

## Editor's Introduction

*"But the scores of methodological and ideological essays about new approaches to the study of communications can hardly be honored by the term "ferment." There is a simple recipe for these essays: avoid measurement, add moral commitment, and throw in some of the following words: social system, capitalism, dependency, positivism, idealism, ideology, autonomy, paradigm, commercialism, consciousness, emancipation, cooptation, critical, instrumental, technocratic, legitimation, praxiology, repressive, dialogue, hegemony, contradiction, problematic."*

—Ithiel Pool, pp. 271–72 below

*"How could it be that in free universities in a free society we came so close to a major debacle, with little awareness of what was going on, and with relative quiescence by students and faculties alike?"*

—Ithiel Pool, p. 289 below

*"Most movements that are self-described as radical are highly urbanistic, or nationalistic, or oriented to obsolete class structures, or to central bureaucratic planning. The changes that we can see on the horizon are much more drastic than that...People who think about social change in traditional political terms cannot begin to imagine the changes that lie ahead. Conventional reformers cast their programs in terms of national policies, or in terms of laws and central planning. But in the end, what will shape the future is a creative potential that inheres in the new technologies."*

—Ithiel Pool<sup>1</sup>

Plato's *Republic* argued that improved education of future leaders was a key to better government: he recommended an ideal of philosopher-kings. Beginning in the 1930s, American universities supported the growth of social science that began at the University of Chicago and have added another (scientific) ideal and option for undergraduate and graduate training in public affairs.

The development of social science continues to face political challenges in America: when it is used to recommend greater effectiveness for contentious policies; from the unexpected tenacity and competition of simple and familiar ideological ideas; from (in Ithiel's view) deconstructionism and other misdirected wastes of time; and from government. These issues are addressed in the first four selections:

### **"Some Facts About Values"**

During the Cold War Ithiel Pool shared the anti-Communist commitment of the American foreign policy Establishment. When America became militarily involved in Vietnam, he contracted to direct a series of major research projects in Vietnam to improve the war effort. He also was a public supporter of the war. Leading academic opponents of the Vietnam War brought the integrity of his scientific work under attack, alleging (in part) that it should have been value free.

In the first essay, "Some Facts About Values," Ithiel Pool responds to this criticism and the deeper issue of whether the disciplined detachment of science is inconsistent with strong moral and political commitments.<sup>2</sup>

### **"What Ferment?"**

Ithiel Pool was deeply educated in the humanities. Thus, there was a degree of surprise and frustration when a movement of deconstructionists and other humanists began to criticize the scientific study of communication processes. As the quotation at the beginning of this section illustrates, Pool had scant sympathy for their elusive and impassioned conversations of words with other words, especially if these were presented as progress. It may help to explain his views by making three points:

1.) As I noted in the introduction to this volume: To Ithiel Pool's generation of social scientists, it was already obvious that social real-

ity was invented and that people often were entrapped and manipulated by the cultures, societies, and political systems in which they lived. As an undergraduate during the 1930s, at the University of Chicago, he was a passionate Trotskyite and student leader. Later, he studied Nazi propaganda during World War II as armies marched at the behest of demagogic leaders. Afterward, he studied political development in decades when millions more died in the Chinese revolution and other nationalist/decolonial revolutions; and Soviet-American confrontations, intensified by ideology, threatened nuclear wars.<sup>3</sup> The commitment to freedom was implicit: Pool believed that social science, itself, is liberating and provides an independent, steadier, truer, and more realistic alternative to the frameworks and choices that the political world provides.

2.) Deconstruction has been done for decades—perhaps more usefully—with help from scientific methods. Any scientist who researches America's pluralist political system quickly recognizes that feminists, Republican businessmen, Black nationalists, religious fundamentalists, authoritarians, etc. “write” different stories and interpretations of national political reality, their own identities, and their relationship to government. The alleged single “objective” reality of a good social scientist typically is a picture of many individual's realities, only partially shared—just as (in section two of this volume) Pool described the Kaiser and the Tsar as living in distinct realities, although with common elements. Another example (also from section two): when Abelson, Pool, and Popkin used a computer to simulate the American political system they began with 80,000 respondents (from statistically representative samples), immediately “deconstructed” any crude effort to tell one story about political reality by systematically identifying 480 voter types, and reconstructing the stories of each type's different relation to the political election with respect to 52 political issues! Just as “deconstructing” the physical world into 100+ physical elements by *scientific* methods allows you to see how it is put together, and is empowering, so Ithiel believed that the social scientific way of pursuing the aims of deconstructionist liberation also would be more productive.

3.) The contention between some humanist writers and social scientists is not whether social reality is made-up. Indeed, a key task of social scientists is to create and line-up independent and dependent variables, invent stories (i.e., alternative causal theories) and chose

among them. An American physician could be challenged by a witch doctor, on the grounds that both “make up” versions of reality, but the rejoinder of an American physician would be “What is your cure rate?” Until their debate moved to this second question, Ithiel believed critics were missing the point, and power, of uniting the humanities with science to create social science as an aid to democratic problem solving.

### “Who Rules America?”

The third selection is Ithiel Pool’s critical review of a book by a distinguished contemporary and political scientist at Yale, Charles Lindblom. Lindblom’s book, *Politics and markets*, was a public affairs book that made strong ideological arguments blended with the language of social science.

Ordinarily, Pool did not review public affairs books, which typically require simple and bold themes and proscribe words like “hypothesis”—it would be unfair to hold them to scientific standards. In Lindblom’s case he made an exception, perhaps because the book received an award from the American Political Science Association as a scientific contribution. Too, the unexpected tenacity of simple ideological ideas to diagnose and solve national problems has continued to restrict the growth of social science and the review was an opportunity to alert readers, with a degree of frustration, that social science is capable of a better analysis of the issues that Lindblom addressed.<sup>4</sup>

### “Human Subjects Regulations on the Social Sciences”

Ithiel Pool’s scientific views about the conditions of well-functioning democracy are included in a companion volume, also published by Transaction Books.<sup>5</sup> He believed that many other institutions in society must be strong and well-run, with a degree of respected independence and self government, for a democracy to be strong. The value of healthy, independent institutions was evident in his own life in the strength provided by his family and Jewish traditions: he was descended from a long line of distinguished scholars and rabbis (on both sides) and his father, David deSola Pool, had been the head of the Sephardic congregation in New York City. And he cared about scientific integrity and building strong institutions: he built the MIT Poli-

cal Science Department to be one of the best in the world and cared deeply about the quality of teaching and the humanity and rigor of the Department's daily operation.

The essay concerns an attempt by the federal government to impose requirements for prior ethical review of all university research involving human subjects, *even* when no government funds are used for the research. The attempts to assure ethical rules may seem well-intentioned to the reader (and, perhaps, they were). Thus, Ithiel Pool's reasons for leading the national fight against them might be especially instructive: he felt that basic truths, supported by social science research, were being forgotten—or had never sunk-in—among many faculty and administrators at American universities.<sup>6</sup> At the time, it was alarmingly easy for university administrations to be unconcerned or to acquiesce in the face of such well-intentioned motives for bureaucratic review—and the reader should be forewarned that, except for Ithiel's personal initiative, commitment, and credibility with scientists throughout the country, the erosion probably would have occurred.

### **“What's Next? The Intellectual Legacy of Ithiel de Sola Pool” by Lloyd Etheredge**

This final paper discusses the potential contribution of several of the methods from this volume to improve our understanding and foresight about the new forces that are shaping the world. Especially as these methods are made more practical by the exponential improvements in computer technology. The reader may especially want to consider Ithiel Pool's view (expressed in the quotation at the beginning of this section) that emerging social science research will show that the traditional categories of thinking about political reform are becoming outmoded and that better guidance in securing a freer world, and more humane politics, can be provided by the development of social science.

The paper also seeks to express the spirit of Ithiel Pool's scientific work. It discusses elements of his life, his civic engagement with the issues of his time, his instinct for scientific leadership, and his passionate commitment to a world with freedom and human dignity. The paper was presented at an MIT symposium honoring a communication research program that Ithiel Pool had begun three decades earlier, a

symposium that—in Ithiel’s spirit—looked forward to the new research issues raised by the transitions to new media on the threshold of the twenty-first century.

### Notes

1. Ithiel de Sola Pool, “Four unnatural institutions and the road ahead,” in Lloyd S. Etheredge (ed.), *Politics in wired nations: Selected writings of Ithiel de Sola Pool* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1998), pp. 227—237, p. 237.
2. Readers who are familiar with the Vietnam period and Ithiel Pool’s views may wish to have a further discussion of the issues raised by his involvement. The questions deserve to be addressed separately, after copies of the research are declassified, but several comments may be useful to future scholars:

There were seven main Simulmatics projects in Viet Nam between June, 1966 and the Tet offensive: 1.) a study of the Chieu Hoi or Open Arms Program to understand the original recruitment of Viet Cong members and increase the effectiveness of the program in securing and maintaining defections. (The study included observations of reception centers and several hundred interviews, including 84 depth interviews.) 2.) A study, under Dr. Philip Worchel, to improve the effectiveness of the Regional and Popular Forces of South Vietnam. Over 700 troops from effective and ineffective RF/PF squads were interviewed, along with their wives and fellow-villagers (a total of about 1300 subjects); reliability was checked by a second series of interviews three months later and the results were cross-validated with untested units and villagers. 3.) New methods to measure combat effectiveness, a project directed by Dr. Frederick Rockett. 4.) An independent assessment of the reliability of the data provided by American advisers concerning the progress in pacification of rural areas. 5.) Assessment of elements of Vietnamese culture and tradition which aided US authorities in communicating effectively with the Vietnamese population. 6.) A three wave panel survey, designed by Ithiel Pool and Dr. Ralph K. White (George Washington University), to assess the impacts of introducing television to rural areas of Vietnam, which was never completed. 7.) Studies of special groups within the Vietnamese population to assess how to help mobilize these groups for the war effort and national reconstruction. The study included students, the labor movement, the Chinese community, the Hoa Hao (a religious sect that have successfully checked Communism in provinces under its control), and the entrepreneurial class in both metropolitan areas and small towns. Participants included Dr. Arthur Smithies (Harvard), Dr. John Donnell (Temple), Dr. Milton Sacks (Brandeis), and Dr. Frederick Yu (Columbia). Source: Ithiel de Sola Pool, “Simulmatics efforts in Viet Nam.” February, 1968. Xerox. Attachment 7 to a post Tet-offensive memorandum by Ithiel de Sola Pool, “Achieving pacification in Viet Nam.” Xerox, no date.

B.) In judging Pool’s relationship to the war effort, it is relevant that he was highly respected in Cambridge and enjoyed a unique and direct access to the National Security Advisers of Presidents involved in the war, especially McGeorge Bundy (Presidents Kennedy and Johnson) from Harvard and Walt Rostow (President Johnson) who was a former MIT colleague. It seems likely that the contracts to Ithiel Pool’s Simulmatics corporation were designed to give an independent and direct channel of scientific assessment and well-informed advice at a high level, in the same spirit as related contracts to the RAND Corporation. Thus

Pool's belief that he could influence the war effort as an in-house critic and adviser had a realistic basis. If there is criticism due on this score, it is probably that Ithiel Pool over-estimated the capacity and commitment of the American government to act on the assessments and recommendations he provided, even if they were favored by the National Security Adviser.

- C.) The question of impact needs to be judged carefully. Ithiel Pool's advice for winning the war was not accepted, but his research concerning the problems that needed to be solved may have confirmed a pessimistic and skeptical analysis in the Washington intelligence community, especially concerning problems of motivation of the military forces of South Vietnam compared with the Viet Cong and the acute disconnection between local villages and the political elites in Saigon. (For example, in his post-Tet memorandum (cited above) Ithiel Pool recommended a vigorous improvement of the war effort, but also summarized current progress candidly: "Most of these 150,000 to 175,000 [PF—Popular Force soldiers in the villages of Viet Nam] are poorly led." "PF unlike (sic) ARVN [the army of South Viet Nam] seldom abuse the villagers." "The interface of the village and the district governments is the interface between a grass roots meaningful organization and Mandarin authoritarianism...responsible [national] government in Viet Nam that will command the people's loyalty" has not been achieved. See Leslie Gelb and Richard Betts, *The irony of Vietnam: The system worked* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1979).)
3. In America, there also was a steady progression of liberation and reform movements during his lifetime: union organizing, the civil rights and environmental movements of the 1960s, women's liberation, and many others.
  4. A reader who is familiar with Pool's work will recognize that his earlier book about the influence of American business on Congress (R. Bauer, I. Pool, and L. Dexter, *American business and public policy: The politics of foreign trade*. (NY: Atherton Press of Prentice-Hall, 1963)) is the type of grounded analysis that he believed Lindblom should have done before making statements about the influence of business in American politics.
  5. Etheredge (ed.), *op. cit.*
  6. The scientific base for these views concerning civil society is discussed more fully in his "The Public and the polity," reprinted in Lloyd S. Etheredge (ed.), *op. cit.*, pp. 263-290.