

Socio-Cultural Capability Requirements across All Phases of Military Operations

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ABSTRACT

In modern military operations, it is critical that commanders and their staffs be sensitive to the social and cultural norms of populations with whom they must interact. Most military operations have the mission of promoting stability and reconstruction, or eventually evolve to such after major combat. Gaining the cooperation of the local population is critical to a secure environment. This paper identifies the socio-cultural capabilities needed to execute military missions, identifies which of these the military has access to, and proposes mitigating measures to close requirement gaps. We identified 27 missions across all phases of military operations along with 12 socio-cultural capability requirements organized in five categories: planning, communication and coordination, gaining detailed cultural awareness, engaging the population and assessing the impact of this engagement. We identified several gaps but in general, we found that substantial progress has been made in terms of closing these gaps. Personal initiative accounted for a large fraction of these efforts and attests to the growing appreciation among military personnel for the important role of socio-cultural capabilities. Although we provide recommendations to fill specific gaps, finding ways to encourage personal initiatives will nurture the development and testing of original ideas that could be used to address socio-cultural needs more broadly.

Keywords: Military operations, socio-cultural capabilities, human terrain, cultural awareness.

INTRODUCTION

In modern warfare it is critical that Commanders and their staffs be sensitive to the social and cultural norms of host nations. Most military operations have the mission of promoting stability and reconstruction, or eventually evolve to such after major combat as in Iraq. Gaining the cooperation and active assistance of the local population is critical to ensuring a secure environment. The Army and Marine Corps doctrine manual on counterinsurgency operations emphasizes the importance of understanding the local culture and social structure (FM 3-24, 2006):

...staffs should identify and analyze the culture of the society as a whole and of each major group within the society. Social structure comprises the relationships among groups, institutions, and individuals within a society; in contrast, culture (ideas, norms, rituals, codes of behavior) provides meaning to individuals within the society.

Although this addresses counterinsurgency operations, the Army and Marine Corps recognize that understanding a society's culture and social structure is necessary in all phases of military operations.

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This paper identifies the socio-cultural capabilities needed to execute missions and tasks across the full spectrum of military operations, identifies which of these the military has access to, and proposes mitigating measures to close requirement gaps. The analysis draws on the capability-based assessment (CBA) process. A CBA is designed to identify solutions to provide the warfighter with capabilities needed to accomplish missions. A CBA consists of three parts: the Functional Area Analysis (FAA) resulting in the identification of needed capabilities; the Functional Needs Analysis (FNA) resulting in the identification of gaps in the required capabilities identified in the FAA process; and the Functional Solutions Analysis (FSA) resulting in the identification of means to fill the capabilities gaps.

THE MISSIONS

The full spectrum of military operations is described in terms of operational *phases*. Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*, describes the military operations phasing model. This model is designed to organize operations by helping Commanders and their staffs to think through an entire campaign from the early *shaping* phase through the *combat phases* to *reestablishing civil authority* in the host nation. There are six phases identified. Although presented as a sequence, it is clear that there is considerable overlap of the phases of an operation, thus precluding a distinct separation between phases. This reality highlights the need to integrate socio-cultural factors throughout a military operation. (Joint Publication 3-0, 2010)

We describe the activities associated with each of the operational phases along with the missions drawn from the sources cited above. For each phase, we summarize the mission set by citing the major objectives associated with the phase. The full list of missions is included in Table 1.

Phase 0: Shaping: This phase consists of benign military operations designed to enhance international legitimacy and gain international support for U.S. Military and national objectives. The focus is on building local capacity, developing host nation military capabilities, and dissuading potential adversaries. The objective is to create a favorable opinion of the United States and to establish or reinforce relations with friendly countries.

Phase I: Deter: In this phase, the objective is to demonstrate resolve by engaging in preparatory actions that clearly demonstrate that a joint force is both capable and committed to deterring enemy activity. Some of the activities in this phase include demonstrating capability, deterring criminals and violent extremists, and gaining support for the command's operations concept. In general, U.S. forces move pro-actively to prevent a potential attack or crisis.

Phase II: Seize the Initiative: If adversaries cannot be deterred, the U.S. may move quickly to launch combat operations to seize the initiative, regardless of whether it is a hostile nation state or a non-state group posing the threat. In non-combat operations the objective is to apply appropriate joint force capabilities to gain the initiative. Phase II activities can include offensive combat operations designed to destroy an adversary, kill or capture its senior leaders, reduce its freedom of movement, dislodge its forces from their positions, and degrade an enemy's capability to threaten U.S. or allied interests, or undertake acts of violence.

Phase III: Dominate: This phase focuses on breaking the enemy's will for organized resistance or, in non-combat situations, control of the operational environment. If the United States succeeds in seizing the initiative from an adversary, it can attempt to dominate the environment and prepare to transition from offensive operations to longer-term stability operations. In Phase III, the United States might conduct continuous operations aimed at suppressing threat networks and isolating threat groups, including violent extremist organizations, operating within a partner country.

Phase IV: Stabilize: This phase applies when there is not a functioning government in the host nation, or only a weakly functioning government in place. This scenario may arise from the collapse of a regime. The phase is characterized by the transition from combat operations to stability operations. In this phase the United States may be compelled to step in and use military forces to provide basic security, re-build critical infrastructure, and ensure that the essential needs of the host country population are met, including medical needs.

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Phase V: Enable Civil Authority: In Phase IV, the joint force has assisted the re-establishment of governance by a host country. In Phase V the joint force focuses on providing support to a legitimate, functioning government, one that it may have helped establish. Support to a functioning government is provided in accordance with some agreement. U.S. Military forces will typically work in coordination with other U.S. government agencies, foreign government agencies, and NGOs and IGOs.

We identified 27 missions across the full spectrum of military operations (Table 1). These missions were culled from several Joint Staff, Major Command and Service documents. They are, in essence, summaries of more theater-specific missions and tasks. We reviewed Joint Publication 3-0, which describes activities that Commanders might anticipate in various phases of a theater campaign. We consulted the planning guidance and tasks assigned to combatant Commanders in the *Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan* (Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan, 2008). We reviewed Joint Warfighting Center materials to identify tasks organized by type of operation developed for mission analysis and published in the *Universal Joint Task List*, a Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff manual (CJCSM 3500.04C, 2002). Finally, we took future missions into consideration by reviewing scenario data published for each of the selected combatant commands in the Multi-Service Force Deployment documents promulgated by the Joint Staff.

Table 1: Military Missions by Phase

Phase	Missions
Phase 0: Shaping	Build local capacity and support infrastructure projects,
	Develop host nation military capabilities and solidify relationships with friends and allies
	Dissuade or deter potential adversaries
	Improve information exchange and intelligence sharing, and provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access
Phase I: Deter	Employ the joint force to demonstrate capability and resolve
	Deter criminal and violent extremist activities
	Mobilize and tailor the force to address the crisis in coordination with OGAs, IGOs, and NGOs
	Support the command’s CONOPS by obtaining over-flight permissions and planning for force protection and logistics
Phase II: Seize the initiative	Disable or destroy the enemy through kinetic means
	Limit collateral damage to infrastructure and partner country populations
	Provide assistance to relieve conditions that precipitated the crisis
	Influence and inform the local population
Phase III: Dominate	Prevent instability from spreading to adjacent areas,
	Influence population to counter anti-U.S. messages
	Disrupt activities of violent extremist organizations
	Control the situation
	Overmatch the enemy by employing the full joint force
Phase IV: Stabilize	In irregular warfare, dominate the environment using conventional and unconventional, information and stability operations
	Improve local governance
	Assist in the provision of basic services and re-build, improve, and protect infrastructure
	Build capacity of local law enforcement and justice system, and partner with local authorities to increase security and restore order
	Ensure that conditions leading to the original crisis do not recur
Phase V: Enable civil authority	Begin redeployment operations as soon as possible
	Build, support, improve, and secure legitimate civil government and enable civil authority’s provision of services
	Coordinate actions with multinational OGAs, IGOs, and NGOs

	Persuade locals to regard U.S. and local civil authority favorably
	Disrupt and deter human/drugs/weapons trafficking and erode support for criminal and violent extremist organizations

THE SOCIO-CULTURAL CAPABILITIES

Across the globe, in commands, theaters, and campaigns, there is an increasing recognition that socio-cultural knowledge and expertise is critical for the success of military missions. The U.S. Military and its allies are increasingly dealing with internal conflicts within states, responding to complex humanitarian emergencies, and other situations far outside the scope of “traditional” state-to-state warfare (TRADOC OE White Paper, 2009). In these new operational environments, the enemy is often not a clearly discernible group, and may change rapidly from day to day. Such environments call for new capabilities that can assess and make productive use of operationally relevant information regarding the social and cultural landscape of the area of operations. As recent campaigns have shown, this is no small feat. Human terrain is inherently local and by its nature rapidly evolving. Our next task then was to develop a list of socio-cultural capabilities necessary to meet this challenge.

The first step in developing a list of required socio-cultural capabilities (SCCs) required our developing a working definition of the term itself. We assembled a team of military experts (most of them former U.S. Military officers) and social science experts with applied research backgrounds in Anthropology, Psychology, Political Science, and Public Health. The research team conducted a literature search for descriptions of how socio-cultural knowledge and research had been used to inform military operations, as well as calls for improvements in the use of socio-cultural knowledge for future military operations. This involved consulting doctrine, military documents such as reports from Human Terrain Teams, academic journals and books, and the existing RAND literature on the topic. In addition, we vetted the definition of SCCs with military and non-military experts during one-on-one and group interviews we conducted over the course of the study. This process produced the following definition:

*A socio-cultural capability is the ability to employ **human and material resources** to gather, synthesize, analyze, interpret and share **operationally relevant** information about a population’s **social and cultural landscape**, and use this to inform and assist the planning, preparation, execution and assessment of a military operation*

We further defined the bolded elements of the above definition. Table 2 summarizes these additional definitions.

Table 2: Socio-Cultural Component Definitions

Component	Definition
Operationally relevant	Pertaining to the requirements of the supported unit and mission
Social landscape	A particular group’s political, economic, institutional, kinship and class structure and organization
Cultural landscape	Meanings, beliefs, attitudes, behavioral norms, values, and perceptions shared by and distributed among a group
Human resources	Resources that support an individual or unit’s socio-cultural capability development. Examples include interpreters/linguists, subject matter experts, tribal leaders, key figures in local governance, NGOs, social scientists, etc.
Material resources	Information storage and sharing systems; software for data analysis; local media for dissemination and influence, etc.

Our SCC definition includes a ‘know’ element (knowing the social and cultural landscape) and a ‘do’ element (using information to plan, prepare, execute and assess a mission). Modern social science views the social and cultural as causally intertwined; thus, the term “socio-cultural” is a reflection of the myriad causal forces and processes that influence patterns of thought and behavior in a society or group.

Based on interviews with approximately 30 military and non-military experts and an extensive literature review we reduced a rather long list of socio-cultural capabilities to a manageable set of 12 which we divided into five categories. The categories were organized to approximate a chronological progression of how socio-cultural capabilities might be used throughout the planning and execution of military missions. They consist of planning, communication and coordination, gaining detailed cultural awareness, engaging the population and assessing the Cross-Cultural Decision Making (2019)

impact of this engagement. We describe the categories below and Table 3 lists the associated required socio-cultural capabilities.

Planning: For the purposes of mission planning, the Commander must have the ability to discover the features of the human terrain that are most operationally relevant—in other words, to know what needs to be known. Furthermore, he must have the ability to make use of socio-cultural information to inform mission objectives. This requires the ability to identify relevant socio-cultural information and use it to plan operations.

Coordination and Communication: One critical socio-cultural capability is the capacity to communicate information and coordinate productively with other parties operating in the area of interest (AOI). This requires the ability to communicate findings and information to both military and non-military organizations and to work well with organizations in the region to plan collaborative activities.

Gaining Detailed Cultural Awareness: The most important and arguably most difficult required capability is the capacity to obtain valid and reliable operationally relevant information regarding the social and cultural landscape of an AOI. Some of the requirements in this category include the ability to acquire knowledge of the culture, social structure, political dynamics and economics of the area and how they interconnect, design and administer efforts aimed at obtaining this information, and verify the accuracy and reliability of the information.

Engaging the Population: Increasingly, through the use of provincial reconstruction teams, female engagement teams, and the like, the U.S. Military is recognizing the need for and difficulty of engaging in sensitive interactions with the local population in a culturally appropriate manner. This requires an ability to communicate with the local population, build trust, and productively interact with them. A number of initiatives attempting to address these challenges have been undertaken. “Smart cards” with basic phrases in the local language and information about the culture have been issued to deploying personnel (Davis, 2010).

Impact Assessment: After socio-cultural capabilities have been employed in the pursuit of mission success, it is important to assess the impact of these efforts in order to inform future mission planning. This requires an ability to obtain reliable information on post-engagement conditions and the ability to understand the implications of local changes for successive engagements. For example, effectiveness of language training courses is routinely assessed. Within the Army, “language tests are mandatory for soldiers who have received foreign language training at government expense,” excluding survival-level courses (Army Regulation 11-6, 2009). However, annual retesting of speaking skills is not currently required for all language-dependent military occupational skills. The Defense Language Transformation Roadmap sets proficiency level goals for language professionals (Defense Language Transformation Roadmap, 2005).

Table 3: Socio-Cultural Capabilities by Category

Category	Required Socio-Cultural Capabilities
Planning	The ability to identify operationally relevant socio-cultural information categories and requirements (Salmoni and Eber, 2008), (Medby and Glenn, 2002).
	The ability to use socio-cultural information to design missions and activities (FM 3-24, 2006) (Salmoni and Ebert, 2008). Such as: possess access to best practices for using socio-cultural information to inform or alter mission objectives (Flynn, Pottinger, and Batchelor, 2009), (Salmoni and Eber, 2008).
Coordination and communication	The ability to communicate findings and information effectively to both military and non-military organizations (Shaley, 2007).
	The ability to store and establish access to information for multiple agencies and organizations (3-24, 2006), (Kjeldsen, 2006), (Defense Science Board, 2009), (Byman, 2001).
	The ability to work with organizations, both U.S. and foreign, in the region to plan collaborative activities (Medby and Glenn, 2002), (Byman, 2001), (FM 3-24, 2006).
Gaining Detailed cultural awareness	The ability to acquire knowledge of the culture, social structure, political dynamics and economics of the area and how they interconnect. Such as: (1) understand where to go to in order to get information; (2) have access to documents describing the local culture; (Medby and Glenn, 2002) and (3) possess access to experts (HTS, RRCs, SMEs, CAs, etc.).
	The ability to design and administer appropriate efforts to gain detailed situational awareness. Such as: (1) possess the ability to design and administer surveys, interviews, focus groups (Morgan, 1993), and conduct ethnographic observations; and (2) possess the ability to conduct quantitative and qualitative analyses and make appropriate inferences.

Category	Required Socio-Cultural Capabilities
	The ability to verify the accuracy and reliability of the information gained (Jandora, 2006), (Legree, 2010), (FM 3-24, 2006). Such as: (1) have procedures in place to crosscheck the accuracy and reliability of information; and (2) to update with new information as it becomes available.
Engaging the population	The ability to communicate with the local population. Such as: (1) possess survival language skills for limited interactions; (2) possess ability to communicate fluently for in-depth interactions; (3) have access to translators/interpreters if needed; and (4) if translators/interpreters are needed, understand how to use them appropriately.
	The ability to productively interact with the local community (Jandora, 2006), (LeGree, 2010), (FM 3-24, 2006). Such as: (1) understand the meaning and significance of local culture (Abbe and Halpin, 2009-2010), (Jager, 2007), (Salmoni and Eber, 2008), (Wunderle, 2006), (Abbe, Gulick, and Herman, 2008), (FM 3-24, 2006); (2) possess awareness of appropriate social etiquette, with people and groups across the social hierarchy (Abbe and Halpin, 2009-2010), (Cushner, and Brislin, 1995), (Cushner and Landis, 1996), (Salmoni and Eber, 2008); (3) possess the ability to build effective relationships with local institutions and persons of influence or high status (Jandora, 2006), (LeGree, 2010), (Salmoni and Holmes-Eber, 2008), (Stenmark, 2006), (FM 3-24, 2006); and (4) possess locally appropriate influence, negotiation, and conflict resolution skills (Black and Porter, 1991), (Brett and Okumura, 1998), (Gelgand, Erez, and Aycan, 2007), (Gelfand and Dyer, 2000), (LeGree, 2010), (Morris, Williams, Leung, Larrick, et al, 1998), (Ohbuchi and Takahashi, 1994), (Sheer and Chen, 2003), (Sullivan, Peterson, Kameda, and Shimada, 1981), (Tyler, Lind, and Huo, 2000).
Impact assessment	The ability to obtain reliable and relevant information on post-engagement conditions to assess the efficacy of employing SCCs (Language Skills, Regional Expertise, and Cultural Capabilities, 2011). Such as: (1) the ability to develop a credible socio-cultural impact assessment plan; (2) possess knowledge of various assessment methods; (3) the ability to access trained personnel and resources required to conduct proper assessments; (4) the ability to assess the impact of U.S. operations on the local socio-cultural environment (may focus on balance of power, traditional practices, etc.); and (5) the ability to assess the impact of the socio-cultural milieu on U.S. operations.
	The ability to understand the implications of local changes for successive engagements. Such as: the ability to integrate relevant information and conclusions from impact assessment efforts into planning processes for successive missions.

SOCIO-CULTURAL CAPABILITIES BY OPERATIONAL PHASE

With the missions and the required socio-cultural capabilities identified, the next step was to identify which socio-cultural capabilities were needed to accomplish the missions across all phases of military operations. We proposed to develop a matrix with the 27 missions as rows and the 12 socio-cultural capabilities as columns. The result was to be a matrix with 314 cells containing the manner in which the column socio-cultural capability can assist in accomplishing the row mission. Figure 1 illustrates the matrix structure. We refer to the cell entries as “intersections.”



Figure 1. Intersections of SCCs by Mission Activities

While useful for validation purposes and to produce a large base of “raw data” for further work, this level of resolution was found to be excessively specific and therefore not likely to be useful for military planners or other operatives across the diversity of conditions found in different COCOMs and operations. Thus, once we created the set of mission activities and socio-cultural capabilities described above, we created a diminished matrix consisting of the six phases as rows and the five categories as columns. This resulted in a more manageable matrix consisting of 30 cells. The socio-cultural capability categories and phases intersect at a more general level. Table 4 illustrates Cross-Cultural Decision Making (2019)

the process by depicting two of the five category columns and all six of the operational phases.

Table 4: Sample Intersections of Phases by SCCs

SCC Categories	Planning	Coordinating and Communicating
Operational Phases		
Phase 0: Shape	Develop compelling messages aimed at both potential adversaries and supporters that decreases negative and increases positive perceptions of U.S. actions in the region, minimizing the use of threats or punitive language if possible.	Gain access to appropriate communications media to target specific audiences in ways that reach them in time to influence their response.
Phase I: Deter	Develop messages that inform the population of: (1) how the U.S. military’s demonstration of resolve deters enemy activity; and (2) how the preparatory actions they are observing contributes to a capable joint force.	Disseminate messages developed using a wide range of media to reach a diverse audience to include the local government, the military and the local population.
Phase II: Seize the initiative	Develop CCIRs for the commander aimed at understanding the local population demographics and cultural sites to help avoid unnecessary collateral damage. Develop messages to inform the population of the military operations to the extent possible.	Disseminate messages that inform the local population of the operations underway. Aim at convincing the populace that the military will not deliberately destroy homes and culturally significant sites.
Phase III: Dominate	Advise the commander to avoid collateral damage when conducting combat operations by identifying culturally significant sites as well as major population centers. Develop messages to inform the population of military operations to the extent possible.	Disseminate messages that inform the local population of the operations underway. Aim at convincing the populace that the military will not deliberately destroy homes and culturally significant sites.
Phase IV: Stabilize	Advise the commander on ways to engage the population that account for cultural sensitivities. Provide humanitarian assistance and engage in nation-building.	Develop messages that convince the local population that the U.S. humanitarian assistance and nation building efforts are in their best interests.
Phase V: Enable civil authority	Partner with and provide support to the legitimate government while continuing to provide humanitarian assistance.	Disseminate messages developed using a wide range of media to reach a diverse audience to include the local government and military and the local population.

GAPS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

Our research consisted of reviewing the pertinent socio-cultural literature and military documents in addition to conducting several interviews of military and non-military personnel. In the process, we identified several gaps in the provision of SCCs, organized along our five major categories. We noted that not all gaps constituted a complete lack of capability. Some were due to limited access to required capabilities or limited knowledge that such capabilities existed. In addition, competing priorities resulted in precluding access. The following is a summary of our major findings and recommendations. Table 6 lists all the gaps we uncovered in this research along with the measures we recommended to mitigate the gaps arranged by Doctrine, Organization, Training and education,

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Materiel, Leadership, Personnel, and Facilities (DOTMLPF). We have omitted Facilities from the list as it had not been mentioned in any of our interviews. The numbers at the head of each column refers to the coded gap mitigation measure listed by DOTMLPF category in Table 5.

Table 5: Gap Mitigation Measures

DOTMLPF Category	No.	Gap mitigation measures
Doctrine	1	Incorporate SCC information into long-term strategic planning
	2	Develop doctrinal publication that provides guidance on how to do the above, and incorporates lessons learned from employment of SCCs over the last decade
Organization	1	Repeat deployment to same local area
	2	Utilize resident SCC expertise
	3	Expand and systematize cooperation with NGOs, OGAs, IGOs
	4	Systematize collaborative links with colleges, universities, research centers / “think tanks.”
	5	Increase pass-through of socio-cultural information during RIP/TOAs
Training and education	1	Pre-deployment training in socio-cultural aspects of local AOI
	2	Training in proper use / caveats of using translators and interpreters
	3	Develop training in “culture-general” skill sets (non-verbal communication, cultural relativism, empathy, etc.)
	4	Training track in data acquisition, verification, analysis, interpretation.
Materiel		Develop standardized field-based platforms for data acquisition (geospatial, survey, social network, etc.), as well as both field-based and centralized standardized analysis and interpretation tools with broad accessibility
Leadership	1	Education tracks for senior military leaders in social science and related fields
	2	Bolster existing education efforts in SCC areas in academies and civilian schools
	3	Support Commanders’ individual initiatives for pre-deployment training in socio-cultural arena
Personnel	1	Hiring tracks to aid recruitment of military personnel with SCC skills
	2	Career tracks that incentivize development of SCCs and balance rewards for kinetic and non-kinetic skills
	3	Include assessments of SCC-related skills in officers’ performance evaluations
	4	Develop review boards to assess quality of socio-cultural information, education, and training
	5	Develop reference list of regional and thematic experts for consultation on socio-cultural issues

Table 6: Gaps and Mitigation Measures

	Doctrine		Organization					Training and education				Materiel	Leadership			Personnel					
	1	2	1	2	3	4	5	1	2	3	4		1	2	3	1	2	3	4	5	
Planning																					
<i>Lack of appropriate personnel</i>				X		X									X	X		X	X	X	X
<i>Plans not sensitive to local context</i>			X		X	X	X	X			X	X									
<i>Plans based on hunches</i>			X		X	X	X	X			X	X									
<i>Kinetic bias</i>	X	X															X				
Coordination and Communication																					
<i>Problems w/in military</i>								X				X									
<i>Ineffective outreach</i>			X		X		X	X			X								X		
<i>Military vs. non-mil</i>					X	X					X								X		
Gaining Detailed Cultural Awareness																					
<i>Unsure where to access</i>				X		X	X	X			X	X			X					X	
<i>Validity checking</i>						X					X									X	
<i>Unclear roles</i>														X							
<i>Leveraging experts</i>				X	X	X		X								X				X	
<i>Lack of culture-general tools</i>											X										
<i>Local AOI information</i>			X		X		X	X			X	X			X					X	
<i>Methodological training and expertise</i>						X					X	X			X	X		X	X	X	
<i>Lack of appropriate personnel</i>				X		X									X			X	X	X	
Engaging the Population																					
<i>Basic language skills</i>			X					X							X	X	X	X	X	X	
<i>Fluency</i>			X												X	X		X	X	X	
<i>Interpreters/translators</i>										X										X	
<i>Etiquette</i>			X					X								X				X	
<i>Relationship-building</i>			X		X		X	X			X									X	
<i>Conflict resolution</i>			X				X	X			X									X	
<i>Conflict resolution</i>								X			X				X	X		X		X	
<i>Negative perceptions of military</i>			X		X		X	X			X									X	
Impact Assessment																					
<i>Not incorporated in SOP</i>	X	X										X									
<i>Lack of appropriate personnel</i>				X		X					X				X			X	X	X	
<i>Poor/biased assessments</i>						X					X	X								X	
<i>No assessments of SCC training</i>						X														X	

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CONCLUSIONS

In **Planning**, we identified challenges in finding the appropriate personnel to use socio-cultural knowledge in the service of strategic planning. Our research also indicated that the continuing use of “one size fits all” directives or plans based on hunches rather than data was a problem in the use of SCCs in planning missions and activities. In **Coordination and Communication**, we identified several gaps related to SCCs, many related to cross-cultural interactions between military and non-military organizations as well as difficulties coordinating among different military entities. Negative perceptions of the U.S. Military by international government organizations (IGOs) and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) present a significant challenge to prospects for supplementing SCCs through collaborative effort with other organizations operating in the area of interest.

In **Gaining Detailed Cultural Awareness**, we found there to be a gap in the ability to access up-to-date, verified information about specific areas of interest, as well as a lack of systematic approaches and systems for obtaining, analyzing, storing, and sharing socio-cultural information. Similarly, we discovered a lack of sufficient access to military and non-military personnel with the methodological and area expertise to cover the wide range of areas of interest covered by the military. With respect to **Engaging the Population**, our research identified the need for increased training in languages and/or the use of interpreters and translators, as well as a better capacity to build productive relationships with local populations, engage local leaders, and resolve conflicts in culturally appropriate ways. We identified significant gaps in **Impact Assessments**, most notably the fact that impact assessment for the provision of SCCs is not systematically incorporated in standard operating procedures. Additionally, military socio-cultural education and training has not been systematically assessed.

Our research team used the DOTMLPF framework to provide recommendations to mitigate these gaps (Table 6). We recommend a doctrinal or doctrine-like publication that focuses on lessons learned in the provision of SCCs during the past decade, as well as the use of SCCs in long-range strategic planning. With respect to **Organization**, we recommend organizing repeated deployments to the same local areas as well as improving processes during Relief in Place/Transfer of Authority operations to transfer socio-cultural knowledge and ensure the proper hand-off of relationships with key leaders. As well as building greater socio-cultural capacities within the armed forces, we recommend expanding and systematizing relationships with NGOs and IGOs, as well as universities and think tanks that provide access to SCCs.

With respect to **Training**, we recommend expanding the provision of socio-cultural knowledge specific to the precise area pre-deployment (rather than regional or national training), expanding training in the use of interpreters and translators, and also expanding training in “culture general” skill sets, including empathy, suspension of judgment, and the ability to adapt to new cultural environments. For the category of **Materiel**, we recommend establishing systems for the standardized acquisition, analysis, and interpretation/validation of both existing sources of information and new streams of data from units deployed and collecting data in the field. As a model, we point to the SERENGETI system developed at AFRICOM. SERENGETI is an Africa-centric data repository that is populated with open source data according to a specific architecture and taxonomy. It was developed in AFRICOM’s knowledge development division (Lee, undated). We make several recommendations pertaining to **Personnel**. First, we suggest instituting specialized hiring efforts and promotional tracks to both attract personnel with socio-cultural skill sets and to reward the expansion of these skills during service members’ careers. We also recommend making SCC-related parameters a systematic part of officers’ performance evaluations and implementing efforts to monitor and assess socio-cultural training and education.

On the whole, we found that substantial progress has been made in terms of building socio-cultural capabilities, and that when gaps emerged there were at least limited attempts to address unmet needs. Personal initiative accounted for a large percentage of these ad-hoc efforts and attests to the growing appreciation among military personnel for the important role of socio-cultural capabilities in achieving mission goals. Although we provide recommendations for how to fill specific gaps, finding ways to encourage and support personal initiatives will not only help meet SC needs as they arise in specific locales, but will nurture the development and testing of original ideas that could be used to address SC needs more broadly. Issues that on the surface appeared unrelated to socio-cultural issues were often the main impediments to building greater SC knowledge and skill sets: a position’s promotion potential, the length and repetition of deployments to an area, the commissioning of assessments, and the quality of the rotation process. Resolving these over-arching issues would likely produce marked improvements over multiple SCC

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categories and as such, might be cost-effective areas for focusing future SCC reform efforts.

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