

**The Vulnerability of the United States:
A Predictive Study on Possible Al-Qaeda
Terrorist attacks in the United States.**

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INTL504 Analytics I

“Can a 9-11 Style Attack be predicted? Is Al-Qaeda or the T.S.A. strong enough to overcome the other?”

Introduction

This paper will examine how two methods of analyzing intelligence data and information can be used to predict the likelihood of another 9-11 style attack in the United States. The two methods covered in this research paper are the “Lamp

Method and the “Use of Alternative Futures and Scenario Analysis”. A comparison of the two methods will show which one is better at predicting a terrorist event and the likelihood that it could occur again. Further, it will discuss the actors and how one or the other could potentially overcome the other. In addition, it will identify the strengths and weaknesses of both. Potential targets and their value will be examined.

Placing us at a disadvantage is that we are now tasked with assessing where the next attack will be in the United States. Traditionally in wars, opposition knows where to locate enemy camps. However, the dynamics here are different. Ours is a fully exposed infrastructure with a massive amount of land to protect. Land mass is some 3,000 miles from one coast to the other and there is literally 1400 between the Mexican border and the Canadian border. This is a large quantity of land to keep continual surveillance on with anyone’s guess where and when the next target will surface. (4)

The main priorities of Al-Qaeda are not necessarily to destroy the United States symbols, but rather to bring the United States economy to our knees. On a smaller scale from CBRN, the airline industry suffered a great deal from the post-affect of 9-11. Most hit were 2003 and 2004 travel seasons pitting passengers, airline industry, and the threats of airplanes used as weapons. Airline passenger traffic has yet to recover from the 9-11 attack. In this regard, Al-Qaeda has succeeded in its plan to thwart economic progress. (4)

Literature Review

Several articles were surveyed covering potential targets, main actors, TSA

improvements, organization, and weaknesses, and Al Qaeda threat potential.

The Palo Verde Power Plant could be used as a potential example since it is a viable target, is vulnerable due to its size, potential for a use in the future as a WMD, its apparent accessibility and potential for a terrorist attack. This power facility is located in Arizona in the Sonora desert just 50 miles west of Phoenix. The government was said to have deployed the National Guard in an effort to protect the United States' largest nuclear power facility with three reactors that produced 30 billion kilowatt hours of electricity in 2002. Jim McDonald, an Arizona Public Service spokesman stated that we live in sensitive times and he understands the critical nature of the safety and security of the plant. He stated: "We understand the sensitivity of this time, and we are very, very committed to protecting the safe operation of Palo Verde." He declined however, to make any comments on the specific intelligence that identified the threat. One official stated the threat was contained in "classified intelligence reports distributed to law enforcement and security officials." (1) Another official confirmed that the threat was uncorroborated threat information however, the officials in the State of Arizona continue to take the threat seriously. Some of the sensitive information received disclosed that the plant was targeted by unidentified Middle-Eastern terrorists. This threat came along with other threats from intelligence that indicate Iraq had set up operatives in cells within the United States or abroad that may be given the directive to conduct attacks or sabotage on Baghdad's behalf. Justice Department officials have warned that war with Iraq is expected to dramatically increase chances of terrorist attacks launched against the United States and

abroad. (1)

In another article, an impact study was conducted by Applied Economics, a Phoenix based consulting firm in order to assess the importance of Palo Verde Power Plant and what exactly it contributes to the economy. Randy Edington wants employees of Palo Verde to realize its affects on the economy and the surrounding communities. This facility reportedly contributes \$1.8 billion to the state's economy and approximately 52 million in taxes the plant pays annually. It is obvious to see why Palo Verde could be a target worthy of an attack by terrorists. Its ability to produce this much power to this many geographical areas -Arizona, California and New Mexico, some 4 million plus customers makes this a very attractive target for terrorists. One can imagine the toll it would take economically if it was struck or attacked since it is a major contributor to the economy dumping millions into the southwest economy. This doesn't even take into consideration the psychological shock the public would be compelled to succumb to if it were struck nor the death tolls or slow deaths that would surely follow such an attack.

On any given day the Power plant has 3,400 workers present at the site, the station has three identical pressurized water reactors that stretch across 4,250 acres west of Buckeye. When all three are running at full capacity they generate 4,170 megawatts. Given the magnitude of how large and how powerful this plant is, terrorists have most certainly identified it as a target of global media appeal. (2)

In an alarming report, vulnerabilities pertaining to the security of the reactors revealed various security breaches. Security drills implemented by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission were conducted to test the awareness level of security

and ascertain their ability to repel an attack by terrorists. Consequently, as a result of the drills-reactor Security Guards were said to have performed poorly. The drills involved mock attacks by only three intruders and assisted by only one confederate within the plant. Even though the drills were somewhat limited, employees at nearly half the reactors scored poorly. “In an article in the January issue of The Bulletin of Atomic Scientists (www.thebulletin.org), Daniel Hirsch, the president of Bridge the Gap, contends that the drills are unrealistic, especially in light of the terrorist attacks of September 11, which involved 19 hijackers operating in four well coordinated teams. The N.R.C. and the industry seem to be stuck in a time warp of a quarter of a century ago, and are simply hoping that the problem goes away. He called for upgrading the level of assumed threat that is the basis for designing protections of nuclear power plants.” (3)

Federal regulations are calling for more emergency preparedness and for them to be better prepared to deal with “a determined violent external assault, attack by stealth or deceptive actions of several persons.” (3) Attackers are said to have been extremely prepared and are assumed to carry light weapons, use vehicles such as four wheel or utility style, and have assistance from an inside source or employee from within the plant. Interestingly, the regulations do not address the protections much needed that would protect against attackers with aircraft or boats, even though many power plants are located near areas where flight is not restricted or tightly regulated, or perhaps near rivers, seashores or lakes. This is an obvious weakness in our steps of progressive upgrade of terrorist counter strategies. If there are vulnerabilities or weaknesses in these areas of specificity,

Al-Qaeda most probably has already identified them as such. The Regulations call for at least five guards on duty at plants-by their calculations enough to “outnumber” terrorists. The National Regulatory Commission’s documents “call this a matter of conservatism, and the agency has said that the threat of a larger attack is not credible.” (3)

Hoover Dam and Glen Canyon Dam have been reported to be a terrorist targets. Although considered an extremely soft target the reality is, it could be a terrorist attraction. This target has media glamour that could be a target worthy of media frenzy-grabbing media attention on a national level and most likely international attention. “What the FBI concludes is, Al-Qaeda will not risk experimental means for attack. They plan to “go for gold” striking the jugular vein of the U.S. economy. Civilian casualties are only a side bar, not the goal.” (4) Hoover Dam reportedly supplies power to Arizona 19%, Nevada 23%, Metropolitan Water District of Southern California 28%, Los Angeles 15% with California sharing 1.5 percent of the Colorado River Basin yet consumes 26% of the river output. Keeping in mind of course that according to sources, in 2001 5 hijackers from 9-11 visited Las Vegas. (4)

Not only are dams such as Hoover Dam and Glen Canyon Dam targets, there are others worthy of note. The Colorado River which sprawls 1400 miles long connecting more than 50 dams. Lake Powell and Lake Mead supply water to Colorado, Wyoming, New Mexico, Utah, Arizona, Nevada, California, and Northern Mexico. (4)

Should terrorists ever be positioned to attack Manhattan bridges and tunnels

the City of New York could be isolated from the rest of the world. Although this feat would prove temporary it would be somewhat costly however, not catastrophic. An attack against the Golden Gate and the Oakland Bay bridges would also be costly and slow commuters for a lengthy period of time. San Francisco would not be cut off due to its emergency preparedness and plans are in place for any such disaster. (4)

Perhaps what continues to worry FBI officials is the probability of a catastrophic event that would take a decade or so to rebuild. “The destruction of Glen Canyon Dam and Hoover Dam in the Western United States are on the FBI’s less publicly known list of targets. The economic impact involving the destruction of these dams would be two-fold. Not only would an initial impact cause more devastation than Hurricane Andrew and the Northridge earthquake combined; but a long term impact would cripple the major cities of Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Los Angeles for years.” (4)

Since the Colorado River has more than 50 dams altogether, any number of smaller dams downstream from Glen Canyon would buckle under the pressure of the initial water release. The structure of the Hoover Dam is in question should Glen Canyon ever fail. Seemingly, at a bare minimum the gush of water would bypass Hoover Dam causing at least a “500 foot high wall to overtake its crest for 11 days. The flood damage caused by destroying both dams simultaneously can only be speculated.” (4)

The largest reservoir in the United States is Lake Mead; which is contained in the Hoover Dam. It supplies some 30 million residents with 34,850,000 cubic meters of

water. While its counter part-Glen Canyon reservoir (Lake Powell) is the second largest reservoir in the United States and contains approximately 33,300,000 cubic meters. (4)

It is estimated to rebuild Glen Canyon and Hoover Dams would be 36 billion dollars and could be a daunting task of up to 17 years to rebuild, which would include water replenishment. These two dams alone would most likely be the worst economic catastrophe of modern times. Upon their immediate destruction the likely effects would be the most important water and electric power supply becoming non-existent “for residents and businesses in the most populated region in the United States.” (4)

There are some security measures in place for both dams since 9-11. These contain vehicle restrictions so that large vehicles carrying luggage are prohibited from crossing-this would include commercial trucks and busses. These rules are applicable during peak travel times. Any type of vehicle that is covered for example, U-haul type trucks, campers on trucks, pickup trucks with camper shells, boats, trailers and other such covered traffic are subjected to inspections. Every passenger, their vehicles or luggage are subject to inspection at any time. “Glen Canyon Dam was constructed with a bridge bypass, vehicles do not have access to cross.” (4)

Although the possible scenarios mentioned above are problematic for future evaluation as are their remedies; the United States needs to be acutely aware of the fact that since airplanes have caused the most devastating and successful attack against the United States, we should question whether our T.S.A. is strong

enough to prevent Al-Qaeda and other terrorists from gaining entry and access. An Al-Qaeda affiliate group attempted to bring down Northwest flight 253 on Christmas day. The attempt involved explosives smuggled inside a passenger's shoes. Unsuccessful detonation of explosives within his underwear signaled passengers of something dangerously wrong. Passengers and flight crew stopped the would-be bomber. However, there are questions that the public and government officials' want answered. Are there any stepped up efforts and is TSA doing an adequate job? Several raised the question of why was Umar Farouk Abdulmutallab allowed to board a plane let alone fly. Much of the attention understandably turned toward the TSA and their seemingly inability to "connect the dots" about this particular passenger by either refusing to allow him to board the plane in the first place and disrupting the attack.

This article states that it is difficult to streamline the continuous information received, information can be unreliable at best, and it is too difficult to get corroboration or verification of information in a timely manner. One of the proposed methods for improvement is simply a multi-layered security system that has several points by which to identify threats potentially, and consequently disrupt attacks. (5)

There are far too many gaps in the TSA's responsibilities. It doesn't appear that communication efforts between TSA and other federal governmental officials is adequate. There is far too much information that is not being streamlined and shared amongst all levels of law enforcement across the board. At the present time, there is no doubt in the public perception that the TSA is not strong enough

to overcome the obstacles posed by Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups thus, it is signaled by the lack of confidence in passenger traffic. If the general public had faith in current procedures of the airlines up to an including the TSA, more passengers would be flying as witnessed before the 9-11 attack. (5)

The twin towers was a target well chosen and very successful for Al-Qaeda. The reason this attack was very successful was because Al-Qaeda chose a triad of American symbolism consistent with the very heart of the United States economic and global domination. Iconic and functional buildings strategic and crucial to the U.S and its existence-our multinational business system, our military, and our government. These three were the Pentagon, the World Trade Center and the capital. Almost all the terrorists involved in this attack were from Saudi Arabia-including Osama bin Laden-none was from Iraq. Al-Qaeda's perception of the United States is we are attempting to dominate the Middle-East and the entire world for that matter, in a global domination. Al-Qaeda believes it is the last resort of the defenders for the Middle East in a war waged against the United States because they believe we are the "Unholy Trinity of our multinational businesses, military and government." (6) Al-Qaeda are guerilla fighters that believe their backs are against the walls. They are known to be fanatical fighters. They have proven they are willing to employ suicide attacks to further their goals, send their messages and/or achieve their objective/s. The attack against the United States in reference to 9-11 is not radical islam; it was about power, domination and wealth. It is about people who believe they are oppressed, repressed and exploited. Further, they believe they have nothing else to lose-in some cases the desperation of

survival.

The American people are led “to believe that the attack was caused by radical Islamic hatred of the Christian and Jewish west.” (6) However, if you examine the horrific attack and its possible motives more thoroughly, it is apparent the attack was not religiously motivated or in an effort to wage a terrorist campaign who did not follow their Islamic faith. Repeated investigations reveal that attacks of this nature are foreseeable in the future as the United States scrambles to predict how, when and where the next attack will take place or if it will be abroad.

In September 1992 Ramzi Yousef traveled to the U.S by directive from the NYC terrorist cell. When his luggage was searched bomb-making manuals turned up along with evidence supporting other terrorist connections. He traveled with an individual also suspected of terrorist connections, Ahmed Ajaj. The bomb making manuals brought into the U.S. by both suspects “included instructions on the use and handling of virtually other component of the bomb in Oklahoma City.” (9)

Yousef later joined up with the NYC terrorist cell and immediately began planning the truck bombing of the World Trade Center. The bombing of the WTC was later executed in 1993.

In taking a more in depth look at the Oklahoma City bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah federal building there has been information that has surfaced in the past few years revealing a possible link to Al-Qaeda.

The Oklahoma City bombing was the worst terrorist attack on American soil until the September 11, 2001 World Trade Center attack. On April 19th, 1995 at approximately 0902 hours the homemade bomb that Timothy McVeigh had set to

detonate from a Ryder truck outside the front of the building curbside exploded after he lit the fuse and casually walked away from it. There have been two other co-conspirators charged-Terry Nichols and Michael Fortier. The bomb consisted of approximately 5,000 pounds of ammonium nitrate fertilizer. The explosion ripped through the building devastating the building and killing 168 in the explosion.

Taking a closer look at that attack everyone in the American public has been led to believe there were several different reasons behind McVeigh's masterminded plot. One such reason was that he was disgruntled in the military after he failed to make the Army's Special Forces with deficiencies in physical fitness testing and his failure was the tipping point.

Another reason has been said that he was outraged about the David Koresh and company standoff at Waco, Tx involving the Feds. He believed the American citizens were being oppressed by the U.S. government. He admired the militia movement and was considered by many as right wing. He considered the standoff in Waco which left 76 dead as a serious trespass or violation by the U.S. government. He wanted to send a message to the U.S. government that their bullying and violations of forceful entry and trespass should not be tolerated. Although different articles have said he was delusional, he believed, that he was the chosen one to send the message in an effort to punish them. This has been said to have reflected his egocentric and arrogant perception that although he was one, had the authority and right to represent the many in a launched terrorist attack against his own government.

Still yet another theory that exists is that “McVeigh associated his act with the blood spilled for the sake of revolution against King George III.” (7) McVeigh’s plan to punish the U.S. federal government by this bombing and killing of many innocent civilians falls short of that parallel for many obvious reasons.

Finally, the last theory is the most relevant to this paper because it describes what many have believed all along. Many observers from the aftermath of this tragedy have thought that this terrorist activity was prompted and sponsored by “Islamic Extremists or other Middle Eastern Interests.” (9) Many have said that the reasoning of this link was dismissed early due to the religious and ethnic bigotry. The case was quickly closed as the U.S Government did not want to allude to the idea that the link was a possibility or perhaps did not want the American people to even stop long enough to consider the link could be a viable explanation. The U.S. government would only state the attack was carried out by “domestic, right wing American terrorists” case closed. (9)

By their theory the links that existed are unexplainable otherwise. Information from that point forward began to develop relevant to “extremist islamic sleeper cells” located in the United States. If information after the bombing is scrutinized a little closer it begins to take new concepts into consideration. Take for example that McVeigh and Terry Nichols were in the military in the early 1990’s. This would be consistent with the fact that the two of these former military men “fit within a socially dense but geographically sprawling network of al-Qaeda operatives known to be active in the U.S. during the early 1990’s.” (9)

Newer information surfaced where documented records stated al Qaeda

attempted to “recruit U.S. veterans as terrorist operatives at critical moments in the Oklahoma City timeline. Previously undisclosed documents obtained exclusively by INTELWIRE also reveal that a top al Qaeda operative was secretly detained the U.S. even as investigators dismissed the possibility of foreign involvement in the terrorist attack that killed 168 people on April 19, 1995.” (9)

In 1991 the Saudi government “sponsored a program designed to convert U.S. soldiers to Islam, according to the Washington Post. The program targeted soldiers stationed in Saudia Arabia during the Gulf War.” (9) McVeigh was stationed in this location during that timeframe.

The Saudi government and its officials held a key meeting in December 1992 in an effort to recruit soldiers from a list of U.S. Army veterans. Shortly after that meeting, both McVeigh and Nichols moved to “key locations where al-Qaeda ran recruiting operations.” (9)

Coincidentally, after the December 1992 meeting, McVeigh suddenly paid off all his debts, subsequently quit his job and decided to travel to Florida. “where al-Qaeda-linked operatives were recruiting U.S. citizens as terrorists. U.S. citizens were considered to be very valuable in the terrorist syndicate because they could easily pass the travel requirements, their appearance was unassuming and they already possessed passports. This would allow them to travel freely around the globe without suspicion. The operation in Florida was tied to Benevolence International Foundation and had an office merely 15 minutes within distance of the house where McVeigh stayed with his sister. (9)

Nichols did something quite similar; he traveled to the Philippines. Just a few

years earlier he married a woman who was from Cebu City. In Cebu, al-Qaeda targeted Christians as terrorist recruits. (9) Nichols stayed with his wife's family in the Philippines for several weeks before meeting up with McVeigh in Michigan. McVeigh began working within the gun show circuit. Some of the al-Qaeda operatives were dealing in the American black market of weapons. During many of the transactions conducted trade in manuals of military technique, bomb building and making materials, and survivalism as well as a stolen military training manual from Fort Bragg. Suspiciously, terrorists connected with Hezbollah and the Irish Republican Army also attended some of the U.S. gun shows during the same time frame and locations where both Nichols and McVeigh sold guns. (9)

While both traveled the countryside, both encountered different members from the radical right-wing factions and survivalist groups most generally originating around "the anti-federal sentiment and white separatist beliefs. There is a great deal of evidence to suggest that Timothy McVeigh and Nichols made contacts at Elohim City white separatist compound in Oklahoma. Other Elohim City affiliates included a bank robbery gang that would later be credibly linked to the Oklahoma City bombing, the Aryan Republic Army." (9)

In September of 1994 as taken from the federal indictments, both McVeigh and Nichols formally began to conspire to bomb the federal building in Oklahoma City. This happened on the very same day the Benevolence International Foundation began a conspiracy to "fund terrorist attacks around the world on behalf of al Qaeda." In November of 1994 Nichols left the preparation of the Oklahoma City bombing and traveled to the Philippines where he left a note with his ex wife

detailing where a large quantity of cash and other valuables were. It specified where the money was to be distributed upon his death and specified what should happen if his life insurance failed to pay out. He then listed the reasons for what the stipulations to pay off would be. (9)

There have been other links as well that tied the travel and future chain of events with McVeigh and Nichols however none of that information had enough corroboration.

After the attack two different Saudi Arabian Intelligence officials telephoned former CIA officers on April 19th and hinted that the attack was sponsored by Iraqi intelligence. “The phone calls, documented in various government filings, must be viewed as highly suspect considering the context-namely the fact that the Saudi government itself linked to several known and suspected terrorists in the United States, including some who had the means, motive and opportunity to interact with McVeigh and Nichols.” (9) There are other strong links as well however, they are discounted or disavowed by the United States government.

The two methods used in this paper are the LAMP and the Alternate Futures method. A detailed description and the steps involved for each method as taken from the lesson notes follow.

The Lockwood Analytic Method for Prediction (LAMP) technique is a systematic method for predicting short-term, unique behaviors (vice continuous or recurring, cyclical behaviors) (see Lockwood and O’Brien

Lockwood 1993). Using primarily qualitative empirical data, LAMP allows the analyst to predict the most likely outcomes for specific research questions. LAMP analyses are anchored in rational choice theory, synthesizing tenets of rational choice with tenets of other predictive analytic techniques such as Alternative Futures and the Delphi Method. The steps of the LAMP process are presented below along with an example of using LAMP to predict the future of the Colombian Peace Process after the 2002 Colombian Presidential Elections.

Step 1. Determine the issue (behavior) for which you are trying to predict the most likely future. What is your specific research question? (Note: Keep your questions precise and limited. Questions that include too many actors, too many courses of action, or too many major scenarios will make the number of permutations that must be analyzed too large for the LAMP technique to be easily used.)

Example: What will happen to the Colombian peace process negotiations between the Government of Colombia (GOC) and Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarias de Colombia (FARC) narco-guerilla group after the 2002 Colombian presidential elections?

Step 2. Specify the “actors” involved in the issue. (Note: This tips you that LAMP is principally an agency or “free will” approach using rational choice.

Step 3 ensures that not only the agency factors, but also structural factors are

included in the analysis.)

Actors for this example: GOC, FARC, US Government (USG), Autodefensas Unidos de Colombia (AUC), International Community (led primarily by the United Nations and European Union).

Note: Like other rational choice analyses, it is assumed that all actors are “unitary actors,” i.e., there is one leader or group of leaders that determine the actor’s behavior. While this example also makes that assumption, in fact the FARC and AUC are more loose coalitions of violent groups that do not always act in a unitary or “rational” fashion.

Step 3. Perform an in-depth study of how each actor perceives the issue in question. (Note: This is the most difficult and time-consuming part of the analysis. It usually requires both a literature review and fieldwork. The analyst must study all the historical, structural (social, political, and economic), and psychological/ motivational issues affecting the actors involved. Here is also where you must avoid “mirror-imaging,” taking measures to reduce the effects of your own biased “lens” about the issues or actors involved.)

Example: This would constitute the contextual material (historical setting), literature review, and empirical data for your study. It is not provided with this example due to its length.

Step 4. Specify all possible courses of action for each actor. List your assumptions. (Note: It is not necessary for the actors to have the same courses of action. It is also permissible here to assume that one actor will always move (act) before the other(s).)

Example Courses of Action: Both the GOC and FARC have three courses of action:

NEG – Negotiate in earnest about reforms and concessions that could lead to peace.

STALL – Continue the ongoing stalemate where reform and concessions are not

seriously considered by either side.

BOFF – Break off the peace process.

Example Assumptions (that emerge from Step 3):

- 1. The FARC prefers a stalemate in the negotiations as the current situation gives them three things they desire, (1) territory, via a free operating zone (the despeje) in Southern Colombia, (2) no serious threat to their estimated**

\$650 million of annual income from kidnapping, extortion, and drug-trafficking activities, and (3) an international platform from which they can discredit the Colombian government. The FARC will remain in the rural areas, but will occasionally conduct urban terrorist attacks to remind the political and economic elite that they can easily bring the guerilla war to the urban areas.

- 2. The people of Colombia want an end to the guerilla-related violence. The political and economic elite of Colombia, however, will continue to lack the political will to act against the FARC provided that they are not substantially threatened in their urban strongholds. Thus, the political and economic elite may not prefer, but are content with, the current stalemate.**
- 3. Any action taken against the FARC will be the result of Colombian Presidential leadership initiatives supported by the Colombian military.**
- 4. Either the FARC or GOC may act first.**
- 5. The USG will continue to support the GOC and will provide resources that make the Colombian military increasingly more effective at engaging the FARC.**
- 6. The AUC will continue to operate against the FARC and will not turn their attacks against the GOC. As a result, the GOC will not make any serious attempts to engage the AUC.**
- 7. The International Community will continue to pressure the GOC to continue the peace process. The International Community will not assume a role as the central negotiator or mediator in the peace process as it did for example**

in the El Salvador conflict.

Step 5. Determine the major scenarios (changing environments/conditions) within which you will compare the alternate futures. List your assumptions.

Example Major Scenarios:

Scenario 1: Serpa Wins the 2002 Presidential Election

Scenario 2: Uribe Wins the 2002 Presidential Election

Example Assumptions:

- 1. The next president of Colombia will be either Horacio Serpa or Alvaro Uribe. Serpa's campaign platform for the peace process is near identical to that of the current Pastrana administration, which has resulted in the peace process reaching a stalemate where the GOC offers no substantial reforms and the FARC offers no concessions. Uribe, on the other hand, has run on a campaign platform of getting tough with the FARC, a program that would either force the FARC to negotiate in good faith and offer concessions or will see the GOC militarily engage the FARC on a more intense level. It is assumed that whoever wins the election will implement their campaign platform peace process.**
- 2. The FARC will play a role in the 2002 Presidential election outcome. If in the months leading up to the election the FARC remains quiet, Serpa obtains the advantage, as the election may turn more on issues related to**

Colombia's economic recession rather than the peace process. If the FARC increases its activities in the months leading up to the elections, Uribe obtains the advantage, as the Colombian people support his plan for the future peace process. (Note: Exactly what role the FARC would play in the elections is the topic of a different research question and a new LAMP analysis.)

3. Colombian economic growth will continue to be weak.

Step 6. Calculate the total number of permutations of possible "alternate futures" for each scenario.

Example:

X = number of courses of action (3: NEG, STALL, BOFF).

Y = number of actors (2: GOC, FARC)

Z = number or permutations of "possible futures" for each scenario.

$$X^Y = Z$$

$$3^2 = 9$$

Table 1

Possible Permutations

| Possible Future # | FARC | GOC | Remarks |
|------------------------------|--------------|--------------|--|
| 1 | NEG | NEG | GOC Desired Situation |
| 2 | NEG | STALL | |
| 3 | NEG | BOFF | |
| 4 | STALL | NEG | |
| 5 | STALL | STALL | Current Situation (as of 02/02) |
| 6 | STALL | BOFF | |
| 7 | BOFF | NEG | |
| 8 | BOFF | STALL | |
| 9 | BOFF | BOFF | Pre-Peace Process Situation |

NEG – Negotiate in earnest.

STALL – Continue the ongoing stalemate.

BOFF – Break off the peace process.

Step 7. Perform a “pair wise comparison” of all alternate futures to determine their relative possibility. (Note: The winner of each comparison gets one vote. An individual analyst, group of analysts, or the Delphi technique can be used to complete this step. It should be obvious that any change in the previous

assumptions will result in different results for the pair wise comparisons.)

Example: Using Table 1 above, compare possible future #1 with all possible futures below it, awarding a vote of one to the most likely outcome between #1 and each of the other scenarios. Then do the same with possible future #2, and so on. See Step 8 for the results of the pair wise comparison in this example.

Step 8. Rank order the alternate futures for each scenario from highest relative probability to the lowest based on the number of “votes” received.

Table 2

Scenario 1: Serpa Wins the 2002 Presidential Election

| Possible Future # | FARC | GOC | # Votes |
|----------------------|-------|-------|---------|
| 5 | STALL | STALL | 8 |
| 6 | STALL | BOFF | 6 |
| 9 | BOFF | BOFF | 6 |
| 4 | STALL | NEG | 4 |
| 8 | BOFF | STALL | 4 |
| 1 | NEG | NEG | 3 |
| 3 | NEG | BOFF | 3 |
| 2 | NEG | STALL | 2 |
| 7 | BOFF | NEG | 0 |

NEG – Negotiate in earnest.

STALL – Continue the ongoing stalemate.

BOFF – Break off the peace process.

Table 3

Scenario 2: Uribe Wins the 2002 Presidential Election

| Possible Future # | FARC | GOC | # Votes |
|------------------------------|-------------|------------|----------------|
| 6 | STALL | BOFF | 8 |
| 9 | BOFF | BOFF | 8 |
| 7 | BOFF | NEG | 6 |
| 4 | STALL | NEG | 5 |
| 3 | NEG | BOFF | 4 |
| 1 | NEG | NEG | 2 |
| 6 | BOFF | STALL | 2 |
| 2 | NEG | STALL | 1 |
| 5 | STALL | STALL | 0 |

NEG – Negotiate in earnest.

STALL – Continue the ongoing stalemate.

BOFF – Break off the peace process.

Step 9. Assuming that each scenario occurs, analyze the possible futures with the

highest relative probabilities (i.e., most votes) in terms of its/their consequences for the issue in question.

Example: If Serpa wins the election, it is likely that the Colombian peace process will continue in its current stalemate, with neither the FARC nor GOC negotiating in earnest over reforms or concessions. If Serpa wins, it is a slightly less likely that the GOC will break off the negotiations. If Uribe wins the election, it is most likely that the GOC will break off the peace process. The most significant finding of this analysis, however, is that no matter who wins the election, it not likely that both sides will negotiate in earnest—thus overall it is likely that Colombia will be faced with a continuing guerilla-related violence problem.

At this point in the LAMP process you have enough information to predict the most likely futures (behaviors) and their consequences. The points that follow call for the construction of an “indications and warning” problem that allows the recognition of when a particular alternate future is about to occur.

Step 10. State the potential of a given alternate future to “transpose” into another alternate future.

Example: In both scenarios, the GOC could use a strategy of breaking off the peace process (BOFF) to attempt to force the FARC into earnest negotiations (NEG). Thus, for the GOC, the route for forcing the FARC into earnest negotiations

(NEG) may first call for a break off (BOFF) of the peace process that the GOC hopes will transpose into a NEG/NEG result. The above analysis reveals, however, that the relative probability of the FARC ever participating in earnest negotiations is low (Serpa wins) to moderate (Uribe wins).

Note: This also highlights the role of deterring how sequential moves (i.e., who moves first) play in these analyses.

Step 11. Determine the “focal events” that must occur in our present in order to bring about a given alternate future.

Example: The FARC is content with the current stalemate in the peace process. Therefore, for the highest probable possible futures above to occur, the GOC will have to act first. This is most likely to entail either the GOC continuing the stalemated process (under Serpa) or taking action to break off the peace process (Serpa and Uribe).

Step 12. Develop indicators (measures) for the focal events.

Examples of indicators that foretell actor behavior:

- 1. GOC continues to match the FARC’s diplomatic positioning (STALL).**
- 2. FARC increases attacks on rural targets (STALL).**

3. GOC official statements become less optimistic and supportive of the peace process (BOFF).
4. GOC increases attacks on FARC forces outside the despeje (BOFF).
5. GOC positions military forces around the despeje (BOFF).
6. FARC increases attacks on urban targets (BOFF).
7. GOC military forces conduct a surprise attack on the despeje (BOFF).
8. GOC declares the peace process over (BOFF).

Note: The above LAMP analyses shows the key role of assumptions in conducting predictive analyses. One of the key assumptions of this analyses was that the Colombian peace talks would continue until the election of a new president. Those familiar with the Colombian Peace Process now know that President Pastrana cancelled the peace talks several months before the elections and began a military offensive against the FARC that continued well into the Uribe (presidential winner) administration. (10)

Whereas the LAMP looks at a slice of the future with a higher level of predictive detail, the Alternative Futures method is designed to look at broader problems without necessarily getting into specific events leading up to them, although this can still be done over time. The use of Alternative Futures and Scenario analysis, while somewhat less structured than the LAMP, nevertheless have their place in predictive analysis, mainly when you are dealing with predictive problems that are very broad in scope or that involve a large number of actors, conditions that would

overwhelm the LAMP (even with the use of specialized computer software to augment the LAMP and facilitate voting by a group of analysts), which is designed more for examining a narrower "slice" of the future rather than trying to encompass its totality.

ALTERNATIVE FUTURES ANALYSIS

Systematically explores multiple ways a situation can develop when there is high complexity and uncertainty.

WHEN TO USE

Alternative futures analysis (often referred to as "scenarios") is most useful when a situation is viewed as too complex or the outcomes as too uncertain to trust a single outcome assessment. First, analysts must recognize that there is high uncertainty surrounding the topic in question. Second, they, and often their customers, recognize that they need to consider a wide range of factors that might bear on the question. And third, they are prepared to explore a range of outcomes and are not wedded to any preconceived result. Depending on how elaborate the futures project, the effort can amount to considerable investment in time, analytic resources, and money. A team of analysts can spend several hours or days organizing, brainstorming, and developing multiple futures; alternatively, a larger-scale effort can require preparing a multi-day workshop that brings together participants (including outside experts). Such an undertaking often demands the special skills of trained scenario-development facilitators and conferencing facilities.

This technique is a sharp contrast to contrarian techniques, which try to challenge the analysts' high confidence and relative certitude about an event or trend.

Instead, multiple futures development is a divergent thinking technique that tries to use the complexity and uncertainty of a situation to describe multiple outcomes or futures that the analyst and policymaker should consider, rather than to predict one outcome.

VALUE ADDED

Alternative futures analysis is extremely useful in highly ambiguous situations, when analysts confront not only a lot of "known unknowns" but also "unknown unknowns." What this means is that analysts recognize that there are factors, forces, and dynamics among key actors that are difficult to identify without the use of some structured technique that can model how they would interact or behave.

As the outcomes are not known prior to the futures exercise, analysts must be prepared for the unexpected and willing to engage in a more free-wheeling exchange of views than typically occurs in order to "imagine the future." Given the time and resources involved, scenario analysis is best reserved for situations that could potentially pose grave threats or otherwise have significant consequences.

From past experience, analysts have found that involving policymakers in the alternative futures exercise is the most effective way to communicate the results of this exploration of alternative outcomes and sensitize them to key uncertainties. Most participants find the process of developing such scenarios as useful as any finished product that attempts to capture the results of the exercise. Analysts and policymakers can benefit from this technique in several ways:

- It provides an effective means of weighing multiple unknown or unknowable factors and presenting a set of plausible outcomes.
- It can help to bound a problem by identifying plausible combinations of uncertain factors.
- It provides a broader analytic framework for calculating the costs, risks, and opportunities presented to policymakers by different outcomes

It aids analysts and policymakers in anticipating what otherwise would be surprising developments by forcing them to challenge assumptions and consider possible “wild cards” or discontinuous events.

- It generates indicators to monitor for signs that a particular future is becoming more or less likely, so that policies can be reassessed.

THE METHOD

Although there are a variety of ways to develop alternative futures, the most common approach used in both the public and private sectors involves the following steps:

- Develop the “focal issue” by systematically interviewing experts and officials who are examining the general topic.
- Convene a group of experts (both internal and external) to brainstorm about the forces and factors that could affect the focal issue.
- Select by consensus the two most critical and uncertain forces and convert these into axes or continua with the most relevant endpoints assigned.
- Establish the most relevant endpoints for each factor; e.g., if economic growth

were the most critical, uncertain force, the endpoints could be “fast” and “slow” or “transformative” and “stabilizing” depending on the type of issue addressed.

- Form a futures matrix by crossing the two chosen axes. The four resulting quadrants provide the basis for characterizing alternative future worlds.
- Generate colorful stories that describe these futures and how they could plausibly come about. Signposts or indicators can then be developed.

Participants, especially policymakers, can then consider how current decisions or strategies would fare in each of the four worlds and identify alternative policies that might work better either across all the futures or in specific ones. By anticipating alternative outcomes, policymakers have a better chance of either devising strategies flexible enough to accommodate multiple outcomes or of being prepared and agile in the face of change.

Actors

Hillary Clinton the Secretary of State has faced several challenges since the Bush Administration. One of the many challenges she faces is attempting to balance the delicate opinion of other state actors with regards to the United States and its global posturing. She hoped that the “U.S. led military efforts would inevitably split the Taliban from Al Qaeda in Afghanistan, laying the groundwork for a lasting political settlement.” (11) Clinton stated the surge in U.S. led troops was a part of the strategy to “split the weakened Taliban off from al Qaeda and reconcile those who will renounce violence and accept the Afghan constitution.” (11)

In 2001 the Taliban faced a similar such choice when the United States

launched an attack against Afghanistan and successfully toppled the “Islamic regime for hosting al Qaeda leaders who planned the September 11 attacks on New York and Washington.” (11) Now, there is mounting pressure from the U.S. military campaign to gain compliance from the Taliban which is basically-sever your ties with al-Qaeda, give up your arms, and fully comply with the Afghan constitution and then you can rejoin Afghanistan society. However, if you “refuse you will continue to face the consequences of being linked to al Qaeda as an enemy of the international community.” (11)

However, key civilian leaders under President Barack Obama have placed the political focus on political reconciliation efforts, making the argument that many of the rank-and-file Taliban are merely attempting to seek livelihood and can be co-opted.” (11)

In another article Hillary Clinton warned the Taliban fighters in Afghanistan to completely disconnect from al Qaeda or face the choice between war and peace. The U.S. plans to begin its withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan this summer, with a projected complete withdrawal by 2014.

While speaking at an Asia Society research organization, she reiterated the U.S’s “three-track strategy in Afghanistan: a military offensive against al Qaeda and the Taliban; a civilian-led effort to strengthen the Afghan and Pakistani governments, economics and civil societies; and a diplomatic effort to end the Afghan war.” (12) Ms. Clinton has said there has been significant progress and stabilization with regards to their security situation. She stated “The momentum of

the Taliban insurgents has been blunted and in some places reversed.” (12)

In addition, the U.S. is imposing sanctions against approximately 16 groups and individuals in Afghanistan for allegedly laundering money. Washington has warned that those on that list would have their U.S. assets frozen and U.S. citizens would be barred from conducting business with. (12)

President Barack Obama has recently been a strong proponent for “beefing up the war in Afghanistan and pursuing al Qaeda.” (13) In a recent article of the president’s objectives he has stated his highest priority is to protect and keep the American people safe. “The President is committed to securing the homeland against 21st century threats by preventing terrorist attacks and other threats against our homeland, preparing and planning for emergencies, and investing in strong response and recovery capabilities. We will help ensure that the Federal Government works with states and local governments, and the private sector as close partners in a national approach to prevention, mitigation, and response.” (13)

The National Security Strategy which was released in May 2010, lays down a comprehensive strategy and approach for the advancement of American interests, not limited to but including the security of the American people, a growth of our economy, supporting values, and an international order that specifically addresses 21st century challenges.” (13)

In an effort to defeat terrorism worldwide the Administration plans to provide 5 billion in assistance through the “Shared Security Partnership over the stretch of

the next several years to optimize the ability of our partners to make improvements within their own security and work in collaboration with us to defeat worldwide terrorism.” (13) The U.S’s focus will be:

Placing emphasis on strengthening our Bio and Nuclear weapons security, simultaneously preventing the outbreaks of a pandemic disease are yet another focal point. Specifically focusing on reduction of risk “of these high consequence, non-traditional threats.” (13)

Strengthening/ improving our intelligence capacity and information sharing. In order to prevent threats it is crucial that there is not simply an information gathering and sharing but to properly identify and interdict those whose intentions are to harm us. Not only must be all intelligence be gathered, it must also be analyzed and appropriately shared. Investing in “our analytic capabilities and our capacity to share intelligence across all levels of government without delay or error while simultaneously strengthening efforts to protect the privacy and civil rights of all Americans.” (13) Additional other steps include:

Ensuring a Secure Global Digital Information and Communications Structure,

Promote the Resiliency of our Physical and Social infrastructure, Pursue

Comprehensive Transborder Security, and ensure Effective Incident Management.

(13)

The TSA has changed dramatically since post 9-11. The National Commission on

Terrorist Attacks has stated the following improvements have been implemented

to our security operations. “All cockpit doors have been hardened to withstand an attack. Federal Air Marshals have been deployed in massive numbers, armed Federal Flight Deck Officers have begun to be introduced into the system.” (14)

There has been an implementation of new and improved training techniques and programs for the flight cabin crews. They have already been developed, approved and implemented. TSA has also beefed up their passengers/luggage screening using new technology, equipment and techniques. All checked baggage is subject to explosive-detection screening. In addition, the TSA is working collaboratively with all airlines to develop information technology, “taking advantage of known passenger information, to better determine where to focus its screening resources.” (14) As for the future the TSA is looking at obtaining more sophisticated technology to better assist with their screening. TSA believes their “intelligences flow and analysis” has much improved. (14)

Al Qaeda means “The Base” in Arabic. The definition of Al Qaeda is simply “an international terrorist network founded by Osama bin Laden sometime in the late 1980’s. Primarily its goal may be considered to rid the Muslim countries of the Western influence and replace it with fundamentalist Islamic regimes. Al-Qaeda launched its attack against the United States September 11, 2001, destroying the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Subsequently, the United States struck back by countering an attack in Afghanistan in an effort to eliminate al Qaeda’s bases located there and overthrow the Taliban. The Taliban is the country’s Muslim fundamentalist rulers who protected and hid bin Laden and his loyal followers.

President Obama has committed to a U.S. strategy of destroying the safe haven al Qaeda hides within. This would inevitably limit the strikes against U.S. targets.

In February of 2009, Dennis Blaire, the Director of National Intelligence stated the “groups core is less capable and effective than it was a year ago.” However, he further stated “Al Qaeda and its affiliates and allies remain dangerous and adaptive enemies keen on attacking the U.S. and European targets.” (15)

The article further states that the “international crackdown that followed 9-11 attacks greatly cut into Al Qaeda’s resources” and many of its former leaders may have been captured or killed. Also, Al Qaeda seemingly has shifted from what was once a hierarchical organization operating from a large budget into what is now an ideological movement. Al Qaeda traditionally trained its own and giving them directives for where to attack. However, now it could be anyone who has been inspired to commit this act on their behalf without any means of monetary support from a larger organization or network. Likewise, Al Qaeda has been effective at spreading the ideology on the internet using global technology and its media wing. (15)

Lamp Analysis

Use of the LAMP to analyze the intelligence data and make a prediction requires twelve steps.

- 1) The question being analyzed is: What is the likelihood of an Al Qaeda attack on U.S. soil given the relative strengths of Al Qaeda and the Homeland Security Department?**

2) Major actors in this analysis are the Homeland Security Department (TSA) and its policies, improvements, and funding as determined by the Obama Administration. Hillary Clinton Secretary of State and President Barack Obama These actors are all working toward a single goal. Homeland Security can be considered a single action. The other actor in this scenario is Al Qaeda and its strategies and tactics as formulated by Osama bin Laden and his associates.

3) Several articles were surveyed and discussed above.

4) 5) The courses of action for each actor lead into the major scenarios. Homeland Security is, and should be in a constant state of improvement in training, technology upgrading, and intelligence sharing. This action is in response to the continuous threat of an Al Qaeda attack on the U.S. soil. Al Qaeda is in a perpetual attack mode, attempting to duplicate its 9-11 success.

6) The calculation of possible permutations given the number of identified actors is as follows: number of actors is 2, number of actions is 2, then permutations is 4.

7) Comparing the likelihood of pairs of scenarios and assigning points: scenario 1 (3 points), scenario 2 (2 points), scenario 3 (3 points), scenario 4 (4 points).

8) Table of outcomes by points

| Possible futures | Points |
|-------------------------|---------------|
|-------------------------|---------------|

9) The most likely outcome is scenario 4 in which the Homeland Security is strong and Al Qaeda is weak.

10) The most likely chance of one scenario becoming another is based on the success of an Al Qaeda attack regardless of its present strength. A successful attack on U.S. soil could demoralize the Homeland Security department and weaken it, thus changing scenarios 1 and 4. A successful attack could also strengthen Al Qaeda changing scenarios 3 and 4.

11) The focal event of scenario 4 and scenario 1 is the continued strength of Homeland Security. The focal event of scenarios 2 and 3 is a successful Al Qaeda attack on U.S. soil.

12) The likelihood of either focal event is as follows: Continued funding of Homeland Security Department will result in constant upgrading of techniques, technology, and training to keep Homeland Security effective. This is a high priority for the Obama Administration and is likely to be continued. Pressure overseas from American anti-terror policies has weakened Al Qaeda to the point where an attack on U.S. soil is unlikely. Al Qaeda is more apt to focus attacks overseas where security measures are going to be less stringent. Foreign targets

are going to be more vulnerable as U.S. security is improved.

ANALYSIS

Alternative Scenarios/Future Analysis

Using this method to analyze intelligence data requires the identification of two key factors on which to base the coordinate axes. The two axes are plotted perpendicularly to each other to form quadrants of alternate scenarios. In this case the relative strength of Al Qaeda is plotted against the effectiveness of the Homeland Security Department. Showing this analysis graphically gives the following illustration:

In quadrant 1 a highly effective Homeland Security department is pitted against a strong Al Qaeda. In this case each adversary is in a position of strength and constant improvement. This is similar to a predator-prey relationship in the natural world. Constantly evolving strategies and tactics of attack and defense are the norm in this scenario. The terrorist attacker constantly produces and develops new methods of offense. This spurs continual responses on the part of the defender to counteract the attacks.

In quadrant 2 a strong Al Qaeda is attacking a weak and ineffective Homeland Security department. Continued attacks resulting in varying degrees of success lead to a reactive Homeland Security department rather than a proactive

department. The psychological effects of Al Qaeda leading and Homeland Security trailing behind are devastating to the prospect of improving Homeland Security. Al Qaeda will be encouraged by its success and increase its attacks thus putting more pressure on Homeland Security. Homeland Security employees will get discouraged and feel overwhelmed. The American public will become alarmed and put more pressure on the government to protect them. Al Qaeda will benefit further by getting more recruits and funding from areas and nations unfriendly to the United States. This will make AL Qaeda even stronger and bolder.

In quadrant 3 both players are weak. However, a single success by Al Qaeda will go far in strengthening their resolve, discouraging Homeland Security employees, and alarming the public. A single success will improve Al Qaeda recruiting and funding. This is the most dangerous scenario for the U.S. While both quadrant 2 and 3 show Al Qaeda succeeding quadrant 2 gives the advantage to the U.S. in assuming Al Qaeda as being a known high level threat. Quadrant 3 shows Al Qaeda as a lower level threat that may lead to a less vigilant Homeland Security department and improve the chances of an Al Qaeda success based upon surprise.

Quadrant 4 shows a strong Homeland Security and a weak Al Qaeda. This is the best scenario for the U.S. An effective Homeland Security department will foil any Al Qaeda attacks attempted on U.S. soil. This will discourage recruiting and funding for Al Qaeda because they will be seen as ineffective. As funding and recruiting sources dry up Al Qaeda will wither and fade away. As the threat of attack fades the American public will feel safer and return to normal activities. This

will lead to an improved economic climate and stimulate growth through out the nation.

CONCLUSION

The LAMP analysis gave a result of four possible scenarios. The most likely answer to the question of the chance of an Al Qaeda attack on the U.S. soil is that it is unlikely to occur. The rankings given to maintaining a strong Homeland Security department and a weakened Al Qaeda point to the lessening possibility of an attack on U.S. soil. While the Alternative futures model also gave four scenarios the LAMP system gives more consideration to side by side comparisons of possible outcomes and thus more depth of analysis. A single added actor expands the possibilities of the LAMP considerably. The Alternative futures model is restricted to two major actors on which to base the coordinate axes. A third actor is possible to add into the Alternative futures model but would require a three-dimensional axis system that would be difficult to interpret. More actors would make a multidimensional system that would be almost impossible to handle. The LAMP does a better job of handling multiple actors, though the number should be kept as low as possible.

The Alternative futures model gives four possible scenarios. In response to the question of a potential al Qaeda attack. Given the intelligence data revealed in the literature review the most likely scenario is quadrant 4. Homeland Security has been constantly improving since its formation after 9-11. Funding has been a government priority to keep the department as up to date as possible. The latest

technology and ongoing training of employees has kept the department in a process of continuous quality improvement. No successful Al Qaeda attacks have been carried out on U.S. soil since 9-11. Al Qaeda itself grew tremendously after 9-11 but without much success since then it has been on path of declining influence and prestige. Constant pressure of U.S. anti-terror policies overseas has also kept Al Qaeda too busy to mount any large scale attack on U.S. soil. Just keeping Osama bin Laden on the run makes Al Qaeda more disorganized and ineffective. This scenario is the most likely to play out in the near future. It is the best outcome for the U.S. and is crucial for our future. The best way to insure this is to keep the funding for Homeland Security at an adequate level to keep the department strong, up to date, and effective.

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