

To: "Dr. Baruch Fischhoff - Chair, National Academy Committee on Improving Intelligence"  
<baruch@cmu.edu>,

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

**Subject: 176. Recommendations: Advisory Panel on Comparative  
Politics and Public Data**

Dear Dr. Fischhoff and Colleagues:

You might want to recommend that General Clapper create an Advisory Panel on Comparative Politics and Public Data to identify, and find ways to underwrite, basic public data systems that meet priorities - established by behavioral scientists - for rapid learning about comparative politics and comparative political behavior.

The acquisition of these data may, in many cases, actually be relatively inexpensive and straightforward. For example, I am attaching ProPublica's guide, published online several days ago, for using the new global system, mTurk, created by Amazon.com for simple clerical tasks like reformatting data into digital form. America's current system of requiring social scientists to make (competitive) cases for data in NSF grant applications, adding academic overheads, waiting nine months (etc.) for review cycles and problematic answers, and then - if they are lucky - organizing and supervising the work themselves, etc. is daunting. And now, given current budget pressures on non-defense controllable budgets, probably blocked.

**Comparative Survey Research**

Equivalent scientist-generated survey research in other countries, even when it can operate at very low cost via Zogby International and/or other firms who do contract survey research abroad for the US government, also is probably blocked. Comparative politics (i.e., compared to the field of American political behavior) is, at NSF, a marginal priority; and in a marginal discipline, in a marginal Division.

- General Clapper may have the mistaken impression that, because there is such a high

priority national benefit to understanding and forecasting politics and political behavior beyond the water's edge, that our leading research universities and researchers (here and abroad) would already have the relatively modest (in the scheme of things) infrastructure support they need to pose and answer the most important empirical and theoretical questions in their fields. But Astroinformatics gets many times the support, even from part of the NASA budget, than the pennies that the National Science Foundation/National Science Board provide for evidence-based comparative politics/comparative political behavior data systems.

LE

Dr. Lloyd S. Etheredge - Director, Government Learning Project  
Policy Sciences Center  
301-365-5241 (v); lloyd.etheredge@policyscience.net (email)

[The Policy Sciences Center, Inc. is a public foundation that develops and integrates knowledge and practice to advance human dignity. Its headquarters are 127 Wall St., Room 322 PO Box 208215 in New Haven, CT 06520-8215. It may be contacted at the office of its Chair, Michael Reisman (michael.reisman@yale.edu), 203-432-1993. Further information about the Policy Sciences Center and its projects, Society, and journal is available at [www.policysciences.org](http://www.policysciences.org).]