The Analytical Worksheet

Full-size copies are at the back of the manual.

DOING THE ANALYSIS

GETTING STARTED

Getting started, for some people, is the hardest thing about doing analysis. A blank page can be intimidating.

But it doesn't have to be. You can think of this analytical model — the drivers model — as starting with a series of simple, direct questions.

- What's my issue?
- What's going on? Who's doing it? Where? How much?
- What's causing it?
- How are the causes evolving?
- What's going to happen in the future?
- What does it matter?

Each of these questions represents one phase of the model.

Rather than starting with a blank page, you can begin with a handy form that will help you throughout the analysis phase of your project. On the facing page are images of such a form — the Analytical Worksheet — and on the next page is a simpler version you can use. (Full-size versions are in the back of this manual.)

The purpose of each section of the worksheet will be clear as you proceed. Just one needs a little explanation — along with a little context.

- The box labeled "Other Points" on page two of the form is where you can write important facts or thoughts that, while their rightful place in the form or in your final report may not be evident, are nuggets that you want to keep. Each may be a factoid that supports a point you want to make. It may be an example of something, to give your analysis depth and texture. It may just be an interesting bit that — it's OK to admit it — may show your decisionmaker that you've done your homework on the issue.
- The form's main purpose is to give you an efficient way to get from research to analytical product, but it should not

Building Blocks

Thesis
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Framing (Basic info)
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WHY is it happening?
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BUILDING BLOCKS

"Just answer the questions."

What will happen?
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Why does it matter?
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Other Analytic Points
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Full-size copies are at the back of the manual.

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wring from your analysis the perspectives and fascinating details that give it color.

- One element of your message to decisionmakers when you compile your final product is going to be the "feel" for the issue that certain facts, anecdotes, and reflections can impart. Use the "Other Points" block or a scrap of paper to preserve these valuable tidbits.

"DRIVERS"

Drivers: The Heartbeat of Analysis … and Policy

"It's all about DRIVERS"

Analysts of international relations, wars, criminal networks, and national matters are not unique in their mission. Any task entailing diagnosis, troubleshooting, problem resolution, and planning requires a process of figuring out WHAT is happening — which problem is threatening a goal or what circumstance is creating an opportunity to promote it — and WHY and HOW it is happening.

The WHAT is important, of course, because it defines the phenomenon. It tells the consumer the basics of the situation. It's an essential snapshot that identifies what someone is doing, where they're doing it, and when they've done it or are doing it. The WHAT is important because it *frames* the issue the analyst is looking at.

But a diagnostician, troubleshooter, planner, or fixer — an analyst — gives the decisionmaker something much more valuable. By showing WHY and HOW the phenomenon is occurring, you're identifying what they can do, if they wish, to change the situation.

- For a doctor to confirm to a patient that, yes, they have a headache that's impairing their vision is important

information, but to tell them the underlying cause —
high blood pressure, a head injury, or a tumor — is key
to making decisions about treatment.

- A car owner doesn't want an auto mechanic just to
confirm that their engine is running rough; the owner
pays them to identify the cause — it's because the spark
plugs are bad, they bought bad fuel, or rain water got
into a computer.

Policies that address **symptoms** of problems, rather than the
underlying drivers, tend to fail. Problems almost always have
identifiable root causes, and history has shown that merely
suppressing the symptoms doesn't help much. Sucking on a cough
drop may reduce irritation that makes coughing worse, but it
doesn't help if the underlying driver is an infection. Governments
can crack down on protests through police or military action, but
that rarely brings a lasting solution as efficiently as addressing
why people are protesting.

- Political instability usually has immediate, practical
causes, such as economic stress, and systemic ones, such
as government corruption and a sense of desperation
among people. If protesters take to the streets, their
perceptions that the government won't crack their heads
— because the government is weak or fears international
condemnation — could be a driver as well. These drivers
will affect the government's options and their
effectiveness.
- A surge in crime is often a symptom of underlying social
and economic causes that aggressive police action
cannot address. Narcotics trafficking has multiple
drivers in the producing, transiting, and consuming
countries it touches, and the "war on drugs" has
demonstrated clearly that focusing on one of them, such
as by eradicating coca fields, while ignoring others, does
little to help. Continued corruption among government
officials, private companies, and others is going to
thwart any solution. For example, U.S. programs for
Colombia, Central America, and Mexico have invested
tens of billions into stopping the flow of drugs, but the
programs have apparently overlooked or ignored key
drivers — because many tons of the substance are still
reaching U.S. consumers.

Good policy is based on good analysis of drivers.

Drivers and the Three I's

Identifying drivers is often a matter of common sense. As you
read into most problems, at least some of their first-tier causes
become clear. As noted above, if riots are breaking out in a capital
city, it's often because unemployment, food scarcities, electricity
outages, etc., are intensifying. Those are pretty easy to see.

But the best analysis goes even deeper, to the *root causes*. Why
is unemployment high? Why is food scarce? Why is electricity
unreliable? That exploration should turn up factors that get closer
to answering the question … or lead to other drivers.

- Some of them might be very concrete, such as some sort
of economic challenge caused by a pandemic or a trade
war. Sometimes the causes are longstanding or plain to
see: mountains, avalanches, floods, and other major
obstacles can have a deep impact.
- But others can be abstract and … more important.
Government corruption may be robbing the country of
funds that should be going to programs that benefit
society. Poorly focused policies on education may be
depressing economic expansion. Demographic realities,
like a youth bulge or aging of the population, could be
aggravating various stresses on the economy. Racial or
ethnic issues, including many that are structural and
less obvious, could be hindering people's participation in
the economy. Historical grudges could be the grounds of
disruptions in trade or energy flows. Climate change
could be gradually causing droughts or floods that
undermine farmers' production, meaning loss of income
and food supplies.

Policymakers need to know the most meaningful of these
underlying drivers. Some problems might not appear open to
ready solutions — historical or environmental problems can have
roots that decisionmakers think are beyond their reach — but
almost all of them will shed some light on possible policies.

- Anti-corruption measures, such as transparency,
oversight, and accountability, can be instituted. Trade
disputes can be resolved. Populist rhetoric can be toned
down. Food shortages and infrastructure damage caused
by a natural disaster can be mitigated.
- Issues like climate change and demographic challenges

can't be addressed in the timeframe that most policy people operate in — just a few years — but they can nonetheless inform policy debates. If analysis indicates that a youth bulge contributes to crime, or that societal aging is straining social programs, those are important insights that could save policymakers from spinning their wheels and wasting resources.

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There is no universal list of drivers, but the "Three I's" model of political economists can be adapted into a tool that helps analysts think about drivers. In very simple terms, the original model asserted that most political and economic behavior could be analyzed by examining the Ideas, Interests, and Institutions involved.
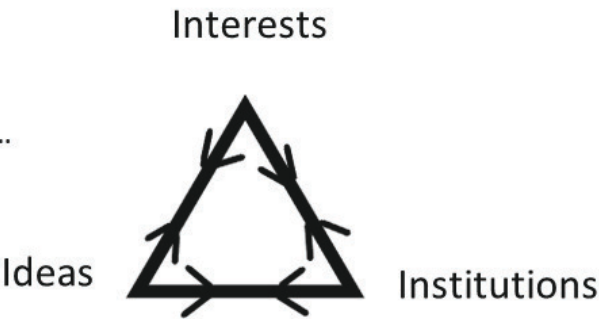
- **Ideas** are the bricks and mortar used to construct or defend policies. They can be abstract, like ideologies or identities, or they can be concrete concepts that we see in practice, such as "free trade" or even "democracy."

- **Interests** are what people want — and gain or lose — from an issue. They include security, wealth and resources, power, and other tangible forms of power.

- **Institutions** are the human organizations through which ideas and interests are developed, articulated, and promoted. They range from family units to governments (and subsidiaries like military forces), to big international forums like the United Nations.

The Three I's help make analysis *conscious*. A lot of experienced analysts — including you — can do good work off the top of their heads, which is sometimes important. But every additional level of consciousness you bring to the process contributes to its depth and quality.

The charts below are not complete checklists of things to consider when analyzing an issue. Rather, they can help trigger something new, to consider an aspect of an issue that isn't off the top of one's heads. Used *consciously*, they also implicitly reassure you that you're thinking broadly and, hopefully, deeply.

PERSONAL LIFE

Drivers are at work in personal lives. When people make personal decisions, what drivers influence them? What interests, ideas, and institutions?

Example: John's old car is failing.

John has 2002 Chevrolet that is suffering signs of age. The engine lacks power and has stalled several times on the roadway; the brakes make funny noises and take longer to stop the car; the tires show signs of wear. John is the "decisionmaker" in this situation. The "policy" questions he faces are:

- What should he do to ensure that he has reliable and safe transportation? Should he repair his old car, replace it, or find another means of transportation?

The analytical questions that, as a decisionmaker, he faces are:

- What's happening to his car? What are the drivers of his transportation situation? How long will his car last before total breakdown? What are the options for fixing or replacing his old car?

An examination of the Three I's should help him make his decisions.

Interests could include the need to get to work, the supermarket, the hospital, and recreation venues; the need or desire to visit or help friends and family; the location of his home; and the amount of time he can devote to transportation. If he lives on a mountain, he may want a car that's strong enough to climb it at particular speed, or in snow. He probably has to consider the challenge of costs (of repairs or a new vehicle) or the difficulty getting a loan.

Ideas could steer him toward buying a car that does the least harm to the environment, or that is made in a particular country or by a particular company, or that is consistent with the values of his family or peers. He may also value a particular self-image, or have been influenced by advertising, that creates a desire for a particular kind of car.

Institutions could also be big factors — parents or other relationships that influence his decisions. The needs of John's spouse or children could be paramount, and a parent-in-law may have particular transportation needs. Perhaps his employer will influence the decision. A boss who wants him to use his car for representational purposes, such as taking clients to lunch, could encourage him to get something comfortable — and may even help find a way for the company to contribute to the cost. If John is a member of a political party or other social organization, they may prefer he get a car made by a national rather than foreign producer.

A review of those drivers would yield an analysis that would give us (or John) a good idea of his options and the strengths of each.

- If the drivers for a new car are strong *and* if he can find a car that matches his budget, self-image, and environmental concerns, or if his family members support the purchase, there's a pretty good chance that he'll buy a new vehicle.

- If even one of those drivers comes out strongly against the purchase — such as an inability to qualify for a loan — the outcome will probably be different. Moreover, if public transportation passes near his home, if he works flexible hours, if he doesn't need a car for moving other people or cargo, if he doesn't face snowy winters, or if he can repair the car for a reasonable price, he is likely to decide to keep the car for another year or two.
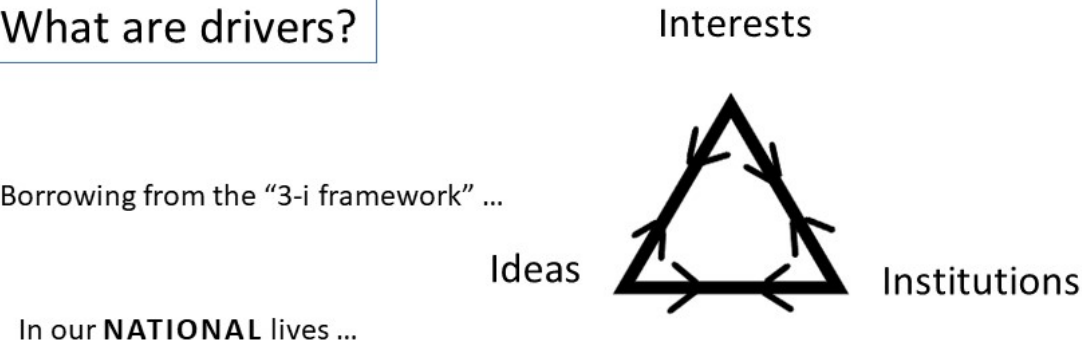
Interests	Ideas	Institutions
Power/influence	Self-definition	Leadership
Needs	Nationalism	Abilities/constraints
Desires/ambitions	History	Economic structures
Wealth	Concepts/logic	Intermediation
Economic performance	Values	Inclusion
	Ideology	Topography/geography
		Climate

And more!

NATIONAL LIFE

Examination of the drivers of national behavior helps you produce accurate analysis of why countries behave as they do. Here's a short list of examples of drivers of national behavior.

Think back to a foreign policy that your government adopted, and identify the drivers behind it.

Interests. Was the decision taken because some concrete security or economic interest was under threat? As response to a terrorist threat or to another country's encroachment upon national territory, wealth, environment, or people? Or because policymakers perceived an opportunity to move forward their political agenda by doing something overseas such as security operations, diplomatic maneuvers, trade promotion, or sanctions?

Ideas. Was the decision taken because the government felt it would fulfill a mandate beyond immediate interests — something related to national image (such as "leader of the democratic world"), values (such as that democracy is an innately superior system), historical identity (such as regional hegemon)? Or because a more immediate situation,

such as when a value — the promotion of an ideal like democracy — conflicts with the reality that that democracy can destabilize a generally manageable situation under an authoritarian system? Did historical tensions figure prominently in how the government perceived situations, perhaps leading it to incorrect conclusions?

Institutions. Was the decision primarily the function of a particular leader, or was the leader channeling other forces in making it? Were there checks and balances in the policy process, and what impact did they have on it? What impact did immutable factors, such as geography and climate, have on the decision?

In other words, what were the drivers of the policy you're examining. Did the government identify the correct drivers and, therefore, increase its chances of solving a problem? "Reverse-engineering" decisions is a useful exercise to appreciate the role and variety of drivers. That's why historians are often great analysts of current affairs too!

DRIVERS OF DRIVERS

Drivers often have drivers, too. Violence in rural areas, for example, is driven by at least two: the emergence of armed groups, and the decline in effective policing.

- The armed groups are driven by, perhaps, the growth in the drug trade in the area facilitated by local officials' willingness to turn a blind eye to it, in return for some financial reward.

- The decline in policing is driven by, perhaps, the embezzlement of funds dedicated to it — e.g., the police aren't getting paid, don't have fuel for patrols, or have inadequate communications gear.

Taken together, these drivers would seem to have a common *megadriver* or *über-driver*: **corruption**. Continue scratching around, and you may find that another megadriver is poverty — which fuels theft of public funds, sustains demands for government services, and keeps tax revenues insufficient. The lack of community values among elites may also be a factor; they don't want to pay taxes; they put their children in private schools and later encourage them to build their lives outside the country; they suborn government officials for special treatment.

When you write your report or briefing (discussed in detail later), you won't necessarily write about all of the drivers you identify. You'll choose those that best make your analysis actionable.

- A megadriver like corruption would almost surely merit mention — and the decisionmaker will probably look for ways to address it — but so too would drivers about crime, the economy, and social conditions.

- You will aggregate the drivers into the most meaningful units. If your analysis is that urban crime is a major driver of migration — because people don't feel safe — you may note that gangs are growing because youths get inadequate education, have no jobs, need a sense of belonging, and see no future for themselves. You may note that a weak economy is undermining opportunities for education and work; that breakdown of the family has left youth disoriented; and that social media are reinforcing a sense of desperation among them.

The drivers will be the heart of your analysis and, as you'll see later, your narrative. They tell the story for you.

FUEL AND FRICTION

Another way of thinking about drivers is to analyze them as either "fuel" or "friction."

Loran Nordgren and David Schonthal, an organizational psychologist and specialist in entrepreneurship at Northwestern University's Kellogg School, explore the "unseen forces" that block new ideas in their book *The Human Element: Overcoming the Resistance that Awaits New Ideas*. They say that people tend to focus too much on "fuel" in their analysis and decisionmaking.

- **Fuel** includes *forward* drivers — effort, energy, money, time, momentum — that tend to make things happen. If you want to make a business a success, according to this logic, you have to *push* your idea. In one example the authors use, it is the gunpowder that makes a bullet fly. In the marketplace, new design, new features, and new advertising are fuel that, when an entrepreneur launches a product, they hope propel sales.

- But **friction** is often an equally decisive driver of the outcome of success or failure of an idea. Friction is

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│        │   DRIVERS    │         │
│        └──────────────┘         │
│                                  │
│  "FUEL"           "FRICTION"    │
│  Effort/energy     Obstacles     │
│  Resources         Resistance    │
│  Technology, etc.  Limitations, etc. │
│                                  │
│  to PUSH a solution.  that OBSTRUCT a solution. │
│                                  │
│  "Forward" drivers    "Status Quo" or │
│                        "Backward" drivers │
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resistance to change or movement. Air and wind resistance are friction that a bullet must overcome to hit its target. Habits, fears, physical obstacles, and financial considerations are friction drivers that hinder the entrepreneur's new product.

Smart actionable analysis examines both fuel and friction. The fuel drivers are often easier to identify: something or someone is *causing* something to happen. Some friction drivers are easy to see; someone *wants* to buy a fancy new car, but the price tag makes it impossible. But the "unseen forces" — what's allowing, blocking, or modifying the situation to advance — are subtle.

- A business example that the authors cite: A furniture company has developed a new line of attractive furniture and marketed it at competitive prices. The new line has a lot of "fuel." Visitors to their website click to put products in their shopping cart, but they don't finalize the purchase. Through research, the company discovers that friction — customers didn't want the hassle of disposing of their old sofa or mattress — held the transaction back. When the company offered to cart away old items for free — that is, when they removed the friction — sales took off.

- A socio-political example: Governments encourage *maquila* industries, which assemble light industrial products, to set up and hire local labor. The fuel drivers were investment, tax incentives, and help with marketing — which gave the local economy a nice boost in employment and income — but friction drivers undermined the positive impact. Women got most of the *maquila* jobs and the lack of daycare and the lack of extended family to take care of their children contributed to serious social problems. The workers wanted the income but couldn't work because of this friction.

Nordgren and Schonthal, whose work focuses on business practices, conclude that "removing friction is more powerful than increasing fuel." The energy drivers in other areas that you may be analyzing, such as international affairs, may sometimes be overwhelming. But it's always good to make yourself *aware* and *conscious* that where there are fuel drivers, it's smart to look for friction drivers as well.

THE DOUBLE IMPORTANCE OF DRIVERS

Drivers are the heartbeat of analysis ... and, as noted above, they are also the heartbeat of good policy.

Here's an example:

The European Union and the United States both have faced a problem of strong migrant pressures from their southern borders for decades. The political dynamics surrounding the migration issue have been intense and, arguably, have had a greater impact on policy than have information and analysis. But a look at the situation south of the U.S. border, for example, can help us appreciate a possibly better role of analysis in policy formulation.

- Intending migrants, from the northern tier of Central America and elsewhere, have been arriving for years in various waves — at times single-male workers, families, and even unaccompanied minors sent north by families desperate to get them out of danger and give them a better life. The numbers have surged to hundreds of thousands a year. The problem has been variously called a challenge, a crisis, and a humanitarian disaster — depending on the political impact the speaker desires to