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

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

## **Subject: On (Sometimes) Not Trusting Academic Science**

Dr. Fischhoff & Colleagues:

It would be timely to warn the DNI of the necessity to spend part of his \$75 billion/year to develop his own capacities for original R&D and to check recommendations, even from leading scientific institutions.

1.) **Re the economics of both advanced and developing economies**: The catastrophic failure to be in touch with reality and forecast the national/global economic crisis was a deep failure of both data systems and outdated conceptual models of a changing world. And there have been many decades of failed economic development models for Third World countries - the social science models still may not work very well (although private investors - e.g., in China - may make better choices using different models.) Neither field seems likely to improve quickly.<1>

2.) **Biases of US social science**. I cited, in an early submission, the thoughtful warnings by Gergen ("Social Psychology as History") and David Sears about the biases of Western social science arising from using undergraduate US college students as subjects. This extends across most fields, including such relevant issues as models of voting behavior.

3.) **The National Academy of Sciences system sometimes mixes its policy recommendations with a self-interested lobbying agenda**. Especially where money is involved, the facts and analysis from this source also must be rechecked. In the recent Gathering Storm report the Academy became a rather painful enemy of truth (and, de facto, of the DNI): It sounded an alarm that the most urgent global threat to America was the "600,000" Chinese and Indian science and engineering students being graduated each year. It was "urgent" to double the R&D budget of a core set of physical science and engineering disciplines, massively recapitalize K-12 science education, etc.

However, the job of the DNI is to recognize (and tell the President and the Congress) when such Reports are flawed or a lie. Fareed Zakaria, a Senior Editor of Newsweek and Trustee of Yale, spent several pages in his recent book analyzing the "600,000" number - it was goofy and ignorant about Asian educational systems. Moreover, the Presidents of the National Academies of Science and Engineering were, it turns out, bluntly warned by President Bush's Science Adviser and government experts in Asian science against using the misleading numbers and incompatible definitions (e.g., including technical high school and junior college "engineering" graduates) and doing a crude body-count policy analysis to scare Congress about American jobs and raid the federal treasury.<2>

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<1.> For example, William Easterly, The Elusive Quest for Growth; and The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the Rest Have Done So Much Ill and So Little Good; Paul Collier's The Bottom Billion.

<2.> There is further discussion of the Gathering Storm case on [www.policyscience.net](http://www.policyscience.net).

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