

*Advancing governance reform for development results*

WORLD BANK-ANNENBERG

**Executive  
Course in  
Communication  
and Governance  
Reform**

# **Political Intelligence / Political Updates**

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# Overview

- **The role of events for the reform process**
- **Methods for gathering up-to-date political intelligence**
  - General advice from practitioners
  - The Journalistic Method
- **Group work**



# The Role of Events in the Reform Process

## Problem-Driven Political Economy Analysis

“A problem-driven approach to [Political Economy] analysis comprises working through three layers: (i) **identifying the problem**, opportunity or vulnerability to be addressed, (ii) **mapping out the institutional and governance arrangements and weaknesses**, and (iii) **drilling down to the political economy drivers**, both to identify obstacles to progressive change and to understand where a ‘drive’ for positive change could emerge from. This basic approach can be applied to analysis at country, sector, or project levels.”

*Fritz, 2009: “Problem-Driven Governance and Political Economy Analysis”*

# The Role of Events in the Reform Process

## Political Economy Analysis

- **Advantages:**
  - Thorough analysis of a country or sector and its stakeholders
  - Highly sophisticated
- **Limitations:**
  - Expensive
  - Time-intensive
  - Not responsive to day-to-day political happenings



# The Role of Events in the Reform Process



**“A week is a long time in politics”**

Harold Wilson, UK Prime Minister 1964-1970

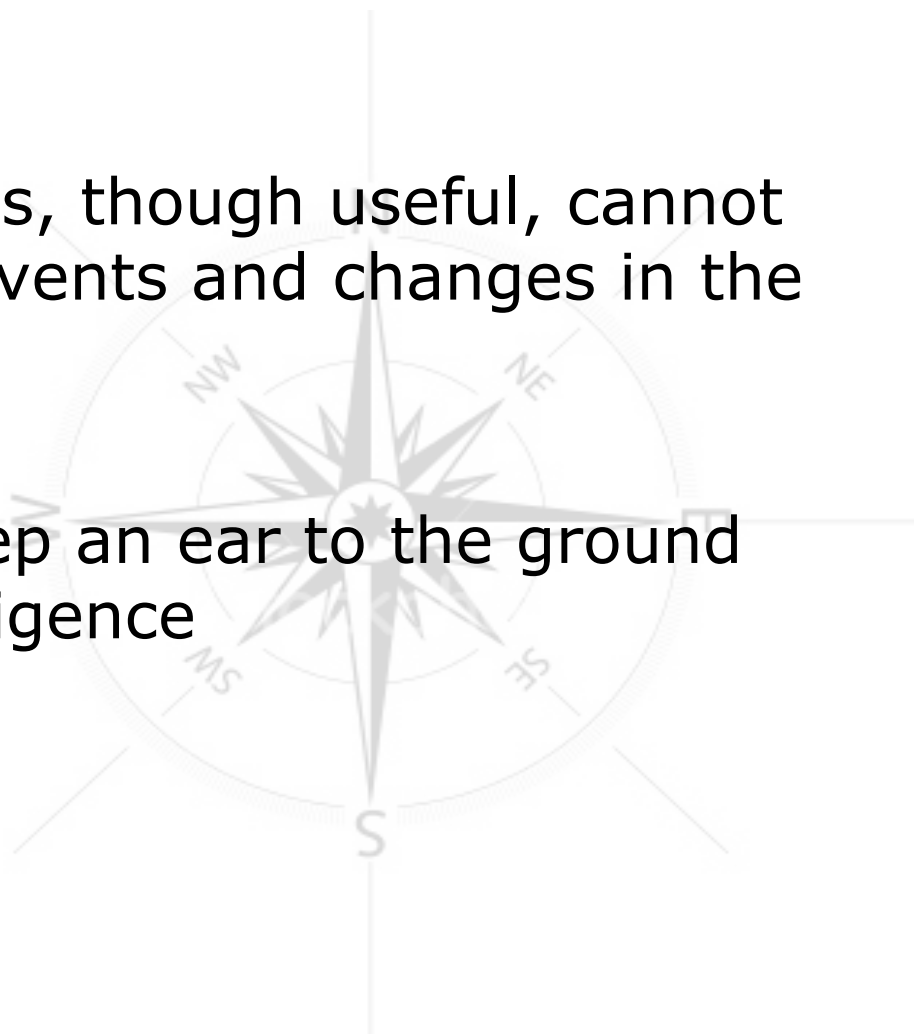
UK Prime Minister (1957-1963) Harold Macmillan when asked what is most likely to blow governments off course:

**“Events, my dear boy, events.”**



# The Role of Events in the Reform Process

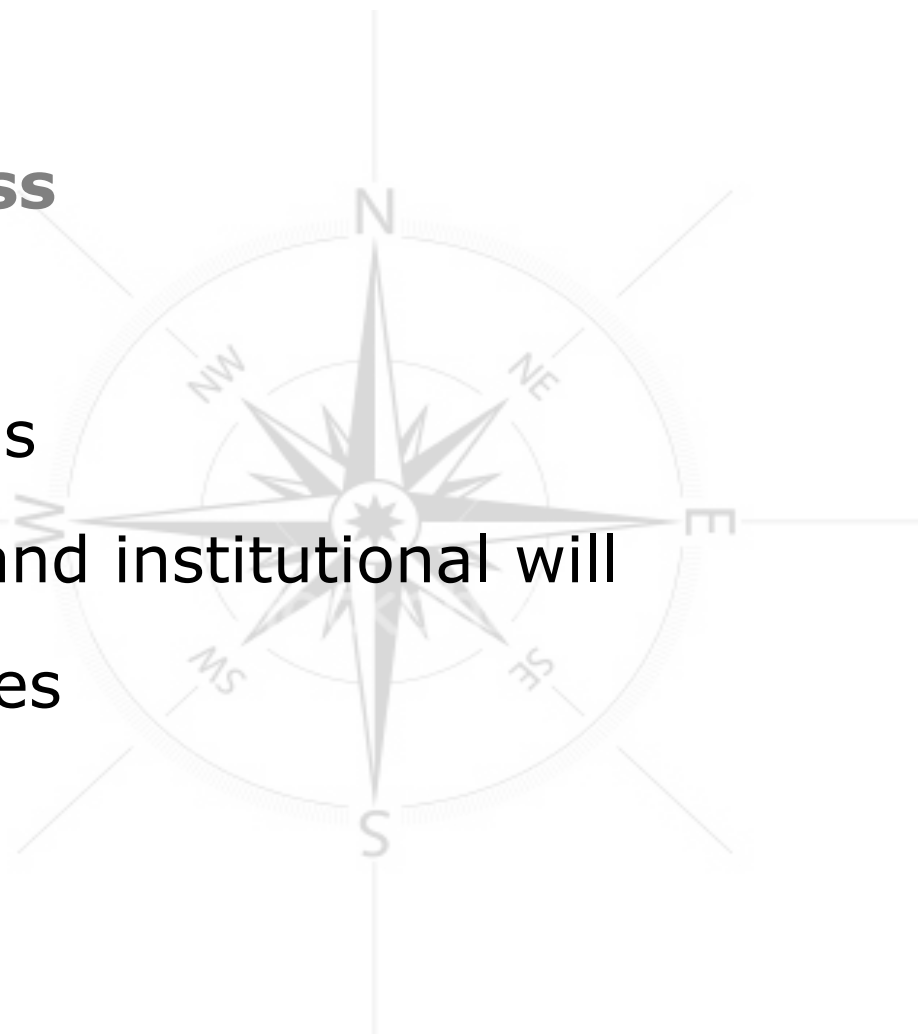
- Political Economy Analysis, though useful, cannot capture fast happening events and changes in the reform environment
- Needed: a method to keep an ear to the ground and gather political intelligence



# The Role of Events in the Reform Process

## Threats to reform success

- Lone champion problem
- Unstable reform coalitions
- Lack of political, public, and institutional will
- Changing political alliances



# Example: Multiple Reform Stakeholders Can Hinder or Support Progress

- Executive
  - Parliament
  - Independent oversight institutions
  - Electorate
  - Mass media
  - Civil society
- All impacted by fast-moving events





# Example: The Need to Understand Context

“... when ... reforms have needed to move beyond the realm of what could be implemented by a Ministry of Finance decree and required broader cabinet or parliamentary approval, they have stalled. **There are no examples of more far-reaching PFM reforms that came to fruition if the broader political context was not supportive.** Nor are there examples of where senior officials were able to isolate and protect major PFM reforms from major shifts in the broader political climate.”

Beschel & Ahern, 2012,  
Public Financial Management Reform  
in the Middle East and North Africa, p. 12/13

# Methods for Gathering Political Intelligence

## What would this method need to do?

- Provide tools to understand the constantly evolving reform environment with regard to major players and their positions
- Enable to anticipate issues and risks before they hurt the reform process

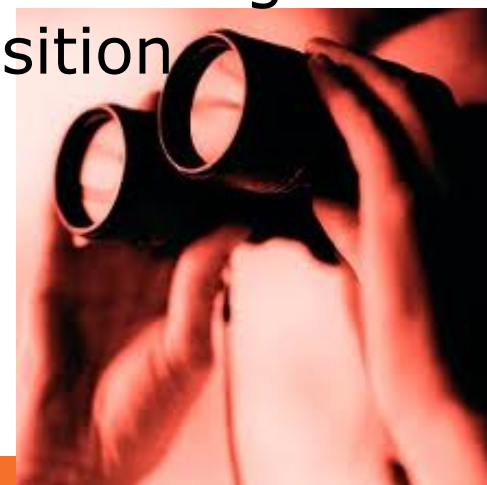
Allow

**Astute tactical maneuvering**

# Methods for Gathering Political Intelligence

## Tips from practitioners:

- Talk to political officers in embassies
- Regular lunches/dinners with top political journalists
- Cultivate individuals in the know and chat with them regularly
- Regular team meetings dedicated to discussing “political gossip” (beware team composition to check bias)
- Have a communication specialist who knows the country well and has good contacts in your team



# Methods for Gathering Political Intelligence

## Journalistic method as “quick and dirty” alternative to Political Economy Analysis

- Should be done by someone who
  - Knows the local landscape
  - Has networks and access
  - Understands which information is relevant and asks the right question of the right people
  - Can analyze and synthesize information
  - Writes well

# Journalistic Method: 4 Stages

1. Doing the analysis
2. Interpreting the findings
3. Devising a response
4. Acting on it...



# Journalistic Method: How is it Done?

## 1. Develop general questions:

- Who are the people affected by the reform?
- What is their (likely) position on it, and **why**?
- Who influences them?
- How committed are the politicians and bureaucrats implementing the reform?
- What motivates them?



## Journalistic Method: How is it Done? (contd)

- 2. Desk research:** gather background info, further specify the questions, *identify key individuals*
- 3. Field interviews** with relevant individuals, formally or informally as appropriate
- 4. First draft for comment:** any unanswered questions? Any fresh questions raised?
- 5. Return to field/desk,** plug gaps
- 6. Revise draft**



## i.e, the Method is Journalistic

- Not a form of qualitative analysis:
  - Does not use focus groups, ethnographies, in-depth interviews with typical individuals *to develop a general hypothesis*
- Nor is it opinion research
- Instead, a search for the particular:
  - Journalistic method seeks 'relevant' spokespeople and facts; *reaches a specific conclusion*
- *Dynamic, iterative*:
  - Conclusions change as information changes



# Journalistic Method: Recommended Format

- As short as possible, with references/links to resources, and annexes if needed
- News story format: the inverted pyramid
- Executive summary, with conclusions on top
- Main report:
  - Intro listing questions sought to be answered
  - Body, in sections in descending order of importance



## Journalistic Method: General Check List

- Understand the overall local context: political players, current hot issues, chronic issues, the local election cycle, etc
- Identify key individuals in the decision-making structure (political, bureaucratic, and nonofficial) and their motives
- Assess capacity and quality of the bureaucracy
- Assess commitment of the implementing agency to the operation, and its ability to relate to stakeholders
- Identify relevant civil society opinion leaders, their role, and likely responses



## Journalistic Method: General Check List (Contd.)

- Investigate presence or absence of critics and activists (local, national, and international), their arguments and likely tactics
- Assess interests of local political and power elites
- Identify project stakeholder groups, their traditional political behaviors and relationships:
  - with the state as a whole and the implementing agency in particular
  - with each other
- Assess the media environment
- Assess salience of the Bank or donor's own reputation in the specific context



# Journalistic Method: The Other 3 Steps

1. Receiving and interpreting the analysis
2. Devising a response
3. Acting on it...

These are functions of *informed reform leadership*



## Group Work

### How are decisions made and how do you find out about them?

1. Discuss how political decisions are supposed to be made in your country – and how they are **actually** made. Who are the main decision makers according to the constitution/ law? Who are the actual decision makers? Which processes are they required to go through when making political decisions? When and how are decisions really made? Give examples from your own country and compare them to the experience of your group mates.  
*(10 min)*
2. How would you set up a method for finding out what the real decision makers are thinking about and which decisions they are making?  
*(15 min)*
3. Choose one spokesperson to report back to the auditorium. Give a few examples that you gathered around the table. Summarize your group's findings.  
*(5 min)*

