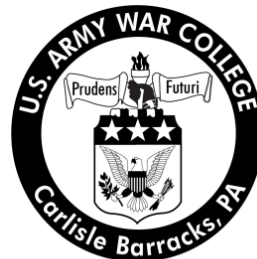


Strategy Research Project

Harnessing International Relations Theory to Security Cooperation Program Design

by

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United States Army War College
Class of 2012

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USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

**HARNESSING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY
TO SECURITY COOPERATION PROGRAM DESIGN**

by

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ABSTRACT

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Security cooperation programs are international activities that shape the geostrategic environment, so International Relations theory should guide program design efforts. The Realist, Constructivist, and Liberal schools of theory all offer perspectives on shaping interstate relations that can be applied to support national security objectives and expand strategic options. Three key actors in the Defense Department; the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the Geographic Combatant Command, and the Country Team, are best qualified to inform program design. Each should represent one of the three schools of International Relations theory in security cooperation program design to prevent redundancy, guarantee diversity, and increase the overall likelihood of success in peaceful interstate military relations.

HARNESSING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS THEORY TO SECURITY COOPERATION PROGRAM DESIGN

Security cooperation activities shape the geostrategic environment every time they impact the military relations between international partners. “International relations,” as defined by the political scientist K.J. Holsti, “refer to the structured and organized relations between established entities that may or may not become involved in the major political issues of the day.”¹ Security cooperation activities are all structured, organized, and formally administered programs that govern interstate interaction between partnered military units and their leaders. These programs are therefore a unique subset of international relations as Holsti defines them. Security cooperation programs aspire to build common expectations with partner nations so that their military assistance is available when needed. In an environment of diminishing defense resources, we can no longer expect to have the manpower, time, or funding available to compensate for either program inefficiencies or poorly targeted activities. It is more important than ever that we find a way to do things correctly at the first opportunity, making informed choices with every partner and program. Security cooperation plans should support national objectives, expand policy options, and eliminate potential surprises from partner nations. They must be deliberately designed from the outset to achieve these objectives.

This paper posits that modern international relations theory should shape our security cooperation activities. It will begin by demonstrating how security cooperation programs increasingly reflect our desire to shape the future geostrategic environment in favor of American national interests. A review of three schools of thought on

international relations, the Realist, Constructivist, and Liberal schools, will follow to offer several relevant models for understanding and predicting interstate behavior. This examination will indicate that three actors in the Defense Department are best suited to direct security cooperation planning. The Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Geographic Combatant Command (GCC), and the Senior Defense Official (SDO) on each Country Team are sufficient to incorporate the benefits of each school of IR theory into security cooperation planning. Each school should guide one of these actors to prevent redundancy, guarantee diversity, and increase the overall likelihood of success in interstate military relations. International relations theory is relevant to our understanding of security cooperation programs, as it can help policy makers determine both that the right programs are adopted and that the programs are achieving their desired results.

Refining the Scope of Security Cooperation

The US Armed Forces have peacefully interacted with other militaries through much of their history, but the mechanisms of security cooperation have changed. A brief examination is in order, as the relevancy of international relations theory will not become apparent without first understanding what security cooperation activities are.

A Cold War era commentator established that “the purpose of U.S. military and security aid is to apply American power internationally by: first, strengthening the defensive capabilities of states in the American alliance structure; second, helping friendly nations quell internal political or military disturbances; and third, assisting friendly nations in buying breathing space and, with luck, in regaining or retaining stability.”² America’s post-Cold War identity, once described by former Secretary of State Madeline Albright as the “indispensible nation,”³ has done little to alter these

objectives. American military assistance continues to strengthen our global security posture by protecting American interests, supporting our partners, and postponing security challenges whenever possible.

Currently, the US Armed Forces are charged with shaping the geostrategic environment in coordination with foreign partners in four of the five missions described in the Strategic Guidance document of January 2012.⁴ When not in actual combat, the military does this every day when it conducts activities abroad. Security assistance programs are controlled under Title 22 (Foreign Assistance) of the US Code, while other military cooperation tasks fall under Title 10 (Defense) and are directly tasked to the Defense Department. Security cooperation, however, is identified in the Joint lexicon as “all DOD interactions with foreign defense establishments to build defense relationships that promote specific U.S. security interests, develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and multinational operations, and provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access to a host nation.”⁵ This essay accepts this inclusive list, and defines security cooperation as all military to military relationships, activities, and exchanges conducted outside of a zone of conflict or during times of peace. It will include all State Department funded Title 22 activities as well as all interactions with foreign armed forces financed by the Defense Department, the individual Armed Services, or the worldwide Geographic Combatant Commands. Since all these activities affect military to military relationships, and consequently shape the geostrategic environment, they should be addressed together to better synergize their effects.

The Relevance of Theory to Assess Success

We now fully expect security cooperation programs to affect foreign partners and provide access, influence, capability and capacity for the US Armed Forces. The

programs are all intended to expand the ends, ways, and means available to formulate future strategies. Both capability, “the ability to perform a function, and capacity...the extent of a capability present,”⁶ can be identified as the means of a strategy. Capacity and capability each lend themselves to quantifiable measurement, and can be assessed in a straightforward manner. It is much harder to determine if the ways and ends of a strategy adopted by the United States are equally desirable to a potential coalition partner.

Security cooperation programs that address only the abilities of our security partners and ignore their willingness to adopt similar strategies are blatantly ignoring the political considerations that guide defense choices. For the US to participate in coalition warfare in the future, we must present strategies that are feasible, acceptable, and suitable not only to American interest, but to that of our potential partners as well. “Political considerations,” Carl von Clausewitz noted, “do not determine the posting of guards or the employment of patrols. But they are the more influential in the planning of war, of the campaign, and often even of the battle.”⁷ Security cooperation activities must positively influence political conditions between the United States and another sovereign nation by developing a common vision of acceptable strategy if they are to be considered effective. Any less ignores the existing statutory requirement for security cooperation to support access and influence in American international relations. Access and influence must always be earned from, and granted by, security partners to remain valid.

Karl Deutsch first identified security communities in his 1957 study “Political Community and the North Atlantic Area.” He demonstrated how transactions, both

internal and external, created and strengthened security communities, focusing on the “processes and interactions: interactions between societies and interactions between states.”⁸ His research was carried forward to the interpretation that “what state interests are or become, and the meaning and purpose of power, take shape within – and are constituted by – the normative structure that emerges and evolves due to the actions and interactions of state and non-state actors.”⁹ Harmonizing concepts of state interest and power are essential to the maintenance of a security community, or even a bilateral military partnership. International relations theory is therefore again applicable, as it will help policy makers gauge if their activities will meet intended results. Informed analysis may indicate whether we have done the right thing well, and must be applied to predict outcomes in advance of the next war, campaign, or battle.

Three Schools of Thought

One school of political theory and international relations that is famously connected with the security community and hard power is the Realist school. Rising to prominence in the 1970's under the scholarship of Hans Morgenthau, Hedley Bull, and Kenneth Waltz, the Realist school has had lasting impact on the conduct of American foreign policy, particularly in the field of nuclear deterrence. The Realist school assumes that nation states are the principal actors in world politics, and that they interact in an environment of global anarchy. In this “main tenet of realism...an anarchical system [is] one which lacks the central governing authority familiar to us in the domestic sphere.”¹⁰ This anarchy does not imply chaos, only the recognition that there is no higher order in place over a sovereign nation to impose order on the state system.

Because there are no “rules” imposed from above, Realist scholars generally expect individual states to maximize their positions, as determined by a rational calculation of their self-interests. In the Realist system, “cooperation is rare and it is anyway likely to be evanescent given the inevitability of changes in national interest.”¹¹ Harvard scholar Stephen Walt, in his work *The Origins of Alliances*, explained that states will either cooperate with, and “bandwagon,” or compete with and “balance” the relative power of a potential partner state based on their estimation of relative power. In either case, the course of action a state chooses is driven by perceptions of self interest and mitigated only by the perceived chance of success, as no higher system of reward or punishment will constrain state behavior.

This perception of a zero sum game often leads states to adopt Manichean, carrot-and-stick, approaches to incentives and punishments when attempting to persuade other states to alter or continue their behavior. Most Realists believe that as single states acquire power and influence through such hard bargaining, other states may either balance or bandwagon in response to a single state’s ascending power. In either case, Realist scholars offer several case studies that may help an international relations practitioner predict state behavior when confronted with a black and white security choice. The Realist school offers multiple examinations of diplomatic history to help policy makers predict if their future incentive strategies will bear fruit, and identify best practices about how to achieve their ends.

The scholars of Constructivist international relations theory also recognize the anarchic environment inherent to the Realist school. While most Constructivists acknowledge that there is no higher authority over the state system, they do not believe

that the international system lacks a type of order. “Anarchy,” notes one of the founding Constructivists, Alexander Wendt, “is what states make of it.”¹² Wendt believes that ‘self-help and power politics do not follow either logically or causally from anarchy, and...if today we find ourselves in a self-help world, this is due to process, not structure.’¹³

Process, of course, is much easier to modify than structure, particularly when a single state actor does not control a system. A poker player can increase his chance of success by learning to play with skill, but he cannot change the rules of the game so that he is always dealt an extra card unless he owns the casino. As such, “the central insight of constructivist thought can perhaps best be conveyed by the notion that there is a fundamental distinction to be made between ‘brute facts’ about the world, which remain true independent of human action, and ‘social facts’ which depend for their existence on socially established conventions.”¹⁴ Social conventions, reached only by agreement, are always open to modification and renewal.

Because Constructivists “either argue that anarchy’s consequences for specific political interactions are radically underdetermined, or that the socially constructed nature of anarchy makes it amenable to transformation,”¹⁵ their observations offer much to security cooperation planners. By describing an international order that extends beyond a self-help world of black and white policy choices, they expand the field of acceptable policy options and allow for a wider menu of military to military interactions. Recognizing this offers policy makers many more options to obtain positive behavior from another state.

Constructivists describe an environment where existentialist choices can be made, and individual nations can define themselves and their values through their actions. They generally agree that ideas and identity matter. Some of these characteristics can be used to predict collective behavior. Well-identified norms can discard certain state or cultural behaviors as either highly unlikely or unacceptable. More aptly, some Constructivist theorists believe that there can be, and in fact is, a community of norms that can regulate interstate behavior and conduct. The creation and maintenance of these norms must therefore be the focus of steady state security cooperation activities, which can carry these norms forward between partners.

Norms, of course, can always take the form of laws, which then brings us to the Liberal school of international relations. The Liberal school is the intellectual precursor to both Realism and Constructivism, and has its origins in the seventeenth century. Predating the system of secular independent states established under the Treaty of Westphalia, Hugo Grotius “asserted that all international relations were subject to the rule of law – both the law of nations and the law of nature. He rejected the idea that states can do whatever they wish and that war is the supreme right of states.”¹⁶ As opposed to the Realist vision of anarchy, Liberals generally agree with Grotius that there is a larger system at work restraining state behavior.

One of the most famous Liberal theorists is the philosopher Immanuel Kant, whose theory of “Perpetual Peace” centered on a vision where “free, democratic states would retain their sovereignty while working together to avoid war.”¹⁷ Kant’s vision has repeatedly been channeled into a desire to “democratize” other nations in the interest of expanding security, and create regimes whose laws and social mores will be directly

compatible with the conquering democratic state. Many modern international relations theorists would find this interpretation unsustainable. Michael W. Doyle argued as much in 1999, cautioning that “in a world armed with nuclear weapons crusading is suicidal. And in a world where changes in regional balances of power could be extremely destabilizing for ourselves and for our allies, indiscriminate provocation of hostility (such as against the People’s republic of China) could create increased insecurity.”¹⁸

Liberals generally define power broadly, and also consider state behavior to be subject to its member’s vision of identity. Globalization has, to some degree, challenged the identity of almost all of the United State’s security partners. Subgroups of Liberal theory can help explain how identity changes behavior. Some modern Liberal scholars acknowledge increasing international interdependence and the sensitivities and vulnerabilities it creates. In *Power and Interdependence*, Robert Keohane and Joseph Nye “recognize that states have incentives to cooperate because they seek to maximize absolute gains. As a result, cooperation is a common occurrence, not the rare exception. Through institutions, states can solve collective action problems, that is, problems that one state alone cannot solve.”¹⁹ Keohane and Robert Axelrod belong to the school of Liberal Insitutionalists and applied game theory “to illustrate how cooperation is in the individual state’s self-interest.”²⁰ All three theorists offer useful models to predict state behavior in advance of security cooperation program design.

Both Liberal Interdependence and Liberal Institutionalists share roots with Grotius and Kant, and believe that there is a larger civil society where interstate tensions should be productively managed. Liberal theorists would call for policy to strengthen this regime, as “one should rely primarily on transnational civil society for

expansion by three methods: it should begin with ‘inspiration,’ focus on ‘instigation,’ and, thereby, call upon ‘intervention’ only when necessary.²¹ This prescription, frighteningly close to our Cold War definition of American military assistance noted earlier, should illustrate how direct the link between theory and policy can be.

Three Principal Actors in Program Control

In order to understand how international relations theory can inform our security cooperation policy choices, we must first identify the key actors in the policy process. Because of their unique roles and responsibilities, a triad of actors is sufficient to direct and evaluate security cooperation programs. The Secretary of Defense, his Senior Defense Official (SDO) on the Country Team, and the SDO’s senior military supervisor, the Geographic Combatant Commander are the three most important actors in ensuring that greater strategic options exist with partners in the future.

The most important stakeholder of all is the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). Charged by law with conducting security cooperation activities on its own, it is the interagency lead for the integration of the military instrument of national power for US government security assistance. Title 10 of the US Code, which pertains to the US Armed Forces, authorizes DOD’s international programs and security cooperation programs, and fixes the Secretary of Defense with this burden. “Title 22, pertains to U.S. foreign relations to include [the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961] FAA and [the Arms Export Control Act of 1976] AECA security assistance...[I]t should be noted that certain DOD security cooperation program authorities are also with 22 USC,”²² which are administered by the Department of State. Because it serves as the interface with the Department of State for Title 22 programs, the Office of the Secretary of Defense therefore has a unique responsibility for interagency collaboration it cannot delegate.

Where OSD can delegate responsibility is does so. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) “direct[s], administer[s], and provide[s] overall policy guidance for the *execution* [emphasis added] of security cooperation and additional DOD programs,”²³ by order of the Secretary of Defense. It does this “under the authority, direction, and control of the Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (USD (P))...and report[s] to the USD (P) through the Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs (ASD (ISA)), who, under the USD (P), shall exercise authority, direction, and control over the DSCA.”²⁴ DSCA clearly executes policy developed by the civilian leadership of the Pentagon, and does not determine what that policy will be.

When conducting research on behalf of the Office of the Secretary of Defense, several RAND researchers saw that “various laws, directives, and instructions govern the execution of...security cooperation programs. But not all programs have associated directions or instructions.”²⁵ Many seminars, exchanges, and military exercises conducted with foreign partners are funded from operational budgets and may “derive their authority from memorandums from senior leaders or simply from precedent.”²⁶ The RAND team concluded that in order to ascertain whether these outlier programs were effective or not, they had to be compared to the OSD authored Global Employment of the Force (GEF) document. Because they found that “at present, the GEF provides the only real assessment guidance available to the COCOMs, services, and defense support agencies,”²⁷ the Office of the Secretary of Defense must be considered the primary stakeholder in security cooperation, without equal.

As a unique actor at the top of the food chain, and the Executive agency linked to the other agencies of government and the elements of national power, the Liberal Institutional school may be the most useful in helping the Office of the Secretary of Defense develop goals and programs for security assistance. Only OSD can define the kind of relationship with another sovereign state military with legal authority, either through Executive branch authority or through testimony to Congress. Legal definitions count in security assistance, as there is a distinct legal difference between a coalition partner and an ally. Without a negotiated and ratified treaty, there is no Alliance. The legal obligations Alliance members assume are valid because of the reasons identified by Liberal Institutionalists.

Legal protections and enforcement regimes are also the only force behind authorization of technology transfers to foreign parties. The multinational development of defense articles like the Joint Strike Fighter would be impossible without a developed set of rules to protect the interests of all interested parties. Certainly, “it is...possible for the Liberal Institutionalists to point to the fact that the overwhelming majority of transactions between states are peaceful, in accordance with international law, and to the mutual benefit of the states involved.”²⁸ Institutional case studies may help determine what types of legal regimes and agreements between states were most durable in the past, and could inform the development of future international ventures.

The second actor in the security cooperation triad is the Senior Defense Official (SDO) assigned to each Embassy’s Country Team. Whether their individual position is resourced through either the Defense Intelligence Agency or the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, this individual reports directly to the local Geographic Combatant

Commander. SDOs also serve as the Defense Secretary's personal representative to the United States Ambassador and the interagency Country Team assigned to each foreign capital. This designation creates a direct line of accountability in defense policy channels between Washington and the Country Team.

Our Ambassadors speak directly for the President when dealing with foreign governments. For security cooperation matters "the in-country point of contact between the United States government (USG) and the host nation generally is either the Defense Intelligence Agency (DIA)-sponsored defense attaché office (DAO) or the DSCA-sponsored Security Cooperation Office (SCO),"²⁹ both of which are subordinate to the SDO, who also enjoys direct and regular access with the governing officials of that country. This permanent presence in a host nation forms the crux of the Ambassador and SDO's identity. Each is expected to model American behaviors and expectations in their conduct of business. They are both called on to demonstrate, build, and strengthen commonalities of interests between the United States and their host country as required. Each is expected to interpret and explain US policies in the appropriate local language, and even more importantly, the appropriate cultural context.

The unique position as a cultural intermediary should draw the Senior Defense Official to the Constructivist school of international relations theory. Constructivist theorists have focused on the grey area of political discourse, and attempted to explain how identity politics influence state behavior. This is exactly the milieu of the Senior Defense Official. Outside of the constraints of a formal demarche, where a diplomats words are chosen for him and a specific message is most often conveyed verbatim, the SDO and other members of the Country Team interact with their host nation

counterparts in their own words. Because their words may be the first a host nation official hears about a topic of mutual strategic interest, or because they are relied on to interpret policies broadcast directly from Washington, the members of the Country Team must choose their words and actions wisely.

Constructivist theory, although relatively new among the schools of international relations theory, is just what is required to inform the forward edge of security cooperation policy. Constructivist theorists “agree that the behavior of individuals, states, and other actors is shaped by shared beliefs, socially constructed rules, and cultural practices. They argue that what actors do, how they interrelate, and the way that others interpret their behavior create and can change the meaning of norms.”³⁰ No group is better able to observe the behavior of a security cooperation partner and judge whether a common practice has been adopted or a compatible opinion formed within that partner’s armed forces than the Senior Defense Official and members of the Country Team. Through direct observation of units and conversations with key leaders, these individuals are best able to determine if a security cooperation program has had the desired effect of improving the host nation armed forces’ strategic readiness, identified as willingness and ability.

By applying Constructivist theory, the security cooperation experts on the Country Team should seek to interact with the recipients of US assistance as much as possible. They should seek opportunities for frank discussions with the host nation leadership to understand where gaps may exist between host nation and American forces across the spectrum of doctrine, organization, training, leader development, materiel, personnel, or facilities (DOTLMPF). They should be concerned with senior

leader commitment as much as unit capacities, as each of these are indicators for Constructivist benchmarks in identity and interest formulation. Progress in security cooperation programs should be determined by how host nation characteristics change in relation to US policy.

Constructivist theorists hold “a belief that ideas, values, norms, and shared beliefs matter, that how individuals talk about the world shapes practices, that humans are capable of changing the world by changing ideas, and hence that it is necessary to show how identities and interests of actors are ‘socially constructed’.”³¹ International interactions can help change these ideas in significant ways. After substantial investment, “Germany after World War II reoriented its identity to multilateralism, embedding itself in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and European institutions with the encouragement of the United States.”³² While most security cooperation programs do not rival the Marshall Plan in size or scope, they are all focused on closing gaps in capacity or orientation with our counterparts. No one in the security cooperation process is better placed to monitor changes in either quality than the members of the Country Team. As such, they would be well served to look at Constructivist theory in determining how and where capacity gaps with other countries will be measured and addressed.

Sometimes, however, the subjective judgments of diplomats are insufficient. Detailed knowledge of the needs and desires of a partner country are essential to establishing and maintaining common ground in interstate relations. For security cooperation investments to be judged effective they must always be reviewed by how well they help achieve American security interests throughout the world.

Strategic planners desire, and often require, complete clarity about a potential ally's abilities and intentions, particularly in moments of crisis. As in the common financial services disclaimer that past behavior is not an indicator of future performance, those strategists charged with forming an international military coalition will require more than historical images and updated organizational charts to sleep soundly at night. Nowhere are potential policies expressed as hard demands more clearly than in the assumptions of an operations plan (OPLAN). Determining whether the starting assumptions about a coalition partner's ability or willingness in an OPLAN are valid point us to the final actor in the security cooperation triumvirate, and another school of international relations theory.

The Geographic Combatant Command maintains the library of operations plans (OPLANS) for any given theater. They have a statutory responsibility to maintain and update these plans regularly.³³ The Plans section of the staff (J5) has a key task in identifying the enabling conditions assumed necessary at the start of an OPLAN. Security cooperation programs with a partner country referenced in an OPLAN should be oriented to support these opening conditions. An intelligence estimate that describes the likelihood a plan may be activated, and how far in the future that likelihood may arise, will determine the time available to develop those conditions. Understanding the time available before a security relationship reaches an inflection point at the start of an OPLAN will then allow the J5 to triage security cooperation activities in the GCC area of responsibility. Programs that support making the most important conditions and assumptions in the most likely OPLANS a reality can then receive a corresponding emphasis.

Since the tenure of Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, these plans have been reviewed in the interagency process defined as the Active Planning Initiative. This interagency involvement in plan review continues in the current administration under Secretary Panetta, and routinely involves representatives of the Department of State in events called Promote Cooperation sessions. Because the State Department is involved in the plan review process, a working group in the Promote Cooperation session should be designated to examine if the Title 22 funds designated for security assistance in the Joint Operational Area of an OPLAN actually support the starting assumptions of the OPLAN and meet the intent of our national objectives. The Department of Defense should be able to positively respond to State Department inquiries about administration of these Title 22 funds and any GCC Commander operations and maintenance funds expended in the JOA. The DOD can advance the case through the Executive to make security cooperation priorities a matter of law, but even the additional emphasis of the Combatant Commander should be sufficient to order requirements in a region and increase the surety of prediction in OPLAN development.

To emphasize those starting requirements not bound by law, but prioritized as essential preconditions for a plan's success, the GCC staff should employ the Realist theory to develop corresponding security assistance tasks and programs. Realist models are comparatively the hardest standards to predict policy effectiveness, because success requires a demonstration of true core values and ability. Realist theorists will also predict that as stress on the political regime increases, the government is increasingly likely to narrow its definition of self-interest. These strict

criteria, however, are exactly the type of indicators GCC planners need. During a time of crisis, a Combatant Commander needs positive behaviors concretely demonstrated. Carrot and stick negotiations at this moment will impress the gravity of the situation in ways that appeals to institutional rules or common values may not.

Because the assumptions in an OPLAN are tied to event triggers that would activate the plan, their relative necessity and importance lend themselves to prediction. An intelligence estimate tracking the potential activation of an OPLAN would indicate when the assumption conditions were required to be met. Goals can be placed in time, so an on-off switch of direct *quid pro quo* security cooperation agreements would likely be sufficient to make sure those goals are realized.

Creating a System of Checks and Balances

History is full of examples of states that supported or abandoned one another in a time of need. Undeniably, the American taxpayer supports security cooperation activities to increase the likelihood that we will have more, rather than less, capable and willing coalition partners to meet our strategic military goals. Security cooperation is charged with providing the American Armed Forces with access and influence worldwide. International relations theory can help the military instrument of US policy identify several different approaches to accomplishing that task. These competing theories naturally limit the actors involved in the shaping process, as three key players (OSD, the Geographic Combatant Commands, and the Country Teams) are sufficient to create a system of checks and balances among each other. Each corner of this triangular relationship, when guided by a distinct school of international relations theory, will mutually support one another to maximize the opportunities for congruence when dealing with another state.

The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, Service Chiefs, and the GCC Subordinate Component Commands are deliberately excluded from the triad because they are primarily concerned with training, manning, and equipping forces for global readiness. Focused inward, they all may see security cooperation activities as vehicles to best execute these tasks, but they should not be setting the direction for bilateral activities between states. The Defense Security Cooperation Agency draws attention that “the broad definition of security cooperation to include all DOD international programs... has significantly increased the playing field within DOD. Now it reaches far beyond the Secretary of Defense to the GCC, the in-country [Defense Attaché Office] DAO, and the [Security Cooperation Office] SCO. Every community within DOD has a role to play in security cooperation and its use in achieving U.S. foreign policy and national security objectives.”³⁴ This is a noble goal, but applies to program execution more than to program design. In practice, the design of security cooperation engagements remains under the purview of the triad. Major Combatant Command liaisons to foreign countries, such as the Army’s Training and Doctrine Command network, are responsible to coordinate their activities as part of the Country Team through the Senior Defense Official. National Guard or Active troops visiting or training in a foreign country must obtain country clearance approval from the Geographic Combatant Command and the local American Embassy. Enough statutory controls exist that it serves to acknowledge the duties and authorities of the actors in the triad and recognize them as the supported effort when designing, executing, and evaluating security cooperation programs.

Simplifying the number of actors also helps each one focus on discrete goals when pursuing the security cooperation relationship with a foreign government.

Foremost, the OSD team can prioritize each country worldwide to order their relative importance to US security goals, and then pursue legal and binding agreements for partnerships to formalize interstate relationships. The Secretary of Defense will undoubtedly interpret the Department's interagency responsibilities and best define the "tone" and political nature of military to military relationships. The direct involvement of the Senior Defense Official and their subordinate GCC resourced security cooperation activities in the Country Team provide the second anchor point for policy. Their presence in a host nation allows them to identify issues by talking to partners and create or strengthen cultural norms and expectations. By interacting with a host nation's armed forces, they can clarify intentions and observe capacities to benchmark an overall level of interoperability with US forces. Understanding capabilities and inclinations are vital to the final point in the triad, the Geographic Combatant Command. A GCC Plans shop that concentrates on OPLAN assumptions, necessary operational permissions, and an ally or partner's promised or desired capabilities provides even more balance to ensure that American strategic equities are met in the defense relationship with a foreign power.

Maintaining Balance in the Triad

Each of the three agencies in the triad governing security cooperation program design is mutually reinforcing. Integrating a school of international relations theory at each point in the triad should maximize decision-modeling options to predict and encourage positive behaviors of other states to support US national security objectives. Each agent should represent an approach with the appropriate theory to guide their estimation of whether they are doing the right thing and if they are doing it well.

Defining the role of each actor by scope will incentivize different approaches to the myriad of security assistance programs available by public law.

Embodying a school of international relations theory will require security cooperation planners to demonstrate considerable mental agility. This will be particularly true for the Foreign Area Officers and Regional Affairs Officers who may serve in sequential assignments at different points in the triad. When serving on the Country Team, they will need to model behavior and communicate expectations to the appropriate host nation officials to ensure that students selected for International Military Education and Training (IMET) programs will actually broaden and deepen the alignment between defense institutions upon graduation. When serving at the Pentagon they will have to understand institutional relationships and obligations, informing the Secretary of Defense about the appropriate classification of partners and allies as they affect the Global Employment of the Force. Identified capability gaps along the DOTLMPF spectrum will preoccupy those program designers serving at the Geographic Combatant Commands, as they develop their own framework to ensure global security challenges are addressed.

Perhaps most importantly, all three actors must cooperate continuously to maintain an environment of creative destruction that will ensure security cooperation programs remain relevant. Focusing the efforts of each actor in the triad to a collective goal of promoting US security objectives should help break fiefdoms in program administration, as no one actor can monopolize the intended outcomes for a program, nor discard examination of a security cooperation activity because it is “not in my lane.” Each point in the triad will examine the suite of security cooperation programs from a

different point of view only to develop a collective judgment that military assistance is both doing the right thing and doing it well.

The emphasis on purpose and outcomes will be increasingly necessary in the future. As future DOD budgets are expected to decline, military strategists will have less “slack” available in the system, and more reason to get things right the first time. A balanced, informed approach to security cooperation activities and policies is necessary now more than ever.

Endnotes

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