

Lesson 3.2: Understanding the Information Terrain

Learning Outcomes

- Explain the information terrain (info terrain).
- Describe the key elements of the info terrain
- Describe the challenges affecting UN uniformed
- forces' ability to understand the info terrain.

Lesson Contents

- The information terrain (IT).
- Mapping the IT.
- Areas to explore when mapping the IT.
- Understand the IT.
- Challenges understanding the IT.

Information Terrain

The IT refers to the sum of individuals, organisations and systems that acquire, process, disseminate or act upon information.

Information Terrain: Dimensions

- **Physical**: The physical platforms and infrastructure used for communication.
- **Informational**: The content of the information itself, including its creation, manipulation and dissemination.
- **Cognitive**: The impact of information on the understanding, perceptions and beliefs of individuals and groups.

Mapping the Information Terrain

- Create a detailed overview of how information is produced, distributed and consumed within a specific context or community.
- Understand the dynamics of communication.
- Enable communications approaches to be more effective, context-sensitive and responsive to the needs and dynamics of the local population.

Mapping the Information Terrain (2)

Information Channels



- ✓Who owns the information infrastructure.
- ✓Who can expand or curtail infrastructure.
- ✓Distribution networks, dark spots, redundancies.

Information Needs



- ✓Target audience needs, wants and beliefs.
- ✓Change triggers (stress, violence, disruptions, etc.).
- ✓Cognitive capabilities.

Mapping the Information Terrain (3)

Context and Messaging



- ✓Types of information and dissemination methods,
- ✓Producers and trusted sources.
- ✓Pathways and barriers.

Reception and Perception



- ✓Intended effects versus unintended impacts.
- ✓Mitigation mechanisms.
- ✓Non-aligned capacities.

Mapping the Information Terrain (4)

Flows and Networks



- ✓Trusted sources.
- ✓Popular platforms.
- ✓Information biases.
- ✓Motivation.

Stakeholders and Sources



- ✓Accessible & collaborative influencers.
- ✓Perception credibility.
- ✓Negative association effects.
- ✓Authenticity and sustainability.

Mapping the Information Terrain (5)

Socio-political and Cultural



- ✓Threats to trust.
- ✓Most trusted sources (i.e. family, clerics, politicians)
- ✓Reliability of sources
- ✓Authenticity & sustainability

Tools and Methods



- ✓Political, socioeconomic and geographic factors
- ✓Means to access information.
- ✓Power relationships affecting access.

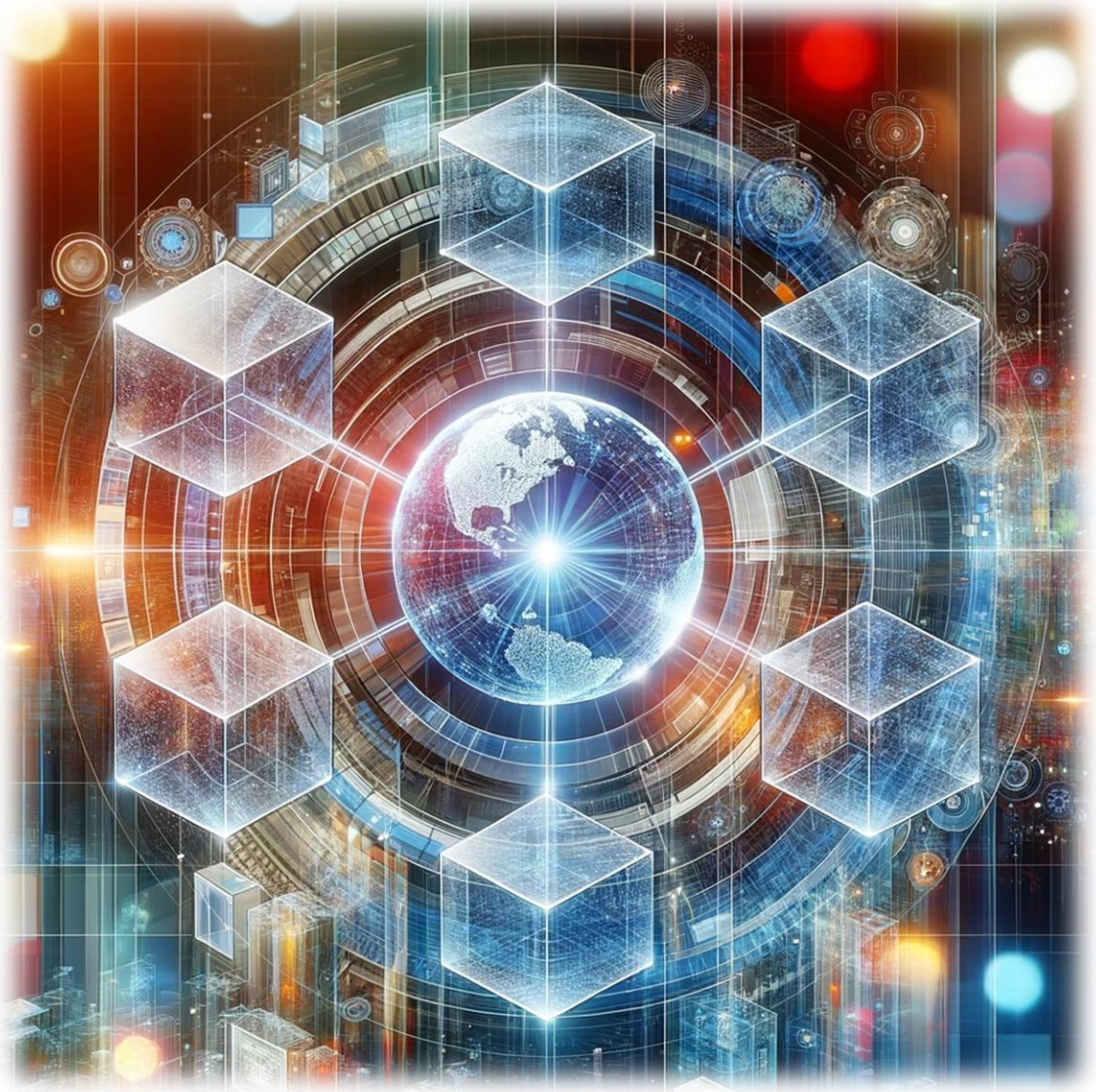
Understanding the IT

Quantitative and qualitative approaches

Information manipulation tactics

Online behavior patterns

Narrative content analysis



Analysis of the information Terrain

DEMOGRAPHICS

- Population- 108,407,721
- Median Age- 17.8 years
- Language- French (off.), Swahili
- Literacy Rate- age 15 and over can read and write French and Swahili (population male: 49.5%, female: 50.5 (2023).
- Religion- majority Christian (29% Catholic. 26% Protestant 36.5% other, 1.3% Muslim)
- Ethnicity- more than 60 ethnic groups, the three largest- Falin, Kori and Tatsii making up about 45% of the population
- Key Local Groups- Church Group

BACKGROUND

Free elections were conducted in 1986, under international pressure, which were won by the Parti Democratique de Carana (PDC). Initially the government was reasonably representative of the ethnic balance of the country, although still dominated by the Falin, and it followed democratic principles that were later enshrined in the 1991 constitution. Some economic and social reforms were realised but President became increasingly preoccupied with suppressing opposition groups and replaced all key Kori and Tatsi government ministers with members of Ogavo's Falin tribe. Repression corruption and economic inefficiency have mounted. Since 1998, the economy has been in decline and humanitarian crises occur on a regular basis.

OVERVIEW

Country X's external boundaries result from the colonial time and do not represent the ethnic distribution in the region. The Falin make up 10 percent of the population of Sumora, the Kori make up 38 percent of the population of Katasi and the Tatsi make 45 percent of the population of Rimosa. Many Tatsi favor secession of Leppko from Country X and the creation of a 'Greater Elassonia', which would be created out of southern Country X and northern Rimosa.

GROUND- Map)





- 16.50 million internet users
- **internet penetration rate 17.6%**
- 5% of Population social media users
- 97.84% Use Google as their search engine
- 70% of searches related to football



- The government's broadcasting service provides TV services between 0800-1700 daily including regular news.
- Only those living in major cities have access to TV – broadcasts are in French.



- **Radio X** is the national broadcaster. It is government controlled. currently broadcasts in Lingala, French and English.
- Radio Freedom has coverage over the eastern part of the country, including the unit area of operations.



- Newspaper X (largest newspaper outlet, privately owned)
- Coverage in major cities only
- The country has a poor record on press freedom.



- 4.25 million people use Facebook
- 540.7k people use Insta
- 400k use LinkedIn
- 166.6k use Twitter
- 81.27% use mobile phones & 17.94% use desktops to access the internet



- Key leaders influence public opinion – politicians and village elders.

Other relevant info

- The Payat Resistance Movement (PRM) is assessed to have between 50-70 fighters, although there are signs that more and more disaffected Payat may join the movement despite the tribal leaders' agreement to the cease-fire and its associated disarmament protocol.
- Like the PRM, the Cambo Independence Security Council (CISC) is a group of fighters that believes the peace agreement will ultimately fail, and that they must be ready to fight the Payat once again. It is thought to consist of two Operational Teams (OT) of 10 men and women.

Challenges in understanding the IT



Interactive Activity

Activity: The Information Environment Mapping and Analysis Scenario

Scenario: Imagine a situation where a rumour has been spreading through the fictitious region of Veronia. There was an incident two weeks ago where a teenager was struck and killed by a passing UN vehicle. Information has been spread that the locals believe the UN may have struck the youth on purpose. The information has been carried by media and disseminated through word of mouth in community gatherings, leading to increased tensions and distrust towards UN peacekeepers.

Objective: The objective is to equip participants with practical skills in information environment mapping and analysis.

Note: *This is a fictitious scenario designed for educational purposes to foster critical thinking and awareness regarding the impact of MDMH in peacekeeping contexts.*

Task

- Using the information from the lesson, each group must identify the type of MDMH, channel, information needs, context of the message, perception, network, stakeholders, socio-political considerations, etc.
  - How would you map the information sources and channels in the scenario?
  - What information would you use to analyse the potential impact of the misinformation?
  - Who would you engage to get the information you needed to map and analyse the issue?
  - What risks could arise in the course of this mapping and analysis process, and how would you mitigate them?

Take Away

- The information terrain is a complex interplay of physical, informational and cognitive elements.
- Analysing the information terrain is critical, involves the identification of information sources, channels and the socio-political context.
- Units face numerous challenges in this process, including cultural and linguistic barriers, the potential risks of conducting this type of research, and the ever-present risk of MDMH.
- Analysis requires a deep dive into the motives and patterns of information flow, both online and offline.
- Units must balance their strategies within the framework of ethical and legal standards.

Questions