RAND

Tool

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# Tactical Will to Fight Assessment Guide

## A How-To Manual for Conducting Tactical Will to Fight Assessments

For more information on this publication, visit **www.rand.org/t/TLA3552-1**.

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# About This Tool

**The objective of this tool is to improve will to fight (W2F) analysis and assessments.** It does this by providing analysts (information, intelligence, or otherwise) with a structured analytic approach for assessing adversary or partner W2F at the tactical level. The hope is that a better understanding of W2F will improve tactical decisionmaking by identifying ways to exploit that understanding and by anticipating conditions that might alter W2F. The tool builds on previous foundational W2F research and offers a structured approach for analysts to add rigor to estimates of a critical aspect of the operational environment that is often overlooked or misunderstood. The tool is designed to be accessible to junior analysts without additional training. It is tailored toward adversary assessment but can also be used for partners and even friendly forces.

## Will to Fight Tool Overview

This W2F tool consists of three parts:

1. *Tactical Will to Fight Assessment Guide* (this document)
2. *Tactical Will to Fight Assessment Workbook* (spreadsheet available for download at www.rand.org/t/TLA3552-1)
3. *Tactical Will to Fight Assessment Briefing Slide Template* (slide available for download at www.rand.org/t/TLA3552-1)

The guide includes the following chapters:

1. Introduction
2. Will to Fight Framework and Assessment Methods Overview
3. Deliberate Assessment Method
4. Hasty Assessment Method
5. Finishing and Presenting a Will to Fight Assessment
6. Leveraging Artificial Intelligence in Will to Fight Assessment
7. Concluding Observations on Will to Fight Assessment

Appendixes:

A. Factor Definitions and Rubrics
B. Will to Fight Research and Analysis
C. Research Method

We strongly recommend that users begin by reading this guide before jumping into the workbook and trying to develop a W2F assessment. Once you start analysis, you may need to come back to the guide, but having a basic understanding of the overall approach will help you to be more efficient and effective in conducting analysis.

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For more information on the RAND Navy and Marine Forces Program, see www.rand.org/nsrd/nmf or contact the director (contact information is provided on the webpage).

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Chapter 1

# Introduction

> "Will to fight [is] the disposition and decision to fight, to act, or to persevere when needed."
>
> Ben Connable, Michael J. McNerney, William Marcellino, Aaron B. Frank, Henry Hargrove, Marek N. Posard, S. Rebecca Zimmerman, Natasha Lander, Jasen J. Castillo, and James Sladden, *Will to Fight: Analyzing, Modeling, and Simulating the Will to Fight of Military Units*, RAND Corporation, RR-2341-A, 2018, p. xi.

## Purpose of This Guide

**This guide is intended to provide analysts (information, intelligence, or otherwise) with a structured analytic approach for assessing adversary or partner will to fight (W2F) at the tactical level.**

W2F assessment is complex and dynamic. It is more qualitative than quantitative, and it is integral to developing a comprehensive understanding of adversaries, partners, and their postures and potential for various (in)actions. This framework is designed to add structure and rigor to the assessment process and help to provide more accurate and honest information for decisionmakers in a consistent manner.

This framework should be applicable to various types of adversary forces, so we use the generic term *combatant*. The framework also can conceivably be used for partner and own-force assessment, which could enable a comparative look; note that such scrutiny of own or friendly forces is both highly sensitive and potentially contentious. Despite the associated challenges, an honest assessment of own-force or partner W2F, especially when examined for trends over time, can be tremendously valuable to a commander for understanding strengths and vulnerabilities (and possible opportunities for improvement).

## Will to Fight Basics

The Marine Corps' foundational doctrine document, Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1, *Warfighting*, states that "[t]he essence of war is a violent struggle between two hostile, independent, and irreconcilable wills, each trying to impose itself on the other."[1] This Clausewitzian perspective positions *will* as central in warfare and dictates that winning the contest of wills is the key to victory. Therefore, understanding will is critical to planning for and ultimately defeating one's adversary.

[1] U.S. Marine Corps, *Warfighting*, Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1, 2018.

## What Is Will to Fight?

W2F has historically been one of those terms used loosely and without much consideration of its actual definition. There is an inherent assumption about common understanding of its meaning, but when personnel are asked for a definition, answers vary widely.[2] In 2018, RAND researchers conducted foundational research sponsored by the U.S. Army; this research defined W2F as "the disposition and decision to fight, act, or persevere as needed."[3] That is the definition we will use for this publication. RAND researchers also examined and defined *national W2F*, but that is not what this framework is intended to assess. More detail is available in Appendix B, "Will to Fight Research and Analysis Background."

## Why Does Will to Fight Matter?

Congress validated RAND's research a few years later, following several high-profile W2F assessment failures: the Iraqi Army's near collapse in the face of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) (2014), the precipitous collapse of Afghanistan's security forces (2021), and the miraculous success of the Ukrainian Armed Forces in the face of Russia's 2022 invasion. As a result, Congress tasked the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) to conduct additional research on W2F assessment,[4] citing RAND's definitions as a point of departure.[5] Ultimately, there are at least three reasons that W2F is worth considering:

1. **Understanding:** W2F is a key part of information environment battlespace awareness. It helps planners and commanders to better understand the disposition of various actors and potentially anticipate what they might do (or not do)—their most likely courses of action.
2. **Targeting:** With deeper understanding, planners can conduct more-effective targeting. W2F analysis provides a framework for understanding strengths and weaknesses that can help to illuminate opportunities for more- and less-productive ways to pressure, suppress, or break the will of enemy combatants.
3. **Advantage:** Understanding W2F and its application through targeting can ultimately help with gaining advantages in the battlespace. Advantage might be achieved in several forms, such as time, space (geographic), or cognitive, and can facilitate opportunities for tactical and operational successes.

[2] This insight was gleaned from numerous interviews across multiple RAND projects related to W2F.

[3] Connable et al., 2018, p. xi.

[4] Executive Order 14347, signed September 5, 2025, authorized the use of Department of War as a secondary name for the Department of Defense. This publication was written before that order was released and thus refers to the secretary and department by their current statutory names under Public Law 81-216, National Security Act Amendments of 1949.

[5] "[S]ubmit . . . a report examining the extent to which analyses of the military will to fight and the national will to fight informed the all-source analyses of the intelligence community regarding how the armed forces and governments of Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Iraq would perform at key junctures" (Public Law 117-263, James M. Inhofe National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2023, December 23, 2022, Section 6521).

### Who Does Will to Fight Assessment, and How Do They Do It?

One of the challenges with W2F assessment is that, historically, no U.S. organization is tasked to conduct this analysis. It is not formally part of Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment (JIPOE) or Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace (IPB). Even if a commander or formation wanted to prioritize W2F, much like with its definition, there was not a standardized or rigorous process for its assessment at the tactical level. Although there has been some recent progress on addressing W2F, that focus remains at the national or strategic level.[6]

## Related Analytical Processes and Tools

A number of analytical processes established in military doctrine mention or allude to W2F and its significance, but none of them address the topic with any depth. They most certainly do not provide detailed frameworks for W2F's assessment or incorporation in other processes or assessments in a structured way. In this section, we offer a brief overview of some of the related analytical processes and resources to clarify what they do and do not cover in terms of W2F and offer insights into how they can be complementary with what is offered here.

### DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms

The DoD Dictionary, the go-to resource for all DoD terms and definitions, contains only one brief mention of W2F. It defines *vulnerability* as "[t]he susceptibility of a nation or military force through which its war potential or combat effectiveness may be reduced or its will to fight diminished."[7] There is no further explanation or context, and *W2F* itself is not defined. Will to *act* is addressed as it relates to center of gravity (COG) analysis. Although will to act is related to W2F, will to act is broader, more conceptual, and somewhat removed from the tactical analysis we are focused on here.

### Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment[8]

JIPOE is "the process to analyze the threat and relevant actors' aspects of the operational environment to identify possible courses of action and to support joint planning, execution, and assessment."[9] The JIPOE process is executed in four steps, with the intent of achieving a holistic view of the operational environment. The steps are as follows:

1. Define the operational environment.
2. Describe the impact of the operational environment.

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[6] For example, the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA) published *Analyzing Will to Fight*, Tradecraft Note 02-23, in January 2023, with an update in September 2024, which addresses "combat will to fight" as part of a broader assessment that, as one might expect given DIA's role, skews toward the national level.

[7] U.S. Department of Defense, *DoD Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, August 2025.

[8] Joint Staff, *Joint Guide for Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment*, May 26, 2022.

[9] Joint Staff, 2022.

3. Evaluate the threat and other relevant actors.
4. Determine threat and other relevant actors' courses of action.[10]

JIPOE's latest version specifically notes the importance of *will to act* as part of COG analysis and alludes to W2F as a contributing factor.[11] The JIPOE guide provides a detailed explanation of conducting COG analysis but does little to equip analysts to be able to effectively assess will to act or W2F. W2F analysis can help joint intelligence analysts to develop a more comprehensive assessment when conducting JIPOE step 3.

## Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace[12]

IPB is essentially the service-level version of JIPOE. IPB doctrine follows four steps, which are nearly identical to the JIPOE steps and conclude with an intelligence estimate. The four steps are as follows:

1. Define the operational environment.
2. Describe the effects on operations.
3. Evaluate the adversary or enemy.
4. Determine adversary or enemy course of action.[13]

The IPB manual does not address W2F directly, but it does hint at it in a couple of places. The first table in that document addresses battlespace framework conditions, which include physical, temporal, cognitive, and virtual considerations. It notes: "Cognitive considerations relate to people and how they behave. They include information pertaining to adversary or enemy decision making, adversary or enemy will, the Nation's will, and the population's behavior."[14] Although it is good to see this defined and highlighted up front, the reality is that the process does little to offer an explicit approach for examining W2F—certainly not at the level of a tactical formation. Additionally, the IPB publication offers a brief treatment of impact on morale, the closest proxy, in the section describing effects on operations (step 2).[15] In the section on evaluating the adversary, it notes "[m]orale, spirit, health, nutrition, discipline, and political reliability (or belief in the cause they fight for)" as factors that contribute to combat effectiveness. While this description gets a bit closer to W2F, it still does not offer insight into how to approach it.[16]Again, like with JIPOE, W2F analysis can be helpful for adding depth when conducting IPB step 3.

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[10] Joint Staff, 2022.

[11] Joint Staff, 2022, p. xvi. "COG, which is a source of power that provides moral or physical strength, freedom of action, or will to act" (Joint Staff, 2022, p. IV-1).

[12] U.S. Marine Corps, *Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace*, Marine Corps Reference Publication 2-10B.1, July 1, 2023.

[13] U.S. Marine Corps, 2023.

[14] U.S. Marine Corps, 2023, p. 1-9 (see Table 1-1, "Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace and Intelligence Analysis Support to Battlespace Framework Considerations").

[15] U.S. Marine Corps, 2023, p. 4-16.

[16] U.S. Marine Corps, 2023, p. 5-14.

## Generic Intelligence Requirements Handbook[17]

Not a process but a tool, "[t]he Generic Intelligence Requirements Handbook (GIRH) provides Marines a quick-reference guide for operational intelligence requirements. It is organized around the Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace (IPB) process."[18] This resource provides a bit deeper look into cognitive factors in particular values and narratives, encouraging analysts to ask such questions as "What tactics and techniques, themes and messages, and means and methods is the adversary employing to sustain soldier morale? What concerns are revealed in these themes and messages that could indicate potential adversary psychological vulnerabilities?"[19] This complement to IPB doctrine gets a little closer to W2F, addressing cognitive aspects more comprehensively, but still does not directly address it.

## Target Audience Analysis[20]

The *Military Information Support Operations Process* provides an overview of the process executed by psychological operations (PSYOP) personnel.[21] PSYOP service members benefit from doctrine and training that comes closest to formally assessing W2F. "Target audience analysis (TAA) is a Psychological Operations branch-specific process in which Soldiers critically and comprehensively examine individuals and groups to determine current behaviors, causes of behaviors, and audience susceptibilities and vulnerabilities in relation to psychological objectives (POs)."[22] W2F analysis is closely related to yet distinct from TAA. TAA involves using the TAA model (TAAM), an eight-step process, to complete a TAA worksheet (TAAW). From the TAAW, PSYOPers develop a series of messages and actions to pursue their POs.[23] The process is in some ways similar to W2F analysis, but it is ultimately focused on more generalized influence targeting. Like with JIPOE and IPB, W2F assessment can help with a deeper look into a particular potential target audience. W2F assessment is more narrowly scoped than TAA but can absolutely support it. Similarly, previously completed TAA may offer a helpful jump start for W2F in terms of findings and resources.

[17] Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, *Generic Intelligence Requirements Handbook*, September 2023.

[18] Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, 2023, p. 3.

[19] Marine Corps Intelligence Activity, 2023, p. 39.

[20] U.S. Army, *Influence Process Activity: Target Audience Analysis*, Technical Manual 3-53.11, February 2024.

[21] U.S. Army, *Military Information Support Operations Process (Change 1)*, Special Text 33-01, May 2023.

[22] U.S. Army, 2024, p. 1.

[23] U.S. Army, 2024, p. 5.

Chapter 2

# Will to Fight Framework and Assessment Method Overview

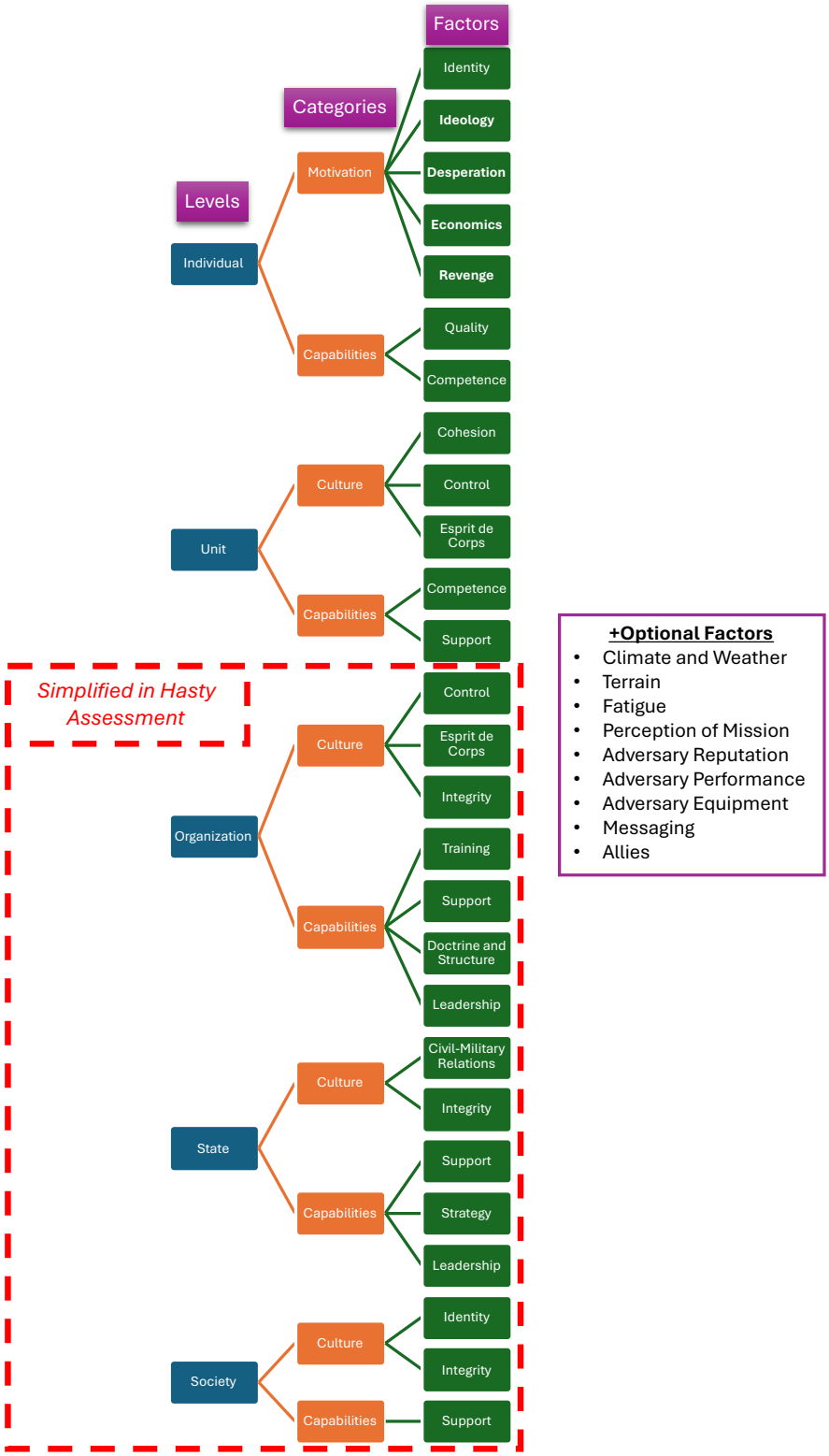
## Will to Fight Framework

Figure 2.1 provides an overview of the hierarchical nesting of W2F levels, categories, and factors:

- Levels (shown in blue)
  - Individual
  - Unit
  - Organization
  - State
  - Society
- Categories (shown in orange)
  - Motivation (individual level only)
  - Culture (every level except individual)
  - Capabilities
- Factors (shown in green)
  - Various.

Step-by-step details on how to conduct a deliberate W2F assessment are presented in Chapter 3. In the hasty method, the organization, state, and society levels are glossed over or dropped out, depending on previous analysis of the unit in question; we provide more on that below. We have also included several optional factors that the analyst may choose to include, depending on context.

## Figure 2.1. Will to Fight Framework




SOURCE: Adapted from Connable et al., 2018.

## Assessment Methods

In this guide and in the companion workbook, we offer two tactical W2F assessment methods: deliberate and hasty (Figure 2.2 compares both methods). The default should always be the deliberate method. However, the enemy, and commanders, get a vote, and analysts who are in or supporting expeditionary forces may not have the luxury to be as methodical and comprehensive as they (and this method) would like. The key is to be transparent about the depth you were able to provide and where uncertainty remains. Ideally, these gaps turn into information requirements and inform future collection against them to help continually improve the assessment. When choosing how to proceed, think about and convey to the consumer the trade space between good, fast, and cheap.[24]

### Deliberate Assessment

This is the gold standard. It should accompany JIPOE, IPB, Information Preparation of the Information Environment (IPIE), TAA, or any similar comprehensive analytic process. It takes time to do this right. This assessment method includes an examination of W2F factors at all levels and concludes with a comprehensive assessment of the W2F of a unit, potential change conditions, factors to exploit or avoid, and information requirements to further improve the assessment.

### Hasty Assessment

This is an abbreviated version of the deliberate assessment, like the Rapid Response Planning Process compared with the more deliberate Marine Corps Planning Process, or, in terms of products, what a fragmentary order is to a base order. The hasty assessment should be used to update a previously completed deliberate assessment, which will be much more comprehensive. In a pinch, the hasty assessment can be used to quickly get a general sense of a unit's W2F, but this comes at a cost in terms of accuracy and reliability—trade-offs that are critical to convey to fellow staff and commanders.

**Figure 2.2. Comparison of Will to Fight Assessment Methods**

| | DELIBERATE | HASTY |
|---|---|---|
| **Completeness** | Comprehensive | Limited |
| **Time available** | Time intensive | Faster |
| **Analytical levels** | ✓ Individual | ✓ Individual |
| | ✓ Unit | ✓ Unit |
| | ✓ Organization | ✗ Organization* |
| | ✓ State | ✗ State* |
| | ✓ Society | ✗ Society* |
| | ** These are simplified in the hasty method, not eliminated.* | |

[24] Sanket Alekar, "Good, Fast, Cheap—You Can Have It All," Medium, August 28, 2016.

## Principles for Effective Will to Fight Analysis

Below we offer some principles—not hard and fast rules but aspirational guidelines—to consider when executing W2F analysis. We also offer some reminders that are intended to help analysts overcome inherent biases and avoid analytical traps or pitfalls that too often plague this type of assessment.[25]

1. **Oversimplification is risky.** In the era of data, there is great demand for quantitative assessments, especially to facilitate longitudinal trend analysis. However, W2F is human-centric, and human beings are complex and unpredictable creatures—they make concrete assessment really difficult. As an analyst, you need to think hard about how to convey nuance and caveats to colleagues and decisionmakers without misrepresenting certainty through hard unqualified numbers (e.g., the W2F of unit X is Y, or Z out of 10, or Z percent). This tool guides the analyst through a structured way to assess and score the significance of the factors and acknowledge confidence in this assessment, based on sources. Applying numbers allows for ordering and (de)prioritization for the analyst. However, the example briefing slide format does not include any scores; it relies on a narrative assessment to convey the complexity of the W2F assessment.
2. **Every assessment is unique**, as every situation is unique—unit assessed, geographic location, state of conflict, etc. Seasoned analysts benefit from the breadth of their experience, but they must guard against generalizing with mental shortcuts that rely too much on analogs—all of which are imperfect.
3. **The weight or significance of factors varies.** In certain cases some factors might be insignificant, while in others they may be incredibly impactful. Avoid simply going through a long list of factors and ratings. Instead, offer a more in-depth discussion on a few factors with the biggest impact on W2F in *this specific assessment*, how they affect W2F, and what your unit can do to exploit that.
4. **There is no perfect assessment.** The goal is to gain a deep understanding of the perceptions and perspectives of those being analyzed and the impact of the associated factors.
5. **An assessment is out of date as soon as it is time-stamped.** These are living documents and must continuously be updated.
6. **Cultural context matters; beware of mirror-imaging.** The impact of your own cultural context is easy to overlook; it's natural to see things through your own cultural lens and not even realize it. Do not assume that the U.S. way or your way is the *right* or *best* way.[26]

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[25] For more on analytical pitfalls and overcoming them, see U.S. Marine Corps, *MAGTF Intelligence Production and Analysis*, Marine Corps Tactical Publication 2-10B, April 4, 2018, pp. 4-8 to 4-14; Robert W. Schmor and James S. Kwoun, "Analytic Tradecraft Standards," *Military Review*, March–April 2021; and Office of the Director of National Intelligence, *Analytic Standards*, Intelligence Community Directive 203, signed 2015, amended 2023.

[26] Mirror-imaging is one of many cognitive biases (the tendency to rely on experiences or mental models) that analysts should remain aware of in conducting W2F assessments. Specifically, analysts should understand the ways in which identities (at all levels), cultures, and norms of behavior may differ in the force being assessed. For example, many non-Western militaries have different norms around the exercise of command and control than the Marine Corps, which doctrinally prioritizes flexibility and speed in a mission command framework.

7. **A W2F assessment that stops at disposition is not good enough.** What are the operational implications? Begin with the end in mind and think about the "so what?," just like in intelligence analysis. This should include consideration of potential change conditions and recommendations for how to target adversary W2F vulnerabilities and how to discover or confirm adversary W2F strengths that are not worth expending resources against.
8. **Do your best to corroborate with multiple sources, and be transparent about information gaps**; turn them into requests for information. Some subjectivity is unavoidable, but research rigor can help mitigate it and increase assessment confidence.
9. **This is *not* a capability assessment in terms of tactical or operational effectiveness or readiness.** It's all about *will* to fight—not the physical capability or capacity to fight.
10. **Consider expectations and psychological momentum.** Expectations are heavily informed by experience and are likely to affect the magnitude of the impact of other factors—e.g., for a unit accustomed to harsh field conditions, a lack of support might not affect their W2F as much as it would for a unit accustomed to more-comfortable conditions. Additionally, consider the aphorism "success begets success," meaning that when things are going well, there is a real psychological impact. However, the converse is also true—it can be tough to get out of a slump.[27]

## Recommended Resources

Assessing W2F across 28 standard and nine optional factors requires the analyst to gather quality information from a variety of sources and at different levels of classification in order to apply their judgment. In beginning your research into an adversary's W2F, starting with a recommended list of resources can aid you in identifying information gaps and determining how to conduct research into specific factors. With that in mind, we offer the following set of recommended resources at the unclassified and Secret levels as a foundation for your assessment (Table 2.1).

**Table 2.1. Recommended Resources**

| Source Name or Type | Description |
|---|---|
| Open-source intelligence research | Organizations specializing in open-source data collection and analysis can provide useful insights in a variety of areas, such as armaments, operations, and unit organization. Reputable organizations include Janes and Bellingcat. |
| Defense and national security research organizations | Several well-established organizations conduct research and analysis of security issues. These include the Brookings Institution, the Center for Strategic and Budgetary Assessments, the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the Council on Foreign Relations, the Foreign Policy Research Institute, the Henry L. Stimson Center, the Heritage Foundation, Pew Research Center, RAND, and the Stockholm International Peace Research Institute, among others. |

[27] In the foundational RAND research, "expectation" is a factor under unit culture at the unit level. We have removed that factor and instead decided to include it as a general consideration.

| Source Name or Type | Description |
|---|---|
| Specialized regional or country reporting | A variety of organizations specialize in reporting on regional or country issues at a level of depth and sophistication not available in major U.S. or Western news organizations. These organizations often tailor their products toward government, nongovernmental organization (NGO), and corporate clients. This reporting can provide in-depth understanding on economic, cultural, and societal factors. |
| Major media organizations | News media reporting from such institutions as the *New York Times*, *Washington Post*, and *Wall Street Journal*, especially from reporters embedded in conflict zones, can provide valuable insights into how certain units fight and live. |
| Professional military education research components | These organizations are affiliated with service and joint professional military education institutions and conduct research on such topics as military strategy, doctrine, and force development. Particular organizations of interest may include National Defense University's Institute for National Strategic Studies and the U.S. Army War College's Strategic Studies Institute. |
| Combatant Command Intelligence (J2) Highpoint sites—Secret Internet Protocol Router Network (SIPRNet) | This is a repository of finished intelligence products from combatant commands, both geographic and functional. |
| The Source (DIA)—SIPRNet | This provides finished intelligence products on a variety of defense issues worldwide. Especially useful products' names are country Military Capabilities reports, Military at a Glance, Joint Country Force Assessment, Defense Intelligence Threat Library, Military Leader Profile, Power Lineup, and orders of battle. |
| National Ground Intelligence Center (NGIC)—SIPRNet | A component of U.S. Army Intelligence and Security Command, NGIC specializes in reporting on ground forces. The site features assessments of ground force units at echelons lower than most other SIPRNet sites, evaluations of doctrine and equipment, and other reporting. |
| Marine Corps Intelligence Activity—SIPRNet | The Marine Corps' service intelligence center features a variety of assessments on peer adversaries. |
| Marine Corps component commands' Highpoint sites—SIPRNet | This is a service component command (e.g., U.S. Marine Corps Forces, Pacific) repository of finished intelligence products. |
| Tempo (Department of State Bureau Intelligence and Research)—SIPRNet | Tempo is the Department of State's intelligence reporting, searchable by country, and primarily includes products related to economics, international relations, and economics. |
| Treasury Department Highpoint site—SIPRNet | This is the Treasury Department's repository of finished intelligence products, searchable by country. Products primarily relate to economics and organized crime. |
| Intellipedia | This is SIPRNet's version of Wikipedia. Information can be outdated and require verification, but this resource is useful for identifying classified information on niche subjects. |

Chapter 3

# Deliberate Assessment

## Conducting a Deliberate Assessment

Table 3.1 lists and describes the steps in the process for conducting a deliberate W2F assessment using the companion workbook.[28] The steps are replicated in full in the workbook on the "Quick Start Guide" tab. The analyst primarily works with the "Analytic Worksheet" and "Analytic Summary" tabs. The "Briefing Slide Format" tab shows a briefing slide that can be used to summarize and present the results of the W2F assessment—this is the end product that comes from all the work. The workbook also includes the principles listed above, as well as some recommended references and resources for conducting analysis.

**Table 3.1. Process Steps for Deliberate Will to Fight Assessment**

| Step | Description |
|---|---|
| ***In the workbook, begin on the "**Analytic Worksheet**" tab*** | |
| **1. Define "Unit Assessed"** | At the top of the **Analytic Worksheet**, input the classification, date-time group (next to "*Updated*") to keep your work time-stamped, and your name. In the next row, describe the unit being assessed—be as specific as possible (you may have to adjust this later, especially if your preliminary analysis shows that there are not enough data to be as granular as you would like). The intent is for the unit assessed to be a tactical-level maneuver element (a battalion, regiment, or brigade is probably the lowest-level unit that can practically be assessed given data availability), and the organization is one or two echelons above—for example, if assessing a battalion as a unit, the division would serve as the organizational unit of analysis. It may be beneficial to state explicitly what entity you are analyzing at the organizational level along with your "unit assessed"—e.g., Unit Assessed: 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, Organization: 2nd Marine Regiment (or 2nd Marine Division). |

[28] The companion workbook and slide template can be found at www.rand.org/t/TLA3552-1.

| Step | Description |
|---|---|
| **2. Review factors and perform preliminary research** | In the Analytic Worksheet, review the first four columns ("Level," "Category," "Factor" [covered at the beginning of Chapter 2], and "Factor Definition"; the text in these columns is also available in Table A.1 in Appendix A of this guide). Explore unclassified and classified resources to gain a general understanding of the unit you are assessing; take detailed notes (you might need a separate Microsoft Word document if you are sifting through numerous sources), but don't jump into detailed factor analysis yet. Sources might include traditional media articles, polling, think tank or NGO reports, classified reporting, etc. Recently observed exercises and operations, especially combat operations, are also an excellent source. It is best to start at the lowest classification level and move up as required. Use the "Sources" column to keep track of relevant sources; you will need to get back to them later for in-depth research.<br><br>*Notes:*<br>*See the "Resources" tab for recommendations on where to find data.*<br>*The purpose of this step is only to develop a rough sense of relevant factors—it should take a small percentage of the total time available for an assessment.* |
| **3. Determine which factors are relevant** | Based on preliminary research, determine which factors are relevant and which are not by selecting "Y" for yes or "N" for no in the "Preliminary Research: Is Factor Relevant?" column. When in doubt, err on the side of inclusion. Also start to consider change conditions that might make a factor's relevance or significance change—especially if you are determining that a factor is irrelevant at present. |
| **4. For each relevant factor, do in-depth research** | Use the "Factor Summary" column to provide bullet points on key findings. Keep more-detailed notes on each factor in a separate document. Continue to track useful sources in the "Sources" column. A best practice is to code these notes and findings according to the factors with which they are associated for ease of reference. Factors can be researched in any order. |
| **5. Based on detailed research, score each factor** | The five columns to the right of the "Factor Summary" column are the scoring rubric. Based on the factor definition and scoring rubric, apply a rating in the third-from-last column, "Select Score (1–5)," based on your analysis of that factor and its impact on W2F. Use the drop-down and assign one of the following values:<br>1. Significantly Undermines Will to Fight<br>2. Undermines Will to Fight<br>3. Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight<br>4. Improves Will to Fight<br>5. Significantly Improves Will to Fight<br>Refer to "Principles for Effective Will to Fight Analysis" (in Chapter 2 here and in the "Principles" tab in the workbook) for additional analytic guidance. |
| **6. State your confidence in each score, given data quality and quantity** | Assess your confidence in your assessment of the factor as "H" (for high), "M" (for medium), or "L" (for low) in the second-to-last column (use the drop-down). In assessing confidence, consider source quality (recency, author bias, conflicting info, etc.) and quantity (number of independent corroborating sources). |

| Step | Description |
|---|---|
| | *Note: "Optional Factors"*<br>*We have included some additional "Optional factors" rows at the bottom of the "Analytic Worksheet" tab. These stem from the foundational research. These factors are important but are highly situationally dependent. Information on these factors might be more likely to come from units in the field rather than research. We recommend reviewing them briefly and including as appropriate.* |
| | ***"Analytic Worksheet" complete*** |

*Review and address any open issues, then move on to the "Analytic Summary" tab. The following items should autopopulate into the "Analytic Summary" tab from the "Analytic Worksheet" tab: "Relevance," "Factor Summary," "Factor Score," and "Confidence."*

***Shift to "Analytic Summary" tab***

| | |
|---|---|
| **7. Consider potential change conditions** | In the "Potential Change Conditions" column of the **"Analytic Summary"** tab, identify plausible change conditions that might have a significant impact on that particular W2F factor. This is a creative exercise around the question "What actions might cause this W2F factor to decrease or increase?" It does not mean to exhaustively explore every possible scenario but to instead focus on the most likely and most dangerous change conditions. Additionally, the analyst should prioritize factors with low or mid durability when identifying change conditions (high durability indicates a decreased likelihood for change). An example of a potential change condition might be an economic collapse (if plausible), which would result in high likelihood that soldiers would not get paid. If possible, offer a prediction on the implications: Might soldiers lose the W2F as a result? You may find it helpful to look back to the factor definitions in the "Analytic Worksheet" tab. Use bullets for easy reference if discussing multiple change conditions.<br><br>*Note: Durability*<br>*Durability ratings—High, Mid, or Low—describe the likelihood that any one factor might change over the course of a single battle and have immediate impacts on W2F.[a] For example, it is unlikely that organizational integrity (high durability) will change in a meaningful way in a short period of time and immediately impact W2F, but unit leadership (mid durability) might. We have included the default or presumed factor durability ratings to assist the analyst in thinking through the implications of each factor, but these ratings can be changed if good reason dictates.* |
| **8. Identify factors to exploit and avoid (think about targeting)** | Use the "Exploit/Avoid Recommendations" column to record opportunities to exploit (gaps) and factors that may not be worth committing resources against (surfaces). E.g., for fanatical ideologues, ideology may be so strong that it's not worth targeting. Use bullets for easy reference if discussing multiple recommendations. |
| **9. Develop priority information requirements** | In the "Priority Information Requirements" column, list information that would enable you to provide a more complete and/or accurate assessment. This includes both identifying information gaps and, ideally, prioritizing them. These information requirements may become intelligence requirements that make their way into a collection plan. You may want to prioritize factors with low and medium confidence ratings if you believe that information is obtainable. |

| Step | Description |
|---|---|
| *Note: Don't forget to replace all red text at the top of the "Analytic Worksheet" and "Analytic Summary" tabs for DATE:TIME, Unit Assessed, and Analyst(s), and confirm appropriate classification markings.* | |
| | ****Analytic Summary complete. Now develop an assessment product.**** |

[a] Connable et al., 2018.

Chapter 4

# Hasty Assessment

## How the Hasty Assessment Differs

A deliberate assessment is always preferred because it offers a more holistic and detailed look at W2F and has the additional benefit of providing a more comprehensive understanding of the organization, state, and society that the assessed unit and its combatants are nested within. The two major differences between a hasty and deliberate assessment are that (1) the hasty assessment focuses on examining individual and unit factors (while simplifying organizational, state, and society factors) and (2) the hasty assessment relies solely on new or updated sources of information when working from an existing deliberate assessment.

A number of factors may make conducting a hasty assessment more desirable or feasible than a deliberate assessment. These might include operational urgency, the injection of new information that warrants a quick tactically oriented update, or a lack of suitable information on higher-level categories. An analyst making the decision to conduct a hasty assessment rather than a deliberate one should consider the trade-off and associated risks. Whenever possible, a hasty assessment should update a deliberate assessment, rather than be conducted as a stand-alone assessment.

## Conducting a Hasty Assessment

Table 4.1 describes the process steps for conducting a hasty W2F assessment with the companion workbook. The analyst primarily works with the "Analytic Worksheet" and "Analytic Summary" tabs.

**Table 4.1. Process Steps for Hasty Will to Fight Assessment**

| Step | Description |
|---|---|
| ***In the workbook, begin on the "**Analytic Worksheet**" tab*** | |
| *Note: Ideally, this is a hasty update to a previously completed deliberate assessment. However, we will describe the steps as if you are starting from scratch, mirroring the deliberate assessment and noting distinct differences.* | |
| **1. Define "Unit Assessed"**<br>*[Same as deliberate assessment]* | On the top of the **Analytic Worksheet**, input the classification, date-time group (next to "Updated") to keep your work time-stamped, and your name. In the next row, describe the unit being assessed—be as specific as possible (you may have to adjust this later, especially if your preliminary analysis shows that there are not enough data to be as granular as you would like). The intent is for the unit assessed to be a tactical-level maneuver element (a battalion, regiment, or brigade is probably the lowest level unit that can practically be assessed given data availability), and the organization is one or two echelons above—for example, if assessing a battalion as a unit, the division would serve as the organizational unit of analysis. It may be beneficial to state explicitly what entity you are analyzing at the organizational level along with your "unit assessed"—e.g., Unit Assessed: 2nd Battalion, 2nd Marine Regiment, Organization: 2nd Marine Regiment (or 2nd Marine Division). |
| **2. Leverage existing products, and update understanding with new sources**<br>*[Unique to hasty assessment]* | Reference the existing deliberate W2F assessment (if available) on the unit. Note the sources used and the date conducted. Utilize more-recent information where available, including from the open-source and classified network literature review tools and keyword searches on suggested sources in the "Resources" tab. Focus solely on the factors in the individual and unit categories (not organization, state, or society). The purpose of this search is only to confirm that the analyst has the most current and salient information to conduct an assessment on these factors. It is best to start at the lowest classification level and move up as required. Use the "Sources" column to keep track of relevant sources; you will need to get back to them later for in-depth research.<br><br>*Notes:*<br>*- See the "Resources" tab for recommendations on where to find data.*<br>*- The purpose of this step is only to develop a rough sense of relevant factors—it should take a small percentage of the total time available for an assessment*. |

| Step | Description |
|---|---|
| **3. Update relevancy of individual and unit factors**<br>*[Update to deliberate assessment—if one already exists]* | Based on updated sources of information and the existing deliberate assessment (if available), update the relevance of factors in the individual and unit categories only by selecting "Y" for yes or "N" for no in the "Preliminary Research: Is a Factor Relevant?" column. Ask the questions "Have any change conditions from that assessment been met?" and "Does this factor have a potential impact on W2F in this specific case?" When in doubt, err on the side of inclusion. As a best practice, consider and annotate change conditions that, when observed, would make a factor relevant.<br><br>*Note: If a change condition for an organizational, state, or societal factor has been met and could significantly increase or decrease W2F, include it in this step.* |
| **4. Conduct focused research for relevant individual and unit factors**<br>*[Same as deliberate assessment]* | Use the "Factor Summary" column to provide bullet points on key findings for individual and unit categories and any additional factors identified in step 3. Keep more detailed notes on each factor in a separate document. Continue to track useful sources in the "Sources" column. A best practice is to code these notes and findings according to the factors with which they are associated for ease of reference. Factors can be researched in any order. If working from an initial assessment, utilize only newer sources than have previously been used. Utilize the "Sources" column on the "Analytic Worksheet" tab to reference and hyperlink sources for each factor. |
| **5. Score relevant individual and unit factors**<br>*[Update to deliberate assessment—if one already exists]* | **There is no change in this step from the deliberate assessment, other than solely focusing on those factors that have been updated.** The five columns to the right of the "Factor Summary" column are the scoring rubric. Based on the factor definition and scoring rubric, apply a rating in the third-from-last column, "Select Score (1–5)," based on your analysis of that factor and its impact on W2F. Use the drop-down and assign one of the following values:<br>1. Significantly Undermines Will to Fight<br>2. Undermines Will to Fight<br>3. Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight<br>4. Improves Will to Fight<br>5. Significantly Improves Will to Fight<br>Refer to "Principles for Effective Will to Fight Analysis" (in Chapter 2 here and in the "Principles" tab in the workbook) for additional analytic guidance. |
| **6. State your confidence in each assigned score**<br>*[Update to deliberate assessment—if one already exists]* | **There is no change in this step from the deliberate assessment, other than solely focusing on those factors that have been updated.** Assess your confidence in your assessment of the factor as "H" (for high), "M" (for medium), or "L" (for low) in the second-to-last column (use the drop-down). In assessing confidence, consider source quality (recency, author bias, conflicting info, etc.) and quantity (number of independent corroborating sources). |

| Step | Description |
|---|---|
| | *Note: "Optional Factors"*<br>*We have included some additional "Optional factors" in rows at the bottom of the "Analytic Worksheet" tab. These stem from the foundational research. These factors are important but are highly situationally dependent. Information on these factors is likely to come from units in the field rather than research. We recommend reviewing them briefly and including as appropriate.* |
| | ***"Analytic Worksheet" complete*** |

*Review and address any open issues, then move on to the "Analytic Summary" tab. The following items should autopopulate into the "Analytic Summary" tab from the "Analytic Worksheet" tab: "Relevance," "Factor Summary," "Factor Score," and "Confidence."*

***Shift to "Analytic Summary" tab***

| | |
|---|---|
| **7. Consider potential change conditions**<br>*[Update to deliberate assessment—if one already exists]* | **There is no change in this step from the deliberate assessment, other than solely focusing on those factors that have been updated.** In the "Potential Change Conditions" column of the "**Analytic Summary**" tab, identify plausible change conditions that might have a significant impact on that particular W2F factor. This is a creative exercise around the question "What actions might cause this W2F factor to decrease or increase?" It does not mean to exhaustively explore every possible scenario but to instead focus on the most likely and most dangerous change conditions. Additionally, the analyst should prioritize factors with low or mid durability when identifying change conditions (high durability indicates a decreased likelihood for change). An example of a potential change condition might be an economic collapse (if plausible), which would result in high likelihood that soldiers would not get paid. If possible, offer a prediction on the implications: Might soldiers lose the W2F as a result? You may find it helpful to look back to the factor definitions in the "Analytic Worksheet" tab. Use bullets for easy reference if discussing multiple change conditions.<br><br>*Note: Durability*<br>*Durability ratings—High, Mid, or Low—describe the likelihood that any one factor might change over the course of a single battle and have immediate impacts on W2F.[a] For example, it is unlikely that organizational integrity (high durability) will change in a meaningful way in a short period of time and immediately impact W2F, but unit leadership (mid durability) might. We have included the default or presumed factor durability ratings to assist the analyst in thinking through the implications of each factor, but these ratings can be changed if good reason dictates.* |
| **8. Identify factors to exploit and avoid (think about targeting)**<br>*[Update to deliberate assessment—if one already exists]* | **There is no change in this step from the deliberate assessment, other than solely focusing on those factors that have been updated.** Use the "Exploit/Avoid Recommendations" column to record opportunities to exploit (gaps) and factors that may not be worth committing resources against (surfaces). E.g., for fanatical ideologues, ideology may be so strong that it's not worth targeting. Use bullets for easy reference if discussing multiple recommendations. |

| Step | Description |
|---|---|
| **9. Develop priority information requirements**<br>*[Update to deliberate assessment—if one already exists]* | **There is no change in this step from the deliberate assessment, other than solely focusing on those factors that have been updated.** In the "Priority Information Requirements" column, list information that would enable you to provide a more complete and/or accurate assessment. This includes both identifying information gaps and, ideally, prioritizing them. These information requirements may become intelligence requirements that make their way into a collection plan. You may want to prioritize factors with low and medium confidence ratings if you believe that information is obtainable. |

*Note: Don't forget to replace all red text at the top of the "Analytic Worksheet" and "Analytic Summary" tabs for DATE:TIME, Unit Assessed, and Analyst(s), and confirm appropriate classification markings.*

*****Analytic Summary complete. Now develop an assessment product.*****

[a] Connable et al., 2018.

Chapter 5

# Finishing and Presenting a Will to Fight Assessment

After conducting a detailed W2F analysis (deliberate or hasty), the analyst must package and deliver their assessment in a way that conveys the key takeaways and demonstrates rigor with appropriate transparency about assumptions, information gaps or fidelity, etc. Usually, the assessment is constrained by time, slides, or words, and, if limits are not provided, the analyst should consider how much information might be too much given the context. Here we offer an approach for developing a briefing to present W2F findings, which could be presented by itself or incorporated into another analytic process, such as JIPOE, IPB, or TAA.

## Developing the Will to Fight Briefing

Table 5.1 describes the process steps for developing a briefing product from a tactical W2F assessment. Using the completed "Analytic Summary" tab in the companion workbook as a reference, fill out the "Briefing Slide Format" PowerPoint template.[29] The template is available for download at www.rand.org/t/TLA3552-1.

**Table 5.1. Process Steps for Developing Briefing from Tactical Will to Fight Assessment**

| Step | Description |
|---|---|
| 1. State assessment scope and limitations | Consider the following:<br>• Scope: Define specifically which unit was assessed.<br>• Limitations: Acknowledge any potentially significant information gaps in examining the factors that might affect the overall assessment. Was information lacking or dated for a certain factor, category, or level?<br>• Generalizability: Determine whether the assessment can be generalized to describe the W2F of other related units (yes or no), describe which units, and provide detail on why or why not the assessment can be generalized. |
| 2. Develop narrative assessment | In narrative form, use a paragraph of prose to briefly describe the overall W2F assessment. Focus on three or four key factors (assessed strengths and weaknesses, ideally with medium or high confidence), especially if there have been any significant changes from previous assessments. Use the "Factor Summary" entries and scoring criteria on the "Analytic Worksheet" tab as a starting point. |

[29] The "Briefing Slide Format" tab in the companion workbook shows the slide template, but it is not editable.

| Step | Description |
|---|---|
| 3. Describe potential change conditions | Identify key *change conditions*, or things that might cause a marked change in W2F by the entity in question—e.g., the economy of the state assessed is at risk of collapse, and there is a possibility that soldiers may not get paid if this happens. If possible, offer a prediction on the implications, referring to the "Factor Definition" column in the "Analytic Worksheet" tab. Consider the durability of particular factors, using the "Durability" column in the "Analytic Summary" tab. Use bullets for easy reference if describing change conditions for multiple factors. |
| 4. State exploit and avoid recommendations | Utilize the lowest ("significantly undermines will to fight") and highest ("significantly improves will to fight") factor scores, ideally with high confidence. Identify opportunities to exploit or target vulnerabilities—without getting into how to do so. Also point out any key strengths that should be avoided from a resource efficiency perspective—e.g., for fanatical ideologues, ideology is probably not worth targeting. Use bullets for easy reference if discussing multiple recommendations. |
| 5. State priority information requirements | Prioritize factors with low and medium confidence ratings, and develop priority information requirements to collect against indicators of a factor. Prioritize priority information requirements, and present them in a numbered list. |

## Assessment Challenges and Presentation Considerations

Conducting accurate W2F assessments is challenging for multiple reasons. In this section, we offer more-detailed information on challenges that analysts might face in the process, how to overcome those challenges, and how to ensure that the analyst presents the most accurate and honest assessment possible. This section complements the "Principles for Effective Will to Fight Analysis" in Chapter 2.

### Data

As the old analytical adage goes, "Garbage in equals garbage out." To develop a high-quality W2F assessment, analysts must use high-quality data, ideally corroborated from multiple independent, reliable sources. In the companion workbook, we offer specific data source recommendations that may help provide a starting point for this type of analysis. In identifying data sources and assessing data quality, consider the following:

- Understanding how the target unit, organization, state, and society communicate is critical. For instance, does the organization or state tightly control narratives through a limited number of distribution channels, as in North Korea? If yes, then it may be reasonable to assume that the unit being analyzed has been insulated from differing perspectives, which could conceivably diminish their W2F.
- Using independent specialist information sources that focus on particular adversaries or geographic regions can be a useful starting point in gaining cultural familiarity with the state and society of the unit assessed. For example, regionally focused think tanks or research organizations may be a particularly good starting point rather than trying to start from scratch, especially when analyzing factors at the higher levels (society, state, and perhaps organization) during a deliberate assessment.

- Consider potential biases and gaps in your sources. W2F factors can be misrepresented intentionally (because of adversary information operations) or unintentionally (if using a narrow range of sources or sources with a particular viewpoint). Additionally, operations security provides a strong incentive to conceal formal or informal W2F self-assessment, which is part of what makes this type of analysis difficult.

## Presenting a Will to Fight Assessment

An analyst's approach to presenting a W2F assessment should be much like presentation of any other assessment, regardless of form—written product, presentation, oral briefing, etc. An analyst should consider questions such as the following:

- Who is the target audience?
- What message do I want to convey to them?
- What is the most effective way to convey that message to that audience?
- How can I ensure that the audience does not misinterpret my assessment?
- How can I effectively address limitations and caveats without having the assessment dismissed out of hand?
- What would allow me to improve this assessment, and is there a way for me to tactfully request the resources or support, if required, to accomplish this?

## Presentation Formats

There are pros and cons to various presentation methods, and ultimately an analyst may not have much of a choice. However, there is tremendous benefit to the analyst being available to offer context and to be able to answer questions—especially given that W2F assessment is not yet a widely adopted or consistently understood topic.

If an analyst is limited to written products, those products must stand on their own, meaning that they are explained, in plain language, as clearly as possible and include all the appropriate analytic caveats. Again, it is critical to be transparent about where data were sufficient in quantity and quality and where there are gaps. It is also important to be explicit about the currency of the assessment, because this is something that could change rapidly. In Figure 5.1, we offer a single-slide briefing format recommendation (which is also included in the "Briefing Slide Format" tab in the workbook). Note that it is entirely qualitative in nature.

**Figure 5.1. Will to Fight Assessment Briefing Slide**

*Updated:* *<Date>*
*Analyst:* *<Name>*

# W2F Assessment Tool – Briefing Slide

## Unit Assessed

*<What unit was assessed? Be as specific as possible about the hierarchy that it fits into and consider noting how this assessment may be truly exclusive and unique to that unit, or note if there is an informed reason to judge the assessment to be more widely generalizable.>*

## W2F Narrative Assessment

*<In narrative form, briefly describe the overall will to fight assessment of a unit or organization's will to fight. Focus on key factors (strengths and weaknesses), especially if there have been any significant changes from previous assessments—e.g., news has come out about service-level military leadership skimming supplies for personal use, which may be negatively impacting organizational leadership perceptions. Use a paragraph of prose, and keep it concise.>*

## Key Strengths

*<Identify a few highly rated factors, and be prepared to explain reasoning.>*

## Key Weaknesses

*<Identify a few low-rated factors, and be prepared to explain reasoning.>*

## Potential Change Conditions

*<Identify key "change conditions," or things that might cause a marked change in will to fight by the entity in question—e.g., the economy is on the risk of collapse, and there is a possibility that soldiers may not get paid if this happens. If possible, offer a prediction on the implications. Use bullets for easy reference.>*

## Exploit/Avoid Recommendations

*<This is the "so what" section and therefore the MOST IMPORTANT. Identify opportunities to exploit or target vulnerabilities—without getting into the "how." Also point out any key strengths that should be avoided, from a resource efficiency perspective—e.g., for fanatical ideologues, ideology is probably not worth targeting. Use bullets for easy reference.>*

## Priority Information Requirements

*<Where are there information gaps? What specific indicators should the unit or supporting organizations "collect" against to have a more complete and/or more accurate picture of W2F?>*

## Scope, Limitations, Generalizability

*<Be transparent about what you could and could not cover, key information gaps, etc. Also, specify how generalizable or bespoke this assessment is—does it only apply to this particular unit, the entirety of its parent command, etc.?>*

Version 1.1 Slide 2

Chapter 6

# Leveraging Artificial Intelligence in Will to Fight Assessment[30]

There is currently a great deal of excitement, and some trepidation, about applying artificial intelligence (AI) to everything—especially knowledge-work tasks, such as conducting analysis. AI, more specifically generative AI—namely, large language models (LLMs)—has a lot of potential to assist with improving both the accuracy and speed of analysis, but it is by no means a panacea. We are not yet and might not ever get to a point at which an analyst can click a button or give a voice command and have a machine spit out a comprehensive and accurate W2F assessment. However, we recognize that analysts will use AI, so below we offer some considerations for how to thoughtfully leverage AI to support the human analyst, as well as some cautionary notes to avoid being led astray. Finally, we offer a collection of prompts that analysts may find helpful when conducting W2F analysis.

## How to Apply Artificial Intelligence in Will to Fight Analysis

Perhaps the greatest strength of AI is the simple fact that it can process a volume of data that is orders of magnitude beyond what any human or even a small group of humans can process. Below is an initial list of some specific ways that AI can be helpful in W2F assessment:

- identifying useful sources
- summarizing potential sources to quickly determine whether a source is worth deeper examination
- developing a rough initial draft as a baseline
- composing prose for a written assessment based on analytical findings
- possibly overcoming analyst bias.[31]

[30] For further reading on this topic, we recommend a recent report on AI and IPB by our colleagues: David Stebbins, Richard S. Girven, Timothy Parker, Thomas Deen, Brandon F. De Bruhl, James Ryseff, Jessica Welburn Paige, Annie Yu Kleiman, Sunny D. Bhatt, Éder M. Sousa, Marta Kepe, and Matthew Fay, *Exploring Artificial Intelligence Use to Mitigate Potential Human Bias Within U.S. Army Intelligence Preparation of the Battlefield Processes*, RAND Corporation, RR-A2763-1, 2024.

[31] Stebbins et al., 2024.

## Risks of Applying Artificial Intelligence in Will to Fight Analysis

Although the allure of using AI to conduct analysis is strong, there are several risks that must be considered prior to and during its application. This list is not necessarily exhaustive, but it should help to foster consideration of how to thoughtfully apply AI—and how not to apply AI—to W2F analysis.

- **Technical limitations:** There are numerous limitations imposed by the AI model used in analysis, including the time cutoff for training data, selection bias impacting which training data is used, and bias embedded in training data.
- **Security concerns:** While not unique to AI, analysts must be thoughtful about the models they are using. Is the LLM in a secure space, such as a government cloud? What types of queries is the analyst putting out that might telegraph their research?
- **AI skepticism:** Leadership and/or colleagues may be skeptical of AI for a number of reasons, which can have real impacts on the willingness of others to accept your analysis. When leveraging AI, analysts should, as always, be transparent about their method and the tools they used. One of the challenges with AI, specifically LLMs, is that it can be difficult to achieve repeatability. LLMs also typically do not offer traceability. That said, we recommend developing a proposed AI approach, socializing it, and obtaining approval before executing analysis with AI, so as to not have it tossed out or discounted.[32]

## Prompt Suggestions for Artificial Intelligence–Assisted Will to Fight Analysis

Below we offer some suggested prompts to use when conducting W2F analysis. These are simple starting points and are in no way meant to be comprehensive or perfect but instead are meant to help foster thinking about how to thoughtfully leverage this powerful capability to supercharge the human-led analytical process. As a default, we always recommend that you direct the model to "provide references" or "cite sources" so that you can investigate them yourself and to avoid being caught by hallucinations. Table 6.1 offers prompt suggestions in **bold**, with additional context and considerations below each bold prompt suggestion. The table offers recommendations for each step in the deliberate assessment process, which can easily be applied to the hasty assessment process.

[32] For more on this topic, see William Marcellino, Jonathan Welch, Brittany Clayton, Stephen Webber, and Thomas Goode, *Acquiring Generative Artificial Intelligence to Improve U.S. Department of Defense Influence Activities*, RAND Corporation, RR-A3157-1, 2025.

Table 6.1. Applying Artificial Intelligence to Deliberate Will to Fight Assessment

| Step | Prompt Recommendations ("->" signifies an actual prompt) |
|---|---|
| **0. Fine-tuning** | **-> Will to fight is defined as the disposition and decision to fight, to act, or to persevere when needed.**<br>You could also upload key publications, such as RAND's foundational research.[33] |
| **1. Define "Unit Assessed"** | **-> Describe the order of battle of [x] military.**<br>AI likely has limited utility in this step, except for gaining a general understanding of the organization of the force in question. Actual scoping or definition of the unit assessed really needs to be done by the human analyst. |
| **2. Review factors and perform preliminary research** | **-> Provide a list of references that might offer insights into the will to fight of [Unit X].**<br>If "Unit X" is too specific, due to lack of available data, zoom out and try increasingly larger groups that may offer generalizable insights. For example, if "North Korean [X] Brigade, fighting in Ukraine" is too specific, try zooming out to "North Korean forces in Ukraine" and then to "North Korean forces" of the same branch, unit type, etc. This process will incorporate additional data sources but may or may not be generalizable.<br>**-> Using this framework [paste in the W2F framework: levels, categories, and factors], provide an assessment of [Unit X]'s will to fight.**<br>**-> Provide an initial assessment of [Unit X]'s will to fight in terms of individual, unit, organization, state, and society levels; cite references.**<br>**-> Create a table.** |
| **3. Determine which factors are relevant** | This is very much a human judgment question; AI likely has limited utility in assessing factor relevance. |

[33] Connable et al., 2018, p. xi.

| Step | Prompt Recommendations ("->" signifies an actual prompt) |
|---|---|
| **4. For each relevant factor, do in-depth research** | Using AI here will take some creativity and iteration. It is possible that the high-level approach in step 2 yielded a decent enough preliminary assessment. However, you can try asking an LLM to analyze individual factors or group them as categories or levels. This will likely require some trial and error. Working in smaller chunks, such as one factor at a time, is likely to yield better responses. The prompt examples below use only the first factor, category, and level, which are underlined and would need to be repeated with the other factors, categories, and levels.<br>[Factor] **-> Describe the perception and significance of <u>identity</u> as it pertains to will to fight for [Unit x]. Include references.**<br>[Category] **-> Describe the perception and significance of <u>individual motivations</u> (identity, ideology, desperation, economics, revenge) as they pertain to will to fight for [Unit x]. Include references.**<br>[Level] **-> Describe the significance of individual factors in terms of <u>individual motivations</u> (identity, ideology, desperation, economics, revenge) and <u>individual capabilities</u> (quality and individual competence—skills, relevance, sufficiency, sustainability) as they pertain to will to fight for [Unit x]. Include references.**<br><br>Another potential angle to take is to seek assistance in comparing the relative significance of various factors. For example:<br>**-> Assess their relative motivations in terms of identity, ideology, desperation, economics, and revenge.**<br>This might provide an insightful alternative, especially a preliminary one, to going through the rubric-based scoring process.<br><br>If you have multiple sources and/or pieces of text, AI may be helpful in summarizing them into a concise factor summary. You could use a simple prompt such as the following:<br>**-> Provide a concise summary of the following [paste in relevant text].**<br>Note: The more selective and deliberate you are on inputs, the better the outputs will be. |
| **5. Based on detailed research, score each factor** | Upload the scoring rubric to the LLM; this could be for one factor, category, or level or the whole thing at one time. Again, working in smaller chunks may yield better outputs.<br>**-> Based on the above rubric, using the following factor summary, score this will to fight category: [paste in factor summary].**<br>Based on the factor definition and scoring criteria, select the score with characteristics most closely aligned with research. |
| **6. State your confidence in each score, given data quality and quantity** | This is very much a human judgment question; AI likely has limited utility in assessing factor relevance. |

| Step | Prompt Recommendations ("->" signifies an actual prompt) |
|---|---|
| **7. Consider potential change conditions** | **-> For each factor, identify potential change conditions that might alter the factor's relevance and describe how it might be altered.**<br>It may be necessary or helpful to include the list of factors in order. You could also prompt the model to give you the output in a table or CSV (comma-separated values) format for easy usage.<br><br>This is a case in which historical analogs *might* be useful. You could explore these with something like this:<br>**-> Produce a list of historical examples of when units like this have experienced major shifts in unit cohesion. Present the list in a table indicating the causes of that shift.** |
| **8. Identify factors to exploit and avoid (think about targeting)** | **-> Identify factors that might be exploited and how they might be exploited.**<br>**-> Identify factors that are unlikely to be worth exploiting and why.** |
| **9. Develop priority information requirements** | **-> Identify information gaps or shortfalls; describe how they might be addressed; and assign a priority level of low, medium, or high.** |
| **Develop a briefing or narrative assessment** | **-> Compose an executive summary, in a concise short paragraph, from the following assessments [try pasting in the factor summaries from the "Analytic Summary" tab in the workbook].**<br>If the output is not in the ballpark, try again by selectively inputting what you deem to be the summaries of the most relevant factors. Do not assume that this process will give you a perfect or final answer, but it can help to overcome writer's block or to offer creative language to convey a complex assessment.<br><br>**-> Compose an executive summary with the following section headings: Unit Assessed, Narrative Assessment, Key Strengths, Key Weaknesses, Potential Change Conditions, Factors to Exploit and Avoid, Priority Information Requirements, Scope/Limitations/Generalizability. [Try pasting in the factor summaries, potential change conditions, exploit/avoid recommendations, priority information requirements, and notes columns from the "Analytic Summary" tab in the workbook].**<br>Note: This format follows the briefing slide format sections identified in Chapter 5 of this guide; see Figure 5.1 above. |

## Tips for Using Artificial Intelligence Effectively in Will to Fight Assessment

- ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS keep a human (yourself) in the loop, and scrutinize LLM output for accuracy and bias.
- Consider the security of the models you are using—i.e., do not just go out to the open internet and start conducting W2F analysis on any "free" LLM, especially when signed in with your account or while signed into another web application as yourself.
- If able, try different models and compare outputs to find the one that best meets your needs.

- Be specific with prompts, and work in smaller rather than larger chunks or batches to avoid hallucinations.
- Record the models and prompts you use to keep track of what works and what does not.

Chapter 7

# Concluding Observations on Will to Fight Assessment

Previous chapters covered the process for using the tool. Here we offer some general observations on W2F analysis, as well as things we learned applying an earlier version of the tool to a test case. Finally, we provide a brief overview of the additional materials available in the appendixes.

## General Observations on Will to Fight Analysis

During the course of this research, the RAND team was reassured by the thoroughness and usefulness of previous research. However, while exercising the process, we made some observations worth noting for analysts, especially if they reference previous work in this space. There may be some overlap here with the "Principles for Effective Will to Fight Analysis" in Chapter 2, but we deemed these issues to be important enough to address more thoroughly here.

1. **"Perception is reality," a cliché aphorism in the military, is apropos in W2F analysis.** It's (nearly) impossible to objectively assess most of the W2F factors, so the key to success is to try to understand how those being analyzed *perceive* those factors. When conducting W2F analysis, remember to keep asking yourself how combatants perceive each factor and the resulting effect on their W2F, rather than trying to objectively rate the significance or absence of various factors in a clinical fashion. For example, ask how the combatant perceives leadership or doctrine and how that impacts his or her W2F, rather than assuming that because Unit X has high-quality leadership or doctrine, it must have high W2F.
2. **Individual factors are markedly different from factors at other levels (unit, organization, state, and society), especially in terms of motivation.** The foundational RAND model captures this by categorizing individual factors in terms of **motivation** and capabilities, whereas at every other level they are categorized in terms of **culture** and capabilities. While at first glance this may seem obvious, one cannot overestimate the importance and complexity of individual motivations. These are deeply personal drivers and likely matter more at lower echelons where individuals can have a greater impact. Typically, several individual motivations will concurrently apply in varying degrees, and some may not apply at all; they are not mutually exclusive. It is also important to avoid the risk of overindexing or generalizing based on rich data for a few individuals (survey bias) who may or may not be representative of a unit or organization.
3. **There is some overlap between factor effects at various levels.** This can make attribution and double-counting or undercounting risky. "Leadership" may be the premier example: At

what level or levels should strong or weak leadership be attributed? Again, the more specific an analyst can be in defining the unit to be analyzed, and the more information available, the better. However, if, for example, an analyst is examining an adversary brigade, "unit leadership" might reflect or overlap with the nature of leadership at higher levels—in this case, the brigade's parent division (at the organization level in the W2F model). Also, even at the brigade level, "unit leadership" still represents a fairly broad bucket that includes the commander, subordinate battalion commanders, noncommissioned officers, etc. This systems-of-systems reality is discussed in more detail in the foundational RAND research.[34]

4. **Mirror-imaging is a natural and deeply seated bias that must be deliberately managed.** The analyst's cultural context must be considered when executing W2F analysis. The foundational W2F research acknowledges that corruption exists almost everywhere, but the degree (if that can really be measured objectively) and the perception or impact of said corruption are what really matter.[35] As a research team, we caught ourselves falling victim to this trap. Taking a team approach helped to keep each other in check and counterbalance biases. We even noticed some biased language embedded in factor definitions in the foundational research. This appears to have been the consequence of reliance on Western doctrine and research. We have tried to improve the definitions in this tool to set the analyst up for a more objective look.
5. **For military analysts, there is a natural tendency to fall into the trap of assessing unit military readiness or combat effectiveness rather than the W2F of those in the unit or the unit's collective W2F.** Again, we as a research team caught ourselves, on multiple occasions, conflating military capability and capacity, in the physical sense, with will. They are closely related, to be sure, but we contend that they are still distinct. Military analysts might find it helpful to ask themselves, "Is this the sort of information that would go into a readiness assessment or report?" If "yes," then it is probably **not** part of a W2F assessment.
6. **The Likert scale comes with limitations.** One of the critiques of a 1 to 5 Likert scale is that its linear nature may provide an oversimplified representation of degree. This is part of why we caution against taking an overly quantitative approach and put a great deal of energy into the factor definitions and scoring rubrics. The intent is not to provide perfect numerical scores in terms of significance or certainty but to help analysts identify key factors, as well as ones of lesser consequence. The scoring process is designed to assist the analyst by providing a means to evaluate data as they build a comprehensive assessment, which we recommend be provided in narrative form (see Figure 5.1). Related to this, we determined that although most factors can undermine or improve will to fight, at least one factor cannot: revenge. Revenge might simply not be a factor, in which case it would be rated 3, or it might improve W2F (4 or 5), but we could not conceive of a case in which it would undermine W2F, so the rubric definitions for 1 and 2 are simply "Not applicable." For example, when North Korean soldiers were introduced to the Russia-Ukraine war in 2024, they had no reason for vengeance.

[34] Connable et al., 2018.

[35] Connable et al., 2018, pp. 89–90. It is also worth noting that this part of the foundational research relies heavily on U.S. Army doctrine, which likely takes an idealistic and perhaps not generalizable perspective on this topic.

However, after some time in combat, depending on how the fighting played out, revenge may surface as a motivation in their willingness to fight.

7. **We did not include "expectation" as a unit-level factor.** The foundational research added "expectation . . . the belief that something will happen" as a factor and noted that it was the only one not identified by other scholars.[36] However, after much examination and consideration, we chose not to include it as a factor. We felt that it was too difficult to isolate and assess, and we felt that it is sufficiently represented in the consideration of "perception" throughout. There is certainly an aspect of "success begets success" or gaining operational and psychological momentum, but we found it to be too difficult to discern the psychological aspect from the operational.[37]
8. **Developing a baseline understanding of state and societal culture is an essential component of assessing factors at all levels.** Particularly for analysts who lack regional expertise, developing such a baseline is critical to developing the perspective needed to assess several factors. As one example, acknowledging the impact of the North Korean state ideology of Juche and centrality of the Kim family in the military, state, and society would be critical in assessing such factors as identity, ideology, esprit de corps (at the unit and organizational levels), and civil-military relations. Native-language sources and subject-matter expert elicitation can be especially helpful in developing cultural understanding.
9. **Acknowledge potential bias in reporting and the gray area between reporting and commentary.** Applying a critical lens to sources, particularly in such areas as conflict zone reporting, includes an understanding of the target audience and intended effects of reporting. Be wary of sensational language, stereotypes, and generalities, and seek to confirm such accounts with other sources.
10. **Acknowledge the potential for information gaps to make factors seem irrelevant—confirm with classified sources.** For certain adversary forces, domestic information controls can complicate the ability to determine factor relevancy through a short period of initial research. For adversaries with particularly strong information controls, confirm across multiple levels of classification that a factor is likely irrelevant before making a final determination.

## Overview of Appendixes

The appendixes of this guide offer a variety of resources intended to help the analyst both with gaining an initial understanding of W2F analysis and with executing it. Below is an overview of what each appendix covers:

[36] Connable et al., 2018, pp. 66–71.

[37] For more on "success begets success" and "psychological momentum," see Christopher Bergland, "The Hot Hand Phenomenon of Teamwork: Success Begets Success," *Psychology Today*, December 4, 2018; and Christopher J. Honey, Abhijit Mahabal, and Buddhika Bellana, "Psychological Momentum," *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, Vol. 32, No. 4, May 6, 2023.

- **Appendix A. Factor Definitions and Rubrics:** This mirrors what is in the workbook portion of the tool, but it is included here for convenience.
- **Appendix B. Will to Fight Research and Analysis Background:** This appendix provides a very brief overview of the body of W2F literature and research. It is generally sequential to help illustrate how W2F thinking has evolved.
- **Appendix C. Research Method:** This describes the study approach resulting in this tool.

Appendix A

# Factor Definitions and Rubrics

For easy reference, Table A.1 replicates the factor definitions and rubrics from the "Analytic Worksheet" tab in the workbook portion of the tool.

Table A.1. Factor Definitions and Rubrics

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Individual | Individual motivations | Identity | **An individual's sense of self. Identity is multifaceted and includes personal, social, societal, state, and military identities. A combatant's various identities may conflict with or reinforce their military identity. E.g., identifying with an "elite" unit may positively influence W2F.** | Identity has strong negative influence on combatants. Characteristics include: (1) combatants strongly reject their military identity OR combatants have extremely negative feelings about the unit or organization which they identify with; (2) nonmilitary identities outweigh and significantly conflict with military identity. | Identity has negative influence on combatants. Characteristics include: (1) combatants reject their military identity OR combatants have negative feelings about the unit or organization which they identify with; (2) nonmilitary identities outweigh and conflict military identity. | Identity is generally not harmful or helpful. Characteristics include: (1) combatants do not have strong feelings about their military identity OR combatants don't identify with the unit, but this lack of identity is not harmful; (2) nonmilitary identities are generally irrelevant. | Identity helps bond the combatants to the unit or organization and has a positive influence. Characteristics include: (1) combatants embrace their military identity OR they identify with the unit or organization in a positive way; (2) nonmilitary identities reinforce the combatants' connection to the unit and/or organization. | Identity tightly bonds combatants to the unit or organization and has a powerful, positive influence. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are proud of their military identity OR individual identity is tightly woven with unit or organizational identity in a very positive way; 2) nonmilitary identities directly reinforce an intense, positive military identity. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Ideology** | **Commitment to a cause or belief system. It can include general ideas of patriotism, religious commitment, political ideologies, or abstract concepts like freedom. Ideology can influence W2F in several ways—it can improve W2F by unifying combatants, or it can undermine W2F by dividing combatants or unifying combatants against the mission.** | Strong dissonance between combatants' and unit/organization's ideologies, ethics, and values. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are actively opposed to the broader cause; (2) combatants' ideological values are directly contradictory to the mission; (3) conflicting ideologies among combatants sharply undercut obedience and unit cohesion. | Tension between combatants' and unit/organization's ideologies, ethics, and values. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are opposed to the broader cause; (2) combatants' ideological values do not align to the mission; (3) conflicting ideologies among combatants undercut obedience and unit cohesion. | Ideology is not present or has little military impact. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are neither committed nor opposed to the broader cause; (2) ideology is not directly relevant to combatants' perception of the mission; (3) varied ideologies may exist, but they do not significantly affect obedience and unit cohesion. | Unifying ideology, ethics, and values have positive military value. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are generally committed to the broader cause; (2) combatants' ideological values generally align with the mission; (3) combatants are generally unified around a core ideology that provides motivation. | Strong unifying ideology, ethics, and values have powerful, positive military value. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are fully committed to the broader cause; (2) combatants' ideological values strongly align with the mission; (3) combatants are tightly unified around a core ideology that provides deep and enduring motivation. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Desperation | **The fear of death, the need for self-preservation, or a belief that no other options exist. It exists at two levels: (1) immediate but temporary desperation in combat and (2) desperation to protect families, homes, country, ethno-sectarian group, etc. Depending on the circumstances, desperation can either undermine or improve W2F.** | Desperation overwhelms combatants' W2F. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are paralyzed by existential fears; (2) combatants have reverted to self-preservation behavior, ignoring the mission; (3) combatants are convinced that their families, homes, or other groups are in danger and are determined to save them rather than accomplishing the mission. | Desperation makes combatants reluctant to fight. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are distracted by existential fears; (2) some combatants are prioritizing self-preservation behavior instead of focusing on the mission; (3) combatants worry that their families, homes, or other groups are in danger and prioritize saving them rather than accomplishing the mission. | Combatants are not desperate OR desperation has minimal effect. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are not experiencing existential fears; (2) combatants feel some desperation, but it has mixed or no significant effect on their mindset or behavior. | Desperation causes combatants to fight with more resolve. Characteristics include: (1) existential fears motivate combatants to fight; (2) combatants are drawn closer together and made more focused on the mission by their sense of desperation; (3) combatants believe that accomplishing the mission will protect their families, homes, or other groups. | Desperation is a powerful driver, significantly improving W2F. Characteristics include: (1) existential fears are strongly motivating combatants to fight; (2) combatants are tightly bonded to each other and the mission by their collective sense of desperation; (3) combatants are convinced that accomplishing the mission is critical to protect their families, homes, or other groups. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | Economics | **The need for subsistence (e.g., food, water, and money) and the need for longer-term socioeconomic advancement. Combatants may focus on their own needs or be motivated by concerns for larger groups (e.g., family, tribe). Strong economic incentives for military service may increase W2F, whereas weak incentives for military service or strong incentives in other sectors may undermine W2F.** | Economic concerns strongly drive combatants away from fighting. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are poorly compensated, inconsistently compensated, or not compensated at all; (2) alternative financial opportunities are extremely compelling; (3) combatants believe that their families will be left in dire financial straits if they are injured or killed. | Economic concerns lower combatant motivation to fight. Characteristics Include: (1) combatants are poorly or inconsistently compensated; (2) alternative financial opportunities are appealing; (3) combatants do not believe that their families will be well taken care of if they are injured or killed. | Economic concerns do not affect combatant motivation. Characteristics include: (1) military compensation is adequate or not strongly influential; (2) there are no strong alternative financial opportunities. | Economic incentives encourage combatants to fight, act, or persevere. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are consistently and sufficiently compensated; (2) alternative financial opportunities are poor compared with military incentives; (3) combatants believe that their families will be taken care of if they are injured or killed. | Economic incentives strongly drive combatants to fight, act, or persevere. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are consistently and extremely well compensated; (2) compared with alternatives, military service provides substantial economic benefit and future opportunities; (3) combatants believe that their families will be well taken care of if they are injured or killed. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Revenge** | **A desire to inflict punishment on the adversary in retaliation for an injury or offense. Can stem from broad, long-standing historical narratives or from immediate circumstances in combat. Generally unlikely to undermine W2F.** | Not applicable | Not applicable | Revenge is not a factor. Characteristics include: (1) there is no desire for revenge OR revenge does not affect combatants' motivations. | Desire for revenge motivates combatants. Characteristics include: (1) there is historical or immediate context for revenge that motivates the combatants to fight. | Desire for revenge drives combatants. Characteristics include: (1) there is strong historical or immediate context for revenge that drives the combatants to fight. |
| | **Individual capabilities** | **Quality** | **The basic mental and physical capabilities inherent to the combatant. Consists of fitness, education, social skills, psychological traits, resilience, and adaptability. Generally, higher-quality combatants have stronger W2F.** | Combatant quality is abysmal. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are not at all suited to the physical and mental demands of combat; (2) combatants are not at all resilient to hardship or trauma; (3) combatants have great difficulty adapting to new situations. | Combatant quality is poor. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are not suited to the physical and mental demands of combat; (2) combatants are not resilient to hardship or trauma; (3) combatants have difficulty adapting to new situations. | Combatant quality is average. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are adequately suited to the physical and mental demands of combat; (2) combatants have acceptable resilience to hardship or trauma; (3) combatants can generally adapt to new situations. | Combatant quality is good. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are well suited to the physical and mental demands of combat; (2) combatants are resilient to hardship and trauma; (3) combatants are adaptable. | Combatant quality is elite. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are exceptionally well suited to the physical and mental demands of combat; (2) combatants are highly resilient to hardship and trauma; (3) combatants are extraordinarily adaptable. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Individual competence—skills, relevance, sufficiency, sustainability** | **Capabilities developed through military training, which shapes a combatant's qualities. Includes the combatant's skills, the relevance and sufficiency of the skills for the mission, and how well those skills are sustained. Highly competent combatants who are confident in their abilities and believe they are prepared for combat will be more disposed to fight.** | Combatants are incompetent; training is not at all aligned to the combat environment. Characteristics include: (1) combatants have little to no military skills; (2) training is of exceptionally poor quality; (3) training is almost completely ineffective for the mission at hand; (4) skills are not maintained. | Combatants lack many basic competencies; training is poorly aligned to the combat environment. Characteristics include: (1) combatants have limited military skills; (2) training is poor; (3) training has little relevance for the current mission; (4) skills are poorly maintained. | Combatants are competent; training mostly aligns to the combat environment. Characteristics include: (1) combatants have basic military skills; (2) training is adequate; (3) training is generally aligned with the current mission; (4) skills are generally maintained. | Combatants are skilled; training aligns well to the combat environment. Characteristics include: (1) combatants have solid military skills; (2) training is sound; (3) training is closely aligned with the current mission and/or can be readily adapted to new missions; (4) skills maintenance is routine and effective. | Combatants are exceptional; training fully aligns to the combat environment. Characteristics include: (1) combatants have exceptional military skills; (2) training is of very high quality; (3) training is tightly and purposefully aligned with the current mission and/or is extremely adaptable to new missions; (4) skills are sustained and enhanced through continuous and evolving training. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Unit** | **Unit culture** | **Unit cohesion—task, social horizontal, social vertical** | **The bonding within a military unit, consisting of task cohesion and social cohesion. Task cohesion is a commitment to collective goals. Social cohesion is bonding based on interpersonal relationships and can be horizontal (between combatants) or vertical (between combatants and leaders). Greater cohesion within a unit generally improves W2F, although a unit that is cohesive in opposition to its leaders may undermine W2F.** | Unit is not cohesive OR is very cohesive but mutinous. Characteristics include: (1) corrosive social distrust, ethno-sectarian and/or socio-economic differences drive combatants apart OR combatants have unified in opposition to leaders; (2) collective work burdens are distributed unequally; (3) combatants distrust leaders; (4) leaders distrust combatants. | Unit has weak cohesion OR is cohesive but disobedient. Characteristics include: (1) weak social connections, ethno-sectarian and/or socio-economic differences create some distrust between combatants OR combatants tend to bond with each other against leaders; (2) collective work is inconsistently shared across the unit; (3) combatants are wary of leaders; (4) leaders are wary of combatants. | Unit has sufficient cohesion to hold together under moderate stress. Characteristics include: (1) social connections are adequate to sustain a basic sense of trust; (2) ethno-sectarian and/or socio-economic differences may be slightly disruptive; (3) collective work is shared equally and a sense of fairness exists; (4) combatants and leaders have a functional relationship. | Unit is cohesive under most conditions. Characteristics include: (1) social connections between combatants are solid and resilient; (2) ethno-sectarian and/or socio-economic differences are moderate OR do not cause distrust; (3) collective work generates a sense of bonding; (4) combatants and leaders share mutual trust. | Unit is highly cohesive, even under extremely difficult conditions. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are tightly bonded with one another; (2) ethno-sectarian and/or socio-economic differences are minimal OR are sources of strength and unity; (3) collective work generates deep camaraderie; (4) combatants and leaders share deep mutual trust. |

| | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Unit control—coercion, persuasion** | **The unit leadership's method of obtaining obedience to orders and pursuit of mission objectives, consisting of a mix of coercion and persuasion. Coercion includes fear, compulsion, punishment, and external threats to elicit obedience. Persuasion is encouragement to perform to formal and informal standards of behavior. Neither extreme has a singular effect on W2F—a highly controlled unit may be more vulnerable to breakdowns in leadership but might be less vulnerable to measures aimed at breaking down individual combatants, and vice versa.** | Unit control is ineffective. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are unresponsive to leadership control, whether applied through persuasion or coercion. | Unit control is weak. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are inconsistently responsive to leadership control, whether applied through persuasion or coercion. | Unit control is adequate. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are generally responsive to leadership control, whether applied through persuasion or coercion. | Unit control is generally effective. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are responsive to leadership control, whether applied through persuasion or coercion. | Unit control is extremely effective. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are exceptionally responsive to leadership control, whether applied through persuasion or coercion. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | **Unit esprit de corps** | **Group spirit, consisting of the reputation of the unit, the sense of belonging that combatants feel to the unit, their collective fighting spirit, eagerness to execute tasks, confidence in battle, and the concept of elite membership. Higher esprit de corps is linked to higher W2F.** | Unit esprit de corps is nonexistent. Characteristics include: (1) combatants feel extremely negatively about the unit or its history; (2) combatants are ashamed of their membership in the unit; (3) the unit has an awful reputation. | Unit esprit de corps is weak. Characteristics include: (1) combatants have negative feelings about the unit or its history; (2) combatants derive no motivation from membership in the unit; (3) the unit has a poor reputation. | Unit esprit de corps is sufficient and/or not significant. Characteristics include: (1) combatants have mixed or neutral feelings about the unit; (2) combatants may take some pride in unit membership; (3) the unit has a mixed or unproven reputation. | Unit has strong esprit de corps. Characteristics include: (1) combatants feel positively about the unit and its history; (2) combatants take pride in unit membership; (3) the unit has a good reputation. | Unit has overwhelmingly strong esprit de corps. Characteristics include: (1) combatants feel extremely positively about the unit and its history; (2) combatants derive immense pride in unit membership; (3) the unit has a stellar reputation. |
| | **Unit capabilities** | **Unit competence—skills, training, performance** | **A unit's collective ability to perform tasks and defeat enemy forces under reasonable conditions. It includes quality and relevance of unit skills, training, and performance. Highly competent units tend to be more confident, which is associated with stronger W2F.** | Unit is essentially incompetent. Characteristics include: (1) training is inadequate for the mission; (2) training sustainment does not exist, and skills have atrophied; (3) performance of collective tasks is abysmal. | Unit competence is questionable and limited in scope. Characteristics include: (1) training is barely adequate for the mission; (2) training sustainment is inadequate, and skills have degraded; (3) performance of collective tasks is poor. | Unit competence is adequate. Characteristics include: (1) training is adequate for current mission; (2) training sustainment is adequate to generally maintain skills; (3) performance of collective tasks is adequate. | Unit is capable. Characteristics include: (1) training is effective for present tasks and provides flexibility for new missions; (2) training sustainment is good and fully maintains skills; (3) performance of collective tasks is good. | Unit is highly capable. Characteristics include: (1) training is well aligned with tasks and provides exceptional flexibility for new missions; (2) training sustainment is strong and sharpens skills; (3) performance of collective tasks is exceptional. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | | **Unit support—sufficiency, timeliness** | **Sufficiency and timeliness of the provision of equipment, supplies, weapons, medical assistance, fires, food, water, and other things that the unit needs to accomplish its missions and have basic quality of life. Poor support generally tends to reduce W2F but can affect each unit differently. Some units are able to maintain W2F even without adequate support.** | Unit does not provide combatants with basic necessities. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are inadequately equipped for the mission; (2) combatants lack necessities to maintain an acceptable quality of life; (3) chronic lack of unit-level support often cripples mission accomplishment OR unit recently failed to provide support in a dramatic manner; (4) combatants do not believe that they will receive adequate emergency support if needed. | Unit provides some necessities, but support is poor and inconsistent. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are not well equipped for the mission; (2) combatants sometimes lack basic necessities to maintain an acceptable quality of life; (3) lack of unit-level support sometimes undermines mission accomplishment OR unit-level support is spotty and unreliable; (4) combatants are unsure that they will receive adequate emergency support if needed. | Unit provides adequate support. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are adequately equipped for the mission; (2) combatants are provided basic necessities; (3) unit-level support generally enables mission accomplishment; (4) combatants generally have faith that they will receive basic emergency support if needed. | Unit provides generally reliable support. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are well equipped for the mission; (2) quality of life for combatants is good; (3) unit-level support is reliable and effective; (4) combatants have faith that they will receive emergency support if needed. | Unit provides excellent support. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are very well equipped for the mission; (2) quality of life for combatants is high—perhaps better than for civilians; (3) unit-level support is exemplary; (4) combatants have strong faith that they will receive high-quality emergency support if needed. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | | **Unit leadership—competence, character** | **The act of a person in authority directing and encouraging the behavior of combatants to accomplish a military mission. Competence is the ability to accomplish tasks and a demonstrated ability to win. Character reflects whether the leader can be counted on to do the right thing. Leaders who are competent and have strong character usually have a positive influence on W2F.** | Unit leaders are very weak. Characteristics include: (1) unit leaders are incompetent and/or obtained their positions via dubious means; (2) unit leaders are not mission driven; (3) unit leaders are deeply corrupt by cultural norms; (4) unit leaders are demoralizing and/or cruel to their subordinates by cultural norms. | Unit leaders are weak. Characteristics include: (1) unit leaders are sometimes incompetent; (2) unit leaders are generally not mission driven; (3) unit leaders are corrupt by cultural norms; (4) unit leaders are uninspiring and/or sometimes mistreat their subordinates by cultural norms. | Unit leaders are sufficient to keep the unit functioning. Characteristics include: (1) unit leaders are mostly capable; (2) unit leaders are generally focused on mission accomplishment; (3) unit leaders are not noticeably corrupt by cultural norms; (4) unit leaders neither demoralize nor inspire their subordinates. | Unit leaders are generally effective and inspire trust. Characteristics include: (1) unit leaders are capable and perceived as deserving of their positions; (2) unit leaders are focused on mission accomplishment; (3) unit leaders have good character by cultural norms; (4) unit leaders inspire confidence in their subordinates. | Unit leaders are highly capable and inspire deep trust. Characteristics include: (1) unit leaders are extremely capable and perceived as fully deserving of their positions; (2) unit leaders are extremely focused on mission accomplishment; (3) unit leaders have unimpeachable character by cultural norms; (4) unit leaders inspire extraordinary confidence in their subordinates. |

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| **Organization** | **Organizational culture** | **Organizational control—coercion, persuasion** | **The organization's method of obtaining obedience to orders and pursuit of mission objectives. Rules, regulations, enticements, and punishments are designed and codified by the organization and applied by leaders at the unit level. Typically, unit leaders seek to mirror organizational standards but tailor control to some degree in order to adapt to local conditions. Misalignment between organizational and unit control might reduce W2F as combatants struggle to fit their behavior into an acceptable norm or could enhance W2F by offsetting an ineffective organizational** | Organizational control is ineffective. Characteristics include: (1) organizational control is grossly ineffective, and unit control does not compensate for it. | Organizational control is weak. Characteristics include: (1) organizational control is generally ineffective, and unit control does not compensate for it OR organizational control is grossly ineffective, but unit control is able to partially compensate for it. | Organizational control is generally effective. Characteristics include: (1) organizational control and unit control are generally effective and well aligned OR organizational control is less effective, but unit control is able to compensate for it. | Organizational control is effective. Characteristics include: (1) organizational control and unit control are both effective and well aligned. | Organizational control is extremely effective. Characteristics include: (1) organizational control and unit control are both extremely effective and well aligned. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | | | **approach to control.** | | | | | |
| | | **Organizational esprit de corps** | **Similar to unit esprit de corps—group spirit, including the reputation of the organization, sense of belonging that combatants feel to the organization, their collective fighting spirit, eagerness to execute tasks, confidence in battle, and elite membership. Higher esprit de corps is linked to higher W2F.** | Organizational esprit de corps is nonexistent. Characteristics include: (1) combatants feel extremely negatively about the organization or its history; (2) combatants are ashamed of their membership in the organization; (3) the organization has an awful reputation. | Organizational esprit de corps is weak. Characteristics include: (1) combatants have negative feelings about the organization or its history; (2) combatants derive no motivation from membership in the organization; (3) the organization has a poor reputation. | Organizational esprit de corps is sufficient and/or not significant. Characteristics include: (1) combatant feelings about the organization are mixed or neutral; (2) combatants may take some pride in organization membership; (3) the organization has a mixed or unproven reputation. | Organization has strong esprit de corps. Characteristics include: (1) combatants feel positively about the organization and its history; (2) combatants take pride in organization membership; (3) the organization has a good reputation. | Organization has overwhelmingly strong esprit de corps. Characteristics include: (1) combatants feel extremely positively about the organization and its history; (2) combatants derive immense pride in organization membership; (3) the organization has a stellar reputation. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | | **Organizational integrity—corruption, trust** | **The professional character of the organization as demonstrated by how it deals with corruption and the resulting internal perceptions of fairness, measured in trust. While cultural norms may vary, high levels of trust are generally equated with improved W2F, while low levels of trust generally undermine W2F.** | Corruption is endemic and highly disruptive. Characteristics include: (1) combatants' lives are severely disrupted by corrupt practices; (2) corruption directly and severely undermines organizational functioning; (3) combatants actively distrust the organization. | Corruption is present and sometimes disruptive. Characteristics include: (1) combatants' lives are negatively affected by corruption; (2) corruption undermines organizational functioning; (3) combatants distrust the organization. | Corruption is manageable. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are sometimes impacted by corruption; (2) corruption has some impact on organizational functioning; (3) combatants generally trust the organization. | Corruption is low and well managed. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are generally protected from corruption; (2) corruption has minor impact on organizational functioning; (3) combatants trust the organization. | Corruption is rare and tightly controlled. Characteristics include: (1) combatants feel confident that they will not be affected by corrupt practices; (2) corruption has no measurable impact on performance; (3) combatants have exceptional trust in the organization. |

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| | **Organizational capabilities** | **Organizational training—capabilities, relevance, sufficiency, sustainment (of capability, not logistics)** | **Organizations provide capabilities developed through basic, advanced, and collective skills training. Ideally, organizations have the resources to provide training relevant to the missions at hand, training is sufficient for mission accomplishment, and sustainment training keeps skills sharp. Robust training that leads to a highly capable organization helps bolster W2F.** | Organizational training is inadequate. Characteristics include: (1) indoctrination and basic military skills training are nonexistent and/or ineffective; (2) advanced skills, including technical training, are nonexistent and/or very poorly trained, not trained, or inadequate for organizational missions; (3) training is badly out of alignment with current organizational doctrine and missions; (4) sustainment training is nonexistent or inadequate. | Organizational training is weak. Characteristics include: (1) indoctrination and basic skills training are weak—combatants are poorly prepared for service; (2) advanced skills, including technical training, are poorly trained, rarely trained, or inadequate for organizational missions; (3) training is out of alignment with current organizational doctrine and missions; (4) sustainment training is rare and/or poor. | Organizational training is acceptable. Characteristics include: (1) indoctrination and basic skills training are acceptable—combatants are generally prepared for service; (2) advanced skills, including technical training, are adequately trained, routinely trained, and adequate for organizational missions; (3) training is generally aligned with current organizational doctrine and missions; (4) sustainment training is available and adequate. | Organizational training meets requirements. Characteristics include: (1) indoctrination and basic skills training are good—combatants are well prepared for service; (2) advanced skills, including technical training, are well trained, trained often, and well suited to organizational missions; (3) training is well aligned with current organizational doctrine and missions; (4) sustainment training is readily available and is of high quality. | Organizational training is world class. Characteristics include: (1) indoctrination and basic skills training are exemplary—combatants are exceptionally well prepared for service; (2) advanced skills, including technical training, are exceptionally well trained, trained aggressively, and finely attuned to organizational missions; (3) training is tightly aligned with current organizational doctrine and missions; (4) sustainment training is nearly constant and is of exceptionally high quality. |

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| | | Organizational support—sufficiency, timeliness | **The organization's ability to meet demand (in terms of sufficiency and timeliness) in the provision of equipment, supplies, weapons, medical assistance, fires, food, water, and other requirements to keep units operating effectively. Poor support tends to decrease trust in organizational leadership and esprit de corps, leading to reduced W2F. However, lack of organizational support affects each unit differently, with some units able to maintain W2F even without adequate support.** | Organization does not provide combatants with basic necessities. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are inadequately equipped for the mission; (2) combatants lack necessities to maintain a reasonable quality of life; (3) chronic lack of organization-level support often cripples mission accomplishment OR organization recently failed to provide support in a dramatic manner; (4) combatants do not believe that they will receive adequate emergency support if needed. | Organization provides some necessities, but support is poor and inconsistent. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are not well equipped for the mission; (2) combatants sometimes lack basic necessities to maintain a reasonable quality of life; (3) lack of organization-level support sometimes undermines mission accomplishment OR organization-level support is spotty and unreliable; (4) combatants are unsure that they will receive adequate emergency support if needed. | Organization provides adequate support. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are adequately equipped for the mission; (2) combatants are provided basic necessities; (3) organization-level support generally enables mission accomplishment; (4) combatants generally have faith that they will receive basic emergency support if needed. | Organization provides generally reliable support. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are well equipped for the mission; (2) quality of life for combatants is good; (3) organization-level support is reliable and effective; (4) combatants have faith that they will receive emergency support if needed. | Organization provides excellent support. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are very well equipped for the mission; (2) quality of life for combatants is high—perhaps better than for civilians; (3) organization-level support is exemplary; (4) combatants have strong faith that they will receive high-quality emergency support if needed. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | | **Doctrine and structure—appropriateness, effectiveness** | **The organization's approach to organizing, functioning, and fighting. It provides guidelines for how each unit should prepare itself for combat and how it should act and fight. Doctrine represents the organization's understanding of and approach to warfare. Ideally, it is appropriate to the mission and provides a framework that helps the organization's units to achieve tactical and operational successes.** | Doctrine undermines mission success. Characteristics include: (1) doctrine is badly outdated and/or is not relevant to current conditions and/or is in conflict with the culture (societal, organizational, unit, individual); (2) general military theory is not applicable to current missions; (3) concepts and tactical recommendations in doctrine sharply undermine mission success; (4) doctrine is inflexible; (5) doctrine is very poorly articulated. | Doctrine does not contribute to mission success. Characteristics include: (1) doctrine is outdated and/or not directly relevant to current conditions and/ or is misaligned with the culture (societal, organizational, unit, individual); (2) general military theory is misaligned with current missions; (3) concepts and tactical recommendations in doctrine undermine mission success; (4) doctrine is rigid; (5) doctrine is not well articulated. | Doctrine is adequate. Characteristics include: (1) doctrine is generally up to date and is sufficiently relevant to current conditions and/or is aligned with the culture (societal, organizational, unit, individual); (2) general military theory is fairly well aligned with current missions; (3) concepts and tactical recommendations in doctrine are somewhat useful; (4) doctrine is neither rigid nor flexible; (5) doctrine is adequately articulated. | Doctrine is sound. Characteristics include: (1) doctrine is up to date and directly relevant to current conditions and is tailored to culture (societal, organizational, unit, individual); (2) general military theory is well aligned with current missions; (3) concepts and tactical recommendations in doctrine support mission success; (4) doctrine is flexible and supports adaptation; (5) doctrine is well articulated for combatants and leaders. | Doctrine is a significant combat multiplier. Characteristics include: (1) doctrine is cutting edge and forward thinking and/or explicitly leverages the culture (societal, organizational, unit, individual); (2) general military theory is tightly aligned with current missions and inspires military thinking; (3) concepts and tactical recommendations in doctrine drive mission success; (4) doctrine articulates a precise balance between guidance and flexibility; (5) doctrine is exceptionally well articulated. |

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| | | **Organizational leadership—competence, character** | **Similar to unit leadership (reference the definition of "leadership" there). At the organizational level, this is a generalized assessment about perceptions of leadership competence and character, which might be disproportionally impacted (positively or negatively) by one or more key leaders. Positive impressions about organizational leadership (individual or in general) should contribute to W2F.** | Organizational leaders are disastrous. Characteristics include: (1) organizational leaders have exceptionally poor character, and they cannot be trusted; (2) leaders are considered to be terrible people by regional cultural standards; (3) leaders are abusive; (4) leaders are meek; (5) leaders are ineffective, and they do not get things done; (6) leaders readily accept failure from subordinates; (7) leaders seem adrift and disconnected from the day-to-day functioning of the organization. | Organizational leaders are weak. Characteristics include: (1) organizational leaders have questionable character; (2) leaders are considered to be bad or weak people by regional cultural standards; (3) leaders do not treat subordinates well; (4) leaders are not sufficiently active or aggressive; (5) leaders struggle to get things done; (6) leaders are too quick to accept failure; (7) leaders are not effectively directing and controlling the organization. | Organizational leaders are adequate. Characteristics include: (1) organizational leaders have acceptable or mixed character; (2) leaders have mixed or neutral reputations by regional cultural standards; (3) leaders are generally fair to subordinates; (4) leaders have routine work habits and apply themselves to organizational duties; (5) leaders generally encourage success; (6) leaders are generally effective at directing and controlling the organization. | Organizational leaders are effective. Characteristics include: (1) organizational leaders have good character; (2) leaders are considered good people by regional cultural standards; (3) leaders are fair to subordinates and think of their welfare; (4) leaders have good work ethic and try to improve the organization; (5) leaders have high standards for performance; (6) leaders effectively direct and control the organization. | Organizational leaders are exceptional. Characteristics include: (1) organizational leaders have exceptionally good character; (2) leaders are considered to be exceptionally good people by regional cultural standards; (3) leaders pay very close attention to the welfare of subordinates and work hard to improve their lives; (4) leaders have exceptional work ethic and strive to improve their organization; (5) leaders demand high-level performance; (6) leaders are highly skilled at directing and controlling the organization. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| State | State culture | Civil-military relations—appropriateness, functionality | **The official and practical ways in which the military and civilian authorities interact. Appropriate relations fit within societal cultural norms and are generally acceptable to combatants. Functional civil-military relations facilitate military effectiveness rather than fostering doubt in the system. Positive civil-military relations likely have little impact on W2F, whereas fraught civil-military relations likely adversely impact W2F.** | Civil-military relations are skewed and dysfunctional. Characteristics include: (1) civilian and military leaders are fighting with each other for power; (2) civilian and military leaders share deeply corrupt relationships; (3) one side or the other has seized all power, creating a dangerous imbalance; (4) relations are so dysfunctional that they undermine military operations. | Civil-military relations are misaligned and generate friction. Characteristics include: (1) civilian and military leaders are at odds with each other, and their disagreements have public impact; (2) civilian and military leaders share some corrupt practices; (3) one side or the other is dominant in a way that imbalances state functioning and trust in the state; (4) poor civil-military relations have negative effects on military operations. | Civil-military relations are mixed but generally functional. Characteristics include: (1) civilian and military leaders share power with minimal public disturbance; (2) shared corrupt practices are manageable by regional cultural standards—they have minimal impact on the state and the military; (3) both sides have fairly well-balanced power relationships, or the existing imbalance has little negative effect; (4) civil-military relations generally do not affect military operations. | Civil-military relations are good and enhance military operations. Characteristics include: (1) civilian and military leaders support and respect each other; (2) corruption between civilian and military leaders is low and/or easily managed; (3) both sides share power and respect each other's roles; (4) relations are solid, and mutual support sends a positive signal to the society, the state, and the military. | Civil-military relations are a hallmark of state success and national unity. Characteristics include: (1) civilian and military leaders actively encourage and support each other; (2) corruption between civil and military leaders is negligible; (3) both sides share power equally and enthusiastically; (4) relations are highly effective—mutual support sends a powerful signal that the state is united behind the military, and the military is united behind the state. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | | **State integrity—corruption, trust** | **The way the state maintains and applies standards for behavior and corruption, much like at the organizational level. In general, reassurance resulting from state integrity, and a sense of trust and fairness, can enhance W2F. However, this is a complex and nuanced topic, especially across cultures.** | The state is deeply corrupt. Characteristics include: (1) corruption is deeply embedded at many levels of government; (2) the level of corruption is unacceptable by regional cultural standards; (3) state corruption directly and severely undermines government functioning; (4) corruption directly and severely undermines military functioning; (5) government reputation for integrity is awful. | The state is corrupt. Characteristics include: (1) corruption exists at many levels of government; (2) the level of corruption is concerning by regional cultural standards; (3) state corruption undermines government functioning; (4) corruption undermines military functioning; (5) government reputation for integrity is poor. | State corruption is mixed or generally manageable. Characteristics include: (1) government corruption exists but is not severe; (2) the level of corruption is manageable by regional cultural standards; (3) state corruption has negligible effects on government functioning; (4) corruption has negligible effects on military functioning; (5) government reputation for integrity is mixed or neutral. | State integrity is good. Characteristics include: (1) government corruption is well managed; (2) the level of corruption is low by regional cultural standards; (3) effective state anti-corruption efforts help maintain government performance; (4) military performance is strong as a result of the near absence of corruption; (5) the government has a reputation for generally solid integrity. | State integrity is unimpeachable. Characteristics include: (1) government corruption is exceptionally low and dealt with severely; (2) the level of corruption is exceptionally low by regional cultural standards; (3) highly effective state anti-corruption efforts foster effective government performance; (4) military performance is strong as a result of the absence of corruption; (5) the government has a reputation for unimpeachable integrity. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | State capabilities | State support—sufficiency, timeliness | **The state provides support to organizations, which in turn provide it to units and combatants. Organization and unit support are in many ways limited by what the state does and does not provide. State support can consist of major equipment items, personnel, supplies, medical assistance, and information. Generally, sufficient and timely state support improves W2F.** | State support to the military is grossly inadequate. Characteristics include: (1) military organizations and units do not have the materiel, funding, information, or other resources they need to accomplish their missions; (2) major gaps in basic materiel provided from the state often cripple effectiveness; (3) organizations and units regularly have to utilize other mechanisms of obtaining support to make up for nonexistent or failing state support. | State support to the military is inadequate. Characteristics include: (1) a significant portion of military organizations and units do not have enough of the materiel, funding, information, or other resources they need to accomplish their missions; (2) gaps in basic requirements from the state sometimes undermine effectiveness; (3) organizations and units have to improvise in order to make up for failing state support in some areas. | State support is adequate. Characteristics include: (1) military organizations and units have the basic materiel, funding, information, or other resources they need to accomplish their missions; (2) gaps in support exist but rarely at a level that adversely impacts military effectiveness; (3) organizations and units generally do not have to improvise or coordinate mechanisms to receive external support. | State support is effective. Characteristics include: (1) military organizations are well supported by the state—they have the materiel, funding, information, and other resources they need to succeed; (2) dependable support facilitates military effectiveness; (3) organizational and unit leaders are confident in state support and do not need to seek additional resourcing. | State support is dependable and highly effective. Characteristics include: (1) military organizations are exceptionally well supported by the state— they have the materiel, funding, information, and other resources they need to succeed in the most difficult circumstances; (2) exceptionally dependable support greatly facilitates military effectiveness; (3) organizational and unit leaders view state support as a major combat multiplier. |

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| | | **State strategy—clarity, effectiveness** | **The approach the state is taking to succeed in a specific conflict or contest. Strategy includes the plan and the actions to ensure that the plan succeeds. Clear and effective strategies are easier to translate into statements of purpose and action for combatants at the unit level, which likely help build and sustain W2F.** | State strategy is nonexistent, unclear, or incoherent. Characteristics include: (1) theory of victory for the current conflict is unclear and not communicated to the military; (2) conflict strategy is incoherent and is contributing directly to state defeat; (3) strategic guidance to the military is deeply confusing and misleading; (4) political dishonesty about the overall strategy shatters military confidence. | State strategy is impractical and/or not broadly understood. Characteristics include: (1) theory of victory for the current conflict is not sufficiently clear or well communicated to the military; (2) strategy is poorly designed and undermines military success; (3) strategic guidance to the military is at times confusing and contradictory; (4) state leaders are not being fully honest about their overall strategy. | State strategy is adequate. Characteristics include: (1) theory of victory for the current conflict is fairly clear and generally understood by the military; (2) strategy is adequately designed but not optimal, neither clearly harming nor helping the military; (3) strategic guidance to the military is generally clear and consistent; (4) state leaders are sufficiently clear and direct about the overall strategy. | State strategy helps drive military success. Characteristics include: (1) theory of victory for the current conflict is clear, directive, and well understood; (2) strategy is well designed and drives military success by aligning resourcing and plans; (3) strategic guidance to the military is clear and directive; (4) state leaders are generally clear and honest about the overall strategy. | State strategy is innovative, inspiring, and clearly guides successful military action. Characteristics include: (1) theory of victory for the current conflict is sharply defined and both directive and adaptable; (2) strategy clearly drives military success and inspires and provides commanders with both sufficient direction and flexibility; (3) strategic guidance is well focused on general context for military operations and for current missions; (4) state leaders are transparent and direct in communicating their overall strategy. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | | State leadership—competence, character | **State leadership builds or erodes confidence in the rationale for military action. This can be a comprehensive assessment, or it can center on top-level leadership—whichever is most relevant. As with the other leadership factors, competence and character are the primary characteristics to assess.** | State leadership is atrocious. Characteristics include: (1) state leaders are notoriously corrupt; (2) leaders have terrible character according to regional cultural standards; (3) the state and/or its agencies appear to be rudderless; (4) leaders' behavior causes despair among members of the government and/or the military. | State leadership is weak. Characteristics include: (1) state leaders are harmfully corrupt; (2) leaders have poor character according to regional cultural standards; (3) the state and/or its agencies lack direction and control; (4) leaders' behavior discourages members of the government and/or the military. | State leadership is adequate. Characteristics include: (1) leadership corruption is within acceptable regional limits; (2) leaders can generally be counted on to provide ethical leadership; (3) the state and/or its agencies are led with sufficient competence; (4) leaders neither discourage nor encourage members of the government and/or the military. | State leadership is positive and effective. Characteristics include: (1) leaders have a reputation for shunning corruption; (2) leaders can be counted on to be ethical; (3) the state and/or its agencies are led competently and effectively; (4) by their example and reputation, leaders encourage positive behavior and trust in the state. | State leadership is legendary—these are renowned figures. Characteristics include: (1) leaders appear to be almost wholly incorruptible; (2) leaders are highly ethical and demand ethical behavior in government; (3) the state and/or its agencies are led with razor-sharp effectiveness; (4) leaders are inspirational. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| **Society** | **Societal culture** | **Societal identity—ideology, ethnicity, history** | **Societal identity may include ideological (religious, political, etc.), ethnic, and historical aspects of identity and is closely tied to individual identity. Aspects of societal identity may align with or undermine military identities or missions. This is a deeply nuanced factor without a simple direct relationship.** | Societal identity is deeply divisive and/or debilitating. Characteristics include: (1) social divisions are tearing apart the society and causing violence between social groups; (2) dominant social groups are deeply opposed to the military or its missions; (3) one or more societal identities are deeply incompatible with military service. | Societal identity is divisive and undermines social, state, and military order and effectiveness. Characteristics include: (1) societal divisions are weakening societal bonds and causing friction between social groups; (2) dominant social groups oppose the military or its mission; (3) one or more societal identities are incompatible with military service. | Societal identity issues have mixed or no impact on the military. Characteristics include: (1) societal divisions are not obviously disruptive; (2) dominant social groups neither actively oppose nor support the military or its missions; (3) societal identities do not affect individual decisions to serve in the military; (4) some identities weaken societal connections to the military, but other identities balance them out. | Societal identity is a source of strength and unity. Characteristics include: (1) unity of identity gives the society a sense of common cause and purpose; (2) dominant social groups support the military and its mission; (3) identity differences provide helpful diversity to the military and can be a source of strength. | Societal identity unifies the society and empowers the state, organization, unit, and combatants. Characteristics include: (1) social unity drives social purpose and inspires military duty and heroism; (2) dominant social groups aggressively and openly support the military and its mission; (3) societal identity differences are a source of deep strength for the military—they demonstrate the nonpartisan nature of military service. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | | **Societal integrity—corruption, trust** | **The presence, nature, and impact (in terms of expectation and trust) of corruption and (un)ethical behavior in the society from which the military is drawn. Weak integrity undermines social trust, or the cohesion between people in the society. Societal integrity directly influences, but might be very different from, state integrity and organizational integrity. Cultural norms define what is or is not acceptable in terms of corruption and ethical behavior. This is a complex factor and requires a nuanced analysis.** | Corrosive societal integrity is severely debilitating to society. Characteristics include: (1) corruption permeates all parts of society and corrodes public trust and the basic functions of the society and the state; (2) corruption is endemic and debilitating in one or several critical parts of society; (3) corruption is wholly unacceptable by regional cultural standards; (4) corruption prevents social trust; (5) standards for ethical behavior are extraordinarily low. | Low standards for societal integrity undermine social trust and social functioning. Characteristics include: (1) corruption is present in many parts of society and undermines public trust and some functions of the society and the state; (2) corruption is present and harmful in one or several critical parts of society; (3) corruption is worrisome by regional cultural standards; (4) corruption undermines the development of social trust; (5) standards for ethical behavior are low. | Standards for societal integrity are sufficient to maintain basic social trust and functioning. Characteristics include: (1) corruption exists but has little to no impact on public trust or social or state functioning; (2) corruption is present but not particularly harmful in one or several critical parts of society; (3) corruption is generally acceptable by regional cultural standards; (4) corruption does not affect the development of social trust; (5) standards for ethical behavior are generally sufficient to help sustain a functional level of social trust. | High standards for societal integrity foster social trust and social functioning. Characteristics include: (1) corruption is infrequent and well controlled, and the societal efforts to keep corruption low enhance public trust and functioning; (2) corruption is generally considered low by regional cultural standards; (3) standards for ethical behavior are high and help to build and sustain high levels of social trust. | Exceptionally high standards for societal integrity provide a solid foundation for society. Characteristics include: (1) corruption is rare and generally not accepted in any part of society; (2) corruption is considered exceptionally low by regional cultural standards; (3) standards for ethical behavior in society are exemplary—ethical behavior is a central cultural norm. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | Societal support | Societal support—consistency, efficiency | **This covers an array of attitudes and behaviors, including popular support for the military and/or its operations; material support provided to the combatants by private citizens and organizations and/or willingness to sacrifice for or contribute to the military and/or the cause; and recruiting support, primarily through a clear demonstration of propensity to serve. Societal support generally has a direct and positive impact on W2F.** | Society does not support the military. Characteristics include: (1) most citizens actively dislike the military; (2) citizens provide no material support to combatants; (3) joining the military is considered amoral, stupid, or both; (4) citizens support the combatants but actively oppose the current war or the military organization OR citizens support the current war but think the military is incompetent and useless. | Society provides only limited support to the military. Characteristics include: (1) some citizens actively dislike the military—its reputation is poor; (2) citizens provide little in the way of material support to combatants; (3) joining the military is considered a poor life choice; (4) some citizens support the combatants but not the war or the military organization OR some citizens support the war but not the military organization. | Society provides adequate support to the military. Characteristics include: (1) most citizens have mixed or neutral opinions about the military; (2) some citizens provide some material support to combatants; (3) the military is no more or less respected than any other profession; (4) societal support for the combatants, organization, and mission are mixed or effectively neutral. | Society actively supports the military. Characteristics include: (1) many citizens like the military—its reputation is good; (2) many citizens provide direct material support to the combatants in the form of packages, demonstrations, social media messages, and other writings; (3) the military is well respected as a profession; (4) in general, citizens support the combatants, the organization, and the current war. | The military is a central pillar in society—it receives broad public support. Characteristics include: (1) most citizens have tremendous respect for the military—its reputation is outstanding; (2) many citizens actively provide material support, and most citizens are willing to provide support; (3) the military is highly respected as a profession—it is one of the most sought-after professions in society; (4) most citizens strongly support the combatants, the military organization, and the current war. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| Optional factors | | Climate and weather | **Conditions like heat, cold, rain, snow, ice, dry air, and humidity affect W2F. Well-prepared units fighting in conditions to which they are accustomed are less likely to suffer from climate and weather effects and, in fact, may have a stronger W2F as a result of their perceived readiness.** | Climate and weather conditions are harsh and/or extremely draining. Characteristics include: (1) conditions are extreme AND the combatants are not prepared; (2) equipment and uniforms are drastically inappropriate and/or almost completely ineffective. | Climate and weather conditions are difficult and/or draining. Characteristics include: (1) conditions are difficult AND the combatants are not well prepared; (2) equipment and uniforms are not well suited for the conditions and/or are only partially effective. | Climate and weather have mixed or neutral impact on the unit. Characteristics include: (1) conditions are effectively neutral; (2) combatants are adequately prepared; (3) equipment and uniforms are adequate for the conditions. | Climate and weather conditions give the unit an edge. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are well prepared for the conditions; (2) equipment and uniforms are well suited for the conditions; (3) conditions give the unit a comparative advantage over the adversary. | Climate and weather conditions give the unit a significant advantage. Characteristics include: (1) combatants are exceptionally well prepared for the conditions; (2) equipment and uniforms are tailored for the conditions; (3) conditions give the unit a significant advantage over the adversary. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | | Terrain | **The land's physical features—including open plains, farmland, hills, mountains, swamps, forests, jungles, and urban areas. Familiarity and preparation generate capability and confidence, which, in turn, improve W2F.** | Terrain conditions are extremely dangerous. Characteristics include: (1) extreme terrain heavily degrades combatants and equipment; (2) terrain is completely unfamiliar; (3) terrain gives the adversary a massive tactical advantage; (4) equipment and uniforms are not at all appropriate for the terrain. | Terrain conditions are difficult. Characteristics include: (1) difficult terrain degrades combatants and equipment; (2) terrain is somewhat unfamiliar; (3) terrain gives the adversary a tactical advantage; (4) equipment and uniforms are not well matched for the terrain. | Terrain conditions are mixed or have little impact on the unit. Characteristics include: (1) terrain results in standard wear and tear on combatants or equipment; (2) combatants are generally familiar with the terrain; (3) terrain gives neither side an advantage; (4) equipment and uniforms are sufficient for the terrain. | Terrain conditions are advantageous. Characteristics include: (1) terrain generally does not wear on combatants and equipment; (2) combatants are confident operating in the terrain; (3) terrain gives the unit a tactical advantage; (4) equipment and uniforms are well matched to the terrain. | Terrain conditions are extraordinarily advantageous. Characteristics include: (1) terrain produces minimal wear on combatants and equipment; (2) combatants are supremely confident in their ability to operate in the terrain; (3) terrain gives the unit an extraordinary tactical advantage; (4) equipment and uniforms are tailored for the terrain. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | | Fatigue | **The toll on combatants from combat stress (fear, killing, losing friends, etc.), physical exertion, exposure to the elements, long periods away from home and family, and similar grinding physical and mental effects. It can accrue rapidly or gradually. Fatigue can undermine capability, which undermines confidence and, therefore, W2F.** | Unit is exhausted. Characteristics include: (1) combat exhaustion has set in across the unit, sharply degrading effectiveness; (2) perceived long deployment time away from home is demoralizing. | Unit is tired. Characteristics include: (1) combat fatigue has set in across the unit, degrading effectiveness; (2) perceived long deployment time away from home has contributed to fatigue. | Unit fatigue has not set in. Characteristics include: (1) the unit is not (yet) suffering from the effects of fatigue OR leadership effectively manages fatigue through operational tempo (unit or combatant rotations) | Unit is fresh or has benefited from tough experiences. Characteristics include: (1) the unit has had sufficient time to rest and refit between combat or is new to the combat theater; (2) combatants do not believe that they have been deployed for too long OR combatants believe that the long deployment is warranted—it is not a source of fatigue. | Unit is at its peak of capability and performance and/or gains strength from tough conditions. Characteristics include: (1) the unit is fresh and at peak capability; (2) combatants do not believe that they have been deployed for too long OR combatants firmly believe that the long deployment is necessary and/or thrive in a combat environment for extended periods. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | | Perception of mission | **The combatants' understanding of their mission as tactically worthwhile, achievable, dangerous, and ideologically and politically valid in a broader operational and strategic contexts. Worthwhile, achievable, and valid missions with acceptable risk can reinforce W2F.** | Combatants consider the mission to be irrelevant or unworthy of sacrifice. Characteristics include: (1) the mission is viewed as a waste of lives and/or resources; (2) combatants have no faith that they can accomplish the mission; (3) risks are deemed excessively high—combatants firmly believe that they will die if they undertake the mission and do not believe the sacrifice is worth it. | Combatants question the mission. Characteristics include: (1) combatants question the necessity of the mission; (2) combatants doubt that they can accomplish the mission; (3) risks are thought to be high—combatants believe that they are likely to die and question if the sacrifice is worth it. | Combatants generally accept the mission. Characteristics include: (1) the mission is viewed as an acceptable necessity; (2) combatants generally do not question the ability of the unit to succeed; (3) risks are deemed acceptable or are generally not questioned. | Combatants support the mission. Characteristics include: (1) the mission is viewed as necessary; (2) combatants believe that the mission will succeed; (3) risks are deemed worthwhile or low, or both. | Combatants embrace the mission and are driven to support its objectives. Characteristics include: (1) the mission is viewed as essential, or even existential; (2) combatants have supreme faith that the mission will be successful; (3) risks are fully accepted or are seen as negligible, or both. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | | Adversary reputation | **How competent and dangerous the combatants view the adversary to be, relative to the combatants themselves. If combatants have high expectations of adversary performance and the adversary performs poorly, confidence (and thus W2F) may increase, and vice versa.** | Combatants are terrified of the adversary. Characteristics include: (1) combatants believe that the adversary is invincible; (2) the adversary has a reputation for atrocities, and this terrifies the combatants. | Combatants fear the adversary. Characteristics include: (1) combatants believe that the adversary will be very hard to defeat; (2) the adversary has a reputation for atrocities, and this scares the combatants. | Combatants accept the nature of the adversary with little or mixed impact. Characteristics include: (1) combatants believe that the adversary can be defeated given the right conditions; (2) the adversary has a reputation for atrocities, but combatants are generally unaffected. | Combatants are confident that they can defeat the adversary. Characteristics include: (1) combatants believe that they will defeat the adversary under most conditions; (2) the adversary has a reputation for atrocities, and this inspires anger, motivating the combatants to fight. | Combatants are supremely confident that they can defeat the adversary. Characteristics include: (1) combatants believe absolutely in their ability to defeat the adversary in any circumstance; (2) adversary reputation for atrocities infuriates the combatants and serves as a powerful motivation to fight. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | | Adversary performance | **Successful or failed adversary combat actions, atrocities, surrenders, effective or ineffective tactics, and aggressiveness of fighting style. Poor adversary performance can improve W2F.** | Adversary is highly aggressive, highly capable, and dominant. Characteristics include: (1) adversary attacks are hugely successful against friendly military forces; (2) adversary combatants are highly aggressive and display strong W2F; (3) a negligible number of adversary combatants have surrendered or quit in battle; (4) adversary tactics are brilliant and tailored to defeat friendly military forces. | Adversary is aggressive, capable, and successful. Characteristics include: (1) adversary attacks are successful against friendly military forces; (2) adversary combatants are aggressive and seem to have strong W2F; (3) few adversary combatants have surrendered or quit; (4) adversary tactics are sound and effective against friendly military forces | Neither side appears to have a significant advantage—results are mixed. Characteristics include: (1) adversary attacks have mixed or unclear results; (2) adversary combatants are basically competent but not clearly superior or inferior; (3) some adversary combatants have surrendered or quit, but not in large numbers; (4) adversary tactics are sufficient, but there are exploitable flaws. | Adversary performance has been poor or unimpressive. Characteristics include: (1) many adversary attacks have failed or have had poor results; (2) adversary combatants lack competence in some areas and seem to be weak; (3) many adversary combatants have surrendered or quit; (4) adversary tactics are poorly conceived and/or executed—they can be beaten. | The adversary is incompetent and/or collapsing. Characteristics include: (1) adversary performance has been pathetic—they almost always fail in combat; (2) adversary combatants are clearly incapable of fighting effectively and are visibly weak; (3) adversary combatants, and possibly some leaders, are giving up in droves; (4) adversary tactics are so poor that they actually benefit friendly forces. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | | Adversary equipment | **The real and perceived physical capabilities and material effectiveness of the adversary force. Includes the use of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), such as those that are chemical, biological, radiological, or nuclear, or incendiaries. Adversary equipment that is far superior may undermine W2F, or vice versa.** | Adversary equipment is far superior, highly effective, and/or terrifying. Characteristics include: (1) adversary equipment is far superior to friendly equipment; (2) the vast disparity in equipment between adversary and friendly forces terrifies the unit's combatants; (3) use of WMD and/or incendiaries terrifies the unit's combatants. | Adversary equipment is superior, effective, and/or frightening. Characteristics include: (1) adversary equipment, including weapons, is superior to friendly equipment; (2) disparity in equipment between adversary and friendly forces undermines combatants' confidence; (3) use of WMD and/or incendiaries scares the unit's combatants. | Adversary equipment is generally on par with friendly equipment. Characteristics include: (1) adversary equipment and weapons are generally equivalent to friendly equipment and weapons in terms of quality and capability; (2) use of WMD and/or incendiaries has a negligible effect on the combatants; (3) the unit is neither directly nor indirectly affected by adversary equipment. | Adversary equipment is less effective and/or of lesser quality than friendly equipment. Characteristics include: (1) adversary equipment is of lower quality and has less capability than friendly equipment; (2) the positive disparity in equipment contributes to combatants' confidence; (3) use of WMD and/or incendiaries angers combatants more than it scares them. | Adversary equipment is pathetic and/or far less effective than friendly equipment. Characteristics include: (1) adversary equipment is of very poor quality and offers little capability to the adversary; (2) highly positive disparity between adversary and friendly equipment is a huge confidence booster; (3) use of WMD and/or incendiaries infuriates the combatants and motivates them to fight. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | | Messaging | **Both friendly and adversary forces may try to use information activities to influence W2F. This can be through any vector, including political officers, loudspeaker, internet, text messaging, leaflet, rumor-mongering through word of mouth, or others. Sometimes adversary messaging can unintentionally boost friendly W2F (e.g., a deeply offensive message or a message that makes the adversary look foolish).** | Messaging is having a crippling effect. Characteristics include: (1) adversary messaging is terrifying and/or deeply compelling; (2) adversary messaging is far more convincing than friendly messaging; (3) friendly messaging is incompetent or backfiring. | Messaging is having a negative effect on combatants. Characteristics include: (1) adversary messaging is generating fear and/or compelling; (2) adversary messaging is more convincing, on balance, than friendly messaging; (3) friendly messaging is mostly ineffective. | Messaging effectiveness is mixed or neutral. Characteristics include: (1) adversary messaging has negligible effects; (2) friendly messaging has negligible effects. | Messaging is having a positive effect on combatants. Characteristics include: (1) adversary messaging is not effective and possibly backfiring; (2) adversary messaging is less convincing, on balance, than friendly messaging; (3) friendly messaging is mostly effective. | Messaging is having a highly positive effect on combatants. Characteristics include: (1) adversary messaging is grossly ineffective and backfiring; (2) adversary messaging is far less convincing than friendly messaging; (3) friendly messaging is powerful and highly effective. |

| Level | Category | Factor | Factor Definition | Significantly Undermines Will to Fight (1) | Undermines Will to Fight (2) | Has Minimal Impact on Will to Fight (3) | Improves Will to Fight (4) | Significantly Improves Will to Fight (5) |
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| | | **Allies** | **The type, quality, and consistency of support provided by allied military forces. Allies might provide advantages that boost W2F or create or exacerbate dependencies that reduce W2F. Sometimes the absence of allies is a factor, particularly if there was some expectation for allied support that went unmet.** | Allies are severely undercutting friendly military performance. Characteristics include: (1) allied military forces are performing terribly, increasing friendly vulnerabilities; (2) promised allied support was not provided; (3) many allied forces have fled; (4) allies are creating dangerous logistical and/or combat support dependencies among friendly forces. | Allies are harmful to friendly military performance. Characteristics include: (1) allied military forces are performing poorly; (2) not all promised allied support was provided OR promised allied support has been unreliable; (3) some allied forces have fled; (4) allies are creating logistical and/or combat dependencies that undermine friendly forces. | Allies are having mixed or neutral impact on friendly performance. Characteristics include: (1) allied military forces are performing adequately; (2) promised allied support is generally provided; (3) few, if any, allied forces have fled; (4) any dependencies that the allies are creating are manageable. | Allies are contributing to military success. Characteristics include: (1) allied military forces are performing well; (2) allied support is reliable; (3) few, if any, allied forces have fled; (4) allies have not created noticeably harmful dependencies. | Allies are extraordinarily helpful. Characteristics include: (1) allied military forces are performing exceptionally well; (2) allied support is highly reliable and almost unquestionably dependable; (3) allied forces are resolute; (4) allies have been careful to avoid creating harmful dependencies among friendly forces. |

Appendix B

# Will to Fight Research and Analysis Background

This appendix provides a brief overview of the range of W2F research and analytical methodologies. It is intended to help illustrate how W2F thinking has evolved, illustrate some of the nuanced differences in perspective, and provide others with a foundation for subsequent research on related topics.

## Academic Will to Fight Research

1. **Foundational research by RAND.** In 2018, RAND personnel completed foundational research on the topic of W2F sponsored by the U.S. Army. This research looked at both military units and at national-level W2F. RAND's foundational research established a formal definition for W2F, both for units and the national level, and the model that serves as the basis for this tactical W2F assessment framework. RAND's model established the framing of levels, categories, factors, subfactors, and the consideration of their durability. This research included two reports and a research brief:
   - Ben Connable, Michael J. McNerney, William Marcellino, Aaron B. Frank, Henry Hargrove, Marek N. Posard, S. Rebecca Zimmerman, Natasha Lander, Jasen J. Castillo, and James Sladden, *Will to Fight: Analyzing, Modeling, and Simulating the Will to Fight of Military Units*, RAND Corporation, RR-2341-A, 2018. As of December 1, 2025: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2341.html
   - Michael J. McNerney, Ben Connable, S. Rebecca Zimmerman, Natasha Lander, Marek N. Posard, Jasen J. Castillo, Dan Madden, Ilana Blum, Aaron B. Frank, Benjamin J. Fernandes, in Hyo Seol, Christopher Paul, and Andrew Parasiliti, *National Will to Fight: Why Some States Keep Fighting and Others Don't*, RAND Corporation, RR-2477-A, 2018. As of December 1, 2025: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2477.html
   - RAND Corporation, "Will to Fight: Returning to the Human Fundamentals of War," RB-10040-A, 2019. As of December 1, 2025: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_briefs/RB10040.html
2. **Case study research.** RAND researchers have conducted several comprehensive W2F case studies using the RAND model, including a detailed examination of the Iraqi Army during its fight against ISIS and an analysis of Russian private military contractors. RAND researchers have also conducted detailed W2F research on Russian and Ukrainian forces in the Russia-

Ukraine war, but that research has not been approved for release at the time of this publication. Key reports include the following:

- Ben Connable, *Iraqi Army Will to Fight: A Will-to-Fight Case Study with Lessons for Western Security Force Assistance*, RAND Corporation, RR-A238-1, 2022a. As of December 1, 2025: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA238-1.html
- Molly Dunigan and Anthony Atler, *Will to Fight of Private Military Actors: Applying Cognitive Maneuver to Russian Private Forces*, RAND Corporation, RR-A355-1, 2023. As of November 6, 2025: https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RRA355-1.html

3. **Will to Fight Act.** Following several significant failures in W2F assessment (the Iraqi Army's nearly disastrous response to ISIS [2014], Afghan National Security Forces' disastrous response to the Taliban's final assault [2021], and the Ukrainian Armed Forces' unexpected success against Russia's invasion in 2022), Congress, in the fiscal year 2023 National Defense Authorization Act, directed a

   > report examining the extent to which analyses of the military will to fight and the national will to fight informed the all-source analyses of the intelligence community regarding how the armed forces and governments of Ukraine, Afghanistan, and Iraq would perform at key junctures.[38]

   The same act also endorsed RAND's definitions for unit and national W2F as a starting point for analysis.

4. **CNA: Will They Fight?** The Office of the Secretary of Defense commissioned CNA to conduct the resulting study *Will They Fight? Assessing Military Will to Fight*, which was published in August 2024. It generally endorsed RAND's foundational research but argued for shifting focus from a dispositional and presumably static look at *will to fight* to a scenario- or context-specific framing of *will they fight?*, especially as it pertains to partners.

   - Sam Plapinger, Ryan Baker, Nicholas Bradford, Margaret Sparling, and Annaleah Westerhaug, *Will They Fight? Assessing Military Will to Fight*, CNA, DRM-2024-U-038522, August 2024.

5. **Devoted Actor Framework.** Over the past two decades, Scott Atran, of Artis International, has developed the Devoted Actor Framework (DAF) with support from the National Science Foundation, the Carnegie Foundation, and the Department of Defense Minerva Initiative. In contrast with the broader framework developed by RAND, the DAF focuses on psychosocial factors that explore actors' willingness to fight and die. This work is based on a comprehensive set of brain scans.

[38] Public Law 117-263, 2022, Section 6521.

– Scott Atran, "What Sustains Wars: Will to Fight Versus Military Might," *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, Vol. 1554, No. 1, December 2025. As of November 30, 2025:
https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/41177947/

## Defense and Intelligence Research and Analytical Resources

6. **DIA will to fight analysis.** In January 2023, DIA's Office of the Research Director issued *Analyzing Will to Fight*, Tradecraft Note 02-23, which is unclassified. In that document, DIA describes W2F as "one of several factors that comprise the 'Intangibles' element of the STEEPRISE framework. STEEPRISE serves as the backbone for military capabilities (MILCAP) analysis at DIA. Its constituent elements—Structure, Training, Environment, Employment, Personnel, Roles and Missions, Intangibles, Sustainment, and Equipment—represent the driving factors necessary for consideration to answer the key MILCAP intelligence question." The other intangibles are "why they fight" and "how they fight." DIA's Tradecraft Note also builds on RAND's foundational research. The document skews toward national-level analysis, which makes sense for that organization. It is set up in a worksheet-style format, but its analytical focus is different. Although it does have factors and corresponding definitions, it does not include the rubric that this tool does to help with prioritization and with consideration about what to do about findings from the assessment.
   – DIA, Office of the Research Director, *Analyzing Will to Fight*, Tradecraft Note 02-23, January 2023.
7. **The Global Cultural Knowledge Network (GCKN) and the Exploitable Conditions Framework (ECF).** Formerly part of the U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command, now part of the Transformation and Training Command (T2COM) under the Foreign Military Studies Office, the "GCKN provides the Army with relevant sociocultural analysis, methodology, expertise, and training to contextualize the OE [operational environment], revealing the root causes of conflict and instability. GCKN leverages elements within the Army, DOD, academia, and industry to conduct sociocultural research in support of PME [professional military education], training exercises, and wargames, and informs Army DOTMLPF-P to increase the social science expertise within the US Army and Joint Force."[39] The GCKN was established in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017.[40] The GCKN uses "[t]he ECF as a simple and practical means to enhance sociocultural understanding of the OE. The ECF helps analysts identify and understand any of the 12 Exploitable Conditions in a specific area."[41] The GCKN also offers a two-hour course for analysts to learn how to apply the framework. This relates closely to W2F analysis but takes a

[39] T2COM G2 Operational Environment Enterprise, "About FMSO & GCKN," webpage, undated. DOTMLPF-P is doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy.

[40] Public Law 114-328, National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017, December 23, 2016, Section 1087.

[41] T2COM G2 Operational Environment Enterprise, "What Is ECF," webpage, undated.

broader look than what we propose. Previously, GCKN provided unclassified "Running Estimates" on Russian domestic perceptions of the war in Ukraine.[42] The following article offers additional insight into the ECF via a brief case study of the Russia-Ukraine war.

– Benjamin A. Okonofua, Nicole Laster-Loucks, and Andrew Johnson, "'Will to Fight': Twenty-First-Century Insights from the Russo-Ukrainian War," *Military Review*, May–June 2024. As of November 30, 2025: https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Journals/Military-Review/English-Edition-Archives/May-June-2024/MJ-24-Will-to-Fight/

[42] Army University Press, "Global Cultural Knowledge Network Running Estimates," webpage, undated.

Appendix C

# Research Method

The development of this tool followed a rigorous social science approach. The effort began with a literature review of previous research on W2F, which included, but was not limited to, RAND's previous body of work on the topic. It included foundational research and examinations of case studies (see Appendix B for more on specific sources). It also included reviews of work that has not yet been publicly released. The authors collaborated with colleagues from RAND and other organizations who have previously conducted and continue to conduct research and analysis on related topics.

The authors built on existing research and previously developed frameworks to develop a draft tactical W2F assessment framework tailored to meet the Marine Corps Information Operations Center's (MCIOC's) analytical needs. This draft framework was then tested, first by RAND analysts, by applying it to a test case: North Korean soldiers operating in the Russia-Ukraine war. The preponderance of the analysis was conducted at the unclassified level, and then it was finished with classified sources. The RAND team then presented the draft framework and worked example to MCIOC at an in-person workshop, which included personnel from a variety of operational and analytical backgrounds. MCIOC personnel offered feedback, which the RAND team then incorporated into this final version. Finally, MCIOC analysts took the updated draft and used it for a W2F assessment of a real-world case. The RAND team received feedback from the MCIOC team and incorporated it into this tool.

# Abbreviations

| | |
|---|---|
| AI | artificial intelligence |
| COG | center of gravity |
| DIA | Defense Intelligence Agency |
| DoD | U.S. Department of Defense |
| GIRH | Generic Intelligence Requirements Handbook |
| IPB | Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace |
| IPIE | Information Preparation of the Information Environment |
| ISIS | Islamic State of Iraq and Syria |
| JIPOE | Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment |
| LLM | large language model |
| MCIOC | Marine Corps Information Operations Center |
| NGO | nongovernmental organization |
| PO | psychological objective |
| PSYOP | psychological operations |
| SIPRNet | Secret Internet Protocol Router Network |
| TAA | target audience analysis |
| TAAM | target audience analysis model |
| TAAW | target audience analysis worksheet |
| W2F | will to fight |
| WMD | weapons of mass destruction |

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