Date: Thu, 24 Dec 2009 01:00:26 -0500
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 Nation-Building/Failed States chapter: Somalia and other return engagements

Dear Dr. Fischhoff & Colleagues:

"Early nation building efforts in Haiti, Somalia, and the Balkans began as though they were the first of their kind. By the mid-1990s, the U. S. government began to codify lessons learned and improve planning for subsequent operations. Unfortunately, the lessons of the 1990s were disregarded in the planning for Afghanistan and Iraq. The result has been inefficient operations, billions of dollars of wasted resources, and stymied ambitions."

This quotation might seem to be from a radical or Leftist/revisionist critique of American foreign policy. However, it was written by a distinguished Council on Foreign Relations Task Force in 2005: In the Wake of War: Improving U.S. Post-Conflict Capabilities was co-chaired by two former National Security Advisers, Samuel Berger and Brent Scowcroft. Their subject was the lack of sustained learning/institutional memory across six major nation-building projects, from Mogadishu to Mosul, from 1993 - 2005. They also were concerned with related problems in the conceptual frameworks, learning, memory, and effectiveness of sixteen ongoing UN peacekeeping operations, with 67,000 peacekeepers, at the time of their Report. <1>

A New Return Engagement with Somalia
As the United States, now, faces a return engagement in Somalia - a result of its earlier failure of nation-building - it is timely for the National Academy of Sciences to give guidance about the social science data systems and analysis methods that will be needed to solve these problems in sub-Saharan Africa.

"Will This be on the Exam?" - A Long History
One of the famous early social science forecasting exercises, originally an issue of Daedalus, Toward the Year 2000, was edited by Daniel Bell et al. in 1967. It

included Ithiel de Sola Pool's, "The International System in the Next Half Century." Pool got a remarkable number of things right - among them, that there would continue to be political instability, violence, and the threat/reality of failed states in sub-Saharan Africa.

It is sobering to realize how long-standing these problems in sub-Saharan Africa have been; and how persistent the failures of learning and institutional memory have been in American foreign policy. <2>

Today, with $75 billion/year for an N=200,000 national intelligence system, this record might improve - if the National Academy of Sciences outlines how to do it.

Lloyd Etheredge

<1> The cases and failures actually extend backward to Vietnam, and even earlier in the Central American foreign aid/political development work of the Cold War.

<2> South Africa - which many people in the 1960s thought would disintegrate into a horrific race war - became a stable democratic state. So there might be methods that can work.

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