

Date: Tue, 17 Nov 2009 11:35:57 -0500

To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff, Chair - National Academy Study on social science & improving Intelligence" <baruch@cmu.edu>

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

Subject: From the Minuet to the Basketball Court. Online knowledge/collaboration systems to support President Obama

Dear Dr. Fischhoff and Colleagues:

President Obama plays basketball. He likes fast games: "When everything is in motion, that's when things open up and you get your opportunities." His approach is moving American foreign policy into the 21st century and developing the new political opportunities of global communications. Last week Secretary of State Clinton was holding a televised town hall meeting in Pakistan; this week President Obama is in Shanghai holding a televised/Webcast town hall meeting.

The DNI produces a range of interesting documents and studies whose databases and methods (and conclusions) deserve more academic attention - and critical scrutiny. For example, the DNI/National Intelligence Council's 2025 Report usefully forecasts: "The need for effective global governance will increase faster than existing mechanisms can respond." (p. 81); President Obama already is approaching global governance more creatively, and from different dimensions, than the DNI's more conventional thinking about governance.<1>

Run for Office. Political Acceleration

President Obama's new logic of international power and organizing/governance shifts outward the entire sensibility of running for President in domestic politics, as an overlay on the global stage. The new theory of governance is: America runs for office, for voluntary election as the world's leader. World politics will be a perpetual political campaign, with the President, Secretary of State, and a supporting cast of special envoys arriving frequently at key locations to give town hall press conferences and generate local headlines and build relationships/alliances with local governments.

Political acceleration is a part of the new strategic package (which includes Smart Power ideas). All US Cabinet Secretaries have been alerted to new bilateral meetings of Cabinet Department delegations, every 6 months, with counterpart Cabinet delegations of the Chinese government. It is likely that all Cabinet Secretaries and parts of their Departments will become more enrolled as part of the foreign policy team: the organizing/governance agenda already is expanding beyond US-China bilaterals.

The Social Science of Large-Scale Collaboration Systems: DNI Data Systems and Coordinating the Playbook

These strategic/conceptual changes mean, in part, that the DNI's online data systems need to move (soon) from finding enemies to management (including knowledge management) for American foreign policy. The DNI's (security-oriented) online Information Sharing Environment (ISE) project is only the first step - and the next steps are beyond the Department of State or any other single agency.

The challenges will be extraordinary. The rule of thumb, in Washington, is that any inter-agency Task Force at a sufficiently high level to make a decision has officials at too high a level to really understand the details of the problems that they are deciding; and, due to the workloads and schedules of its members, almost never meets.

Even the smartest NSC staff that you can find, supported by the best large-scale collaboration/knowledge management system that the DNI can design, and working 24x7, will be challenged to deliver on President Obama's agenda. Especially since everyone has to be in motion.

And there is another dimension to the challenge of creating and sustaining momentum: To the extent that the Obama Administration/DNI are succeeding, it will be helpful, also, for the DNI to develop shared specialized work stations/collaboration systems that can be accessed and used by working-level officials in different areas of responsibility, in China and many other countries.

[One possibility might be to delegate this work, at least in several areas. For example, there has been a coalition of scientists, academic institutions, and other organizations advocating a National Library for Science & the Environment (www.ncseonline.org). It would be similar to the National

Library of Medicine, that has built the basic online data systems for global collaboration in biomedical research (e.g. Index Medicus). Princeton (<http://uc.princeton.edu>) already has been boldly developing the international linkup systems for policy analysis/development of scientists and government & NGO professionals - although, as it grows, it will need a better user interface.]

best regards,
Lloyd Etheredge

<1> Although DNI Reports also are concerned with identifying new opportunities, fresh thinking and innovation have not been their greatest strengths.

Dr. Lloyd S. Etheredge - Fellow, World Academy of Art & Science
Policy Sciences Center Inc.
127 Wall St., Room 322 - Box 208215
New Haven, CT 06520-8215
URL: www.policyscience.net
301-365-5241 (v); lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net (email)