

## **The Minerva Consortia: A Partnership for Knowledge**

America today faces more, and more complex, challenges than at any time in its recent past. From the rise of new powers to trends in the environment, demographics, and culture to violent extremism, we will increasingly grapple with unprecedented change. To address these shared challenges, Americans, and their government, need a better understanding of the factors and causes behind them, what they mean, and what the future might bring. We in the Department of Defense propose a new initiative to help develop that understanding: government-supported research consortia that will draw upon the knowledge, ideas, and creativity of the nation's universities. The Minerva Consortia will provide important and lasting professional contributions to a variety of disciplines, and a critical public service.

### ***Concept***

Minerva's core approach is to encourage the formation of diverse consortia to conduct original research in a range of topic areas. Each topic or question will be framed and approached in a fashion appropriate to it and from a range of perspectives. We seek teams of scholars across universities and colleges who will tackle a question or topic across disciplines, coordinated by a lead institution. Participants need not be U.S. citizens.

Minerva builds upon experience and practice. The U.S. government already supports extensive research in a wide range of topics, primarily in science and technology, and has done so for decades. We wish to expand this support into fundamental research in new areas in the social sciences. Minerva will be driven by the pursuit of wider and deeper knowledge of subjects of national interest, derived through open-source research, to produce conferences and publishable peer-reviewed papers. The consortia's results will often assist informed decision making across all aspects of government, yet ultimately its contribution will be to the disciplines it reflects and to the nation as a whole.

All Minerva research and debate will be transparent. Research results will be unclassified and open for publication. The consortia would also be centers for the promotion of their own work, with some institutions becoming the repositories of important open source documentary archives available to scholars from throughout the country.

### ***Consortium Participants***

Any accredited institution of higher learning in the United States and its territories may form the lead institution for a consortium. Foreign institutions may

participate if it can be shown that they have a unique contribution to make. Team members may be drawn from any discipline, but must be shown to be relevant to the research being undertaken. Team members may be with institutions of learning, think tanks, and independent scholars. Neither they, nor their graduate students, need be American citizens. We seek the best minds in all fields, no matter where they may be found, and encourage collaboration across institutions and disciplines. Applications will be reviewed for the whole team, not just the lead institution, and in some cases DoD will stipulate modifications across competing applications to create a common application for a consortium. Typically, we would expect two awards per area of interest, although this will vary according to need and the attractiveness of applications. These consortia will not be permanent bodies, rather they will last the length of a project

### ***Initial Topic Areas and Products***

1. Chinese Military and Technology. The Chinese publish a wealth of information about military and technological developments on an unclassified basis. However, many of these publications are difficult for scholars outside of China to access. This consortium would create a documentation center, physical or virtual, to serve as an archive for such publications and would sponsor authoritative translations of primary sources. By facilitating access to these resources, sponsoring research, and holding conferences, the consortium would contribute significantly to our understanding of the capabilities and intentions of a rising world power – an understanding that would have real impact on public policy.
2. Studies of the Strategic Impact of Religious and Cultural Changes within The Islamic World. The ultimate course for solving terrorism challenges will depend less on military action than on the overall ideological climate within the world of Islam. A research program dedicated understanding how this climate is likely to change and how religious views and attitudes evolve could be an important contributor to how we develop strategy for countering violent ideological extremism. Consortia will be asked for an approach to better understanding future ideological trends within Islam and will produce papers to be presented in a joint conference.
3. Iraqi Perspectives Project. In the course of Operation Iraqi Freedom, a vast number of documents and other media came into the possession of the U.S. Defense Department. This collection offers a unique opportunity for an unprecedented insight into the workings of a dictatorial third-world nationalist regime. In its breadth and potential value, this collection can only be compared to the Smolensk archives, which were of immense value to numerous scholars from diverse backgrounds and disciplines. A consortium will be asked to examine the

collection, help further organize it for scholars, and write papers for publication based on these materials.

4. Studies of Terrorist Organization and Ideologies. Similarly, the Department of Defense has accumulated a collection of documents and other media that relate to the workings of terrorist organizations. Most items in the archive contain strategic, ideological, practical considerations, and day-to-day debate that I think would be of great interest to scholars. These archives can only be fully explored, understood, and shared with the help of scholars, and their contents could help significantly advance future research and scholarship on numerous subjects. Consortia will be asked to examine the collection, help further organize it for scholars, write papers for publication based on these materials, and become centers for the promotion of research in this area.

5. Exploratory Areas for Research. Just as new ideas and fields of study, such as game theory and Kremlinology, evolved during the Cold War, the challenges facing the world today will require a much broader conception and application of national power than just military prowess. The government and the Department of Defense need to engage additional intellectual disciplines – such as history, anthropology, sociology, demography, and evolutionary psychology – in order to better understand what have we overlooked and what is on the horizon. What topic areas or questions relevant to international affairs, international security, and national security, have not been properly understood or are emerging? A Consortium will create a seed project examining opportunities for further research and establish workshops to define topics and questions.

### ***Future Selection of Topics and Products***

The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy will identify future needs and types of products (papers, dissertations, conferences, studies, etc.) for consortia. The Under Secretary of Defense for Policy will select topic areas or focus questions with the advice of an advisory board. Potential applicant consortia teams, each with a lead institution, may also submit ideas and proposals for consideration.

A Minerva Academic Advisory Board will provide peer review and will advise the Department regarding evaluation and selection of applications and to help evaluate results. The board will be made up of members drawn from a large pool of individuals. A committee for each topic will be selected from the pool, however to prevent a conflict of interest, no institution or individual participating in a submitted proposal may be a member of the committee. A committee will consist of: a chair and scholars or research directors from universities and/or research centers. Members will be selected by the Secretary of Defense.

Committees will meet twice annually: once to assist in selection, once to assist in evaluation.