

Date: Sat, 18 Sep 2010 13:44:31 -0400

To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff - Chair, National Academy Committee on Improving Intelligence" <baruch@cmu.edu>, "Dr. Kenneth Prewitt" <kp2058@columbia.edu>

From: Lloyd Etheredge <lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net>

Subject: 151. Tony Blair's Memoirs re Cheney: Was Jihadism a Rational Response to Bush-Cheney Foreign Policy? An Experiment

Dear Dr. Fischhoff and Colleagues and Dr. Prewitt:

"[Cheney] would have worked through the whole lot, Iraq, Syria, Iran, dealing with all their surrogates in the course of it - Hezbollah, Hamas, etc. In other words, he thought the world had to be made anew, and that after 11 September, it had to be done by force and with urgency. . . ." - Tony Blair

A year ago, I recommended that the DNI build, as a high priority, a cumulative ability to engage recurrent challenges. There are generic problems that can be seen in diplomatic history and across recent decades: similar issues, debates, and opportunities for lesson-learning in American foreign policy and about the world (e.g., # 1 "Hubris, the Cheney Syndrome, the Rory Stewart Problem."] <1>

In this context, you might be interested in Tony Blair's discussion (below) of Vice President Cheney's mindset and influence. Blair underscores the urgent problem, for learning in US foreign policy and the international system, of effective evidence-based ways to engage this kind of vivid, strong, dramatized (and perhaps oddly-wired) version of *Realpolitik* that co-exists with other mechanisms for thinking in the brain.

Psychologists (including applied practitioners of political psychology like Tony Blair) might disagree about whether Vice President Cheney himself could have been affected by evidence-based arguments from the CIA and the early DNI system. However the future challenge for the DNI system is to serve a President and political system where there are oppositions and ambivalences that encode impulses, truths, perceptions of political reality, and possibilities that should be weighed and tested in an integrated policy mix.<2>

Was Jihadism a Rational Response?

One possibility is that growing jihadism, across the Muslim world, was (in a sense) a rational response to the threat and messianic agenda that Tony Blair, for exam-

ple, perceived as partly shaping a US Grand Strategy after 9/11. I assume that Tony Blair has written this passage carefully:

"[US Vice President Cheney] had one central insight . . . He believed, in essence, that the U.S. was genuinely at war; that the war was one with terrorists and rogue states that supported them; that it stemmed from a guiding ideology that was a direct threat to America; and that therefore the only way of defeating it was head-on, with maximum American strength, with the object of destroying the ideology and allowing democracy to flourish in its stead. He would have worked through the whole lot, Iraq, Syria, Iran, dealing with all their surrogates in the course of it - Hezbollah, Hamas, etc. In other words, he thought the world had to be made anew, and that after 11 September, it had to be done by force and with urgency. So he was for hard, hard power. No ifs, no buts, no maybes. We're coming after you . . ." - Tony Blair, A Journey: My Political Life (Kindle location 7861-7868]

Independent of the DNI system, the question is whether *jihadism* was a rational response needs to be addressed for students, candidly, by IR and American foreign policy textbooks. American social scientists do not have the data easily available to make the case - and are unlikely to have it via NSF funding - but the DNI surely does have the data, and perhaps models and well-tested theories are possible within the DNI world.

This behavioral science theory can make a great deal of difference in how we think about the current phenomenon of so-called "radical imams" influencing "unformed youth" in a geographically spreading war on terrorism. Consider, for example, the Cold War and the strong, activated response of the religious Right to "Godless" atheistic Communism. Even when Soviet foreign policy did not specifically articulate an equivalent messianic and urgent agenda to "destroy the power of the Christian fundamentalists" in America to "modernize" American society. Stalin, perhaps, did not care - and he may not have been that stupid.

Two Models: Inherent Radicalism/Violent Jihadism v. Amygdala Hijacks

In a deeper sense, it makes a great deal of difference whether a "radical imam" (in the current US media terminology) is indeed "radical" and committed to violent *jihad*. The package of a strong enemy image and what psychologists call an "amygdala hijack" response may be similar to the kind of activation and escalation that was induced in Cheney by 9/11.<3>

A Suggested Experiment

What would be the harm, for example, of a bolder experiment in which senior

Westerners said publicly, three times/week for the next year on Al-Jazeera: "it's a misperception" about current US/Western hostility or desires to change fundamentalist Islam or "break the hold of the clerics" on their societies? If this is true [? - it is not clear what range of covert activities, inherited from the Bush/Cheney years, remains) and if the peace process in the Middle East actually works this time (it may) and - perhaps with other policy initiatives as part of the experiment - this behavioral science theory could have useful policy insight.

Lloyd E.

<1> A reference copy is # 1, online at www.policyscience.net at II. D.

<2> The sensibility and "hard, hard power" approach might have selective zones of relevance. For example, Bush seems to have adopted, post 9/11, the same "kill or neutralize" order that the Israeli government activated after the Munich Olympics and the attack on its athletes - in Bush's case, reportedly a list of 100 and progress that he monitored personally. In this application the capacity-degradation and deterrent effects may have outweighed the arousal effects.

<3> Concerning these phenomena: IR theory might be rewritten someday as (partly) a story of similar subsets of people, across societies and national boundaries, shaping (and partly rationalizing) the psychology and escalating/de-escalating dynamics of an entire nation-state system.

Dr. Lloyd S. Etheredge - Director
Government Learning Project
Policy Sciences Center
URL: www.policyscience.net
301-365-5241 (v); lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net (email)

[The Policy Sciences Center, Inc. is a public foundation that develops and integrates knowledge and practice to advance human dignity. Its headquarters are 127 Wall St., Room 322 PO Box 208215 in New Haven, CT 06520-8215. It may be contacted at the office of its Chair, Michael Reisman (michael.reisman@yale.edu), 203-432-1993. Further information about the Policy Sciences Center and its projects, Society, and journal is available at www.policysciences.org.]