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To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff - Chair, National Academy Committee on Improving Intelligence" <baruch@cmu.edu>,  
From: Lloyd Etheredge <lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net>

**Subject: 159. Forecasting and Using the Ithiel de Sola Pool and  
McLuhan Effects. Reinventing World Politics as  
Control of the Future**

Dear Dr. Fischhoff and Colleagues:

An interesting and timely extension of the NCI's Global 2025 efforts would be a project for rigorous evaluation, forecasting, and experiments re creative applications of the Ithiel de Sola Pool and McLuhan hypotheses concerning the effects and potential effects of new global communications technologies.

For example:

"These prospects of drastic change have very little in common with most political platforms that advocate drastic change. Most movements that are self-described as radical are highly urbanistic, or nationalistic, or oriented to obsolete class structures, or to central bureaucratic planning. The changes that we can see on the horizon are much more drastic than that . . . They reflect the ease with which communication can operate over global distances, and the abundance of bandwidth that can now be made available to all, without producing any exhaustion of the earth's resources. . . People who think about social change in traditional political terms cannot begin to imagine the changes that lie ahead. Conventional reformers cast their programs in terms of national policies, or in terms of laws and central planning. But in the end, what will shape the future is a creative potential that inheres in the new technologies of electronic communications. " <1>

One of the key questions for US planning is how to identify, and develop, this creative

potential? Even in science (e.g., # 4 and # 147, archived at [www.policyscience.net](http://www.policyscience.net) at II. D.) the US government still is lagging badly in developing the potential for a global, rapid-learning, health system. Across all Cabinet Departments and US government international activities there are enormous potentials, especially if the DNI is tasked to think, using behavioral science ideas, about the rapid evolution of the new G-20 framework for global governance and progress.

- Re McLuhan. McLuhan has many, earlier, challenging (and sometimes elusive) ideas about the effects of changing media on subjectivities and political behavior/social change. One of his key insights may be that most institutions lag in recognizing and developing the creative potential of new technologies: at first, after the motion picture camera was developed, it was just used in a fixed position to film traditional plays on the theater stage. The traditional nation-state personae psychodrama models of global politics, based on the diplomacy and court protocols of absolute monarchs at the time of the Congress of Vienna, still deeply limit State Department thinking about the new pathways and forms of influence.

### **Reinventing World Politics: Competing for Control of the Future.**

World politics is no longer about conquering and controlling geographic territories or specific populations or trade routes. It is about shaping the future on a global scale.

Ithiel Pool believed in the extraordinary potential of new electronic/communications technologies to expand freedom and create potential for vast, rapid, change on a global scale and at a speed undreamed of by statesmen, and even political reformers, of earlier historical periods. But he was mindful, too, that the potentials of freedom were available to everyone and they can be used for retribalization or dumbing-down - the Fox News/Glenn Beck/Sarah Palin/Tea Party shifts in American domestic politics (which may be mirrored in other polities). One of McLuhan's theories was that the future belonged to whoever identified and used more quickly, to their advantages and for their purposes, the creative potentials and applications that, at first, were unrecognized.

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<1.> Ithiel de Sola Pool (1983), "Four Unnatural Institutions and the Road Ahead,"  
excerpts in Etheredge (Ed.) Politics in Wired Nations: Selected Writings of Ithiel de  
Sola Pool (1998), chapter 11, p. 237.

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