



FODA:

A Modern Approach to Army Targeting Methodology, Part 1

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This article is the first in a three-part series aimed at revolutionizing and proposing necessary changes to the Army's current targeting methodology. Please make sure to read parts two and three for a full overview.

“The role of the theorist is not to provide off-the-shelf systems of warfare but to provide a vehicle for discussion of war, and material for training minds to make war more skillfully, or to avoid it.”^[1]

The Army's targeting methodology, which formally implemented the Assess step almost 30 years ago, has seen few fundamental changes despite adjustments to foundational Army doctrine such as FM 3-0. Decide, Detect, Deliver, and Assess (D3A) shaped and stagnated Army leaders' thought processes for decades. The lack of adaptation in D3A is not an indication of its longevity, but rather reflects a reticence to reassess and evolve.

This paper seeks to propose a new Army targeting methodology: Frame, Orient, Decide, and Assess (FODA). The process is designed to address key shortcomings of the existing method. The FODA methodology seeks to improve two key areas the previous methodology failed to adequately address: pragmatism and the consideration of feedback frequency.

The first area of improvement includes the promotion of pragmatism. Pragmatism is defined as, “possessing the will, knowledge, and skill to do what a military situation requires, while not being wedded to idealistic or dogmatic prescriptions.”^[2] FODA introduces pragmatism as a principle of targeting. This definition underpins the FODA methodology's approach to adaptive decision-making.

The second area of improvement is the implementation of multiple feedback loops. The current methodology of D3A has a single feedback loop and is typically executed in a 24-hour sequence. The sluggish way units execute D3A creates delays in decision-making. “Delays in feedback loops are critical determinants of system behavior.”^[3] This inefficiency is comparable to a thermostat that only monitors the temperature every 24 hours, regardless of ongoing environmental changes. “Overlong delays in a system with a threshold, a danger point, a range past which irreversible damage can occur, cause overshoot and collapse.”^[4] As the modern battlefield evolves, encompassing five domains and three dimensions, the Army must adapt to a more agile targeting methodology through FODA.

The Targeting Problem

The current Army Targeting Methodology provides an effective method for matching friendly force capabilities against enemy targets, however, the methodology falls short in guiding the selection of appropriate targets in the first place. This is a flaw in the current methodology as it is designed to consist of four functions. One of which is “deciding what, when, where, and how to employ capabilities against targets.”^[5] However, this function assumes that the targets have already been selected. It is a recurring theme throughout the current FM 3-60 that the preponderance of the process is designed for synchronizing and employing capabilities against targets, as opposed to

Soldiers assigned to the 2nd Battalion, 77th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 4th Infantry Division, observe artillery fires from a cliffside vantage point using binoculars during Exercise Steel Avalanche, at Fort Carson, Colorado. From this elevated position, Soldiers can closely monitor round impacts, providing valuable feedback for targeting adjustments and ensuring fire support effectiveness. (U.S. Army photo by Spc. Doniel Kennedy.)

choosing the correct targets in the first place. This approach fosters a checklist mentality, where more attention is given to the development of fighting products focused on matching responses to targets, rather than analyzing operational needs and selecting targets based on appropriate variables.

Since the current methodology focuses more on matching the appropriate response to targets than it does on considering operational capabilities, it fosters intellectual laziness in which staffs select targets based on heuristics and social norms. The lack of attention toward appropriate selection is a cause for concern for any true targeting professional, as history suggests that no two wars will be fought the same. A quick analysis of the 2003 invasion of Iraq, the First Chechen War, and the Yom Kippur War demonstrate the unpredictability of warfare and the fundamental need for more attention focused on selecting targets appropriately. Common phrases among Staff officers—including “If you’ve done one warfighter you’ve done them all” or “Tanks kill tanks”—exemplify preconceived assumptions made without adequate analysis, leading to a flawed outcome from the outset.

In response to feedback mechanisms, the methodology’s rigid, circular format of D3A slows decision-making and limits flexibility in changing environments. Each phase depends on the completion of the last, which hinders real-time adaptation and risks missing critical opportunities. Modern military conflicts exist in an inherently complex environment where feedback can be minimal or drastically varied, making accurate predictive analysis for targeting difficult. However, one can simplify complex environments by adding frequent and rigorous feedback at every opportunity.^[6] A more effective approach would introduce feedback

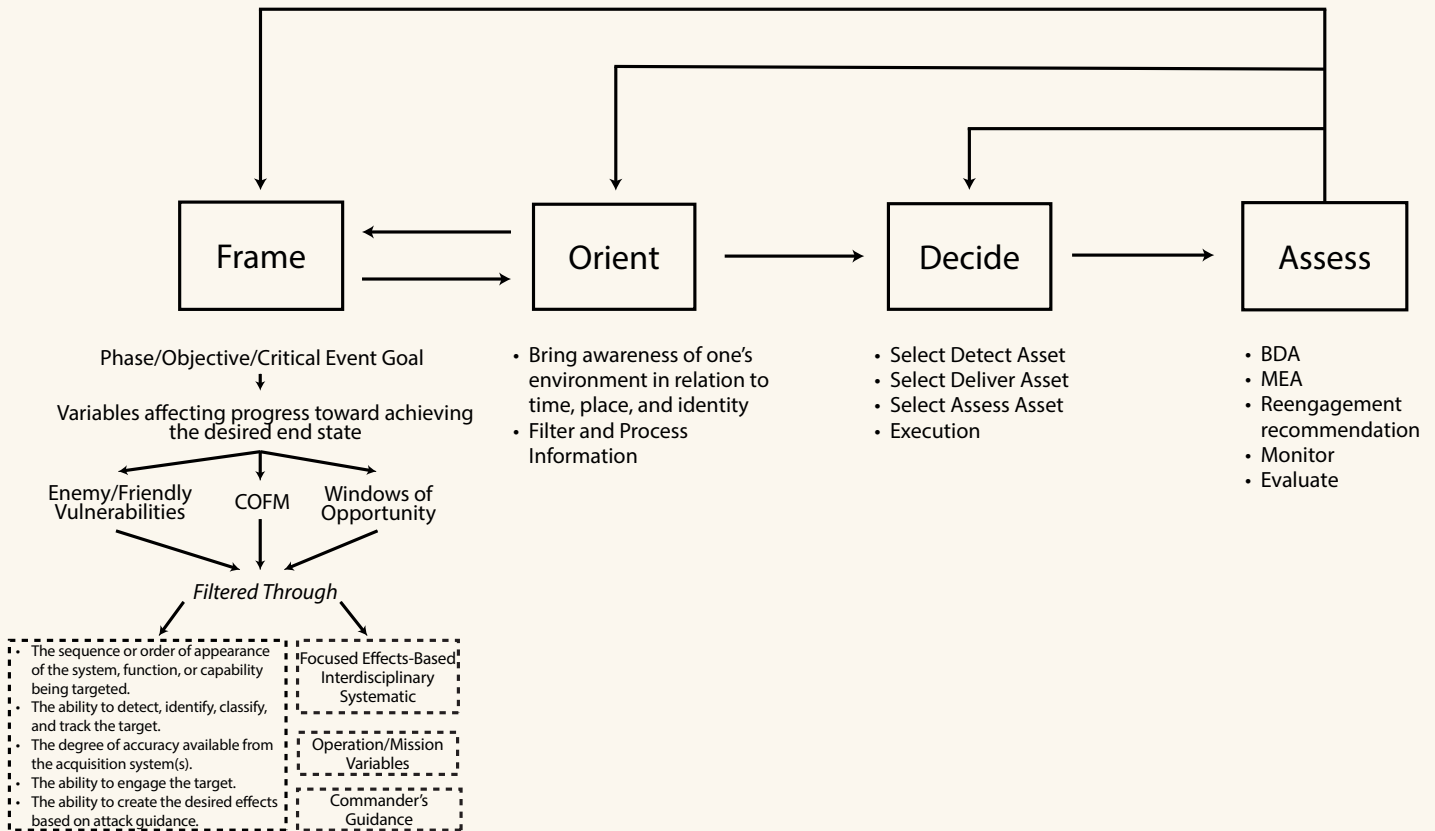
at each stage, allowing continuous re-framing. For example, real-time feedback could prompt commanders to adjust their target set or tactics before fully executing an action. This would transform the targeting methodology into a more dynamic system better suited to respond to evolving threats. Evidence of this rigid process is seen in recent warfighter exercises, where additional meetings, like the target refinement board, have been added to compensate for the lack of real-time feedback within the current methodology. Given the limitations of D3A and the evolution of the modern battlefield, FODA is a better alternative to enable Army targeting.

FODA Overview

Let’s define FODA: Framing is the identification of both the targeting objective and variables that affect outcomes. Orienting is the refinement of the targeting objective, temporally based on data applied to associated variables. Deciding involves selecting detection, delivery, and assessment assets, as well as execution based upon analysis of the variables as they relate to the targeting objective. Assessment is the determination of whether the organization met the targeting objective; this can feed inputs into Framing, Orienting, and Deciding. Likewise, Orientation can feed inputs into Framing.

In a complex environment, the steps of this process can occur simultaneously, allowing for better nesting with the operations process. All steps of the operations process occur at the same time within functional command posts. In command posts, there is an aspect of planning the next fight while part of the staff executes the current fight. Targeting, as a key integrating process, must be in congruence with the operations process. Figure 1 is pictorial representation of the interrelation of the FODA steps.

Figure 1: The FODA Concept



Additionally, FODA is scalable. The methodology would work at the Brigade level just as well as it would at the Corps level. The scalability of FODA ensures leaders grow up in the Army applying the FODA methodology the same way as leaders move between echelons.

Frame

From a targeting perspective, operations must be framed within the context of the Commander's selected course of action, creating a frame within a frame. Framing the targeting efforts is crucial to avoiding the biases of commanders and staffs, and to ensuring all relevant factors are considered before deciding how to target.

Framing is essential for understanding the variables and complexities of the operational environment (OE) in which the friendly unit operates. It is important to note three things regarding these variables: first, they do not remain stationary and are continuously changing. Second, it is unrealistic to expect an organization to identify and account for all of them, as it may be difficult to decide which variables are most important. Third, due to these ever-changing variables, it is important to recognize the appropriate feedback loops and reassess the Framing step as the OE evolves.

Framing lays the foundation for organizational orientation and decision-making. From a targeting perspective, Framing starts with identifying either the phase, critical event, objective, or goal the unit aims to achieve. The next step is identifying variables that affect progress. These variables form the foundation of the targeting process and are identified by assessing the following:

- 1) **Friendly / Enemy Vulnerabilities:** While ATP 2-33.4 "Intelligence Analysis" addresses critical factor analysis, a different technique is recommended for identifying these vulnerabilities. To do this, begin by understanding the enemy's mission, end state, and the actions necessary to achieve their goal. This analysis helps identify the specific equipment and units needed to carry out those actions and determine which ones can compensate for others. This understanding allows a commander to operate within the enemy commander's decision cycle. Similarly, applying this analysis from a friendly perspective helps the commander identify which friendly vulnerabilities need protection. Criticality, Accessibility, Recuperability, Vulnerability, Effect, and Recognizability (CARVER) Analysis, a method not originally designed for High-Value Target List (HVTL) development, is not preferred when using the recommended FODA targeting methodology.
- 2) **Correlation of Forces and Means (COFM):** COFMs are a tool used by staffs to assess the relative combat power between enemy and friendly forces. While this analysis is typically performed during the action development step of the Military Decision-Making Process (MDMP), it must also be revisited during the targeting process as operations progress to array forces and develop a task organization. Ideally, a unit is task-organized with everything it needs to accomplish its mission in its assigned Area of Operations (AO), making COFMs less central than often assumed in



Specialist Connor Prunty and Specialist Michael McFarland Alpha Battery, 3rd Battalion, 320th Field Artillery Regiment 101st Division Artillery Brigade, 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), mark and write down target coordinates during Division Artillery's Best of the Best competition on Fort Campbell, KY. Accuracy is important for artillery so that mis-fires do not occur. (Photo by Pvt. Matthew Wantroba)

targeting. When done properly, COFMs should be just one of several considerations, not the primary focus. COFMs are sometimes used as an "easy button" or buzzword that influences target selection, but it is only one of many variables and is often overemphasized. Relying too heavily on COFMs without fully framing the situation or understanding the OE can lead to poor decisions. A couple of important quotes to consider as one begins assessing this variable:

"Within reasonable limits it matters not whether one outnumbers or is outnumbered by the enemy; the outcome of battle turns on factors other than numbers."^[7] -General Donn Starry

"There is no direct relationship between force ratios and attrition rates."^[8] -Trevor Dupuy

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3) Windows of Opportunity: Given the complexity of large-scale combat operations, it is crucial to properly frame the windows of opportunity. These windows are key to gaining a position of relative advantage. Without first framing this aspect, it would be naive to assume that one can effectively select High-Payoff Targets (HPTs) to create such an advantage.

It is essential to the Framing step to assess each of these variables rather than arbitrarily selecting targets. Understanding these variables helps the unit fully understand the OE and determine the appropriate method of attack. Effective framing, focused on analyzing rather than merely targeting familiar or comfortable elements, enables success.

Once the staff identifies these variables, the staff uses a multitude of tools as a filter to provide clarity, including:

- 1) The five considerations outlined in FM 3-60 for selecting HPTs:
 - a) The sequence and order of appearance

- b) The ability to detect, identify, classify, and track the target
 - c) The degree of accuracy available from the acquisition system
 - d) The ability to engage the target
 - e) The ability to create the desired effects based on attack guidance
- 2) The principles of targeting:
 - a) Focused
 - b) Effects Based
 - c) Interdisciplinary
 - d) Systematic
 - 3) The operation variables:
 - a) PMESSI-PT
 - 4) The Mission Variables:
 - a) METT-TC
 - 5) Commander's Guidance

Thank you for reading part one of this three-part series. Please follow up with parts two and three for a full overview of FODA methodology.

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Endnotes

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