

Chapter 4

Purpose and Questions



**Security Analysis
Critical-Thinking
Framework**

Bottom Line Up Front

Generating purpose statements and research questions kick-start a critical-thinking project and provide focus to the analysis. All projects start with a larger purpose statement and one or more specific research questions. Customer alignment is a first step in generating the purpose and questions for a project. Once the customer's expectations are clear, the analyst develops the purpose statement. From the broader purpose, the analyst generates more specific research questions. This chapter focuses on techniques for developing the purpose statement and generating research questions in security analysis.

Analyst Challenge

New security analysts—both practitioners and academics—often find developing purpose statements and generating research questions a challenge. This may be explained by the way individuals have been taught to conduct research in their previous academic pursuits. At the elementary and secondary school levels, students generally are allowed to investigate broad topics where they collect a handful of references on a topic and present the descriptive material found on the topic in a logical order, usually in 10 pages or less. Near the end of the research project, they provide a paragraph or two with an intuitive analysis of the material found. Sound familiar? Often this same process is continued in the early years of the analyst's undergraduate education. It may not be until the undergraduate student reaches upper-division (junior, senior) courses in their major, or even in graduate school, when they first encounter more robust and systematic research methods. It is thus understandable why new security analysts often struggle with the processes in a critical-thinking approach presented in this book, because this approach differs significantly from how the analyst conducted research in previous years.

Most analysts gain years of experience using the basic intuitive and inductive research and writing procedures introduced in elementary and secondary school. This book; however, forces a change in this basic process by presenting a deductive (scientific) approach based in critical thinking. This process of change can create cognitive dissonance in the student's mind, resulting in a mental struggle to replace previously learned research and writing methods with new techniques. Much of the student's past experience with research and writing still applies, especially in terms of information searching, grammar, spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, and paragraph formatting. The newer critical-thinking research and analysis techniques explained herein require a narrower purpose and questions, deeper search for information, more robust analytic

techniques, and analytic results (findings and conclusions) placed first (bottom line up front) instead of at the end of a project.

The material in this and following chapters is presented primarily as if addressing a single analyst. In reality, few security analysis projects involve only one analyst. It is more common for a team of analysts to work on a particular project. The recommended procedure in professional analysis is to gather a team of analysts with different academic backgrounds (political scientists, economists, etc.) and different levels of field and analytic experience to generate a diversity of perspectives on the analytic topic. In current-events analysis, especially during rapidly unfolding crisis situations, one or two experienced analysts may be the primary producers of an analytic product. Even these experienced analysts will have supervisors review their work. All the techniques taught in this book may be used by teams of analysts or by individual analysts, as the situation requires.

Customer Alignment

The first step in any analytic project is to determine the needs and expectations of the customer(s). This is called **customer alignment**. The proper terminology in security analysis for those who will use the analytic products is *customers* or *clients* and not consumers.¹ The exact customer for a security analysis project will vary based on the agencies involved and situations requiring analysis. Some analysis will have one or just a few customers and others may be directed at the entire security community, and possibly even a larger public audience. Primary security analysis customers include national security and homeland security policy makers and decision makers, policy-maker staffs, military leaders and staffs, military commanders and field units, other intelligence agencies, U.S. Congress, law enforcement officials, and business leaders.² Academic analysis customers include course professors, academic or professional conference audiences, and academic journal and book readers. It is vitally important that security analysts—both practitioner and academic—understand what the customer expects and how

the analysis will be used in policy making, decision making, or the academic setting.

As described in Chapter 1, intelligence analysis reports provide customers with threat and opportunity analyses, but do not recommend policy or alternative solutions to a problem or situation. Intelligence analysis products must be non-partisan and not be influenced by the politics of the situation.³ This type of analysis focuses on threat and opportunity analyses decision makers have requested or where the intelligence community (IC) determines the decision makers need to be alerted and informed. The aim of intelligence analysis is to reduce uncertainty, which can at best be reduced but likely never eliminated.⁴ Once the analysis is provided, policy analysts then consider the resource implications and politics of the situation and develop the alternatives for the policy maker or decision maker to consider and select. In some cases, the policy analysts will not have a supporting intelligence staff and must provide both the intelligence and policy analysis in the same project.

There may be instances where the intelligence and policy analysts must work in tandem, which will stretch the boundaries where intelligence analysts normally work. For example, it is perfectly acceptable for policy analysts or decision makers to request an intelligence analysis of the implications or consequences of specific policy alternatives. The intelligence analysts or their supervisors; however, should not generate or recommend the specific policy alternatives. Another example is when there is a joint risk analysis effort. Risk analysis of the U.S. critical infrastructure is a major function of homeland security analysis.⁵ One of the formulas used for risk analysis offers: $R = (C \times V \times T)$, indicating Risk (R) is a function of the combination of Consequences (C—potential damage, casualties, etc.), Vulnerabilities (V), and Threats (T) for a specific infrastructure component. The T in this formula is traditionally the role of intelligence analysts. At times; however, intelligence analysts may be tasked to look deeper and also analyze the V and C, and occasionally generate the R. Actions to mitigate the resultant risk level is the purview of policy analysts as their

considerations include the resources and politics of the situation. In small, state- or city-level Homeland Security Intelligence Fusion Centers, one analyst or a small group of analysts may address both the risk formula components and resultant mitigation actions.

Much of the security analysis at the U.S. federal government level supports customers in the U.S. National Security decision-making structure diagrammed in Figure 4.1.⁶ Intelligence and policy analysis support all the levels shown. At times, the written reports will be provided directly to the policy-making staffs supporting each committee. At other times, depending on the situation and timelines involved, analysts may provide both verbal briefings and written reports directly to the committees, or even attend the meetings themselves in advisory roles. While the chairs and members of the Figure 4.1 committees change for each Presidential administration, the overall structure of the staff process has remained somewhat stable since 2000. Presidents George W. Bush and Donald J. Trump utilized separate National Security Council and Homeland Security Council structures, both mirroring Figure 4.1. Presidents Barack Obama and Joe Biden used one National Security Council and combined both national security and homeland security decisions in one structure.

Figure 4.1 U.S. National Security Council Structure



The differing levels of Figure 4.1 include:

National Security Council (NSC). This body was created by the U.S. National Security Act of 1947 to coordinate interagency responses to U.S. national security issues. The NSC is chaired by the President and today has as statutory members the Vice-President, Secretary of Defense, Secretary of State, Secretary of Homeland Security, Attorney General, Secretary of Energy, and Secretary of Treasury. Other Cabinet-level officials, members of the NSC staff, and officials from other executive departments or agencies may be appointed as NSC members or attend NSC meetings based on the President's preferences and the issues under consideration. The Director of National Intelligence, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Director of the CIA, and Director of the FBI, are regularly present at NSC meetings. The President makes all NSC decisions after presentation and discussion of specific issues. A combination of the President's Daily Briefing Book and intelligence supporting the President's NSC decision role make the President the number one customer of intelligence analysis produced at the U.S. federal level.

Principals Committee (PC). This Committee consists of the same members as the National Security Council, less the President. It is normally chaired by either the Vice President or the National Security Advisor to the President. This is the Cabinet-level senior interagency forum for discussing national security or homeland security issues prior to the convening of the full NSC or Homeland Security Council with the President in attendance.

Deputies Committee (DC). This Committee consists of the deputies of the regular members of the National Security Council such as the President's Chief of Staff, Vice-President's Chief of Staff, Deputy Secretary of Defense, Deputy Secretary of State, Deputy Secretary of Homeland Security, Deputy Attorney General, Deputy Secretary of Energy, and Deputy Secretary of Treasury. Deputies

from other executive departments and agencies also are often involved in the issues under discussion. This Committee is chaired by either the National Security Advisor or Deputy National Security Advisor as required by the situation. This is the principal sub-cabinet-level committee for interagency discussions and coordination that leads to national security or homeland security policy.

Policy Coordinating Committees (PCCs). These are the primary interagency committees for the development, management, and implementation of national security and homeland security policies. These Committees usually are either regional or state specific (Latin America, Russia, etc.) or functional (terrorism, WMD, cybersecurity, etc.). Primary participation is at the Assistant Secretary or equivalent level, with participation of other executive departments or agencies as the situation requires. The Committees are either permanent or formed *ad hoc* as needed. Policy Coordinating Committees normally are chaired by members of the NSC staff with a portfolio in the region, state, or functional issue under consideration. As the main interagency coordination committees, Committee members discuss and forward interagency policy for consideration by the more senior committees and coordinate implementation of Presidential decisions.

Below the Policy Coordinating Committees. There also exist a variety of other interagency or intra-agency committees and working groups to support the NSC process. For U.S. federal intelligence and policy analysts working on non-security issues, or at state and local organizations, there usually is a hierarchical structure for generating coordinated intelligence and policy alternatives for submission to policy makers and decision makers. The bottom line for security analysts is to know their customers' needs and expectations in order to clearly define the purpose and question(s) for their analytic projects.

Purpose Statements

The critical-thinking process for analytic projects begins with development of a general analytic purpose statement. At the U.S. federal government level, security analysts will usually have their projects' general analytic purposes defined or implied in one or more federal government strategy or guidance documents. These documents generally designate the primary threats and program priorities of the current U.S. administration and are products of the Figure 4.1 NSC structure. Figure 4.2 provides a sample list of selected strategic-planning and guidance documents. When the issuing agency is the White House, these documents usually have been coordinated through the NSC structure, with the White House National Security Staff normally preparing the final document for presidential approval. When the issuing agency is other than the White House, the individual agency's staff prepares the documents for agency leadership approval after interagency and intra-agency coordination.

The documents listed in Figure 4.2, as well as other national strategy documents, provide guidance to U.S. Executive Branch component analysts and program managers. These documents are a key to Executive Branch planning, programming, and budgeting actions, and often are required to be produced by the U.S. Congress or the U.S. Office of Management and Budget. Executive Branch strategy documents usually are reissued near the beginning of each new U.S. presidential administration and may be revised or originated during an administration as international and domestic events unfold or administration priorities change. The documents are primarily guidance to Executive Branch components, as Congress has no role in their development. Congress is free to either accept or reject Executive Branch requests based on these strategies and other Executive Branch-generated documents. Security analysts not working within the U.S. federal government structure, such as at state or local governments, also should have a series of such strategies or other documents to

provide general guidance. Academic security analysts should understand the federal-level strategies in their specialty areas.

Figure 4.2 Selected U.S. National Strategy and Guidance Documents (2020)	
Strategy or Guidance	U.S. Issuing Agency
National Security Strategy	White House
National Defense Strategy	Department of Defense
National Military Strategy	Joint Chiefs of Staff
National Strategy for Biodefense	White House
National Strategy for Counterterrorism	White House
National Strategy for Countering Weapons of Mass Destruction Terrorism	White House
Homeland Security Strategic Plan	Dept. Homeland Security
National Strategy for Aviation Security	White House
National SW Border Counter-narcotics Strategy	Office of Drug Control Policy
National Northern Border Strategy	Dept. of Homeland Security
National Strategy for Protecting Critical Infrastructure and Key Assets	Dept. of Homeland Security
National Intelligence Strategy	Director of National Intelligence
Worldwide Threat Assessment (updated annually)	Director of National Intelligence
Defense Intelligence Strategy	Department of Defense
Presidential Executive Orders	White House

There will be circumstances when the analytic project’s purpose is not defined by a strategic plan or other guidance. When this occurs, the analysts or their supervisors—in consultation with the customers—develop the analytic guidance. For practitioners, this is also the case when intelligence or policy analysis focuses on making policy makers and decision makers aware of new threats or opportunities. In these situations, the purpose may not be gleaned from strategy documents, but normally will advance the goals identified in Figure 4.2 guidance or other documents. Some academic security analysts may receive grants or contracts to conduct projects supporting government operations where the purpose is clearly identified. Most academic analysis; however, will require analysts to establish their own purpose statements.

The case study of the Cuban Missile Crisis (see Box 2.1) is an example of

when an analytic customer developed their own purpose and research question in a crisis situation. The ExCom's first day of deliberations addressed the question of "what do we do about the Soviet missiles in Cuba?" They did not have a separately defined purpose. After this first day, President Kennedy created the purpose and questions for the continuing ExCom discussions. The new purpose looked to "avoid war." The main question became "how to remove the missiles in Cuba while avoiding a conventional or nuclear war." These changes to the purpose and questions completely reframed the ExCom analysis and ultimately avoided a nuclear war.

In academic circles, the purpose is often called the "research puzzle," which defines the "bigger picture" issue(s) concerning a topic people care about. The purpose considers the general goals, aims, or objectives for the analytic project (Chapter 3). Analyzing the purpose normally would require a project too broad in scope to be studied with available time and resources. The research purpose should be a larger example of a problem people care about because of the associated consequences. In other words, the purpose should identify a topic that is important and one where the analyst's efforts may make a contribution in solving a problem or answering a question.⁷ For example, a general-purpose topic could encompass:

1. Causes of war or violent conflict.
2. Chances for nuclear conflicts.
3. Performance of U.S. security agency members.
4. Results of U.S. government reorganizations.
5. Options for national security actions.

The above are "bigger picture" issues that may take years to study adequately and several book-length manuscripts to report the analytic findings; therefore, it is impractical to address such problems in a single analytic project. As

the analyst works toward a set of specific research questions (see below), he/she attempts to carve out a small piece of the larger purpose or puzzle to address.

Writing the purpose statement. Once a general-purpose topic for the analytic project is ascertained, the next step is to develop a purpose statement. This statement defines a narrower focus on the general-purpose topics such as mentioned above and must directly address or imply an answer to the question: *Why should anyone care about this analysis?* The purpose statement must be clear about the problem being addressed.

The purpose statement should be an example of a larger problem people care about because of its potential consequences. Security policy makers and decision makers may care about it because it assists in a decision process. Academics might care about the purpose if it solves a theoretical puzzle; especially if it adds to the theoretical knowledge base on a particular topic of interest.

The analyst also must ask whether there is an obvious answer to the purpose statement. For example, if the purpose statement addresses “whether powerful states are really more likely to win wars than weak states.” The obvious answer is “Yes, they are.” This purpose statement then would be interesting only if the analytic project’s purpose is to show “how, at least in some circumstances, weak states can prevail over powerful states.”⁸

Examples of good general-purpose statements (often written as questions) are provided below; these correspond to previous general-purpose topic examples. These purpose statements are still too broad or general to study in a single research project.

1. Can an external non-state actor (terrorist group, etc.) incite a war with a regional power?
2. When would contiguous regional powers use nuclear weapons in a local conflict?

3. Do organizational cultures affect interagency intelligence analysis?
4. Does government reorganization improve interagency information sharing?
5. What diplomatic and military options exist in response to violations of international law?

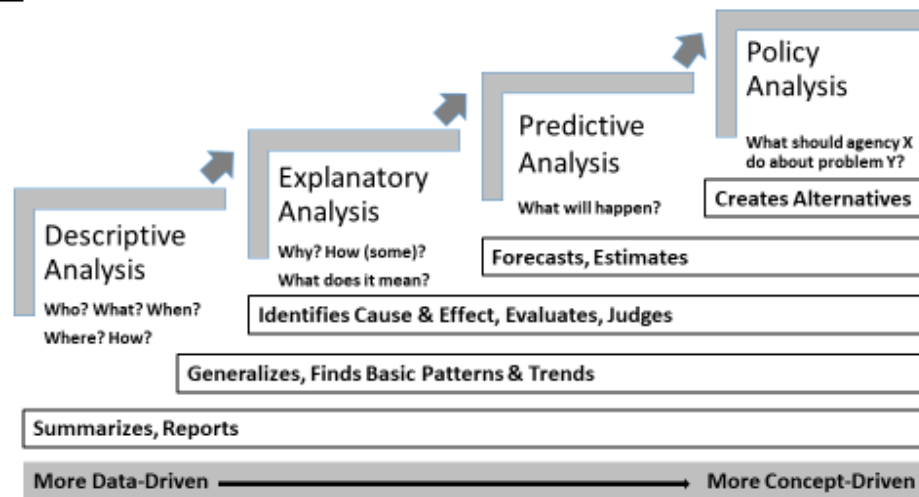
Research Questions

Research questions delineate the actual study to be conducted. These questions provide specificity to the purpose statement by designating the category of study, situation, or phenomenon to be studied, and the cases or concepts to be included. A critical-thinking project may have more than one specific research question, but it is usually best—especially for new analysts—to limit the investigation to one question. The specific research questions determine the smaller piece of the larger research topic to be addressed in the project. It also helps frame the feasibility of the research project, which entails making sure the time, resources, and information to complete the project are available.⁹ Good questions must be relevant, timely, answerable in more than one way, and precisely worded.¹⁰

After completing customer alignment; considering the goals, aims, and objectives of the analytic project (see Figure 3.8); and developing the purpose statement; the analyst can generate the specific research question(s). The Security Analysis Spectrum in Figure 4.3 demonstrates the different categories of analysis separated into descriptive, explanatory, predictive, and policy analysis.¹¹ The different analytic categories shown in Figure 4.3, include the types of questions normally answered in each indicated category. The spectrum starts on the left with the least-complex analysis (descriptive) and continues to the right with increasingly complex analyses, with policy analysis as the most complex. This figure also captures how the next higher category of analysis usually cannot be addressed without first completing the lower categories. For example, before

attempting a predictive analysis, support is required from both descriptive and explanatory analytic efforts. Descriptive analysis is more data-driven. Explanatory, predictive, and policy analysis rely on data, but become increasingly concept-driven, meaning they use the critical-thinking research and analytic techniques presented in this book.

Figure 4.3 The Security Analysis Spectrum



Descriptive analysis. This type of analysis attempts to answer specific research questions: the *who*, *what*, *when*, *where*, and *how* about a current situation or phenomenon (e.g., human behavior) under investigation. Descriptive analysis primarily summarizes and reports data, but may also be used to make broad generalizations or find basic patterns in the data. The data for descriptive analysis is collected from a myriad of sources to include libraries, archives, databases, intelligence collection systems, imagery, and other sources (Chapter 5). Once data is collected, the analyst summarizes and organizes it logically in published reports or briefings to present to either customers or other analysts. Descriptive statistics summarizing larger databases (means, modes, medians, ranges, distributions, variances, standard deviations, correlations, etc.) are frequently part of summaries prepared in descriptive analyses. Historians and journalists are well known for their descriptive analysis. Those who conduct

descriptive research employ the inductive approach and utilize historical research methods.

Security analysis relies on significant descriptive analysis. Intelligence agencies regularly publish descriptive studies on foreign political, economic, and social conditions (country studies), foreign military capabilities and organizations (order-of-battle studies), foreign political and military leader biographies (Chapter 6), foreign infrastructure studies (roads, airports, seaports, etc.), and other topics of possible interest to policy makers and decision makers. Most explanatory, predictive, or policy analysis efforts include background or contextual information gleaned from descriptive analysis. Standing descriptive reports usually are completed as part of a scheduled IC publication cycle. Both intelligence analysts and policy analysts depend heavily on descriptive analysis products.

Descriptive analyses are often key components of more complex analyses. Beyond basic summarizing and reporting, descriptive analysis also can be used for generalizing and finding patterns in data. Some techniques utilized include content analysis, extrapolation, link analysis, geospatial analysis, and chronological studies (Chapters 5 and 7).

1. Content analysis looks for trends in specific sources of communications (speeches, etc.). For example, a political leader's word selection in a number of speeches may provide insights into future actions.
2. Extrapolation simply shows past trends, usually graphically or chronologically, which can reveal future general trends or patterns.
3. Link analysis provides diagrams of contacts (links) among people, organizations, bank accounts, vehicle registrations, and other collectable data, to understand the working and weaknesses of an organization, government, or criminal entity.
4. Geospatial analysis combines photography and mapping with annotation techniques. Geospatial maps or charts can provide notations of buildings, equipment, or other geographic features or infrastructure. Today's

geographic information systems use digital mapping, digital photography, and database information to create descriptive analysis products.

5. Chronological studies relate events to timelines.

Explanatory analysis. This analysis answers the *why*, and sometimes the *how* questions, plus questions similar to *what does this mean* about current situations or phenomenon. Explanatory analysis employs the deductive (scientific) approach for identifying patterns and trends. It also investigates cause-and-effect situations in addition to evaluating and judging situations to determine what they mean. Explanatory analysis techniques are usually taught in upper-division undergraduate and graduate courses. Academics specialize in explanatory analysis because it allows the building of models (Chapter 7) and theories (Chapter 3). Practitioners in particular use explanatory analysis to answer *what does this mean*-type questions, to support predictive analyses, and eventually as inputs to policy analyses. These analyses require a robust conceptualization of the situation. Chapter 7 addresses conceptualization through basic, process, structural-causal, and agency modeling. Inferential statistical techniques used to test hypotheses are the mainstay of conducting quantitative explanatory analysis. Qualitative and comparative research designs; however, also are used widely in explanatory analysis to determine patterns and trends, to model situations, and to advance hypotheses. As with descriptive analysis, the use of descriptive statistics to summarize large databases is frequently used in explanatory analysis.

Most explanatory analysis answers *why* questions. Security analysts frequently will have to address questions of *what does this mean* if policymakers and decision makers want a deeper understanding of a situation. *How* questions in explanatory analysis are a little tricky. They can answer either descriptive or explanatory questions. If the question calls for describing political, military, economic, or social situations; then, a *how* question in a descriptive analysis is likely appropriate. If the question calls for explaining *how* a situation or process came about, then a *how* question in an explanatory analysis is appropriate. For

example, asking “How many combat aircraft will state X employ?” is a descriptive topic. Asking “How did state X increase its combat aircraft inventory?” identifies an explanatory situation. To avoid confusion, it is best to use *why* or *what does this mean* questions to frame explanatory studies.

Predictive analysis. This analysis answers questions similar to *what will or could happen* concerning the situation or phenomenon under investigation. While sometimes employed in academic studies, intelligence analysts specialize in predictive analysis. Intelligence analysts often refer to predictive analysis as *estimating* or *forecasting*. The techniques for predictive analysis seldom are covered in undergraduate and graduate social science courses, leaving the IC to instruct new analysts on the techniques. This book includes a basic foundation in predictive analysis (Chapter 9), which relies on having a model to generate the predictions (Chapter 7). Good predictive studies are usually preceded by an explanatory analysis to generate models. As mentioned above, supporting descriptive-analysis reporting is also of critical need in predictive analysis. There are usually three main categories of predictive analysis:

Cyclical events. These are predictions of events or phenomenon whose occurrences are just short of inevitable.¹² In natural science, this would include determining sunrise and sunset, phases of the moon, tides, and other natural phenomena. In security analysis, for example, it may predict when an adversary’s surveillance satellite passes overhead when its normal tracks are well known. The key here is the phenomenon occurs on a regular, predictable schedule.

Chronological events. These are predictions of events that happen over a period of time. It may be known the event is happening or will happen, so the challenge is determining when it will happen.¹³ For example, a state’s construction of an aircraft carrier may be widely known; but predictive

analysis is required to forecast when the aircraft carrier will be launched, finished outfitting, crew trained, and eventually become fully operational. Another example is to forecast when a state may field a nuclear weapon. In these examples, both science and technology analysts and political-military analysts must work together to synthesize both technical and behavioral data to provide the predictive analysis results desired by customers.

Unique events. These are predictions of events or phenomenon that may happen at some specific point in time, but where there is little to no past data to assist in making precise predictions as in cyclical or chronological events.¹⁴ Predicting unique events is challenging for intelligence analysts. Unique event predictions are of major concern to policy makers and decision makers and are needed to develop alternatives in policy analysis. For example, the policy makers and decision makers may want to know if and when two states will go to war. Such unique event predictions are necessary in order to devise diplomatic and military policy alternatives to respond to the situation. Predicting unique events is based in probabilities or likelihoods, as no one can be 100% sure of the findings.

Policy analysis. This type of analysis answers questions similar to *what should agency X do about problem Y*. This is the analysis of primary interest to policy makers and decision makers. It usually requires a synthesis of descriptive, explanatory, and predictive research to support development of a list of alternative policy decisions for consideration by the customers. Policy analysis includes developing strategies and tactics to address a current situation or phenomenon. At the highest levels, policy analysis is the basis for strategy development.¹⁵ Most policy analysis described previously in the NSC structure is for strategy development. But at the field level in national security, military commanders and senior law enforcement officials also must have operational or tactical policy analysis to assist in their decision processes for implementing

national strategy or for countering a threat. Public administration, public policy, political science, and international relations academic programs, plus military staff and war colleges, provide instruction for national security policy analysis. This book's Security Analysis Critical-Thinking Framework (see Figure 2.5) is applicable to policy analysis.

Writing the research question. Once the analyst determines the category of research question(s) to ask—descriptive, explanatory, predictive, policy, or a combination of these—the next step is to compose the actual research questions. The following general procedures can assist in creating research questions:

1. Start the question with the interrogatory wording (*who, what, when, where, how, why*) or a version of *what does this mean, what will or could happen, or what should agency X do about problem Y*.
2. Include the exact situation, phenomenon, behavior, decision, or condition the customer wants described, explained, or predicted, or policy alternatives generated. This is usually the dependent variable in the analysis.
3. Include the exact case or cases to be investigated in the analysis.
4. Only include independent variables (i.e., potential causes) in the research question if they are a primary focus of the analysis. In most analyses, the independent variables will emerge from the information search and conceptual model development and will not be known at the research question-writing stage.
5. Do not include an abundance of descriptive or contextual material as subordinate clauses or supporting sentences in the specific research question. KISS (Keep It Simple Sailor (or Soldier)) is good advice when writing research questions. Limit research question(s) to one concise, self-contained sentence.

6. For policy analysis studies, do not include the solution in the question.¹⁶ The best solution will emerge as the critical-thinking analysis nears completion.

Good, specific research question examples include (these correspond to the previous purpose statement examples):

1. **Why did Israel and Hezbollah go to war in Lebanon in 2006?** This question calls for an explanatory study (*why* question). The dependent variable (what is being explained) is the start of the war. The case study is the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war.
2. **Will Pakistan and India fight a nuclear war in the next decade?** This question calls for a predictive study of a unique event, which may or may not occur in the next decade. The dependent variable is the potential start of a nuclear war. The case study is Pakistan versus India.
3. **How did differing organizational cultures prevent U.S. intelligence agencies from predicting the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon?** This question calls for an explanatory study (*how* question—a case of where a *how* question is appropriate in an explanatory study). The dependent variable (effect) is the intelligence agencies' failure to predict the 9/11 attacks. The independent variable of main interest (the cause) is different organizational cultures. The case study is the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon.
4. **Will formation of the Department of Homeland Security improve U.S. intelligence sharing of terrorism-related information?** This question calls for a predictive study of a unique event. The dependent variable is the improvement of U.S. intelligence sharing of terrorism-related information. The independent variable of main interest is the formation of the Department of Homeland Security. The case studies involve investigating the policies and procedures of several agencies in the IC.

5. What should the NSC do to counter Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea? This question calls for a policy analysis study. The NSC (i.e., the President) is the organizational level to make the decision. Chinese territorial claims in the South China Sea is the case study to be analyzed.

Getting Started Checklist

Developing the purpose statement and research question(s) provide the foundation for the analytic project. This requires the analyst conduct a basic information search (Chapter 5) to understand the problem. If the purpose and question(s) are not constructed properly, the project may be headed for trouble. This does not mean the purpose or questions(s) will stay unchanged during the project. As new information is located on the situation or phenomenon, there may be revisions of both the purpose and question(s). Figure 4.4 provides an analytic technique entitled a Getting Started Checklist. The items on this checklist should be answered to both the analyst's and their supervisor's satisfaction before beginning a more in-depth information search.

Figure 4.4 Getting Started Checklist¹⁷

- _____ Who is/are the primary customer(s)? Who are any secondary customers?
- _____ Customer alignment completed. Source of customer guidance (strategy document, current event, face-to-face meeting, supervisor tasking, report updates, etc.).
- _____ Does the primary customer have the technical or background experience to understand and utilize the analysis? If not, how would the analysis findings be presented?
- _____ How will the customer(s) use the results of the analysis?
- _____ Might the customer turn to other sources for additional or competing analysis? If so, to whom?

- _____ What is the purpose statement?
- _____ Does the purpose statement provide insight into why anyone should care about this analysis (i.e., what is the value added)?
- _____ What is/are the specific research question(s)?
- _____ Are there obvious answers to the specific research question(s)? If so, what is wrong with the obvious answers?
- _____ Is the project feasible? Are the time, resources, and information available to properly answer the specific research question(s)?
- _____ Does/do the specific research question(s) raise any special challenges?

Key Concepts

Chronological Events

Customer Alignment

Cyclical Events

Descriptive Analysis

Explanatory Analysis

Policy Analysis

Predictive Analysis

Purpose Statement

Research Question

Unique Events

Discussion Points

1. How do purpose statements and research questions differ when comparing practitioner and academic analyses?
2. Provide examples of predictive analyses addressing cyclical, chronological, and unique events.
3. Complete the Figure 4.4 Getting Started Checklist for a professional or academic analysis project.

Notes

¹ Robert M. Clark, *Intelligence Analysis, A Target Centric Approach* 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage/CQ Press, 2017), 339.

² Ibid, 341-348.

³ Mark M. Lowenthal, *Intelligence, From Secrets to Policy*, 7th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE/CQ Press, 2017), 4-5.

⁴ Clark, 340.

⁵ Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), “Threat and Hazard Identification and Risk Assessment” (Washington, DC, FEMA, 2018). <https://www.fema.gov/threat-and-hazard-identification-and-risk-assessment> (accessed May 10, 2021).

⁶ White House, “National Security Memorandum 2” (Washington, DC, White House, February 4, 2021). <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/02/04/memorandum-renewing-the-national-security-council-system/> (accessed May 10, 2021).

⁷ Gary King, Robert O. Keohane, and Sidney Verba, *Designing Social Inquiry, Scientific Inference in Qualitative Research* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 15-16.

⁸ Paul Kowert, (graduate U.S. foreign policy analysis course handout, Florida International University, fall 1996).

⁹ Jerome K. Clauser and Sandra M. Weir, *Intelligence Research Methodology, An Introduction to Techniques and Procedures for Conducting Research in Defense Intelligence* (Washington, DC, Defense Intelligence School, 1975), 96-101.

¹⁰ Katherine Hibbs Pherson and Randolph H. Pherson, *Critical Thinking for Strategic Intelligence*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage/CQ Press, 2017), 14-15.

¹¹ Figure 4.3 modified from Pherson and Pherson, 50.

¹² Clauser and Weir, 295-296.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Richard L. Kugler, *Policy Analysis in National Security Affairs: New Methods for a New Era* (Washington, DC, National Defense University Press, 2006), 15-17.

¹⁶ Eugene Bardach and Eric M. Patashnick, *A Practical Guide for Policy Analysis, The Eightfold Path to More Effective Problem Solving*, 5th ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE/CQ Press, 2016), 11.

¹⁷ Modified from Pherson and Pherson, 9, 42; Kowert.