2002).

2. The principal database of comparative foreign policy behavior (underwritten by the Pew Foundation) is a series of 190+ case studies, modeled on case studies of the Harvard Business School. The studies are traditional scholarship and diplomatic history, topical and reportorial, written by Americans (often, primarily by graduate students), present one view of reality, and contain little oral history or verbatim material that can be used by other researchers. Thus, they cannot be used to evaluate alternative theories, or even raise deeper issues such as systematic misperception or learning in international relations, or to judge the range and changing ability of professional diplomats to perceive and bridge gaps between cultures and political systems. See: www.guisd.org/case_page.html. Few of the studies have been updated in light of changing scholarship. Without science, the investment has had little enduring value.

3. The American Foreign Service Association has a professional interest in oral history projects, which they have begun to develop on the American side. Retrospective diplomatic history, with participation by former officials from both sides, is a relatively new opportunity in world history. Concerning hypotheses, see: Lloyd S. Etheredge, "Is American Foreign Policy Ethnocentric? Notes Toward a Propositional Inventory" (Unpublished draft, 1988) online at www.policyscience.net. Also, *idem*. "Managerial Responsibility and the World's

Need: Perception and Misperception in American Foreign Policy” (1990), unpublished draft online at www.policyscience.net for a wider model, including learning and non-learning.

4. Robert Chase, Emily Hill, and Paul M. Kennedy (Eds.) The Pivotal States: A New Framework for U.S. Policy in the Developing World (New York: W. W. Norton, 1998).

5. One could add other major powers - England, France, and Germany - or countries with special relations to the US and their regions (Israel). Richard Neustadt’s classic Alliance Politics (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970) studied major misperceptions in British-American relations. Western Alliance politics is not my field, and it might be worthwhile to ask for an independent judgment of whether additional Centers should be created.

6. These Centers would have core grants to develop databases and operate their own research programs, and also to provide visiting fellowships for collaborative research with US investigators. There also would be money for exchange and training programs to build indigenous research capacities. In the startup years, the funds would support annual summer workshops to bring together scientists from all Centers to develop shared, cumulative research programs; in later years, regularly scheduled Internet-based colloquia series and videoconference capabilities would link the Centers.

7. From The Analysis of International Relations. Cited, Lloyd S. Etheredge, A World of Men: The Private Sources of American Foreign Policy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1978).

