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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

Linear vs. Spiral Thinking

One of the biggest ruts that analysts can fall into is thinking, working, and writing linearly — in a straight line. It happens when they build a list of factors or events and march down it without branching out or fully exploring the relationship between them. The resulting conclusions often reflect assumptions and biases more than a fresh analysis of the issue. The ending point often reflects the starting point. The product may be a nice summary of events or factors, but it's not actionable analysis.

- Straight-lining hurts when writing the analysis, too. It happens when the writer starts with a sentence, usually reflecting their initial view, and adds another, and another, and another without checking back whether the points take the readers where they need to go.

Good analysis requires a more dynamic process. It's natural that you begin your exploration of an issue with an assumption, but your value comes from treating it as a *hypothesis*, not as a conclusion. A hypothesis is something that you test and alter as evidence requires. It guides you toward richer research and rigorous thinking. A *conclusion* is something that you defend, even if it means canceling out information that does not support it. It tends to narrow your thinking.

The quality of your analysis depends, obviously, on being open to information and altering your hypothesis as you integrate that new information. That process is a spiral that, while starting with an assumption and hypothesis, shifts to include deeper and broader information. Each discovery of new information drives the spiral forward — making an ever-richer product.
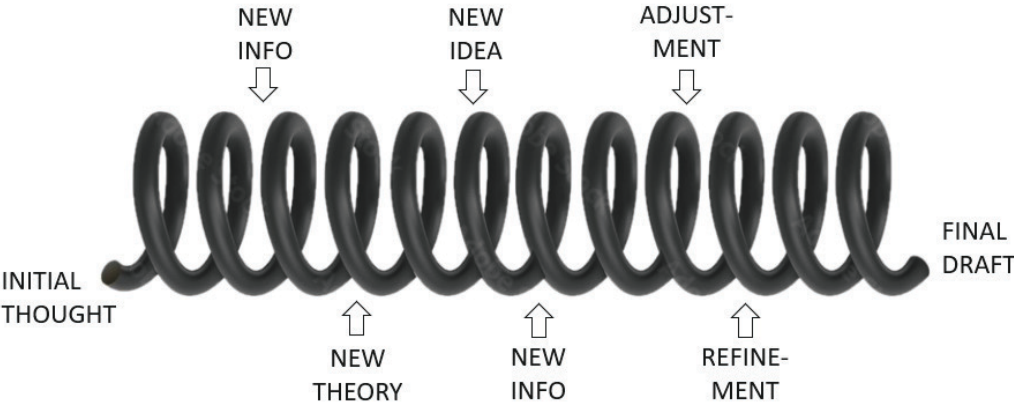

have — but the numbers undoubtedly show that the flow has been huge.

- The migration problem has continued despite the efforts of several U.S. administrations of both major political parties for many years. In simple terms, one party has focused on the "push factors" behind the migration — trying to address the reasons that people give up their lives in their home countries to face an uncertain fate in the United States. The other has focused primarily on the "pull factors" — trying to discourage migrants by changing their perceptions of what they'll face up north. To disabuse people of imagining easy entrance into the United States, administrations have built walls, increased border patrols, declared migrants a health threat, and sent hundreds of thousands of people home.

Political leaders have ordered up analyses and made a lot of speeches, but none has found a solution that works.

If you were an analyst assigned to work this issue, you would want to understand the policymakers' predicament, as discussed earlier, and develop an analysis that helps them devise and vet options for dealing with the situation. You start by creating two big categories of drivers — those PUSHing people to migrate and those PULLing them to make the dangerous trip northward.
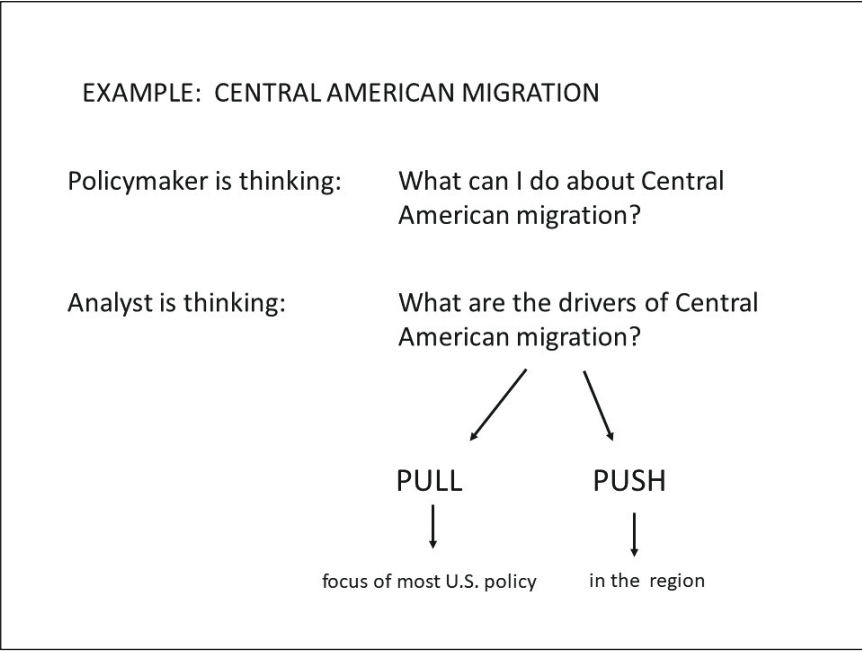
Because the policy tools for managing the PULL factors are well known — and have been tried several times in different forms (albeit with modest results) — you may decide that your value to the policymaker will be greater if you focus on the PUSH factors.

Some push factors, or drivers, are the ***immediate*** reasons migrants cite for fleeing their homeland.

- War, poverty, and violence are big ones. Staying in and leaving their countries may be the difference between dying and surviving.

Other drivers function on a higher tier — as ***megadrivers***, "drivers of drivers" discussed above.

- *Climate change*, for example, is a megadriver in some contexts because of its profound impact on many aspects of life. Droughts, floods, and hurricanes that destroy farmers' ability to raise crops deprive them of livelihood and their communities of food. Storms destroy entire villages.

- You may also determine that *corruption* is a highest-tier driver because embezzlement and diversion of public funds weaken the economic, educational, security, and public health institutions that are nominally charged with helping people manage their daily lives. Hospitals lack supplies and schools lack teachers. Gangs have taken over many communities and terrorize neighbors because the theft of police budgets leaves an open range for them to operate; institutions have been hollowed out.

Some megadrivers are ***structural*** in the environment and society.

- Mountains separate communities from each other, and providers of goods and services from consumers. Rivers run in one valley but not the other. Islands are naturally separate from neighbors.

- Weak economies leave citizens unemployed or forced into informal economic activities, and rural laborers into subsistence farming, because they are excluded from the national economy. In addition, some countries suffer from youth bulges so big that, even if significant reforms were undertaken immediately, a large number of citizens would still lack educational and employment opportunities.

Some of these drivers, of course, suggest solutions that are extremely difficult if not impossible. As you review them for your analysis, you don't want to rule them out entirely too early in the process.

- Because megadrivers and structural drivers defy quick

and affordable solutions — policymakers can't reverse climate change, move a mountain, or eliminate a youth bulge — they are generally not attractive to decisionmakers. The delayed reward — *partial* success after *large* investments over *long* periods of time — just doesn't work in political reality.

- Nonetheless, a exploration of even difficult options can enrich your analysis. Policymakers can't move a mountain, but a highway can might go around it or tunnel through it. They can't eliminate a youth bulge, but education and work programs might help young people get jobs and build a better life. They can't reverse climate change, but they might be able to build a dam and irrigation distribution to get water to thirsty farmlands.

A quick look at these alternative options will often give your analysis texture and context. It makes your product more actionable.

- That contribution can be implicit, the result of an intellectual exercise. You probably won't mention most of the ideas in your final paper or briefing because, simply, they're not feasible. But the grain of creativity the exploration yields will not be lost as you massage your drivers — merging some into bigger, better drivers.

- It will also help you when you ask yourself the all-important question about the salience of each driver. This part of the exercise helps you test the drivers and find common points among them — and often enables you to identify drivers that have causes that, if not megadrivers, may be countered by similar policy initiatives.

๛   ๖

You then massage, merge, and split up the drivers to make meaningful, actionable analysis. In this examination of the drivers of migration, perhaps you will conclude that certain immediate drivers, such as the flow of U.S. guns to gangs in the region, can be addressed tactically, while others, such as endemic corruption,

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│                                                               │
│   EXAMPLE:  DRIVERS OF CENTRAL AMERICAN MIGRATION             │
│                                                               │
│   Q:  Why are the "push factors" of migration from the        │
│       "Northern Triangle" of Central America so strong?       │
│                                                               │
│                     A.  Drug cartels                          │
│  A.  Poverty and hunger   causing violence    A.  Poor social │
│                                                   services –    │
│                                                   education,    │
│                                                   health       │
│  A.  Geography, and    A.  Low cooperation                     │
│      isolation             among countries    A.  Problems     │
│            A.  Corruption  in the region          with family  │
│                                                               │
│     A.  Aloof elites                          A.  Weak         │
│                        A.  Ineffective            institutions │
│                            public security                    │
│                                               A.  Lack of      │
│  A.  Demographics      A.  Flow of guns           employment   │
│      and youth bulge       from U.S.              opportunities│
│                                    A.  U.S. Deportation of     │
│                                        gang members           │
│                                                               │
│         ┌────────────────────────────────────────────┐        │
│         │  How would you aggregate and weight the     │        │
│         │  drivers?                                   │        │
│         └────────────────────────────────────────────┘        │
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will require sustained efforts. You may also judge that the corruption militates against greater joint cooperation against the drug cartels because, your analysis may reveal, our local "partners" themselves are involved in illicit dealings. The key point is that you rack and stack the drivers into meaningful and efficient categories that generalists, who don't have your luxury of time to delve into the issue, can grasp.

At this stage, you might have a list like this:

First Tier

- Violence in general, including that by narcotics traffickers as well as local gangs, threatening family members and entire neighborhoods.

- Lack of employment opportunities, especially for youths.

- Lack of quality food, health care, education.

- Abundance of guns, many from the United States.

Higher Tier

- Corruption among government officials, leaching resources away from initiatives that nominally help people.

- Aloof attitudes of economic and political elites,

who weaken government by resisting taxes and focusing the country's resources on their own ambitions.

- Certain U.S. measures, such as the deportation of young men who are indoctrinated into gangs while in U.S. prisons and the failure to stop southbound arms flows, that inadvertently aggravate Central America's problems.

- U.S. consumption of narcotics, which makes the region a vulnerable and dangerous "transit zone" of substances made in South America for burgeoning U.S. markets.

After you've worked up and massaged this draft list of drivers, and explored — often by asking the simple word "Why?" — you will begin to see a hypothesis or theme emerge that helps you characterize the problem and its drivers. You should write it down and set it aside. It is the first draft of your thesis statement.

Remembering that it's not your job to develop the policy options your consumer will have, it's nonetheless smart for an analyst to test the analysis by asking if certain measures would help. For the little list above, the answer would probably be yes. Here's how it would work on a sampling of the drivers:

Driver	Possible policy options*
Violence	Increase support for police, with increased anticorruption monitoring.
	Suspend the U.S. deportation (return) of individuals who joined gangs and hardened allegiance while in U.S. prisons.
Lack of daily necessities	Increase direct assistance in food, medications, educational materials, etc., to vulnerable populations.
	Increase supervision of distribution of assistance, perhaps identifying trustworthy local organizations.
	Press host government to identify resources, levy taxes, and deliver goods to the needy with transparency and accountability.
Drug cartels	Conduct a serious review of current strategies for countering the South American production of narcotics and their transit through Central America on their way

Driver	Possible policy options*
	to U.S. markets. Take serious steps to reduce U.S. consumption of narcotics, perhaps by bringing the "war on drugs" into U.S. borders and offering citizens with addiction recovery assistance.
	Use international leverage to persuade regional governments to take more effective action against traffickers and local enablers, including corrupt officials at all levels of local officials, businesses, and gangs.
Corruption	Increase pressure, perhaps by conditioning our interaction, on governments to clean up corruption, increase accountability and transparency in government programs.
	Increase support and training for host-country news media — and for protection of journalists from retaliation from government, private-sector, and gangs — to increase the flow of quality information to citizens.
	Support "hybrid" (foreign-local) organizations to investigate corruption and impunity.
Weak institutions	Encourage governments to collect taxes to support government offices — and ensure that funds are distributed to needy communities and individuals.
	Establish and enforce practices for holding institutions accountable for the expenditure of government budgets.
	Increase training of government officials in efficiency and anticorruption practices.
	Increase efforts to give voice to legitimate non-governmental interests, including organizations watching out for businesses, families, women, minorities, and marginalized groups.
Flow of guns from U.S.	Track businesses and shows at which guns are sold, often to "strawmen" — people buying on behalf of gangs that smuggle the arms southbound.
	Increase control of southbound border crossings into Mexico to reduce arms smuggling.

* Remember at all times that your analysis isn't going to present or discuss these options. This part of the process is simply to help you ground your analysis in reality.

A chart like this is more elaborate than most issues require, but it shows plainly one of the big secrets of policymaking in government or, for that matter, any institution:

> ## To identify the drivers of a problem is to show the way to its solution.
>
> ✦ Policymakers often have to respond to symptoms, for political reasons.
>
> ✦ But outcomes are more effectively changed by addressing the drivers.

ARE DRIVERS "INDICATORS"?

Drivers and indicators are different.

- **Drivers**, as stated above, are the factors that make things happen — that are affecting the issue that you're analyzing.

- Many analytical reports state that "the **indicators** show" that something is happening. The indicators, therefore, are evidence of what the drivers are doing.

A simple example: A winter freeze is *driving* the cancellation of outdoor events. As it gets colder, more events are canceled. The *indicators* of these two phenomena: the thermometer indicates that the temperature is going down, and the list of canceled events is growing.

Drivers cause things. Indicators show the things are happening.

WHAT ARE THE DRIVERS OF AN ISSUE
YOU'RE TRACKING, AND WHERE ARE THEY
TAKING YOU?

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Trends

How are the drivers behaving?

Once you've identified your drivers and arranged them into the most meaningful groups — by tiers or by categories — you give them an additional analytical scrub of immense value: you determine the *trends*, or currents, that they are showing.

You look at how they are behaving along generally (but not exclusively) two axes.

- One axis reflects whether the driver is becoming **stronger or weaker,** as a determinant of its importance or weight in the analysis.

- The other reflects whether the driver is moving the problem **toward resolution** ("better") or **away from resolution** ("worse").

If you're analyzing a country's internal stability and have judged (so far) that the economic driver has a very powerful impact on the stability/instability it is experiencing, you can look at unemployment, inflation, scarcities, energy supplies, and other economic indicators as pushing the driver along these two axes.

- Rising unemployment and prices would indicate that the economic driver is remaining "strong" and getting "worse." This could be the case even if the government is taking steps to draw attention away from the economic misery — such as through nationalist rhetoric or measures to distract the people.

- On the other hand, reforms that increase economic activity would indicate that this driver was not getting worse and may even get "better" and therefore become a "weaker" driver of instability.

Another example: Criminal gang activity today may be a "strong" and "bad" driver of mass migration from one country to another. If the government launched a negotiation with the gangs

that gave them access to some sort of program, however, they could in principle reduce attacks on common citizens and become a less "strong" and less "bad" driver.

Identifying these trends forces you to reexamine your drivers and give them greater context — and prepare for analyzing what will happen in the future.

❧ DRIVERS/TRENDS EXERCISE ❧

Now that you're familiar with drivers and their trends, do Exercise 1 at the back of this manual.

- In the exercise, you select four issues — of your own or from a list provided — and identify the multiple drivers behind each. Ask yourself how the drivers can be meaningfully aggregated — to help your reader understand what's really behind the issue.

- Then describe the "trends" that each driver is exhibiting. Look at the two main axes along which you could plot the drivers' behavior — their salience (weaker/stronger/static) and their movement of the issue toward/away from resolution ("better"/"worse"). If there's another axis to plot for your particular drivers, you should do so.

The resulting list of drivers and trends will form the basis of the next phase of your analysis — pulling them together into scenarios.
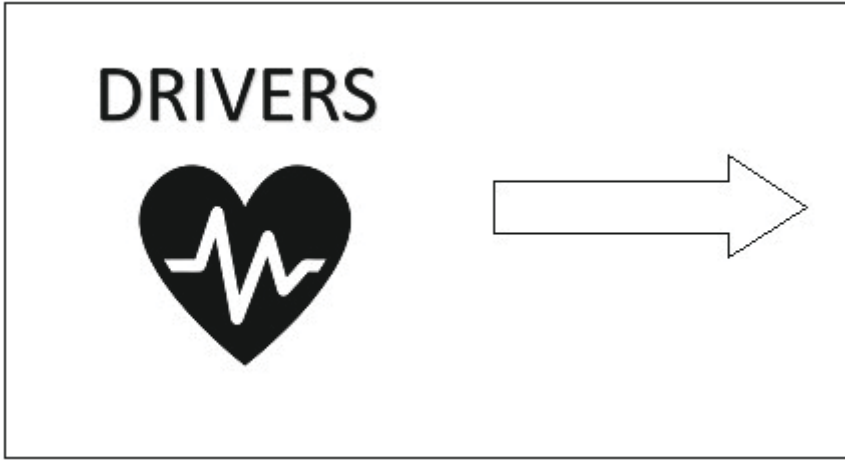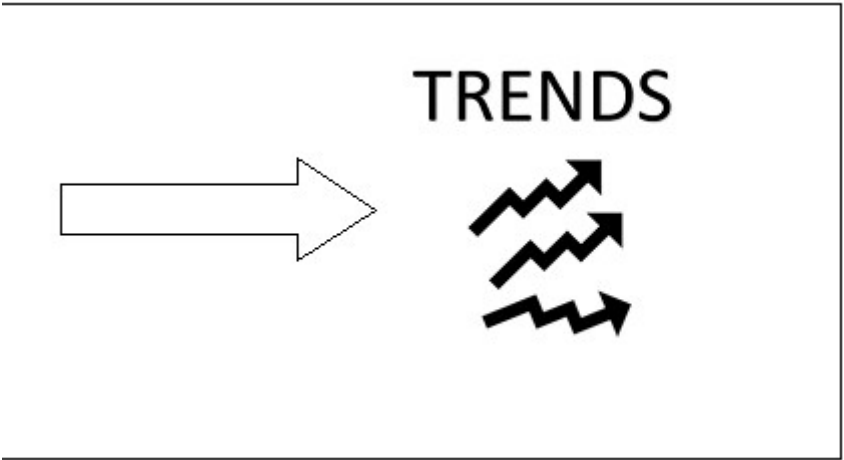
Exercise

Drivers and Trends   1

Practice identifying drivers and their trends.

1. Select four issues (examples below).
2. Identify and write the issues' _multiple_ drivers.
3. Describe the drivers' trends along the two main axe (stronger/weaker and "better"/"worse."

ISSUE:	
What are the **drivers** of this issue?	What **trend** do you see in the driver's behavior
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

ISSUE:	
What are the **drivers** of this issue?	What **trend** do you see in the driver's behavior
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN CHALLENGED TO
EXPLAIN A "BEST-CASE" SCENARIO OR
"WORST-CASE" SCENARIO?

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Scenarios

The drivers take you to *scenarios* — potential outcomes of varying probability. Decisionmakers need scenarios to grasp the urgency of the issue you're analyzing. For a person with responsibility, an idea of what will happen, will probably happen, and can happen is valuable for prioritizing responses. The drivers in your analysis will help them see where they might be able to have influence; the scenarios will help them appreciate what will happen if they do not intervene.

- The word "scenarios" connotes predictions of the future. A lot of analysis aims to do that — to look at what a situation will look like in the future. But you can use the word to describe the *current* situation as well.

- Understanding the drivers and trends, and analyzing the dynamics among them, lets you say *"what's happening now"* in a way that goes beyond what, who, where, when, and how much. As with predictive analysis, the drivers help decisionmakers identify and evaluate areas in which they might adopt policies.

When looking at the future, how far out you take the scenarios — one, five, ten years — will depend on what your decisionmaker has requested and what you think you can credibly provide.

- Your goal is to explain how your drivers and trends will lead to a probable, less-probable, and "possible" scenarios. Will the problem you're examining get worse and more threatening for your organization or country's interests? Will it get better? What drivers are going to mold which outcome?

- If you're analyzing what will happen in country X, you will see how the various economic, political, security, social, and other drivers will, for example, challenge the government; how the government will react; and the results of that reaction. If you're analyzing climate change, you'll see its short– and long-term impact on agriculture, water supplies, coastal regions, etc.

- You want to give your decisionmaker a picture — as credible