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To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff - Chair, National Academy Committee on Social Science & Improving Intelligence" baruch@cmu.edu

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Subject: 18. Evaluating McNamara's Rules; the Groundhog Day challenge

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Dr. Fischhoff & Committee Members:

Robert McNamara, one of your strong predecessors, deserves to be rigorously evaluated. Across the arc of his lifetime and experiences he made one of the strongest historic commitments to analytic reason, evidence-based analysis, and learning that we have seen in any public official. It's a great touchstone, right or wrong, for scientific progress - The Fog of War (DVD) and the books.

Several years ago James Blight (Brown) was maintaining online materials including an expansion of McNamara's 11 lessons.

I am forwarding an unpublished symposium [for the political science journal, PS] about Fog of War. The idea of the symposium was to help hypothesis-generation & the creative process by assembling brief movie-review-length papers from a range of political scientists and others. The draft papers did provoke passionate arguments (although from reviewers and the editor thought it was more prudent to kill the project) - so I pass them along to you, and perhaps your Committee can give the rigorous analysis that McN. deserved but has not yet received.

There's an interesting challenge to re-run a maximum rationality post WWII simulation, based on McN's rules. Could the counterfactuals be applied and give better results? He also is verging on a meta-rule policy problem: What do you do (e.g., best practices) when maximum available data and scientific/rational analysis do not give you a known-correct answer?

The Groundhog Day Challenge

A meta-comment: At one level, McN. & the US intelligence community still seem linked to the analytical science/correctness theory of truth. But his quotation from T. S.

Eliot suggests that he might be arriving at the unconcealment theory - which implies very different methodology. There's a brief discussion at my lesson 9 (p. 8): Bob Thurman (Columbia), an adviser to the Dalai Lama, was an adviser on the film & it does portray the arc of growth & the empirical observations on which their theory of Enlightenment is based. It's worth a very serious look by your Committee since a lifetime of scientific/statistical training & huge databases probably would not have been nearly enough to arrive at the Groundhog Day ending that is achieved by another pathway of learning.

The Domino Theory ?

I think McNamara finessed the domino theory question. It still needs a rigorous scientific evaluation. It needs attention especially if the recent theory is correct that it's rooted in the more primitive parts of the brain - i.e., instead of being rational, other nations may be as affected by it as the US government was, and, thus, this irrational component needs to be included in DNI analysis.

LE

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