Subject: 141. Testing New Reality-Creation Theories of World Politics

Dear Dr. Fischhoff and Colleagues:

   I hope that the National Academy of Sciences will be including a strong recommendation to restart content analysis capabilities. This is a generic investment that, as a public domain tool for (global) research in the information age, will allow behavioral scientists at all universities, and across disciplines, to develop new lines of investigation. A world of new ideas for projects can inform the immediate concerns of the intelligence communities and Executive branch policy development and be broadly informative to democracies and their policy development.

   Former Undersecretary of State Richard Armitage said, on a recent Charlie Rose show, that he ignores most US mass media television news. However, each day, he watches the (online) news of BBC, al-Jazeera, and Russian Television. They have viewpoints but they also give him - as a former government official - a sense of what is happening in the world that he does not get elsewhere.

Political Effects of Reality-Creation

   These broader, global/regional television services are especially interesting if we assume that people's actions are correlated, in the long run, with their perceptions of reality. al-Jazeera, for example, includes vivid pictures of US violent actions; it also includes British-sensibility stories (e.g, about fair-play issues arising in international cricket) and shared global-village conversations and sensibilities around these values. [I'm reminded of the idea that rock and roll (once dismissed as mere cultural programming) - by viscerally expressing the meaning of freedom to generations of young people behind the Iron Curtain - became a powerful political argument.]

   There will be a lot to say and analyze about these effects and many methodological/conceptual challenges to solve. But we ought to get started because new, reality-construction theories of world politics are alert to a new dimension about a changing world.

   [There also are interesting differences in political culture that can be informative to students. This morning's Russian Television {English language http://rt.com] includes a public warning by Russian President Putin that banned gatherings in Russia are "provocations" and that protestors who take part in them will "get hit on the head."]

Forecasting: The Fox News/John Boehnert/Mitch McConnell Effects

   It is likely (what a surprise!) that there are both hopeful and worrisome effects underway. For example, it would be worthwhile - to understand new trends in the comparative politics of democracies and the future of world politics - to analyze whether the same Fox News/John

BoehnerMitch McConnnell dumbing-down effects also are occurring in other democratic polities. Technically, this could be easy to study with content analysis methods linked to the new Google global news databases [now with 60 regional editions <1>] - for example, measures of integrated cognitive complexity [that can be automated, or partly automated] are an important research tool that (across ideologies) make important predictions for political behavior. Possibly, globalizing elites/attentive publics are becoming more cosmopolitan across all democracies while mass democratic publics are becoming more tribal and want the pseudo-security of dumbed-down/low integrated complexity leaders. [Or is it just the US?]

New Capabilities
    I hope that you can get us these new capabilities! We should be moving a lot faster. And we have very few research universities (even in the US) with the leadership and relevant cross-disciplinary expertise to build these new global political/cultural analysis capabilities for the behavioral sciences.

Lloyd E.
<1> http://news.google.com and click on Other News Editions at the bottom of the page. Google's simple search capabilities are good but more powerful, generic tools are needed across all databases to analyze and recognize what is in these databases.