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

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

**Subject: 184. WikiLeaks Interpretations: Are Islamic Politicians  
"Playing" the US Government?**

Dear Dr. Fischhoff and Colleagues:

When your Report is published, or before, your National Academy of Sciences panel might want to add ideas based on the State Department's views of foreign reality and causation in the 250,000+ WikiLeaks cables. For example, new ways to connect dots and analyze data to understand a new world and increase options for US policy:

**Through a Glass Darkly or "Playing" the United States?**

There is an urgent need (and opportunity) to cross-connect evidence from the WikiLeaks (Department of State) theories and interpretations with the (more highly classified and protected) NSA communications surveillance data. This research project can provide a high-level Report to the President and Congress testing a game-theoretical model with multiple indicators to evaluate whether Islamic leaders - and perhaps Israeli leaders as well - now are "playing" the United States. Specifically: inducing the United States to spend trillions of dollars in their region, supporting their own political purposes and personally enriching most of these Islamic government officials far beyond the dreams of American diplomats, soldiers, or members of Congress. And astutely "stringing along" the US, with niggardly progress toward achieving any US government objective.

The new theory could improve upon the "corrupt and incompetent" explanation that is favored by the Department of State in the cables themselves. What appears to be incompetence also may be cynical, smart, and intentional manipulation.

These new WikiLeaks disclosures, from US Embassy/State Department traffic, cannot fully

test the "playing America"/"outsmarting America" theory. However, they do show the King of Saudi Arabia, a man with serene self-assurance and fabulous personal wealth, repeatedly pressing the US to attack Iran and destroy its nuclear capabilities - "cut off the head of the snake" - (but there is no evidence that he offered to pay the costs of any war or to assure that the price of oil will be unchanged). And they show a very limited *quid pro quo* in recognition of the several trillions of dollars that the US spent to defend Saudi Arabia from Iraq or potential Iraqi WMDs. (Indeed, the cables suggest that the principal source of financing for Sunni militant groups like al-Qaeda still is from Saudi Arabia (as were many of the perpetrators of 9/11 and suicide bombers in Iraq): King Abdullah and his associates may be willing to have it both ways, with the US paying the bill.

Re Afghanistan and Pakistan: The cables show an Afghan Vice President (Ahmed Zia Massoud) traveling to the United Arab Emirates with \$52 million in cash, presumably to add to bank accounts that he and other corrupt government officials acquire. These are (now, personally wealthy) Afghan politicians who, themselves, appear to exert only minimal effort to fight the Taliban in their own country. The longer these Islamic politicians fail, the more money they receive.

- The project could include, too, testing the theory re Pakistan. Huge flows of US government funds are provided to these leaders with limited accounting - i.e., funds that perpetually encounter frustrating "difficulties" in achieving US goals. Could additional (Top Secret and Codeword) NSA data improve upon explanations in State Department cables and show that Pakistani leaders privately intend to string America along?

### **An Image of Easily-Fooled America?**

More recently we have seen the bold use of an imposter in negotiations with the Afghan government, who received cash payments and pretended to represent the Taliban. Could this illustrate an Islamic view of naive, easily-fooled Westerners that we also observed in the Iran-contra scandal in the Reagan Administration? <1>

### **Connecting Dots with NSA Data?**

The proper meta-analysis requires access to CIA and NSA data. If these Islamic world leaders

and "allies" can be shown (e.g., by communications intercepts) to be "playing" the US, and achieving extraordinary personal wealth in the process, such candid and realistic analysis could outrage people and revolutionize American policy, perhaps for the better. <2>

### **Beyond a Melange of Competing Images and Hypotheses**

The image of smart, astute politicians in this region diagnosing American blind spots and profitably "playing" America across the decades is a serious competing hypothesis. If it is supported by compelling evidence, it would be a revelation for IR textbooks and academic courses in American foreign policy, as well as in DNI Reports and forecasts to Congress. And it could give wider options to President Obama.

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<1> Western *hubris* could make it almost inconceivable - to Americans - that anybody would try to fool the American government at this level and expect to get away with it. Alternatively, some Islamic leaders may not, as one State Department cable speculated, know how smart we are and how much we know about them.

<2> E.g., The theory/interpretation of incompetence comes in many forms: 1.) Islamic political leaders are poorly educated, cognitively limited and lack the strategic purview of US diplomats and officials; 2.) They can, at best, operate by a muddling-through incrementalism, *in media res*, amidst dangerous historical forces they barely understand; 3.) They are personally irrational (the President of Afghanistan is variously described as manic-depressive and "off his meds" or (alternatively, in these cables) as "paranoid;" 4.) They have limited ethnic and non-cosmopolitan identities. 5.) They need superior American leadership, problem-solving abilities, and the skills of democratic politics, supplied by the US, to build peace processes or national political order. Etc.

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