

BASIC BATTLE ANALYSIS: KASSERINE PASS (Student Handout 1)

Study Guide for Battle Analysis

Overview:

1. General: The U.S. Army Command and General Staff College developed the battle analysis methodology to help its students structure their studies of battles and campaigns. The format can be easily applied by any military professional seeking insight from historical battles and campaigns to help deepen his/her understanding of warfare and the profession of arms

a. The battle analysis methodology is a process for systematic study of a battle or campaign.

b. This process takes the form of a checklist that ensures completeness in examining the critical aspects of the chosen subject.

c. There are two forms of the Battle Analysis: Basic and Advanced. Both utilize the same four steps, but the Advanced is more complex and detailed. Also, the Advanced analyzes the strategic influences on the battle.

2. Format: The checklist is divided into four steps, each of which builds on the previous one(s) to provide a logical order for the study.

a. The four steps are:

- (1) Define the Subject/Evaluate the sources.
- (2) Review the Setting (Set the Stage).
- (3) Describe the Action.
- (4) Assess the Significance of the Action.

b. In the first step, you decide what battle you are going to study. In the next two, you gather the information necessary for a thorough and balanced study, and organize it in a logical manner to facilitate analysis. In the last step, you analyze the information to derive "lessons learned."

3. Purpose: The battle analysis methodology is a guide to help ensure that important aspects of the study of a historical battle or campaign are not forgotten. It is not a rigid checklist that must be followed to the letter. You do not have to use every part of it in your study, but all of the elements of battle analysis should be considered. Do not let the flow of your study be disrupted by the format's order.

Annotated Basic Battle Analysis Methodology:

1. **DEFINE THE SUBJECT/EVALUATE THE SOURCES:** Just like a military operation, a successful study of military history requires a clear, obtainable objective. The battle analysis format begins with the definition of the study.

a. **Define the Battle to be Analyzed.** This will become your introduction

(1) Where did it take place?

(2) Who were principle adversaries?

(3) When did the battle occur?

b. **Determine the research sources:** Once you have chosen a subject, decide what sources you will need to make a systematic and balanced study. Books and articles will make up the majority of your sources, but other media—such as video, audio, and electronic ones—can also contribute to the study.

(1) **Books:** Look for a variety of sources to get a balanced account of the battle. Memoirs, biographies, operational histories, and institutional histories should all be consulted for information on your subject. Do not overlook general histories, which can help provide the strategic setting.

(2) **Articles:** Articles from professional military publications and historical journals can be excellent sources of information.

(3) **Other:** Documentaries containing film footage of actual events or interviews with people who took part in a battle can add to your understanding of the events. Transcribed oral history interviews with battle participants may also be available. In addition, check the Internet for electronic documents on more recent military operations.

c. **Evaluate the research sources:** Finding good sources to support your study is not easy, despite the large volume of published material. As you gather the research material, evaluate each in terms of its content and bias.

(1) **Content:** Determine what information the source can give you. Is it relevant to your subject? Will it help you complete your study?

(2) **Bias:** Decide to what extent the author is subjective or objective in his/her work. Is there a clear bias? If so, what is it? Does the bias make a difference in your use of the work?

2. **REVIEW THE SETTING (Set the Stage):** This portion of the battle analysis format establishes the setting for the study. You must have a good understanding of the strategic, operational, and tactical situations before you can analyze the battle. The level of detail in this portion of the battle analysis will depend on the purpose of the study and the audience for which it is intended. If the causes of the war and the opponents are well known, there is little reason to go into great detail.

a. **Strategic/Operational Overview:**

(1) Identify the war this Battle is fought in to include the time frame and locations.

(2) Identify the war aims of the principle adversaries.

(3) Identify and briefly describe the campaign this battle was part of, if any. What were the events that lead to this battle being fought at this location with these units?

b. Study the area of operations:

(1) Weather. What was the weather like in the area of operations? How did it affect the operation?

(2) Terrain. Use OAKOC (observation and fields of fire, avenues of approach, key terrain, obstacles, and cover and concealment) factors to describe the terrain in the area of operations. What advantages did it give to the attackers or to the defenders?

c. Compare the principle antagonists (Operational/Tactical): In many ways, this is the heart of the study—analyzing the opposing forces. Describe and analyze the forces involved in the following terms:

(a) Size and composition. What were the principal combat and supporting units involved in the operation? What were their numerical strengths in terms of troops and key weapon systems? How were they organized?

(b) Technology. What were the battlefield technologies, such as tanks, small arms, close support aircraft, etc., of the opposing forces? Did one side have a technological advantage over the other?

(c) Logistical systems. How did logistics affect the battle? Did one side have an advantage in available supplies or transportation?

(d) Command, control, and communications. What kind of C3 systems did the opposing forces employ? Were these systems under centralized or decentralized control? How were the staffs organized, and how effective were they?

(e) Intelligence. What intelligence assets were available to the opposing forces? How well were they used? What were the major sources of intelligence? Did one side have an advantage over the other in intelligence resources?

(f) Doctrine and training. What was the tactical doctrine of the opposing forces, and how did they use it? What was the level of training in the opposing forces? Were some troops experienced veterans, some not, and some in between?

(g) Condition and morale. What was the morale of the troops before the fighting, and did it change after the fighting began? How long had the troops been committed, and how did weather and terrain affect them? Did specific leaders affect morale?

(h) Leadership. Who were the leaders, and how effective had they been in past actions? How were they trained, and what was their level of experience?

d. State the mission and describe the initial disposition of the opposing forces: What were the objectives? What plans were developed to achieve the objectives? Were there other options—such as attacking, defending, or withdrawing—open to the two sides? Were those options feasible? What were the locations of the units of the opposing forces? How were the units deployed tactically?

3. **DESCRIBE THE ACTION:** This part of battle analysis—describing the battle itself—is what most people consider to be real military history. By following the format, you will study the battle chronologically. Do not let this approach disrupt your study of the battle. If you need to skip a phase in order to examine a combat functional area—such as maneuver, logistics, etc.—because it is more important to your overall objective, then do so.

a. **Describe the opening moves of the battle:** Examine the initial actions by the opposing forces. Did one side gain an advantage over the other in the opening phase of the battle?

b. **Detail the major phases/key events:** Establish a chronology for the battle while examining the actions after the opening moves. Look for key events or decisions that turned the battle toward one side or the other.

c. **State the outcome:** Who won the battle? Did either side achieve its objectives? Did the battle provide an advantage to the winning side, and what was it? Did the battle have any long term effects, and what were they?

4. **ASSESS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACTION:** This is the most important step of the battle analysis process. With this step, you are turning “combat information” in the form of the historical facts of the battle into finished analysis rendered as “lessons learned.”

a. **Relate causes to effects:** In trying to distill “lessons” from the study of any battle, it is important to look at why something happened. To do so you will look at the outcome and what caused it. Look for those essential elements of the victory or defeat.

b. **Establish military “lessons learned”:** Lessons from the past that are still relevant today are the end product of the battle analysis process. The insights, or “constants of war,” gained from the study should transcend time, place, and doctrine. You can use one of the following fundamentals (or another) for focusing analysis of military operations to help find these “constants.” These fundamentals are defined in FM 3-0, Operations.

(1) Principles of War.

(2) Threads of Continuity

(3) Warfighting Functions

Suggested Format for Basic Battle Analysis Paper or Briefing

1. DEFINE THE SUBJECT/EVALUATE THE SOURCES:
 - a. Define the Battle to be analyzed (where, who, when).
2. REVIEW THE SETTING (SET THE STAGE):
 - a. Strategic/Operational Overview
 - b. Study the area of operations.
 - (1) weather.
 - (2) terrain.
 - c. Compare the principle antagonists (Operational/Tactical).
 - (1) size and composition.
 - (2) technology.
 - (3) doctrine and training.
 - (4) logistical systems.
 - (5) intelligence.
 - (6) condition and morale.
 - (7) command, control, and communications.
 - (8) leadership.
 - d. State the mission and describe initial disposition of the opposing forces.
3. DESCRIBE THE ACTION:
 - a. Describe the opening moves of the battle.
 - b. Detail the major phases/key events.
 - c. State the outcome.
4. ASSESS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ACTION:
 - a. Relate causes to effects.
 - b. Establish military "lessons learned."