

Critical Belief Analysis for Security Studies

**by Barnett D. Feingold and
Michael W. Collier**



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Dedication

To America's security analysts,
who help keep our country safe!

Preface

The authors of this book met through the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute at the College of William & Mary. The Osher Institute offers courses on diverse topics of interest to adult learners. We initially attended each other's Osher Institute courses. Barney taught several Osher courses centered on Critical Belief Analysis (CBA). Mike taught several Osher courses on critical thinking and homeland security. Our discussions over the years led us to conclude CBA could contribute to critical-thinking analyses in the domestic and international security fields. Thus, the idea for this book was born.

This book is a companion to Mike's *Security Analysis: A Critical-Thinking Approach*.¹ *Security Analysis* includes a short introduction to CBA.² This book provides more in-depth and expanded CBA material. This book should be particularly interesting to mid-career security analysts — especially foreign policy analysts — who want to add a unique and powerful technique to their analytic toolkits for studying agency (decision-making and actions by individuals and groups).

The language of this book focuses on agents' beliefs. The focus on agents (actors, believers, decision-makers) is a vital component of security analysis. Analysts may also use CBA to critique their analytic efforts. While this book focuses on security studies, CBA is applicable to any social science field studying decision-making and resultant actions.

Chapter 1 introduces CBA and its role in critical thinking. Chapters 2 to 5 describe the theoretical foundations of CBA. An analyst must understand this theoretical material before attempting an analysis. Chapter 6 provides a "CBA User's Manual" and includes several figures (checklists) to assist in conducting a CBA. We recommend that readers print Figure 6.1, The Periodic Table of the Beliefs, now and refer to it frequently. Doing so will help you understand the overall structure of CBA and the relationships among the characteristics of belief to which CBA draws analysts' attention. Figures 6.2 to 6.4 present step-by-step

guidance for conducting a CBA. Chapter 7 provides an example CBA of U.S. President George W. Bush's 2003 decision to invade Iraq.

We have done our best to make this book intelligible. Key concepts are bolded. A consolidated list of the Key Concepts is provided at the end of the book, allowing readers to check their comprehension of important material. Figures (i.e., tables, lists, and graphics) support the text throughout the book. A system of continuous endnotes is employed with reference material found in a final consolidated Endnotes section. Nonetheless, we expect many readers to initially find CBA's concepts and techniques unfamiliar and challenging. Most are likely to find that becoming a skilled practitioner of CBA requires repeated reading of Chapters 2 to 5 and extensive practice using its analytic techniques.

We are indebted to those whose ideas and works have influenced us. Ultimately, all mistakes in facts, examples, sources, and analytic techniques are ours alone. Nothing in this book should be used to assert or imply U.S. government authentication or endorsement of any material presented. Nothing in this book intentionally touches on classified material.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to Critical Belief Analysis

Why Critical Belief Analysis?

Critical Belief Analysis (CBA) is an important addition to the security analysis toolkit. Foreign policy and security analysts (hereafter **security analysts** or just **analysts**) employ a variety of tools and techniques to describe, explain, and predict leaders' decisions and actions. Security analysts usually use a combination of **structural analytic techniques**³ and **agency analytic techniques** to reach their conclusions. Structural analytic techniques assess factors related to history, ideology, politics, economics, social relationships, cultures, religions, and linguistics. Structural analyses also address the influence of domestic and international laws, regulations, rules (both formal and informal), treaties, and conventions. Security analysts usually combine their structural assessments with agency analyses, i.e., investigations of the characteristics and tendencies of individual decision-makers, primarily based on the theories, tools, and techniques of cognitive psychology. These agency analyses are where CBA excels.

Security analysts often create a **psychobiography** for individuals and groups of decision-makers in their studies.⁴ A psychobiography is an investigation of the experiential, cognitive, and emotional factors influencing a leader's points of view and assumptions (i.e., their beliefs) and thus affecting their decisions and actions. Psychobiographers employ diverse techniques to assess agents' personalities and leadership styles, as well as their cognitive, physical, mental, emotional, attitudinal, and ideological characteristics. If there is substantial information about a leader, a strategic psychobiography can delve deep into their background. However, such deep dives often take considerable time to complete. More commonly, operational and tactical analyses make do with modified

psychobiographies because information on agents (decision-makers) is incomplete, and deadlines for final analyses are short. CBA can help mitigate the limitations of such incomplete strategic, operational, and tactical psychobiographies.

CBA helps security analysts deepen and refine their understanding of points of view, assumptions, and beliefs revealed by other analytic approaches.⁵ Methods for assessing the role of beliefs in threat-based and overall decision-making are poorly developed. Social science has studied “belief systems” and “belief networks,” i.e., interrelated beliefs and their ideological foundations.⁶ As a rule, foreign policy and psychology literatures conceptualize beliefs as “attributions” shaping agents’ explanations of events.⁷ These literatures fail to provide techniques to help analysts understand the structure of beliefs, grasp how beliefs affect agents’ understandings of threats and opportunities or predict agents’ responses to challenges.

CBA focuses on these hitherto overlooked issues. CBA helps analysts refine and deepen their understanding of how beliefs affect decisions and actions.⁸ Per an overused metaphor, CBA allows the analyst to “peel the onion” more deeply than previous belief-related analytic techniques. This book provides a detailed description of CBA and a user’s manual (Chapter 6) for its conduct. Security analysts who regularly conduct agency analyses should benefit most from this book.

Security analysts can use CBA to achieve two distinct sets of objectives:

First, analysts can use CBA tools and techniques to deepen their understanding of agents’ beliefs, thereby helping them more accurately:

- Describe, explain, and predict agents’ decisions and actions.
- Assess the reasonableness of those decisions and actions.
- Estimate the probability agents’ policies and actions will have the intended consequences.

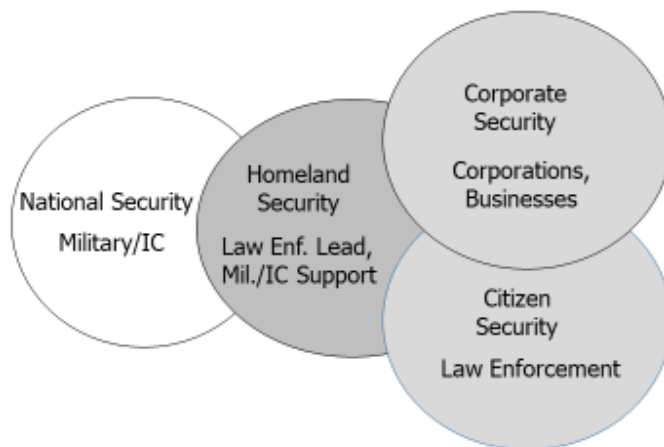
- Anticipate agents' reactions to the failures of belief-inspired policies and actions.

Second, analysts can use CBA tools and techniques for self-analysis. CBA can sensitize security analysts to factors that may bias their investigations or inflate confidence in their conclusions.

Defining Security Studies

For the purposes of this book, the field of **security studies** includes national security, homeland security, law enforcement, and corporate security. Figure 1.1 portrays the relationships between U.S. security actors after the September 11, 2001 (9/11) terrorist attacks.⁹ **National Security** is the primary responsibility of the U.S. military and intelligence community (IC). **Homeland Security**, also known as **Public Security**, sees law enforcement take the lead with military and IC support. **Citizen Security** is the purview of law enforcement and is responsible for protecting U.S. citizens and visitors to the United States. With an estimated 90 percent of critical U.S. infrastructure privately owned, **Corporate Security** has become more prominent since 9/11. While supported by **Homeland Security** and **Citizen Security**, **Corporate Security** is the primary responsibility of corporations and businesses. CBA is an important analytic tool in each of these security areas.

Figure 1.1 Conceptualizing Security (post 9/11)



Security analysis includes two key analytic components: **intelligence analysis** and **policy analysis**. Both of these components provide support to security decision-makers. Most large organizations have a dedicated intelligence support staff tasked with delivering analytic reports on threats and opportunities to policy analysts and decision-makers. It is up to policy analysts and decision-makers to combine intelligence reports with additional information from other sources, consider political and resource constraints, develop lists of potential policy alternatives, and decide which alternatives to pursue. In smaller organizations, policy analysts may not have dedicated intelligence analysis support and, therefore, must complete intelligence threat and opportunity analyses themselves before attacking the policy side.

Security Analysis Critical-Thinking Framework

CBA is most effective in security studies when used as part of a larger **Security Analysis Critical-Thinking Framework**. Figure 1.2 provides such a framework.¹⁰

Figure 1.2 Security Analysis Critical-Thinking Framework

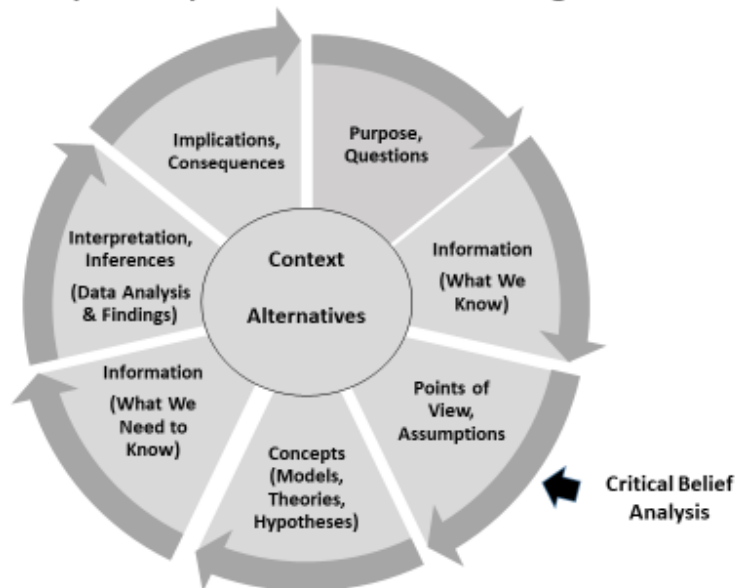


Figure 1.2 places the Foundation for Critical Thinking's **Elements of Thought** in the order of the steps in the scientific method.¹¹ Starting with **Purpose** and **Questions** and moving clockwise around the framework's circle may appear to be rigidly linear. However, the proper use of the elements is anything but linear. Richard Paul and Linda Elder, the creators of the original Elements of Thought, argue that competent critical thinkers repeatedly reassess each element of thought as their analyses proceed.¹² Thus, all the elements are interrelated. A skillful **critical-thinking analysis** requires both **systematic** and **active** inquiry. Systematic means there is a comprehensive format for conducting the analysis, such as shown in Figure 1.2 and detailed in Chapter 6 for CBA. Active means the analyst thinks about the analytic process as it proceeds. Competent analysts continually revisit and reassess each **Element of Thought** as their analyses proceed.

Figure 1.2 places the **Context** and **Alternatives** elements in an inner circle abutting each of the other elements.¹³ This is because **Context** and **Alternatives** directly affect every other element. For example, an analysis may have alternative **Purposes** and **Questions**, alternative **Information**, alternative **Points of View**,

alternative **Assumptions**, and so on. Usually, the **Context** for each element also differs. Therefore, the **Context** and **Alternative** elements must be frequently considered as critical thinkers assess all the other elements.

Figure 1.2 also features two **Information** elements: “**what we know**” and “**what we need to know.**” This model contrasts the role of an initial information search in uncovering facts and theories relevant to the **Questions** driving the study with the search for additional information used to test alternative conceptual models and hypotheses as the study progresses. Once the analyst has completed the conceptualization of the study and identified and collected “what we need to know,” they then proceed to the **Interpretation and Inferences** and **Implications and Consequences** elements, revisiting other elements as needed, to complete their analysis. *Security Analysis: A Critical-Thinking Approach*¹⁴ provides a more detailed description of the elements of thought within the Security Analysis Critical-Thinking Framework, including the analytic techniques employed with each element. Below is a brief description of each element.

The Elements of Thought

Purpose and Questions. Every research project or analysis should begin with a broad purpose. Often expressed as questions, such purposes are usually too broad to be effectively investigated. For example, it would take years, if not decades, to study a purpose such as: “How can world peace be achieved?” The analyst must narrow the scope of the purpose to questions that can be studied with available resources within the time allotted. For example, a good research question may be: “Why did Israel and Hezbollah go to war in Lebanon in 2006?”

Information and Context. Once the research question(s) are developed, the next step is to search for existing information (data, facts, evidence) and existing studies and theories about the current problem. This search requires skill in **information literacy**: the analyst’s ability to find, assess, use, and document

information. During the initial information search, the analyst strives to discover the structural issues and current information needed to establish the general context of the analysis. A security analyst must have well-developed information literacy skills, including those used in identifying misinformation, disinformation, and other falsehoods. The information element is usually addressed a second time (what we need to know) to generate data required to test alternative models, hypotheses, scenarios, or recommendations the analysis develops.

Points of View and Assumptions. Using material gleaned from the initial information search, analysts assess the points of view, assumptions, and beliefs shaping the functioning of opposing agents as well as the points of view, assumptions, and beliefs influencing their own thinking. Points of view and assumptions speak to the belief systems of the actors or societies under study; these include structural, historical, ideological, political, economic, social, cultural, religious, linguistic, and security factors. Knowledge of agents' points of view and assumptions plays a crucial role in explaining and predicting their decisions and actions. CBA contributes significantly to the assessment of points of view and assumptions.

Concepts (conceptualization). The analyst then conceptualizes (models) the behavior of the agents under study. There are several classes of modeling techniques, including geospatial modeling, temporal modeling, process modeling, structural causal modeling, and agency modeling.¹⁵ Typically, these models identify the hypotheses, scenarios, or recommendations to be tested in the study. Figure 6.1, The Periodic Table of the Beliefs, is a tool analysts can use to help them understand how CBA models agents' beliefs.

Alternatives. Working almost simultaneously with the conceptualization element, the analyst establishes the range of alternative hypotheses, scenarios, or recommendations to be tested in the analysis, i.e., options useful in explaining or

predicting the decision-making and behavior under study or developing alternative policy recommendations. There are several techniques for generating alternative hypotheses, scenarios, and recommendations. Some hypotheses, scenarios, and recommendations flow from the information search or from modeling (i.e., the “**Concepts**” **Element of Thought**). Others flow from such techniques as synthesizing **creative thinking** into the critical-thinking framework.¹⁶ Creative-thinking techniques generate unique, useful “out-of-the-box” alternatives that must be assessed in the same way as alternatives generated by other techniques.

Interpretation and Inference. When alternative hypotheses, scenarios, or policy recommendations have been generated, the next step is to test each to determine the best alternatives to answer the questions or solve the problems guiding the analysis. There are several qualitative, comparative, and quantitative techniques for testing and evaluating alternative hypotheses, scenarios, and policy recommendations.¹⁷ Analytic findings (best answers or solutions) emerge from this element. *Security Analysis: A Critical Thinking Approach* provides several useful qualitative techniques.¹⁸ There are specific comparative analysis techniques (e.g., Truth Tables and Fuzzy Sets), but most comparative analyses use both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Most quantitative analyses require the analyst to have a background in statistics or advanced mathematics.

Implications and Consequences. The findings of the analysis must then be evaluated for their implications and consequences. If the findings or solutions are adopted, decision-makers must understand the likely outcomes. Implications flow from the thoughts generated by the analysis. Consequences flow from the implementation of analysts’ suggested recommendations. *Security Analysis: A Critical-Thinking Approach* includes a number of analytic techniques for assessing implications and consequences.¹⁹

Critical Belief Analysis as Part of Critical Thinking

CBA is a crucial component of any critical-thinking security studies project assessing the agency aspects of individual or group decision-making. It provides a systematic model for describing, explaining, and predicting agents' actions through a deeper understanding of their points of view, their assumptions, and the webs of belief supporting those points of view and assumptions. Properly conducted, a CBA will also sensitize the analyst to the points of view, assumptions, and webs of belief shaping their own conclusions.

The tools and techniques of CBA may also contribute to other elements of the Security Analysis Critical-Thinking Framework. CBA can contribute to conceptualizing the study by helping analysts generate alternative hypotheses, scenarios, and recommendations. Figure 6.1, The Periodic Table of the Beliefs, provides a conceptual model for use in any agency analysis. CBA can also help analysts interpret their findings and generate inferences. Additionally, CBA can offer insights into the implications and consequences of various alternatives, scenarios, and recommendations. Overall, CBA makes analysts aware of crucial matters they might otherwise overlook in a critical-thinking analysis.

Chapter 2

Fundamental Needs Motivating Beliefs

Assumed and Actual Belief Guidance

Critical Belief Analysis (CBA) focuses on *the degree to which beliefs provide the guidance agents expect*. As such, this type of analysis encourages attention to the guidance agents rely on (*assume*) their beliefs to provide, the guidance those beliefs *actually* provide, and the differences between agents' expectations and reality. More specifically, CBA encourages systematic attention to three consequential but commonly ignored characteristics of beliefs that powerfully affect the guidance beliefs provide. Those characteristics are (a) the fundamental needs (motivations, desires, goals) agents look to their beliefs to satisfy (this chapter), (b) the precision/ambiguity of the beliefs' predictions (Chapter 3), and (c) the beliefs' viewpoints — that is, the nature of the issues beliefs address and their relationships with other beliefs (Chapters 4 and 5). Thus, CBA directs analysts' attention to:

- The fundamental needs agents *assume* their beliefs satisfy.
- The fundamental needs those beliefs *actually* satisfy.
- The precision of the guidance agents *assume* their beliefs provide.
- The precision of the guidance those beliefs *actually* provide.
- The viewpoints (i.e., the nature of the issues) agents *assume* their beliefs address.
- The viewpoints those beliefs *actually* address.

Two Fundamental Needs Motivating Beliefs

CBA holds that humans look to beliefs to satisfy one or both of two fundamental needs. The first is the need for *information to help them survive and prosper*: information about how things are, what is likely to happen, and how to get things done. Beliefs agents treat in ways that support the satisfaction of these needs are called **informative beliefs**.

The second fundamental need motivating beliefs is the need to *feel comfortable and confident*. Such feelings result from seeing oneself as wise, powerful, loving, connected, and valued and from seeing the world as safe and one's position in it as secure. Beliefs engendering those feelings help agents cope with realities that might otherwise be overwhelming. Austrian neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud and his disciples described those beliefs as the products of an individual's "defenses."²⁰ CBA refers to these as **reassuring beliefs**.

Both informative beliefs and reassuring beliefs can be beneficial or detrimental. Optimal functioning requires understanding the benefits and dangers of both kinds of belief, using them appropriately, and finding the proper balance between them.

Agents reveal the fundamental need they *assume* their beliefs satisfy through their words and actions. If agents rely on their beliefs for guidance concerning consequential matters, they *assume* their beliefs are informative. If they freely admit choosing to believe as they do — although they recognize the guidance of their beliefs is misleading or useless — they *assume* their beliefs are reassuring. Of course, such self-awareness and honesty are rare. People are generally biased toward viewing their beliefs as informative — even beliefs objective observers view as transparently worthless or blatantly false.

Determining whether a particular belief provides information or reassurance requires investigating the agent's relationship with the belief. If that relationship is characterized by commitments to impartiality, objectivity,

openness to criticism, detachment, and struggles against bias and irrationality, the agent's treatment of the belief renders it informative. If, on the other hand, that relationship is characterized by attachment, bias, defensiveness, closed-mindedness, rampant subjectivity, and blindness to the effects of such belief-protective strategies, the agent's treatment of the belief renders it reassuring.

When determining whether a belief is informative or reassuring, several aspects of the agent's relationship to the belief must be considered, including whether the agent:²¹

- Wants the belief to be true.
- Feels good about believing as they do.
- Sees the belief as making them a better person.
- Considers the belief essential to their identity.
- Views affirming the belief as rendering them morally or intellectually superior to skeptics.
- Finds the belief comforting.
- Would be upset by information raising serious questions about the belief.
- Avoids information that has the potential to challenge the belief.
- Views the belief's guidance as unquestionable.
- Finds critical inquiry into the belief pointless.
- Does their best to "explain away" information that appears to have the potential to challenge the belief.
- Finds challenges to the belief distressing.
- Views those who believe differently as flawed.
- Feels justified ignoring challenges to the belief.
- Advocates silencing those with different beliefs.
- Suppresses their doubts to avoid upsetting others.
- Responds to potential challenges by increasing the ambiguity of their belief.
- Feels obliged to champion their belief.

An agent may (a) *assume* a belief is either informative or reassuring while (b) relating to the belief in a way that renders it informative or reassuring. As such, the agent may:

1. Accurately *assume* an informative belief is informative.
2. Accurately *assume* a reassuring belief is reassuring.
3. Inaccurately *assume* a reassuring belief is informative.
4. Inaccurately *assume* an informative belief is reassuring.

In situations #1 and #2 above, the agent has a realistic view of the guidance their belief provides. As such, they have a good chance of using its guidance wisely. However, as you'll discover, doing so requires discipline, skill, and self-awareness.

In situation #3 above, agents are likely to treat their beliefs as profound truths and defend them by distorting data and violating the laws of logic. Situation #3 is usually pernicious and is commonly discovered when conducting security analyses. For example, agents may:

- Refuse to accept distressing realities.
- Convince themselves of reassuring falsehoods.
- Deny their feelings.
- Selectively attend to supportive data and arguments.
- Selectively ignore challenging data and arguments.
- Interpret vague or ambiguous data as supportive.
- Selectively cast doubt on the accuracy or relevance of challenging information.
- Use *ad hominem* (personal) arguments to attack the credibility of those who challenge their beliefs.
- Overlook the motives and failings of those who support their beliefs.
- Accept supportive evidence and logic of dubious quality.

- Reject challenging evidence and logic of higher quality.
- Refuse to examine the assumptions undergirding their beliefs.
- Subject the assumptions of competing views to exacting critiques.
- Selectively remember supportive events.
- Selectively forget challenging events.
- Create or accept unfalsifiable excuses for failures.

As a result, agents' faith in the guidance situation #3 beliefs provide is likely misplaced.

Agents in situation #4, who *assume* informative beliefs to be reassuring, are, like agents in situation #3, intoxicated by certainty. However, where the certainty of agents in situation #3 is the product of credulity, the certainty of agents in situation #4 is the product of such factors as cynicism, bitterness, and distrust.

Agents who falsely view informative beliefs as reassuring are likely to defend those beliefs by distorting data and violating the laws of logic. Such agents are likely to downplay the contribution of subjective experiences to life satisfaction and to view experiences and reports to the contrary as products of reassuring self-deception. However, the objective value of love, kindness, empathy, charity, and compassion is supported by extensive research.²² Dismissing such objective realities as subjective fantasies can lead to the erroneous view that relationships, at their best, are temporary alliances motivated by self-interest and that power, wealth, status, and symbols of success make life rewarding.

On occasion, investigation may reveal an agent's *assumptions* about their beliefs and their treatment of those beliefs vacillate. An agent's words and actions may indicate they (a) view certain beliefs as informative at some times and as reassuring at others, or that they (b) sometimes relate to such beliefs in ways that render them informative while at other times relating to those beliefs in ways that render them reassuring. When agents are unclear about whether they (a) *assume* their beliefs to be informative or reassuring, or (b) treat their beliefs in

ways that render them informative or reassuring, they are likely to treat their beliefs inconsistently. Predictably, inconsistently treated beliefs are likely to do a poor job of providing either information or reassurance.

Chapter 3

Precision/Ambiguity of Beliefs

Aspects of Precision/Ambiguity

Critical Belief Analysis (CBA) views a belief's precision or ambiguity, like the fundamental need agents look to a belief to satisfy, as a consequential but commonly ignored characteristic. In the vocabulary of CBA, precision and ambiguity, like loudness and softness, are complementary ways of describing the same phenomenon.

For the purposes of CBA, a belief's **precision** is the narrowness of the range of observations believers consider belief-consistent. On the other hand, a belief's **ambiguity** is the breadth of observations believers consider belief-consistent. In other words, the more precise a belief, the narrower the range of potentially supportive observations and the wider the range of potentially challenging observations. The more ambiguous a belief, the wider the range of potentially supportive observations and the narrower the range of potentially challenging observations.

Readily Quantifiable Precision/Ambiguity

The most precise (i.e., least ambiguous) belief one can have when playing roulette is: "On the next spin, the ball will land in a specific numbered pocket." On a 38-pocket roulette wheel, such bets will be wrong about 97.3 percent of the time. A less precise (i.e., more ambiguous) belief would be: "On the next spin, the ball will fall into one of the wheel's eighteen red pockets (or one of the wheel's eighteen black pockets)." On the same (38-pocket) roulette wheel, such bets will be wrong about 52.6 percent of the time. The belief that the pocket the ball lands in will

reflect divine will — a belief consistent with all possible outcomes — is even more ambiguous.

Hard-to-Quantify Precision/Ambiguity

A belief also may be imprecise/ambiguous because it is consistent with diverse qualitative realities. Applying this standard, Austro-British philosopher of science Karl Popper found Freudian and Adlerian theories highly ambiguous. Popper noted that the psychoanalytic theories of Austrian neurologist and founder of psychoanalysis Sigmund Freud and Austrian psychotherapist Alfred Adler effortlessly explained actions as varied as attempting to drown a child and sacrificing one's life to rescue a child.²³ Freudians, Popper claimed, could attribute the first act to repression and the second act to sublimation (i.e., the transformation of the energy of a biological impulse to serve a more acceptable use). On the other hand, Adler's followers could claim feelings of inferiority motivated both acts. In the first instance, Adler's followers might argue that feelings of inferiority compelled the villain to prove they dared commit a crime. In the second instance, Adler's followers might claim that feelings of inferiority motivated the hero/heroine to prove they dared to risk their lives in a rescue attempt.

Popper described these examples as symptoms of a trait Freud's and Adler's theories shared. While neither predicted human behavior, both could account, after the fact, for anything someone might do. Thus, in the language of CBA, they were profoundly ambiguous.

By contrast, more precise theories, such as the German-born physicist Albert Einstein's Theory of Relativity, were distinguished by their risky predictions. One prediction of Relativity Theory was "gravitational lensing," the bending of light by gravity.

Relativity Theory predicted the degree to which the sun would bend light passing close to its surface. It became possible to test this prediction in 1919

when a solar eclipse allowed astronomers to measure shifts in the apparent positions of stars whose light passed close to the sun. As Einstein had predicted, the apparent positions of those stars shifted twice as much as the English mathematician Sir Isaac Newton's Universal Law of Gravitation forecast. Even a small discrepancy between astronomical observations and Einstein's predictions would have raised questions about the validity of his theory, especially if the discrepancy was consistent with the competing Newtonian model.

The Impact of Second-Order Precepts on Precision/Ambiguity

A belief's precision/ambiguity is also revealed by the ease with which agents recognize its flaws, i.e., by their answers to questions such as, "How would you know if your belief was wrong?" Answers to such questions are powerfully influenced by what CBA calls **second-order precepts**, that is, rules determining how agents think about, defend, criticize, and communicate about their beliefs. Some second-order precepts encourage agents to openly discuss and honestly grapple with challenges. Other second-order precepts encourage agents to defend and promulgate their beliefs by any means necessary.

Second-order precepts closely resemble Popper's "second-order traditions."²⁴ However, second-order precepts include both second-order traditions and the rules by which agents operate in the absence of such traditions. The influence of second-order precepts on the pursuit of authentic understanding is evident in physical scientists' responses to the confirmation of Einstein's predictions regarding gravitational lensing. The early twentieth-century scientific community was attached to Newtonian conceptions of time, space, and gravity. Such attachment was well-justified; Newton's model was supported by two centuries of astronomical observations, including the discovery of Neptune, the mass and position of which had been predicted using Newton's equations. Yet, with few exceptions, the scientific community cautiously embraced and

celebrated observations challenging Newton's model. Newton's legacy clearly included second-order precepts that encouraged not only precision but integrity.

The second-order precepts associated with Soviet agronomist Trofim Lysenko's doctrines contrast sharply with those associated with Newtonian physics. Lysenko's influence over Soviet agronomy was not the result of his doctrines' successes. Instead, it was due to extraneous factors, including the role of his policies in quelling peasant unrest, his humble origins, and the consistency of his ideas with Marxist doctrine.

Lysenko's career started in the late 1920s, when new Soviet collectivist reforms were instituted. One of those reforms mandated the confiscation of peasant farmers' agricultural landholdings. In response, many peasants abandoned their farms, became indifferent to the quality of their work, and engaged in pilfering.

Lysenko drew favorable attention because he advocated agricultural methods that, while unscientific, had positive consequences. Lysenko's methods encouraged disaffected peasants to return to farming, increased opportunities for year-round agricultural work, and enabled peasants to view themselves as having personal stakes in the success of the Soviet experiment.

Lysenko's personal history also contributed to his rise. As the son of peasants, bereft of formal academic training or affiliation, Lysenko benefited from policies encouraging Communist Party leaders to promote members of the proletariat to positions of influence. Lysenko's rise, which continued throughout General Secretary Joseph Stalin's reign, culminated in his appointment as Director of Genetics at the Academy of Sciences of the Soviet Union.

Lysenko also gained influence because he subscribed to the evolutionary theory of French naturalist Jean-Baptiste Lamarck, who alleged that acquired characteristics of plants and animals could be inherited. The Lamarckian view, which German revolutionary socialists Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels endorsed, suggested agronomists could create new varieties of plants and animals within a few generations by exposing current varieties to environmental pressures. More

poignantly, it suggested that subjecting Soviet citizens to the demands and rewards of a socialist Utopia would, within a few generations, create a population that instinctively embodied Soviet virtues and ideals. Lysenko's domination of Soviet agriculture reached its peak in 1948 when he delivered a speech prepared with Stalin's aid. That speech denounced prevailing conceptions of genetics and described orthodox geneticists as enemies of the people.

Lysenko imposed Draconian second-order precepts on the discussion of his ideas. Scientists who failed to renounce genetics were dismissed from their posts. Many were imprisoned; some were executed. These realities encouraged scientists to destroy evidence challenging Lysenko's conceptions, present fraudulent data supporting those conceptions, and write public letters confessing their errors and praising the wisdom of the Party.

In short, the second-order precepts associated with Lysenko's views rendered those views profoundly ambiguous. They encouraged scientists to restrict themselves to Lysenko-supportive thoughts and statements. They inspired selective promulgation — and even manufacture — of data supporting Lysenko's ideas, and they suppressed data that might have challenged his ideas.

Lysenko's followers would have had an answer to the question, "If Lysenko's ideas were wrong, how would you know?" However, this answer was likely to have been, "The Communist Party will say so!" Although such an answer reveals sensitivity to a particular kind of error, it also reveals subservience to authority and indifference to data, logic, and scientific discipline. Such subservience and indifference render this answer evidence of ambiguity.

Over time, Lysenko's policies contributed to famines that killed millions in the Soviet Union. When adopted by the People's Republic of China, those policies played a role in the Great Chinese Famine (1959-1961), which killed between 15 million and 55 million people. Oppressive second-order precepts may alter agents' reflections and discourse, but they do not change reality.

CBA views Lysenkoism as exemplary of a particularly destructive species of belief. Such beliefs are "justified" by fraudulent facts or theories. A substantial

majority of their predictions are false, and the measures they inspire are disproportionately detrimental. Yet they create passionate adherents. They do so by encouraging advocates to deny reality, defend demonstrable falsehoods against credible evidence, and silence critics. They encourage self-deception, defensiveness, dishonesty, bitterness, hatred, and violence.

Such beliefs put adherents on a slippery slope. Palpable lies require the support of other lies, and those lies require the support of still more lies. Discrediting, defaming, or silencing those who challenge such lies becomes a righteous duty. Further, the unjustifiable harshness of attempts to discredit, defame, or silence challengers encourages agents to rationalize their cruelty, justifying the ever-harsher treatment of their ideological opponents.

Advocates of competing ideologies often support their arguments with differing second-order precepts. Those precepts encourage agents to attend to differing facts and interpret those facts differently. Often, they employ different definitions of the same terms. Characteristically, arguments using those definitions differ in their precision. These phenomena are apparent in the debates between advocates of scientific evolution and creationism, as well as disputes over U.S. security policy.²⁵

Classes of Precision/Ambiguity

Beliefs can be thought of as falling into four precision/ambiguity categories: precise beliefs, imprecise beliefs, rules of thumb, and catalytic narratives. Some beliefs fit these categories imperfectly; however, these categories are sufficiently distinct for use in security studies.

Precise Beliefs

Precise beliefs provide agents with explicit guidance about the nature of reality and how to achieve their goals. Such beliefs are characteristic of the physical

sciences. A paradigmatic example of such precision is Newton's Law of Universal Gravitation, which was mentioned above. An even more dramatic example of precision comes from the standard model of particle physics, which describes subatomic particles and forces. A recent experiment devoted to determining the electron magnetic moment, a measure of the strength of the electron's magnetic field, found it to agree with the standard model's prediction to within roughly one part in a trillion. Precise beliefs share six characteristics:

- They offer clear, detailed descriptions of the phenomena they address.
- They specify how to measure those phenomena.
- They specify the relationships between those phenomena.
- They describe the circumstances under which those relationships occur.
- They incorporate second-order precepts that encourage agents to seek, generate, acknowledge, grapple with, promulgate, and discuss challenging arguments and data, and to thoroughly assess excuses for predictive failures.
- They are likely to incorporate second-order precepts that encourage the use of increasingly stringent tests as more sensitive instruments or revealing procedures become available.

Precise beliefs may predict that employing well-defined procedures in well-defined circumstances will achieve well-defined outcomes. They may predict that those who make observations under well-defined circumstances will witness well-defined phenomena. Or they may provide data or concepts that enable agents to generate such predictions.

How to determine whether agents *assume* a belief is precise. If an agent's statements and actions suggest they rely on a belief to (a) tell them what will happen, (b) tell them how to achieve their goals, or (c) provide a readily falsifiable, data-sensitive framework that helps them explain or predict events,

they are treating the belief as if it were precise. In the language of CBA, their behavior suggests they *assume* the belief's guidance to be precise.

Imprecise Beliefs

Beliefs CBA calls **imprecise** are somewhat more ambiguous than precise beliefs. Where precise beliefs make specific predictions, imprecise beliefs make *directional predictions*.

Most social science hypotheses are imprecise, as are many of the more useful tenets informing security studies. For example, the security studies thesis Democratic-Peace Theory makes two directional predictions: that democratic nations will be (a) more peaceful internally than authoritarian regimes and (b) less likely than authoritarian regimes to wage war against democracies.

The inexactitude of imprecise beliefs is evident in the ways adherents investigate, discuss, and promulgate them. Archetypal imprecise beliefs share eight attributes:

- They make directional (rather than specific) predictions regarding relationships between phenomena.
- They describe the general (rather than precise) nature of those phenomena.
- They broadly (or only implicitly) describe the conditions under which relationships between phenomena are alleged to occur.
- They lead agents to expect relationships between phenomena to hold true most — but not necessarily all — of the time.
- Their second-order precepts encourage agents to balance advocacy with openness to challenge and refinement.
- Their second-order precepts permit agents to accept speculative *post hoc* explanations for predictive failures and other challenging observations without investigating those explanations.

- Their second-order precepts fail to encourage seeking, generating, acknowledging, or promulgating challenging facts and arguments.
- Their second-order precepts inspire *laissez-faire* attitudes toward reexamining claims when more sensitive instruments or meticulous investigative procedures become available.

How to determine whether agents *assume* a belief is imprecise. If agents' statements and actions suggest they expect a belief's guidance to increase their odds of success — but not necessarily to make success likely — they are treating the belief as if it were imprecise. In the language of CBA, their behavior suggests they *assume* the belief's guidance to be imprecise.

Rules of Thumb

Beliefs CBA categorizes as **rules of thumb** are more ambiguous than imprecise beliefs. Some beliefs everyday language refers to as “rules of thumb” also meet CBA's criteria for inclusion in that category. However, many beliefs English speakers casually describe as “rules of thumb” are more accurately characterized as imprecise beliefs or catalytic narratives.

Some rules of thumb make rough predictions or describe approaches to problems that promise to increase agents' odds of success. However, when made by rules of thumb, such promises are illusory. Rules of thumb fail to increase agents' odds of success because (a) they provide only colloquial descriptions of the phenomena they address and (b) they are vague or silent about the conditions under which relationships between those phenomena occur.

Those characteristics permit rules of thumb to contradict one another. Consider the paired rules of thumb below, which offer conflicting advice and are silent as to the conditions in which the advice is relevant:

- Look before you leap./He who hesitates is lost.

- Nothing ventured, nothing gained./Better safe than sorry.
- Great minds think alike./Fools seldom differ.
- Many hands make light work./Too many cooks spoil the broth.
- What will be will be./Life is what you make it.
- The more, the merrier./Two's company; three's a crowd.

Between their colloquial descriptions of the phenomena they address and their silence about the conditions under which they hold, rules of thumb offer little more than elusive hints about the nature of reality. Consistent with a broad range of observations, they are unaccountable for the expectations they inspire. As such, failures of rules of thumb have little impact on agents' faith in their utility. Often, those who unsuccessfully attempt to apply a rule of thumb are considered responsible for misunderstanding the rule or the conditions in which it applies. However, unlike more ambiguous beliefs (i.e., catalytic narratives), rules of thumb influence only a circumscribed range of agents' views, values, and perspectives. Archetypal rules of thumb share six characteristics:

- Their guidance is vague because (a) they provide only colloquial descriptions of the phenomena they deal with, (b) their claims regarding relationships between those phenomena are unclear, and (c) they are vague or silent about the conditions under which those claims hold.
- Their ambiguity allows them to account, after the fact, for a wide range of observations.
- They have little effect on agents' experiences or understanding of the issues they address.
- Failures of the predictions and strategies they inspire have little effect on agents' confidence.
- Their guidance cannot be expected to reliably increase the agent's odds of success.
- They encourage agents to consider issues that may matter.

How to determine whether agents *assume* a belief is a rule of thumb.

Suppose an agent's words and actions indicate they expect a belief to provide nothing more than encouragement to think about issues that may matter. In that case, they treat the belief as a rule of thumb. In the language of CBA, their behavior suggests they *assume* the belief to be a rule of thumb. However, it should be noted agents rarely view their beliefs this way.

Catalytic Narratives

The most ambiguous beliefs are **catalytic narratives**. Catalytic narratives are beliefs that make no falsifiable claims but appear — to those who embrace them — to be profound truths. Catalytic narratives come in many forms: they may be packaged as descriptive statements (such as “Members of religion X are enemies of God”), compelling images (even if Photoshopped or generated by artificial intelligence), captivating stories (novels, sacred texts, movies, plays, editorials, documentaries, or the literature of academic disciplines), evocative words or phrases (such as “racist,” “sexist,” “bigot,” “fake news” or “social justice”), and defamatory descriptions ending in “phobe.” They may also be descriptions that make no explicit predictions and are open to widely varying interpretations. Examples include: “Religion Y is a religion of peace,” and “It takes a loathsome person to vote for candidate Z.”

Catalytic narratives provide lenses through which agents view reality, creating “true believers.” Like catalysts, they transform what they encounter while remaining unchanged. Although catalytic narratives bias experience and judgment, they lead adherents to believe their narrative-influenced perceptions and judgments embody unique and unquestionable truths. All too often, catalytic narratives convince those under their sway they are morally and intellectually superior to those who fail to believe as they do. With rare exceptions, political, religious, and other ideologies consist of either a cardinal catalytic narrative and its implications or a web of interwoven, mutually supportive catalytic narratives.

Catalytic narratives are the most ambiguous of beliefs. Their power to explain events after they occur is limited primarily — if not exclusively — by the vagueness of their language and their advocates’ passion, imagination, and rhetorical skill. Their predictive failures are easily discounted. The ambiguity of catalytic narratives allows believers to interpret them in ways they find satisfying. It also makes it easy for those narratives to explain a wide range of phenomena, encouraging believers to think they are “onto something” and inspiring passion and commitment. Archetypal catalytic narratives share six characteristics:

- They satisfy agents’ needs to see themselves as knowledgeable, wise, and powerful.
- They make no falsifiable predictions. They often evade falsifiability by making no predictions or encouraging agents to glibly “explain away” predictive failures. Only rarely do the adherents of catalytic narratives have an answer to the question, “How would you know if you were wrong?”
- They account for a wide range of events after they occur.
- Their second-order precepts fail to encourage (or actively discourage) seeking, generating, or promulgating challenging facts or arguments.
- Their second-order precepts strongly discourage serious consideration of challenging arguments, logic, and events.
- Their second-order precepts strongly discourage critical examination of claimed predictive successes.

How to determine whether agents *assume* a belief is a catalytic narrative.

Suppose an agent’s words and actions suggest they view a belief as transforming them in ways that lead them to see it as true while failing to provide them with authentic information. In that case, they treat the belief as if it were a catalytic narrative. In the language of CBA, their behavior suggests they *assume* the belief to be a catalytic narrative. However, agents rarely, if ever, view their beliefs in this way. Instead, they look to catalytic narratives to guide their most consequential

decisions and actions, unaware of the intoxicating spells those narratives weave, the dubious guidance they provide, and the unjustified certainty they inspire.

Effects of the Desire for Reassurance on Precision/Ambiguity

Is it possible for a reassuring belief to qualify as precise, imprecise, or a rule of thumb? Appearances to the contrary notwithstanding, the answer to this question is “No.” If a belief is reassuring, agents who embrace it are likely to:

- Deny distressing realities that challenge the belief in question.
- View reassuring falsehoods as accurate.
- “Spin” vague or ambiguous information to make it appear supportive.
- Portray challenging information and arguments as inaccurate or irrelevant.
- Find specious reasons to distrust whatever might challenge that belief and equally specious reasons to trust supportive arguments and information.
- Selectively remember events consistent with that belief while selectively forgetting events that raise questions about it.
- Uncritically accept excuses for that belief’s explanatory and predictive failures.

The above approach to evaluating beliefs conflicts dramatically with that which qualifies beliefs as precise. If a belief is to qualify as “precise,” its advocates must dispassionately seek and grapple with challenging arguments and data. They must be willing to evaluate it using the most exacting technological and conceptual tools available, and they must be open to discussing their doubts and concerns.

This approach to evaluation also conflicts, albeit less dramatically, with that which characterizes imprecise beliefs. If a belief is “imprecise,” its advocates cannot be closed to challenging arguments and data or to employing sophisticated conceptual and technical tools to reexamine its claims. Lastly, they

cannot be unwilling to discuss the possibility their belief suffers from flaws and limitations.

Reassuring beliefs also differ, albeit subtly, from rules of thumb. Where reassuring beliefs powerfully distort their advocates' perception and judgment; the bias that rules of thumb engender is comparatively mild. And where the guidance of reassuring beliefs is likely to be ineffective, rules of thumb are likely to inspire reflection and, indirectly, effective action.

However, reassuring beliefs and catalytic narratives are complementary. Reassuring beliefs are shaped by advocates' desires to see themselves as wise, knowledgeable, and powerful; the ambiguity of catalytic narratives allows them to satisfy those desires.

Like reassuring beliefs, catalytic narratives help advocates see themselves as possessing profound truths. Their ambiguity enables advocates to explain everything after it occurs, make horoscope-like predictions, and rationalize predictive failures. Catalytic narratives also support advocates' longing for omniscience by diverting their attention from facts and arguments that might undermine their confidence.

Although all reassuring beliefs are catalytic narratives, not all catalytic narratives are reassuring beliefs. Unlike reassuring beliefs, informative catalytic narratives may be motivated by the desire to authentically understand, predict, and control reality.

Why Attention to Precision/Ambiguity Matters

Agents who fail to attend to the precision/ambiguity of their beliefs are vulnerable to relying on those beliefs for guidance they cannot provide. Without explicit attention to this issue, agents are likely to view catalytic narratives, rules of thumb, and imprecise beliefs as powerful aids to understanding reality, predicting the future, and achieving their goals.

However, as seen above, catalytic narratives provide little information about reality. Their predictions are so vague they are meaningless. With few exceptions, their suggested strategies and tactics are ineffective. Worst of all, catalytic narratives blind adherents to their flaws and limitations, leading agents who believe them to experience them as profound truths. Security study history is littered with such beliefs (see the example in Chapter 7).

Unlike catalytic narratives, rules of thumb have negligible effects on agents' views of reality. Rules of thumb may create illusions of understanding. However, unlike the transformative, totalizing illusions that catalytic narratives create, the illusions that rules of thumb engender are pedestrian and circumscribed. In addition, the second-order precepts associated with rules of thumb lack the blinding power of the second-order precepts associated with catalytic narratives. Moreover, while the second-order precepts of both catalytic narratives and rules of thumb protect their principal claims from being judged wrong, the second-order precepts of rules of thumb, unlike the second-order precepts of catalytic narratives, allow the beliefs they accompany to be deemed inapplicable. Further, unlike catalytic narratives, which encourage agents to view the issues they highlight as uniquely important, rules of thumb encourage agents to reflect on issues that matter to *them*. Nonetheless, rules of thumb are of little value in understanding reality, predicting the future, or producing well-defined outcomes. In the absence of meticulous attention to the precision of rules of thumb, those who embrace them are likely to overestimate the accuracy with which they describe reality and the value of the guidance they offer.

Agents who are insensitive to the limitations of imprecise beliefs are also likely to view their guidance as more powerful and dependable than it is. Naïve believers in imprecise beliefs, like those who naïvely embrace rules of thumb and catalytic narratives, are likely to *assume* the guidance of their imprecise beliefs is as functional as the guidance of precise beliefs. In some cases, they may even come to view false imprecise beliefs as true.

Less severe errors are also possible. Those who naïvely place their trust in rules of thumb or catalytic narratives may *assume* the guidance those beliefs offer resembles the guidance of imprecise beliefs. Advocates of catalytic narratives may also *assume* their guidance resembles that of rules of thumb.

Attention to the *assumed* and *actual* precision of beliefs guiding agents' thoughts and actions can improve analysts' ability to:

- Understand and anticipate the confidence with which agents embrace and implement policies.
- Estimate the odds that agents' belief-inspired strategies will have unintended consequences or fail to produce the expected results.
- Understand and anticipate agents' responses to failures and surprises.

Chapter 4

Viewpoints of Beliefs

Characteristics of Viewpoints of Beliefs

The third consequential but commonly ignored characteristic of beliefs to which Critical Belief Analysis (CBA) directs analysts' attention is their **viewpoint**. The term viewpoint denotes two closely related attributes of a belief: (a) the nature of the issues the belief addresses and (b) the belief's relationships with beliefs in other viewpoints. The easiest way to understand this concept is to examine CBA's five viewpoints (listed from lowest to highest) — Existential, Realist, Ethical, Visionary, and Quest and Commitment.

The Existential Viewpoint

An agent's most fundamental beliefs are proper to the **Existential Viewpoint**. Such beliefs embody agents' answers to questions such as "What kind of person do I wish to be?" and "What institutions, laws, regulations, assumptions, values, relationships, standards of discourse, and approaches to evaluating beliefs might help me become that kind of person?" Agents' answers to such questions reveal their ideals and determine their functioning in all higher viewpoints. Informative Existential Viewpoint beliefs augment agents' willingness to take responsibility for their choices and strengthen agents' commitments to wonder, objectivity, insight, communication, reason, doubt, mastery, and love. Reassuring Existential Viewpoint beliefs diminish that willingness and weaken those commitments.

The Realist Viewpoint

Realist Viewpoint beliefs answer the question, “What is?” Such beliefs reflect views of objective reality. One such belief is, “In 2018, over a third of those who died in vehicular accidents tested positive for alcohol.” This belief and other apparent facts are proper to the Realist Viewpoint.

While Realist Viewpoint beliefs are nominally factual, they can be biased. Absent encouragement for objectivity, agents are likely to attend to information validating their preconceptions or satisfying their emotional needs. To make matters worse, agents can be blind to that penchant. For example, alcoholics in denial about the severity of their drinking problems are less likely to seek out information about the relationship between drinking and traffic deaths than are members of Mothers Against Drunk Driving (MADD). Further, neither is likely to view their choice of information sources as biased. Bias may also affect agents’ understanding of political issues. Passionate progressives are likely to view reports on MSNBC and CNN about conservative ideas and politicians as credible; conservatives, on the other hand, are unlikely to do so. What agents take to be raw data are rarely the products of immaculate perception.

The Ethical Viewpoint

Answers to the Realist Viewpoint question, “What is?” are likely to inspire agents to seek answers to the archetypal **Ethical Viewpoint** question, “Is ‘what is’ good?” For example, most readers will probably respond to Realist Viewpoint information about the relationship between drinking and traffic deaths by wondering about the goodness of this state of affairs. They are also likely to arrive at the Ethical Viewpoint belief that the prevalence of driving “under the influence” is troubling.

While distress over the prevalence of driving while intoxicated is undoubtedly justified, not all Ethical Viewpoint beliefs are well-grounded. An agent’s justifiable confidence in an Ethical Viewpoint belief is limited by their

justifiable confidence in the Realist Viewpoint beliefs supporting it. Justifiable confidence is further limited by both the agent's Existential Viewpoint integrity and the integrity of those whose reports the agent chooses to trust.

The Visionary Viewpoint

Aroused by beliefs portraying some realities as better than others, agents may imagine realities that are better still. Although such imagined realities may have never existed, agents may view them as possible. Beliefs describing those possibilities are proper to the **Visionary Viewpoint**.

Agents' fantasies may range from visions of modest improvement (such as a five percent reduction in drunk driving) to visions of dramatic improvement (such as a world free of drunk drivers). Often, such beliefs are shaped by the assumption that if a bit of X produces a bit of Y, lots of X will produce lots of Y, and that increasing X will have no other effects. Such assumptions are often false.

Visionary Viewpoint beliefs have the power to engender passion and commitment, rendering agents indifferent to harm their efforts to bring their beatific visions to life might do. However, Visionary Viewpoint beliefs may not merit the zeal they inspire. After all, Visionary Viewpoint beliefs depend on Ethical Viewpoint beliefs, which depend on Realist Viewpoint beliefs, which, in turn, depend on Existential Viewpoint beliefs and commitments. If there are flaws in the lower-viewpoint beliefs supporting agents' Visionary Viewpoint beliefs, their faith in those Visionary Viewpoint beliefs may be unfounded.

The Quest and Commitment Viewpoint

Provoked by visions ranging from the modest and realistic to the Quixotic and Utopian, agents may ask, "What do my visions of improvement and perfection demand of me?" In response to this question, they may formulate quests inspired by questions such as, "How can I play a part, however small, in reducing drunk

driving?” “Am I committed to doing whatever may be within my power to get every intoxicated driver off the road?” and “Am I committed to doing my part to eliminate every traffic death?”

More broadly, agents might ask, “What am I willing to do to bring about the Utopia my ideology promises?” “What am I willing to do to alleviate poverty?” “Am I willing to do whatever I can to bring about social justice?” and “Am I willing to do whatever my God or my movement may ask of me?”

In each case, the question, “What am I willing to do to achieve the goal I have set?” is accompanied by such implicit questions as “What am I unwilling to do to achieve this end?” “How much am I willing to sacrifice?” “How radically am I willing to narrow my vision?” “How much am I willing to ask my allies and those I love to sacrifice?” “How much am I willing to demand of outsiders, skeptics, and others who don’t share my values?” “What lesser values might my quest justify compromising?” and “How much pain am I willing to cause?” The answers to these questions belong to the **Quest and Commitment Viewpoint**.

Of course, Quest and Commitment Viewpoint beliefs rely on Visionary Viewpoint beliefs. Visionary Viewpoint beliefs, in turn, rely on Ethical Viewpoint beliefs, and Ethical Viewpoint beliefs rely on Realist Viewpoint beliefs, which, in a like manner, rely on commitments, attitudes, habits, and skills proper to the Existential Viewpoint. All too often, however, agents treat Quest and Commitment Viewpoint beliefs as if their grounding were unquestionable. If agents think and act responsibly, flaws in beliefs critically undergirding their Quest and Commitment Viewpoint beliefs should raise red flags.

Quest and Commitment Viewpoint beliefs can bring out the best and worst in those who embrace them. Those who temper their passion for progress with prudence and humility may cautiously strive to heal the world, sensitive to the unintended consequences of their actions. However, those intoxicated by images of paradise may run headlong toward their visions, indifferent to the chaos and suffering their actions may cause. History reveals that beliefs promising heaven

on earth have repeatedly failed to achieve what they promised; instead, they have delivered tyranny, oppression, persecution, injustice, and slaughter.

Relationships between Viewpoints and Precision/Ambiguity

Viewpoint-Related Limits on the Precision of Beliefs

The precision of a belief is limited by the ambiguity inherent in its viewpoint. Let's examine how that limitation manifests itself in beliefs about drunk driving.

The Realist Viewpoint belief about drunk driving was, "In 2018, over a third of those who died in vehicular accidents tested positive for alcohol." This Realist Viewpoint belief is (allegedly) a straightforward fact and a precise belief. Those data could also give rise to imprecise beliefs such as, "Drinking increases drivers' chances of dying in a traffic accident." They could inspire rules of thumb such as, "If you drink, don't drive." Lastly, they could motivate lurid catalytic narratives, such as heartbreaking stories about drinking-related tragedies. As these examples illustrate, the Realist Viewpoint can host beliefs of any degree of ambiguity.

The Ethical Viewpoint belief about drunk driving — "The number of persons who drive under the influence of drugs and alcohol is intolerable" — cannot be reasonably interpreted as precise. The least ambiguous belief that can be derived from this statement is an assertion such as, "If asked, a majority of persons (or authoritative persons) would describe the prevalence of drunk driving as disgraceful." While imprecise beliefs are the least ambiguous beliefs the Ethical Viewpoint can host, nothing prevents the Ethical Viewpoint from hosting rules of thumb or catalytic narratives, for example, value-laden rules of thumb about drinking and driving or value-laden stories about the consequences of drunk driving.

The Visionary Viewpoint belief about drunk driving — "The world would be better if drunk driving were reduced" — makes neither precise nor imprecise predictions. Instead, it encourages agents to consider the advantages of reducing

drunk driving. This statement is a rule of thumb, the least ambiguous category of beliefs the Visionary Viewpoint can host. The Visionary Viewpoint can, of course, host catalytic narratives: inspiring stories about a world free of drunk drivers.

The Quest and Commitment Viewpoint belief about drunk driving — “I’m obliged to do my best to reduce drunk driving” — describes the sort of person the agent wishes to be. As existentialists and cognitive psychologists have observed, such choices are self-validating and unfalsifiable. Thus, the answer to the question, “What am I called upon to do to achieve the improvement or perfection I envision?” is a catalytic narrative, the only category of beliefs the Quest and Commitment Viewpoint can host.

Finally, since Existential Viewpoint beliefs reflect unfalsifiable choices and commitments, such beliefs are always catalytic narratives.

In short, a belief’s precision is constrained by its viewpoint. The precision of Realist Viewpoint beliefs is unlimited. Ethical Viewpoint beliefs are imprecise at best. The precision of a Visionary Viewpoint belief cannot exceed that of a rule of thumb. And neither Quest and Commitment nor Existential Viewpoint beliefs can be more precise than catalytic narratives. Those who *assume* their beliefs provide more precise guidance than they can deliver use the wrong tool for the job.

Limits on Precision Imposed by the Ambiguity of Supportive Lower-Viewpoint Beliefs

Two further oversights engender unmerited faith in beliefs. The first is insensitivity to how the ambiguity of lower-viewpoint beliefs limits the precision of higher-viewpoint beliefs they support. The second is blindness to how beliefs can be self-discrediting.

To explore the first issue, let us once more turn our attention to the drunk driving example. Imagine an agent had no access to statistics about the relationship between alcohol consumption and traffic deaths. Imagine, instead, the agent’s Realist Viewpoint knowledge of the effects of drinking and driving

came exclusively from stories (i.e., catalytic narratives) about driving while intoxicated. Such narratives might reasonably inspire heart-rending morality tales about drinking-related tragedies. However, those narratives would not justify imprecise Ethical Viewpoint descriptions of drinking and driving as a severe, widespread problem. Nor, logically, do Realist Viewpoint catalytic narratives provide a factual foundation for Visionary Viewpoint beliefs depicting the elimination of drunk drivers as a dramatic improvement. Ignoring this issue inspires excessive confidence in judgments of goodness and conceptions of progress. It also encourages agents to have undue confidence in the effects of their plans and the moral imperatives they view as compelling action.

Limits on Precision Imposed by the Effects of Higher-Viewpoint Beliefs on Supportive Lower-Viewpoint Beliefs

As mentioned above, inattention to the interaction of ambiguity and viewpoint can blind agents to how beliefs can discredit themselves. As the reader should now realize, the validity of higher-viewpoint beliefs depends on the validity of the lower-viewpoint beliefs that ground them. Consequently, any higher-viewpoint belief that biases the lower-viewpoint beliefs on which it is built — thereby compromising the accuracy of those beliefs — is self-discrediting. Such beliefs are like skyscrapers whose upper floors are made of material stolen from their foundations.

Imagine, for example, that a Quest and Commitment Viewpoint belief renders an agent passionate about bringing a political program to fruition. If the agent's passion inspires them to (a) create unrealistically rosy Visionary Viewpoint scenarios about the joy and justice the program could bring about, (b) exaggerate or misrepresent the Ethical Viewpoint injustice and oppression the proposed program promises to remedy, or (c) distort data to support dark Realist Viewpoint portrayals of contemporary life, the validity of the agent's Utopian Quest and Commitment Viewpoint vision is in doubt.

Summary: Why Attention to Viewpoint and Viewpoint-Precision/Ambiguity Interaction Matters

Inattention to viewpoint matters because such inattention can inspire agents to have excessive confidence in their beliefs. There are four ways this can occur. First, agents who are inattentive to the inherent limitations in the precision of Existential, Ethical, Visionary, and Quest and Commitment Viewpoint beliefs may assume they are more precise — and thus provide more valuable guidance — than their viewpoints permit. Second, those who are inattentive to the viewpoints of their beliefs are unlikely to acknowledge beliefs underlying or otherwise shaping the beliefs they consciously embrace. Such oversights render agents susceptible to viewing their beliefs as straightforward facts and to downplaying or neglecting their relationships with other beliefs. Third, those who are inattentive to the lower-viewpoint beliefs that ground their higher-viewpoint beliefs are vulnerable to overlooking the ambiguity of those lower-viewpoint beliefs and neglecting the implications of that ambiguity. Finally, in the absence of attention to these issues, agents are unlikely to take appropriate responsibility for the beliefs that profoundly and pervasively affect who they are — their Existential Viewpoint beliefs.

How to Identify the Viewpoint an Agent *Assumes* a Belief Occupies

Figure 4.1 provides a guide for determining the viewpoint an agent *assumes* a belief occupies.

Figure 4.1 Indicators of Assumed Viewpoint	
If an agent's words describe or actions embody fundamental commitments and ideals.the agent <i>assumes</i> those commitments and ideals to be manifestations of a belief proper to the Existential Viewpoint .
If an agent's words describe or actions reflect faith in an alleged reality...	... the agent <i>assumes</i> the belief to be proper to the Realist Viewpoint .
If an agent's words describe or actions reflect faith in the goodness of a particular state of affairs...	... the agent <i>assumes</i> the belief inspiring their assessment to be proper to the Ethical Viewpoint .
If an agent's words describe or actions reflect faith in an imagined improvement...	... the agent <i>assumes</i> the belief in question to be proper to the Visionary Viewpoint .
If an agent's words stipulate or actions reflect their perceived obligation to realize the improvement they imagine...	... the agent <i>assumes</i> the belief animating their imagination to be proper to the Quest and Commitment Viewpoint .

How to Identify a Belief's Actual Viewpoint

Usually, the viewpoints agents assume their beliefs occupy and the viewpoints their beliefs actually occupy are the same. However, there are exceptions.

- Whatever their assumed viewpoints, reassuring beliefs are actually proper to the Existential Viewpoint.
- Whatever their assumed viewpoints, informative beliefs are actually proper to the Existential Viewpoint if:
 - They bias the lower-viewpoint beliefs that inspire and support them.
 - They are catalytic narratives.

- Agents are uncritical or neglectful of the lower-viewpoint beliefs that inspire and support them.

The Value of Attention to Viewpoint and Viewpoint-Precision/Ambiguity Interaction in Security Analysis: Some Examples

Agents are likely to falsely *assume* their informative Existential and Ethical Viewpoint beliefs are proper to the Realist Viewpoint. Frequently, agents make the same false assumption regarding the viewpoints of their informative Visionary Viewpoint and Quest and Commitment Viewpoint beliefs.

Agents who treat informative Existential Viewpoint beliefs as informative Realist Viewpoint beliefs are likely to:

1. Inaccurately view their decisions and actions as compelled by immutable facts.
2. Fail to appreciate their freedom to focus on different facts, interpret facts differently, and decide differently.
3. Ignore the effects of their defenses and biases on openness, objectivity, empathy, and quality of discourse.

In addition to making the three numbered errors above, agents who treat informative Ethical Viewpoint beliefs as if they were informative Realist Viewpoint beliefs are likely to fail to realize:

- The guidance of informative Ethical Viewpoint beliefs is imprecise at best.
- The guidance of such beliefs is no more valuable than that of the most ambiguous Realist Viewpoint belief that grounds them.
- To the extent such beliefs bias lower-viewpoint beliefs that ground them, they are self-discrediting.

- Such beliefs are also self-discrediting to the extent they compromise Existential Viewpoint commitments to objectivity, openness, empathy, or truthful communication.

In addition to making the three numbered errors above, agents who treat informative Visionary Viewpoint beliefs as if they were informative Realist Viewpoint beliefs are likely to fail to realize:

- The guidance of informative Visionary Viewpoint beliefs is, at best, that of rules of thumb.
- If any of the Realist or Ethical Viewpoint beliefs grounding their Visionary Viewpoint beliefs are catalytic narratives, the quality of the guidance those Visionary Viewpoint beliefs offer is limited to that of catalytic narratives.
- To the extent such beliefs bias lower-viewpoint beliefs that ground them, they are self-discrediting.
- Such beliefs are also self-discrediting to the extent they compromise Existential Viewpoint commitments to objectivity, openness, empathy, or truthful communication.

In addition to the three numbered errors above, agents who treat informative Quest and Commitment Viewpoint beliefs as if they were informative Realist Viewpoint beliefs are likely to fail to realize:

- The guidance of informative Quest and Commitment Viewpoint beliefs is, at best, that of catalytic narratives.
- The guidance of such beliefs is further compromised if any of the Realist, Ethical, or Visionary Viewpoint beliefs that ground them are catalytic narratives.
- To the extent such beliefs bias lower-viewpoint beliefs that ground them, they are self-discrediting.

- Such beliefs are also self-discrediting to the extent they compromise Existential Viewpoint commitments to objectivity, openness, empathy, or truthful communication.

Agents' views of reassuring beliefs, like their views of informative beliefs, are generally inaccurate. However, the signature misunderstanding of reassuring beliefs differs from the signature misunderstanding of informative beliefs. As detailed above, agents typically *assume* informative Existential, Ethical, Visionary, and Quest and Commitment beliefs are proper to the Realist Viewpoint. That is, they *assume* beliefs addressing *different* issues address *the same* issue. By contrast, agents generally *assume* their *reassuring* beliefs are proper to the diverse viewpoints they appear to address rather than to the Existential Viewpoint. That is, they *assume* beliefs addressing *the same* (i.e., Existential Viewpoint) issues address *different* issues.

More specifically, agents generally *assume* reassuring beliefs that appear to (a) describe reality, (b) depict the goodness of "what is," (c) offer visions of what might be better, or (d) characterize agents' obligations to realize those visions address the issues they seem to address. But whatever their apparent subject, reassuring beliefs actually answer the Existential Viewpoint question, "What kind of person do I wish to be?" This question is explored in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

Existential Viewpoint Beliefs: A Closer Look

Why do Existential Viewpoint Beliefs Matter?

Existential Viewpoint beliefs matter because they determine how agents manage reality, respond to unexpected events, and cope with stress. These beliefs and their associated commitments and predilections support or constrain the ability of leaders, advisors, organizations, and members of movements to deal with the issues they face. They also support or impede openness, objectivity, and sensitivity to error.

Existential Viewpoint beliefs determine the accuracy and completeness of an agent's grasp of reality. They constrain the thoughtfulness and compassion with which agents evaluate goodness. They affect the balance between creativity and sobriety in agents' fantasies of improvement and perfection. And they determine the diligence and humility agents bring to bear when formulating and reflecting on the obligations those fantasies allegedly impose on them.

This suite of influences can profoundly affect the odds that the policies and procedures agents fashion, support, and implement will have the effects they anticipate. It also can profoundly affect how agents respond to failures and other unanticipated outcomes.

Existential Viewpoint beliefs, commitments, and predilections impact the ease with which agents exaggerate their knowledge, wisdom, effectiveness, empathy, and benevolence, and that of their advisors, comrades, and followers.

Wholesome informative Existential Viewpoint beliefs, commitments, and predilections help those who embrace them to become more accurate observers. They encourage agents to be thoughtful, caring judges of good and evil. They inspire agents to be creative and humble visionaries and healers of the world who

balance passion for what might be with reverence for “what is.” Unwholesome informative Existential Viewpoint beliefs, commitments, and predilections fail to support — and can even undermine — such functioning.

The effects of reassuring Existential Viewpoint beliefs, commitments, and predilections contrast sharply with the effects of their wholesome informative counterparts. Reassuring beliefs, commitments, and predilections help agents distort data, evidence, and reason. By so doing, they bias agents’ grasp of reality, rendering their judgments of good and evil imprudent and uncaring, and their fantasies of improvement and perfection chimerical. More troubling still, such beliefs render agents’ views of the obligations their fantasies impose upon them ill-considered while rendering their views of the freedoms those obligations grant self-indulgent.

Key Characteristics of Informative Existential Viewpoint Beliefs, Commitments, and Predilections

CBA encourages attention to three Existential Viewpoint commitments and predilections that can be uniquely supportive of informative functioning. These include (a) a commitment to “genuineness” or “authenticity,” (b) a devotion to the kinds of relationships that support genuineness/authenticity, and (c) a passion for open, respectful communication.²⁶

Genuineness and Authenticity

Genuineness/authenticity is a commitment to the scientific method informed by the love of creation. According to Canadian philosopher and theologian Bernard Lonergan, genuineness/authenticity has four components. Those components are listed and defined in Figure 5.1.

Figure 5.1 Components of Genuineness/Authenticity	
1. Attentiveness...	...openness and curiosity.
2. Intelligence...	...the desire to understand, the effectiveness of one's efforts at understanding, the desire to communicate what one has come to understand, and the effectiveness of one's communication.
3. Reasonableness...	...the willingness to discuss, criticize, and test one's ideas.
4. Responsibility...	...the commitment to acting on one's best understanding with appropriate humility and caution as well as the commitment to creating circumstances that support genuineness/authenticity in oneself and others.

Unfortunately, being genuine/authentic can be daunting because agents' attempts to be attentive, intelligent, reasonable, and responsible bring them face to face with their flaws and limitations.

- Agents' attempts to expand their range of experience unavoidably sharpen their awareness of the endless array of experiences they will never have, leading them to reflect on their frailty, their mortality, and their sensory, cognitive, and motoric limitations.
- Agents' attempts to expand their understanding require them to face the immensity of their ignorance.
- Agents' attempts to communicate their insights more effectively require awareness of their communicative failures.
- Agents' attempts to identify the limitations and flaws of their beliefs inevitably bring them face to face with the inadequacies of their conceptions and commitments.
- Agents' attempts to accomplish their goals may confront them with the shortcomings of their technologies and their limited mastery of those technologies.

- Agents' attempts to improve their ability to love may compel them to face how poorly they understand the needs of that which they love and the clumsiness of their best efforts to fulfill those needs.

While the struggle for genuineness/authenticity may be inescapably daunting, certain relationships can make this struggle easier to bear. CBA refers to such relationships as "noetic."²⁷

Noetic Relationships

Noetic relationships are built around activities that make it rewarding to bring out the best in oneself and others. Such activities have inexhaustible goals, such as knowledge, competence, health, beauty, and joy. Anyone may create or experience as much knowledge, competence, health, beauty, or joy as they wish without reducing the amount potentially available to themselves or others.

The goals of truly noetic relationships share a second, closely related characteristic: each person's attainment of such goals makes others' attainments easier. Since such goals are inexhaustible and each participant's success makes others' successes more likely, there is every reason to root for one another.

But, *pace* Socrates, to know the good is not necessarily to do the good. Relationships are noetic only if their participants root for themselves and one another to achieve their goals. A relationship is not noetic unless its participants serve as cheerleaders who motivate and inspire others, celebrate their successes, accept the support they receive, and reward those who root for them with gratitude and enthusiasm.

Further, if a relationship is noetic, the rooting and support it inspires cannot focus exclusively on achieving the goal of the moment. Instead, each participant must root not only for success but for the processes that create it. Relationships are noetic only if each participant (a) cherishes, in themselves and others, the desires for experience, knowledge, love, and mastery and (b) delights in the

attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility that help satisfy those desires. Finally, the goals around which noetic relationships are built must, if achieved, enhance life or authenticity and diminish neither.

A Counterintuitive Property of Relationships with Noetic Characteristics. As noted above, relationships are noetic if (a) they are built around the pursuit of inexhaustible goals that, if achieved, enhance life or authenticity and diminish neither, (b) participants root for themselves and each other to achieve those goals, and (c) participants root for their own authenticity and that of their partners. Ironically, relationships with two of these three characteristics are not two-thirds as wholesome as those that are fully noetic. While such relationships have much of the passion of relationships that are fully noetic, they lack the benevolence fully noetic relationships inspire.

Relationships built around competition for limited resources encourage participants to view opponents as impediments to achieving their goals. If those goals are seen as vital, such relationships can move participants to dehumanize their opponents or view them as enemies. Moreover, when the goals of such relationships are achieved, competition for the spoils can lead participants to turn against one another. Such pseudo-noetic relationships can be found in criminal gangs, sectarian movements, and partisan politics.

Relationships that are otherwise noetic may also turn out badly if participants disagree over the desirability of demonstrably inexhaustible, life-enhancing goals. Those whose goals meet with disapproval are likely to view their associates as narrow-minded, intolerant, judgmental, self-righteous, condescending, passionless, or hypocritical. The promise of such relationships will likely erode as communication becomes more contentious, joy becomes harder to share, and disappointment intensifies.

What, one may wonder, is wrong with relationships in which participants root for themselves and each other to achieve inexhaustible and otherwise worthy goals without explicitly rooting for genuineness/authenticity? Doing so

treats the achievers as means to ends rather than ends in themselves. Thus, such treatment creates alienation, cheapens life, and opens the door to abuse and brutality.

Rules of Discourse Supporting Genuineness/Authenticity

Wholesome informative Existential Viewpoint beliefs must also encourage **respectful, open communication**. German philosopher and sociologist Jurgen Habermas described the characteristics of such communication in his *Discourse Ethics*.²⁸ Communication violating those rules closes agents to information that may inspire insight and creativity. In addition, such communication deprives agents of feedback that might alert them to bubbles that encase them and rails they are in danger of going off.

Habermas believed open communication required commitments to:

- Making sense by being consistent and avoiding contradicting oneself.
- Meaning what one says.
- Defending one's positions or justifying one's refusal to do so.
- Minimizing the influence of force and threats of force on what is said and how it is understood.

CBA argues open communication also requires commitments to:

- Supporting one's positions with valid arguments and unbiased data.
- Stating one's positions in ways that render them subject to meaningful discussion or falsification.
- Refusing to buttress one's positions by manipulating the terms or rules of debate.

Key Characteristics of Reassuring Existential Viewpoint Beliefs

Like informative Existential Viewpoint beliefs, reassuring Existential Viewpoint beliefs can profoundly affect agents' abilities to formulate and achieve constructive goals. However, much of that effect is negative. Reassuring Existential Viewpoint beliefs encourage agents to distort data, evidence, and logic. They can foster relationships and rules of discourse that help agents deceive themselves, justify whatever they wish to do, and consecrate whatever they desire to be. Reassuring Existential Viewpoint beliefs can:

- Render agents inattentive to potentially troubling experiences and information.
- Discourage disturbing insights.
- Encourage agents to defend comforting beliefs and discredit bothersome beliefs by any means necessary.
- Inspire agents to view their impulsive, irresponsible, short-sighted, and self-serving acts as carefully considered, effective, and virtuous.
- Justify agents' efforts to fashion relationships and rules of discourse that support assuasive self-deception and self-justification.

In extreme cases, biases associated with reassuring beliefs may be so powerful that any data set will lead to the same conclusion. Take, for example, the data used to support anti-Semitism. As Israeli educator and author Gustavo Perednik observed:

The Jews were accused by the nationalists of being the creators of Communism, by the Communists of ruling Capitalism. If they live in non-Jewish countries, they are accused of double-loyalties; if they live in the Jewish country, of being racists. When they spend their money, they are reproached for being ostentatious; when they don't spend their money, of being avaricious. They are called rootless cosmopolitans or hardened

chauvinists. If they assimilate, they are accused of being fifth-columnists; if they don't, of shutting themselves away.²⁹

Similarly, as the pioneering American sociologist Robert Merton noted, individuals and groups may create circumstances that validate their prejudices while blinding themselves to their responsibility for doing so. Merton noted that during the early twentieth century, the view of African Americans as strikebreakers contributed to their exclusion from most labor unions and the jobs those unions controlled. Ironically, Merton observed, such exclusion encouraged African Americans to take advantage of strikes (i.e., to be strikebreakers) to obtain positions that were otherwise unavailable to them.³⁰

Reassuring Existential Viewpoint Beliefs Can Be Addictive

Not only do reassuring Existential Viewpoint beliefs have the power to mislead and blind those who adopt them, but they also have the potential to addict those who do so. Agents can become addicted when their beliefs (a) encourage them to use ineffective strategies and (b) fail to insulate them from the consequences of the failures those strategies engender while (c) blinding them to how their beliefs and strategies contribute to their failures. This state of affairs leaves agents subjectively distressed.

Addiction can occur when agents respond to their distress by seeking comfort and guidance from the same reassuring beliefs whose guidance caused their misery. Predictably, the consequences of the guidance such beliefs provide deepen distress, provoking further ineffective comfort-seeking, leading to more profound distress and additional negative consequences.

Princeton University Islamic scholar Bernard Lewis attributes the relative decline of Muslim nations to just such a process.³¹ According to Lewis, Islam teaches that following Allah's word renders the faithful unquestionably superior and their civilizations inevitably dominant. Thus, Islamic culture paid scant attention to the scientific, technological, philosophical, humanistic, and artistic

works of unbelievers, leaving the Muslim world intellectually isolated. In addition, Lewis notes that dominant interpretations of Islam encourage women to devote themselves to being obedient wives and mothers, thus minimizing their activities outside the home. According to Lewis, those practices contributed significantly to the waning of Islamic prosperity and influence, provoking Muslims to ask, “What went wrong?”

Roughly, the answer often has been, “We (Muslims) are not falling behind because we refuse to learn from unbelievers or waste the talents of half our people. We are falling behind because we are insufficiently Islamic. We are too tempted by modernization and too open to Western thought. We fail to enforce Sharia with sufficient passion. We indulge our women’s deviant desires.” Such answers have led much of the Muslim world to become increasingly focused on compliance with the strictures of Sharia and religious observance, increasingly isolated, and increasingly repressive toward women. None of those strategies, steeped in reassuring Existential Viewpoint beliefs, seem likely to restore the dominance of fundamentalist Islam.³²

Of course, some reassuring Existential Viewpoint beliefs can help agents manage otherwise debilitating stress. Such beliefs, however, must be used with full awareness of their potential to mislead and addict. As noted previously, reassuring Existential Viewpoint beliefs work their magic by distorting experiences, judgments, and values, thus encouraging ineffective and detrimental actions while blinding agents to the harmful consequences of their guidance.

As such, reassuring Existential Viewpoint beliefs must be chosen with care and employed in ways that maximize the comfort they provide while minimizing their impact on consequential decisions. Ideally, such beliefs should be viewed as fictions that — if used warily — can decrease stress, increase enthusiasm, and enhance motivation without hampering investigation of and action regarding significant realities. Those contemplating the counsel of such beliefs should ask themselves such questions as, “Are my confidence in the truth of this belief and the trustworthiness of its guidance justified?” and, “If this belief was false, how

might its guidance be damaging?” To use reassuring Existential Viewpoint beliefs without such care is to invite disaster.

The Importance of Existential Viewpoint Functioning

Why does Existential Viewpoint functioning matter to security analysts? Because the beliefs, commitments, and predilections of the agents, persons, and organizations security analysts scrutinize can profoundly affect:

- The rationality and effectiveness of their actions.
- The nature of their relationships and lines of communication.
- Their openness to corrective feedback.

Highlights of CBA’s Approach to Understanding the Impact of Beliefs

The words in which a belief is expressed provide an incomplete picture of its impact on an agent. A more complete understanding requires knowledge of:

- The guidance the agent *assumes* (or expects) the belief to provide, including:
 - The fundamental need the agent *assumes* the belief satisfies.
 - How precise/ambiguous the agent *assumes* the belief to be.
 - The nature (i.e., viewpoint) of the issue the agent *assumes* the belief addresses.
 - The agent’s *assumptions* about the second-order precepts and Existential Viewpoint beliefs, commitments, and predilections that affect their treatment of the belief.
 - How the four above characteristics interact.

- The guidance the belief *actually* provides, including:
 - The fundamental need(s) the agent’s approach to the belief allows it to satisfy.
 - How precise/ambiguous the belief *actually* is.
 - The nature (i.e., viewpoint) of the issue the belief addresses.
 - The second-order precepts and Existential Viewpoint beliefs, commitments, and predilections that affect the agent’s treatment of the belief.
 - How the four above characteristics interact.

- The differences between the *assumptions* and *actualities* (or realities) of the belief as listed above and the probable consequences of these differences.

CBA also urges security analysts to conduct similar inquiries into their own conclusions. Absent such queries, analysts are vulnerable to overlooking factors that may bias their judgments or dangerously inflate their confidence.

CBA offers a systematic approach to identifying the confidence beliefs merit while providing a unique perspective on the consequences of relying on beliefs for guidance they cannot provide. However, CBA does not claim attention to these issues affords an unbiased or exhaustive understanding of beliefs or agents. Its claim is more modest. Systematic attention to these issues, it holds, can enhance analysts’ self-awareness while helping them integrate and enrich insights drawn from other sources. Doing so can render analysts’ understanding of beliefs and agents more detailed and accurate and their confidence in that understanding more appropriate.

Chapter 6

Conducting a Critical Belief Analysis: A User's Manual

Checklists for Conducting a Critical Belief Analysis

This chapter leads the reader through a systematic process for conducting a Critical Belief Analysis (CBA). Chapter 7 provides an example analysis. Before conducting a CBA, the analyst must thoroughly understand the conceptual material in Chapters 2 through 5. If the analyst is uncertain about the basic concepts of CBA, they should seek to resolve their concerns. Those who wish to enhance their understanding of these concepts may find it helpful to read the articles at <http://barneysplace.net/site/> and complete the exercises at the end of each article.

The analytic process is easier and more informative if conducted with the aid of The Periodic Table of the Beliefs (Figure 6.1). The Periodic Table is designed to help analysts visualize the nature and limitations of the guidance beliefs provide, the relationships between beliefs, and the implications of disparities between agents' and objective observers' views of those beliefs. Analysts are encouraged to make frequent reference to Figure 6.1 when conducting CBAs.

Each cell of The Periodic Table of the Beliefs is home to beliefs with a specific combination of fundamental need (motivation), precision/ambiguity, and viewpoint. Informative beliefs occupy the left half of the table while reassuring beliefs occupy the right. More precise informative beliefs can be found toward the left edge of the table while more precise reassuring beliefs can be found toward the right edge. More ambiguous beliefs can be found closer to the center. Lower-viewpoint beliefs are toward the bottom of the table; higher-viewpoint beliefs are toward the top.

The cells of The Periodic Table of the Beliefs are color-coded. Black cells share a distinctive combination of attributes: (a) agents may *assume* that beliefs possess combinations of characteristics that render them proper to those cells, but (b) those cells are *actually* vacant because their defining characteristics are incompatible. Light gray cells are home to beliefs that function as informative catalytic narratives, while dark gray cells are home to beliefs that function as reassuring catalytic narratives. White cells are home to those rare beliefs whose guidance will likely help agents achieve their goals.

Three additional checklists are also employed in conducting a CBA:

- Figure 6.2, Critical Belief Analysis Procedure, offers a detailed, systematic process that analysts can use to identify differences between the guidance agents *assume* their beliefs provide and the guidance their beliefs *actually* provide. It also helps analysts understand and, where appropriate, predict the consequences of those differences.
- Figure 6.3, Critical Belief Analysis Worksheet, is designed to help analysts document their progress and record their findings as they carry out a CBA in accordance with Figure 6.2.
- Figure 6.4, Identifying the Desires Motivating Beliefs, is a 23-item questionnaire designed to help analysts determine whether an agent's attitude toward and treatment of an *actual* (observed) belief renders the belief informative, reassuring, or both.

Figure 6.1 The Periodic Table of the Beliefs

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BELIEFS THAT PROMISE TO SATISFY THE AGENT’S NEED TO KNOW, MASTER, AND LOVE (INFORMATIVE BELIEFS) <i>WHEN EVALUATING THESE BELIEFS, ASK: DO THESE BELIEFS HELP THE AGENT KNOW, MASTER, AND LOVE? IF NOT, DO THESE BELIEFS TRANSFORM THE AGENT INTO SOMEONE WHO’S BETTER ABLE TO DO SO?</i>					BELIEFS THAT PROMISE TO SATISFY THE AGENT’S NEED TO BELIEVE THEY ARE WISE, POWERFUL, AND LOVING (REASSURING BELIEFS) <i>WHEN EVALUATING THESE BELIEFS, ASK: DO THESE BELIEFS REASSURE THE AGENT? DOES THE AGENT USE THESE BELIEFS WISELY, WITH AWARENESS OF THEIR POTENTIAL TO MISLEAD AND ADDICT?</i>				
VIEWPOINT: THE VALIDITY AND PRECISION OF HIGHER VIEWPOINT BELIEFS ARE LIMITED BY THE VALIDITY AND PRECISION OF RELEVANT LOWER VIEWPOINT BELIEFS. RULES OF LOGIC AND EVIDENCE RENDER HIGHER VIEWPOINT BELIEFS LESS LIKELY TO SATISFY THE AGENT’S NEED TO KNOW, MASTER, AND LOVE. UNDER THE NAME OF EACH VIEWPOINT ARE QUESTIONS THAT BELIEFS IN THAT VIEWPOINT ANSWER.	DEGREE OF AMBIGUITY CAPACITY TO SATISFY THE NEED TO GRAPPLE WITH REALITY DECREASES WITH INCREASING AMBIGUITY <i>PERMISSIBLE BIAS DECREASES WITH PRECISION</i>				DEGREE OF AMBIGUITY CAPACITY TO SATISFY THE NEED FOR REASSURANCE INCREASES WITH INCREASING AMBIGUITY <i>PERMISSIBLE BIAS INCREASES WITH PRECISION</i>				VIEWPOINT: AGENTS MODIFY LOWER AND/OR HIGHER VIEWPOINT BELIEFS TO SUPPORT BELIEFS THEY FIND REASSURING. UNDER THE NAME OF EACH VIEWPOINT ARE QUESTIONS THAT BELIEFS IN THAT VIEWPOINT APPEAR TO ANSWER. NOTE, HOWEVER, THAT ALL REASSURING BELIEFS, REGARDLESS OF APPARENT VIEWPOINT, FUNCTION AS EXISTENTIAL VIEWPOINT BELIEFS.
	PRECISE BELIEFS	IMPRECISE BELIEFS	RULES OF THUMB	CATALYTIC NARRATIVES	CATALYTIC NARRATIVES	RULES OF THUMB	IMPRECISE BELIEFS	PRECISE BELIEFS	
QUEST AND COMMITMENT WHAT IS THE AGENT CALLED UPON TO DO TO ACHIEVE THE ENVISIONED IMPROVEMENT OR PERFECTION?	In, QC, P	In, QC, I	In, QC, RoT	In, QC, CN	Reas, QC, CN	Reas, QC, RoT	Reas, QC, I	Reas, QC, P	QUEST AND COMMITMENT WHAT GOALS WOULD MAKE THE AGENT FEEL GOOD ABOUT THEMSELVES? WHAT GOALS WOULD JUSTIFY ANYTHING THE AGENT MIGHT WISH TO DO OR BE?
VISIONARY WHAT WOULD IMPROVEMENT OR PERFECTION LOOK LIKE?	In, Vi, P	In, Vi, I	In, Vi, RoT	In, Vi, CN	Reas, Vi, CN	Reas, Vi, RoT	Reas, Vi, I	Reas, Vi, P	VISIONARY WHAT VISION OF PERFECTION WOULD MAKE THE AGENT FEEL GOOD ABOUT THEMSELVES? WHAT VISION OF PERFECTION WOULD JUSTIFY COMPLETE COMMITMENT AND COMPLETE FREEDOM TO ACT?
ETHICAL IS “WHAT IS” GOOD?	In, Eth, P	In, Eth, I	In, Eth, RoT	In, Eth, CN	Reas, Eth, CN	Reas, Eth, RoT	Reas, Eth, I	Reas, Eth, P	ETHICAL WHAT MORAL JUDGMENTS WOULD MAKE THE AGENT FEEL GOOD ABOUT THEMSELVES? WHAT MORAL JUDGMENTS WOULD MOST POWERFULLY ENDORSE THE AGENT’S DESIRE TO SEE, DO, AND BE WHATEVER THEY WISH? WHAT MORAL JUDGMENTS SUPPORT REASSURING VISIONS OF PERFECTION?
REALIST WHAT IS?	In, Real, P	In, Real, I	In, Real, RoT	In, Real, CN	Reas, Real, CN	Reas, Real, RoT	Reas, Real, I	Reas, Real, P	REALIST WHAT BELIEFS REGARDING “FACTS” WOULD MAKE THE AGENT FEEL GOOD ABOUT THEMSELVES? WHAT BELIEFS REGARDING “FACTS” WOULD ENHANCE THE POWER OF MORAL JUDGMENTS AND OTHER BELIEFS TO PROVIDE REASSURANCE?
EXISTENTIAL WHAT KIND OF PERSON DOES THE AGENT STRIVE TO BE? ANSWER: SOMEONE WHO FUNCTIONS EFFECTIVELY IN THE VIEWPOINTS ABOVE (I.E., SOMEONE WHO’S AUTHENTIC, CREATES AND SUSTAINS NOETIC RELATIONSHIPS, AND FACILITATES OPEN COMMUNICATION).	In, Ex, CN				Reas, Ex, CN				EXISTENTIAL WHAT KIND OF PERSON DOES THE AGENT STRIVE TO BE? ANSWER: SOMEONE WHO CAN EFFECTIVELY REASSURE THEMSELVES (I.E., SOMEONE WHO CAN DISTORT DATA, EVIDENCE, AND REASON; AND WHOSE RELATIONSHIPS AND COMMUNICATIONS SERVE THE NEEDS OF REASSURING SELF-DECEPTION AND SELF-JUSTIFICATION)

Critical Belief Analysis (CBA) is devoted to answering the question, “How closely does the guidance a belief *actually* provides resemble the guidance the actor/believer/decision-maker (hereafter **agent**) *assumes* it provides?” This step-by-step procedure is designed to help the analyst find this answer. This procedure is intended to be used in conjunction with Figure 6.1, The Periodic Table of the Beliefs; Figure 6.3, Critical Belief Analysis Worksheet; and Figure 6.4, Identifying the Desires Motivating Beliefs. Figure 6.3, Critical Belief Analysis Worksheet, provides spaces in which to record both your analytic findings and the processes by which you reached them.

Step 1: Orient Yourself to the Project.

1. Record the research purpose and research question on Figure 6.3, the Critical Belief Analysis Worksheet.³³
2. Identify the agent and the agent’s to-be-evaluated (target) belief(s). (*Note: Each target belief requires a separate analysis.*)
3. Collect and document requisite sources of information and context.³⁴
4. Describe the circumstances in which the target belief developed if this description contributes to understanding the belief.
5. Complete a psychobiography of the agent(s).³⁵
6. Specify the target belief’s second-order precepts (i.e., the rules determining how agents — and, if the agent is powerful, the agent’s subjects — are expected to think about, defend, criticize, and communicate about the target belief.)

7. List situations in which the target belief *strongly* influenced the agent's *past* thoughts, feelings, policies, or actions. Describe (a) the results of policies, etc., shaped by the target belief(s) and (b) the agent's responses to failures or unexpected consequences of those policies, etc.

8. List situations in which the target belief seems likely to influence the agent's *future* thoughts, feelings, policies, or actions.

Step 2: Locate the Belief on Figure 6.1, The Periodic Table of the Beliefs.

Note: Locating the target belief on the Periodic Table requires the analyst to determine what the agent perceived, assumed, thought, or knew. However, the analyst is unlikely to have access to specific information about these matters. As such, the analyst may need to use the results of the information and context search (Step 1, #3), the psychobiography (Step 1, #5), and the agent's writings, speeches, conversations, and actions (Step 1, #7) to "see the world through the agent's eyes."

1. Using the guidelines below, identify the cell of Figure 6.1 that the agent *assumes* the target belief to occupy. (*Note: This approach to determining the agent's assumptions about the target belief presumes those assumptions to have been consistent. If those assumptions have varied, more weight should be given to the agent's recent assumptions about that belief in situations that, from the agent's point of view, are similar to the situation(s) of interest.*)

a. Determine whether the agent *assumes* the belief to be informative or reassuring. Choose the option best describing what the agent expected the belief to do in the situations listed in Step 1, #7. (*Note: Agents may look to*

a belief to assist them in multiple ways in a particular situation.) Determine if the agent expected the belief to:

- Provide information that helps them understand the situation, decide what to expect, figure out how to get things done, evaluate the virtues and vices of a situation, or establish goals. (If so, the agent *assumed* that the belief was informative.)
- Enhance their commitment to openness and objectivity, their ability to deal effectively with reality (including the situation in question), or their devotion to promulgating an ethos supporting openness and objectivity. (If so, the agent *assumed* that the belief was informative.)
- Help them *feel* more comfortable or confident (e.g., help them *feel* more informed, competent, powerful, righteous, safe, secure, connected, or valued). (If so, the agent *assumed* that the belief was reassuring.)
- Contribute to creating, sustaining, or promulgating an ethos, political group, religious group, or social group devoted to beliefs they find comforting or reassuring, or help them see themselves as doing so. (If so, the agent *assumed* that the belief was reassuring.)

Tally the number of times the agent looked to the belief for information (i.e., *assumed* the belief to be informative) or for reassurance (i.e., *assumed* the belief to be reassuring). Using this tally, determine whether the agent typically *assumed* that the belief offered *information, reassurance, or both*. (Note: *If, in recent situations similar to the situation of interest, the agent assumed that the target belief was informative, for the purposes of this analysis the target belief should be considered informative.*)

b. Determine the viewpoint of the issue the agent *assumed* the belief addressed. Viewpoints are hierarchically arranged on Figure 6.1, The

Periodic Table of the Beliefs, from Existential (lowest) to Realist, Ethical, Visionary, and Quest and Commitment (highest).

Identify the viewpoint of the issue the agent *assumed* the belief addressed in each situation listed in Step 1, #7 (see Figure 6.1). Determine if the agent's words described or their actions manifested:

- Fundamental commitments, values, or ideals. (If so, the agent most likely *assumed* the belief was proper to the Existential Viewpoint.)
- Faith in an alleged reality. (If so, the agent most likely *assumed* the belief was proper to the Realist Viewpoint.)
- Faith in the goodness of a particular state of affairs. (If so, the agent most likely *assumed* the belief was proper to the Ethical Viewpoint.)
- Faith in the goodness of a fantasized altered state of affairs. (If so, the agent most likely *assumed* the belief was proper to the Visionary Viewpoint.)
- A perceived obligation to realize the imagined improvement. (If so, the agent most likely *assumed* the belief was proper to the Quest and Commitment Viewpoint.)

Tally the number of times the agent's words or actions indicated they *assumed* the target belief addressed issues proper to each viewpoint. Identify the most influential viewpoint the agent *assumed* the target belief to occupy. (*Note: If, in recent situations similar to the situation of interest, the agent assumed that the target belief addressed issues in diverse viewpoints, the lowest of those viewpoints is likely to be the most relevant for the purposes of this analysis.*)

c. Determine whether the agent *assumed* the target belief to be precise, imprecise, a rule of thumb, or a catalytic narrative. In each situation

identified in Step 1, #7, identify the confidence the agent *assumed* the belief's guidance merited. Determine if the agent's words and actions suggest that they:

- Relied on the belief to alert them to what was going to happen, tell them how to achieve their goals, or provide a readily falsified, data-sensitive framework that helped them explain events. (If so, the agent's behavior suggests they *assumed* the belief to be precise.)
- Expected the belief's guidance to increase their odds of success — but not necessarily to make success likely. (If so, the agent's behavior suggests they *assumed* the belief to be imprecise.)
- Expected the belief to provide nothing more than encouragement to think about issues that may matter. (If so, the agent's behavior suggests they *assumed* the belief to be a rule of thumb.)
- Saw the belief as transforming them in ways that led them to see it as true *even though they realized the belief in question failed to provide authentic information about reality*. (If so, the agent's behavior suggests they *assumed* the belief to be a catalytic narrative.)

Tally the number of times the agent arguably *assumed* the target belief to possess each degree of precision. Specify the degree of precision that, for the purposes of this analysis, the agent is most appropriately viewed as *assuming* the belief to possess. (*Note: If, in recent situations similar to the situation of interest, the agent assumed the target belief possessed diverse degrees of precision, the most precise of those is likely to be the most relevant to this analysis.*)

d. Summarize the agent's *assumptions* about the target belief by circling or bolding the appropriate fundamental need, viewpoint, and degree of precision/ambiguity on the Figure 6.3 worksheet.

e. Designate the cell of Figure 6.1 corresponding to the agent's assumptions about the target belief with an "A" (for *assumed*).

2. Using the guidelines below, determine the cell of Figure 6.1 that the target belief *actually* occupies. (*Notes: (1) Successful completion of this section requires an accurate and comprehensive understanding of CBA. (2) This approach to determining the nature of the guidance the target belief actually provides assumes the nature of that guidance has been consistent. If it has been inconsistent, more weight should be given to the guidance the target belief provided recently, in situations that, from the agent's point of view, are similar to the situation(s) of interest.*)

a. Using the procedure specified in Figure 6.4 and other relevant information, determine whether the agent's overall treatment of the belief facilitates the provision of information, reassurance, or both. If the belief is:

- Informative, circle or bold "Information (In)" on the Figure 6.3 worksheet and proceed to b., immediately below.
- Reassuring, circle or bold "Reassurance (Reas)" on the Figure 6.3 worksheet, classify the belief as a reassuring Existential Viewpoint catalytic narrative, and proceed to Step 3.
- Both reassuring and informative, circle "Both" on the Figure 6.3 worksheet and rephrase the belief as two or more statements, each of which is either reassuring or informative (but not both). Analyze each statement separately.

b. Identify the viewpoint of the issue(s) the target belief *actually* addresses.

- The belief is proper to the Existential Viewpoint if it answers such fundamental questions as “What kind of person do I (the agent) wish to be?” or “In the interest of becoming that kind of person, what institutions, laws, regulations, assumptions, values, relationships, standards of discourse, or approaches to evaluating beliefs do I wish to embrace or champion?”
- The belief is also proper to the Existential Viewpoint if it significantly biases the lower-viewpoint beliefs grounding it. *Note: If the belief is proper to the Existential Viewpoint in even a single case, the analyst should treat the belief as proper to the Existential Viewpoint.*
- The belief is tentatively proper to the Realist Viewpoint if it answers the question, “What is?”
- The belief is tentatively proper to the Ethical Viewpoint if it answers the question, “Is ‘what is’ good?”
- The belief is tentatively proper to the Visionary Viewpoint if it answers the question, “What might improvement or perfection look like?”
- The belief is tentatively proper to the Quest and Commitment Viewpoint if it answers questions like, “What does my (i.e., the agent’s) vision of improvement or perfection demand of me?” or “What constraints does the possibility of achieving such improvement or perfection free me from?”

Note: If, in recent situations similar to the situation of interest, the target belief addressed issues proper to the Existential Viewpoint, it should be treated as an Existential Viewpoint belief for the purposes of this analysis. If the belief addressed issues proper to a single non-Existential viewpoint, it should be treated as proper to that viewpoint. If it addressed issues proper

to diverse viewpoints (other than the Existential Viewpoint), it should be treated as proper to the highest of those viewpoints.

- Circle or bold the appropriate viewpoint on the Figure 6.3 worksheet and proceed to c., below.

c. Determine the precision of the target belief. First, identify the maximum possible precision of the target belief by considering the two constraints discussed below:

Constraint #1: Viewpoint-imposed limitations on precision:

- Existential Viewpoint beliefs are no more precise than catalytic narratives.
- Realist Viewpoint beliefs may be precise, imprecise, rules of thumb, or catalytic narratives.
- Ethical Viewpoint beliefs may be imprecise, rules of thumb, or catalytic narratives.
- Visionary Viewpoint beliefs may be rules of thumb or catalytic narratives.
- Quest and Commitment Viewpoint beliefs can be no more precise than catalytic narratives.

Constraint #2: Limitations on the precision of target beliefs imposed by the viewpoints of underlying beliefs:

First, identify lower-viewpoint beliefs that the agent has explicitly cited (or that you [the analyst] can confidently specify) as providing crucial support for the target belief. The target belief cannot be more precise than the least precise of those beliefs.

Next, using the guidelines below, identify the maximum precision of the target belief in each of the situations identified in Step 1, #6, and Step 1, #7 above.

- The belief may be classified as **precise** if the above constraints do not preclude such a classification and if, as used by the agent, it:
 - Is proper to the Realist Viewpoint. (Only Realist Viewpoint beliefs can be precise.)
 - Clearly describes the phenomena it addresses or enables the agent to generate specific predictions.
 - Incorporates second-order precepts that:
 - Encourage the agent to seek, generate, acknowledge, and honestly grapple with challenging arguments and information.
 - Encourage the use of increasingly stringent tests as more sensitive instruments or revealing procedures become available.
 - Encourage the agent to promulgate and discuss challenging data and experiences.

- The belief may be classified as **imprecise** if the above constraints do not preclude such a classification and if, as used by the agent, it:
 - Is proper to the Ethical or Realist Viewpoints. (Only beliefs proper to those viewpoints can be imprecise.)
 - Makes directional prediction(s) regarding relationships between phenomena.
 - Describes the general nature of those phenomena.

- Broadly (or only implicitly) describes the conditions under which relationships between phenomena are alleged to occur.
- Leads the agent to expect predicted relationships between phenomena to hold most of the time.
- Incorporates second-order precepts that:
 - Encourage the agent to balance advocacy with openness to challenge and refinement.
 - Permit the agent to accept speculative *post hoc* explanations for predictive failures and other challenging observations.
 - Fail to encourage the agent to seek, generate, acknowledge, or promulgate challenging facts and arguments.
 - Inspire a *laissez-faire* attitude toward reexamining claims when more sensitive instruments or meticulous investigative procedures become available.
- The belief may be classified as a **rule of thumb** if the above constraints do not preclude such a classification and if, as used by the agent:
 - It is proper to the Visionary, Ethical, or Realist Viewpoint.
 - It provides only colloquial descriptions of the phenomena it deals with.
 - It makes unclear claims regarding relationships between those phenomena.
 - It is vague or silent about the conditions under which those claims hold.
 - The above ambiguities allow it to account, after the fact, for a wide range of observations.

- It has little effect on the agent's experience or understanding of the issues it addresses.
 - Failures of the predictions and strategies it inspires have little impact on the agent's confidence.
- The belief may be classified as a **catalytic narrative** if, as used by the agent, it:
 - Provides a "lens" through which the agent experiences or interprets reality.
 - Satisfies the agent's need to see themselves as knowledgeable, wise, or powerful.
 - Makes no falsifiable predictions, either by making no predictions or by encouraging the agent to "explain away" predictive failures.
 - Can account, after the fact, for a wide range of events.
 - Incorporates second-order precepts that:
 - Fail to encourage seeking, generating, or promulgating challenging facts and arguments.
 - Discourage serious consideration of challenging ideas, logic, or events.
- d. Summarize your findings regarding the guidance the target belief *actually* provides by circling the appropriate fundamental need, viewpoint, and degree of precision/ambiguity on the Figure 6.3 worksheet.
- e. Designate the appropriate cell on Figure 6.1 with an "O" (for *observed, actual*) and check the appropriate circle on the Figure 6.3 worksheet.

Step 3: Assess Existential Viewpoint Issues.

1. If the target belief is either *actually* or *assumed to be* reassuring, an informative catalytic narrative, or an informative Existential Viewpoint belief, investigate the issues below. Record your answers to the questions below in the allotted spaces on the Figure 6.3 worksheet. If the target belief engenders no Existential Viewpoint expectations and has no effect on Existential Viewpoint functioning, proceed to Step 4. 1.
2. Determine the target belief's impact on Existential Viewpoint functioning.
 - a. *How does the target belief affect the agent's genuineness? Does it encourage or discourage (see Figure 5.1):*
 - Attentiveness (openness and curiosity)?
 - Intelligence (the desire to understand and communicate one's understanding and the effectiveness with which one does so)?
 - Reasonableness (willingness to consider the possibility one's understanding may be erroneous or of limited relevance)?
 - Responsibility (commitment to acting lovingly, responsibly, and cautiously, guided by one's best understanding and open to the possibility one's actions may be ineffective, harmful, or both)?
 - b. *How does the target belief affect the quality of the agent's noetic relationships? Does it encourage the agent to:*
 - Craft, conceptualize, and participate in activities that bring out the best in themselves and others?
 - Inspire others to do so?
 - Root for their own success and the success of their collaborators?

- Accept support with gratitude?
- Root for good faith efforts to experience, know, master, and love?
- Root for the genuineness that is essential to experience, knowledge, mastery, and love?

c. *How does the target belief affect the quality of the agent's communication?* Does it encourage or discourage commitments to:

- Being consistent?
- Meaning what one says?
- Defending one's positions or justifying one's refusal to do so?
- Minimizing the influence of coercion on what is said and how it is understood?
- Ensuring that arguments used to support one's positions are valid, and that data used to support one's positions are unbiased?
- Stating one's positions in ways that render them subject to falsification or meaningful discussion and criticism?
- Refusing to buttress one's positions by manipulating the terms or rules of debate?

d. ***What is the overall impact of the agent's genuineness, noetic relationships, and communication style/discourse ethics on the:*** (Record the assessments in the designated space on the Figure 6.3 worksheet.)

- Objectivity with which the agent treats the target belief?
- Belief-relevant data reaching the agent?
- Nature of belief-relevant discourse to which the agent is exposed?
- Agent's responses to belief-relevant data and discourse?

Step 4: Assumption-Reality Disparities and their Implications.

1. Identifying the target belief's assumption-reality disparities requires reflecting on the disparity between (a) the agent's *assumptions* about the fundamental needs that motivate their acceptance of the target belief and the fundamental need(s) that *actually* motivate the belief's acceptance, (b) the agent's *assumptions* about the viewpoint of the issue the belief addresses and the viewpoint of the issue the belief *actually* addresses, and (c) the agent's *assumptions* about the precision of the belief's guidance and the *actual* precision of that guidance. The Figure 6.3 worksheet provides space to record insights into those disparities.

a. **Assumption-reality disparities regarding motivation.** Identify the disparities between the agent's *assumed* and *actual* motives for holding the target belief. Complete the following sentences:

"The agent *assumes* they accept this belief because it satisfies their desire for . . ."

"The agent *actually* accepts this belief because it satisfies their desire for . . ."

If the agent's *assumed* and *actual* motives differ, describe the likely consequences of this error by completing the statement:

"This misapprehension matters because . . ."

b. **Assumption-Reality Disparities Regarding Viewpoint.** Identify the disparity between the viewpoint of the issue the agent *assumes* the target

belief addresses and the viewpoint of the issue the target belief *actually* addresses. Complete the following statements:

“The agent *assumes* the target belief is concerned with . . .”
(Complete this statement in a way that highlights the target belief’s assumed viewpoint.)

“In fact, the target belief is concerned with . . .” (Complete this statement in a way that highlights the target belief’s actual viewpoint.)

If the *assumed* and *actual* viewpoints of the target belief differ, complete the statement below:

“The agent’s misapprehensions about the viewpoint of the target belief matter because (*Specify likely errors.*) . . .”

Note: If the agent accurately *assumes* the target belief to be informative, see the Chapter 4 section, “**The Value of Attention to Viewpoint and Viewpoint-Precision/Ambiguity Interaction in Security Analysis: Some Examples,**” which starts on page 49.

If the target belief — whether informative or reassuring — is proper to the Existential Viewpoint or the agent *assumes* it to be, complete the following statements:

“The agent *assumes* this belief will help them become someone who . . .”

“However, it *actually* encourages the agent to become someone who . . .”

If the agent's expectations regarding the existential impact of the target belief conflict with reality, complete the statement below:

"The ways this belief falls short of the agent's expectations about its impact matter because . . ."

c. *Assumption-Reality Disparities Regarding Precision/Ambiguity.*

Identify the disparities between the precision of the guidance the agent *assumes* the belief provides and the precision of the guidance the belief *actually* provides by completing the following statements:

"The agent *assumes* the guidance the target belief provides is . . ."
(*Describe the guidance the agent views the belief as providing, highlighting its assumed precision.*)

"In fact, the guidance the target belief provides is . . ."
(*Describe the guidance the belief actually provides, highlighting its precision.*)

If the agent's *assumption* regarding the precision of the target belief's guidance is inaccurate, specify the probable consequences of this misapprehension by completing the statement:

"This misapprehension matters because . . ."

Ensure all insights generated by Step 4 are recorded on the Figure 6.3 worksheet.

Step 5: Consequences, Self-Critique, Analytic Narrative

1. Describe the major consequences of the agent's false assumptions about the target belief by completing the statement below. Where relevant, describe the effects of the agent's belief-relevant second-order precepts and Existential Viewpoint functioning.

"The most important consequences of the agent's false *assumptions* regarding the target belief appear to be . . ."

Note: Be sure to consider the likely impact of the belief's second-order precepts and the agent's Existential Viewpoint functioning [assessed in Step 3] on each of the identified implications or consequences.

2. Critique the agent-focused CBA.

Upon completing a CBA of an agent's belief, the analyst should conduct a self-critique of that CBA. While such self-critiques address the same factors as agent-focused CBAs — fundamental need, viewpoint, and precision/ambiguity — they are significantly easier to carry out. That's because analyst-focused CBAs need only compare the analyst's CBA of the agent's belief with the standards by which such products are judged. Thus, the statement that analysts' self-critiques should address is, "My CBA of the agent's target belief meets the standards such analyses are expected to satisfy." There are three such standards.

First, security analysts are expected to strive for objectivity. In the language of CBA, security analysts are expected to do their best to ensure their reports are shaped by the desire for information rather than the desire for reassurance. Analysts are therefore advised to reflect on their

thoughts and feelings about the agent-focused CBA and to review Figure 6.4, Identifying the Desires Motivating Beliefs, to sensitize themselves to any attitudes, beliefs, or practices that may have compromised their objectivity. Specifically, analysts should identify and document the potential impact of every Figure 6.4 “A” statement with which they **agreed** or **strongly agreed**. The products of their self-examination should be documented by completing the sentence stem, “Self-examination (including the use of Figure 6.4 to help uncover my possible biases) suggests the following attitudes, beliefs, or penchants, motivated by the need for reassurance, may have biased my conclusions:” Analysts should consider revising their agent-focused CBA if a review of Figure 6.4 raises the possibility of significant bias. If a review of Figure 6.4 suggests the possibility of mild bias, analysts should acknowledge that bias and discuss its possible impact on their conclusions.

Second, the conclusions of competent, ethical security analysts are expected to be proper to the Realist Viewpoint. Analysts should strive to provide decision-makers with objective descriptions of the substantive and structural characteristics of agents’ beliefs and the implications of those characteristics. They should refrain from opining about the goodness of those characteristics or other issues that are not proper to the Realist Viewpoint. Analysts who discover that the conclusions of their CBAs are proper to the Existential, Ethical, Visionary, or Quest and Commitment viewpoints are advised to consider revising their reports.

Finally, analysts are expected to be sensitive to the ambiguity of the explanations and predictions their conclusions inspire. Suppose such explanations and predictions are unfalsifiable. In that case, analysts should acknowledge that their conclusions are catalytic narratives, i.e., assertions that create the illusion of truth while failing to offer meaningful guidance to those tasked with making consequential decisions. Suppose the report’s conclusions about agents’ target beliefs have the characteristics of rules of

thumb. In that case, analysts should acknowledge that those conclusions do little more than encourage attention to issues that may matter and that those tasked with making consequential decisions cannot assume the guidance of those conclusions will improve their odds of success. Suppose the report's conclusions about agents' target beliefs have the characteristics of imprecise beliefs. In that case, analysts should acknowledge that the guidance of those conclusions can do nothing more than increase one's odds of success and that one cannot assume the guidance of those conclusions will make it likely that one will succeed. Finally, suppose the report's conclusions about agents' target beliefs have the characteristics of precise beliefs. Since the complexities of human behavior and institutional functioning make this degree of precision unlikely, analysts are advised to subject the processes that shaped their conclusions to a comprehensive critique. Only conclusions that survive such critiques should be offered as reliable insights into the future.

Determine the likelihood/probability that the conclusions of your agent-focused CBA are correct.³⁶ Justify your estimate.

Specify your degree of confidence that your agent-focused CBA is a "quality analytic product."³⁷ Explain your view.

3. Document all analytic work on the Figure 6.3 worksheet and prepare the analytic narrative (written report, verbal briefing, etc.). Chapter 11 of *Security Analysis: A Critical-Thinking Approach* provides guidance on preparing the analytic narrative.³⁸

This worksheet is to be used in conjunction with Figure 6.1, The Periodic Table of the Beliefs; Figure 6.2, Critical Belief Analysis Procedure; and Figure 6.4, Identifying the Desires Motivating Beliefs. Complete each task as directed, using additional sheets if necessary. Mark each step bracket ([**v**]) upon completing all subordinate tasks.

[] Step 1: Orient Yourself to the Project.

- Research purpose (*specify*):

- Research question (*specify*):

- To-be-evaluated agent and target belief (*specify*):

- Sources of information utilized (*specify*):

- Circumstances in which the target belief developed, if relevant (*specify*):

- Psychobiography (*specify relevant history and characteristics*):

- Target belief's second-order precepts (*specify*):

- Situations in which the target belief *strongly* influenced the agent's *past* thoughts, feelings, or actions (*specify*):
 - Results of policies, etc., shaped by the target belief (*specify*):
 - Agent's responses to failures or unanticipated consequences of the above policies (*specify*):
- Situations in which the target belief seems likely to influence the agent's *future* thoughts, feelings, policies, or actions (*specify*):

[] Step 2: Locate the Belief on Figure 6.1, The Periodic Table of the Beliefs.

1. Determine the nature of the guidance the agent *assumes* the belief provides.

- The agent's history suggests the agent *assumes* the target belief satisfies their desire for (*Circle or **bold** one and, if necessary, justify or explain your choice.*):

Information (In)

Reassurance (Reas)

Both

Justification/Explanation (optional):

- The agent's history suggests the agent *assumes* the belief is primarily concerned with (*Circle or **bold** one and, if necessary, justify or explain your choice.*):

Existential Viewpoint issues (Ex)

Realist Viewpoint issues (Real)

Ethical Viewpoint issues (Eth)

Visionary Viewpoint issues (Vi)

Quest and Commitment Viewpoint issues (QC)

Justification/Explanation (optional):

- The agent's history suggests the agent *assumes* the belief offers the guidance of (*Circle or **bold** one and, if necessary, justify or explain your choice.*):

A precise belief (P)

An imprecise belief (I)

A rule of thumb (RoT)

A catalytic narrative (CN)

Justification/Explanation (optional):

- Based on the above, the agent likely *assumes* the belief is proper to the cell of Figure 6.1 specified below (*Circle or **bold** one in each row.*):

In Reas

Ex Real Eth Vi QC

P I RoT CN

- Designate the appropriate cell of Figure 6.1 with an “**A**” for *assumed*.

2. Determine the nature of the guidance the target belief *actually* provides.

- The procedure specified in Figure 6.4 and other relevant information suggests the agent’s overall treatment of the belief facilitates the provision of (*Circle or **bold** information (In), reassurance (Reas), or both. If necessary, justify or explain your choice.*):

Information (In)

Reassurance (Reas)

Both

Justification/Explanation (optional):

- The belief is actually concerned with (*Circle or **bold** one and, if necessary, justify or explain your choice.*):

Existential Viewpoint issues (Ex)

Realist Viewpoint issues (Real)

Ethical Viewpoint issues (Eth)

Visionary Viewpoint issues (Vi)

Quest and Commitment Viewpoint issues (QC)

Justification/Explanation (optional):

- The belief *actually* offers the guidance of (*Circle or **bold** one and, if necessary, justify or explain your choice.*):

A precise belief (P)

An imprecise belief (I)

A rule of thumb (RoT)

A catalytic narrative (CN)

Justification/Explanation (optional):

- Based on the above, the belief is *actually* proper to the Figure 6.1 cell specified below (*Circle or **bold** one in each row.*):

In Reas

Ex Real Eth Vi QC

P I RoT CN

- Designate the appropriate cell of Figure 6.1 with an “**O**” for *observed or actual*.

[] Step 3: Assess Existential Viewpoint Issues.

- The target belief affects the agent’s genuineness by (*Specify those aspects of genuineness the target belief encourages and those it discourages.*) . . .

- The target belief's effects on the (noetic) quality of the agent's relationships include . . .

- The target belief's effects on the quality of the agent's communication style/discourse ethics include . . .

- The target belief's impact on the agent's genuineness, the (noetic) quality of the agent's relationships, and the agent's communication style/discourse ethics seems likely to affect (*Choose those effects that apply. Justify or explain your choices.*):
 - The objectivity with which the agent treats the target belief.

 - The belief-relevant data to which the agent is exposed.

 - The belief-relevant discourse to which the agent is exposed.

 - The agent's responses to belief-relevant data and discourse.

[] **Step 4: Assumption-Reality Disparities and Their Implications.**

1. [] **Assumption-Reality Disparities Regarding Motivation.**

- *(Complete the following sentence. Elaborate if appropriate.)* The agent *assumes* they accept this belief because it satisfies their desire for . . .

- *(Complete the following sentence. Elaborate if appropriate.)* The agent *actually* accepts this belief because it satisfies their desire for . . .

If the agent's *assumed* and *actual* motives differ, complete the statement below:

- This misapprehension matters because *(Specify likely errors.)* . . .

2. [] **Assumption-Reality Disparities Regarding Viewpoint.**

- *(Complete the following sentence, highlighting the target belief's assumed viewpoint. Elaborate if appropriate.)* The agent *assumes* the target belief is concerned with . . .

- *(Complete the following sentence, highlighting the target belief's actual viewpoint. Elaborate if appropriate.)* In fact, the target belief is *actually* concerned with . . .

If the *assumed* and *actual* viewpoints of the target belief differ, complete the statement below:

- The agent's misapprehensions about the viewpoint of the target belief matter because (*Specify likely errors.*) . . .

If the target belief — whether informative or reassuring — is proper to the Existential Viewpoint or the agent *assumes* it to be, complete the following statements:

- The agent *assumes* this belief will help them become someone who . . .
- However, it *actually* encourages the agent to become someone who . . .

If the agent's expectations regarding the existential impact of the target belief conflict with reality, complete the statement below:

- The ways this belief falls short of the agent's expectations about its impact matter because . . .

3. [] Assumption-Reality Disparities Regarding Precision/Ambiguity.

- The agent *assumes* the guidance the target belief provides is (*Describe the guidance the agent views the belief as providing, highlighting its assumed precision.*) . . .

- In fact, the guidance the target belief *actually* provides is . . . (*Describe the guidance the belief provides, highlighting its precision.*)

If the agent's *assumption* about the precision of the belief's guidance was in error, complete the statement below:

- This misapprehension matters because . . .

[] Step 5: Consequences, Analyst Self-Critique, Analytic Narrative

1. [] Consequences

Complete the statement below. Where relevant, describe the effects of the agent's belief-relevant second-order precepts and Existential Viewpoint functioning on each identified consequence.

- The most important consequences of the agent's false assumptions regarding the target belief appear to be . . .

2. [] Critique the agent-focused CBA

a. Critique the claim, "My CBA of the agent's target belief meets the standards such analyses are expected to satisfy" by responding to the prompts below as appropriate:

Complete the following sentence, making sure to identify and describe the potential impact of every Figure 6.4 “A” statement with which you **agreed or strongly agreed**:

- Self-examination (including the use of Figure 6.4 to help uncover my possible biases) suggests the following attitudes, beliefs, or penchants, motivated by the need for reassurance, may have biased my conclusions:

- If you neither agreed nor strongly agreed with any Figure 6.4 “A” statements, say so.

- If appropriate, include the following sentence (or something similar) in your report: Since, despite my best efforts to be objective, it is possible the desire for reassurance biased the conclusions of my agent-focused CBA, I suggest those who read this report keep the following caveats in mind:

- Review and, if necessary, revise your report to ensure the following statement is accurate: “I have reviewed and, if necessary, revised my agent-focused CBA to ensure its conclusions address factual (i.e., Realist Viewpoint) concerns.” Include a statement to that effect in your report.

- Review and, if necessary, revise your report to ensure the following statement is accurate: “I have reviewed and, if necessary, revised my agent-focused CBA to ensure its conclusions (a) are no more precise than

the most ambiguous beliefs or observations that provide those conclusions with crucial support and (b) do not bias those supportive beliefs or observations. If indicated, I have dialed back the exactitude of my conclusions.” Include a statement to that effect in your report.

- Include one of the two statements below (and, if indicated, your response to that statement) in your report:
 - a. “Having completed the above critique and all indicated corrective actions, I feel justified in describing my CBA of the agent’s target belief as satisfying all expected standards.”
 - b. “I am concerned that my analysis of the agent’s target belief may (a) fail to meet the following standards (*specify*), (b) those failures may have compromised my understanding of the agent’s target belief, and (c) such compromised understanding may have contributed to the following flaws in my analytic narrative” (*specify*):
- Estimate the likelihood/probability the conclusions of the analyst’s agent-focused CBA are correct. Justify or explain your estimate.
- Specify your degree of confidence that your agent-focused CBA is a “quality analytic product.” Explain your view.

- Prepare caveats for the analytic narrative provoked by both the agent's self-critique and limitations in the CBA of the agent's target belief.

3. [] **Analytic Narrative**

- Prepare the analytic narrative (written report, verbal briefing, etc.).

Figure 6.4**Identifying the Desires Motivating Beliefs³⁹**

This questionnaire can be used to reveal the fundamental need(s) *actually* motivating the beliefs of agents and analysts. If the analyst responds to each item pair as they believe the agent would if they (the agent) were self-aware, insightful, and honest, this questionnaire can reveal what motivates the agent's target beliefs. If, when critiquing their own beliefs, the analyst responds to each item pair with similar self-awareness, insight, and honesty, this questionnaire can reveal what motivates the analyst's beliefs about their conclusions, including their beliefs about the agent.

Belief to be examined (*specify*):

Keeping the to-be-examined (target) belief in mind, ask how the person holding the belief (whether agent or analyst) *actually* feels about each of the issues addressed by the pairs of contrasting statements below. In each case, the believer may agree or strongly agree with Statement "A," agree or strongly agree with Statement "B," or agree with neither statement. Concurrence with Statement "A" reflects a desire for reassurance, while concurrence with Statement "B" reflects a desire for competence (information).

RESPOND TO EACH PAIR OF CONTRASTING STATEMENTS BELOW BY:

- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "1" FOR STRONG AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT A
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "2" FOR AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT A
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "3" FOR AGREEMENT WITH NEITHER STATEMENT
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "4" FOR AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT B
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "5" FOR STRONG AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT B

PAIR #1

- a. I want this belief to be true.
- b. I don't care whether this belief is true. 1 2 3 4 5

PAIR #2

- a. This belief makes me feel good about myself.
- b. This belief doesn't make me feel good about myself. 1 2 3 4 5

PAIR #3

- a. Believing this makes me a better person.
- b. Believing this has no effect on my goodness. 1 2 3 4 5

PAIR #4

- a. This belief helps make me who I am.
- b. I would be the same person if I didn't hold this belief. 1 2 3 4 5

PAIR #5

- a. I would see myself differently if I didn't hold this belief.
- b. I wouldn't see myself any differently if I didn't hold this belief. 1 2 3 4 5

RESPOND TO EACH PAIR OF CONTRASTING STATEMENTS BELOW BY:

- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "1" FOR STRONG AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT A
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "2" FOR AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT A
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "3" FOR AGREEMENT WITH NEITHER STATEMENT
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "4" FOR AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT B
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "5" FOR STRONG AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT B

PAIR #6

a. Affirming this belief renders me morally superior to those who are blind to its truth.

b. Affirming this belief has no effect on my moral standing. 1 2 3 4 5

PAIR #7

a. Affirming this belief renders me intellectually superior to those who are blind to its truth.

b. Affirming this belief has no effect on my intellectual standing. 1 2 3 4 5

PAIR #8

a. Believing this makes me feel comfortable.

b. This belief has no effect on how comfortable I feel. 1 2 3 4 5

PAIR #9

a. Information that appeared to raise serious questions about this belief would upset me.

b. Information that appeared to raise serious questions about this belief wouldn't faze me. 1 2 3 4 5

PAIR #10

a. I do my best to avoid information that might challenge this belief.

b. I don't try to avoid information that might challenge this belief. 1 2 3 4 5

RESPOND TO EACH PAIR OF CONTRASTING STATEMENTS BELOW BY:

- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "1" FOR STRONG AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT A
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "2" FOR AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT A
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "3" FOR AGREEMENT WITH NEITHER STATEMENT
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "4" FOR AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT B
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "5" FOR STRONG AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT B

PAIR #11

- a. I believe that, when properly implemented, strategies this belief inspires always work.
- b. I'm open to the possibility that strategies this belief inspires may fail, even if properly implemented. 1 2 3 4 5

PAIR #12

- a. Strategies this belief inspires only fail when those implementing them lack skill or commitment.
- b. Strategies this belief inspires may not work, even in the hands of skilled, committed believers. 1 2 3 4 5

PAIR #13

- a. Careful examination of data or arguments that challenge this belief is a waste of time.
- b. Careful examination of data or arguments that challenge this belief may be worthwhile. 1 2 3 4 5

PAIR #14

- a. If I encountered information that appeared to challenge this belief, I'd do my best to explain it away.
- b. If I encountered information that appeared to challenge this belief, I'd consider the possibility the belief may be flawed. 1 2 3 4 5

RESPOND TO EACH PAIR OF CONTRASTING STATEMENTS BELOW BY:

- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "1" FOR STRONG AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT A
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "2" FOR AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT A
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "3" FOR AGREEMENT WITH NEITHER STATEMENT
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "4" FOR AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT B
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "5" FOR STRONG AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT B

PAIR #15

a. Any argument challenging this belief must employ inaccurate information or faulty logic.

b. Some of the arguments casting doubt on this belief may be sound.

1 2 3 4 5

PAIR #16

a. I'm distressed if others don't share this belief.

b. It's OK with me if others don't share this belief.

1 2 3 4 5

PAIR #17

a. There's probably something wrong with those who don't accept this belief.

b. Even those who are worthy of my respect and admiration may find it hard to accept this belief.

1 2 3 4 5

PAIR #18

a. I have no trouble dismissing challenges to this belief if my fellow believers consider the sources of those challenges biased.

b. I feel obliged to investigate challenges to this belief for myself.

1 2 3 4 5

RESPOND TO EACH PAIR OF CONTRASTING STATEMENTS BELOW BY:

- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "1" FOR STRONG AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT A
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "2" FOR AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT A
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "3" FOR AGREEMENT WITH NEITHER STATEMENT
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "4" FOR AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT B
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "5" FOR STRONG AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT B

PAIR #19

- a. Those who challenge this belief should be silenced.
- b. Those who challenge this belief should be free to express their views.

1 2 3 4 5

PAIR #20

- a. There's no point in trying to understand the values or perspectives of those who don't share this belief.
- b. Efforts to understand the values or perspectives of those who don't share this belief may be worthwhile.

1 2 3 4 5

PAIR #21

- a. I avoid questioning this belief or considering incompatible beliefs because those I care about would be upset if I did so.
- b. The feelings and opinions of those I care about have no effect on what I allow myself to think, say, or believe.

1 2 3 4 5

RESPOND TO EACH PAIR OF CONTRASTING STATEMENTS BELOW BY:

- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "1" FOR STRONG AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT A
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "2" FOR AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT A
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "3" FOR AGREEMENT WITH NEITHER STATEMENT
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "4" FOR AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT B
- CIRCLING OR BOLDING "5" FOR STRONG AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT B

PAIR #22

a. I would respond to information that could be considered threatening to my belief by rephrasing my belief to make it harder to challenge.

b. I would respond to information that could be considered threatening to my belief by reflecting thoughtfully on that information.

1 2 3 4 5

PAIR #23

a. I feel obliged to champion my belief, even if doing so requires me to portray biased information, falsehoods, or irrational arguments as unquestionable truths.

b. I feel obliged to present my belief fairly and accurately, even if doing so creates doubts about its truth, its goodness, or the trustworthiness of its guidance.

1 2 3 4 5

Assessing the Fundamental Needs Motivating the Target Belief.

TOTAL #1s CIRCLED OR BOLDED (STRONG AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT "A"):

TOTAL #2s CIRCLED OR BOLDED (AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT "A"):

TOTAL #3s CIRCLED OR BOLDED (AGREEMENT WITH NEITHER STATEMENT "A"
NOR STATEMENT "B"):

TOTAL #4s CIRCLED OR BOLDED (AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT "B"):

TOTAL #5s CIRCLED OR BOLDED (STRONG AGREEMENT WITH STATEMENT "B"):

Beware of the temptation to interpret the results of this questionnaire mechanically. For example, one might assume believers (whether agents or analysts) look to a particular belief to *inform* them about reality if, upon examining their feelings about that belief, they find they agree or strongly agree with the majority of "B" statements. However, reflection on the paired statements comprising this questionnaire reveals that endorsing an "A" statement generally indicates the believer is passionate about the belief in question while endorsing a "B" statement generally indicates the believer views the belief with a degree of detachment. For this reason alone, those interpreting this questionnaire should weigh endorsements of "A" statements more heavily than endorsements of "B" statements.

But there is an even more compelling reason for weighing endorsements of "A" statements more heavily than endorsements of "B" statements. Objectivity is inherently fragile; a single flaw in an otherwise valid argument can invalidate that argument. Bias, by contrast, is inherently durable. Adding a valid argument or observation to a flawed argument adds little or nothing to its validity.

Thus, interpreting responses to this questionnaire requires imagining how the attitudes reflected in the endorsements are likely to impact objectivity. If those responses suggest the believer has the requisite commitment and discipline to treat the target belief objectively, the interpreter should classify the belief as informative. If those responses suggest the believer lacks such commitment and discipline, the interpreter should classify the belief as reassuring. And if those responses suggest the believer's treatment of the belief vacillates, the analyst should evaluate the belief in question as two distinct beliefs — one informative and one reassuring.

Conclusion (circle or bold one):

THIS BELIEF IS BEST CONSIDERED (AND EVALUATED AS):

REASSURING

INFORMATIVE

TWO BELIEFS: ONE REASSURING AND ONE INFORMATIVE (rephrase and re-evaluate each separately)

Justification/Evaluation (optional):

Chapter 7

Critical Belief Analysis Example: U.S. 2003 Decision to Invade Iraq

Figure 7.1 provides a sample Critical Belief Analysis (CBA) examining the U.S. 2003 decision to invade Iraq. This example follows the general format of Figure 6.3, Critical Belief Analysis Worksheet. While CBA is designed to help analysts *predict* agents' decisions, agents' actions, and the consequences of those decisions and actions, this example examines an event the outcomes of which are known. Thus, the focus here is to *describe* and *explain* decisions and actions leading to the 2003 U.S.-Iraq War. Where appropriate, the tenses of Figure 6.3 worksheet "prompts" have been modified to reflect this descriptive and explanatory focus.

Figure 7.1 Critical Belief Analysis Example

Analysis Topic: U.S. 2003 Decision to Invade Iraq.

[v] Step 1: Orient Yourself to the Project.

- Research purpose (*specify*):

To explain why a state may employ a preemptive military attack.

- Research question (*specify*):

Why did U.S. President George W. Bush order a 2003 preemptive military invasion of Iraq? (Calls for an explanatory study using after-the-fact analysis.)

- To-be-evaluated agent and target belief (*specify*):

President George W. Bush's belief that an invasion of Iraq with the goal of removing Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath Party from power was justified.

- Sources of information utilized (*specify*):

The following analysis was developed primarily from Bob Woodward's book: *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq*.⁴⁰ Other pertinent references were consulted as needed.

Bob Woodward developed *Plan of Attack* using interviews with President Bush and his principal advisors, information from U.S. government records, and other journalists' reports. Woodward's original reporting on the Watergate scandal, for which he shared a Pulitzer Prize with Carl Bernstein, was followed by many highly regarded books on succeeding presidential administrations. The esteem in which Woodward is held by the Washington establishment afforded him unique access to the top decision-makers in the U.S. Government.

- Circumstances in which the belief developed, if relevant (*specify*):

After the 1991 Persian Gulf War, in which U.S. and Coalition forces expelled invading Iraqi military forces from Kuwait, United Nations (U.N.) and U.S. security policymakers remained concerned about what to do with Iraq. In response to a number of post-1991 U.N. Security Council resolutions, Iraq agreed to destroy its chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear weapons of mass destruction (WMD) stockpiles, laboratories, and programs. Iraq had

used chemical and biological WMD against Iranians as well as Iraqis who opposed its policies during the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War.

Despite the 1991 Iraq-U.N. peace agreement, a quasi-war continued between Iraq and the U.S., the United Kingdom (U.K.), and (until 1996) France. Those nations enforced no-fly zones to protect the majority Shi'ite Muslim population in southern Iraq and the minority ethnic Kurdish population in northern Iraq. It was believed that without the no-fly zones Hussein would use air attacks against those vulnerable populations, both of which opposed the Ba'ath Party. (Saddam and his ruling Ba'ath Party were primarily minority Sunni Muslims.) The no-fly operations, which were still in effect when George W. Bush was inaugurated U.S. president in 2001, were not approved by the U.N. Security Council.

Iraq initially agreed to allow U.N. inspectors to document their WMD disarmament. However, in 1998, Iraq expelled the U.N. weapons inspectors. On October 31, 1998, U.S. President Bill Clinton signed the Iraq Liberation Act (ILA), which declared the U.S. would support efforts to remove Iraqi President Saddam Hussein and his ruling Ba'ath Party from power. Clinton enforced the ILA by increasing support to a number of Iraqi opposition groups and working with the U.N. to isolate Iraq politically and economically.

President George W. Bush brought a new level of passion to achieving the goals of the ILA. Bush held a personal grudge against Hussein, who was behind a failed April 1993 assassination attempt on his father, former President George H. W. Bush. Before the second Bush's January 2001 inauguration, Vice President-elect Dick Cheney asked that Bush receive Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) briefings focusing primarily on the situation in Iraq. Cheney, who had served as Bush's father's Secretary of Defense (SecDef), felt U.S. and Coalition forces had ended the 1991 Persian Gulf War prematurely. Cheney believed U.S. and Coalition forces should have invaded Iraq and removed Hussein from power after they liberated Kuwait.

However, the pre-inaugural threat briefing CIA Director George Tenet gave Bush focused primarily on (a) Osama bin Laden (OBL) and his al Qaeda (AQ) terrorist network, (b) the possibility AQ or other terrorists would obtain WMD, and (c) the rising power of China. Iraq was barely mentioned.

After Bush's 2001 inauguration, his principal advisors on security matters were Cheney, SecDef Donald Rumsfeld, Secretary of State (SecState) Colin Powell, Deputy SecDef Paul Wolfowitz, Deputy SecState Richard Armitage, CIA Director Tenet, and National Security Advisor (NSA) Condoleezza Rice. Cheney, Rumsfeld, Wolfowitz, and their like-minded advisors and staff members, who were later dubbed "neo-conservatives (neocons)," advocated a more aggressive U.S. security policy. Rumsfeld characterized the Clinton administration's response to challenges and attacks as a passive "reflexive pullback." The new security approach, which Bush approved, would be more active, aggressive, and "forward-leaning."

The neocons' enthusiasm was intensified by VP Cheney's and SecDef Rumsfeld's belief that the U.S. needed military success in the Middle East to re-establish itself as a dominant regional actor. Bush explicated his vision of "forward-leaning" when, in preparation for his January 29, 2002, State of the Union address, he told his advisors and speechwriters he viewed the U.S. as obliged to reform Muslim societies by advocating for democracy, women's rights, civil and political liberties, and free markets.

In the spring and summer of 2001, there were a number of U.S. National Security Council (NSC) meetings addressing Iraq. These included NSC Principals' meetings — cabinet-level meetings chaired by Cheney or Rice, and NSC Deputies' meetings — deputy cabinet-level meetings chaired by Rice or her primary assistant, Deputy NSA Stephen Hadley. These meetings focused mainly on approaches to increasing intelligence collection on Iraq, improving support to Iraqi opposition groups, and refocusing and strengthening the enforcement of Iraqi U.N. economic sanctions. It was hoped these actions, in combination with continuing no-fly zone

enforcement, would pressure Hussein and his Ba'ath Party to surrender power.

The September 11, 2001 (9/11) AQ attacks on the Pentagon and New York City's World Trade Center refocused U.S. national security attention on the "War on Terror" and inspired the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan, whose Taliban government provided OBL and AQ with a safe haven in which they planned and prepared for the 9/11 attacks. Denying OBL and AQ the use of Afghanistan as a safe haven required the removal of the Afghani Taliban government.

On November 21, 2001, with most initial U.S. goals in Afghanistan either accomplished or on track, Bush questioned SecDef Rumsfeld about the deferred-but-never-forgotten Iraq War Plan. Bush's inquiry provoked a year-long review and revision of the war plan led by the U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander, U.S. Army General Tommy Franks and his staff, in consultation with SecDef Rumsfeld, the SecDef staff, Joint Chiefs of Staff, and military services. This planning effort was intended to ensure the availability of a robust military option that could be used if diplomatic and economic efforts to remove Hussein from power failed. By the fall of 2002, Franks had developed a plan to remove Hussein from power with minimal U.S. and Coalition military forces while minimizing Iraqi civilian casualties.

In his June 2002 speech at the U.S. Military Academy (West Point) graduation ceremony, Bush outlined his administration's "preemption doctrine," a commitment to "confront the worst threats to the United States before they emerge by taking the battle to the enemy."

Over the next several months, Bush and his neocon advisors hinted at the possibility of a preemptive strike against Iraq in speeches and interviews. Bush's September 2002 speech to the U.N. General Assembly can be interpreted as suggesting the U.S. would act to stop Hussein's transgressions if the U.N. failed to do so. While Bush allowed diplomatic and economic efforts to continue, he was clandestinely preparing for war.

Some commentators later dubbed the Bush administration's Iraq preemptive intervention information campaign a "Great Deception" or "Great Manipulation." By making frequent references to preemptive intervention, Bush and his surrogates created the illusion that preemption was a widely accepted solution to the threat posed by the Iraqi regime. Eventually, both the U.S. Congress and the U.S. public supported military engagement with Iraq. In October 2002, a U.S. Congressional resolution authorizing the use of U.S. military force in Iraq was passed by the House (296-133) and Senate (77-23). By March 2003, surveys revealed that 70 percent of the U.S. public supported U.S. military intervention in Iraq.

Throughout the fall of 2002, Bush continued to build international support for an invasion of Iraq. His new coalition, while far smaller than the coalition supporting his father and the 1991 Persian Gulf War, included the United Kingdom (U.K.), Poland, Spain, and Australia.

Bush arguably began the groundwork for the invasion of Iraq as early as August 2002, when he authorized a CIA clandestine intelligence team to deploy to northern Iraqi Kurdish territory to work with the Kurds and other anti-Hussein groups with access to Baghdad and the Iraqi military. The CIA team established a clandestine intelligence collection network to provide intelligence on the locations and capabilities of Iraqi military units as well as information on the locations of senior Iraqi military and government officials. In the fall of 2002, Bush authorized General Franks to gradually deploy U.S. and Coalition forces to the Middle East while disguising preparation for a large-scale invasion of Iraq.

On November 8, 2002, the U.N. Security Council unanimously passed a resolution declaring Iraq would face "serious consequences" if it failed to comply with previous resolutions mandating WMD disarmament and U.N. weapons inspections. Iraq immediately issued a lengthy report on its WMD disarmament efforts and allowed U.N. weapons inspectors back into the country.

Bush became displeased with the U.N. WMD inspectors' initial efforts to assess Iraqi compliance when no WMD were found. However, U.N. Security Council permanent members France and Russia, together with 2003 non-permanent member Germany, remained opposed to military action in Iraq, preferring to continue diplomatic and economic efforts and U.N. weapons inspections well into 2003.

NSA Rice noted she was convinced Bush made the decision to invade Iraq in late December 2002 after concluding neither U.N. weapons inspections nor other diplomatic and economic efforts would put an end to Hussein's Iraqi regime. After Bush's late-December 2002 decision to invade Iraq, Franks increased the rate at which troops and equipment were deployed to the Mideast. A main invasion force of over 200,000 U.S. ground forces, staged mostly in Kuwait, was substantially in place by late February 2003.

The U.S. invasion force was tasked with capturing Baghdad, Iraq's largest city and its capital. U.S. and U.K special forces units based in Jordan were readied to take control of SCUD tactical ballistic missiles based in western Iraq and thought to be targeted on Israel. Around 45,000 U.K. troops were readied to deploy from Kuwait to invade southern Iraq. Those U.K. troops were tasked with securing Iraq's southern oil fields against Iraqi sabotage and seizing Basra, Iraq's second-largest city. Due to Turkey's denial of U.S. requests to deploy military forces through Turkish territory, U.S. CIA and military special forces teams, supported by U.S. airborne (parachute) troops, deployed to northern Iraq to organize, equip, and train ethnic Kurdish troops to secure their homeland, which included Iraq's northern oil fields. Two U.S. Navy aircraft carrier battle groups were stationed in the Persian Gulf for combat air support. Additionally, over 60,000 U.S. Air Force personnel and numerous combat support aircraft were deployed to friendly countries across the Middle East and Southern Europe.

On January 13, 2003, Bush informed SecState Powell of his decision to go to war in Iraq. Powell and Deputy SecState Armitage had been the two most

ardent cabinet-level advocates of diplomatic and economic solutions to the Iraqi problem. Upon learning that Bush had decided to invade Iraq, Powell opted to support him. On February 5, 2003, Powell gave a speech at the U.N. he had prepared with CIA assistance. This speech, which was intended to justify military action against Iraq, was filled with false and misleading information. Powell, who knew some of the assertions in his speech were fraudulent, later described that speech as a “blot” on his professional record. The Bush administration did not request a U.N. Security Council resolution authorizing military action against Iraq, as they expected France and Russia to veto any such resolution.

Bush and the neocons supplemented their campaign to gain the support of the U.S. Congress, U.N. Security Council, and Coalition Forces with efforts to gain U.S. domestic and international public support. Among those efforts was the broadcast of SecState Powell’s February 5, 2003, U.N. speech to U.S. domestic and international television and radio audiences.

While, as noted above, these efforts garnered the overwhelming support of the U.S. public, during the weekend of February 15-16, 2003, an estimated six to ten million protesters in more than 600 cities worldwide demonstrated against the proposed U.S. invasion. Protests were concentrated in Europe but included gatherings in the U.S., Canada, Mexico, South Africa, and countries in western Asia and the Pacific Islands.

On March 19, 2003, Bush ordered the execution of Operation Iraqi Freedom, the U.S. codename for the invasion of Iraq. Bush was convinced U.S. intelligence information on Iraq justified the invasion. With the backing of the U.S. Congress, U.S. public, and Coalition partners, Bush defended his decision by citing the November 8, 2002, U.N. Security Council resolution calling for “serious consequences” if Iraq did not comply with previous U.N. resolutions mandating WMD disarmament and U.N. weapons inspections. (It should be noted, however, that several U.N. Security Council members

disputed Bush's interpretation of the November 8, 2002, resolution as an authorization for war.)

Bush viewed the invasion of Iraq as a "just war" under international law. In accordance with the Just War Doctrine,⁴¹ a preemptive attack may be justified if:

1. There is a manifest intent to injure the preempting party.
2. There is a degree of active preparation making the intent a positive danger.
3. Waiting or doing anything other than fighting greatly magnifies the risk.

In the eyes of Bush and his advisors, the Iraqi situation met these "just war" criteria, thus justifying a preemptive attack.

○ Psychobiography (*specify relevant history and characteristics*):

For a comprehensive psychobiography of George W. Bush see Dan P. McAdams' book, *George W. Bush and the Redemptive Dream: A Psychological Portrait*.⁴² McAdams is a Northwestern University Professor of Psychology who specializes in the study of personality and social development. McAdams' book is widely considered a uniquely comprehensive analysis of Bush's psychological makeup.

In a review of McAdams' study on *Psychology Today's* online blog, William Todd Schultz, Professor of Psychology at Pacific University and editor of the *Handbook of Psychobiography* (2005)⁴³ states, ". . . McAdams hits the mark . . . he sees things in the record that are new, and he does so by bringing to bear current, scientifically validated research findings that shed a bright light on who Bush was and why he did what he did."⁴⁴

Schultz describes McAdams' findings as indicating that "Bush is an extravert . . . [who is] charming, sociable, energetic, but prone to impulsiveness and recklessness. Bush was also low on the cognitive side of openness to experience. He was incurious, the opposite of a thinker or deliberator. These two traits combined disastrously, depending on your political position, when it came to the invasion of Iraq, Bush moved impulsively to act, more or less thoughtlessly."⁴⁵

○ Target belief's second-order precepts (*specify*):

Bush and his principal advisors constructed a supporting narrative and a set of second-order precepts that shaped the ways they thought about, communicated about, and defended the eventual invasion of Iraq. This narrative and those precepts enabled Bush and his principal advisors to ignore or discount criticism of the invasion in the U.N. Security Council as well as later international protests. By January 13, 2003, even SecState Powell supported the narrative and complied with its precepts. The principal advisors took their lead on how to think about, defend, and communicate about the invasion from Bush and VP Cheney. This campaign, later called the Great Deception, helped convince the U.S. public, U.S. Congress, and Coalition partners of the need for the invasion.

The principal arguments driving the eventual invasion of Iraq were:

- Iraq possessed WMD.
- Those WMD constituted a threat to Iraq's Middle East neighbors, the United States, and the world at large.
- The then-current Iraqi regime posed a threat to the oil reserves of the Middle East.
- Those oil reserves were important to the world's economy.
- Iraq had collaborated with AQ and other terrorist groups.

- Iraq was likely to provide AQ and other terrorist groups with WMD.
- AQ and other terrorist groups were likely to use those WMD to expand their attacks on the United States and its allies.
- Saddam Hussein had little or no regard for human life.
- Iraq was not in compliance with U.N. Security Council resolutions designed to remove its WMD capabilities.
- Fostering regime change in Iraq and installing a democratic government would make the Iraqi population safer, enhance Iraqi human rights, and help secure U.S. interests in the Middle East as well as the future of the world at large.

The second-order precepts that shaped the deliberations of Bush and his advisors encouraged conformity, giving rise to groupthink. Groupthink is a term used to characterize deliberative processes in which those with particular points of view dominate discussions while the arguments of those with differing views are silenced or discounted. Groupthink manifested itself when members of Bush's inner circle felt compelled to support Bush's belief that invading Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath Party from power was justified. CIA Director Tenet, who had been widely criticized following AQ's 9/11 attacks on the U.S., supplied Bush and his neocon advisors with intelligence supporting their points of view, apparently motivated, at least in part, by the desire to show Bush he could still lead the CIA effectively. Even SecState Powell, who opposed the Iraq invasion until Bush made his final decision, joined in groupthink efforts after the decision to invade Iraq was made.

When groupthink dominates; discussion, analysis, and decision-making are usually compromised. Bush and his principal security advisors, less SecState Powell and Deputy SecState Armitage at first, manifested strong "confirmation bias." This bias facilitated acceptance of information supporting the belief that an invasion of Iraq was necessary and neglect or

rejection of information disputing that belief. When confirmation bias is combined with “cognitive dissonance,” objectivity is likely to be severely impaired.

Cognitive dissonance arises when someone holds two conflicting ideas at once. In such situations, people often strive to eliminate the resulting conflict by discarding information that fails to support their preferred idea. The combination of groupthink, confirmation bias, and cognitive dissonance is likely to powerfully impede the rationality of any decision-making process.

For another security studies example of groupthink, see *Security Analysis*, Chapter 2. This chapter describes a situation in which groupthink influenced John F. Kennedy’s presidential advisors’ deliberations regarding the 1962 Cuban Missile Crisis.⁴⁶ If President Kennedy had not liberated his advisors from groupthink, a nuclear war between the United States and the Soviet Union may have occurred.

- Situations in which the target belief *strongly* influenced the agent’s thoughts, feelings, or actions (*specify*):

While the target belief is superficially specific to the Iraqi situation, Bush had decided to invade Afghanistan under arguably similar circumstances. After AQ’s 9/11 attacks on the U.S., the Bush administration demanded the Taliban Afghani government deliver OBL and other AQ senior leaders to the United States and stop allowing AQ to use Afghanistan as a support base, training site, and safe haven. The Taliban refused. In response, Bush ordered a U.S. military invasion of Afghanistan, forcing OBL, AQ, and the Taliban to flee the country. Inspired by the desire to reduce the terrorist threat to Western countries, NATO military forces also participated in the invasion.

- Results of policies, etc., shaped by the target belief (*specify*):

U.S. and NATO military goals inspiring the invasion of Afghanistan were quickly achieved: OBL, AQ, and the Taliban were promptly removed. However, little thought had been given to the long-term costs of the invasion, the number of U.S., NATO, and Afghani (military and civilian) personnel who would be killed or injured, or the resources required to rebuild Afghanistan politically, economically, and socially. Bush could not have known it at the time, but the occupation of Afghanistan ultimately cost over 2 trillion dollars and lasted 20 years — after which a 2021 U.S. withdrawal allowed the Taliban to return to power in Afghanistan. Throughout the 20-year U.S. and NATO occupation, the Taliban and AQ continued a guerilla-like insurgency in Afghanistan. The occupation failed to establish a more democratic, more effective, less corrupt Afghani government, build a new Afghani security structure, or expand Afghani human rights.

- Agent's responses to failures or unanticipated consequences of the above policies (*specify*):

Despite the failure to achieve long-term goals in Afghanistan, throughout Bush's term of office, the United States and NATO continued to pour money and resources into Afghanistan to help restructure its government, build its security forces, and fight insurgents. However, as Barak Obama discovered upon assuming the presidency in January 2009, U.S. and NATO operations in Afghanistan lacked an overarching military strategy, failed to deploy sufficient military forces to overcome the continuing insurgency, and failed to prepare Afghan forces to assume responsibility for the security of their territory.⁴⁷

- Situations in which the target belief seemed likely to influence the agent's thoughts, feelings, policies, or actions (*specify*):

Since this analysis is being written when President Bush's decisions and their consequences are known, it has the advantage of hindsight. However, as detailed above, the pattern of thought influencing Bush's approach to Iraq appears to resemble the pattern of thought influencing Bush's approach to Afghanistan. In both cases, Bush underestimated the long-term costs and complexities of occupation and nation-building.

[v] Step 2: Locate the Belief on Figure 6.1, The Periodic Table of the Beliefs.

1. Determine the nature of the guidance the agent *assumed* the belief provided.

- The agent's history suggests he *assumed* the target belief satisfied his desire for (circle or **bold one and, if necessary, justify or explain your choice**):

Information (In)

Reassurance (Reas)

Both

Justification/Explanation (optional): Bush's words and actions indicate he *assumed* the target belief (i.e., an invasion of Iraq with the goal of removing Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath Party from power was warranted) to be informative. That is, he *assumed* that belief to be the result of sincere, disciplined efforts to understand the realities of the situation in Iraq, objectively assess the possible consequences of diverse strategies, and identify the best available course of action.

- The agent's history suggests the agent *assumed* the belief was primarily concerned with (*Circle or **bold** one and, if necessary, justify or explain your choice.*):

Existential Viewpoint issues (Ex)

Realist Viewpoint issues (Real)

Ethical Viewpoint issues (Eth)

Visionary Viewpoint issues (Vi)

Quest-and-Commitment Viewpoint issues (QC)

Justification/Explanation (optional): Bush's words and actions indicate he *assumed* the target belief dealt with Realist Viewpoint issues, i.e. that it was shaped by and addressed an array of palpable realities. Bush *assumed* the target belief provided reliable information about the diverse threats Saddam Hussein and the Ba'ath party posed to Iraq, the region, and the world at large and about how those threats could be alleviated. He believed U.S. intelligence reports allowed him to not only understand what was happening in Iraq but to divine the consequences of various strategies. He believed Iraq continued to possess WMD in defiance of U.N. Security Council resolutions. He knew Iraq had used chemical and biological weapons in the 1980-1988 Iran-Iraq War. He knew U.N. weapons inspectors found stockpiles of chemical and biological weapons before they were expelled from Iraq in 1998. He believed Iraq was pursuing radiological and nuclear WMD programs. And he believed that Iraqi officials had met with senior leaders of AQ and other terrorist groups.

Bush viewed any radiological or nuclear weapons in Iraqi hands as constituting a threat to Israel, Iraq's other Middle East neighbors, the U.S., and the world at large. And he considered it likely Iraq would provide AQ and other terrorist groups with weapons of mass destruction,

further increasing the threat to the U.S. and its allies. He took these threats more seriously because he viewed Hussein as a tyrant whose treatment of his own citizens had demonstrated a disregard for human life. In addition, he viewed Iraq as threatening the oil reserves of the Middle East and thus, the world economy. And he believed removing Hussein from power would require armed intervention. He believed the “Just War Doctrine” and related international law justified a preemptive strike to eliminate the threats posed by Saddam Hussein and the Ba’ath Party. Bush viewed all of these assertions as answering the Realist Viewpoint question, “What is?”

- The agent’s history suggests the agent *assumed* the belief offered the guidance of (*Circle or **bold** one and, if necessary, justify or explain your choice.*):

A precise belief (P)

An imprecise belief (I)

A rule of thumb (RoT)

A catalytic narrative (CN)

Justification/Explanation (optional): While many, with the advantage of hindsight, have accused Bush and his advisors of overconfidence, no one has suggested Bush and his advisors believed they could predict the results of their proposed actions in detail. Rather, it appears that, although they knew the evidence on which they based their plans was questionable, the way the proposed invasion would unfold was uncertain, and the aftermath of the invasion was unpredictable, they assumed that acting under the guidance of the target belief increased their odds of bringing about diverse desirable outcomes. Thus, it appears Bush and his

advisors viewed their Realist Viewpoint belief as providing the sort of *directional guidance* CBA characterizes as "imprecise."

- Based on the above, the agent likely *assumed* the belief to be proper to the cell of Figure 6.1 specified below (*Circle or **bold** one in each row.*):

In Reas
Ex **Real** Eth Vi QC
P **I** RoT CN

- Designate the appropriate cell of Figure 6.1 with an "A" for *assumed*.

2. Determine the nature of the guidance the target belief *actually* provided.

- The procedure specified in Figure 6.4 and other relevant information suggests that the agent's overall treatment of the belief facilitates the provision of (*Circle or **bold** information (In), reassurance (Reas), or both. If necessary, justify or explain your choice.*):

Information (In)

Reassurance (Reas)

Both

Justification/Explanation (optional): It is, of course, impossible to know how Bush would have responded to each of the item pairs comprising Figure 6.4 if he were self-aware and unflinchingly honest. However, it seems likely Bush would have agreed or strongly agreed with the following Figure 6.4 statements, especially as groupthink increasingly affected his functioning:

- I want this belief to be true.
- I would see myself differently if I didn't hold this belief.
- Information appearing to raise serious questions about this belief would upset me.
- I do my best to avoid information challenging this belief.
- Any argument challenging this belief must employ inaccurate information or faulty logic.
- I have no trouble dismissing challenges to this belief if my fellow believers consider the sources of those challenges biased.
- I avoid questioning this belief or considering incompatible beliefs because those I care about would be upset if I did so.
- I feel obliged to champion my belief, even if doing so requires me to portray biased information, falsehoods, or irrational arguments as unquestionable truths.

To determine whether the target belief, as Bush related to it, was informative or reassuring, one needs to answer the question, "Could Bush treat the target belief objectively if his relationship with that belief was shaped by even a few of these attitudes?" We respectfully propose that the answer to that question is "No." As such, I feel confident in saying Bush's treatment of the target belief, influenced by the views of his advisors and his negative feelings about Saddam Hussein, renders the target belief reassuring.

- The belief was *actually* concerned with (*Circle or **bold** one and, if necessary, justify or explain your choice.*):

Existential Viewpoint issues (Ex)

Realist Viewpoint issues (Real)

Ethical Viewpoint issues (Eth)

Visionary Viewpoint issues (Vi)

Quest and Commitment Viewpoint issues (QC)

Justification/Explanation (optional): Since the target belief is reassuring, it is, like all such beliefs, proper to the Existential Viewpoint. As we have seen, the target belief inspired relationships, standards of logic and discourse, and rules of evidence that helped Bush see himself as knowledgeable, wise, powerful, and virtuous.

- The belief *actually* offered the guidance of (*Circle or **bold** one and, if necessary, justify or explain your choice.*):

A precise belief (P)

An imprecise belief (I)

A rule of thumb (RoT)

A catalytic narrative (CN)

Justification/Explanation (optional): Like all reassuring beliefs, the target belief is a catalytic narrative. True to its catalytic nature, the target belief provided a lens through which Bush and his advisors viewed and interpreted the issues it addressed. Its catalytic second-order precepts discouraged Bush and his advisors from seeking, generating, or discussing challenging facts and arguments. By biasing both the information Bush and his advisors considered and the ways they interpreted that information, the target belief led them to view their understanding of the Iraqi situation and its implications as unquestionable truths they could confidently rely on to guide their most consequential decisions and actions. As noted previously, the target belief's second-order precepts

discouraged seeking, generating, and sharing challenging facts and arguments or treating such facts and arguments respectfully.

- Based on the above, the belief was *actually* proper to the Figure 6.1 cell specified below (*Circle or **bold** one in each row.*):

In **Reas**
Ex Real Eth Vi QC
P I RoT **CN**

- Designate the appropriate cell of Figure 6.1 with an “O” for *observed* or *actual*.

[v] Step 3: Assess Existential Viewpoint Issues.

Note: Since President Bush assumed the target belief to be informative but it turned out to be reassuring (and thus proper to the Existential Viewpoint), CBA calls upon the analyst to evaluate the impact of the target belief on Bush’s genuineness, the (noetic) quality of his relationships, and his belief-relevant communication.

- The target belief affected the agent’s genuineness by . . . reducing his openness and curiosity with respect to the Iraqi situation, reducing his desire and capacity to understand its complexities, and discouraging him from seeking information or perspectives that may have led him to question his conclusions or refine his understanding — particularly regarding the purported existence of Iraqi WMD and Iraq’s alleged collaboration with AQ. While the target belief encouraged Bush to act on the basis of his best understanding, it closed him to the possibility that actions it inspired might turn out to be ineffective or harmful. Thus, the

target belief compromised Bush's attentiveness, intelligence, reasonableness, and responsibility.

- The target belief's effects on the (noetic) quality of the agent's relationships . . . while mixed, were detrimental overall. On the one hand, it made it rewarding for Bush and his advisors to bring out the best in themselves and their associates. The goal the target belief inspired (i.e., organizing and garnering support for a minimally destructive invasion of Iraq) encouraged mutual support for what the group viewed as high-level, data-driven intellectual functioning. While no single individual could hope to achieve the goal the target belief inspired, each individual's contribution to achieving the goal made it easier for others to contribute. Groupthink also encouraged Bush and his advisors to "root" for themselves and each other as long as their contributions supported the group's unalterable conclusions.

As such, groupthink powerfully undermined the noetic quality of Bush's relationships. Under its influence, high-level, data-driven functioning and mutual rooting for such functioning did little but cloak bias. It is notable that during 2001 and 2002, only SecState Powell and Deputy SecState Armitage had the temerity to challenge the group's consensus.

- The target belief's effects on the quality of the agent's communication style/discourse ethics . . . were devastating. They created an atmosphere that encouraged self-censorship while discouraging advocates from ensuring that nominally supportive data were authentically unbiased and nominally supportive arguments were valid.

The communications of Bush, his neocon advisors, and like-minded Coalition members were constrained by the requirement that those communications support the target belief (i.e., that a military invasion of

Iraq to remove Saddam Hussein and his Ba'ath Party from power was justified). Bush and his neocon advisors were not open to information disputing these arguments.

Statements conflicting with the target belief, conflicting with beliefs that supported it, or challenging the second-order precepts that protected it were unlikely to be expressed. If expressed, such statements were likely to be discounted. Further, inspired by the perceived righteousness of their cause, Bush and his advisors were willing to employ false information and misleading arguments to win the support of U.S. domestic and international audiences.

- The target belief's impact on the agent's genuineness, the (noetic) quality of the agent's relationships, and the agent's communication style/discourse ethics appears to have affected (*Choose those effects that applied. Justify or explain your choices.*):
 - The objectivity with which President Bush treated the target belief.

The target belief dramatically compromised the objectivity of Bush and his advisors, leading them to treat the belief as if it were certain when it was not. It led them to shield themselves from information and arguments that might have encouraged doubt and to selectively expose themselves — and those they had the power to influence — to biased and, on occasion, patently false information and illogical arguments. This information and those arguments encouraged actions with unanticipated and often tragic consequences.

More specifically, Bush's compromised genuineness made it easy to oversimplify the complexities of the Iraqi situation. In particular, it rendered Bush and his advisors vulnerable to believing — falsely — that Iraq had WMD that threatened its Mideast neighbors and their

oil, the U.S., and the world at large, that Iraq was actively collaborating with AQ and other terrorist groups, and that those terrorist groups were likely to use those WMD to attack the U.S and its allies.

- The belief-relevant data to which the agent was exposed.

See the above description of the objectivity with which President Bush treated the target belief. While Bush had access to the entire U.S. Intelligence Community (IC), he failed to look to that community for data or analyses that enhanced his understanding or disputed his arguments (see more on the IC below).

- The belief-relevant discourse to which the agent was exposed.

See the above description of the objectivity with which President Bush treated the target belief.

- The agent's responses to belief-relevant data and discourse.

The target belief powerfully distorted Bush's interpretation of and response to belief-relevant intelligence information. For example, in the fall of 2002, the CIA published a National Intelligence Estimate (NIE) focusing on Iraqi WMD.⁴⁸ While this report stated, "Baghdad has chemical and biological weapons," it cautioned evidence for this assertion was limited. Furthermore, it warned evidence for collaboration between Iraq and AQ warranted little confidence. Bush and his neocon advisors ignored both the NIE assessment's shaky grounding and its explicit caveats. (CIA Director George Tenet famously described the narrative's findings as a "slam dunk.") Instead,

Bush and his advisors focused on statements supporting their vision of Iraq as possessing chemical and biological weapons and collaborating with AQ. They promulgated this view to U.S. domestic and international audiences. A later bipartisan investigation concluded that the NIE's cautious conclusions relied excessively on one unreliable human source (codenamed Curveball),⁴⁹ the analysis lacked robustness, and its findings were based on faulty assumptions.

Bush's perception of the target belief also led him to pay scant attention to the possibility that invading Iraq might have unanticipated consequences. While Bush's advisors discussed the possibility that Iraq might not possess WMD and the consequences of invading Iraq if WMD were not found, Bush never ordered an expanded intelligence collection effort or deeper analysis of those possibilities.

In sum, Bush and his advisors distorted data, evidence, and reason with respect to Iraqi WMD — a set of distortions later commentators called the “Great Deception” or “Great Manipulation.” These distortions encouraged Bush to order the execution of Operation Iraqi Freedom.

[v] Step 4: Assumption-Reality Disparities and Their Implications.

1. [v] Assumption-Reality Disparities Regarding Motivation.

- *(Complete the following sentence. Elaborate if appropriate.)* The agent *assumed* he accepted this belief because it satisfied his desire for . . . information. More specifically, Bush *assumed* the target belief provided guidance that, if followed, would make the world a safer place by eliminating the threat Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi Ba'ath Party posed

to the people of Iraq, Iraq's Mideast neighbors, the U.S., and the world at large.

Unfortunately, many of the purported facts the target belief encouraged President Bush and his advisors to accept were false. It is now clear that:

- At the time of the Bush-ordered invasion, Iraq possessed neither WMD nor their precursors. As such, there was no cause for concern over the threat WMD might pose to Iraq's Middle East neighbors, the U.S., or the world at large. Nor was there cause for concern Iraq might provide WMD to AQ or other terrorist groups or that those terrorist groups might use Iraq-supplied WMD against the U.S. and its allies.
- There was no evidence the Iraqi regime posed a threat to the oil reserves of the Middle East.
- There was no evidence Iraq had collaborated with AQ or other terrorist groups.
- Fostering regime change in Iraq and installing a democratic government failed to make the Iraqi population safer, enhance Iraqi human rights, help secure U.S. interests in the Middle East, or improve conditions in the world at large.

However, the target belief was not entirely baseless. In fact:

- Iraq had maintained WMD laboratories in violation of U.N. resolutions.
- Saddam Hussein had little regard for human life.
- The oil reserves of the Middle East were important to the world economy. (After the Iraq War, when Iraqi oil production was cut, the world price of oil increased dramatically, eventually tripling. That

increase is widely thought to have contributed to the World 2007-2009 Great Recession.)

- *(Complete the following sentence. Elaborate if appropriate.)* The agent *actually* accepted this belief because it satisfied his desire for . . . reassurance, certainty, and rectitude when dealing with a situation in which the stakes were extraordinarily high, information was scarce and unreliable, and it seemed possible that delayed action would have catastrophic consequences.

If the agent's *assumed* and *actual* motives differed, complete the statement below:

- This misapprehension mattered because . . . President Bush's *assumption* he was treating evidence about the target belief objectively desensitized him to the possibility his understanding was inaccurate. As a result, he acted unwisely and with unwarranted confidence.

2. [✓] ***Assumption-Reality Disparities Regarding Viewpoint.***

- *(Complete the following sentence, highlighting the target belief's assumed viewpoint. Elaborate if appropriate.)* The agent *assumed* the target belief was concerned with . . . Realist Viewpoint issues.
- *(Complete the following sentence, highlighting the target belief's actual viewpoint. Elaborate if appropriate.)* In fact, the target belief was *actually* concerned with . . . Existential Viewpoint issues.

If the *assumed* and *actual* viewpoints of the target belief differ, complete the statement below:

- The agent’s misapprehensions about the viewpoint of the target belief matter because (*Specify likely errors.*) . . . while President Bush *assumed* the target belief addressed the realities of the Iraqi situation, it *actually* provided him with an answer to the question, “What kind of person do I wish to be?” In this instance, he wished to be the kind of person who effectively reassured himself by distorting data, logic, relationships, and communications to serve his needs for self-deception and self-justification.

If the target belief — whether informative or reassuring — is proper to the Existential Viewpoint or the agent *assumes* it to be, complete the following statements:

- The agent *assumed* this belief would help him become someone who . . . could make the world a better place. As such, he tacitly assumed the belief encouraged objectivity and moral clarity and enhanced his ability to anticipate the consequences of his actions.
- However, it *actually* encouraged the agent to become someone who . . . lacked objectivity, moral clarity, and the capacity to accurately anticipate the consequences of his policies and initiatives.

If the agent’s expectations regarding the existential impact of the target belief conflicted with reality, complete the statement below:

- The ways this belief fell short of the agent’s expectations about its impact mattered because . . . they led President Bush and his advisors to rely on the target belief to help manage issues it didn’t — and couldn’t — address. Bush and his advisors falsely assumed the target belief offered

credible, actionable information rather than what it actually offered: a way of relating to belief-relevant information that helped them feel good about themselves.

Those misapprehensions also led Bush and his advisors to employ inappropriate standards when evaluating the target belief. If, rather than assessing the target belief by asking such Realist Viewpoint-appropriate questions as, “Is this belief true?” Bush and his advisors evaluated the target belief by asking such Existential Viewpoint-appropriate questions as, “Does the target belief help me *feel* knowledgeable, wise, competent, powerful, secure, and loving, however poorly or well I embody those virtues?” they might have viewed the guidance the target belief offered more skeptically.

3. [v] ***Assumption-Reality Disparities Regarding Precision/Ambiguity.***

- The agent *assumed* the guidance this belief provided was (*Describe the guidance the agent viewed the belief as providing, highlighting its assumed precision.*) . . . imprecise. As noted above, while President Bush and his advisors recognized war often has unpredictable results, they *assumed* acting in accordance with the target belief would dramatically decrease the severity of the diverse threats Saddam Hussein’s Iraqi regime appeared to pose.
- In fact, the guidance the target belief *actually* provided was (*Describe the guidance the belief provided, highlighting its precision.*) . . . that of a catalytic narrative. The biases at work in assessing the target belief (i.e., those associated with groupthink, confirmation bias, and cognitive dissonance as well as those associated with the target belief’s second-order precepts) rendered Bush and his advisors unable to subject the

target belief to falsification or meaningful criticism. Like all catalytic narratives, the target belief was subjectively compelling but objectively uninformative.

- This misapprehension mattered because . . . it led Bush and his advisors to treat the target belief, which provided only the illusion of guidance, as if acting in accordance with its counsel was likely to have multiple positive effects. As it turned out, the invasion of Iraq was unjustified and contrary to international law. It not only lacked U.N. approval; it violated the Just War Doctrine by overstating the Iraqi threat.

[v] Step 5: Consequences, Analyst Self-Critique, Analytic Narrative

1. [v] Consequences

Complete the statement below. Where relevant, describe the effects of the agent's belief-relevant second-order precepts and Existential Viewpoint functioning on each identified consequence.

- The most important consequences of the agent's false assumptions regarding the target belief appear to be . . . President Bush and his close advisors' belief that the target belief's guidance was informative, proper to the Realist Viewpoint, and imprecise when it *actually* offered the guidance of a reassuring, Existential Viewpoint, catalytic narrative. These false assumptions left them blind to how the target belief compromised their functioning, desensitized them to their biases, imbued them with false confidence, and closed them to conflicting information and criticism. Ironically, those false assumptions also helped Bush and his principal advisors convince the U.S. public, U.S. Congress, and Coalition partners that the invasion of Iraq was a necessity.

Although U.S. and Coalition forces quickly defeated the Iraqi military and located Iraq's WMD laboratories (the existence of which violated U.N. resolutions), they discovered neither stockpiles of biological or chemical weapons nor the precursors required for the production of such weapons. They also failed to discover radiological or nuclear weapons, precursors, infrastructure, or laboratories. And they failed to discover any evidence of Iraqi collaboration with AQ or other terrorist groups.

The post-invasion U.S. and Coalition force occupation also failed to go according to plan. Bush expected U.S. and Coalition forces to occupy Iraq for no longer than two years. During that time, he expected a democratic Iraqi government to be installed, competent, ethical Iraqi police and military forces to be created, and Iraqi economic infrastructure to be rebuilt. However, U.S. and Coalition forces found it hard to pacify Iraq. The occupation was opposed by insurgents drawn from local militias, former Ba'ath Party members, former Iraqi police, former Iraqi military personnel, and an assortment of foreign fighters including AQ. There was also significant sectarian violence among Iraqi religious groups, militias, and foreign fighters. Once reconstituted, Iraqi police and military security forces became the targets of insurgents' attacks. Suppressing these conflicts added more than three years to the anticipated two-year U.S. and Coalition occupation. While Iraq's economic infrastructure was partially rebuilt during the occupation, restoration efforts were hampered by Iraqi corruption and lack of political will. And while a democratic Iraqi government structure was established, the absence of a democratic political culture created significant "growing pains."

VP Cheney initially expected U.S. financial support for the invasion, occupation, and rebuilding of Iraq to cost about 100 billion dollars. Actual costs exceeded Cheney's estimates by a factor of ten. The toll of the Iraq War on human life and well-being was also greater than expected. While the exact numbers are unknown, the war was estimated to have caused

the death of 9,000 and the injury of 32,000 U.S. and Coalition forces, the death of 16,600 and an unknown number of injuries of Iraqi military and police personnel, the death or injury of 250,000 Iraqi civilians, and the displacement of millions of Iraqi non-combatants. There was also extensive damage to Iraq's governmental and economic infrastructure. All these costs were laid at Bush's feet.

The domestic and international reputation of the U.S. in general and the Bush administration in particular suffered badly as a consequence of the Iraq War. The U.S. was cast as a bully and an international rogue state. U.S. support in domestic and international public opinion polls plummeted. Bush's domestic job approval ratings, which were at 90% after the September 2001 AQ attacks, dropped to 71% at the March 2003 start of the Iraq War. When Bush left office in January 2009, after an extended occupation of Iraq, his job approval rating was 34%. The decline in U.S. domestic and international support reduced the credibility and influence of the U.S. in international forums. Before the 2003 invasion, SecState Powell warned President Bush that he would "own" Iraq's problems after a military victory. Powell turned out to be right.

One cannot be certain a more thoughtful and circumspect approach would have allowed Bush and his advisors to foresee the full range of realities they had failed to anticipate. However, had Bush and his advisors treated the target belief more realistically, it seems likely they would have more accurately estimated the difficulties of pacifying Iraq, the number and severity of casualties associated with the occupation, the economic and social impact of the occupation, and the harm the invasion and occupation would do to the reputation of the U.S. at home and abroad.

2. [✓] Critique the agent-focused CBA.

- a. Critique the claim, “My (the analyst’s) CBA of the agent’s target belief meets the standards such analyses are expected to satisfy” by responding to the prompts below as appropriate:

Complete the following sentence, making sure to identify and describe the potential impact of every Figure 6.4 “A” statement with which you **agreed** or **strongly agreed**:

- Self-examination (including the use of Figure 6.4 to help uncover my possible biases) suggests the following attitudes, beliefs, or penchants, motivated by the need for reassurance, may have biased my conclusions:

None of my responses to Figure 6.4 suggested I looked to the target belief for reassurance. My responses to twelve (12) Figure 6.4 statement pairs suggested I looked to the target belief for neither information nor reassurance, and my responses to eleven (11) Figure 6.4 statement pairs suggested I looked to the target belief for information. To the best of my knowledge, I did not have a predetermined view of the situation under analysis.

- If you neither agreed nor strongly agreed with any Figure 6.4 “A” statement, say so.

I did not agree or strongly agree with any Figure 6.4 “A” statements (i.e., statements that, if endorsed, would suggest I related to the target belief in a way that rendered it reassuring).

- If appropriate, include the following sentence (or something similar) in your report: Since, despite my best efforts to be objective, it is possible the desire for reassurance biased the conclusions of my agent-focused CBA, I suggest those who read this report keep the following caveat in mind:

Despite my best efforts to be objective, my desire for reassurance may have biased some aspects of this report.

- Review and, if necessary, revise your analysis to ensure the following statement is accurate: “I have reviewed and, if necessary, revised my agent-focused CBA to ensure its conclusions address factual (i.e., Realist Viewpoint) concerns.” Include a statement to that effect in your report.

I have reviewed and, if necessary, revised my agent-focused CBA to ensure its conclusions address factual (i.e., Realist Viewpoint) concerns.

- Review and, if necessary, revise your report to ensure the following statement is accurate: “I have reviewed and, if necessary, revised my agent-focused CBA to ensure its conclusions (a) are no more precise than the most ambiguous beliefs or observations that provide those conclusions with crucial support and (b) do not bias those supportive beliefs or observations. If indicated, I have dialed back the exactitude and precision of my conclusions.” Include a statement to that effect in your report.

I have reviewed my agent-focused CBA to ensure its conclusions (a) are no more precise than the most ambiguous beliefs or observations that provide those conclusions with crucial support and (b) do not bias those supportive beliefs or observations.

- Include one of the two statements below (and, if indicated, your response to that statement) in your report:
 - a. “Having completed the above critique and all indicated corrective actions, I feel justified in describing my CBA of the agent’s target belief as satisfying all expected standards.”
 - b. “I am concerned that my analysis of the agent’s target belief may (a) fail to meet the following standards (*specify*), (b) those failures may have compromised my understanding of the agent’s target belief, and (c) such compromised understanding may have contributed to the following flaws in my analytic narrative” (*specify*):

Having completed the above critique, I feel justified in describing my CBA of the agent’s target belief as satisfying most, if not all, expected standards. My analysis was grounded in good social science research methodology informed by critical thinking. However, I did not have access to all of the information used by Bush and his advisors.

- Estimate the likelihood/probability the conclusions of the analyst’s agent-focused CBA are correct. Justify or explain your estimate.

Justification/Explanation: I consider it highly (85%) likely that the events described in this CBA occurred due to the factors specified. This is a subjective evaluation.

- Specify your degree of confidence that your agent-focused CBA is a “quality analytic product.” Explain your view.

Justification/Explanation: There is Moderate Confidence (on a scale of High, Moderate, or Low) that the facts and logic on which my CBA relied were credibly sourced and plausible and the analytic methodology employed was proper. I acknowledge that the information used was open to multiple interpretations and that the information and methodology were of insufficient quality to warrant a higher level of confidence. This is a subjective evaluation after reviewing the analytic process (information and methodology) used. See more below.

- Prepare caveats for the analytic narrative provoked by both the agent's self-critique and limitations in the CBA of the agent's target belief.

Because of the Likelihood and Confidence Level assessments above, the following caveat should be included in the final analytic narrative:

"The conclusions of the CBA, while considered highly Likely (85%), are only of Moderate Confidence. The reason for the Moderate Confidence rating is the uncertain accuracy of the information used in the analysis. The information used was primarily drawn from Bob Woodward's book *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq* (2004).⁵⁰ That document, while considered reliable, is nonetheless a secondary source. A more precise analysis would require the examination of primary sources such as unclassified and de-classified U.S. government records pertaining to the case, examination of such additional secondary sources and journalistic reporting from the case, and interviews with the principals involved in the decision-making process. If this were an actionable analysis (where the decision-maker was going to make policy or direct actions), its conclusions could do nothing more than provide guidance that increased decision-makers' odds of success."

3. [] Analytic Narrative

- Prepare the analytic narrative (written report, verbal briefing, etc.).

Key Concepts

Active Analysis
Agency Analysis Techniques
Analysts
Citizen Security
Corporate Security
Critical Belief Analysis (CBA)
Critical-Thinking Analysis
Elements of Thought
 Purpose
 Question(s)
 Information
 Context
 Points of View
 Assumptions
 Alternatives
 Conceptualization
 Interpretation & Inference
 Implications & Consequences
Fundamental Needs of Beliefs
 Informative
 Reassuring
Genuineness/Authenticity
Homeland Security
Information Literacy
Intelligence Analysis
National Security
Noetic Relationships
Policy Analysis
Precision/Ambiguity of Beliefs
 Precise
 Imprecise
 Rule of Thumb
 Catalytic Narrative
Psychobiography
Public Security
Respectful, Open Communication
Second-Order Precepts
Security Analysis
Security Analysis Critical-Thinking
 Framework
Security Studies
Structural Analysis Techniques
Systematic Analysis
Viewpoints of Beliefs
 Existential
 Realist
 Ethical
 Visionary
 Quest & Commitment

Endnotes

¹ Michael W. Collier, *Security Analysis: A Critical Thinking Approach*. (Richmond, KY: Eastern Kentucky University Libraries, Encompass Digital Archive, 2023), free download at <http://encompass.eku.edu/ekuopen/6/> (accessed June 1, 2023).

² Ibid, chap 6.

³ Not to be confused with Richards J. Heuer Jr. and Randolph H. Pherson's, *Structured Analytic Techniques for Intelligence Analysis*, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage/CQ Press, 2015), which provides a number of both structural and agency analytic tools.

⁴ Michael W. Collier, *Security Analysis: A Critical Thinking Approach*. (Richmond, KY: Eastern Kentucky University Libraries, Encompass Digital Archive, 2023), free download at <http://encompass.eku.edu/ekuopen/6/>. (accessed June 1, 2023).

⁵ For a deeper understanding of Critical Belief Analysis, see Barnet D. Feingold's "Barney's Place, A new look at beliefs," <http://barneysplace.net/site/> (accessed December 19, 2020).

⁶ See J.L. Uso-Domenech and J. Nescolande-Selva, "What are Belief Systems?," *Foundations of Science* Vol 21, No. 1 (2016), <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007%2Fs10699-015-9409-z.pdf> (accessed August 23, 2021).

⁷ Valerie M. Hudson, *Foreign Policy Analysis, Classic and Contemporary Theory*, 2nd ed. (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2014), 55-57.

⁸ Feingold.

⁹ Modified from A. Douglas Kincaid and Eduardo A. Gamarra, "Disorderly Democracy: Redefining Public Security in Latin America," in *Latin America in the World Economy*, ed. Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz and William C. Smith (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1996), 211-228

¹⁰ Collier, chap 2. This framework was modified from material in Richard Paul and Linda Elder, *Critical Thinking, Tools for Taking Charge of Your Professional and Personal Life*, 2nd ed. (Upper Saddle River, NY: Pearson Education, Inc., 2014), and

Gerald M. Nosich, *Learning to Think Things Through, A Guide to Critical Thinking Across the Curriculum*, 4th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall, 2011).

¹¹ The Foundation for Critical Thinking, <https://www.criticalthinking.org/> (accessed July 31, 2022).

¹² Paul and Elder, 96-97.

¹³ Nosich added Context and Alternatives to the original Elements of Thought developed by Paul and Elder. Assessing Context and Alternatives is crucial to security analyses.

¹⁴ Collier, entire book.

¹⁵ Ibid, chap 7.

¹⁶ Ibid, chap 8.

¹⁷ Ibid, chap 9.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid, chap 10.

²⁰ J. G. Draguns, "Defense Mechanisms in the Clinic, the Laboratory, and the Social World: Toward Closing the Gaps," in *Defense Mechanisms: Theoretical, Research, and Clinical Perspectives*, eds. U. Hentschel, G. Smith, J. G. Draguns, and W. Ehlers (New York: Elsevier, 2004), 55-75.

²¹ A checklist detailing this evaluation process can be found near the end of Feingold, Art. 7 and in Figure 6.4.

²² See J. Haidt, *The Happiness Hypothesis* (New York: Basic Books, 2006). B. Frederickson, *Love 2.0*. (New York: Penguin Group, 2013), and S. Johnson, *Love Sense* (New York: Little, Brown and Company, 2013).

²³ Karl Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations: The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Those who seek a further exploration of ambiguity and its implications may wish to explore <http://barneysplace.net/site/the-trouble-with-truth/> (accessed December 19, 2020).

²⁶ Bernard Lonergan, *Insight: A Study of Human Understanding* (London: Longmans, Green & Co., 1957).

²⁷ Barnet D. Feingold, “The Structure of Ultimate Love” (presentation, 123rd Annual Convention of the American Psychological Association, Toronto, Ontario, Canada, August 7, 2015).

²⁸ Jurgen Habermas, “Discourse Ethics: Notes on Philosophical Justification,” in *Moral Consciousness and Communicative Action*, J. Habermas (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1990), 43-115. A detailed description of Habermas’s thoughts can be found at <http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/habermas/> (accessed October 6, 2021).

²⁹ Gustavo Perednik, *La Judeofobia: Cómo y Cuándo Nace, Dónde y Por Qué Pervive*, (Barcelona: Flor del Viento Ediciones, 2001), 26. Also see Gustavo Perednik, “Judeophobia - Anti-Semitism, Jew-Hate and anti- “Zionism,” Zionism and Israel Information Center, posted November 2, 2017, <http://www.zionism-israel.com/his/judeophobia.htm> (accessed October 6, 2021).

³⁰ Robert Merton, “The Self-Fulfilling Prophecy,” *The Antioch Review*. 1948, 198-210.

³¹ Bernard Lewis, *What Went Wrong? The Clash Between Islam and Modernity in the Middle East* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

³² Ibid.

³³ Collier, chap 4.

³⁴ Ibid, chap 5.

³⁵ Ibid, chap 6.

³⁶ Ibid, chap 11

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Feingold, “Barney’s Place, A new look at beliefs,” art 7.

⁴⁰ Bob Woodward, *Plan of Attack, The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2004).

⁴¹ See Michael Walzer, *Just and Unjust Wars, A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations* 4th ed. (New York: Basic Books, 1977), 80-82.

⁴² Dan P. McAdams, *George W. Bush and the Redemptive Dream: A Psychological Portrait* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

⁴³ William Todd Schultz, *Handbook of Psychobiography* (Oxford UK: Oxford University Press, 2005).

⁴⁴ William Todd Schultz, "George W. Bush, a Psychobiography," *Psychology Today* blog, September 23, 2010, (<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/genius-and-madness/201009/george-w-bush-psychobiography>) (accessed July 2, 2022).

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Collier, chap 2.

⁴⁷ Bob Woodward, *Obama's Wars* (New York, NY: Simon & Schuster, 2010).

⁴⁸ Executive Office of the President, "Report of the Commission on the Intelligence Capabilities of the United States Regarding Weapons of Mass Destruction," Executive Order 13328, February 6, 2004, released to public on March 31, 2005, <https://policy.defense.gov/portals/11/Documents/hdasa/references/GPO-WMD.pdf> (accessed August 10, 2022).

⁴⁹ Bob Drogin, *Curveball: Spies, Lies, and the Con Man Who Caused a War* (New York: Random House, 2007).

⁵⁰ Woodward, *Plan of Attack: The Definitive Account of the Decision to Invade Iraq*.