

Date: Fri, 24 Sep 2010 12:14:25 -0400

To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff - Chair, National Academy Committee on Improving Intelligence" <baruch@cmu.edu>, "Dr. Richard Atkinson - Chair - NRC/DBASSE" <rcatkinson@ucsd.edu>, "Dr. Kenneth Prewitt - Chair, Committee on Social Science Evidence for Use" <[kp2058@columbia.edu](mailto:kp2058@columbia.edu)>

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

**Subject: 155. The National Academy's Role to Challenge Petraeus:  
"This is the kind of fight we're in for the rest of our lives and  
probably our kid's lives;" Bob Woodward's new book.**

Drs. Fischhoff, Atkinson, Prewitt and Colleagues:

There is an opportunity (an historic opportunity) for the National Academy of Sciences and America's leading behavioral scientists, via the Fischhoff Report, to challenge the assertion by General Petraeus, quoted in the new Woodward book: "This is the kind of fight we're in for the rest of our lives and probably our kid's lives."

If there are people who are going to challenge this kind of current conventional wisdom/behavioral model about the geopolitical problems we face, the bleak assessment of options, and the current (perpetual) budget levels that they imply, it surely includes the world's leading behavioral scientists who are members of the US National Academy of Sciences. The National Academy has a proper role to note that there are competing theories, that General Petraeus et al. have not presented persuasive scientific evidence, and that behavioral science might contribute to more effective, evidence-based, diagnoses, strategies, and - perhaps - to political settlements.

- Consider the possibility of misperception in violent political conflicts - an insight, for example, by President Reagan in his diary, late in life (#'s 50 and 51 at [www.policyscience.net](http://www.policyscience.net)). Many of the young people who have been enrolled in violent jihadism and who, now, are becoming leaders actually may misperceive America. If so, surely, the National Academy of Sciences should say this. And recommend a high-priority analysis and discussion of the implications.

Ronald Reagan's successful leadership to end the Cold War actually began with a recognition (against the baseline of his virtuous image of America) that Russian leaders [even with all of their KGB intelligence resources, its diplomatic corps and decades of experience with America - LE] were genuinely fearful of American attack. Might there not be an equivalent recognition - that there is no "rational" reason for the continuation and spread of most of global violent jihadism involving America and NATO countries? And wouldn't it be extraordinary if behavioral scientists could help to raise that possibility, evaluate the evidence, and explore the implications? [Unexpectedly, Ronald Reagan may have been more "realistic" than Henry

Kissinger (e.g., # 84).]

Would you be willing to raise this possibility? And to recommend that the DNI create a high-level panel to give advice about political alternatives to the Petraeus forecast, inform the DNI assessments of political opportunities, and assist Secretary Clinton and President Obama to understand how to produce political settlements? I do not see any inherent reason what the global war on jihadist terrorism should not be winding-down within two years, assuming that a Middle East peace settlement is, now, achievable within a year. (And with Tony Blair, George Mitchell, President Obama, Secretary Clinton and the other range of skilled political psychologists/practitioners working the problem on a daily basis, I think this is achievable.) The current DNI + NATO system is running at \$750 billion - \$1 trillion/decade (# 152) for intelligence alone and, thus, there are resources that might be shifted.

What an extraordinary political (and scientific) accomplishment this would be! [Consider the possibility that the Cold War itself might have been too long (and too costly and too dangerous) and that behavioral science insights, introduced earlier (somehow) on both sides, might have helped, even at the margin.] There may be - post Bush/Cheney - a less realistic basis for violent jihadism against the US and NATO countries than the Russians had during the Cold War, and the Cold War was ended by a political settlement.

The US government and its NATO allies can do a better job.

LE

Dr. Lloyd S. Etheredge  
Policy Sciences Center  
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](http://www.policysciences.org).]