



September 16, 2008

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Dr. David Lightfoot
Assistant Director
Directorate for Social, Behavioral & Economic Sciences (SBE/OAD)
The National Science Foundation
4201 Wilson Boulevard
Arlington, Virginia 22230, USA

Dear Dr. Lightfoot:

The American Political Science Association views with interest the initiative of the National Science Foundation to partner with the US Department of Defense (DoD) for the Social and Behavioral Dimensions of National Security, Conflict, and Cooperation (NSCC). The political science community has a long standing commitment to forming a deeper understanding of the underlying elements of the initiative's concepts, and of the policy processes that flow from them. We welcome the availability of increased resources for the study of these topics, and of expanded access to relevant scholarly materials, in a merit-based research environment that is nondiscriminatory, unclassified and unrestricted as to publication.

At the same time, we are acutely aware of the manifold and different sensitivities of government funding of such research and of the care that must be taken to protect both the academic freedom of scholars conducting this work and the integrity of the National Science Foundation in supporting it. In this spirit it is important to seek extraordinary transparency in the funding and review process.

We recognize and appreciate that NSCC funded research will follow customary NSF procedures for peer review. While we understand that these procedures may routinely call for NSF program officers to consult government agencies interested in the scholarship as one source of guidance in forming review panels, it is nevertheless highly relevant for scholars to know if this will, or will not, occur in the NSCC initiative. Similarly, while we recognize that the work is unclassified and freely open to appropriate scholarly publication, it is very relevant for scholars to know whether the DoD or other public institutions supporting the work will play any formal role in reviewing the completed research, and what that role would be.

Networking a World of Scholars

In the interest of guaranteeing the independence of scholarly activity, our advice would be that the DoD be not at all involved in either advising on the composition of review panels or reviewing the research. We recognize the legitimate interest of the national security community to learn as much as possible about the work after it has been completed. In any case, we believe it is important that the NSF be explicit about the role that DoD and related agencies may play in contributing to review panels or reviewing the scholarly work, even if such activities fall within the bounds of normal NSF practice. We encourage an addition to the NSF website on these questions, and perhaps also a statement that would be circulated to the scholarly community.

Sincerely,

/s/ BY EMAIL

Peter J. Katzenstein
President

cc:

Frank Scioli, Deputy Division Director, Division of Social and Economic Sciences
Brian Humes, Program Director, Political Science
Howard Silver, Consortium of Social Science Associations