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

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

Subject: 221. Red Team: General Clapper v. Henry Kissinger v. David Brooks v. standards of behavioral scientists

Dear Dr. Fischhoff and Colleagues:

Henry Kissinger responded, on the Charlie Rose Show, (2/4/2011) to the "United States usually gets everything wrong" claim of David Brooks, who placed Egypt in the arc of the past fifty years. This is an issue - a challenge to conventional wisdom of the past five Presidents and the rejected claims to human dignity - that is fundamental to how we think about Egypt and foreign policy decisions in the future. [A reference copy of the Brooks column, forwarded earlier, is online at # 215. at www.policyscience.net at II. D.]

\$80 Billion/year =

I would like to see the analysis about these issues that President Obama has received from General Clapper, and what the American people are getting for \$80 billion/year and the data, analytic brainpower, and scientific integrity of the new DNI system [which includes the Bureau of Intelligence and Research at the Department of State].

The National Academy of Sciences should recommend a rapid Red Team challenge of this conventional wisdom. The DNI's (CIA's) defense of its fifty years of alleged conventional thinking/errors and the Red Team analysis should be published. Then the American people - and our students, and members of the National Academy of Sciences - should be able to judge the intellectual/scientific quality of the work and participate in how the discussion evolves.

Kissinger's Comment

Dr. Kissinger said (diplomatically) that he was not persuaded by David Brooks' assessment of the past fifty years. He rejected - for example - the empirical claim that autocratic regimes are unstable: Kissinger suggested that thirty years of Egyptian stability under Mubarak, in his region of the world, counted against the empirical claim that Brooks was proposing. And he implied that the history of the world's authoritarian regimes, with American support, was a history of notable longevity and stability.

Also, Kissinger - although agreeing that the past five Presidents, and probably Presidents across the past fifty years, had made the decisions that Brooks perceived - thought that Brooks was not attending to the realistic options that were available to the US in each case. [Kissinger was suggesting that opponents of the authoritarian regimes included anti-Americans and - during the Cold War - would have advanced Communist coalitions and the victories would have inspired threatening Communist movements. He may also have been implying that more populist/democratic governments in the Middle East increase - today - the probability of governments that are more aggressively and dangerously anti-Israel and anti-American than their predecessors in Egypt and elsewhere.]

An Exciting Opportunity for Real, Serious, Evidence-Based Thinking?

Since the DNI has asked for help from the National Academy of Sciences and the nation's behavioral scientists to improve its data and analysis methods, I would like to get behind brief sound bites and simple potted plant views of history. We ought to see the N of cases, and the numbers and analyses, and the CIA's consensus judgment and lessons it believes that it has learned about these issues of - alleged - extraordinary misperceptions and deep mistakes.

Can the National Academy of Sciences help? It is difficult to think that there is anything consequential for the CIA's professional judgements and the data and analysis of the conventional wisdom that need to be classified. And we should see the best analysis, upon reflection, that a Red Team recommends to President Obama.

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