



Alternative Futures

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In This Issue

[Integrating a Futures Approach to the Homeland Security Alert System](#)

[Futures and Psychological Type](#)

[Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Commissions IAF to Explore Future of Vulnerability in U.S.](#)

[IAF Wiser Futures Workshop July 8 in Boston at WFS 2010 Annual Conference](#)

[Future Paradigms of Poverty and Development](#)

[IAF Teams Up with Woodrow Wilson International Center for Future of Antibiotic Resistance](#)

[Future of Communications at CCM Conference](#)

[New Report Addresses Potential Benefits and Shortcomings in Development of Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies \(REMS\)](#)



Forward Perspectives

Integrating a Futures Approach to the Homeland Security Alert System

by [Ben Sheppard](#), Senior Associate

After the Homeland Security Department was enacted in November 2002, a Homeland Security Advisory System (HSAS) was implemented under the control of the Office of Homeland Security's Secretary - then Secretary Tom Ridge. The color coded HSAS is comprised of five alert stages: low (green), guarded (blue), elevated (yellow), high (orange) and severe (red). The intention was to notify federal, state and local government agencies, private industry, and the general public of the terrorist threat and thus what measures they should undertake. The risks include the probability of an attack occurring and its potential gravity. When the alert levels change, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) typically provides

information on why the national threat level changed but often fails to address threat locations or timeframes. In addition, many of the alerts are accompanied by contradictory and uncoordinated messages from various parts of the federal government.

The Obama administration, recognizing the shortfall of the HSAS, announced in May 2009 a 60 day review period to develop new recommendations. It has been 10 months and still no announcement has been made concerning the new structure although according to IAF sources the 60 day review panel did present their recommendations to Homeland Security Secretary Napolitano late last year and options were being considered. IAF now understands that the failed Christmas day attack by Umar Farouk Abdul Mutallab on the Northwest Delta flight on its approach to Detroit led to another review of the alert system. This second review raises questions about the robustness of the proposed new system.

Any sound risk communication and alert system should be robust enough to endure and withstand an array of different scenarios. Any new system should be tested through a series of scenarios to examine potential strengths and weaknesses in the system. For an alert and risk communication system to be trusted and respected, it needs to be seen as able to withstand the test of various events and importantly for the public, people must know what measures they may need to take at each stage of the alert system.

The current HSAS inadequately engages and critically misunderstands public perceptions. The HSAS lacks credibility and significance in the public's eyes. A revised HSAS must contain a robust framework that augments societal resilience and endures current and emerging terrorism threats. IAF recommends the following principles:

- 1) Ensure an independent and politically free new HSAS
Implicitly the HSAS is tied to national security politics. Politically, it is difficult for an administration to lower the threat level should intelligence justify it, for fear of being accused of complacency by political opponents were an attack to happen after lowering the alert. Greater clarity on the decision making criteria and clear delineation from the political sphere are paramount.
- 2) 'Orange' alert fatigue – Understand what alert structure the public wants and will react best to
Remaining on either yellow or orange for prolonged periods in such an explicit manner has rendered the HSAS ambiguous and irrelevant to many Americans. An effective alert system needs clearly defined goals and the ability to fluctuate between levels. Research is required to understand what alert structure and communication the public will respond best to. This is achievable in the 60 day review period. The HSAS assessment should be part of a wider DHS risk communication review.
- 3) Openly discuss the uncertainty of an HSAS compared to other hazard alert systems
Terrorism is a complex hazard surrounded by uncertainty. The margin of error is greater than for other alert systems, like those communicating extreme weather phenomena (e.g. hurricanes, flooding, tornados). A new HSAS must contextualize the unique challenges in identifying and conveying alerts in public discussions. Make it clear that, as with any nation combating terrorism, false positives and false negatives are likely. But these should not be interpreted as incompetence. Gain public trust.
- 4) Communicate clearly how the public should interpret different alert levels

The new HSAS should include communication on what is expected of the public at different alert stages geographically and within sectors (e.g. aviation). Advice could include increasing vigilance, reporting suspicious behavior, and ensuring 'x' number of days' worth of supplies. The DHS website should be fundamentally overhauled to dovetail into the new communication strategy.

- 5) Be vigilant to potential adverse changes in the public's behaviors and attitudes
- Following a terrorist attack, DHS needs to ensure subsequent alerts do not cause the public to change their behaviors and attitudes in ways that can have a detrimental effect on the safety of themselves and those around them. For instance, in the 17 months after 9/11 long-distance road travel increased as Americans avoided the perceived risk of flying, resulting in 1600 road fatalities in excess of what would have been expected based on statistics from the previous year. The public needs fundamental awareness of adverse societal ripple effects

We encourage those who are in a position to advance this type of thinking to share this article and contact Ben Sheppard at bsheppard@altfutures.com.

Futures and Psychological Type

by [Jonathan Peck](#), IAF President

Creating forecasts and scenarios comes more readily to some people than others. Years ago a very bright IAF employee with a Ph.D. from a leading university astounded me by being unable to create forecasts. She could lay out facts in a historic trend line, but could not make the intuitive leap to describe how far the trend would extend in ten, twenty or thirty years. She was confused that I could do this readily and I was confused that she could not turn a trend into a forecast.

What comes easily to many futurists creates challenges for many people. That is why IAF integrates psychology, especially the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI), into its "Aspiring Futures" methods; the ability to engage people with different psychological preferences in scenario development is important to us and vital to our work. How does the MBTI help orient people with different preferences to the future? Here are some lessons from a recent workshop conducted for California's Police Officer Standards & Training (POST) Command College:

Recognize the differences. Across MBTI types, the key difference shaping comfort with forecasts is called the "perceiving function," which refers to how one takes in information. Carl Jung identified two distinct forms of the perceiving function: sensing (S) and intuition (N). The data on police show they are among the professions drawing the highest percentage of people with sensing preference—85%, though in the workshop with command level participants we found a lower level of the sensing preference—70%. Sensing appreciates the practical, factual, and actual over the intuitive preference for the conceptual, abstract, and possible future. So as an ENFP futurist with a strong preference for intuition, my approach to teaching these workshop attendants about our Aspiring Futures method was to reverse my tendency. I typically start with the future and conceptual and move toward the present and the specific. This is exactly opposite of how an ISTJ police leader typically prefers to work.

Make the concepts real. Thanks to astute guidance from Bob Harrison, the Course Manager for the Command College, the IAF program began with exercises focused on the specific terms in the MBTI to show the preferences at work in discussions of police work, strategy and leadership. By experiencing introversion and extraversion, intuition and sensing, feeling and thinking, perceiving and judging, participants were in a better position to understand the concepts after the exercises. Knowing the different psychological preferences can be a source of strength for teams when understanding and respect improve

communication and the ability to play to strengths of the teams. Many in the Command College thoughtfully recognized how they could assure that their assignments made use of different strengths. The recognition of psychological types also helped the workshop participants turn to the next part of the program, working on the skills and knowledge needed to anticipate the future.

Get off on the right foot. People with dominant sensing preferences orient themselves to the future through facts and procedures, and the IAF scenario method lends itself to this approach. The initial forecast exercise identified key factors for the future of law enforcement and created statements about an expectable future which would be recognizable to the most practical minded of police leaders. This future is a psychologically comfortable starting place for people with dominant sensing because it seems that the projection from the present into a familiar future works best procedurally. Once the forecasts for an expectable future became clear, participants quickly became adept at creating sets of forecasts to describe a more desperate future with recruitment problems, municipal bankruptcies across California, devastating terrorist attacks and an open border bringing more immigrants than the water supply could handle. More importantly they also created high aspiration forecasts with a smaller but more highly trained profession drawing from top universities. Participants saw making law enforcement more transparently accountable in ways that could both reduce costs and improve the fitness of the force. They could see success in preventing terrorism through outreach to Muslim communities and self-policing communities in which police help design the surveillance systems. In the most hopeful scenario law enforcement leaders saw California police as a mirror of the citizens, with the best and brightest of immigrants joining a diversified and educated force.

A terrific insight came to me somewhere over the Rockies as I was flying back from California. While I was appreciating the good evaluations and positive feedback about what I had taught the police leaders, I realized what they taught me is what I should celebrate. Really good teams, such as those with the life experience and ego maturity that comes from command leadership, are highly capable at working across all of the psychological type preferences. The emotional intelligence of the teams at this workshop was so high, with good natured ribbing and deep trust in cooperative learning that whatever preference the individual might have, the group would take the strength and cover the vulnerability of each person there. So this class had all the capabilities for exploring the future that the most intuitive types bring as well as the great ability to bring back the practical implications here and now, which makes the sensing types so great. Working in teams, these police leaders took the grounded strength of their sensing preferences and added the far-sight abilities of intuition. The workshop brought home the wisdom of Babe Ruth:

The way a team plays as a whole determines its success. You may have the greatest bunch of individual stars in the world, but if they don't play together, the club won't be worth a dime.

News & Events

Robert Wood Johnson Foundation Awards Grant to IAF to Explore Future of Vulnerability in U.S.

ALEXANDRIA, VA – April 6, 2010 – The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation has awarded the Institute for Alternative Futures (IAF) a grant to develop scenarios describing the alternative futures of vulnerability and vulnerable populations in the U.S. The project is part of the Foundation's Vulnerable Populations Program.

The Vulnerable Populations Portfolio addresses the critical connections between health and social

circumstances. These scenarios will support the portfolio's strategy by describing how those connections may evolve over time, suggesting new opportunities to reduce vulnerability. Some questions the scenarios will address include: What will happen to the economy in the next few years? What disasters may challenge vulnerable populations and how might they be prevented or mitigated? How might the internet and wireless communications affect and be used by vulnerable populations? Will manufacturing continue to leave the U.S., or return to U.S. communities – or even households – in new, decentralized forms? Will there be major transformations in social policies?

The Vulnerable Populations Program will use the scenarios -- which are projected to be complete in the fall of 2010 -- to explore the environment for vulnerability and the implications for strategies. Ann Christiano, Senior Communications Officer at the Foundation said, "It is incredibly valuable to have these scenarios as a planning tool. Vulnerability is affected by a myriad of forces, most well beyond health care. This is a 'messy problem' where the boundaries are not clear. It is often difficult to know where to dive in and what the unexpected consequences might be. The scenarios, while not eliminating the uncertainty, will show how historical factors and emerging forces will interact to increase and to decrease vulnerability."

The scenarios will also be used to aid policy-makers to focus on how larger decisions regarding what will affect the vulnerable, helping policymakers understand the effects over time and looking forward. Likewise for those actively working to reduce vulnerability, the scenarios will provide a strategic thinking resource. IAF will conduct strategy workshops for two of the Vulnerable Population Program grantees using the scenarios and will make an online virtual scenario workshop available so that other organizations and communities can use the scenarios in their own planning.

For more information contact Eric Meade at emeade@altfutures.com.

IAF Wiser Futures Workshop July 8 in Boston at WFS 2010 Annual Conference

IAF summarizes its "aspirational futures" approach in our Wiser Futures Workshop. This year we will again be offering it on July 8 in conjunction with the World Future Society Annual Conference in Boston, Massachusetts.

At this popular workshop, participants will better understand specific futures tools such as forecasts, scenarios, and visions; get practical advice on using futures tools to enhance learning and effective choice within organizations and communities; and explore how aspirational futures can transform organizations. This is a highly interactive workshop where participants experience using some of the tools we describe. Every participant receives a sourcebook of tools and examples of work products that illustrate successful futures work. This is a highly rated workshop, and past participants have been able to adapt these tools for use in their own foresight and strategic planning work.

Who should attend: This course is valuable for individuals from organizations and corporations responsible for foresight and strategic planning. Previous workshop attendees from associations, government agencies, small businesses, large corporations, and independent consultants have all found it very useful.

What you'll learn: Experienced practitioners will provide their wisdom and hands-on experience in identifying trends, developing forecasts, creating stimulating scenarios, and discovering powerful visions for an organization. The course provides an introductory overview to the steps the Institute for Alternative Futures considers the core of visionary strategic planning and creating better futures.

How this knowledge can be applied: Participants can use the skills learned to monitor trends, design and use scenarios, and apply futures techniques to develop a better vision and strategies for a preferred future for their

organizations. Practicing futurists will appreciate this opportunity to benchmark their tools and approaches against a leading futurist organization.

Register now for IAF's Wiser Futures Workshop at www.wfs.org/2010-C8.htm.

Future Paradigms of Poverty and Development

IAF senior futurist and vice president Eric Meade will present IAF's recent work on "[foresight for smart globalization](#)," which was funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. He will then discuss new approaches to international development, such as "Cash on Delivery" and other models, and provide a context -- evolutionary, psychological, and geopolitical -- for the future paradigms of global poverty and development. The discussion will include the application of various futures methodologies, such as generations theory, evolutionary spiral, causal layered analysis, and others.

Who should attend: Members of the development community and others interested in the future paradigms of global poverty and international development.

What you'll learn: Participants will learn about IAF's recent work on "foresight for smart globalization" and discuss future paradigms of global poverty and international development. This discussion will include forecasts for the future development work, as well as an opportunity for attendees to practice using futures methods.

How this new knowledge can be applied: Attendees can apply this knowledge to their work in the field of international development, or in areas of research where global poverty and development are significant issues. This session will provide a larger context -- evolutionary, psychological, geopolitical -- for the global poverty discussion now taking place.

Interested in attending? Register for the conference or the day at www.wfs.org/2010regform.htm.

IAF Teams Up with Woodrow Wilson International Center for Future of Antibiotic Resistance

IAF has formed a team for the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars Science and Technology Program to study antibiotic resistance. This growing public health threat has been addressed in reports focused on policy solutions but this study will be taking a systemic look at the scientific solutions. Jonathan Peck has recruited scientist Sheryl Torr-Brown and science writer Charles Schmidt to research and write on scientific solutions for the growing problem of antibiotic resistance. The team will write a report that will be released by the Pew Trust in the summer of 2010. Scientists, public health officials and policymakers should find the report valuable. For more information contact Jonathan Peck at jpeck@altfutures.com.

Future of Communications at CCM Conference

Eric Meade will be presenting *Persona to Psyche: Psychology of the Authentic Enterprise* at this year's [Council of Communication Management Conference in Philadelphia, May 5-7](#). Eric was interviewed by Les Landes of Landes & Associates. Click [here](#) to read the interview.

New Report Addresses Potential Benefits and Shortcomings in Development of Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies (REMS)

WASHINGTON, DC (April 1, 2010) – Two years after the Food and Drug Administration Amendments Act

of 2007 (FDAAA) gave FDA new powers to require Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies (REMS) for higher risk drugs and biologics, a new report concludes that an optimal future for REMS is possible if the agency adopts a systems approach when designing REMS programs and takes advantage of new technologies -- from electronic medical records to genetic testing -- that are changing the way medicine is practiced.

The result of a September 2009 workshop sponsored by the Society for Women's Health Research and facilitated by the Institute for Alternative Futures, the report -- Optimal Futures for Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies -- concludes that FDA has the greatest potential to improve drug safety if the agency's REMS policies incorporate the real life experiences and insights of all stakeholders: patient advocates, prescribers, pharmacists, academics, payers and sponsors. The report also addresses the potential for unintended consequences that could make future REMS problematic, citing the need for policies to assess differences between patient groups when determining strategies to mitigate risk and for uniform standards to assure both innovator and generic manufacturers are held to the same requirements when implementing restricted distribution programs.

To assess the future for REMS, the workshop used a method called "appreciative inquiry" where separate working groups applied successful experiences with risk evaluation and mitigation to identify changes in policy that will significantly improve REMS programs in four key areas: 1) post-approval studies; 2) restricted distribution programs; 3) monitoring, testing, and special populations; and 4) product quality safety studies. Prepared through a collaborative process involving FDA staff and representatives from academia, the patient community and industry, the resulting report will be distributed widely to health policy makers, clinicians and the pharmaceutical industry with the goal of implementing a series of practical and realizable policy solutions for creating an optimal future for REMS.

"Although REMS provides an avenue to reduce patient risks associated with medicine use, a number of important challenges still need to be addressed," said Phyllis Greenberger, President and CEO of the Society for Women's Health Research. "This report is intended as a nationwide call to action and is provided as a common framework for developing new policies and protocols to assure the safe use of all medicines posing safety risks."

Towards Zero Tolerance in Restricted Distribution Programs

Addressing the need for safe prescribing, dispensing and use of medicines that carry high risks, the appreciative inquiry applied lessons learned from the System for Thalidomide Education and Prescribing Safety (S.T.E.P.S.) to identify new policies and procedures that will improve the administration of restricted distribution systems. S.T.E.P.S. was developed by the Celgene Corporation and FDA to strictly regulate the distribution of thalidomide to treat multiple myeloma and a complication of leprosy.

Whereas S.T.E.P.S. tracks every aspect of the drug's distribution to prevent fetal exposure to thalidomide, programs such as the iPLEDGE program for the acne treatment isotretinoin have been less rigorous, resulting in more than 100 pregnancies among users. To reduce these program failures, the report advocates that FDA implement new policies with consistent standards holding all manufacturers responsible for controlling and tracking every prescription and establishing enforcement mechanisms. Moreover, because the number and variety of generic drugs will significantly increase in the years ahead, the report encourages the development of specific guidance for generic drug manufacturers to ensure their risk management programs are equivalent in rigor and scope to those required of innovator companies.

The Optimal Future for Post-Approval Studies

Besides closing potential gaps in policies for restricted distribution programs, the appreciative inquiry focused on the benefits of designing post-approval studies and risk communications that takes into

account biological differences between men and women and accounts for the special needs of patients with rare disorders. Here, the assessment began with the success achieved after FDA ordered studies of a widely used contraceptive which led to improved safety for women at risk of cardiovascular events due to high potassium blood levels. Because these studies guided FDA's strategy -- special label warnings and communications targeted directly at women at risk -- the report underscores the benefits of involving all stakeholders in a systems approach to identify important variables the agency may otherwise miss when implementing targeted risk management programs.

The Promise of Personalized Medicine

Focusing on a large-scale trial that used gene testing to determine the optimal dosing of the blood-thinner warfarin, where the ideal dosage varies widely from patient to patient and is often hard to predict, the appreciative inquiry recognized the promise of personalized medicine to identify patients most likely to receive a specific drug at the correct dosing level. Accordingly, the report identified new opportunities for utilizing REMS to assess variations in risk and efficacy in adolescents, older patients, those taking multiple drugs, and patients with variation in genes for drug metabolism. The report also called on stakeholders to learn to use REMS with electronic medical records as another way to personalize medicine use for improved outcomes.

Assuring the Safety of the Drug Supply Chain

Addressing problems such as manufacturing failures or tainted chemicals coming from overseas are not part of FDAAA 2007, yet REMS may be part of the solution. The report recognizes that the legislated new Sentinel System going into effect in 2012 may be used alongside REMS to mitigate new risks. The team assessing this potential used the 2008 recall of contaminated heparin as a case in which FDA worked effectively with the manufacturer to mitigate risks to patients. Now that more than 80 percent of the bulk substances used in drugs comes from foreign sources, the report recommends that FDA integrate REMS with the new Sentinel System to assure the safety of the drug supply chain as globalization brings new threats to the U.S. market.

The complete report, *Optimal Futures for Risk Evaluation and Mitigation Strategies*, is available [here](#).

Upcoming Events

[Persona to Psyche: Psychology of the Authentic Enterprise](#), CCM 2010 Annual Conference, IAF Vice President and Senior Futurist Eric Meade, May 5, 2010 in Philadelphia, PA.

[Wiser Futures Workshop](#), WorldFuture 2010: Sustainable Futures, Strategies, and Technologies, IAF Futurists Clem Bezold and Eric Meade, July 8th, 2010 in Boston, MA.

[Future Paradigms of Poverty and Development](#), Senior Futurist & Vice President Eric Meade, WorldFuture 2010: Sustainable Futures, Strategies, and Technologies Conference, on July 10, 2010, 11:00-12:00n, in Boston, MA.

The Institute for Alternative Futures is a 501(c)3 non-profit research and education organization based in Alexandria, VA. IAF was founded in 1977 by Clem Bezold, Alvin Toffler, and James Dator. IAF has a long track record of using forecasts, scenarios, visioning, and other futures tools to help leading organizations understand the likely, challenging, and visionary developments that may take place in their environments, and to develop robust and visionary strategies that account for the inherent uncertainty of the future. IAF's past clients include the World Health Organization, AARP, American Cancer Society, and Rockefeller Foundation, as well as a wide range of

multinational corporations through its for-profit subsidiary, Alternative Futures Associates. To learn more about what we can do for your organization, call us at (703) 684-5880 or write to futurist@altfutures.com.

Comments about this newsletter? Questions? Things you would like to see included in future issues? Contact us at futurist@altfutures.com.

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