

POLITICAL/CULTURAL ANALYSIS

I. Project Title: The Cultural Element in Political Analysis

II. Cost: FY-83 FY-84
 \$400K \$400K

III. Description of Project:

A. Statement of Need

In the USG, analysis of the political life of foreign countries is an art which seeks to explain and anticipate events and developments of importance to US policymakers. Full mastery of even the current state of the art of foreign political analysis is difficult, requiring among other things language fluency and a profound sense of place and history; the cultural aspects of history are often those most inaccessible to the non-native, the most difficult to master. Yet most country experts agree that these aspects play an important role in shaping contemporary political life and that a well-informed understanding of this role is essential to high quality political analysis.

The primary purpose of this project is to enhance the quality of political analysis by probing the impact that culture has on politics and providing materials that will enable intelligence analysts more readily and reliably to prepare culturally sensitive political analysis.

The secondary purpose of this project is to stimulate in the academic sector additional multi-disciplinary, and preferably self-sustaining, effort to advance knowledge of culture and politics in its theoretical, methodological, and practical dimensions. If it is determined that this can be accomplished through the development of a national center of excellence for advanced research, writing and teaching in this field, the Department of State's Bureau of Intelligence and Research will be prepared to entertain follow-up proposals for an appropriate USG role in that development.

B. Who Will Accomplish:

A carefully selected contractor who will work closely with a working group of State Department Officials organized by INR.

C. What Is to Be Produced:

The project envisions four types of products:

1. A sophisticated checklist of politically salient aspects of culture, with explanatory, illustrative, and comparative commentary to serve as a guide to USG professionals concerned with foreign political systems.
2. A series of concise and rigorous statements each dealing with culture and politics in one of about ten selected countries designed as an aid to USG analysts and other employees assigned to reporting, representational, negotiating, policy development or other political functions.

3. A report, with recommendations, on techniques for conveying to experienced USG foreign affairs professionals the type of advanced cultural understanding embodied in the checklist and country statements. The techniques should be those judged most effective for use in short courses at the Foreign Service Institute.
4. A series of direct encounters between USG analysts and other professionals, on the one hand, and outside scholars and experts on the other. The meetings should be geared to the preparation and review, of the materials specified above.

D. Payoff:

The materials on culture and politics are envisioned (a) as aids through which experienced professionals called upon to apply their analytical skills to a particular country can more reliably and rapidly develop the advanced cultural understanding required, and (b) as materials for courses at the Foreign Service Institute and other USG educational institutions in which country experts receive advanced training.

E. Time Phasing:

The Community funded aspect of the project will be evaluated at the end of its first year and completed at the end of the second. At that time, it will be determined whether to expand the project to other countries under INR funding.

IV. Intelligence Community Applicability and Benefits:

Project results and products will be available to all Intelligence Community and other USG analysts. The project will contribute to the analyst's sensitivity and understanding of the cultural impacts on political behavior and to the production of more rounded and accurate political estimates.

V. Probability of Success:

The problem of the interaction of culture on politics is extremely complex and is a crucial dimension of political behavior. The probability of improving our understanding of this interaction is good.