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To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff - Chair, National Academy of Sciences Study on Social & Behavioral Science and Improving Intelligence for National Security" <baruch@cmu.edu>

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

Subject: The Emotional Consensus chapter; Lasswell + Victor Hugo

Dear Dr. Fischhoff and Colleagues:

Eighty years ago Harold Lasswell, in his Psychopathology and Politics (1930), recommended that emotional consensus, and the redefinition of emotional consensus, be a fundamental concern of political analysis:

"Politics is the transition from one unchallenged consensus to the next. It begins in conflict and eventuates in a solution . . . not the "rationally best" solution but the emotionally satisfactory one. The rational and dialectical phases of politics are subsidiary to the process of redefining an emotional consensus." (p. 185)

The National Academy of Sciences ought to alert the DNI that - to judge from the forecasting work of the National Intelligence Council - he does not have models or theories about emotional consensus or redefining emotional consensus.

Lasswell + Victor Hugo

A quotation from Victor Hugo underscores Lasswell's point: "Greater than all the armies is an idea whose time has come." Thus - to restate my point - Admiral Blair has a forecasting system that [albeit, being good about armies] is not theoretically or empirically equipped to handle "greater than all the armies . . ." phenomena.

Content Analysis: A Step Forward

These are challenging questions. Restarting content analysis (just to return to an earlier theme) would help. Also, a better understanding of cultural change and, probably, youth cohorts. <1>

Public Psychology v. Statistical Independence

It also could be timely to give Admiral Blair a consumer's warning about

public events/psychology v. statistical independence assumptions. The language of the gaming table, or from physical science processes, may be misleading when thinking about future political phenomena. Or about "redefining an emotional consensus." One billion people are said to watch the Oscars, and one of the purposes of the Pool-Kochen-Milgram et al. "small world" analysis was to show how people are connected and how public opinion also can develop and change without being linked solely to mass communications. From the Lasswell/Victor Hugo perspective, mathematical/forecasting models that are estimated on the basis of statistical independence assumptions may need to be checked carefully.

With best wishes for the New Year,
Lloyd Etheredge

<1> The late Murray Edelman helped to develop these ideas. W. Lance Bennett at the U. of Washington might be a good source of ideas about testing.

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