

Study in Indications

Methodology

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Quantified Indicators

Dear Sirs:

There is a logical inconsistency toward the end of your otherwise well-reasoned Ramsey-Boerner "Study in Indications Methodology." ¹ In interpreting, perhaps a bit casually, the graphic distribution of seven hypotheses with respect to eight indicators in Figure 10, the authors say that "A standdown in the Tactical Air Force . . . seems to explain the negative position on the Z2 axis of the limited war cluster, because tactical rather than strategic air forces would probably be used in a limited action." But reference to Figures 6, 7, and 9 shows that a TAF standdown was judged to indicate against all three hypotheses in the cluster, most strongly against the likelihood of limited war. This indicator should therefore tend to drive these hypotheses toward the positive end of the axis in Figure 10.

If there was no mathematical or graphic error, the opposite interpretations presumably arose from different assumptions as to

timing: during standdown for maintenance the availability of the tactical force would be decreased, but thereafter its readiness would be greater. This discrepancy calls into question the validity of the "intuitive explanation" of the role of the other indicators, since these were apparently not checked, against the quantitative judgments used. More broadly, it points up the need, which the authors themselves stress, for exhaustive definition not only of indicators but also of hypotheses.

Anthony Quibble

Dear Sirs:

Mr. Quibble is quite right that our prima facie interpretation describes erroneously the relevance of a TAF standdown to the limited war hypotheses. Two other statements in the interpretation of Figure 10 are also inconsistent with the judges' weights. We said that a TAF standdown "does not seem to argue strongly for pre-emption" as against premeditated attack or escalation, but Figures 3, 4, and 5 show that it was indeed judged to favor pre-emption. And we suggested that the Bloc consultation indicator "would explain the positive location of the diplomatic crisis hypothesis" along the vertical axis, although this indicator, shown in Figure 8 to weigh against the hypothesis, would tend to repel it toward the negative end of the axis.

We should of course have seen to it that the interpretations were consistent with the quantitative ratings. But a systematic correlation would have required an examination into the judges' reasons for their weights, and these had been developed only with reference to initial disagreements. The superficial inconsistencies do not in any case invalidate our central conclusions from the experiment—that it is possible to distinguish among alternative hypotheses by the patterns of associated indicator weights, and that it is possible to construct a meaningful geometric representation of the relationships.

Diane Ramsey

1 Studies VII 3, pp. 75-94.

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