UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS
CENTER FOR ADVANCED OPERATIONAL CULTURE LEARNING
EDUCATION COMMAND
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CAOCL Staff Ride Lesson Plan

DESCRIPTION

This lesson plan provides a framework that integrates perspective taking into the existing staff ride concept. Cultural mindsets are powerful influences on the decision making and actions of individuals. While invisible, they shape how individuals perceive events and their surroundings and how we respond to them. They are formed over a lifetime and evolve as our life experiences expose us to new challenges, ideas, and people. In staff rides, we are asked to analyze the battle based on the information that was available at the time. However, more often than not, the role of cultural mindsets in shaping the operating environment, the decision making and actions of leaders, and in transforming the battlespace is absent from the discussion. To ensure we equip our leaders with the skills and understanding needed to identify and use this invisible, but powerful aspect of the battlespace in operational planning and execution, this staff ride lesson plan is an intentional exercise in perspective taking.

Through this exercise, Marines learn how cultural mindsets and perceptions are powerful catalysts for action and are ripe for the exploiting–on either side–and how this understanding can help them to protect their own vulnerabilities, project their strengths, and be unpredictable to the enemy while providing them the skills and knowledge to exploit and manipulate the enemy, shape the operating environment to their advantage, and interact effectively with local populations. In this exercise, Marines are asked to adopt an identity of one of the players in a historical battle and analyze the battle through this player's eyes. The lesson plan provides students with deeper and broader questions that they can apply to their current operational challenges and the opportunity to see how these factors play out through a historical case study. This intentional and very detailed process helps to demonstrate how a comprehensive analysis of the different perspectives leads to a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics that shape the operating environment and ultimately the mission outcome.

GOALS

- To analyze a battle from multiple perspectives
- To exercise the Marine Corps problem framing and planning process using a case study, incorporating socio-cultural factors
- To explore how the broader context of the battle influences the events that take place and the individuals in the battlespace
- To evaluate the value of the staff ride experience in furthering understanding of past and present operational challenges

OBJECTIVES

1) To evaluate multiple combatants' key decisions in light of military planning, cultural mindsets, and the political and international context
2) To assess and defend a particular combatant's perspective using the Problem Framing Guide

3) To gain a deeper appreciation of the complexity of a historical battle through individual work, peer discussion and guided instruction during the staff ride
4) To link historical lessons and experiences to present-day challenges

MATERIALS

Instructor's guide for discussion

Student's Problem Framing Guide:

- Understanding the Environment: Situation Framing Matrix with companion questions to guide student analysis
- Understanding the Problem: METT-TC Analysis Matrix with companion questions to guide student analysis

Staff ride reading material

TERMS

Problem Framing

Combatant identity

METT-TC

PROCEDURE

1) Select a battle and the preparatory reading materials.
2) Assign the preparatory reading material.
3) Review the lists of questions in the "Situation Framing Matrix" and the "METT-TC Analysis Matrix," select those with most relevance to your chosen battle, and adjust the Matrices accordingly.
4) Prior to the day of the staff ride, lead a discussion with the students which results in identifying the main combatants in the battle being studied. At the end of the discussion, divide the class equally among the different combatant groups, and assign each student a "combatant identity." Note: Depending on your battle, there may be a large influence from "additional players in the battlespace" – like non-governmental or humanitarian organizations – that warrants some of the students assuming that identity.
5) Place the identified "combatant identities" into the "Situation Framing Matrix" and the "METT-TC Analysis Matrix." Pass out to students.
6) Assign students to fill out the "Situation Framing Matrix," using the accompanying questions. Have the students complete the matrix for all "combatant identities" to practice reorienting their perspective and analysis.
7) Assign students a writing exercise to be submitted on arrival the day of the staff ride. Based on the "Situation Framing Matrix," the student will write a paper of up to 1000 words summarizing his/her assigned combatant identity's perception of the overall situation preceding the battle.
8) Provide the students the "METT-TC Analysis Matrix" and accompanying questions to fill out when reading the preparatory materials and during the staff ride itself. Again, students should be encouraged to complete the matrix for all "combatant identities."
9) On the day of the staff ride (possibly on the bus ride to the location if all in the same vehicle), lead a discussion reviewing the students' understanding of the situation. This discussion should give at least one representative from each combatant identity group the opportunity to frame the problem from his/her combatant identity's perspective.

10) Remind students of their combatant identity, and encourage them to take notes from the staff ride using their "METT-TC Analysis Matrix." Students will be asked throughout the exercise to represent their combatant identity's perspective and position.
11) Guide the students through the battlefield according to the timeline and geographic locations which were significant to the outcome of the battle. Ensure that you as the instructor select significant points from each of the "combatant identities" perspectives.
12) Discuss the decisions of the battle commanders according to their combatant identity. Using the instructor's guide, guide students through discussions that assess these decisions according to the most prominent themes from the selected battle. Draw out student experience with these challenges and explore possible courses of action that mitigate negative impact on operational outcome.
13) At the end of the battlefield walk, ask students to recount what they saw and learned and assess the impact of human dynamics on the outcome of the battle.
14) Assign students a second writing exercise to be completed on their own time. Reflecting on the discussion from the class, students will write two paragraphs totaling no more than 500 words. One paragraph will address what the student learned from studying the historical battle. One paragraph will address what the student learned from the staff ride activity and its impact on their present-day duties in the military.

EVALUATION ACTIVITIES – assessment through written exercises, student participation in Staff Ride discussions, and instructor observation

1) Did the student demonstrate the act of taking on a combatant role/perspective throughout the activity?
2) Did students complete the assignment and prepare a "Situation Framing" paper?
3) Did the students utilize the "METT-TC Analysis Matrix" before and during the walk of the battlefield and incorporate socio-cultural factors into their analysis?
4) Was student discussion representative of the array of combatant identities?
5) Did students make accurate assessments of each combatant's understanding of the environment and the problem and decision-making process?
6) Did the students move their METT-TC analysis beyond the traditional military focus and include the broader, deeper questions of culture into their analysis?
7) Were the students able to identify issues from the battle that relate to their own military experience and duties, draw linkages, and explore alternative courses of action?
8) Did students complete the second writing assignment and prepare a two-paragraph assessment of the battle and staff ride activity and its impact on their present-day military duties?

Instructor Guide

1) Select your battle and preparatory reading materials.
2) In advance, craft questions for the students to discuss during the staff ride and summary discussion. Each battle will have its unique lessons that the instructor must identify. Use the Discussion Guide to inform the staff ride and summary discussion on the human dynamics at play during the battle. Ensure that each “key combatant” is represented in the discussion. Note that not all questions will be pertinent to each battle. "Current Battle" is used to identify the staff ride battle.
3) Schedule a time (either at the final stop of the staff ride or a follow-on class) to conduct the battle analysis/summary discussion.
4) Assign the preparatory reading material. Do a preliminary assessment of who the key combatants are, as mentioned in the readings. Ensure that the readings contain enough details about each combatant that the students can fill out the “Situation Framing Matrix” and the “METT-TC Analysis Matrix” effectively. (For instance, France is a key combatant in the Battle of Yorktown. If one reading focuses on the British or American forces, include another reading/resource that addresses the French perspective.)
5) Have the students in the initial preparatory discussion identify the key combatants. Keep in mind that each side can exhibit multiple identities, depending on the complexity of the situation. It is important to demonstrate to the students the complex human dynamics at play even on the "same" side and that the perceptions within a group can affect effectiveness if not accounted for.
6) Assign each student a “key combatant” identity, and explain the matrices and student exercises.
7) Explain to the students that they will be expected to represent their combatants’ position in all discussions and that they can expect to be called upon throughout.
8) On the bus ride down or once at the site if in separate vehicles, have a representative from each “key combatant” frame the problem for their combatant entity prior to starting the staff ride.

Discussion Guide

Understanding the Environment – Situation Framing Questions:

1) How does the strategic culture (threat perceptions/propensity for offense or defense/foreign influences/national history/history of relationship between the two warring parties/etc.) shape the battlespace? How do foreign influences impact the battle outcome? Use examples from the current battle. What does this mean for you as an operational or tactical leader?
2) How does the strategic culture/political vocabulary of the time shape the mindset of the individual? This takes the strategic to the tactical. How did the popular emotions of the time influence the individuals in the battle? How did they impact individual willingness to fight? Discuss any current national debates that may have impacts on current battlespaces. How do you as a leader deal with this?
3) How can politics impact battle planning and execution? How can leaders use their understanding of the political environment to shape their planning and strategies? How does the military handle the fallout from the politics? Did the military leaders in the current battle understand the political context of the battle? Did they orient their battle planning around political realities? Discuss how politics influence the planning, execution, and outcomes of the current battle. Have students provide examples from their own operational experience.
4) Describe the civilian/political and military leadership relationship for each combatant entity. How does this relationship impact the military leader's effectiveness? Using student experience with varied military forces, discuss the range of relationships they have encountered and the pros/cons or challenges of operating, training, or partnering with the different organizational types.
5) If there is a misalignment between political and military goals, how does that impact the current battle's outcome, and how would you as a military leader deal with that – what would you do?
6) How effective is the political and/or military leadership in mobilizing national resources for the war effort? What in the structure of the state and its politics explains the ability to mobilize adequate resources? How do the constitutional order and the nature of the national political system (democracy vs. authoritarian state for example) in the country affect the ability of the state to fight effectively? Why is this important? What vulnerabilities can it reveal?
7) Is religion, political ideology, or nationalism used as a tool to mobilize troops and motivate populations for the war effort in the short- and long-term? If not, how did political and military leaders mobilize the troops and the population? Discuss each combatant's perspective. Why is this important? What effect does it have on individual combatants? unit cohesion? in framing a concept of enemy? in gaining external support? How does this affect individuals, communities, and nations after hostilities are over? You are warfighters. What tools are used today to motivate warfighters and the population? Discuss the impact.
8) What was the genesis (factors) of the assumptions? How do these factors limit the warfighter's range of available options? How do warfighters ensure that the factors do not blind them? Were the assumptions of your combatant entity validated during the course of the battle? Explain.

Understanding the Problem – METT-TC Analysis Questions:

Mission:

1) Did the combatant leaders understand the mission? Did the troops? Was it correctly scoped? Is it aligned at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels?
2) What is the relationship between mission strategy and political context?
3) Are the rules of engagement for the mission congruent or discordant with the mission's tactical, operational, and strategic levels?
4) What was the center of gravity? In the current battle, did either side recognize their enemy's or their own? Why is this important? Particularly why is it important to understand the other's perception of what is the center of gravity?
5) Have the students reflect on how analyzing the broader situational context in advance influenced how they approached the METT-TC and planning processes and how it changed their evaluation of leader decision making.

Enemy and Troops - Combatant Entity Leadership:

1) Who were the key leaders of each combatant entity? What was their leadership style, and how did that impact the operational outcome? How did their cultural (both individual and organizational) background and affiliations shape this? What was influencing their decision-making processes?
2) How effective were they in carrying out the mission? Was commander's intent clearly articulated? How did the organizational culture impact the leaders' effectiveness in carrying out his plans? How cohesive was the chain of command? Were personal biases at play? Discuss impacts on operational effectiveness.
3) Have the students think about their own leadership style and what are the sources of it and influences on it. How do their cultural (both individual and organizational) background and affiliations shape their leadership style? Why is this important? Two reasons:
    a. One is to know oneself (both individually and organizationally) to better understand what is shaping your actions. Personal biases can have severe impacts on mission accomplishment. Organizational culture and structure also can impact your ability to carry out a mission, and you need to know how to work within the culture to minimize the negative impacts.
    b. The second is to know that others are studying you and can begin to anticipate your actions by understanding your mindset, exposing you to potential manipulation.

Enemy and Troops - Concept of Enemy:

1) There is power in a label. How does labeling someone or a group "the enemy" shape how you approach them?
2) What message are you sending when you use this label? How might using the label "enemy" create problems for you – (possibilities: potential for mislabeling and over-labeling, potential of alienating partners if you use the label to describe their family or friends)?
3) Is there ever a chance to have an "enemy among us" – not an infiltrator, but someone or a group of people who is perceived as "alien" or an "enemy" even though they wear the same uniform?

4) What happens when the concept of enemy changes, when your "enemy" is no longer your enemy but rather your partner? How do you help your subordinates change their perception of the "enemy" and come together as a team?
5) How can these types of situations affect unit cohesion and team effectiveness? What can you as a leader do to mitigate the impact? Discuss examples from the current battle.

Enemy and Troops – Individual and Unit/Group Identity:

1) How do cultural values and identity affect willingness and motivations to fight? How do they affect the mindset of the members of the combatant entities? How does unit/group formation impact motivation to fight?
2) What is unit/team cohesion? How does it play out in the current battle? Were the leaders effective in creating united teams? What were some lessons learned? Some potential considerations for different organizational make-ups:
    a. If this is an international coalition, how did the relationship between the junior and senior partners in a coalition affect effectiveness and unit cohesion? How did each component's perception of the other affect unit cohesion? How did the different militaries' warfighting doctrine, military cultures, leadership styles, deployment strategies, motivations to fight and national perceptions and mindsets impact the mission? What other challenges did the coalition partners have to overcome, and how did they do it? What is the history between the two partners? How does that impact operational effectiveness? What can you as a leader learn about the challenges of each party in a coalition from this battle? Discuss students' experiences serving in a coalition. What were some of the challenges? How did they perceive their partners and how did that affect unit cohesion and motivation to fight?
    b. If this is a coalition of professional militaries and militias, how did the differences in leadership, organization, motivation to fight, and deployment strategies challenge the historical leaders' effectiveness? What lessons can you learn?
    c. If this is a coalition that involves private entities (mercenaries/contractors), what unique challenges did the professional military leader face? How do private entities approach warfare? What are their motivations to fight? How do you exploit their contribution without exposing a potential vulnerability?
    d. If this is a blended military of regulars, volunteers, and conscripts, what unique challenges did the leaders face? Were there different motivations to fight or different fighting styles? Were there biases present that impacted effectiveness? How do you as a leader protect against that?
3) Some individual differences cannot be overcome or overlooked and can have a serious impact on your effectiveness as a leader and as a unit/team. What are some of these differences (religious, state/regional/national affiliation/skin color/ethnicity, etc)? Is this a problem in the current battle? If so, what did leadership do? How do you as a leader overcome the biases within your organization to produce a unified fighting team?
4) Drawing on student experience and the current battle, discuss how you create unit/team cohesion and extend it upward/downward/laterally?

Terrain and Time:

1) Concepts of time can differ greatly across cultures and have significant impacts on perceptions of self and others, events, and life. How did perception of time affect the current battle?

⇒ *For example, the Maori believe that that past is in front of you and the future is behind you, which is very different from how Marines perceive time. Both perceptions of time are valid; however, lack of understanding and appreciation for the differences can greatly undermine effectiveness.*

2) When planning in a foreign environment, having a keen awareness of the timings of local activities (e.g. market day, ceremonies, transportation schedules, etc) will minimize unintended interruptions to your plans. Drawing on the current battle and operational experience, discuss.
3) Understanding the value that the adversary, other players in the operating environment, or the local population place on natural and constructed landmarks can help inform how you approach them. It all depends on what message you want to send and to whom. How did this play out in the current battle? Drawing on the Marines' experiences, have them discuss how their approach to landmarks shaped their mission's outcome.

<u>Civil Considerations</u>:

1) How do local/civil considerations impact battle planning, execution, and outcome? What kinds of things did the combatant entities have to take into consideration when planning the current battle? How impactful was the local population in determining the outcome?
2) How do the additional players in the battlespace shape the operating environment? How did combatant leaders interact with them? What lessons can you draw from that? How do the different organizational perspectives and motivations challenge/help you as a military leader? When you are crafting a plan, what, if anything, must you consider with regard to these additional players? How can they be useful to you? Drawing from the current battle and personal experience, have the students discuss how these additional players have impacted operational outcomes.
3) What could they count on with regard to local support (nothing is an acceptable answer)? How did the combatant entities gain/maintain support of the locals? How did they approach it? How effective were they? What would you have done?
4) What in the local area could be used/exploited to advance mission? Did the combatant leaders take advantage of these resources? What would you have done? Have students provide examples from their own experiences.
5) What means are available to influence the local population? How do you determine which will be most effective? You need to think of second order effects of such actions. Assess the combatant leaders' effectiveness with the local population.

Battle Analysis:

1) <u>Looking again at the METT-TC Analysis</u>:
    a. Were the combatant leaders able to effectively develop a plan and execute it? Why or why not?
    b. Was commander's intent clear and was the plan of action communicated effectively? Were there significant differences at different levels of leadership? Were the combatant leaders able to accurately anticipate their enemy's most probable courses of action?
    c. Did they understand the enemy's and their own strengths and vulnerabilities?
    d. Did Admin and Logistics positively or negatively affect the outcome?
    e. How was Command and Control executed and was it effective?
    f. What were the significant cultural factors shaping this operating environment?

g. What lessons can be drawn from the current battle? Have you experienced similar situations? Please explain.

2) Observe, Orient, Decide, and Act (OODA)-Maintaining the Competitive Advantage: Which combatant leader "OODA'd" better? Explain.
3) Principles of War: How effectively did each combatant leader follow the Principles of War? Is there an expectation that all warring parties will follow these? What happens when you don't share a common understanding of the Principles of War with your enemy? What are some key lessons from this battle? If there were challenges, what got in the way? What have been some of your experiences with carrying out the Principles of War?
4) Concept of Warfighting: Do you and your enemy share an understanding of warfighting? What is a battle? How is a battlespace defined? Why is that important? How are battles fought? What happens when your enemy does not share a common understanding of warfighting? How does your understanding influence how you perceive your enemy's concept of warfighting and decision-making? How does this impact your effectiveness?
5) Concept of Battle: What did "battle" mean to the forces in the current battle? If they won the battle, did they win the war? If not, what impact could that have on the forces' motivation to fight? Is this concern still relevant today? When is a war over? How does the ambiguity of the "end" affect morale and motivation to fight? What does this mean for you as a leader? What happens when your enemy does not share a common understanding of battle? How does your understanding influence how you perceive your enemy's concept of battle? How does this impact your effectiveness?
6) Organizational Culture: What is organizational culture? Describe the organizational culture of the current battle's forces. How does their organizational culture explain the decisions made by the leaders? How does their organizational culture inhibit or help them? How does their organization adapt to change? What is your organizational culture? How does your organizational culture shape your decision making? Your concepts of warfighting? Your concepts of battle? Your assumptions? Your available courses of action? Your perception of your enemy? Your understanding of the battlespace? How does this impact your effectiveness?
7) Problematic Leaders: What do you do if there is a bad/problematic leader? What did the leaders in the current battle do? What about their staff? Why do you think they chose to do what they did? How did the organizational culture impact their ability to appropriately manage their team or raise/address a problem? What was the outcome? What kinds of results do not reporting a problem or promoting without merit yield? What is your responsibility as a leader, as a staff? Is there anything that you can do? Is there anything you should do?
8) Initiative and Innovation: What innovations or initiative were encouraged or stifled? What factors allowed or blocked them? Were the organizations open to innovation/initiative? How do we treat innovation and initiative in the battlespace? How does your organization perceive innovation? How do you as a leader identify and mitigate the impact of potential obstacles to your desired level of innovation/initiative within your team?
9) Values: What are some examples of courage from the current battle? Why do we emphasize stories of courage? What do these reveal about USMC culture? By studying other militaries and cultures, we can learn similar lessons. Have students discuss what some of the other militaries with which they have worked value and why it is important to understand these things. Also, how do the values of the organization shape individual decision making? Were there other decisions that could have been made that were not because they were contrary to values? How

does your organization's and your personal values shape how you view and evaluate your enemy's courses of action and decisions? How does this impact your effectiveness?

10) Importance of Mindset: We spent a lot of time identifying mindset, perceptions, narratives, values, and information flow for each "key combatant." Why is this important? Drawing from the current battle and your own experiences, discuss how this understanding affects operational planning and execution.
11) Influencing People: Influencing people – whether locals, enemies, or others – requires effective communication. Effective communication (both oral and visual) involves both content and delivery. To ensure your message influences in the intended way, you must understand how to craft your message with effective content and to identify how your recipient receives information – bottom line: you must know your target audience.
    a. Target audience: who are they? Did the combatant leaders know their audience? What did they need to know?
    b. Sources of information: Where did the leaders find their information about the local population or the other combatant identities and how did they use it? Did they explore all possible sources of information? Did they miss something? Where do you look for messages?
    c. Content of messages: What were the messages saying? How do you exploit the means of communicating ideas and the messages in the area and glean the necessary information to advance your mission?
    d. Delivery of messages: How did the local population and the other combatants deliver messages? What means did they use? Were these means exploited?

    Keep in mind this is not a skill reserved for IO specialists. Everyone sends messages. As a leader, you constantly are sending messages to your Marines under your command, your partners, and your leaders, as well as to those external to your forces. Knowing where they are coming from–their perspectives, cultural background, narratives, and mindsets–will help you frame your messages more impactfully. Also, it is critical to understand how people pass information so that you know where to look for it and how to interpret what it says in order to understand, anticipate, and shape behavior. Have students think of examples from their experience or study.
    - ⇒ *Positive example: Washington circulating rumors about the New York attack via his forces because he knew they would spread it (lead up to Yorktown 1781).*
    - ⇒ *Negative example: Lee's Proclamation to the People of Maryland in run-up to Sharpsburg/Antietam, as local population was not sympathetic to the cause. You could discuss what he could have done to get the intended result. What language could he have used? Would a different delivery means have been more effective?*
12) Ethics and Law: What are the ethical or legal questions that affect the battle's outcome? What challenges do they present? Do the combatant entities in the current battle share a common understanding of ethics and law? Explain and discuss impact on battle outcome. Some potential discussion points: What are the challenges when you and your adversaries do not share a common understanding of ethics and law? How do you prepare your Marines to follow the laws of war when adversaries do not? How do you as a leader handle "unwritten" rules?
13) Lessons Learned: Examining the battle to determine what went wrong can yield good lessons and help identify areas for improvement. Did the leaders of the battle conduct (formally or informally) this type of analysis? What questions did they ask? Where did they focus their attention? Were there political motivations or personal biases at play? What lessons can be drawn from how they conducted the analysis?

Staff Ride Analysis:

1) This exercise was intentionally detailed, asking for far more information and analysis than a Marine will typically have time to produce prior to deployment. It was to demonstrate how much effort is needed to understand the human complexities of war and conflict. There is no standard answer, and no one source can provide you all the information you need. What do you do, then, when you are operating with incomplete or imperfect information, which will be the norm? What are some strategies you can employ to maximize your effectiveness despite limited or inaccurate information?
2) How did studying this battle from the various perspectives deepen your understanding of the battle and battle outcome?
3) How did defending the battle from a particular combatant identity's perspective shape how you perceived events? Were you surprised at your reaction?
4) Was assuming an identity an effective way to demonstrate the power of perception?
5) What keys lessons did you learn?

Understanding the Environment:
Situation Framing Matrix

KEY COMBATANTS

	Player 1	Player 2	Player 3	Player X	Local Population
Key international/national events shaping environment					
Causes of conflict/motivation to fight					
Narratives and ideological frameworks					
National/strategic mindset and identity					
Political and military goals alignment					
Capacity to mobilize resources and capabilities					
International influences					
Preceding events/battle lead up					
Key assumptions					

Student Exercise: Fill out the matrix for each identified player from that player's perspective, using the linked questions as a guide. Write a paper detailing your assigned identity's perception of the situation prior to the battle that is discussed in the staff ride.
Length: 1000 words

Key Combatants	
	Please identify the key combatants and place them in the matrix.
Key international/national events shaping environment	
	Questions to consider:
	What are the key political, strategic, historical, military, and social events shaping the environment?
	What is the national political climate?
	How do these shape the operating environment?
Causes of conflict/motivation to fight	
	Questions to consider:
	Why is this group fighting?
	What are the root causes (e.g. political, social, environmental, economic, ideological, religious, values/identity-driven) of the conflict?
	What issues are so fundamental that this group is willing to suffer for them?
Narratives and ideological frameworks	
	Questions to consider:
	What are this warring party's current national/strategic narratives?
	Is there a national/strategic ideological framework guiding them?
	Does the state/governing entity effectively employ its ideological framework to mobilize its population and the armed forces and to sustain the conflict in the long run?
	How do they justify their position? What language/vocabulary are they using to explain their position?
	Where is the national/strategic dialogue occurring?
	How are ideas transmitted/received?
	What are the channels of information dissemination at the national/strategic level?
National/strategic mindset and identity	
	Questions to consider:
	What is the national or collective identity of the group?
	What are the national core values that shape the operating environment?
	What are the national/strategic threat perceptions?
	Does the state/governing entity have a preference for defense or offense?
	How does this group view opposing warring parties?

	How do they view themselves?
	How do they view their partners?
Level of alignment between political and military goals	
	Questions to consider:
	Who ultimately controls the armed forces (armed militants) and to what degree?
	What is the level of alignment between the political and miltiary goals?
	How effective is military leadership in translating the national political objectives into effective military goals?
Capacity to mobilize resources and capabilities	
	Questions to consider:
	What national resources (funding, personnel, infrastructure, equipment, etc.) are available?
	What is the national/strategic level capacity to mobilize resources for the war effort?
	Does the state/governing entity possess effective institutions to mobilize economic and military capacity and manpower for the war effort?
	What tools does the state/governing entity employ to mobilize resources and capabilities?
International influences	
	Questions to consider:
	At the national/strategic level, to what extent do foreign countries support diplomatically and economically the efforts of the warring government/governing entity?
	Does the state/governing entity rely on foreign allies for support/assistance? If so, in what form does it come?
	Are there foreign actors in the conflict? If so, why are they there? What are they hoping to gain? What is in it for them?
Preceding events/battle lead up	
	Questions to consider:
	On the operational and tactical level, how did we get here?
	What are the preceding events leading up to this particular encounter?
Key assumptions	
	Questions to consider:
	What are the key assumptions held by your combatant entity?
	Why were they adopted?

Understanding the Problem: METT-TC Analysis Matrix

	KEY COMBATANTS				
	Player 1	Player 2	Player 3	Player X	Local Population
Mission					
Enemy					
- Composition					
- Disposition					
- Strength					
Troops and Support Available					
- Composition					

- Disposition					
- Strength					
Terrain and Weather					
Time					
Civil Considerations					

Student Exercise: As you prepare for and during the staff ride, fill out the matrix for each identified player from that player's perspective, using the linked questions as a guide. You will be expected to represent your assigned identity during the staff ride and the summary discussion. Upon return from the staff ride, prepare a paragraph detailing two lessons learned, one about what you learned from the battle and one about what you learned from conducting this staff ride.

Length: 500 words

Taking the perspective of the "key combatant" you were assigned by the instructor, please fill out the METT-TC Analysis Matrix. The questions below are to serve as a guide. Not all will apply to the current battle, but they will help frame your analysis.

Mission		
		Questions to consider:
		How does your previous analysis of the sitution shape your analysis of your mission?
		Reflecting on this, what is your combatant entity here to do?
Enemy		
		Questions to consider:
		Who is considered your combatant entity's enemy? Why?
		Are there any allies of whom this entity is suspicious? Why?
- Composition		
		Questions to consider:
		Combatant entities, whether individuals, temporary/small groups, or formal military structures, have **cultural** identities of their own and understanding that of your adversary and your own combatant entity faciliates understanding the decision making processes of both.
		What is the purpose/role of your adversary? What was it formed to accomplish?
		What are the formative documents, legends, traditions and ways of action that shape the cultural values and identity of your adversary? Answer the question: What are the characteristics of an ideal member of this group/organization?
		Values: what are the values regarding honor, just war, surrender, and POWs/interrogation?
		Identify the type(s) of **organizational/military** structure(s) employed. Is it a centralized or decentralized power structure? What are the power/authority structures and on what are these based? How does the structure shape the organizational culture and decision making process?
		Identify the demographic make-up of your adversary's forces. What levels and parts of society are sources for forces? How might demographic identity affect the current battle?
		Are there **internal divisions**? If so, what are they based on? How do the various groups within the organizational/military structure differ?
		How does an individual's affiliation to a particular demographic group or group within the organizational/military structure affect motivation to fight?
		How do the military structure, demographics, and internal divisions influence how individual members perceive their national and miltiary history? The groups within the organizational/military structure to which they affiliate? Other groups within the organizational/military structure? What are the perceptions and opinions of the differing groups about each other? How do they interact?
		Who are the key leaders? To which demographic or internal group do they affiliate? How does this shape their decision making?

		Foreign/external support: are there any foreign or external influences supporting them? If so, how and what is the impact?
		Local population: how do they relate to the local population and vice versa? What ties/interests do they have there? What is the impact of that?
- Disposition		
		Questions to consider:
		Identify geographical location of units/cells/groups, equipment, and logistics infrastructure.
		Identify tactical deployments.
		Identify unit/cell/group movements.
- Strength		
		Questions to consider:
		Person net: who is there? How many? And what type? What functionalities do they have based on the people present?
		Weapons and equipment: what is in the battle space? Are there different weapons/equipment that have been created but are not being employed? How does the equipment and technology shape battle tactics?
		Readiness: how **ready** are they? Identify strengths/vulnerabilities.
		Unit Cohesion: provide your assessment of your adversary. Based on what you know, are there any potential vulnerabilities to exploit? How would you go about doing that?
		Logistics train: where are the key logistics centers? By what means do they move equipment/people? Identify strengths/weaknesses.
		Finances: what is the status of their finances? What are the sources? What are the indicators of their financial situation?
Troops and Support Available		
- Composition		
		Questions to consider:
		Combatant entities, whether individuals, temporary/small groups, or formal military structures, have **cultural** values and identities of their own and understanding that of your adversary and your own combatant entity faciliates understanding the decision making processes of both.
		What is the purpose/role of your forces and support assets? What were they formed to accomplish?
		What are the formative documents, legends, traditions and ways of action that shape the culture? Answer the question: What are the characteristics of an ideal member of this group/organization?
		Values: what are the values regarding honor, just war, surrender, and POWs/interrogation?

		Identify the type(s) of **organizational/military** structure(s) employed. Is it a centralized or decentralized power structure? What are the power/authority structures and on what are these based? How does the structure shape the organizational culture and decision making process?
		Identify the demographic make-up of the your forces and support assets. What levels and parts of society are sources for forces? How might demographic identity affect the current battle?
		Are there **internal divisions**? If so, on what are they based? How do the various groups within the organizational/military structure differ?
		How does an individual's affiliation to a particular demographic group or group within the organizational/military structure affect motivation to fight?
		How do the organizational/military structure, demographics, and internal divisions influence how individual members perceive their national and miltiary history? The groups within the organizational/military structure to which they affiliate? Other groups within the organizational/military structure? What are the perceptions and opinions of the differing groups about each other? How do they interact?
		Who are the key leaders? To which demographic or internal group do they affiliate? How does this shape their decision making?
		Foreign/external support: are there any foreign or external influences supporting them? If so, how and what is the impact?
		Local population: how do they relate to the local population and vice versa? What ties/interests do they have there? What is the impact of that?
- Disposition		
		Questions to consider:
		Identify geographical location of units/cells/groups, equipment, and logistics infrastructure.
		Identify tactical deployments.
		Identify unit/cell/group movements.
- Strength		
		Questions to consider:
		Person net: who is there? How many? And what type? What functionalities do they have based on the people present?
		Weapons and equipment: what is in the battle space? Are there different weapons/equipment that have been created but are not being employed? How do the equipment and technology shape battle tactics?
		Readiness: how **ready** are they? Identify strengths/vulnerabilities.
		Unit Cohesion: provide your assessment of your forces and support assets. Based on what you know, are there any potential vulnerabilities to protect? How would you go about doing that?
		Logistics train: where are the key logistics centers? By what means do they move equipment/people? Identify strengths/weaknesses.
		Finances: what is the status of their finances? What are the sources? What are the indicators of their financial situation?

Terrain and Weather		
		Questions to consider:
		Fields of fire and cover/concealment considerations: what are the fields of fire? Where can you see? Where can the enemy see? Are there any obstacles? Natural protection?
		Avenues of approach: based on present obstacles, what routes can be used to move people and equipment? What routes present the most protection from enemy fire? Consider all potential approaches, to include subterranean and overhead.
		Key terrain: what are the key physical markers in the battlespace? Are any of them cultural symbols or of cultural significance?
		Weather: what are the weather conditions? How does climate influence attitudes and capabilities for combat? What is the relationship between climate and season, on the one hand, and battle rhythm and operational tempo, on the other?
Time		
		Questions to consider:
		How much time do you need/have for training and preparation? When do you plan training and preparation? Are there any factors (market day, holidays, religious practices, etc.) that you need to consider when developing your plan?
		Time for execution: when is the best time to execute your mission? Are there any factors (market day, holidays, religious practices, etc.) that you need to consider when developing your plan to execute?
		Is timing of decisions/actions a key factor to mission accomplishment?
		Are there any factors (transport schedules, local ceremonies/rituals, market day, etc.) in the local environment that could disrupt your timing?
		How is time perceived (linearly, cyclicly, or in some other way entirely) by your combatant entity? By your partners? By your enemy? By the local populations? And how did this impact the battle?
Civil Considerations		
		Questions to consider:
- Additional players in the battle space		
		What other organizations are present in the battlespace (e.g. civilian government bodies, non-governmental organizations, militaries, humanitarian groups, etc)? From where do they come? What is the nature of their affiliation (e.g. religion, nationality, mission-focused, etc.)? What is their mission? What motivates them to be there?

		How do they perceive your combatant identity? Are they authorized to work with your combatant identity? How do you perceive them? What is your perception of their level of competence? How does their mission and work complicate/support your mission? What can you leverage from them? What level of trust do you have in them?
- Additional Threats		
		Additional combatants: who else besides the identified combatants might be a threat? How do they perceive themselves, the other combatant entities, and the locals? What motivates them to fight? How do they identify and organize themselves? How is decision making organized? Do they come from within the local population? Which part? What messages are they sending to the locals and the combatant entities and how?
		Regional instability: what else is going on in the broader region that could be affecting the local area? What is the source of instability – economic, political, ethnic, historical?
		Spread of disease: What are the potential disease threats in the local area?
- Local Population		
	Cultural Narratives and Belief Systems	
		How do people within the local population identify/categorize themselves? What are the distinguishing identity factors?
		What are each group's perceptions of self and other? Of their place in the region/world? Of their neighbors? Of self as a combatant as an individual and a member of a particular combatant entity? What are the biases of each group?
		For each group identified, answer the question: What does it mean to be a good [insert group name] here within the local area?
		How have identity and affiliation been mobilized to create conflict in the past?
		What are the pivotal historical stories, folktales, and proverbs that all people in the community share? How do different groups in the area of operations give different significance to the same historical stories, folktales, and proverbs? How are these used to emphasize or teach important values and ideals? How are they used to support propaganda?
		What are the core values of each group? Their ideals? Who are the local heroes/villians and what important positive/negative qualities do they have? Does the local population equate a particular combatant entity to either the local heroes or villians?
		What physical **symbols** indicate membership or status within a particular group within the region? What written or physical symbols are important to be able to recognize in order to navigate and understand what is happening in the region?
		What are each group's rituals or ceremonies? What are the important behaviors and actions associated with them?

		What are the prevalent norms within the society? What underlying allegiances or codes of honor could influence the success of an operation? What activities in the area are considered serious violations of social mores? What local beliefs/assumptions exist about you?
		What are the religious beliefs/practices in the operating environment? Who are the leaders? What is that authority based on? How does religion impact the daily lives of the population? What conflicts exist between various religious expressions (both formal and informal)? How prominent is religion as an explanatory factor for people in current events and in reference to history or historical trajectories?
		What are the **customs and practices** of each group ? What non-verbal behaviors may be misinterpreted by the local people and which ones are important to understand in meetings and negotiations? How do diet, clothing, and dwellings affect customs?
	Communication	
		How does the community communicate ideas? What messages are being sent? How are they crafted and delivered? What are the tools for information dissemination? Who is your target audience? See also the third block of questions of Cultural Narratives and Belief Systems.
		What are the **channels** of information flow? How do formal channels compete with and draw upon informal channels?
		Which informational sources do people trust/distrust? How do traditional information sources interact with new ones?
		What are the external media sources? Local/national sources? What is the historical role of media in the area?
		What are the most influential information outlets in the area? Who are the most influential opinion-makers in the area? Transnational figures?
	Economy	
		What are the essential drivers of the local economy (i.e. agriculture, industry)? What are the economic rhythms of the community (migration seasons, planting/harvesting, market day, work hours)? What are the important features of the environment that determine the economy?
		What kinds of industry generate jobs and wealth? Are they publicly or privately owned? Is there a disparity or tension between the owners/managers and the workers?
		Which economic activities are formal (recognized and controlled by the government) and which are informal? Where are the black markets, and what is traded? What goods and services are provided by the gray market? Who are the influential players in the black/gray markets? What is the relationship between the formal and informal economies and the informal economy and unregulated movement of people, crime, and violence? Do the locals use formal or informal banks? How does the formal economy rely upon the informal economy, and what abuses on the population does this cause? What opportunities exist for the population based on the formal economy's relationship with informal economic practices?

		What are the rules, customs, and patterns of the local marketplace? How are important goods and services obtained? What is considered an “illegal” good or service and on what basis? What goods/services are legal but culturally frowned upon? What is the unit of exchange for goods and services?
		How is wealth measured and distributed? What are the local economic status symbols? What is the socioeconomic structure (i.e. unions, management class, economic elite, working class, lower class)? Are there connections between sub-cultural groups and certain occupations? Are there economic roles for men and women? How are land, water, and access to certain good and resources concentrated in the hands of certain groups?
		What are the economic factors that fuel conflict?
	Social Organizations and Networks	
		What are the significant groups, sub-groups, and networks? How do they interact with one another? How do they **organize** themselves? What roles do social, professional, religious, and political networks play in the society? What is the relationship between particular ethnic groups and control of professions or positions of formal and informal power? Do groups barred from these positions of power challenge the system? If so, how?
		What are the political parties/factions? Which is dominant/subordinate?
		What are the primary education organizations, and what influences their teaching? Who has access to schools?
		What are the roles and status of children, the elderly, men, and women in the society? Is there an age grading system that stratifies people according to age and stage in life? If so, what rights, roles, ceremonies, and duties do people have at each stage?
		What roles do women play in local militaries and insurgencies? Do they engage in armed combat? What are their “behind the scenes” roles?
		How is **class** defined? What are the privileges of members of the upper class? How is access to essential resources for survival determined by class? What is the reality of upward mobility in the local class system, and what is the local perception about the possibility of upward mobility?
		How much flexibility and interaction are there between differing groups?
		What markers of social group or status matter in the local culture? What is the importance of ID cards, licenses, and other official documents?
	Political Structures and Power	
		How is decision-making organized, and who gets to do it? What are the formal and informal centers of authority, and what are the relationships between them? Which centers of authority determine or set the norms and rules for behavior and social interaction?
		Who are the formal and informal leaders, and what is their relationship? How is leadership obtained? What are the symbolic indications of leadership? Who really has the final say? How possible do group leaders think it is to challenge the system?

		What are the important characteristics that determine one's position and power within the community? Which groups are more powerful than others? How stable is this power structure? What is the degree of polarization in the region with respect to the various cultural identities?
		What are the laws? How do the people obey the laws? What are the varying perceptions of official laws? How are formal and informal laws and rules enforced and by whom?
		Do the people perceive the government as legitimate and effective? How do they view the military and police structures of the state?
	Environment	
		What are the beliefs about natural resources? Can they be owned? If so, does that offer exclusive rights? What do locals believe causes changes in availability of natural resources? Which person or group has the right to allow outsiders access to resources?
		What are the local beliefs about weather and seasons? Are changes in weather/seasons linked to social behavior or religion? What are the rituals associated with changing weather or seasons? Do people stay in place all year or are there patterns of movement, residence, rituals, etc related to environmental changes?
		How are water and land used and controlled? Do water, land, or food have symbolic or ritual significance? What are the local staple foods, and what is required to grow, prepare, and serve them? What foods are served by whom – to indicate status of server or guest? What foods are strategic commodities, inasmuch as controlling access to them influences one's coercive or political power?
		How do structures fit the geographic, climatic, and physical aspects of the environment? What do the internal and external appearances and materials used in structures communicate about building purposes, occupant status, etc? What materials for building, repair, and maintenance are local?
		What are the locally found/produced sources of power and fuel? What is the relationship between local elites and access to/provision of fuel/power? How does the larger government authority provide or control access to power? What are the local workarounds for shortages?
		What is the relationship between the political map's national/regional boundaries and what locals see as the boundaries in political, economic, genealogical, and security terms?
	Affiliation	
		Identify with which "combatant entities" the particular groups within the local population most closely align.

See below for further information for the **bolded text** above:	
Cultural	Definition of culture is (in the context of operational planning)is an intricate set of dynamic and interconnected social, historical, political, and environmental factors that shape the perceptions, motives, intent, and behavior of people and groups living and operating in the battle-space.
Organizational/ Military Structures	Potential military structures to consider are conventional, irregular, coalition, voluteer, conscript, regular, a combination of these.
Internal Divisions	Potential sources of internal divisions are functionality/job, geographic, religious, ethnic, linguistic, tribal, gender, economic status/class, national affiliation, regular, volunteer, conscript - or a combination of these.
Readiness (Ready)	Some areas to consider are the following: What is the level of readiness of each unit/cell/group/overall? How much training have they received? What is the level of combat experience of each unit/cell/group/overall? What is the physical and mental health status of each unit/cell/group/overall? What is the level of morale?
Symbols	Physical symbols could be religious, ethnic, political, organizational, etc. and could be in the form of graffiti, signs, art, spirit markers, fences, etc.
Customs and Practices	Some examples include greetings, visiting/hospitality, manners, displays of affection, gifts/taboos, concept of time, personal space, dispute resolution, naming conventions, work week/hours, cultural do's/don'ts.
Channels of Information Flow	Some ideas include mass media, independent/small-scale media, letters, Friday night prayers, posters, truck painting, social networks, poetry festivals, etc.
Social Organization (Organize)	Some possibilities include kinship, ethnicity, politics, religion, economics, profession, or a combination.
Class	Some possibilities include basis of wealth, education, region of origin, inheritance, or familial connection.