

National Security Analysis Critical Thinking Project Worksheet

This is a worksheet for use in National Security Analysis Critical Thinking projects. Use the below worksheet (add pages as needed) to complete your critical thinking analysis.

Elements of Thought



General Topic you plan to analyze:

Element: Purpose:

Element: Question(s):

Element: Information (What We Know)

Quality of Information Checks

Source	Critical Information (Data, Evidence, Facts)	Corroboration of Information	Confidence Level (H, M, L)	Comments

Add additional rows as needed. The number of sources will depend on the general topic, purpose, and question(s).

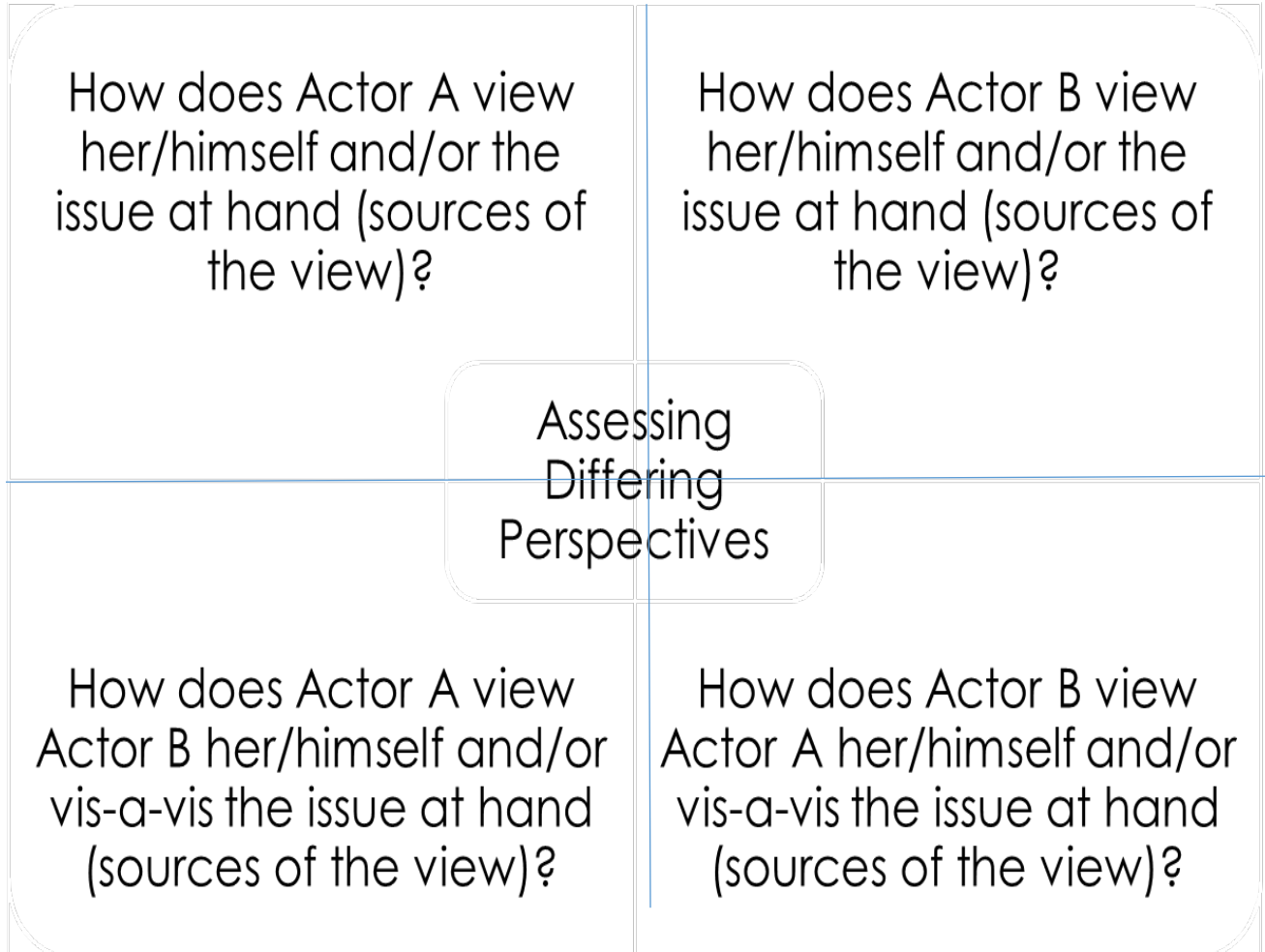
Elements: Context, Points of View, Assumptions

Where do your key actors fall in the **Coordinates of Political Culture** (if applicable)?

Type of Culture	Egalitarian	Individualistic	Collectivist
Governing Ideology	Liberal/Marxist	Mixed-Realist/Liberal	Realist
Culture works for “Good of the”	Entire Society	Individuals/Specific Groups	Leaders/Elites
Leaders strive for....	Wealth	Security	Standing, Reputation
Type of Governing System (World Bank World Governance Indicators)	Mature or Strong Democracies Globalists	New, Transitional, or Weak Democracies Isolationists & Nationalists	Authoritarians , Dictators, Strongmen
Actors Most Affecting Decisions or Policy	All Societal Actors Down to Citizens (Exact Actors Differ by Issue)	Executive, Executive Advisors, Elites, Legislatures, Interest Groups, Lobbyists	Executive, Executive Advisors, Elites
Levels of Political Rights & Civil Liberties (FreedomHouse, Freedom in the World)	Free	Partly Free	Not Free
Levels of Rule of Law (World Justice Project, Rule of Law Index)	Strong	Moderate	Weak
Levels of Elite Accountability	Significant	Some	Little
Levels of Mass Participation	High	Moderate	Low
Economic/Resource Management Systems (Heritage Foundation, Index of Economic Freedom)	Market	Mixed—Command/Market	Command (Statist)
Elite Corruption Behaviors	Paragons	Opportunists	Pirates
Societal Political Corruption Patterns (Transparency International Corruption Perception Index)	Incidental (Low)	Institutional (Moderate)	Systemic (Severe)
Levels of Bridging Social Capital	High	Moderate	Low

4 Ways of Seeing (Points of View)

First—identify your opposing actors (also evaluate your own belief system and that of your customer)



Sources of the view may be historical, ideological, political, economic, cultural, social, religious, linguistic, etc.

Key Assumption Checks

Key Assumption	Category/Comments On Influence	Solid	With Caveats	Unsup-ported
Actor A				
1.	Paradigmatic, Prescriptive, or Causal			
2.				
3.				
4....				
Actor B				
1.				
2.				
3.				
4....				

Add rows or actors as necessary.

Element: Conceptualization

Diagram or Draw your conceptual structural causal, process model, or agency model—or list the key components of your models (only one type model needed, but more than one is better).

Element: Alternatives

List your alternatives and describe the methods or processes used to develop the list.

Element: Information (What We Need to Know)

Quality of Information Checks

Source	Critical Information (Data, Evidence, Facts)	Corroboration of Information	Confidence Level (H, M, L)	Comments

Add additional rows as needed. The number of sources will depend on the general topic, purpose, and question(s)

Element: Interpretation/Inference

Select at least one method to test your list of alternatives (using more than one method is recommended).

Pros, Cons, Fixes

Alternative: (separate analysis for each alternative)

Evaluation Factors	Pros	Cons	Fixes

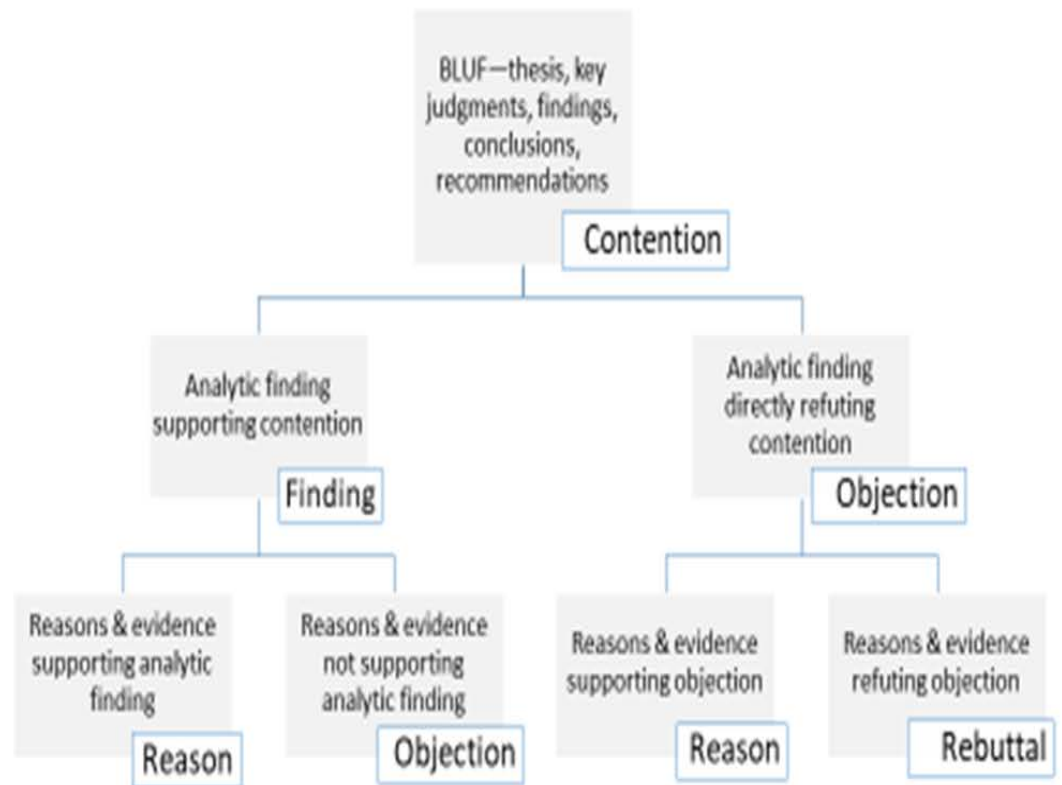
Add rows as needed. There should be at least one evaluation worksheet for each alternative.

Outcome Matrix Analysis

Evaluation Factor	Alternative 1	Alternative 2	Alternative 3
Evaluation Factor 1 (Cost/Benefit, etc.)			
Evaluation Factor 2 (Equity/Practicality , etc.)			
Evaluation Factor 3 (Legal/Ethical, etc.)			
Evaluation Factor 4 (Politically Accept., etc.)			
Total Scores			

Add columns for additional alternatives or rows for evaluation factors as needed.

Logical Argumentation



Element: Implications/Consequences

List those implications or consequences—intended or unintended—that may result from the selection of your best alternative(s).

Finishing Activities: Checking and Reporting Your Findings

Check your analysis with the **Intellectual Standards** to include:

Clarity – gives good examples?

Accuracy – verifies information?

Precision – provides sufficient detail?

Relevance – addresses the initial problem?

Depth – covers the complexities of issue?

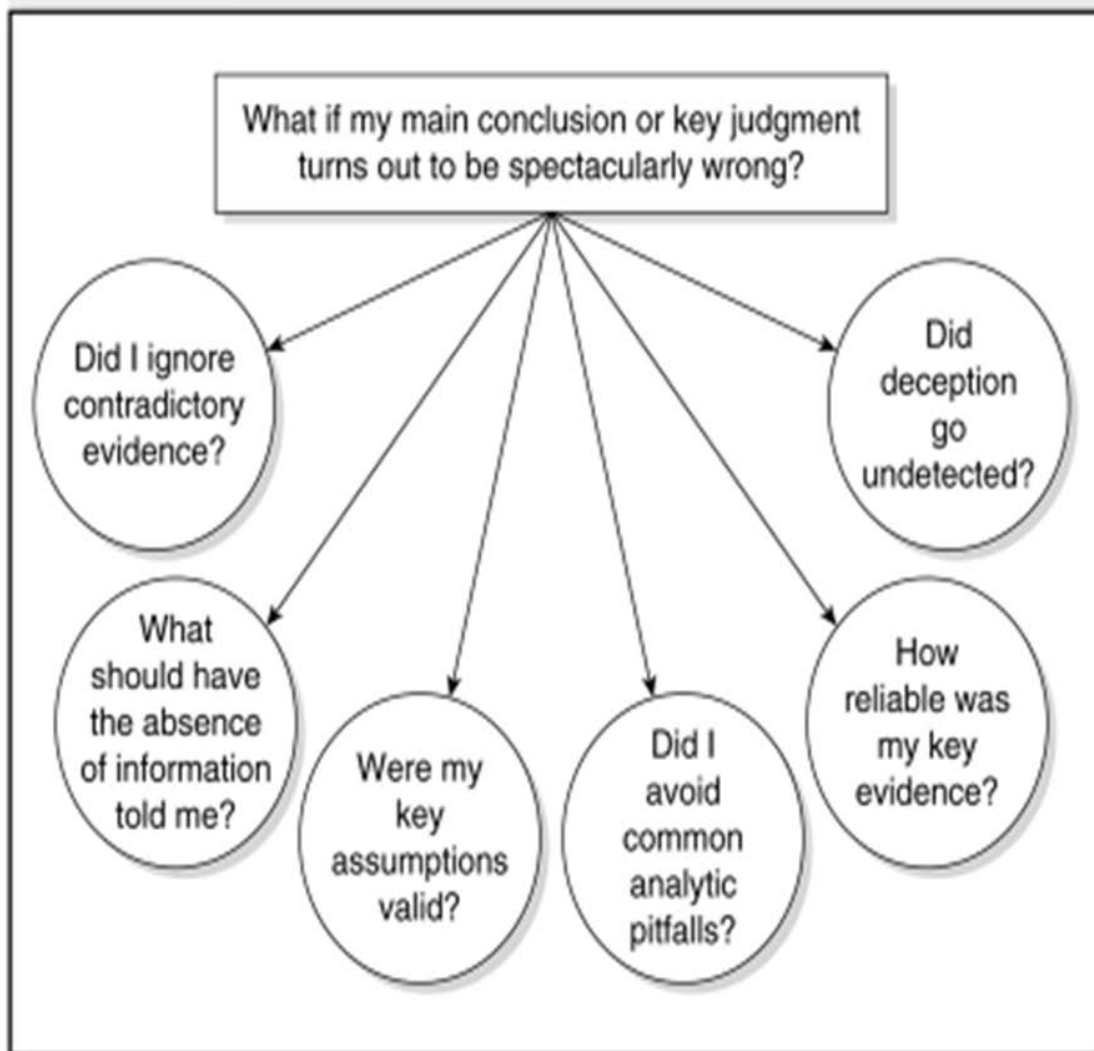
Breadth – considers other points of views?

Logic – makes sense, employs good reasoning (avoids logic fallacies)?

Significance – identifies most important facts/problems?

Fairness – does not serve own vested interests?

Structured Self-Critique Key Questions



Determine Likelihood and Confidence Levels

Likelihood Scales for assessing the findings & recommendations

almost no chance	very unlikely	unlikely	roughly even chance	likely	very likely	almost certain(ly)
remote	highly improbable	improbable (improbably)	roughly even odds	probable (probably)	highly probable	nearly certain
01-05%	05-20%	20-45%	45-55%	55-80%	80-95%	95-99%

Confidence Levels for assessing information sources & analysis quality

High Confidence generally indicates that judgments are based on high-quality information from multiple sources or from a single highly reliable source, and/or that the nature of the issue makes it possible to render a solid judgment.

Moderate Confidence generally means that the information is credibly sourced and plausible, but can be interpreted in various ways, or is not of sufficient quality or corroborated sufficiently to warrant a higher level of confidence.

Low Confidence generally mean that the information's credibility and/or plausibility is questionable, the information is too fragmented or poorly corroborated to make solid analytic inferences, or there are significant concerns or problems with sources.

Structure Final Report: Written or Oral

Outline For Security Analysis Presentation

