• Explain the logic of the analytic argument and expose faulty logic.
• Understand the key factors that shape an issue.
• Stimulate thinking about an issue.
• Uncover hidden relationships and links between key factors.
• Identify developments that would cause you to abandon an assumption.
• Prepare strategists for changed circumstances that could surprise them.

**Method**

Checking for key assumptions requires us to consider how our analysis depends on the validity of certain premises, which we do not routinely question or believe to be in doubt (table 10). To execute the four-step process:

1. Review the current assessment on the issue and write it down for all to see.
2. Articulate all the premises, both stated and unstated, that are accepted as true for this assessment to be valid.
3. Challenge each assumption, asking why it must be true and whether it remains valid under all conditions.
4. Refine the list of key assumptions to contain only those that must be true to sustain your assessment. Consider under what conditions or in the face of what information these assumptions might not hold.

The following are questions to ask during the process:

• How confident are we that this assumption is correct?
Table 10. Key assumptions check tool.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Assumptions</th>
<th>Determine whether the assumption is really an assumption.</th>
<th>Assess the criticality and strength of each assumption.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>List all assumptions in this column.</td>
<td>Choose “yes” or “no.” Make sure the assumption is distinct from your assessments and evidence.</td>
<td>1. Choose “high,” “low,” or “no impact.” To what extent does the assessment change if the assumption proves to be false? 2. Choose “weak/vulnerable” or “strong.” What is the likelihood that the assumption will prove to be false?*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Assumptions that are weak or vulnerable decrease the overall confidence in judgments, especially if they have high impact on the assessment.

Defense Intelligence Agency, adapted by MCUP

- What explains the degree of confidence in the assumption?
- What circumstances or information might undermine this assumption?
- Is a key assumption more likely to be a key uncertainty or key factor?
- Could the assumption have been true in the past but not now?
- If the assumption proves to be wrong, would it significantly alter the analysis? How?
- Has this process identified new factors that require further analysis?
Heuristics are mental shortcuts that our brains use to simplify complex, contradictory, or confusing issues and concepts. Heuristics serve an adaptive purpose and help us reach decisions quickly. This can be vital if we are facing a dangerous, threatening, or overwhelming situation. However, heuristics often contribute to cognitive biases, or systematic patterns of deviation from norms or rationality in judgment, that can lead to errors in thinking. Social pressures, individual motivations, emotions, and limits on the mind’s ability to process information can exacerbate these biases.¹

We assimilate and evaluate information through “mental models,” also called “mind frames” or “mindsets.” These are experience-based constructs of assumptions and expectations about the world in general and about specific subjects. These constructs influence what information the mind will accept—usually information that comports with unconscious mental models is more likely

to be perceived and remembered than information that is at odds with them.

Mental models allow us to process what otherwise would be an incomprehensible volume of information. However, they can cause us to overlook, reject, or forget important incoming or missing information that is not in accord with our assumptions and expectations. Seasoned analysts and subject matter experts may be more susceptible to these mindset problems as a result of their expertise and past success in using time-tested mental models. The key risks of mindsets are that we perceive what we expect to perceive; that once formed, mindsets are resistant to change; that new information can be assimilated, sometimes erroneously, into existing mental models; and that conflicting information is often dismissed or ignored. In crisis scenarios, these biases will become even more influential and difficult to overcome if they are not actively identified and examined.

Cognitive and perceptual biases in human perception and judgment are an important reason to consider alternatives. Try to think of ways to mitigate the influence of these biases in your decision-making to make better-informed choices. Appendix H will introduce structured analytic techniques that can help to uncover biases and heuristics.

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3 *A Tradecraft Primer: Structured Analytic Techniques for Improving Intelligence Analysis* (Langley, VA: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 2009), 1–2.
### Common Biases, Heuristics, and Logical Fallacies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bias</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Actor-observer bias</td>
<td>Attributing your own actions to external causes while attributing others' behaviors to internal causes. Example: you attribute your high cholesterol to genetics while you consider others to have a high level due to poor diet and lack of exercise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ad hominem attack</td>
<td>Attacking the person instead of the argument, the logic, or the evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Affect heuristic</td>
<td>Relying on your emotional state to form an opinion (positive or negative) or make decisions. This is often referred to as a “gut reaction.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambiguity effect</td>
<td>Gravitating toward clear outcomes versus unclear outcomes, even if the unclear option may be more favorable. Also when initial exposure to ambiguous or blurred stimuli interferes with accurate perception, even after more or better information is available.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heuristic/Bias</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anchoring</td>
<td>Relying too heavily on the first piece of information learned and refusing to adjust thinking after forming an initial opinion. Groups will often anchor to the first suggestion presented, even if better solutions follow it. This also refers to the inability to recognize when situations are changing over time because of anchoring to initial perceptions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to (unqualified) authority</td>
<td>Attributing greater accuracy to an authority figure's opinion (unrelated to its content) and being more influenced by that opinion. Example: a celebrity endorsing a political candidate or policy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to fear</td>
<td>Attempting to create support for an idea by attempting to increase fear toward an alternative. Sometimes referred to as coercing others to support your point of view.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appeal to the masses</td>
<td>Believing that a proposition must be true because many or most people believe it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association fallacy</td>
<td>Creates an irrelevant association or generalization by virtue of emotions that falsely equates one thing with another; assumes the qualities of one thing are inherently the qualities of another. Example: cancer = death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attentional bias</td>
<td>When perception is affected by</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
selective factors in our attention; paying attention to some things while simultaneously ignoring others. This complicates our ability to consider alternatives objectively when our mind is occupied with one potential solution.

### Attribution
See *fundamental attribution error*.

### Availability heuristic
Basing information and judgments on what comes to mind quickly versus giving the issue deeper thought. You give greater credence to this information and tend to overestimate the likelihood of similar things happening in the future. Probability estimates are influenced by how easily one can imagine an event or recall similar instances.

### Bandwagon effect
Adopting a certain behavior, style, attitude, or belief simply because everyone else is doing it.

### Confirmation bias
Favoring information that conforms to existing beliefs and discounting evidence that does not conform. Also known as “cherry picking” information.

### Consistency bias
Conclusions drawn from a small body of consistent data engender more confidence than ones
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heuristics and Cognitive Biases</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discredited evidence</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dunning-Kruger effect</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Einstellung effect</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Expectation bias</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>False analogy</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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enough to support the conclusion being drawn. Also known as a *weak analogy*.

| False cause | Assuming a second event was caused by a preceding event without proving a causal relationship or without distinguishing between correlation and causation. |
| False consensus effect | Seeing your own choices and views as more common or acceptable than they really are. Overestimating how much other people agree with you. |
| False dichotomy | Presenting only two possible alternatives when in reality many options exist, or portraying options as mutually exclusive when they may overlap. |
| Functional fixedness | The tendency to see objects as only working in a particular way. Example: not seeing that a wrench can also be used to drive a nail if you do not have a hammer. This can extend to people's functions, such as not realizing that civilians or political appointees can have a thorough understanding of military and defense issues. |
| Fundamental attribution error | Others' behavior is attributed to some fixed nature of the person or country, while our own |
behavior is attributed to the situation in which we find ourselves. Overemphasizing dispositional or personality-based explanations for behaviors observed in others while underemphasizing situational explanations. Example: everything a particular country does has malign intent because it is an adversary.

**Halo effect**
Your overall impression of a person influences how you feel and think about their character. Example: if you personally like someone, you are more prone to think highly of their work, whereas if you personally dislike someone, you are more prone to find fault with their work, even if the work is consistent.

**Illusion of control**
Overestimating the ability to control the outcome, especially over issues that one does not or cannot influence.

**In-group bias**
Favoring one’s own group over outsiders. This can be expressed in evaluation of others, allocation of resources, etc. Also known as *in-group favoritism* or *intergroup bias*.

**Mirror imaging**
Assuming that other actors will act as you would under similar circumstances. Especially per-
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MISINFORMATION EFFECT</th>
<th>Misinformation effect</th>
<th>When post-event information interferes with the memory of the original event. It is easy for memory to be influenced by what you hear about the event from others after the fact. Knowledge of this effect has led to a mistrust of eyewitness information.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MISSING INFORMATION</td>
<td>Missing information</td>
<td>It is difficult to judge the potential impact of missing evidence, even if the information gap is known.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPTIMISM BIAS</td>
<td>Optimism bias</td>
<td>Believing that you are less likely to suffer from misfortune and more likely to attain success than your peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OVERCONFIDENCE EFFECT</td>
<td>Overconfidence effect</td>
<td>Overcalibration of probabilities. Confidence in one's judgments is greater than the objective accuracy of those judgments. In assessing a probability estimate, people are often overconfident, especially if they have considerable expertise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PESSIMISM BIAS</td>
<td>Pessimism bias</td>
<td>Believing that you are more likely to suffer from misfortune and less likely to attain success than your peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLANNING FALLACY</td>
<td>Planning fallacy</td>
<td>When optimism clouds judgment as to how long a project might take to accomplish, how</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
much the project might cost, the risks associated with the project, or all of the above. This is a key pitfall regarding operational and campaign planning.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Heuristic/Coordinate Bias</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rationality assumption</strong></td>
<td>Events are seen as part of an orderly, causal pattern. Randomness, accidents, and errors tend to be rejected as explanations for observed events. Example: the extent to which other people or countries pursue a coherent, rational, goal-maximizing policy is overestimated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Recency bias</strong></td>
<td>People tend to recall the most recent information more accurately than previously heard or experienced information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Red herring</strong></td>
<td>Deflecting debate away from an issue using information that seems important and related but in reality has little to do with the original question.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Resistance to change</strong></td>
<td>Perceptions resist change even in the face of new evidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Risk/loss aversion</strong></td>
<td>Worry about the threat of loss unduly affects decision making compared to keeping the status quo or achieving potential gains.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisficing</strong></td>
<td>Searching for available alternatives only until an acceptability threshold is met, without searching further for a more...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ideal alternative. At that point, the solution is considered “good enough.”  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fallacy Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Self-serving bias</td>
<td>Taking credit for positive events and blaming others for negative events. Example: when you win a poker hand, it is because of your skill at reading the other players and knowing the odds; when you lose, it is because the dealer dealt you a poor hand.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Similarity heuristic</td>
<td>Making judgments based on the similarity between current situations and other situations or prototypes of those situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Simulation heuristic</td>
<td>Gauging the likelihood of an event based on how easy it is to imagine.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slippery slope fallacy</td>
<td>Believing that a relatively small first step leads to a chain of related events culminating in some significant effect, even if the evidence does not support that this chain of events will actually take place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Straw man argument</td>
<td>Creating a fallacious argument by distorting an opposing position to make it easier to attack.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Sunk costs fallacy           | Continuing an effort or continuing to pursue an option if time, money, or other resources were already invested in it, even if it becomes clear that the goal is
no longer attainable or no longer worth the cost. Invested resources cannot be recouped, but that does not make further investment worthwhile.
As discussed in chapters 1 and 6 of this primer, the strength of a nation’s interest plays a large role in the domestic context of an issue as well as the sustainability of potential strategies. However, it is not only the strength of interest within one’s own nation that matters—it is also the comparison of that interest to that of the other actor in question.

While it can be easy to underestimate how much this comparative ratio matters, if an opponent’s strength of interest on an issue far outweighs our own, success is likely to be far more difficult for us to achieve. For example, North Vietnam’s (Democratic Republic of Vietnam) strength of interest to maintain control of its own territory and eject an invading force proved to be far greater than the United States’ desire to do everything necessary to win the conflict decisively and prevent the spread of Communism.

As noted in this primer, subject matter experts should be consulted to ensure that these interests are examined from that actor’s perspective vice our own (i.e., to avoid mirror imaging). The choices our adversaries
make may not always seem rational or logical to us unless we have a deep understanding of their calculus and what they value. Immaterial principles, ideas, emotions, traditions, or beliefs may fuel those values and actions in a way that we cannot fully anticipate without a solid understanding of the actor(s) and their culture. These factors may also fuel the actor’s commitment to certain actions or goals in ways that seem illogical to us from a cost-benefit perspective, such as a willingness to endure what seems like intolerable punishment simply because of the depth of the actor’s will, determination, and commitment to a goal or interest.

Below are some tools and guidelines to explore opposing strengths of interest:

**Step 1**

Begin by listing what an actor’s assessed principle national interests are, heeding the recommendations above. For example, a list of national interests for Iran may appear as follows:

- Its own security, especially from hostile neighbors and especially from Israel. (Nuclear weapons are one mechanism Iran might pursue to achieve this.) This also includes security from the United States, due to fear of potential efforts toward regime change.
- Regional influence/primacy. The type of influence Iran wants probably necessitates displacing the U.S. presence in the region to remove the counterbalance.
- Regional stability and allies, especially vis-à-vis Syria and Iraq. Supporting Shia militia groups (SMG), Lebanese Hezbollah, and
Hamas is a means to an end to maintain allies in the region.

- Stable population that cannot challenge rule or theocracy.
- Economic resilience/prosperity, which enhances stability.
- Hold to the principle of Velayat-e Faqih, with Iran as guardian of Shi‘ism.
- Eradication of Israel (though this is probably more of a long-term aspirational and rhetorical goal than one Iran probably plans to pursue actively or anytime soon).

As a part of this step, you can also outline your assumptions. In this particular case, we might want to set some assumptions and assessments about what Iran does not want or is not willing to do. Iran probably does not want:

- Territorial expansion.
- Near-term conflict with the United States or Israel (although this does not mean Iran would not pursue conflict if pushed to do so or if it feels threatened).
- Long-term conflict or instability in its own region.

**Step 2**

List the principal U.S. interests for engagement with that actor or region:

- Prevent attacks on the U.S. presence in the region.
- Prevent Iran from developing nuclear weapons.
- Stem Iranian meddling in regional conflicts,
including via SMGs, Hezbollah, and Hamas, to increase regional stability.

- Lessen repression of the Iranian population and promote a regime more favorable to U.S. values. (This is a desired end state; there could be multiple ways to get there.)
- Oil security.
- Stem Iranian (Shia fundamentalist Islamist) influence.
- Security for Israel.

As part of this step, you may also want to determine any significant restraints on our interests (i.e., lines we do not want to cross). The United States does not want:
- Increased instability in the region.
- To exacerbate humanitarian or economic crises.

**Step 3**
Determine whether these interests coalesce around related themes and align the related interests to each other. This may require filling in some holes in the logic or thinking about parallel interests on a related area if you have blank cells in table 11.

**Step 4**
Add the assessed strength of interest on each side of the issue (the strength of interest is shown in red in table 12).

**Step 5**
At this point, you will be able to match up the various interests with potential strategies that are being considered to gauge whether our strength of interest is likely to
Table 11. Examples of related interests.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Iran’s national interests</th>
<th>U.S. interests vis-à-vis Iran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>Regional influence/primacy (probably necessitates displacing U.S. presence)</td>
<td>Prevent attacks on U.S. presence in the region; maintain influence and ability to operate in the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Its own security, from neighbors and especially from Israel (obtaining nuclear weapons is one mechanism to achieve this), as well as from the United States (fear of regime change)</td>
<td>Prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons; maintain stable balance of power in the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional stability</td>
<td>Regional stability and allies, especially vis-à-vis Syria and Iraq (supporting SMGs, Hezbollah, and Hamas is a means to an end)</td>
<td>Stem Iranian meddling in regional conflicts (such as those involving SMGs, Hezbollah, and Hamas) to increase regional stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Stable population that cannot challenge rule or clergy</td>
<td>Less repression of population; a regime more favorable to U.S. values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Economic stability and prosperity (which enhances stability)</td>
<td>Oil security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shi’ism</td>
<td>Velayat-e Faqih/protectors of the Shia religion</td>
<td>Stem Iranian (Shia fundamentalist Islamist) influence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Israel</td>
<td>Eradication of Israel (though more of a long-term aspirational and rhetorical goal than one that will be actively pursued anytime soon)</td>
<td>Security for Israel</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP*
**Table 12. Examples of strengths of interests.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Iran's national Interests</th>
<th>U.S. interests vis-à-vis Iran</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Influence</td>
<td>Regional influence/primacy (probably necessitates displacing U.S. presence)</td>
<td>Prevent attacks on U.S. presence in the region; maintain influence and ability to operate in the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH (but decreasing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security</td>
<td>Its own security, from neighbors and especially from Israel (obtaining nuclear weapons is one mechanism to achieve this), as well as from the United States (fear of regime change)</td>
<td>Prevent Iran from obtaining nuclear weapons; maintain stable balance of power in the region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>HIGH (but decreasing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional stability</td>
<td>Regional stability and allies, especially vis-à-vis Syria and Iraq (supporting SMGs, Hezbollah, and Hamas is a means to an end)</td>
<td>Stem Iranian meddling in regional conflicts (such as those involving SMGs, Hezbollah, and Hamas) to increase regional stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population</td>
<td>Stable population that cannot challenge rule or clergy</td>
<td>Less repression of population; a regime more favorable to U.S. values</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HIGH</td>
<td>MEDIUM (but decreasing)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>Economic stability and prosperity (which enhances stability)</td>
<td>Oil security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
<td>MEDIUM (but decreasing with increase of U.S. production)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shi'ism</td>
<td>Velayat-e Faqih/protectors of the Shia religion</td>
<td>Stem Iranian (Shia fundamentalist Islamist) influence</td>
</tr>
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<td>Eradication of Israel (though more of a long-term aspirational and rhetorical goal than one that will be actively pursued anytime soon)</td>
<td>Security for Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HIGH (but long-term)</td>
<td>MEDIUM</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP*
stand up to that of the other actor. For instance, many of Iran’s interests are driven by survival, proximity, and regional aspirations, whereas the United States’ interest and engagement in the Middle East have been waning in recent years. A nation’s interest will naturally tend to be stronger on issues that affect it or its region directly, whereas issues that are farther away and indirect naturally will not be as compelling if they do not fall into the survival or vital interest categories.

If we are considering a strategy or elements of a strategy where our strength of interest is outweighed by the other actor’s strength of interest, we need to consider whether there are ways to offset the difference, or whether the strategy is worth pursuing if the strength of interest is not on par. If the strength of interest is unlikely to increase, the strategist will need to consider whether the issue is really a priority worth pursuing, and what level of investment (e.g., resources, time, etc.) it merits.

Part of the calculus also will be how this issue stacks up against all of our other priorities. For example, where does engagement in Syria fall in comparison to all of our other priorities, such as China and Russia? When combining these two factors—the estimation that Iran’s stake in the issue (i.e., strength of interest) is higher than ours, plus the judgment that our strength of interest in other priorities is probably far greater than this specific issue—the overall strength of interest in engagement in Syria appears to be relatively weak at this particular time.

Another element that should be considered as part of the strength of interest is the validity, or “-ilities tests” discussed in chapter 5—in particular, the suitability, desirability, and sustainability of pursuing the issue. Do the costs and limitations make it less desirable to pursue this issue? What is the cost-benefit ratio? What are the poten-
tial opportunity costs, especially regarding other priorities? What is the sustainability over time?

You will need to summarize your assessments of the issue succinctly for the principle. For example, in this case you may indicate that Iran has a much greater stake in the outcome of the Syria conflict than we do, given its proximity and desire to maintain Syrian president Bashar al-Assad as an ally in the region. You should also convey the bottom line regarding where the issue falls compared to our other priorities. These key elements can help give the decision maker additional context on whether pursuing a particular strategy is likely to achieve sufficient benefits at an acceptable cost.
The following additional strategic approaches can be used offensively or defensively, depending on how they are applied.¹ See chapter 6 and appendix G for assessment tools to determine which approaches might be most effective.

**Wedge Strategy**

A wedge strategy can be defined as a state's attempt to prevent, break up, or weaken a threatening or blocking alliance at an acceptable cost. When the strategy is successful, the state (i.e., the divider) gains advantage by reducing the number and strength of enemies organized against it. Because wedge strategies can turn opponents into neutrals or allies, they can trigger surprising power shifts with significant consequences for war and peace and the trajectory of international politics.

¹ This appendix is adapted from Timothy W. Crawford, “Preventing Enemy Coalitions: How Wedge Strategies Shape Power Politics,” *International Security* 35, no. 4 (Spring 2011): 155–89, https://doi.org/10.1162/ISEC_a_00036. Minor alterations have been made to conform to current standards for grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
Wedge strategies that “selectively accommodate” one adversary (i.e., a target nation) while standing firm against other adversaries are more likely to divide an opposing coalition than strategies that rely on confrontation and coercion. Additionally, selective accommodation is most effective in promoting neutral alignment outcomes or inducing targets to become or remain neutral. Finally, selective accommodation works best when dividers manipulate secondary interests (e.g., assets in peripheral areas, existing alliance ties, economic relationships, and market positions) that benefit targets in ways that are important to the targets, yet are largely under the dividers’ control.

Dividers prefer selective accommodation strategies when they are likely to matter most—that is, when a dangerous alliance is likely to form or persist and the divider has some ability to use inducements to counteract the threat. By contrast, states are more likely to opt for confrontation when dividing their adversaries seems easy or less important, or when they have no other choice. Either way, such strategies are unlikely to greatly benefit the divider. In the first scenario, the divider confronts its adversaries because they seem prone to disunity or their unity does not pose a great danger, or both. In the second set of circumstances, the divider attempts confrontation even though it is almost certain to backfire; the divider is grasping at straws, and the situation cannot become much worse. To better understand how and when selective accommodation strategies are likely to achieve success, one can incorporate two factors into the analysis: the target’s costs of alignment change and the divider’s costs of inducing it.
Realignment
Realignment strategies seek to shift a target from an opposing alliance to a friendly one. To induce such a defection, the divider must offer rewards significant enough both to compensate the target for the blow it will suffer to its credibility and prestige and to benefit the target strategically.

Dealignment
A divider using a dealignment strategy tries to induce the target's neutrality, a less costly and less dangerous form of defection than realignment. The target must still pay the reputational and strategic costs of abandoning an ally, but it can finesse its defection through rhetorical sophistry, legalistic treaty interpretation, and claims of unpreparedness in a way that it could not if it flagrantly switched sides. A dealignment strategy may also serve a preventive purpose: to neutralize a target before its commitment to an ally grows stronger.

Prealignment
A prealignment strategy seeks to preserve the neutrality of a target that is not yet formally allied but is prone to join the enemy camp. Perceiving that propensity, the divider acts to forestall further movement in this direction. Inducing a target to remain neutral is easier and less costly than trying to detach it after it has joined an alliance.

Disalignment
A divider using a disalignment strategy seeks to weaken a target's cooperation within an opposing bloc without trying to convert the target into a neutral or an ally. Enticing targets into such bargains is relatively easy, because
targets do not have to pay the costs of defection to benefit from them. Ideally, the divider’s policy will create or aggravate tensions between the target and its allies and, beyond that, reward the target for adopting policies that weaken their collaboration.

**Appeasement, Compensation, and Endorsement**

There are three main forms of selective accommodation: appeasement, compensation, and endorsement. Each rewards the target on issues to which it attaches major importance. Appeasement is the most costly type of selective accommodation, since the divider offers a direct concession to the target that is of primary interest to the divider. Compensation, which uses inducements based on secondary interests, is less costly. Endorsement is usually the least costly; for example, the divider supports the target’s position in a conflict between the target and the target’s ally.
The diplomatic instrument (table 13) builds up relationships over time to lay the foundation to solve problems based on shared interests. This table takes a broader view of the diplomatic instrument than the construct in the main text of this primer, but it may provide a different, useful perspective. Also note that there is some crossover among the instruments of power.

The economic instrument (table 14) uses economic powers of statecraft to advance the interests, goals, and objectives of the state. This table takes a broader view of the economic instrument than the construct in the main text of this primer, but it may provide a different, useful perspective. Also note that there is some crossover among the instruments of power.
Table 13. The diplomatic instrument.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is a concept or way expressed through specific tools, including the following:</th>
<th>Relies on:</th>
<th>Constraints and considerations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Negotiations, persuasion, assurances, and compromise</td>
<td>• Global interdependencies</td>
<td>• Global interdependencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Treaties</td>
<td>• Strength and power of relationships</td>
<td>• Relationships and weaknesses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Relationships and contracts</td>
<td>• International and domestic policies</td>
<td>• Foreign and domestic politics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multilateral institutions</td>
<td>• Flat implementation of diplomatic structures</td>
<td>• Physical isolation (post-9/11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Money</td>
<td>• Bureaucratic functions</td>
<td>• Costs and efforts to maintain</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Alliances, coalitions, and partnerships</td>
<td>• Consistency over time despite political changes at home</td>
<td>• Lack of resources (e.g., manpower or money)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Multilateral/ international institutions</td>
<td>• Threat status</td>
<td>• U.S. strategic interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Formal state-to-state dialogue</td>
<td>• Presence (geographic personnel)</td>
<td>• Missing the “masses” (i.e., the “youth bubble”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Public diplomacy and activism inside countries</td>
<td>• Words</td>
<td>• Congressional mandates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Public opinion polling</td>
<td>• Individual motivations</td>
<td>• May be issue beyond diplomatic capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Embassy reporting</td>
<td>• Back-channel diplomacy</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Framing the issue</td>
<td>• Institutionalized regional expertise “good offices”</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Back-channel diplomacy</td>
<td>• Informal interactions</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Diplomatic functions or representation</td>
<td>•</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP*
Table 14. The economic instrument.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Is a concept or way expressed through specific tools, including the following:</th>
<th>Ways we use the tools (means) to achieve our ends:</th>
<th>Constraints and considerations:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Development</td>
<td>• Persuasion</td>
<td>• Measure-of-effectiveness and measure-of-performance assessments are challenging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Humanitarian aid and/or assistance</td>
<td>• Image</td>
<td>• Unilateral action can be difficult</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Arms sales</td>
<td>• Behavior change (e.g., autocrats/democratization)</td>
<td>• Requires buy-in</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Sanctions</td>
<td>• Inducement</td>
<td>• Challenge of domestic support (e.g., poor perception of foreign aid)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Embargoes</td>
<td>• Coercion</td>
<td>• Hard to predict second- and third-order effects and unintended consequences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Monetary policy</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Fiscal constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Debt relief</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Personnel/resource constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Assets</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Consider how aid is perceived by target nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Private organizations</td>
<td></td>
<td>• Unintended consequences of sanctions (e.g., moral issues)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sanctions as punitive statecraft include the following:

- Trade embargoes
- Trade boycotts
- Tariff increases
- Product dumping
- Preclusive purchasing
- Aid suspensions
- Asset freezes
- Expropriations
- Capital controls
- Currency manipulations

Economic assistance as positive statecraft includes the following:

- Grants
- Loans
- Technical assistance
- Debt relief
- Investment guarantees
- Trade preferences
- Trade credits

There are multiple uses of the ways based on the desired outcome:

- Persuasion
- Image
- Behavior change (e.g., autocrats/democratization)
- Inducement
- Coercion

Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP
APPENDIX F

Additional Subject Areas for Comparative Analysis of Potential Strategies

The following subject areas amplify the comparative tools provided in chapter 6 and can be used to perform deeper analysis to validate and compare multiple potential strategies.¹

Visions, Values, and Ambitions
An early subject of study should generate an outline of the visions, values, and ambitions of the policy. What is this option’s heart and soul? What is it trying to achieve, and what underlying values and calculations does it represent? Does it provide for a sufficiently strong assertion of U.S. power and resolve to get the job done? Does it have a vision that is bold and clear, rather than cautious and muddled? Is it wise and mature, rather than impulsive and foolhardy? Does this option carry forth existing policy, reflect a linear extrapolation of it, or overturn it?

¹ This appendix is adapted from Richard L. Kugler, Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, 2006): 42–47. Minor alterations have been made to conform to current standards for grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
by crafting an entirely new policy and strategic rationale? How ambitious is this policy? Are its aims modest, or does it aim high? How realistic are its aspirations, and do they reflect the best traditions of American values? Does this option propose to achieve the U.S. goal fully or only partially? Is it based on a sensible reading of events and U.S. priorities, rather than stretching credibility in both areas?

Main Actions, Instruments, and Other Characteristics
What does this option propose that the United States should do in terms of concrete actions, and what instruments does it intend to use? Does it create a simple agenda, or does it require multiple activities and instruments? Do these activities and instruments easily blend together into a coherent whole, or are they not natural partners of each other? Does blending them require a great strategic labor? What other characteristics mark this option?

Theory of Actions and Consequences
What is this option’s theory of actions and consequences, or its core rationale for an expectation that it will succeed? Exactly how are its actions abroad supposed to bring about favorable consequences to achieve national goals? What cause-and-effect mechanisms does it rely on to produce these consequences? Does the option put forth a credible interpretation of these action-and-consequence dynamics? Are these dynamics simple or complex? Can success be achieved through a single change in strategic affairs, or is a chain of successes required? Do these successes promise to be readily accomplished, or will they be hard to bring about? Overall,
is this theory of actions and consequences based on credible logic, instead of representing a mere hope, or someone’s flawed reading of the matter at hand?

**Expected Effectiveness, Benefits, and Losses**

Judged in relation to the U.S. goal and its own ideal aims, how effective is this option likely to be, and what are the benefits and payoffs likely to flow from it? To what degree will it not only achieve its aims, but also set the stage for additional progress in other domains? What negative consequences and losses might it produce in its own domain or elsewhere? Overall, will this option be highly effective or only marginally so? Will its gains exceed its losses? By how much will it produce net benefits on the balance sheet? What are the odds of it succeeding; does it offer a 75-percent chance of attaining 90 percent of its aims, or only a 50-percent chance of attaining 50 percent of its aims?

**Level of Effort, Resource Requirements, and Costs**

How much effort will the United States have to exert to pursue this option? What resources will this option require in political, economic, military, and technological terms? What will be its budgetary costs, direct and indirect, for personnel, investment in technologies, or daily operations? Are these budget costs readily affordable, barely affordable, or too expensive to contemplate? What other costs must be paid, including time, attention, and resources diverted away from other priorities? What are its opportunity costs in terms of inability to pursue other endeavors? Are its sacrifices easily bearable, or will the United States give up too much elsewhere to pursue this option? If only a portion of the necessary resources
can be mobilized, is the option still a viable proposition or not?

**Cost Effectiveness**
How do the expected effectiveness and benefits stack up in relation to the costs that must be paid, budgetary and otherwise? Do the gains of this option exceed its costs by a wide margin or only barely, or do its costs instead seem higher than its benefits? Does this option offer a wise and profitable way to spend money and resources, or could the same assets be allocated elsewhere for substantially better returns? If only two-thirds of the required funds are committed, would the option yield two-thirds of its expected benefits, one-third, or less? Surveying the balance sheet, does this option add up to a sensible investment, or does it waste resources?

**Implementation Strategy**
How will the United States go about implementing this option? Can one executive department implement it, or will a large interagency effort be needed? Will presidential support be required? Is congressional approval required and, if so, in what ways? What key constituencies would have to be mobilized? Should all of its activities at home and abroad be launched at once, or should they be phased to unfold sequentially and achieve their aims in cascading fashion? What steps have to be achieved in order to make others possible? Does this implementation strategy promise to be easily carried out, or is it quite demanding?

**Time Horizons**
How will this option and its consequences unfold over the coming years? Do its actions start fast and peak with-
in two or three years, or do they start slowly, reach maturity within a few years, and continue for a full decade or more? What is its benefit stream; does it achieve its goals and provide other benefits in the near term, the midterm, or the long term? What is its cost stream; do its costs peak early, or are they spread out over the entire course of the policy? How do its benefit stream and cost stream compare? Do its major benefits come early and its costs later, or the converse? Should the distant future be discounted, and if so, what discount rate should be applied? 5 percent? 50 percent? Does the discount rate alter the appraisal by elevating the benefits in relation to the costs, or the other way around?

**Constraints, Difficulties, and Roadblocks**
What constraints could impede the adoption or execution of this option? What difficulties could be encountered? What roadblocks to success might be encountered along the way? How strong are these impediments? Can they be overcome? How could they be lessened?

**Confidence Levels:**
**U.S. Ability to Make Policy Succeed**
How confident can the United States be that this option will succeed in doing what it is supposed to do? Should the government be highly confident, moderately confident, or not confident at all? What is the path of events, including actions by the United States and reactions by allies and adversaries, by which this policy can succeed? What is the path by which it could fail? If it is adopted, how will the United States be able to tell—early enough to make a difference—whether it is on the path of success or failure? What is the main scenario for this policy succeeding? What is the main scenario for it failing? Which
scenario is the more likely to unfold? To what degree does the United States have the strength and influence to channel events in directions that foster the favorable scenario and prevent the unfavorable scenario? Does the United States possess the power to make this policy succeed even in the face of problems and opposition?

**Consistency with Other Policies**

Is this option consistent with overall U.S. national security strategy and other policies that might be operating in the same region? Does it reinforce these other policies, making them easier to carry out and succeed, or does it work at cross-purposes with them, or even threaten to damage them fatally? If there are inconsistencies, how does the importance of this option compare to that of other policies? Is it so important that other policies should be subordinated or sacrificed to it, or do the other policies weigh larger in U.S. priorities? How can this policy be adjusted to minimize any interference elsewhere?

**Unilateral or Multilateral**

Is this option to be pursued by the United States alone, or will it require cooperation from friends, allies, partners, and international bodies? If it is multilateral, how large a team of contributors must be assembled (e.g., a small coalition, all of NATO, or a majority in the United Nations)? Are the prospects good or problematic for assembling such a team? Will the United States be obligated to make concessions, within the policy or elsewhere, in order to gain the necessary multilateral cooperation? What are these concessions, and how do they affect this policy’s drawbacks? Are the prices worth paying?
Feasibility and Prerequisites for Success
What is the feasibility of launching this option and pursuing it to completion? Can the necessary domestic consensus and resources be mobilized? Can key policy instruments, such as the U.S. military, be diverted from other tasks at acceptable levels of risk? To what degree does cooperation from other countries influence feasibility? Is it likely to be forthcoming? If there are multiple prerequisites for success in these areas, what do they suggest about feasibility? Can these prerequisites be met if the necessary efforts are made, or are they beyond the realm of the possible?

Encouraging Signs and Warning Signals
What signs at home and abroad provide encouragement for this option? Is the smell of success in the air? What warning signals are coming from at home and abroad? What is the net balance of encouraging signs and warning signals; does one dominate the other?

Robustness and Flexibility
Is this option robust or brittle? Will it make sense even in the eyes of people who hold somewhat different views and priorities? Can it encounter unanticipated problems and absorb reversals, yet still march onward to success? Or will it fall apart if only a few things go wrong? How flexible is this option? Does its implementation permit only a single narrow game plan, or can it be pursued in different ways? Can the United States shift gears along the way and pursue other paths that still enable the option to achieve its goal, or is the option so rigid that it cannot tolerate changes of direction even if they are necessary?
Vulnerability to Opposition
If this option seeks success at the expense of adversaries, how vulnerable is it to countervailing strategies that these adversaries might adopt? Can it withstand challenges and active opposition, or will it fall short of success if an opponent develops ways to undermine and dilute it? Can this policy emerge victorious in a tough competitive setting, or might it result in defeat in ways that damage and embarrass the United States?

Externalities, Wider Consequences, and Implications
What external considerations should be taken into account in evaluating this option? What could be this policy’s unintended consequences and spin-offs? What impact will this policy have on international affairs outside its immediate domain and on U.S. interests and goals there? Is it mostly self-contained, or will it produce major ripple effects—good or bad—that must be taken into account in evaluating it? What precedents will it set around the world? Do these potential secondary effects make the option look better or worse?

Persuasion and Public Support
Is this option easy to sell to others, or will it be hard? How is it likely to be perceived and accepted at home and abroad? Will it be understood and accepted, or misperceived and widely criticized? Can a public relations campaign be mounted to counter criticisms and lessen negative reactions? Can such a campaign succeed? How and why will it succeed?

Assumptions, Uncertainties, and Biases
What key assumptions does this option make about the
problem or opportunity being addressed and about its own performance? Are any assumptions hidden but deserving of close scrutiny? What uncertainties does this option face, and how important are they to evaluating its likely performance? Does this option contain biases and blinders that might compromise the ability of policy makers and those who implement it to think and act clearly?

**Sensitivities and Risks**
How sensitive is this option to its own calculations and presumptions? Are its expectations for success vulnerable to minor changes in key factors, or do they remain valid in the face of substantial variations? What risks does this option entail? Are they small or large? What wildcards or unpleasant surprises could plunge the United States into deep trouble? Could the option backfire if it were to suffer bad luck that made the existing situation worse or created some new and unwelcome situation?

**Contentious Issues and Key Judgments**
Does the wisdom of this option turn on a few contentious issues about which difficult judgments must be made? What are these special issues, and what judgments must be made about them? How confident can the United States be that its judgments in these areas will be accurate?

**“Gold Badges” and “Red Flags”**
Are there features of this option that make it highly attractive, or necessary, or unavoidable—what might be called “gold badges?” Is it the only viable way to attain high-priority goals and protect vital interests? Is it a surefire success, or at least far more likely to succeed than its competitors, and substantially cheaper as well? Or,
instead, are its costs transparently unaffordable, its difficulties insurmountable, its payoffs too small, or its risks too big? In other words, are there “red flags?” Should this option be adopted or rejected for these reasons alone, irrespective of its other strengths and weaknesses?

**Tradeoffs**

Does this option pose important tradeoffs—something lost in exchange for gain—that must be considered? What are they? Does it offer high payoffs in exchange for heavy costs and significant risks? Or does it call for modest efforts and resources in exchange for modest performance and achievements? Does it offer strong implementation in exchange for less flexibility and adaptability? Does it offer the independence and other benefits of unilateral conduct in exchange for the loss of support from allies? Does it confront adversaries firmly at the expense of the disapproval of countries who resent U.S. superpower status? On balance, how do these tradeoffs add up? Are the gains worth the losses and sacrifices?

**Adaptability to Other Ideas**

Can this option be broadened to include good ideas contained in other options? If it is embraced by the president but encounters resistance in the Congress, can it be broadened to include changes and amendments during legislative review and remain coherent? Can it be used as a basis for negotiations with allies and adjusted to their views? Can it accommodate concessions to opponents or allies?

**Bottom-line Appraisal**

All things considered, is this option clearly a good idea or a bad idea? Or, instead, is the appraisal foggy, ambig-
uous, and full of tradeoffs, some of which argue in favor of the policy while others argue against it? How does this option compare with other alternatives? Is it a clear winner, a clear loser, or an equal competitor? Under what conditions or judgments does this option make more sense than others? Under what conditions does it make less sense, or no sense at all?
In addition to the tools provided in chapter 6, the below tools may be helpful for comparing and contrasting potential strategies. These tools can assist in weighing the potential strategies and determining which strategy—or combination of strategies—is likely to perform best against the goals. Some of these tools compare the same aspects examined in chapter 6, but they provide different ways to visualize potential strategy performance so that the strategist can assess strategies from multiple angles and provide the best insight and clarity to decision makers.

Figure 21 allows the strategist to display the anticipated performance of potential strategies against multiple goals. The main advantage of this tool is that it helps visualize where you are in the current situation as well as how much progress each potential strategy potentially would make against each goal. This provides context regarding the amount of expected progress versus present reality, which is not captured in some of the other tools.
The main distinction of figure 22 is that it acknowledges that not all strategies are designed to advance a goal; some are designed to prevent a situation from...
worsening or declining. This tool allows the strategist to array the potential strategies to depict the overall intent, whether that is seeking improvements, maintaining the status quo, or preventing a situation from worsening.

Figure 23 adds yet another dimension to the analysis in that it assesses the probability or likelihood of the anticipated performance. In other words, how confident are we in our judgment about the anticipated outcome? As discussed throughout this primer, there is always some level of uncertainty, but the extent of that certainty largely depends on the quantity and quality of the information underpinning our judgments, as well as the number and criticality of assumptions. This tool allows the strategist to provide the decision maker additional clarity regarding the likelihood that each potential outcome will occur.

Figure 24 adds the dimension of time, since not all strategies will perform at the same rate. Some may take longer to achieve an effect, even if that overall effect is anticipated to be greater than another potential strategy.
This tool gives strategists and decision makers more context as to how much time might be necessary for each potential strategy to reach its full potential.

Figure 25 is similar to the previous example, but it allows the strategist to assess the potential performance over time for individual goals versus overall strategies. This can provide more fidelity with respect to distinct goals and subordinate objectives.
Figure 25. Time horizon goal comparison.
Structured analytic techniques can help review the accuracy of our mindsets, make those mental models more explicit, and expose our assumptions.¹ We have included a selection of tools and techniques that have utility for strategy making, including brainstorming, the “Four Ways of Seeing,” SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis, identifying drivers, and indicators/signposts of change. These structured analytic techniques can help to:

- Instill more structure into the analysis.
- Make arguments more transparent by articulating them and challenging key assumptions.
- Stimulate creative thinking and examine alternative outcomes, even those with low

¹ This appendix is adapted from A Tradecraft Primer: Structured Analytic Techniques for Improving Intelligence Analysis (Langley, VA: Center for the Study of Intelligence, Central Intelligence Agency, 2009); and Core Techniques (Washington, DC: Defense Intelligence Agency, 2015). Minor alterations have been made to conform to current standards for grammar, spelling, and punctuation.
probability, to see whether available data supports these outcomes.

- Identify indicators of change (or signposts) that can reduce strategic surprise.

Incorporating results of these techniques into potential strategies also serves the policy maker by:

- Highlighting potential changes that would alter key assessments or predictions.
- Identifying key assumptions, uncertainties, information gaps, and disagreements that might illuminate risks and costs associated with policy choices.
- Exploring alternative outcomes for which policy actions might be necessary.

**Brainstorming**

Brainstorming is a group process to generate new ideas and concepts and stimulate new thinking. It is typically used when beginning a project to generate hypotheses about an issue. Brainstorming allows us to see a wider range of factors than we would otherwise consider, since we naturally censor ideas that seem farfetched, poorly sourced, or irrelevant to the issue. It can spark new ideas, ensure a comprehensive look at a problem or issue, identify unknowns, and prevent premature consensus on a single hypothesis.

Brainstorming should be a structured process to be most productive. It includes a divergent thinking phase to generate and collect new ideas and insight, followed by a convergent phase to group ideas and categorize them by key concepts. Some best practices are as follows:

- Include 10–12 people in the process to best maximize results.
• Do not censor ideas no matter how unconventional they seem.
• Explore what prompted the thought. Even if the idea is not used in the end, it might reveal an important connection between the topic and an unstated assumption, or it might serve as a jumping-off point for another idea that will be used.
• Allow sufficient time. It usually takes an hour to set the rules, get the group comfortable, and exhaust the conventional wisdom on the topic. Only then do the truly creative ideas emerge.
• Involve at least one outsider in the process, such as someone who does not share the same educational background, culture, technical knowledge, or mindset as the core group but has some familiarity with the topic. This is essential for injecting new viewpoints as well as pointing out when others seem entrenched in old ideas.

The steps of the process are as follows:
1. Frame the question:
   • Pose the problem in terms of a focal question. Display it in one sentence on a large easel or whiteboard.
2. Divergent thinking phase (unconstrained):
   • Ask the group to write down responses to the question. (This is often done using post-it notes so that ideas can later be moved around and organized into themes.)
   • Stick the notes on a wall or white board.
Review the notes as a group, and treat all ideas as valid. Add any additional ideas that arise during the review.

- When a pause occurs, the group is reaching the end of conventional thinking and new divergent ideas are likely to emerge.
- End the idea-collection stage after two or three pauses.

3. Convergent thinking phase (organize and vet ideas):
   - Rearrange the notes on the wall according to commonalities or similar concepts. Some notes may be moved several times as themes begin to coalesce. You can copy some notes to include ideas in more than one group.
   - Title each grouping or cluster in a way that accurately characterizes the theme.
   - Identify any notes that do not completely fit with others and consider them either unrelated or a jumping-off point for an idea that deserves further attention.
   - Review and record new ideas or concepts that the group has identified or new areas that need more work or further brainstorming.
   - Have participants vote to select a few areas that deserve more attention.
   - Set priorities and decide on the next steps for analysis.

4. Conclude and summarize findings/recommendations:
• Record the themes, components of the themes, and the priorities for analysis selected by the group, as well as any assignments for the group/individual members.

The Four Ways of Seeing
The “Four Ways of Seeing” is used to examine two entities and gain a better understanding of perceptions, motivations, opposition or friction points and red lines, and potential misunderstandings. It can also identify points of commonality to examine opportunities.

The Process
Select two actors (one is designated as X and the other as Y in figure 26). In the top left quadrant of the tool, list a few characteristics of how X sees itself. In the bottom right quadrant, list a few characteristics of how Y sees itself. In the top right quadrant, list how X sees Y, and in the bottom left quadrant, list how Y sees X.

Using Iran and Israel in a specific example might appear as in table 15. After populating the tool, look for areas of friction that can be leveraged or commonalities that could represent opportunities. For instance, it helps to understand that both actors see themselves as justified and that their existence and power is preordained, while also seeing the other as the aggressor. This context also helps to understand that there is a certain rigidity underpinning what each state will be willing to accept or tolerate in its dealings with the other. Also, since each sees itself as relatively isolated in the region with few allies, that may exacerbate tension and fuel a desire to act quickly and decisively when presented with a challenge.
in the region. Many more themes could be pulled from the chart for analysis and further examination.

The Four Ways of Seeing (figure 26) is a tool that is relatively quick and easy to use, and it can provide excellent insight into other actors, as well as what their potential redlines are, and what might help to provide them assurances regarding things they value.

**SWOT Analysis**

SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats) analysis (figure 27) is another quick tool that allows you...
to view a situation and potential outcomes from four different aspects. It can help to:

- Reduce personal and cultural biases.
- Consider the scope of positive/negative consequences and interaction between quadrants or actors.
- Identify disconnects and areas of tension/areas of commonality.
- Use it to identify the “holes in the plan.”

Table 16 reflects a quick SWOT analysis of the 1993 Waco, Texas, siege involving the Branch Davidians.² Us-

ing this tool helps structure thought processes to be able to evaluate each of the quadrants more thoroughly and objectively than we may otherwise, aid analysis for determining whether the potential results are worth the risks, and identify weaknesses and threats that could be mitigated.

**Identifying Drivers**

Understanding drivers can aid analysis of the strategic environment and actor behavior and motivations. It can also help to understand aspects of a situation that are
likely to change, as well as what can be shaped or altered. To identify drivers, it is essential to understand variables.

- **Variables** are characteristics of situations or problems that can change depending on surrounding conditions. They are usually derived from actors, events, and factors related to a problem, but capture those aspects that can change over time and assume different values.

- **Drivers** are a subset of variables that can cause change to a situation or outcome. They are change agents, or things that could alter a situation or issue and therefore alter the assessment. Identifying drivers requires

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**Table 16. SWOT analysis of 1993 Waco siege**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strengths:</th>
<th>Weaknesses:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- The Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms (ATF) is very capable</td>
<td>- David Koresh's followers were dedicated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The ATF had legal cause for the action</td>
<td>- Siege dragged on for weeks</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- The ATF initially had the element of surprise</td>
<td>- The ATF lost the element of surprise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The ATF had no accurate insight as to the Branch Davidians' armaments and provisions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities:</th>
<th>Threats:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>- Prevent potential future violence of attack</td>
<td>- The Branch Davidians were heavily armed and willing to fight</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Negotiation</td>
<td>- Families were present on the compound</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Patience</td>
<td>- The ATF did not foresee the Branch Davidians' willingness to die rather than surrender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The siege sparked public outcry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Marine Corps War College, adapted by MCUP*
foundational knowledge of the actors, their motivations, historical trends, and situational context. Drivers differ from variables in the degree to which they influence or change the larger situation or outcome.

- **Trends** are patterns of gradual change, whereas drivers are conditions that cause subsequent results, conditions, or decisions.

Identify key drivers based on the specific question you are analyzing as well as which changes in the situation would change the assessment (figure 28). Structured brainstorming techniques can sometimes be helpful in identifying your key drivers.

Categories of drivers include the following:

- Demographics and health, such as demographic trends and challenges, migration trends, gender issues, key health, and medical challenges.
- Governance, such as the form of government, its perceived legitimacy, the relationship between center and periphery, the quality of service delivery, the ability to regulate, and levels of corruption.
- Resources and environment, such as key environmental challenges (including severity), water and food quality/quantity, and natural resource assets and natural resource dependencies (especially energy).
- Security and order, such as a national role (and resources available) for the military and police, human rights records, domestic unrest, international threats, domestic crime rates, and criminal justice systems.
Economics, such as the structure of economy (including strengths and weaknesses), trade patterns, wealth distribution, and gray/black economies.

Civil society and communication, such as the presence and influence of nongovernmental organizations, the nonstate organization of society, media and government control of the media, and the role of social media in society.

Examples of drivers include the following:

- Drivers that affect a country’s effectiveness in countering terrorism:
  - Legal system
  - Economic concerns
  - Strategic calculus
  - Internal concerns and politics

- Drivers that enable armed group activity:
  - Common ideology
  - Permissive operating environment/weak state counterterrorism capabilities (including lack of effective multilateral institutions to counter the activity)
  - Availability of weapons
Availability of funds or ability to generate funds (e.g., natural resources, kidnappings for ransom, etc.)

Indicators/Signposts of Change

Indicators are specific identified events or developments that we can monitor to determine whether a particular situation is coming to pass. Explicitly outlining indicators helps prevent strategic surprise and provides an objective list of criteria to be able to recognize when a situation is changing. Periodically reviewing a list of observable events or trends and keeping them up to date can:

- Help track events, monitor targets, spot emerging trends, and warn of unanticipated change.
- Provide an objective baseline to track events or targets.
- Make the analysis more transparent.
- Be tailored for each potential hypothesis or scenario by creating several distinct lists of activities, statements, or expected events.
- Distinguish whether a development is or is not emerging.
## Glossary of Selected Terms

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Accommodate</td>
<td>Strategic approach wherein we adapt to another actor’s wishes to achieve the desired ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assessment</td>
<td>A judgment that is founded upon supporting evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assumption</td>
<td>A presumption that we accept as true without questioning it</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assure</td>
<td>Strategic approach wherein we take confidence-building measures to increase another actor’s sense of security</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bridging assumptions</td>
<td>Filling critical gaps in information or assessments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Center of gravity</td>
<td>A source of power that provides mental or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coerce</td>
<td>Strategic approach that entails persuading another actor through threats or punitive actions; includes deterring or compelling actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compel</td>
<td>Strategic approach that entails threatening or imposing a negative condition on other actors to dissuade them from continuing a behavior or to convince them to take an action they would prefer not to take; subset of <em>coercion</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compromise</td>
<td>Strategic approach wherein all par-</td>
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ties adapt their demands to reach a mutually agreeable solution

Constraints
Factors that limit freedom of action, often in the form of a situation or problem that bounds a strategist’s options for achieving the desired ends; subset of limitations

Convergent phase
Paring down or modifying ideas based on limitations

Costs
Resources and other expenditures needed to achieve the desired ends; can include opportunity costs; subset of limitations

Courses of action
Integration of the ways and means into a proposal for how to achieve the ends

Cyber instrument
Can include defensive actions (e.g., protecting our systems and capabilities) and offensive actions (e.g., disrupting or manipulating another actor’s systems and capabilities)

Deter
Strategic approach that entails making credible threats to discourage another actor from initiating an action that conflicts with or threatens one’s own interests; subset of coercion

Development
Can be used as an instrument to encourage or discourage behavior by offering or withholding development assistance, or by building a partner nation’s capacity (e.g., economic, infrastructure, education, or medical capacities) to encourage behavior that aligns with U.S. national interests

Diplomacy
How a state formally interacts with other state actors and sometimes nonstate actors

Divergent phase
Developing ideas without restricting them based on limitations

Domestic context
Cultures, events, actor motivations
### Glossary of Selected Terms

**Drivers**  
Aspects or elements of the strategic environment that cause a change to a situation or outcome; change agents that can alter a situation or issue; sometimes referred to as *causes*.

**Economic instrument**  
Comprises issues such as regional and bilateral trade, infrastructure development, and foreign investment.

**Elements of power**  
Assets that a nation can convert into capabilities; see also *latent power*.

**Elements of strategic logic**  
Includes the strategic environment, sources and drivers of policy, limitations, and ends, ways, and means.

**Enable**  
Strategic approach wherein we improve another actor's capability to continue pursuing an action that is also in our own interest.

**End**  
A specific desired outcome; also termed *objectives*.

**End state**  
The conditions we want to create; also termed *political aims or goals*.

**Environments**  
Can include physical environments (e.g., geography or the urban setting) or social environments (e.g., the political or societal atmosphere).

**Eradicate**  
Strategic approach that entails eliminating another actor, including leaders and adherents; most severe of all of the strategic approaches.

**Existential threat**  
Something that could harm a state's survival interest(s).

**Financial instrument**  
Closely linked to the economic instrument, but more specifically entails issues such as funds transfers and banking.

**Framing assumptions**  
Mindsets about an actor or issue.

**Grand strategy**  
A theory on how to protect or ad-
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<td>Important interests</td>
<td>Interests that are necessary for the nation to thrive; see also major interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Induce</td>
<td>Strategic approach wherein we offer positive incentives to change another actor’s behavior to align more closely with our own interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informational instrument</td>
<td>Creates, exploits, or disrupts knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instruments of national power</td>
<td>Diplomatic, informational, military, economic, financial, intelligence, and law enforcement (DIMEFIL); see also policy instruments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intelligence</td>
<td>Knowledge generated via collection and analysis of information gathered through various, often clandestine means to inform decision making</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate objectives</td>
<td>Waypoints against which the strategist can measure progress toward national-level goals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International context</td>
<td>Cultures, historical events, current events, actor motivations and behaviors, drivers, trends, and environments in other countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latent power</td>
<td>Resources that a nation can convert into capabilities over time; see also elements of power</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law enforcement instrument</td>
<td>Pertains to legal means of enhancing or restricting another actor’s actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law of the instrument bias</td>
<td>The cognitive bias wherein humans tend to approach problems confined by the skills they know best or resources that are most familiar to them (i.e., to a hammer, every problem looks like a nail)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>Consequences and potential consequences of a proposed strategy that will need to be accounted for</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Term</td>
<td>Definition</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major interests</td>
<td>Interests that are necessary for the nation to thrive; see also important interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Means</td>
<td>The resources and capabilities available or required to achieve the ends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military instrument</td>
<td>Entails the use of force, the threat of the use of force, or enabling partners to use or threaten force to shape another actor's behavior to align with one's own national interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military strategy</td>
<td>A theory on how to protect or advance national interests using military means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National interests</td>
<td>Conditions we seek to achieve or protect as a nation and that we believe are in our state's fundamental best interest; categories of such interests are survival, vital, important or major, and peripheral</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National security culture</td>
<td>A societal predisposition toward certain actions and policies over others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National security strategy</td>
<td>A theory on how to protect or advance national interests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National values</td>
<td>Principles we see as an integral part of our national identity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observe</td>
<td>Entails primarily monitoring events; the least active of the strategic approaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity</td>
<td>An emergent situation or potentiality in the strategic environment that could be seized upon to advance a national interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity costs</td>
<td>Things we will not be able to do as a result of choices we make</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peripheral interests</td>
<td>Interests that enhance our way of life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Persuade</td>
<td>Strategic approach wherein we change another actor's position by virtue of argument</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
PMESII-PT: Political, military, economic, social, information, infrastructure, physical environment, and time

Policy: A pattern of actions, activities, or behaviors designed to attain specific ends or objectives

Policy instruments: Diplomatic, informational, military, economic, financial, intelligence, and law enforcement (DIMEFIL); see also instruments of national power

Problem set: Articulates where you are in the strategic environment, where you want to be (i.e., the desired end state), and the hurdles that must be overcome to get there; comprises the strategic environment plus the sources and drivers of policy

Problem statement: A concise description of the issue that needs to be addressed

Resource-unconstrained: Developing strategy without applying limitations

Restraints: Restrictions on an action or an actor that may affect strategy or elements of strategy; subset of limitations

Risks: Things that could go wrong with a strategy; subset of limitations

Risks from the strategy: Negative consequences caused by a strategy's implementation

Risks to the strategy: Things that could cause the strategy to fail

Scoping assumptions: Choices we make to bound an issue

Shape: Strategic approach wherein we take actions to mold the strategic situation in our favor

Sources and drivers of policy: Values, interests, power and influence, threats, and opportunities

Strategic approaches: Causal mechanisms that bring about a desired behavior from an actor

Strategic environment: Includes the international context, domestic context, and assumptions

Strategic vision: Broad guidance provided by our
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
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<td>Strategy</td>
<td>A theory on how to achieve a stated goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strength of interest</td>
<td>The intensity of a nation’s desire to pursue a goal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subdue</td>
<td>Strategic approach that entails applying force to modify an actor’s behavior to conform to one’s own interests, wherein the applied force is sufficient enough to remove all of the adversary’s other strategy options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Survival interests</td>
<td>Interests that must be protected for the survival of the nation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Threat</td>
<td>Something that could harm a national interest</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vital interests</td>
<td>Interests that pertain to political and territorial integrity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ways</td>
<td>Proposals for how to achieve the ends; also termed <em>courses of action</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole-of-government</td>
<td>Including and effectively integrating all relevant instruments for the issue in question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zone of tolerance</td>
<td>The range of a goal or goals that we perceive as satisfactory</td>
</tr>
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