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Culture and Language Lessons Learned in the Indo-Pacific Operational Context as Presented at the 2020 AU LREC Symposium

Dr. Jessica Jordan, editor

This special edition features selected Indo-Pacific–focused papers presented at the 2020 Air University Language, Regional Expertise and Culture (LREC) Symposium. This event was themed, "Hindsight 20/20: The Past Shapes Our Future," and hosted panels on topics related to the past 10–20 years of global operations that also reconsidered the connections between broad US foreign policy goals and Department of Defense LREC programs and initiatives. Many presenters made recommendations for improvements while considering the anticipated impacts that LREC education could have on global operations over the next 10 years. This volume features papers that successfully combine academic research and experience-based insights about Indo-Pacific operations toward suggesting specific, actionable recommendations.

Introduction

Reflecting on the Past and Future of the Premier Scholarly Event for Department of Defense Language, Regional Expertise, and Culture Scholars

Dr. Jessica Jordan & Dr. Patricia Fogarty

Abstract

This introduction applies the "Hindsight 20/20" theme to the history of the symposium as an event, while making the argument for continued language, regional expertise, and culture (LREC) education across the force. It begins by reviewing the history of the symposium, followed by a reflection on lessons learned from the 2020 event, before concluding with a summary of the enclosed papers that collectively suggest the need for greater LREC research and teaching on the themes discussed herein.

LREC Symposium History and Lessons Learned

The idea for the Air University (AU) LREC Symposium began as a response to three concerns at AU in the 2014–2015 period. First, we wanted to showcase the work done in the LREC area by students, faculty, and staff at AU, as a way to improve awareness of the contributions of the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) to AU and the Department of the Air Force. We were seeing many well-researched student research papers that were not getting the attention we thought they deserved, either at AU or more broadly. Second, we wanted to provide a venue for discussions about LREC education, training, *and* practice that we felt did not get enough attention in local or national circles. There are conferences focused on military history, international relations, foreign language teaching and learning, and armed forces and society, but none that covered all these topics for the Department of the Air Force or military audiences at large, and few that address LREC-related best practices in military operations and planning. We saw a niche that could be filled, much in the same way that AFCLC was set up to fill the gap in LREC education, training, research, and practice. Finally, the mid-2010s were an era of enduring budgetary constraints, resulting in limited travel funds for professional development. We hoped to provide a setting for our colleagues to present their work locally if they could not do so nationally or internationally.

The first LREC Symposium was restricted to personnel at Maxwell AFB and Gunter Annex, both in Montgomery, Alabama, with a few invitations extended to nonmilitary or non-Maxwell/Gunter people in the local area. We had a few dozen presenters and attendees and felt the event was enough of a success to propose a second annual event. The second annual symposium (and every one since) opened participation to anyone in the Department of Defense (DOD), the general public, and even to international partners. The papers in this special edition represent some of the best works presented at our fifth annual event, which hosted more than 2,000 attendees, as you will read below.

Planning for the 2020 event began well before the COVID-19 pandemic changed the world. The "Hindsight 20/20" theme was chosen because the year 2020 called to mind this phrase. And with our US efforts drawing down in Afghanistan and Iraq, it seemed to be a good time to reflect on the growth of LREC education and training in the military since 2001. Back in 2019, the coordinating committee had no way of knowing that this theme ironically foreshadowed the fact that this meeting would turn out to be historic in its own right. The lockdowns and disruptions to everyday life that began in March 2019 had by June led the committee to transition to planning for an all-virtual event. We had never coordinated a virtual symposium before. The planning team met the myriad technical, managerial, and intellectual challenges with energy and creativity.

Going virtual meant that we could open the event to vastly more participants than ever before, including people presenting and attending. Over 120 people presented on a total of 75 panels, and almost 2,100 individuals registered to attend. The scope of the event was nearly 600 percent bigger than all previous years' figures combined in terms of overall participation. The potential impact of the greater number of views on the content presented, some of which was recorded and still lives online, was correspondingly much more significant.

Thus, one lesson learned is that AFCLC ought to continue to entertain virtual or hybrid formats for future events, even after things return to "normal." This is something that much of the industrialized world is also discussing in 2021 as we gradually shift back to more in-person work events. Virtual events—from small meetings to large, multiday gatherings—are often more cost-effective for sharing ideas than in-person gatherings. However, virtual events are arguably less productive for encouraging ad hoc networking characteristic of large in-person conferences. On balance, there are benefits and drawbacks to both approaches. Rather than simply returning to in-person meetings because many of us prefer to interact face-to-face, the relative strengths of the virtual, or hybrid, formats ought to be accounted for when discussing goals and objectives for information sharing toward the generation of new ideas and professional contacts.

Beyond lessons pertaining to the event's virtual format, the specific conceptual challenges that came to light while planning and executing this event are worth considering in more depth. These deal with core themes that comprise a separate set of evolving lessons learned.

There are working conclusions to be drawn about the opportunities that emerge when military and nonmilitary audiences interact at the LREC Symposium. As noted earlier, this event brings together career professionals in the military and academia who share an interest in LREC across DOD programs. These groups of people represent a cross-section of society that tends to be acutely aware of what the US military is doing domestically and abroad, while also being conversant with popular and scholarly debates about these activities. Participants tend to be both operationally savvy and strategically or intellectually curious and/or established thinkers in their own right (for example, military university educators often present their research at the symposium). In summary, these groups include various people who do not often come together elsewhere, and their interactions create the potential for original thinking to emerge about broad themes related to the US military in the world.

Whereas many people living outside the continental United States first encounter Americans in military uniforms, this fact is not immediately apparent to many people living inside the continental US, particularly people who have not themselves served in the Armed Forces. The first US citizens that many foreign nationals, especially in the most important ally and partner countries (like Germany, Japan, and South Korea), get to know are members of the US Armed Forces. The United States' global/overseas-facing persona is armed, possesses a right to violence, and tends to have a lot of resources compared to host nationals. There is an ongoing risk that civil society, particularly in the US "mainland," (i.e., not Hawaii, Alaska, the US territories, or overseas installations), is relatively out-of-touch with the view held by many people in foreign countries of US culture as heavily militarized. More frequent scholarly exchanges between US military and civil society stakeholders might help narrow gaps between competing discourses about the culture and the shifting relevance of the American global presence toward more adept relations with allies, partners, and adversaries the world over.

The issue of the US global footprint and its ongoing challenges was an important theme at the 2020 event, as exemplified by Dr. David Vine's keynote presentation followed by several presentations related to global US military basing. Dr. Vine's work, and the topic of whether the US military presence should be scaled back, were discussed at several engaging panels. It became clear as the event progressed that some in the military community may have been a little uncomfortable with these conversations—particularly those which talked around the ques-

tion of whether the US "ought" to be abroad in the first place. As teachers, we know that when someone reacts with discomfort to an idea, this could signal the fact that real intellectual engagement is about to take place. By opening a space to engage with genuinely challenging questions, last year's symposium created opportunities for personal and institutional reflection. For example, the aforementioned questions fostered a heated, yet polite, exchange of ideas among speakers, participants, and event planners alike. Ultimately, to one degree or another, various US government departments, civilian academics, and not-for-profit groups are actively questioning the scope and rationale behind the global US military presence.

Last year's symposium was held during what was a polarizing time just prior to the 2020 US national election. After the symposium, we began to consider whether this USAF center with a research and teaching mission ought to host such charged discussions if they risk projecting bad optics—which is to say, giving the impression that we are against the global military presence simply because we are asking questions about it. As academics, we think that as long as difficult topics are contextualized well, they can be entertained at these yearly gatherings. This may mean stating clearly that academic speakers can push boundaries of what is politically correct, status quo, or acceptable in DOD strategic messaging. As suggested, the DOD should be having better conversations with civil society on certain topics, the role of the US military in the world being one of the most important of them.

We believe that military and civil society need to know what is happening in the outposts of the US overseas military footprint. Foreign nationals who host bases and the US military members who are sent abroad are aware of some of the day-to-day headwinds they face that implicate populations living both inside and immediately outside the proverbial fences bordering installations. In other words, many people—inside and outside military installations—are aware of what the US military is doing, how they are doing it, and often if they are not doing things as efficiently as they could be. This knowledge can be operationally and strategically consequential, and indeed it is used by global protest groups with an ax to grind against the global US military. Viewed positively, these contested issues are where we find an opportunity for growth. The intellectual, ethical, and practical questions that emerge when one considers the specific details of what goes on in US installations abroad are interesting from an academic perspective, and they have profound implications for global operations (and strategy) as well. More US citizens and nationals in and outside of the US military ought to be aware of, and engaged with, policies that send Americans abroad every day.

Authors who contributed to this special edition have provided much-needed visibility about the on-the-ground footprint of America in the world in their papers, which also consider the linguistic, regional, and cultural contexts in which they are operating. What follows is a summary of these papers.

Contributed Paper Summaries

Brig Gen Leonard J. Kosinski, USAF, participated in the 2020 Symposium as a featured speaker. His talk was entitled, "Going Multinational in Defense: Lessons for Developing Military Leaders," which is also the title of his dissertation-in-progress from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. The article included herein is based on an interview transcript with Dr. Jessica Jordan and is entitled, "Multinational Business Organizational Models and the US Air Force: An Interview with Brig Gen Leonard J. Kosinski, USAF." The article is presented in the style of a transcript, with Dr. Jordan's questions followed by General Kosinski's answers. Compared to the other papers in this special edition, this transcript is presented in a less formal writing style to reflect the nature of the conversation.

As the title implies, General Kosinski is advocating for adopting some of the best lessons learned in the academic studies of multinational businesses leadership to the management of what he calls "multinational military organizations." With this project he "seeks to contribute to the development of a theory on military strategic alliances, incorporating the knowledge-based view, which informs scholars, defense policymakers, and practitioners on the implications of knowledge and integration of forces in seeking higher level military capabilities through multinational cooperation" (p. 16). The enclosed interview transcript unpacks what he means by this while exploring how he came to pursue this research. The transcript also touches on various case studies he is using to advance the idea that merging organizations and cultures—a difficult challenge—lies at the heart of what is meant by the adjective *multinational* in these examples.

General Kosinski told stories during his symposium presentation about growing up in Japan, specifically in Iwakuni from grades 7–11. These formative years shaped his view of himself in the world and his view of Japan and its people. His personal background along with his ever-growing professional credentials endow him with a decided advantage to weigh in on contemporary questions about US–Japan relations. While listening to his symposium talk, we appreciated his depiction of the US Armed Forces as a group with an international presence that employs personnel who are only sporadically valued as culture or language experts. We also agree that if one of America's key strengths is to continue to be its relationships, they should be made into a more central focus of efforts by educating

and training uniformed representatives of the US government for forward positions across the globe.

Maj Logan H. Barlow's "*Erga Omnes Securitas*: International Security and Reliance on Sustainable Partnerships" draws upon original research he conducted while an Air Force Fellow. This research includes interviews with key leaders, politicians, and scholars, along with observations and Japanese government data he gathered while working in Japan as a Mansfield Fellow. His research sheds light on the ways that Japanese and US units make decisions about multilateral training events, while arguing that security cooperation could be improved by some easily implemented policy recommendations. These include increasing exchanges of people, assessing large-scale exercises from the unit perspective, and restructuring and planning in an innovative way.

Major Barlow finds that personal relationships are at the core of successful government cooperation, at every level. He adds that positive human interactions are going to continue to be paramount for future security cooperation, especially in this dynamic region, and suggests that this will require cultivating cross-cultural competence among individual USAF personnel. These recommendations resonate with many other papers in this special edition—in many ways, he speaks for the other contributing authors when he writes: "if a healthy human-based mutual understanding can be fostered on a regular basis, then sustainable security relationships will continue to be a cornerstone of stability in numerous regions around the globe" (p. 28). As a KC-135 Instructor Pilot and certified Indo-Pacific Command (INDOPACOM), Japanese-speaking Foreign Affairs Officer who worked with various large Japanese businesses as well as Government of Japan ministries, Major Barlow's insights are based on a wide breadth of professional experience in Japan. What is more, his academic background as a Mansfield Fellow infuses his research with a depth and rigor characteristic of a graduate thesis, an excerpt of which he reworked for this project.

US Air Force captains Julian Gluck and Byron Muhlenberg's "Opening the Door to Cultural Understanding and Mutual Cooperation: Multinational Military Partnerships and Educational Outreach" argues for improved cultural understanding as the basis for strengthening US relationships with allies in INDOPACOM. The co-authors cite academic studies along with anecdotal observations from experiences working in Japan in different operational capacities, including distinguished visitor support and assignments and exercises with multinational partners. Gluck and Muhlenberg have different strengths and cite various successes and failures they personally observed that they bring to bear on their argument that the DOD could improve operations significantly by investing in cultural education for Airmen.

For example, Captain Gluck discusses his experiences at Cope North, when he participated as a B-52 pilot and a Japanese Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP) scholar who was able to interpret multilateral exercise instructions for his Japanese counterparts. Some challenges he witnessed during this operation included language barriers due to the dearth of bilingual participants, most of whom were from the Japan side. This is important because "mission planning, briefings, sorties, and debriefs were less effective due to language barriers and the cultural differences that existed with planning and analytical processes." In addition, he points out that nations' varying levels of classification of tactics, techniques, and procedures, although essential for security, may diminish "full interoperability" between forces. (p. 43).

Captain Muhlenberg's experiences include twice serving in contracting management roles in Japan, such as his current role as Director of Business Operations at Misawa AB, as well as traveling to Hokkaido to support the bilateral exercise Northern Viper where he assisted the Marines in synchronizing port operations. He echoes his co-author Captain Gluck, in arguing that in all his activities in Japan involving the USAF and Japan Air Self-Defense Force "determined interaction over the course of the operation was the key to success" (p. 43). He goes on to caution that increased interactions between forces is not the same thing as cultural understanding, which is a point that the co-authors clarify in the final section of the paper.

The authors summarize their respective experiences in joint exercises by saying that exercises tend to get off to a rocky start because "there is not rapport yet between the two sides or there is a lack of knowledge of the other's culture, problems for which there are not enough experts to fill in these and other possible gaps" (p. 44). They also suggest that while the AFCLC does a good job hosting various language and culture programs and courses for the USAF and US DOD, overall, too few of these kinds of opportunities exist. What is more, they suggest that there is a lack of awareness of the existing AFCLC opportunities. They recommend: (1) greater training and education for people going abroad, (2) proliferating greater utilization of the regional experience identifier subset of the Special Experience Identifiers (SEI) to leverage personnel's language capabilities and/or cultural savvy, and (3) facilitating even better outreach about existing programs. They suggest that this outreach could consist in part of efforts toward galvanizing "involvement and cooperation with local and regional civic groups" (p. 45).

MSgt Timothy, US Space Force, is a LEAP scholar in Tagalog who draws extensively upon his own experiences in the article "Strengthening Interoperability through the Language Enabled Airman Program: Perspectives from the 2018 to 2019 US–Philippine ISR Mission." As an active-duty service member directly

involved in intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) missions, per regulation MSgt Timothy's name is limited to rank and first name only. He argues that achieving the 2018 *National Defense Strategy* call for more interoperability with allies and partners like the Philippines will require focused US assistance to help advance these nations' national and multinational military and humanitarian operations (and in the future, autonomy), while also ensuring that US war fighters receive even better cultural and linguistic education.

He opens by describing an ISR mission in which the US–Philippine mission relied heavily on US resources and labor before identifying specific operational gaps and opportunities upon which he makes two types of recommendations. These are: (1) providing more local interagency support and bilingual documentation to bridge language gaps, and (2) cultivating more awareness of LEAP across the force to maximize its reach. His recommendations come directly out of the operational context in which he has been working, and they provide a much-needed glimpse into the highly sensitive military relations in the Philippines in which, as MSgt Timothy makes clear, culture and language competence are of vital importance for interoperable mission success.

The next article by Capt Jasmine Bogard, USAF, returns the reader's focus to Japan, while bringing the examination in to a more localized context to consider global implications of an exemplary program. In, "Expanding Cultural Competencies: Exposing All Outside the Continental United States Airmen to the Local Populous," Captain Bogard draws upon anecdotal and experience-based evidence assembled during her time at Misawa Air Base, Japan, where she is the Assistant Director of Operations assigned to 35th Operations Support Squadron, 35th Fighter Wing.

This article reworks her symposium presentation, in which she described being inspired by the longstanding Misawa AB course for Airmen newly assigned to Japan. She cites academic literature on microaggressions and "othering" to contextualize several instances of cultural *faux pas* she witnessed that had the potential to impact US operations in Japan. Next, she summarizes portions of the US *National Defense Strategy* dealing with alliance building and interoperability, both of which require cultural competence in her assessment, before outlining common barriers to such competence including inadequate cultural awareness and insufficient language proficiency. Finally, she provides an example model of cultural competence drawn from academic literature before stitching all these ideas together to suggest specific qualities the Department of the Air Force ought to ensure are part of a proposed program to bolster cultural competence for all Airmen assigned OCONUS. The article does a good job of putting the reader in the shoes of someone witnessing an American making a preventable gaffe abroad

before walking us through research on how to prevent these moments buffered by real-world programmatic examples toward a conclusion replete with specific recommendations that senior leaders could read and potentially act upon immediately.

Lieutenant Shaquille James' contributed commentary piece, "What Would a North Korean Do? Washington Must See Issues from Adversaries' Perspectives in Order to Move Past Outmoded Policies," walks readers through his thought process for untangling the thorny issue of how to (re)formulate an effective foreign policy toward North Korea (DPRK). He starts with an example of insights he gleaned one day when he was talking with a member of the North Korean defector community and moves into an exposition of the vexing questions about the DPRK facing US leaders before providing recommendations about how to begin answering some of these questions.

Lieutenant James is doing the work of seeing North Korea "like" a North Korean, while of course not "as" a North Korean, to argue that their point of view must be understood if progress toward better relations is to be achieved: "in order to form effective policy and have a real shot at solving things once and for all, the outstanding questions regarding Pyongyang's desires, intentions, and willingness must be resolved" (p. 74). Lieutenant James argues that since leaders in Washington have unfortunately often made decisions based on bad assumptions, a deeper understanding of the constraints faced by a broad range of people who live in the DPRK might help leadership move away from a tendency to treat this country as a monolith. He contends that ultimately, "failure to truly understand North Korean intentions, goals, and what can realistically be expected of them," has historically pervaded the US policy orientation (p. 71). Lieutenant James' years of education in the Korean language and his relationships with the defector community have afforded him proximity to voices from this country that can otherwise be difficult to understand.

Conclusion

Future symposia should continue to build on the best of what is showcased by sharing good ideas widely so that they will be more likely to make a difference. Indeed, the desire for these ideas to have an impact outside of the event itself is the primary motivation behind our effort to pull together this special issue of the journal. Far too often, those of us in professional military education hear stories about military members' experiences in operational settings wherein they recognized an inefficiency or opportunity for improvement, wrote up their ideas and passed them up the chain of command, only to find that ultimately nothing came of their efforts. This is an understandable state of affairs, to be sure, given the ever-

present constraints on time, money, and personnel that are most often focused on retrospective rather than forward-looking program reviews. Bottom-up innovation is difficult to create in the first place, difficult to pass upward to people who could mobilize change around innovative ideas, and difficult to resource in a big bureaucracy even after it is embraced by the right people. However, we must keep trying to share ideas borne out of operational contexts with people in higher levels of policy making and implementation. We hope this special issue will amount to one step in this direction.

Dr. Jessica Jordan

Dr. Jessica Jordan is Assistant Professor of Regional and Cultural Studies (Asia) at the AFCLC. She received her Ph.D. in History (Modern Japan) from the University of California, San Diego and has taught courses on the history of Japan, Micronesia, Southeast Asia, WWII in Asia and the Pacific, and the world since 1500. Her dissertation research involved interviewing several dozen Northern Mariana Islanders about their memories of life under Japanese colonial rule (1914-1945), and she is currently revising chapters for publication as peer-reviewed articles. Her teaching and research interests include: historiography, modern colonialism, nationalism and ethnicity/race, and the politics of memory.

Dr. Patricia Fogarty

Dr. Patricia Fogarty is Assistant Professor of Cross-Cultural Relations at the AFCLC. Dr. Fogarty has worked at AFCLC since 2009, and finished her PhD in Anthropology in 2012. Her dissertation research revolved around the work of an internationally funded development agency in the Republic of Moldova (a former Soviet state). Through the topic of development, she explored Moldovans' experiences of citizenship, national identity, and corruption. Research conducted since joining AFCLC has included documenting the intercultural experiences of Airmen of all ranks and AFSCs. Teaching and research interests include: general cross-cultural awareness and competence; ethnic and national identity; the effects of corruption on military operations; incorporating cultural property protection into professional military education, exercises, and wargames; civil-military organizational relationships in humanitarian and stability operations; and the use of museums and heritage sites for political ends.

Multinational Business Organizational Models and the US Air Force

An Interview with Brig Gen Leonard J. Kosinski, USAF

The following is a transcript of an interview with Brig Gen Leonard J. Kosinski, Vice Commander, Fifth Air Force, and Director, Joint Air Component Coordination Element–Japan, at Yokota Air Base, Japan. The transcript is based on a 15 March 2021 interview by Jessica Jordan, PhD, Assistant Professor of Regional and Cultural Studies (Asia), Air Force Culture and Language Center, Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama.

Background

General Kosinski participated in the 2020 Air University LREC Symposium as a featured speaker. His presentation was entitled "Going Multinational in Defense: Lessons for Developing Military Leaders." He agreed to talk with Dr. Jordan to discuss some of the ideas he presented that originate in the dissertation he is writing. This dissertation is for a PhD in international security studies and business relations at the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy at Tufts University. To be allowed to pursue a degree like this while also fulfilling his current job duties, he was handpicked to be a Chief of Staff of the Air Force (CSAF) PhD Program Fellow/National Defense Fellow. He shared the first two chapters of his dissertation-in-progress with Dr. Jordan prior to this interview, which she cites throughout the transcript that follows. Her initials are *JJ* and Brig Gen Kosinski is *LK* in the transcript. This transcript appears in a conversational style to better reflect the tone of the conversation, and it has been edited for clarity.

The Interview

JJ: Thank you for presenting at last year's LREC Symposium and for sharing your dissertation chapters with me. Can you tell me more about this research project?

LK: Pursuing a PhD was rather unexpected. I got a master's in industrial engineering at Texas A&M University (1994) right out of the Air Force Academy, after which time the plan was to go on operational tours once or twice—then I was supposed to come back and teach at the Air Force Academy. Additionally, I received an MBA during my Olmsted Studies in Tokyo, Japan. Following that I did a master's in law and diplomacy at Tufts University. Considering all these

academic experiences, I thought I was done with school. Nonetheless, an opportunity for the prestigious CSAF PhD fellowship came about following my squadron command at the Heavy Airlift Wing in Pápa Air Base, Hungary.

This fellowship was intended for a young captain who could one day become a general officer and was based on a General Petraeus-type model. I was kind of a guinea pig, as they wanted to get someone who had already done a joint job and squadron command to see how this could work. I enrolled in what is normally a three-year program that ended up being a year-and-a-half since I had to go back out early to resume command and complete flying and other training. I have been busy since then, and not asking for additional time to complete and defend before starting O-6 command did not help. The longer you stay away, the harder it is to return.

Right now, I am close to finishing because I completed all the research, but I'm finding that there is always an interesting new problem or example to consider. The entire manuscript is about 300 pages, with a focus on three case studies of prominent multinational organizations.

JJ: Your dissertation is entitled "Going Multinational in Defense: A Theory of Integration and Knowledge in Military Strategic Alliances." The first sentence summarizes your main goals: "This dissertation seeks to contribute to the development of a theory on military strategic alliances, incorporating the knowledge-based view, which informs scholars, defense policymakers, and practitioners on the implications of knowledge and integration of forces in seeking higher level military capabilities through multinational cooperation." Lots of people write on this issue. What was your motivation for choosing this topic for your dissertation?

LK: The knowledge creation theory aspect of my work comes from mentorship I received while studying in Japan. At the time (2000–2002), I didn't realize how lucky I was working under Dr. Ikujiro Nonaka of the Graduate School of International Corporate Strategy at Hitotsubashi University. He is probably the most recognized academic from Japan, perhaps also across Asia, on the business scholarship I reference in this project.

Although my ideas about knowledge management and creation come from his influence, really the spark for this project was the time I spent at the Pápa, Hungary Heavy Airlift Wing, when I was part of standing up a first-of-a-kind combat airlift and airdrop unit involving multiple nations. But my interest in international approaches to security questions dates even further back. I grew up in Japan, which was a formative experience that planted seeds from a young age that would

later bloom into an interest in cultivating multinational know-how among the force.

Another genesis for my interest in this approach was one of my first deployments in supporting NATO in the Kosovo conflict right before I started the Olmsted Scholarship. As my squadron prepared to deploy from McConnell Air Force Base in Wichita, Kansas, we were told neither our final destination in Europe nor what role we would play in the impending conflict. Our KC-135 squadron was originally scheduled for a routine deployment to Turkey for Operation Southern Watch. With preparations for Operation Allied Force quietly executing, we first arrived in Rhein-Main Air Base at Frankfurt, Germany. There were not enough US airfields to support all the operations, especially in France where many had been closed decades earlier; so, aerial refueling units were sent to various unexpected locations throughout Europe. Eventually, after a very short stint in Frankfurt, we ended up setting up operations to fly out of Mont-de-Marsan, France (1999). Only one person in our group of over 100 could speak French, and that was the flight surgeon who had studied some French in college.

For the first couple days, our job was to fly our air refueling planes, the KC-135, to support various critical air operations across the AOR [area of responsibility]. However, we found that we were unable to launch planes for some reason—due to communications difficulties with the air traffic control tower. At first, it was thought that there were problems on the technical side such as old transmitter radios or something blocking signals from the flight line. But it turns out that the problem was not with our technology. We found out that in the evening the tower was manned by French civilians, and they were ignoring the American pilots because they thought the Americans were rude or lacking in manners and French politeness in the way some of our pilots barked over that radio. Consequently, we did not launch flights for a couple of nights because of this cultural issue—it turns out that *how* you say something in the context of a multinational operation is sometimes just as important as *what* you say. We Americans often think we can go anywhere and operate. But that is not the case. At the same time, I remember thinking, this is France and the US, and we are arguably not that different compared to other cultures in the world. It shouldn't be this hard.

This experience, along with working US-Japan relations at the Pentagon and the Japan desk, prepared me to write this dissertation. But the pinnacle experience shaping my thoughts on this topic was in Hungary, when I was standing up something new. Before moving to Hungary, my boss was pleading with SAF/IA [Secretary of the Air Force/International Affairs] asking for a cultural course to prepare all the inbound initial US members—in the end it took about six months to just get a CD-ROM on basic Hungarian sent to us. Now that I have looked at

Hofstede[1] and some of the world cultural values on differences between cultures, I think that this would have been nice to know going into that assignment. We had some people on the mission who had good cultural experience, but this information wasn't to be found on any résumé—we just lucked out. We tried to hire people with special regional or linguistic experience, but the enlisted assignment system doesn't give you a choice. Really our questions were focused on things like, *can we just find someone comfortable to talk with the Hungarians and people from other cultures? Can we screen for people who have the ability to work in multinational environments or overseas?* New personnel for these kinds of assignments also should have been asked, *do you know what this assignment means, and do you want to do this?*

All of this was on my mind when I went to get a PhD and I had to consider what I wanted to do. This was a good topic about which I had some opinions based in real-world lessons learned.

When I dove into the academic reading required for the PhD, I did not see a lot in the military literature about *strategic alliances*, which is a term I define differently in this work. I define strategic alliances in a more inclusive, business sense.

JJ: Right. You defined them in the following way: "Military strategic alliances are the broad range of interactions with foreign defense establishments to pursue a set of agreed upon goals or, more precisely, to develop and access capabilities. A capability is the ability to achieve a specific wartime or other military objective" (p. 17). Can you say more about why you think this definition is not common in the military?

LK: We have been getting better over time, and it is a kind of natural evolution. After WWII, as you know, Europe was demolished as was much of Asia. In the course of helping to lead reconstruction efforts in these areas under the guidance of treaties and agreements—the more formal mechanisms of strategic alliances—the US was also a huge presence economically and businesswise. In those initial postwar decades, the sense in the US was, *why do we need to go abroad?* It was not until the 60s or 70s when the idea that partnering with foreign companies became widely seen as favorable way of doing business in order to succeed.

Returning to the present day, partnering with companies from foreign countries to maximize business potential domestically and abroad is a standard way that large businesses operate. Applying this kind of thinking, along with some of the best practices established by businesses, to the security complex makes sense. A classmate of mine just sent me a note about a Franco-German collaboration example that will be ready in a couple of years. NATO has talked about pooling

and sharing of resources. These endeavors get at this, and they sound good, meanwhile the business side shows us that the right incentives are important. How *do* you incentivize and motivate sharing?

One of my case studies, NATO AWACS [North Atlantic Treaty Organization Airborne Warning and Control System], is also not a bad example of such an attempt. But there are some organizational issues when relationships that make these collaborations work start to become more nationalistic and less integrated. Challenges in NATO AWACS for example include the fact that one person should be in charge, and promotions are supposed to be based on merit rather than backdoor political maneuverings. That said, politics absolutely plays into the leadership structure. Some participants have had almost a secret structure below the formal one that is made up of people who actually do some of the important work involving standardization and training. So, my assessment is that this is not a very good example upon which to model future initiatives, unless some of the challenges are addressed head-on.

Another challenge related to boundaries of authority can be understood through the example from a member (European) country who committed sexual assault or some other heinous offense. Not even a two-star general in charge of the organization could say, *I want you out*. It was up to the nation in question to replace their representative to the organization. The boundaries of authority to manage personnel are harder to internationalize than boundaries of ownership of assets like technology.

In contrast--and this is a relatively small nuance to point out, but it is worth considering—in the Heavy Airlift Wing, based on the MOU [memorandum of understanding], the colonel that rotates through authorizes or certifies people (both US and foreign nationals) to be in the organization. This authority is seldom used to push a preference that might counter the wishes of a foreign nation, but this authority is built-in, nonetheless. Putting something like this into action of course takes a great deal of coordination, but it is a significant structural feature enabling oversight of key leaders that you just don't have in NATO units.

This is where I find it is helpful to think through the business literature on joint ventures, which have an integrated structure that is good for ensuring effective and equitable control. Because I am proposing in my dissertation that this model be adopted for military organizational needs, I am also proposing that a new term be used: *multinational military organization*. This is as opposed to a coalition, non-integrated, or national military unit.

JJ: This makes me think of the "bureaucracy to business" informal initiative that is popular in the DOD, which seeks to apply the wisdom of business practices to

running the military. Some of the counterarguments one often hears to this approach include the critique that businesses have a profit motive at the core of their missions, whereas this is not present in the public sector. To the contrary, profit seeking stands in opposition to one of the fundamental definitions of public service, which is to serve the greater good without seeking profit or personal gain. How do you reconcile the apparent contradiction between profit motives and public service?

LK: First of all, profit motives are not the only missions at the core of for-profit businesses. This point is critical to remember. For example, an auto manufacturer is not only focused on making a profit, but on making the best cars they can. Their mission statements are therefore also qualitatively similar, in some important ways, to those of non-profit-seeking organizations.

There are other differences between businesses and the military that are also often mentioned, the most obvious perhaps being that military personnel routinely risk their lives on their missions, and this is almost never a factor in business. Thinking through the wide chasm of differences that might spool out from this comparison are not productive for my work, which considers similarities to try to yield a hybrid approach.

There are a lot of similarities worth considering, as big business and big government are both large and complex organizations. In this way, international organizations are another relevant model. But the profit-motive incentives that have pushed the business literature farther than many other branches of scholarship make this field one that is extremely well-developed, tested, and practiced around the world in ways that arguably ought to make it attractive to military leadership.

Where my mind is now with my dissertation manuscript is considering the vexing problem, *how do you merge organizations and cultures?* In my last chapter, which I am currently writing, I make a leap into debating different approaches while maintaining a focus on Japan. Right now, being in Japan after having been away for so long, I am considering all that has changed in the direction of multinationalism in the US and Japanese security apparatus. Where I am sitting at Yokota AB, right next door is the Kokujieitai [Japan Air Force] Air Defense Command Headquarters. We are now doing ACE [Agile Combat Employment], which was unheard of 15 years ago. Yet, of course, we are still operating as bilateral operations—this is a subtle but marked difference. Bilateral means that command-and-control structures are different, but they could, and ought to, be integrated to work more effectively. My role in Fifth Air Force exists because we are not like Korea or NATO, where one coordinator exists. Bilateral might sound good, but executing in a crisis or contingency quickly poses other issues—the most critical

among them being a lack of efficiency. The structure as it stands now is, of course, the result of political decisions, but if one were to focus on efficacy and mission success, this would suggest another course of action. Ultimately, you can be the best bilateral coordinator in the world, but bilateral will never be integrated. Japan, on the military side, is leaning forward as much as they can to integrate, and we should too.

JJ: You write that interorganizational relationships are what enable alliances to work, because these relationships propel the development, transfer, and utilization of capabilities. When forces are more integrated, you go on to say, then organizational factors become more important, factors such as what you call "collaborative know-how." You explain that the organizations can either develop these skills, or they don't and fail at their missions—that is how critical they are: "military strategic alliances do not always work out and failure can be costly in terms of resources, politics, and weakened security" (16).

What's more, you suggest that using a "capability and knowledge-based" approach results in a different mind-set, and that this mind-set is much-needed in the current environment, which is knowledge-driven and increasingly competitive. You add that there are current and emerging threats that cannot be handled except on a collaborative, international basis because of their transnational, cross-border nature and include such things as cyberdefense, transnational terrorism, natural disasters, and piracy. To the extent that you can talk about these transnational challenges at the unclassified level, can you share any specific examples/stories that help to prove this claim?

LK: This goes back to the history of international businesses and US decisions to go abroad, and decisions to partner—there were many who initially thought, *why would I give away control? I want to do it on my own.* But these companies faded away, and the multinational corporation emerged as a norm. The military was in that older headspace years ago, but we have to be able to partner with foreign countries. Militaries that are able to partner well will succeed.

The most important factor shaping our capabilities is selecting partnerships with key allies. Our strengths compared to Russia and China include many examples, like our NATO efforts and close security partnerships in the Pacific, and, of course, the Heavy Airlift Wing in Pápa, Hungary. The thinking by some senior leaders on the US military side of that organization initially was, *we need C-17s for our national needs and we can't give them over. We can't lose control.* Yet it seems to me that the F-35 program is one that may have been designed especially for interoperability and partners. I really can't stress enough that we have to be able to

move past the Cold War mentality where we believe that we can't share with our Japanese and other partners. My time in the Joint Staff was insightful because I got to work on an interagency level—I saw foreign military sales, and came to appreciate that at the Air Force we had the SAF/IA. At the time, on some of the Japan issues, we didn't devote adequate energy to international defense. We just didn't take it as seriously back then, but we do better now.

Another example, not at that high level, but . . . I'm struggling here in Japan with the MPEP [Military Personnel Exchange Program]. We have seven US officers working and embedded at engineering, material, cyber, and operational flying units. About 10 years ago, SAF/IA engaged in a bureaucratic decision to consolidate administrative control of all the MPEP exchange officers around the world centrally out of SAF/IA rather than out of the major commands that specifically cover those regions. This move meant that control was more centralized and less subject to regional oversight, thereby removing the ability of leadership assigned in-country to manage local talent. At the Fifth AF, we have a staff here that can handle this work. I showed up, and I saw these Air Force officers, and soon realized that they can't really talk to us. They are off on their own, alone and without appropriate support and advocacy. These folks don't know what Fifth AF mission is and could benefit from help and support that Fifth Air Force was designed to provide. While I think being an exchange officer is one of the most important things in the world, big AF may not understand their unique and impactful role to the Alliance and critical interoperability between our forces. Of course, during COVID nobody's really traveling internationally. But here in Japan, I was able to visit Japan's Air Training Command one day, and I remember sitting across from Japanese senior officers there . . . they were telling me how grateful they are for our exchange officer and support . . . but those key visits with general officers have stopped over the last 10 years. We could and should take better care of these folks—again, we have a staff here, and we could handwork their assignments and provide the support and advocacy they need. Right now, if they are doing bilateral work and come up with some good ideas, it goes up to a lieutenant colonel in Hawaii who is the administrative control person, but it does not go to us or to PACAF [Pacific Air Forces]; so, I don't really know what comes of the knowledge and insight they are acquiring. I think this is a misuse of an incredibly important resource. In my job right now, I'm trying to regain some oversight and engagement with them.

So basically, as an Air Force enterprise, we have showed a trend toward centralizing to try to make things efficient, such as the creation of the AF Installation and Mission Support Center or [IMSC], but you really can't centralize across multiple, different regions and expect things to be culturally efficient. The result is

suboptimal. I happen to know that the Chief of Staff of Japan Air Self-Defense Force has also noticed this as an issue where we can and should improve.

JJ: In your dissertation, you point out that there is no consensus on the need to "go multinational in defense," or to seek strategic partnerships and collaboration in security efforts. Your second chapter points out the fact that the scholarship and literature about lessons learned within the US DOD, NATO, and other military organizations on multinational military cooperation is similarly lacking. You say that there is a surprising absence of micro-level studies that show "the integration and interaction at the most fundamental working levels required in multinational partnerships" (p. 33). This special journal edition includes other papers that make similar suggestions from an operational point of view, including for example the articles by Barlow and co-authors Gluck and Muhlenberg. Both of these provide insight into specific areas where improvement in the functioning of partnerships and alliances might be achieved without too much additional effort, while other papers in this volume address very similar themes.

I want to return to the question about tensions in the model you propose. You cite Joint Publication 3-16, 2007, when talking about how, "integration of command and control is a key principle in US military doctrine and is recommended for multinational military operations" (p. 20). You go on to explain that there are some inhibitions to alliances—especially the fact that the US president has ultimate command authority over US forces, and this poses a challenge to integration. You also point out that there are significant funding restraints, among other countervailing forces. After explaining these conditions, you say, "[I]t is of interest to see how this doctrinal dichotomy functions, or rather dysfunctions, in application" (p. 24). So, how do issues like the US president retaining ultimate command-and-control authority play out in an operational or tactical setting?

LK: As for how this looks in real life, the Heavy Airlift Wing provides a good example. Essentially, the short answer is that if culture is right at a tactical level, then things just get done. It could be compared to a timeshare—you have time in the condo, but you all have to agree to the schedule. The structure with the MOU is that there is already a prioritization structure that gives all authority to the commander. So, if a country does not want to go on a mission, they can give a kind of compromise support, which is to say that there is flexibility for what national support looks like in a given program or mission. In 2010, Haiti suffered the terrible earthquake, and when crafting a response, the unit had to work around the prioritization since the US had already booked the C-17s for missions to Afghanistan. This crisis saw many countries wanting to send help to Haiti, and what

the steering board did, much like a family sitting around a table, was to figure out ways to make this work so that all the countries, in particular, the Scandinavian members, could send support to Haiti. There are always ways to incorporate national concerns while also enabling operations and timelines to work—but this all depends upon a culture of trust and willingness to collaborate.

JJ: This underscores your argument that cultures of multinational military organizations matter to their success. The rules are one thing, and people will pull together to work around challenges—sometimes those challenges being the rules themselves—as long as their relationships are solid.

LK: Right.

JJ: There are other challenges to multinational collaboration in military context that you have identified that I think are worth pointing out here. You say that "US military forces often expend much more time studying enemy forces rather than working to understand their allies and the cultural, organizational, and leadership aspects for successfully working in a multinational military environment" (p. 25). The know-your-enemy approach to national security was a lesson learned from WWII that gave rise to civilian academic departments that focus on foreign area expertise, like the one where I got my PhD. I agree that this foreigner-as-potential-enemy orientation is very much baked into the concept of what threats to national security look like, and it is clear that thinking of foreign nationals as allies to be trusted with US national secrets is a less-developed way of thinking in the DOD. Another related problem you mention in your dissertation is that knowledge transfer has tended to be seen as going *from* the US *to* allies and partners but not the other way around. This is a cultural bias that I have also witnessed, and I agree that it is runs counter to the goal of maximizing the potential of multinational collaboration.

To conclude our chat, I want to call attention to a case you described of a multinational naval unit in WWII about which one scholar discerned six key features contributing to its success. These included operations, communications, communal living, inclusiveness, fairness/right to appeal, unity of command, and leadership. Under leadership, there were three additional bullet points: leadership rotation, quality of leadership, and "leader's foreign/multinational experience (this seems to be a common trait for leadership success and also is supported by studies on the importance of cultural sensitivity when operating in a multicultural or multinational workplace)" (pp. 42–43). I want to briefly turn to the last bullet

point in order to ask you to discuss some of your own background and qualities as a leader.

LK: Multinational experience tends to be a key quality of successful leaders in today's world. In my case, some of my opportunities were by sheer luck—like the fact that I grew up as a Marine dependent, and especially my formative years spanning middle to high school in Iwakuni, Japan in which I became the person I am today while also establishing a diverse group of lifelong friends. Living downtown in a Japanese neighborhood away from the base, early on I came to understand that there are vast differences between people at the same time as one can usually find similarities. I was fortunate to be able to participate in the Olmsted Program, which allowed me to study abroad for two years. Continuing on, I worked on the Japan desk at the Pentagon. This was all great, and in my case my experiences resulted from me going out and pursuing these opportunities, and I was also just lucky at times. But we need institutionalized ways of doing this—even the best companies also have to keep working on this. I am hopeful that the US Air Force will continue to do better at engaging in some of the ideas we've discussed today toward achieving strength through real multinational military integration. ✪

Notes

1. Geert Hofstede and Michael Minkov, "Hofstede's Fifth Dimension: New Evidence from the World Values Survey," *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 15 December 2010. The "World Values Survey" is an open-access website that consolidates related research into a related data set: https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/.

Erga Omnes Securitas

International Security and Reliance on Sustainable Partnerships

Maj Logan H. Barlow, USAF

Sustaining the United States partnership with Japan will require continued investment in the people who will carry this alliance forward in a turbulent and unpredictable world.

—Mike Mansfield, former US Ambassador to Japan

The global state of affairs requires mutually beneficial security partnerships to counterbalance the emerging threats to global peace and stability. Without sustainable security partnerships, the long-term viability of the United States of America as an international actor will undoubtedly come into question. It is more important than ever, for national security leaders, policy makers, and military leadership to critically analyze the state of international security partnerships and the impact security cooperation has on the stability of the international order and national security. Leaders must ask, will existing security partnerships continue to produce the needed advantage to be successful in the current and future security environment? Furthermore, how should engagement with current partners change or evolve to meet future US national security objectives?

Using US–Japan security cooperation as a case study, this article will aim to be informative for US military leaders and policy makers, while encouraging creative, innovative solutions to strengthen existing and future security partnerships. Based on firsthand research, interviews with key leaders, politicians, and scholars, and information provided by various ministries within the Government of Japan during tenure as a Mansfield Fellow, I found that improvement to security cooperation could be achieved through a number of easily implemented and innovative policy recommendations. Strategies including an increase of personnel exchanges, assessment of large-scale exercises from the unit perspective, and creative restructuring and planning must all be considered. I further concluded that when genuine strategic policy discussions regarding international security cooperation take place, it becomes clear that, based on the changing global security environment and increased challenges in maintaining a globally dominate force, the United States must be willing to critically examine its current partnerships. Similarly, Washington must be creative with establishing new, mutually beneficial security cooperation activities. Innovative strategies including the increase of personnel exchanges, assessment of large-scale exercises from the small-scale or unit per-

spective, along with creative restructuring and planning all must be considered as options for improvement. The future of international partnerships and coalitions from the broader perspective of the DOD and the United States Government as a whole depend highly upon positive human-to-human, bureaucrat-to-bureaucrat, military officer–to–military officer interactions beginning at the lowest level and continuing all the way to the highest of leadership positions.

The US–Japan alliance teaches policy makers and military leaders alike that there is a clear need for strong regional alliances that directly impact regional and global stability. The US–Japan relationship will be the most important international relationship for the foreseeable future. Furthermore, the US–Japan relationship will continue to rely heavily on strong and sustainable interpersonal relationships. As such, if a healthy human-based mutual understanding can be fostered on a regular basis, then the US–Japan relationship will never dissolve.

If the USAF intends to meet the dynamic and ever-changing security environment of the global community, strategists and policy makers alike must reassess the current partnership strategy and defense cooperation agreements, including exercise planning and formulation of new innovative and practical approaches to strengthening those security partnerships that are most vital to global stability and US national security interests. Personal diplomacy, innovative thought, and interpersonal relations founded on trust will be vital to the future ability of USAF personnel to work effectively with security partners during times of conflict or in highly contested regions of the world. In today's dynamic security environment, leaders must understand the complexities associated with bilateral security cooperation and foreign domestic politics in some instances.

The future of not only international security partnerships but also the fundamental opinion that other nations have of the United States will continue to be highly dependent upon the example set by individual members. Security partnerships are the critical asymmetric advantage that the United States has with regards to great-power competition. The human-level interaction, both positive and negative, has the potential to impact every aspect of the current and future rapport of the United States. If the DOD and the USAF intends to meet the dynamic and ever-changing security environment of the global community, specifically the security environment in the Indo-Pacific region, strategists and policy makers alike, must reassess the current security partnership strategy and defense cooperation agreements in accordance with the most recent *National Security Strategy* and *National Defense Strategy*. This should include an assessment of current exercise planning, along with the formulation of new and practical approaches to strengthening those security partnerships that are most vital to global stability and US national security interests. If a healthy human-based mutual understanding can

be fostered on a regular basis, then sustainable security relationships will continue to be a cornerstone of stability in numerous regions around the globe.[1]

Revitalizing the Squadron: The Tactical Bridge

In delving into revitalizing the squadron through deepened operational coordination and security activities and a brief discussion on pace setting, the core of the research comes from five site visits coordinated through the Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) Air Staff Office to five JASDF bases and interactions with base-, group- and squadron-level leadership and unit officers and enlisted personnel. In recent years, it has been adamantly articulated that the war-fighting unit of the USAF is the squadron, and that it requires revitalization—meaning empowering tactical-level leaders to make in-time combat and noncombat related decisions, which represents the moving of the locus of decision-making authority to individuals who have greater proximity to the fight.

One potential area where the service should empower squadron-level leadership is when engaging with security partners and counterparts who operate at the same tactical level. While the US–Japan security agreement is one of the most vital to global stability in general and East Asia and the free and open Indo-Pacific in particular, the United States and Japan have never actually been engaged in combat operations together. Through various discussions and interactions with the JASDF, it became abundantly clear that there was much to be learned from security partners' command structure and approach to decision making. Thus, the most opportune times in which to observe Japan's command structure and decision-making chain tends to be in the context of large-scale, bilateral and multilateral defense exercises.

Large-scale Exercises

The United States and Japan cooperate on numerous levels, one of which is large-scale, multiforce, multiservice exercises. These occur in both a bilateral and multilateral context at regular intervals. Large-scale exercises serve as an opportunity to execute and practice in a controlled environment the simultaneous employment of capabilities from each of the participants.

Sometimes exercises tend to be more of an execution of operations in the same area of responsibility rather than truly operating together. Additionally, bilateral cooperation activities are often concluded with some sort of ceremony in which each side expresses gratitude to the other for participation while vowing to continue to work more diligently together. This style of cooperation is superficial at best. Post-exercise feedback along with pre- and post-exercise personnel ex-

changes have the potential to make large-scale exercises more effective for each participant nation. Fundamental knowledge of the command and rank structure, unit hierarchy, and culture and language fundamentals all support the development of mutual understanding. This was a readily apparent area for improvement when examining Cope North Guam, the longest running bilateral exercise. Arriving at an exercise with individuals who possess a mutual understanding for each other, as well as departing with the intent to address lessons learned and conduct activities that would allow for mutual improvement will more likely have a greater overall effect on the security partnership than the actual exercise itself.

Cope North has an overarching goal of increasing the ability of JASDF and USAF assets to effectively complete a variety of missions together. Cope North Guam 2018 was the first to be conducted as a trilateral exercise with "the US Air Force, Navy and Marine Corps, the Japan Air Self-Defense Force, and the Royal Australian Air Force to enhance multilateral air operations between the nations," and focused specifically on integrated operations for, "humanitarian assistance and disaster relief with aerial and force employment events focused on increasing readiness."[2]

The JASDF Aeromedical Evacuation Squadron (AMES) is responsible for maintaining and employing the *Kido Eisei* unit.[3] The Kido Eisei unit is a cargo container that has been adapted into a plug-and-play unit for medical and casualty evacuation operations. The JASDF has the capability to place two of the four units they have on either a C-130 or their C-2 mobility aircraft. Each unit has the capability of carrying up to three patients and, in extremely critical situations, has all necessary equipment to conduct small-scale lifesaving surgeries while airborne. The Kido Eisei unit also resolves the issues of poor aircraft lighting and excessive aircraft noise. The AMES unit brought the Kido Eisei unit to Cope North Guam 2018 as an opportunity to share and show a capability that both the US and Australian forces do not have, at least not as a consolidated plug-and-play system.

The commander of the JASDF AMES gave frank feedback from the Japan perspective on Cope North Guam. Some points that the colonel elected to make during a feedback session were that, firstly, he felt that there still exists a clear language barrier among the nations, even within the medical career field where there is a relatively high percentage of English-speaking doctors and nurses. The colonel articulated that the JASDF participants felt more like observers; they felt like they could not keep up because of the language barrier and essentially were left behind. There was recognition that solving this will require better language training on the Japanese side. However, the AMES commander also articulated the idea that more personnel exchanges focused on casualty evacuation and medical evacuation prior to the exercise would be highly beneficial to the overall co-

operation effort and would perhaps lead to a more reciprocal and effective exercise.[4]

Small-scale Exercises

While large-scale exercises provide a training and validation opportunity for contingency-level responses, smaller-scale exercises at the tactical and operational levels help develop the lethality of the force. There is an annual small-scale bilateral fighter exercise conducted between Japan and the United States, often hosted at a JASDF base. A few years ago, during one of these exercises, aircraft were segregated on the ramp, and no actual flying occurred together. Essentially, the US fighter squadron traveled to the JASDF base and operated in shared airspace but not directly with the JASDF unit. Responsibility for this arrangement falls equitably on each side; however, from the Japanese perspective there was a lack of after-action discussion on how to increase the effectiveness of the exercise in the future.[5]

The JASDF commander suggested an idea worth considering as a necessary shift in current bilateral exercise management practices: line maintenance exchanges. What this means is that JASDF maintenance personnel would work side-by-side with US ground crew from the time the pilots arrived for preflight inspection, through engine start and block out. The key part of this idea was the fact that it would not be a solely JASDF ground crew launching a US fighter but instead an integrated ground crew with an USAF lead. This discussion from the squadron commander was brought up in large part due to the force structure; JASDF flying units tend to take the same form as Army Aviation units, with an imbedded maintenance flight and capability. Regardless of the differences in force and command structure, however, a line maintenance exchange had the potential to be a highly effective method of further integrating capability. This line maintenance exchange would ideally provide opportunity to have younger JASDF and US enlisted personnel work together toward the common goal of safely launching the aircraft for its mission. The 305th Fighter Squadron commander further articulated that perhaps this was a way to prepare for contingency environments in which JASDF line maintenance may have a necessity to fuel, marshal, and launch US aircraft due to limited availability of US forces or adaptive basing requirements. This insightful and forward-thinking observation ought to be taken seriously by leadership across the spectrum of Indo-Pacific region's numerous security cooperation agreements.

Recent observation of this same exercise (October 2020), two years after the 305th Fight Squadron commander's feedback, revealed a much different story. While the line maintenance exchange has yet to be implemented, the level of in-

tegration and interoperability has been drastically improved: the groups do not simply fly in the same airspace but also actually fought together. The most recent iteration of the exercise involved flights with commanders of both US and Japan units, bilateral news and public affairs announcements, integrated airborne and ground control operations, and bilateral air-refueling support in which US receivers conducted air refueling with JASDF tankers and vice versa. Continued efforts in this area, including further development of an integrated operations tactics handbook and use of each nations' various strengthens and assets, will result in a significantly positive outlook for future security cooperation efforts and the lethality of the alliance.

Informal Personnel Exchanges

Informal operational-level exchanges support the intent of the more formalized strategic level exchanges of personnel. Through another firsthand experience, I observed that the Naha Rescue Squadron has often participated in rescue exchanges with personnel from Kadena Air Base—at one point they even participated in an annual exercise called Cope Angel. While these exchanges are highly beneficial for the JASDF pararescue jumpers (PJ), there is a still a significant lack of knowledge regarding what survival equipment USAF pilots take with them when they fly. This lack of knowledge limits the effectiveness of the JASDF PJs in water rescues when US pilots eject. An exchange in which survival tactics and the differences in training between Japanese and US pilots is highlighted would help improve the efficacy of these training events.

Personnel exchanges between various partner and allied nations occur regularly. Within the US–Japan relationship, there are a number of officer exchanges that include an exchange of aviators, maintenance, and even cyberspace or communications personnel.[6] However, these exchanges tend to be limited to educational positions. Often, exchange pilots, such as the USAF F-15 exchange officer imbedded with the JASDF F-15J unit at Nyutabaru Air Base in Miyazaki Japan, are limited to instructing new F-15J pilots or teaching ground school.

While formalized programs such as the Secretary of the Air Force, International Affairs' (SAF/IA) Military Personnel Exchange Program are beneficial and worth continuing, there is a gap at the operational unit level that needs to be filled. Bureaucratic red tape often creates a nightmare of limitations; however, no actual limitations exist to prevent either side of a partnership from engaging in informal personnel exchanges. Nonetheless, all too often such innovative efforts aimed at improving bilateral interpersonal relationships, albeit the simplest idea, frequently elicit an immediate negative response from leadership. Some of the most easily accomplished exchanges involve simply visiting a security partner's base and par-

ticipating in a day-long shadow exchange like the types of exchanges and site visits I was privileged to participate in as a Mansfield Fellow.

Formalized exchanges serve the purpose of supporting the overall strategic concept of the alliance or partnership. Less formal and more substantial interpersonal relationship-focused exchanges increase operational cooperation, streamline bilateral coordination processes, and, ultimately, enhance the effectiveness and lethality of the bilateral partnership. If there is mutual interest and benefit, then informal level personnel exchanges should be pursued and encouraged from the lowest level up.

Bottom-to-Top Approach

Most exercises and exchanges outlined in formal policies and agreements tend to have solely a strategic-level focus and involve mostly coordination and planning at the upper echelons of leadership and policy making. This leaves a significant cooperation gap at the lower levels of cooperation, specifically the squadron level. To fill this cooperation gap there is a need to reassess the way cooperation takes place, which is currently top to bottom. There are significant areas in which lower-level, laterally coordinated cooperation could occur that would inherently be supportive of the larger exercises and the overall strategic goals of the security partnership.

The issue that arises from informal cooperation tends to be top support. In most situations where concrete benefit cannot be clearly articulated, most leaders are less willing to be supportive. Despite the abstract benefit these informal cooperation practices produce, the long-range impact is far more valuable than merely objective accomplishment during large- or small-scale exercises. If anything, the informal coordination processes allow for a more rapid and smooth execution of tactical and operational objectives in both peacetime exercises and would ideally have the same effect in future conflict. A bottom-to-top approach would be highly beneficial to the strategic objective of any security partnership and would allow greater bilateral decision-making capability at the squadron level. Critical in-time decision making and execution coordinated with tactical-level partners affords the most lethal response to developing threats; furthermore, action taken would remain in line with overall strategic objectives and the principle of centralized command and decentralized execution. Tactical-level ideas with operational support and strategic integration allow for greater bilateral decision making at the squadron level. Lateral cooperation with security partner equivalents should be a key concept in continuing to revitalize the squadron. The bottom-to-top approach will be vital to winning future conflicts, specifically in the Indo-Pacific region.

Pacesetting

International security partnerships require formulation of common goals and coordination of security cooperation activities to achieve those goals. In most instances, the cooperation-and-coordination piece rarely addresses the operational execution processes, and instead procedures and challenges tend to be thought of as strategic in nature. Despite having positive intentions and coordinated goals and objectives, when one party outpaces the other or has a different concept of what execution should look like, the partnership becomes less effective than it should be, and the potential for a breakdown in security cooperation overall could occur. Coordinating objective and purpose is only the first step in security cooperation, and operational execution coordination and pacesetting are just as vital, if not more important, to the overall health of the relationship. Working toward a common goal and working together to achieve a common goal are not always the same thing.

The United States' Pace—Train Like You Fight

The DOD approach to training and military readiness is to "train like you fight." Every motion and action taken in the training environment is intended to increase lethality and provide realistic training. The intent is to prepare people to eventually use developed skill sets in a lethal manner during times of real-world conflict or contingency operations. US forces train like they fight by fostering simulated environments that are intended to mimic actual contingency conditions: "Success hinges on practicing the profession of arms in the same manner it will be executed on the battlefield or during a contingency."[7] The DOD's *Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms* even defines exercise as, "a military maneuver or simulated wartime operation involving planning, preparation and execution carried out for the purpose of training and evaluation."[8] Thus the DOD approach to training is simply to train for real-world operations through simulated contingency environments to validate or evaluate mission capabilities.[9]

While this is highly effective and practical, do bilateral or multilateral large-scale exercise and exchanges produce the same sort of effectiveness, or are we setting a pace that is too fast for US security partners? If the goal is to fight alongside security partners, then improvement of security partners' operational capability through training and education needs to be a priority of security cooperation. There is an obligation to adjust the pace of the simulated contingency exercises currently being conducted with security partners.

The Security Partners' Pace—Train to Improve

JASDF leadership at various levels articulated a common theme of feeling as though they could not "keep up" with the US military.[10] When this defense "gap" becomes apparent, it essentially has two significantly detrimental effects. First, a loss of effectiveness in training and development ultimately results in a loss of trust. The Japan Self-Defense Force often adjusts US training objectives and goals to ones that are more reasonably achievable for its own level of capability.[11] Additionally, objectives such as "ensuring that they are not a hindrance on the US execution portion" or "do the best to provide necessary support to US assets when unable to maintain unified action" speak to a common sentiment that sometimes the goal is to just "not be in the way."[12]

A second detrimental effect of US security partners is the development of dependence. Fundamental to the overall US foreign policy is the development of self-reliance, a desire to empower friends and allies to become self-sufficient—be that economically or within the context of national security. This idea of dependency is not one desired by a majority of security partners, most of whom maintain significant capability, such as Japan, which has a strong desire to make a significant contribution to the security relationship.[13] However, when outpaced in training exercises, the habit of leaving certain tasks to US forces becomes the root cause of dependency on US military power. This is called "induced" dependency. In times of actual conflict, this kind of dependency would make US security partners less reliable.

From the strategic perspective of security cooperation, and in accordance with the emphasis in Joint Publication 1-0 *Joint Personnel Support* on "unity of effort," understanding allies' and partners' training and education "pace" is more vital than having a comprehensive exercise to validate all aspects of DOD capabilities.[14] Reflecting the US train-like-we-fight mentality, in almost every case the US pace far exceeds a pace that allies and partners can maintain. In most instances, and as explained by JASDF officers, security partners of the United States often view training as "an opportunity to learn about DOD capabilities, learn from more experienced partners and develop their own talents, skills and capabilities [sic]."[15] Essentially, US security partners "train to improve."

However, if the United States intends to continue to facilitate unity of effort through security cooperation, then in certain bilateral instances it would behoove the United States to either set a pace that is more appropriate to its security partner and/or allow partners to take a larger role in planning, preparing, and leading execution of such exercises and training events. Aligned ends do not always ensure coordinated means.

Partnership Development

If the goal is to fight alongside our security partners, then the United States has an obligation to facilitate the improvement of security partners' operational capability through training and education as a priority for fostering sustainable security partnerships. Fundamental to the overall US international security posture is the development of self-reliant, self-sufficient security partners. In a manner similar to the way the DOD approaches force development through training and education, there is a need to establish clear guidance, procedures, and practices for partnership development. Joint Publication 3-16 *Multinational Operations*, Joint Publication 3-20 *Security Cooperation*, and the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, through discussion on "security assistance," articulate some very broad and overarching goals of security cooperation and partnerships but offer no real concrete methodology that could be useful to commanders who work with security partners on a regular basis.

This "crawl, walk, run" approach could also be applied to US security partnerships throughout the world. Furthermore, the same approach to partnership development through training and education cannot be a one-size-fits-all approach due to the vast range of capabilities that US partners maintain. Joint Publication 3-16 lays the foundational support needed for a partnership development strategy and standalone doctrine, articulating "When the situation permits, FCs at all levels should seek opportunities to improve the contributions of member nation forces through training assistance and resource sharing . . . this could include the development of interoperable C2 [command-and-control] and joint fires capabilities an procedures; the sale or loan of equipment; consistent and shared doctrine; common TTP [tactics, techniques, and procedures]; and participation in multinational exercises, including training at US national train centers when appropriate."[16] If the United States is to continue to be influential throughout various regions in the world, then commanders with responsibilities within the context of a bilateral or multilateral security cooperation agreement should seek to improve the contributions of partner nation forces through training assistance and educational programs.

Conclusion

The US–Japan relationship teaches policy makers and military leaders that there is a clear need for strong regional alliances that can directly influence regional and global security stability in a positive manner. While this article takes a comprehensive approach to framing the issue, it does not offer a solution for every problem that emerged during research conducted for the thesis from which it is

excerpted. It does articulate a clear need for innovative and creative minds willing to work directly on an interpersonal and, in some instances, ad hoc basis with counterparts from partner and host nations to achieve a common objective in the most efficient and productive way possible.

The squadron is the war-fighting unit of the USAF and, as such, it should be the focus of security cooperation efforts. Squadron leadership should be actively engaging with their security partner equivalents on a regular basis and encouraging personnel exchanges, smaller-scale unit exercises, and/or informal learning opportunities. This requires continued empowerment of squadron commanders from the upper levels of leadership; without such empowerment, lower-level cooperation is stonewalled unnecessarily. Failure to cooperate at the tactical level could potentially have dire consequences when conflicts give rise to a need to conduct coordinated operations. Before a conflict arises is the time for the development of cooperation at the squadron and unit levels.

The DOD pace is often fast and lethal, and this is almost never the same pace as that of US security partners. During times of peace, it would be more beneficial for the US side of the partnership to slow the pace, educate and encourage understanding, facilitate capability development, and work side-by-side with security partners. While there is a need to train for realistic wartime situations, we must understand that this also requires developing our security partners. If security partners are left in the dust during peacetime exercises and cooperation activities, it would be illogical to assume those partners would be a benefit to operations during times of conflict. There is a time for both training and executing at the DOD pace of lethality, and there is also a time to work at a pace appropriate to security partners and facilitate comprehensive education and employment of capabilities.

Ultimately, sustainable security partnerships depend highly upon positive human-to-human interactions from the lowest level of leadership to the highest. Even in long established security partnerships, interpersonal relationships are irreplaceable. Personal diplomacy founded on innovative strategies that increase critical personnel exchanges and facilitate trusting interpersonal relations will be vital to the USAF ability to capitalize on the asymmetric advantage that such partnerships provide. The success of these relationships relies heavily on the cross-cultural competency of the individual.

If a healthy human-based mutual understanding can be fostered on a regular basis, then the US–Japan security relationship will continue to be the cornerstone of stability in East Asia. The lessons suggested in this article are not only applicable to the US–Japan alliance but also apply to the bilateral and multilateral relationships throughout the Indo-Pacific and across the globe. That same concept

of sustainable interpersonal relationships as applied to the US–Japan relationship also holds true of other security relationships. Interpersonal relationships and cultural and language competence will be vital to sustainable security relationships continuing to be an asymmetric advantage in regions around the globe. ✪

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Notes

1. The abovementioned concerns were the focus of the fellowship thesis titled, *Erga Omnes Securitas: International Security & Reliance on Sustainable Partnerships*, which was completed while assigned to Air University, Air War College, Air Force Fellows from the summer of 2018 to the summer of 2019. Most research and anecdotal evidence are based on firsthand research from interviews conducted with key leaders, politicians, and academic experts, as well as information provided by various ministries within the Government of Japan during tenure as a Mansfield Foundation Fellow. The primary focus of the Mike Mansfield Fellowship is the US–Japan relationship; in this article the US–Japan security alliance will be the primary case study for considering a reassessment of current security partnerships.

The Mansfield Fellowship is a yearlong experience in which selected federal employees work with their counterparts and other bureaucrats within ministries and offices of the Government of Japan. This experience gives unique government leadership engagement opportunities and represents a hands-on approach to understanding the strategic implications and importance of the US–Japan partnership at various strategic and operational policy levels. The purview of the research is restricted to US–Japan security cooperation. To this end, this research partially draws upon firsthand interviews as well as site visits to vitally important Japan Air Self-Defense Force (JASDF) bases to provide insight into cooperation gaps in communication and highlight a number of missed opportunities for strengthening collaboration and focused efforts to mitigate these shortfalls. The hindsight from firsthand interviews and site visits to JASDF units during the latter part of 2018, specifically those in Naha Air Base (Naha Rescue Squadron) and Nyutabaru Air Base (305th Fighter Wing, F-15J) provided significant insight into Japan's security partnership perspective.

Erga Omnes Securitas: International Security & Reliance on Sustainable Partnerships is available in its entirety. The thesis is a 113-page in-depth analysis that focuses on nine topics critical to sustainable partnerships. Those topics included: economic partnerships and national security, congressional delegations, revitalizing the squadron, pace setting, peace cooperation, humanitarian

assistance and disaster relief cooperation, enterprise engagement, and the impact of foreign domestic politics. However, this article will provide a brief synopsis and extract of only few of the most relevant chapters of the thesis, specifically focusing on revitalizing the squadron and pace setting, through a discussion on large- and small-scale exercises as well as "outpacing." These topics will frame the discussion to provide necessary hindsight, insight and foresight into sustainable security partnerships and their vital role in the United States' asymmetric advantage in the Indo-Pacific region. A number of practical policy recommendations that further strengthen, not only the US–Japan alliance but any strategic partnership that the US currently maintains or will pursue in the future are also articulated.

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3. *Kido Eisei* 機動衛生—Japanese word most accurately translated as "mobile medical unit." The Japanese characters utilized are 機 ki [machine, aircraft, and so forth], 動 do [movement], 衛 ei [protection], and 生 sei [life].

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5. Commander JASDF 305th Tactical Fighter Squadron, interview by author, Nyutabaru Air Base, Miyazaki, Japan, 18 December 2019.

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Opening the Door to Cultural Understanding and Mutual Cooperation

Multinational Military Partnerships and Educational Outreach

Capt Julian Gluck, USAF
Capt Byron Muhlenberg, USAF

The world we live in is quickly shifting: former threats are receding while new dangers materialize, and growing adversaries begin their assertive force projection on the regional and global stages. Since the end of the Cold War, the United States has been able to stay ahead of these emerging threats through economic, military, and scientific dominance and through mutual cooperation within its strongly knit alliance network. As American hegemony wanes—particularly in the Indo-Pacific—strength in numbers and diversity will only increase in necessity as the international system begins to reveal elements of multipolarity with increasingly bellicose centers of gravity. Improving the efficacy of our multinational military partnerships through better educated and trained personnel will be the key to effective operations overseas in our most paramount area of responsibility.

Within US Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM), American politico-military foreign relations have included bilateral arrangements to coordinate with our allies, execute multinational exercises, and arrange arms sales with our partners. However, there are more actions necessary to maintain collective defense security agreements and a norms-based liberal international order for the deterrence of near-peer adversaries, particularly in the new administration. This article will explore the current status of our military and diplomatic relations with allies in the Indo-Pacific theater through published research and the authors' anecdotal experiences from working with multinational partners during different assignments, exercises, and distinguished visitor support to highlight Department of Defense successes, failures, and areas for improvement. These qualitative experiences will illuminate how cultural understanding is the key to the multilateral success of the United States' alliance network.

Additionally, the authors will provide recommendations on how the US Air Force could construct a force equipped with the organic capacity to understand the numerous cultures in our expansive but strong-knit alliance network to better cope with emerging threats over the next decade. These recommendations focus on key points such as the education of our in-theater personnel at the base level

with respect to culture, the provision of more opportunities for cross-cultural exchange outside of the established Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) sphere, and the galvanization of involvement in local and regional civic groups. Only through a deeper cultural understanding of language, regional expertise, and culture (LREC) can we hope to strengthen our mutual security for the future.

Partnerships and Exercises

The Air Force's core missions of global vigilance, reach, and power and American national interests are leveraged with the ability to synchronize interdependent operations through unprecedented range anywhere in the world.[1] However, the Department of Defense—unable to execute its operations everywhere unilaterally—relies upon foreign partners for basing forward deployed personnel, staging operations, and coordinating military efforts. Except for Bhutan (informal), Iran, North Korea, and Taiwan (informal), the United States currently maintains formal diplomatic relations with nearly every country in the Indo-Pacific and is party to numerous bilateral and multilateral agreements.

As detailed in the 2018 *National Defense Strategy*, the emergence of long-term, strategic competition with China and Russia in the Indo-Pacific and the weakening of the post–World War II international order present challenges to the United States' military advantage and its ability to promote liberal values in the region.[2] Rapid technological advancements and the changing character of war—along with the impact of nonstate actors—further complicate a simple, holistic response and necessitate the new administration to promote greater flexibility by the myriad of American military forces in cooperation with local partners.

Our long-term strategic competitors have increasingly engaged in multilateral exercises and security arrangements in opposition to the liberal international order and traditional American allies. Portraying elements of anti-Atlanticism on one end of the geopolitical spectrum and of antidemocratization as a whole, the growing direction of the United States' near-peer adversaries is toward a Eurasian continentalism made visible through increases in geopolitically motivated regional exercises and expansionist posturing.[3] Some examples include Russia's Central Asian military exercise Tsentr in 2019 that notably included such regional players as China, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan and also China's Sea Guardians 2020, which was a bilateral naval exercise between regional partners China and Pakistan.[4] There have also been aggressive overtures for regional influence including increased drills in the South China Sea and incursions of the Senkaku Islands in the East China Sea by vast numbers of Chinese vessels[5] further highlighting the encroachment of the dominant continental pow-

ers and the United States' command of the sea.[6] Japanese Defense Minister Taro Kano at the Committee of Foreign Affairs and Defense in the Diet warned in August 2020 that the Japan Self-Defense Forces "will act firmly" to counter the intensification of Chinese activity in the region.[7] Technological advances by China, North Korea, and Russia with aircraft carriers, longer-range ballistic missiles, and hypersonic glide missiles further expand the offensive reach of adversarial powers.[8] These changes have been part of the driving force heightening threat levels in the Indo-Pacific, causing other regional players, such as South Korea, to either vacillate between sticking with the US alliance-based multilateralism and nonintervention or, in countries such as Japan, to turn further toward the United States as a means to protect their interests—both realities of which the United States should continue to be cognizant and seek to leverage.[9]

The United States alliance network consists of multiple collective defense arrangements. Although the North Atlantic Treaty Organization between the European powers, United States, and Canada may be the most famous, the Indo-Pacific is home to a number of historic arrangements established during the 1950s and 1960s, including those with Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Thailand, Japan, and South Korea.[10] Contemporaneously, USINDOPACOM is the primary unified combatant command associated with five mutual defense treaties and postured American forces numbering 375,000 in personnel, more than one thousand aircraft, and five carrier strike groups.[11] With a sphere of influence of 36 nations and 50% of the world's population, USINDOPACOM is the largest of the combatant commands and arguably will be the most critical in the near future.[12]

Anecdotal Experience

The authors have had a number of experiences working alongside allied partners in the Indo-Pacific through assignments at bases in the theater and in bilateral and multilateral exercises. These have furthered their understanding of the intricate multilateral relationships in the alliance and solidified their conclusion that cultural differences are a strength and that cooperation is critical for our relations in the region.

Captain Gluck

In 2018, Capt Julian Gluck was deployed as a B-52 pilot to the Indo-Pacific as part of Pacific Air Forces' (PACAF) Continuous Bomber Presence. The main training event he participated in during this time was Exercise Cope North—a long-standing joint and trilateral exercise with the Japan Air Self-Defense Force

(JASDF) and Royal Australian Air Force. With a focus on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief training, the combined force of nearly 3,000 service members from 21 flying units flew more than 100 aircraft in the skies over Guam to "enhance multilateral air operations" and "promote stability and security throughout the Indo-Pacific by enabling regional forces to hone vital readiness skills critical to maintaining regional stability."[13]

As an intermediate-level proficiency Japanese speaker in the Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP), Captain Gluck leveraged his language background during mission planning with his fellow aviators, acting as an unofficial translator and intermediary when linguistic confusion arose between the English- and Japanese-speaking planners and flyers prior to their sorties (flying events). During the exercise, he translated an unclassified B-52 capabilities briefing into Japanese and presented the slides to pilots and mechanics from the JASDF to help familiarize the other players in the aircraft stack with the B-52 bomber's abilities and limitations for better integration. He also provided tours of a static display of the B-52 to JASDF maintenance personnel and notably served as the lead for the distinguished visitor event involving the then-commander of Air Defense Command, Lt Gen Hiroaki Maehara, and his entourage, which was highlighted by PACAF public affairs and LEAP as an example of leveraging language capability abroad.[14]

The official and unofficial events at Exercise Cope North—including a large party hosted by the Japanese prior to the exercise's kick-off and a culminating celebratory event at the end with revelry and the trading of military patches—illuminated the strengthening of international ties that can occur at these multilateral events when executed correctly. Over the course of the exercise, the author noted the increased synergy in planning and the execution of operations that came with practice, while the social events and interaction between the senior leaders forged relationships with an increased appreciation for their partners' international cooperation. The sorties familiarized the countries' deployed forces with coordinated employment across diverse mission sets, and participants finished the exercise with tangible experience working with their regional allies.

Challenges noted by the author during Exercise Cope North focused primarily on language barriers where non-English-speaking participants relied upon a small cadre of bilingual participants (primarily on the JASDF side) with varying levels of fluency and miniscule contingent of professional translators or Foreign Area Officers for the event. Mission planning, briefings, sorties, and debriefs were less effective due to language barriers and the cultural differences that existed with planning and analytical processes. Lastly, the classification of information—a vital and omnipresent element when working with multinational partners—diminishes

full interoperability with capabilities and tactics, techniques, and procedures, while preserving necessary information for the countries' respective intelligence and military apparatuses.

Captain Muhlenberg

Capt Byron Muhlenberg has led a majority Japanese workforce and organized multiple bilateral cooperation events—including senior leader gatherings, annual community events, and officer exchanges—affording him the opportunity to directly observe the transformative effect of partnership in the Indo-Pacific.

In one such experience, Captain Muhlenberg traveled to Hokkaido, Japan, to support the bilateral exercise Northern Viper as an Air Force interpreter through LEAP. Involving the US Marine Corps and Japan Ground Self-Defense Force (JGSDF), the exercise's focus was on practicing maneuvering and winter combat training as a combined force. Exercises such as these are critical, as they show a direct and public commitment to mutual cooperation and interoperability. The author's role in this exercise was to assist the Marines in synchronizing port operations and equipment movement with the Tomakomai Port Authority, the local city government, the JGSDF, and the shipping contractor to ensure smooth equipment offloading from the cargo ship and transportation to the training grounds. He noticed that determined interaction over the course of the operation was the key to success. As the participants from the highest level to the lowest Marine increased their interactions with their local counterparts, the operation became smoother, and cooperation increased. It is likely that deeper cultural understanding resulted from these increased interactions and was the key to the bilateral operation's success.

In another experience at Yokota Air Base, Japan, Captain Muhlenberg led a team of Airmen in a bilateral exchange with JASDF members. While the ostensible goal was to assist the JASDF team in an English-medium speech competition, the actual intent was to sow the seeds of interchange between the two allied forces. Over the course of six months, members employed in various job specialties from both nations met over speech practices, base visits, public ceremonial events, and social hours. These interactions developed fellowship and promoted otherwise improbable information exchange about each other's respective services and functional skills—joint efforts personally commended by the JASDF Chief of Staff.

Captain Muhlenberg noticed a few major themes in these experiences. These concerted efforts to display unity and promote exchange actually led to greater individualized opportunities to deepen cultural understanding, heightening the personalized importance of the alliance. There was also a marked transformation

in world perspective—US members' tones changed when speaking about the mission in Japan, and their behaviors in conducting operations with the Japanese changed as well. These transformations were driven by two factors in particular that were and still are inherent in the force: (1) there is an overwhelming interest in forging bilateral relationships, and (2) mission execution is paramount. These are factors that leaders need to keep in mind when promoting multilateralism.

There were also a few potential pain points observed throughout these experiences. While US military members do want to meet service members from other countries' militaries, there either are limited opportunities, or the individuals are unaware of the opportunities that exist. Furthermore, bilateral exercises and events generally start out rocky, either from a paucity of knowledge of a partner's culture or because the relationship between the two sides has yet to be fully developed. This is further compounded by the inability to employ cultural experts early in the process to fill in these and other possible gaps.

In the next section, we will provide a few recommendations on how to resolve these pain points.

Recommendations

Our first recommendation is for better education of in-theater personnel at the base level and prior to multinational exercises. Currently, Expeditionary Culture Field Guides,[15] tailored by AFCLC to the needs of the Department of Defense and peer-reviewed by academics, exist to better familiarize military members with particular countries; however, greater support for their expansion to more nations and greater proliferation of the materials through awareness of their availability online and in the Culture Field Guide mobile application would assist personnel with applying this knowledge to hands-on training.[16] Additionally, training prior to deployments or exercises with components based on cultural clusters and cross-cultural analytical models like Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory would aid in the collective understanding of the foundations of local culture and differences with one's own—better equipping American forces to integrate with their foreign partners.[17] With added linguistic, cultural, and regional education, war fighters will immediately build better relationships for success, rather than spending time trying to learn the basics about each other prior to cooperating, or worse, during the exercise or operation.

The second recommendation is to provide to all Airmen, regardless of their level of cultural understanding, more opportunities for cross-cultural exchange outside of the more formalized opportunities within the Air Force. LEAP within AFCLC is a "career-spanning, volunteer program open to officers and enlisted across all specialties to sustain and enhance foreign language skills of Airmen."[18]

The more than 3,000 Airmen who as a whole train in 95 languages represent a cadre of more adequately skilled regional specialists with prior language backgrounds.[19] Outside of LEAP exist other culture and language experts in the Air and Space Forces whose experiences the Department could better leverage to further develop Airmen and Guardians when engaged with foreign partners domestically and overseas; this could be better accomplished with more utilization of the regional experience identifier subset of the special experience identifiers (SEI) catalogued by the Air Force Personnel Center. These SEIs track levels of regional experience in particular geographic regions (e.g., Northeast Asia) based on a number of quantitative and qualitative factors. In addition to the more specifically trained and focused groups, greater outreach to personnel who desire more generalist learning and cultural knowledge would enhance the foundations of military members who would otherwise lack the mentorship or opportunity to learn—due to an unawareness of how to take advantage of the many tools available online and at bases. Deeper sponsorship of local exchange groups and base events for language and culture (e.g., Japanese or Korean) would provide Airmen and Guardians the framework to establish relationships with foreign peers, build knowledge, and increase baseline cultural awareness when moved or deployed.

The final recommendation is to galvanize involvement and cooperation with local and regional civic groups. Through municipal and international organizations and charitable programs, military members and foreign citizens can further culture exchange. While our bases are consistently working to improve relationships with local communities and municipal governments, there are areas of opportunity past these traditional channels. These groups may be based on similar interests (e.g., the Knights of Columbus or sports fandom), foreign exchange or communication (e.g., Global Shapers, Rotary, or Toastmasters), or be organic or impromptu efforts (e.g., disaster relief teams or 5K races). In addition to the benefit of armed forces personnel gaining cultural awareness, these programs expose citizens of foreign countries to military members involved in activities other than their core job duties as war fighters—showing the human element behind the uniform, engaging individuals in communication between citizens and service members, and promoting positive civil-military relations. The Department of the Air Force should continue to take positive steps to promote partnership with these organizations and others like them and provide opportunities for service member involvement.

Conclusion

To open the door to cultural understanding to a greater number of actors across the force, the USAF should increase efforts at raising foundational knowledge for

personnel and enhance cultural training prior to military exercises, deployments, and permanent changes of station overseas. The implementation of the aforementioned recommendations would address our ability to respond to the LREC challenges highlighted in the *National Defense Strategy* and increase mutual understanding while strengthening relationships with our multilateral partners and local populations. These changes are actionable efforts to counter the encroachment by near-peer adversaries on current and potential partners in the Indo-Pacific region. Through the formation of war fighters with outward-looking mindsets ready to leverage similarities and differences in, and fight alongside, multilateral coalitions, the United States through the Air Force and USINDOPACOM will improve the responsiveness and flexibility of our alliance network to react to emerging threats and ensure collective defense in this vital region.✪

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VIEW

Strengthening Interoperability through the Language Enabled Airman Program

Perspectives from the 2018 to 2019 US–Philippine ISR-MTT Mission

MSgt Timothy, USSF

Abstract

Interoperability is a priority for operational concepts, modular force elements, communications, information sharing, and equipment. It is also a key element for strengthening alliances and partnerships under the 2018 *National Defense Strategy*. The Air Force Language Enabled Airmen Program (LEAP) is a valuable tool for deepening interoperability but may be currently underutilized in some regional and cultural settings due to the scarcity of program participants. This article will illustrate the importance of building up such a pool of LEAP-trained workforce talent from the perspective of an Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance mobile training team (ISR-MTT) deployed by the US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) to drive Philippine military independence on producing actionable intelligence from organic capabilities. It will describe the recruitment and training process; highlight key milestones that were achieved to elevate the ISR-MTT's efforts as a benchmark for training other regional partners; address operational gaps; and provide recommendations to diversify the reach and potential of LEAP in support of the expansion of Indo-Pacific alliances and partnerships.

Introduction

US forces today are operating in a rapidly changing global strategic environment where their military advantage no longer goes unchallenged as in the years immediately following the post–Cold War era. In response to this "new normal," the United States is actively cultivating its alliances and partnerships—particularly in the Indo-Pacific region. According to the 2018 *National Defense Strategy*, "Our allies and partners provide complementary capabilities and forces along with unique perspectives, regional relationships, and information that improve our understanding of the environment and expand our options."[1] Maximizing interoperability along these lines is difficult when the United States finds itself in an asymmetrical position where it provides the bulk of military training and capabilities to its partners but underutilizes the latter's resources in a mutually ben-

eficial manner, and when there is a scarcity of technically skilled, language- and culturally-enabled US war fighters who can effectively engage with allies on an operational level and carry out joint missions seamlessly.

This article will illustrate the above issues at work in the context of a US–Philippine intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance (ISR) training mission that involved heavy reliance on US resources for technology, education, and translation services. Subsequent sections of this article will provide a background of current US–Philippine relations and outline the major objectives of the training mission; describe my recruitment from the LEAP pool; provide an overview of the Philippine unmanned aerial systems (UAS) training program; identify operational gaps and opportunities; and recommend strategies to improve the reach and impact of similar training programs, which include: 1) bridging language and education gaps with the assistance of local agencies and the provision of bilingual documentation; and 2) increasing recruitment and participation in existing language--training programs such as the Air Force Language Enabled Airmen Program (LEAP) to generate a larger, more diversified pool of suitable and mission-ready candidates for training and special operations.

Background

The Philippines is considered a major non-NATO ally. Its partnership with the United States is fostered by strong historical and cultural linkages as well as a joint commitment to democracy and human rights.[2] The two countries reaffirmed shared obligations under the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty by signing the Manila Declaration in 2011. The signing came with the expectation "to maintain a robust, balanced, and responsive security partnership including cooperating to enhance the defense, interdiction, and apprehension capabilities of the Armed Forces of the Philippines (AFP)." [3]

In accordance with the Manila Declaration and the principles outlined in the 2018 US *National Defense Strategy*,[4] allied units partnered within the US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) deployed an Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance Mobile Training Team (ISR-MTT) to conduct a comprehensive training program with the following objectives: 1) enable the AFP to utilize the *ScanEagle* UAS[5] that were acquired by the Philippine Department of National Defense in 2018[6] to its full potential in various mission settings (e.g., counterterrorism, territorial defense, humanitarian and disaster relief operations); and 2) gain AFP autonomy in UAS operations as demonstrated by focused mission planning, integration, and interoperability. It became apparent to the USSOCOM that a Tagalog (a major dialect that serves as the foundation of the mainstream

Filipino language) speaker was needed on board to support the ISR-MTT efforts. The LEAP became the primary resource for the latter.

Recruitment via LEAP

The *Language Enabled Airman Development Resource* (LEADeR) is a website that maintains a directory of all Airmen and Guardians who are enrolled in LEAP. It was used to help USSOCOM identify this author as a potential candidate for the ISR-MTT. In 2018, I was the only Tagalog-speaking imagery analyst (1N1X1A). The ISR-MTT program owners initially contacted me via e-mail to explore my interest in participating in a Philippine-based mission, followed by an in-person interview to verify technical and instructional skills, language proficiency, and prior special operations experience. Once it was determined that I was a good fit for the ISR-MTT team, I made several predeparture preparations over the course of a month, which included securing buy-in and support from my command's leadership, brushing up on drone capabilities and Tagalog fluency, and conducting background research on the local area of operations, military organizational structure and customs, and current security issues.

The Philippine UAS Training Program Overview

The previously stated twofold objectives of the ISR-MTT were accomplished over a two-year period in different provinces across the Philippines. The training program itself was designed to "train-the-trainer": after an initial cohort (comprised of active-duty AFP personnel from various service branches) completed all learning modules, it was expected that the graduates had gained sufficient mastery and proficiency in UAS operations to teach their peers in an on-the-job setting. At least three different cohorts were brought in, with some overlaps of the same AFP personnel participating as peer instructors in subsequent training sessions.

Table 1 organizes the various activities that took place over the course of the training program into three broad phases. It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss each phase in detail. However, in the next section I will provide some insights gleaned from the implementation and evaluation phases as they relate to language and cultural competencies.

Table1. Phased training approach. (Simplified table adapted for purposes of this article. 22 February 2021.)

Phase	Activities
Planning	**Coordination**: Establishing timelines, expectations, ownership between US and Philippine stakeholders **Curriculum Development**: Foreign Disclosure Officer–approved modules, lesson plans, unclassified resources **Logistical Preparations**: (e.g., hardware/software requirements, classroom setup, travel and lodging arrangements)
Implementation	**Classroom Instruction**: Introduction of UAS concepts and principles ranging from basic to advanced **Practical Exercises**: Hands-on opportunities to engage in UAS mission scenarios as observers, operators, or customers
Evaluation	**Feedback**: Critique of job performance and output (products) by instructors and peers; integration of student input / needs in subsequent training sessions **After-Action Reports**: Submission of progress reports and recommendations to program owners via diplomatic and military channels **Interoperability Assessment**: Instructors assume an exclusively observer role to gauge student proficiency and product quality vis-à-vis US-led UAS mission standards

Operational Gaps and Opportunities from a Language and Culture Perspective

The Philippines ranks 27th globally in the English Proficiency Index (EPI) and holds one of the highest EPI in Asia (second only to Singapore).[7] Thus, minimal language barriers were encountered during the implementation and evaluation phases. English was the primary medium of instruction. The cohorts were largely bilingual; however, a few communication gaps still occurred as artifacts of the following:

- Some technical terms do not have direct translations/functional equivalents in the vernacular. Tagalog was often used to clarify highly technical concepts. When certain terms (for example, *sensor* and *line-of-sight*) cannot be translated directly, the English word is used as the default and its corollary explanation is comprised of Tagalog and English ("Taglish"). To further aid understanding, references to commonly used Tagalog words, visuals, and props such as a toy drone were occasionally used (see fig. 1).
- English proficiency levels varied among participants. Most students were able to conduct basic conversational English, but few were able to express themselves well enough to formulate follow-up questions on intermediate--to-advanced technical concepts. They would often whisper among themselves or refer to the most proficient English speaker among them for clarity.

Occasionally, I would step in to articulate the questions in English for the benefit of the instructors and then translate the answers back to Tagalog.

(Image courtesy the author)

Figure 1. References and toy drone

It must be noted that while I was the only LEAP-trained team member, I could not physically support the ISR-MTT efforts 100 percent of the time due to commitments with my CONUS-based command. Were it not for the fact that I was able to find Tagalog-speaking Airmen (albeit not LEAP-trained) within my professional and personal network to fill in for me during certain training periods, the ISR-MTT would have been forced to carry on without a language translator and facilitator. This issue will be revisited at the conclusion and recommendations

section. From a cultural standpoint, there were opportunities to establish rapport with students and leverage their resourcefulness:

- During breaks or post-duty hours, one accepts the invitation to *tambay* (A slang word meaning "to hang out"; originally derived from the English word, "standby." The place where one hangs out is called *tambayan*. Such informal occasions to chat in the designated break areas *tambayan* or participate in social events such as the occasional karaoke or a "boodle fight"[8] enables students to feel at ease and to enjoy camaraderie.
- Due to limited resources, students had latitude to bridge technology gaps with free to low-cost software solutions. For instance, mapping software and communication applications helped improve technological capabilities in these areas. The downside of these technologies is that strict adherence to operational security protocols is not always feasible.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Post-evaluation data (not shown) indicate that the ISR-MTT-led training program has been successful in cultivating a pool of certified UAS operators in the Philippines. As of November 2020, the UAS capability has continued to thrive across various branches of the AFP (specifically, the Philippine Air Force and Philippine Navy).[9] Remarks such as *Kaya namin ito* ("We can do this") and similar positive feedback coming from the trainees themselves provide reassurance that the AFP is well on track to maintaining autonomous UAS operations.

The Philippine UAS training program was to become the benchmark for partners in the Indo-Pacific region who may be interested in establishing their own UAS capabilities.[10] To facilitate day-to-day operations and sustain interoperability in future iterations, I recommend the following:

- Engage local academic, government, and industry partners for educational, linguistic, and technological support. Much of the educational heavy lifting could have been accomplished through the University of the Philippines' National Institute of Geological Sciences and National Institute of Physics.[11] The university could provide instructors who could teach geospatial and satellite technology principles, respectively, using layman's terms.[12] The Commission on the Filipino Language (Komisyon sa Wikang Filipino, the official regulating body of the Filipino language) could have provided guidance on translations.[13] Finally, geographic information system providers could have shared access to their data at a reduced cost.

- Provide bilingual documentation. To address English fluency gaps, it would be helpful to develop bilingual documents. These ensure that all operators understand policies and procedures across the board (see fig. 2).

H	I	J	K	L
Mission Date (Petsa ng Misyon)	**Take-off Time H** *(Oras ng pagpaplipad)*	**Mission Summary** *(Buod ng Misyon at mga makabuluhang aktibidad)*	**Land Time H** *(Oras ng pagbabalik)*	**Team Name** *(Pangkat on duty)*

(image courtesy of the author)

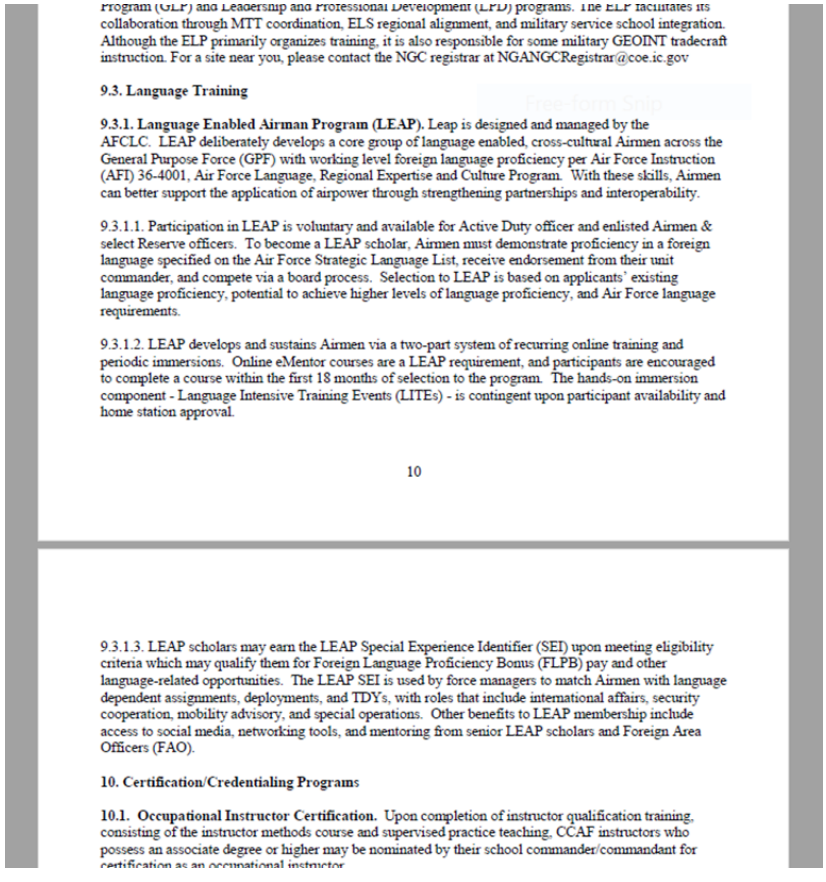
Figure 2. Excerpt from a bilingual (English/Tagalog) mission tracker. (Created by author, circa 2019).

Finally, the shortage of LEAP-trained Tagalog speakers should be addressed. I believe the reason behind shortage is that the program is not well-advertised among Tagalog-speaking Airmen and Guardians. The following strategies may provide greater prominence and incentives to join the program:

- Publish LEAP information in official Air Force and Space Force guidance documents such as the Career Field Educational Training Plan (CFETP). Standard verbiage about the program should be disseminated for consistency and ease of inclusion—eliminating the need to consult the LEAP website (see sample CFETP excerpt, fig. 3). This would also increase the likelihood of diversifying the pool of subject matter experts who are LEAP-trained.
- Develop and authorize a uniform patch or tab to indicate that an Airman and Guardian is an active participant in LEAP. Patches and tabs are great conversation starters. While optional, this is a low-cost, high-visibility approach for LEAP to spread through word-of-mouth.
- Streamline the process of obtaining benefits associated with Special Experience Identifiers and Foreign Language Pay Bonus through a centralized hub or automated system. This will eliminate the need to manually fill out various forms and coordinate with multiple approval authorities.

In conclusion, interoperability will be greatly enhanced not only through collaborations with the US partners' local agencies but also with the expansion of LEAP program participation to include more Airmen and Guardians who speak the languages of the Indo-Pacific region. In fact, good command of one or more of these languages may become a primary recruiting tool that will advance the careers of prospective Airmen and Guardians for unique conventional and special

operations assignments. Building up this talent pool to a critical mass will contribute to a more lethal, resilient, and agile force that is prepared to meet US defense objectives and preserve its global influence.



Program (GLP) and Leadership and Professional Development (LPD) programs. The ELP facilitates its collaboration through MTT coordination, ELS regional alignment, and military service school integration. Although the ELP primarily organizes training, it is also responsible for some military GEOINT tradecraft instruction. For a site near you, please contact the NGC registrar at NGANGCRegistrar@coe.ic.gov

9.3. Language Training

9.3.1. Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP). Leap is designed and managed by the AFCLC. LEAP deliberately develops a core group of language enabled, cross-cultural Airmen across the General Purpose Force (GPF) with working level foreign language proficiency per Air Force Instruction (AFI) 36-4001, Air Force Language, Regional Expertise and Culture Program. With these skills, Airmen can better support the application of airpower through strengthening partnerships and interoperability.

9.3.1.1. Participation in LEAP is voluntary and available for Active Duty officer and enlisted Airmen & select Reserve officers. To become a LEAP scholar, Airmen must demonstrate proficiency in a foreign language specified on the Air Force Strategic Language List, receive endorsement from their unit commander, and compete via a board process. Selection to LEAP is based on applicants' existing language proficiency, potential to achieve higher levels of language proficiency, and Air Force language requirements.

9.3.1.2. LEAP develops and sustains Airmen via a two-part system of recurring online training and periodic immersions. Online eMentor courses are a LEAP requirement, and participants are encouraged to complete a course within the first 18 months of selection to the program. The hands-on immersion component - Language Intensive Training Events (LITEs) - is contingent upon participant availability and home station approval.

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9.3.1.3. LEAP scholars may earn the LEAP Special Experience Identifier (SEI) upon meeting eligibility criteria which may qualify them for Foreign Language Proficiency Bonus (FLPB) pay and other language-related opportunities. The LEAP SEI is used by force managers to match Airmen with language dependent assignments, deployments, and TDY's, with roles that include international affairs, security cooperation, mobility advisory, and special operations. Other benefits to LEAP membership include access to social media, networking tools, and mentoring from senior LEAP scholars and Foreign Area Officers (FAO).

10. Certification/Credentialing Programs

10.1. Occupational Instructor Certification. Upon completion of instructor qualification training, consisting of the instructor methods course and supervised practice teaching, CCAF instructors who possess an associate degree or higher may be nominated by their school commander/commandant for certification as an occupational instructor.

Figure 3. US Air Force 1N1X1A CFETP–LEAP (verbiage emphasized)[14]

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As an active-duty service member directly involved in ISR missions, the author's biography is limited to rank and first name only, per regulation.

Acknowledgment

This article is dedicated to my wife and our children.

Notes

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Expanding Cultural Competencies

Exposing All Outside Continental United States Airmen to the Local Populace

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Abstract

On a regular basis, there are incidences of intercultural conflict between local non-US communities and Airmen at outside continental United States (OCONUS) bases. Even when illegal infractions are not occurring, there are moral or social transgressions that erode the appearance of the US Air Force (USAF). The aim to build, maintain, and expand alliances and partner nations cannot be accomplished until there is an understanding of allies'/partners' histories, cultures, religions, and languages. This *understanding* must be gained through intentional training and exposure. The training should be mandatory for all Air Force--affiliated personnel who are stationed outside the United States, including Active Duty, Guard, Reserve, General Schedule, and contracted employees. Preparation for living overseas should include language, culture, history, and geopolitics courses for representatives of the USAF. The purpose is to equip American individuals with a baseline knowledge of the people and region of the country to which they are assigned. With this education, USAF-affiliated individuals will be able to expand their cultural competencies, decrease cultural faux pas, increase collaborative efforts with partner and ally nations, and better focus on the tenets of the 2018 *National Defense Strategy*.

Expanding Cultural Competencies

In the US Air Force (USAF), a large percentage of Airmen are stationed across the globe, and some of those Airmen possess an innate desire to learn about others different from their own. Some individuals take the initiative to purchase materials to study on their own or utilize the plethora of free or low-cost resources online. Others join meetups or language and culture exchange groups. The USAF has a number of programs in place for Airmen who are self-motivated to study such regional matters. For example, the Air Force Culture and Language Center (AFCLC) at Air University has propelled Airmen into unforeseen realms of cultural competencies across the globe. The AFCLC provides continual language study programs or expeditionary language courses and publishes country-specific field guides that contain a wealth of information from history to political struc-

tures to economics. In another program, men and women of all ranks and AF Specialty Codes (AFSC) have taken advantage of opportunities provided by the AFCLC's Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP). In LEAP, participants take language classes and bi-/triennially apply that acquisition by participating in a Temporary Duty (TDY) assignment where that language is primarily spoken or utilized. Endeavors like LEAP and its corresponding TDY are essential to the US Department of Defense's (DOD) aim to gain and maintain partners and allies across the globe in support of the 2018 *National Defense Strategy* (*NDS*). Because these programs are optional for Airmen, and since some are only offered to Active Duty (AD) USAF members, they are not enough to meet the *NDS* goals alone. Thus, a solution must be implemented that can train and equip the large number of Americans located at overseas bases.

According to the DOD's 2018 *Base Structure Report*, the USAF has 166 sites outside of the United States and its territories.[1] Additionally, per *MilitaryOne-Source*'s 2015 Demographics Report, approximately 28,000 AD USAF members are stationed in Europe, 20,000 in East Asia, 500 in North Africa, 450 in the Western Hemisphere, and 1,100 in other places.[2] Thus, the estimated total of AD USAF members stationed outside of the United States and its territories in 2015 was 50,050. When considering dependents, contractors, and GS employees, this service's OCONUS footprint can easily be quadrupled to 200,000 Americans. Given the significant number of individuals in a foreign country, one can presume that negative interactions between Americans and the local populous occur. Moreover, conflicts are expounded through microaggressive or overt comments and actions based largely in ignorance and misunderstanding the "Other."

Kevin Nadal, a professor of psychology at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, defines *microaggressions* as "the everyday, subtle, intentional—and oftentimes unintentional—interactions or behaviors that communicate some sort of bias toward historically marginalized groups. [One] difference between microaggressions and overt discrimination or macroaggressions, is that people who commit microagressions might not even be aware of them." An example Nadal gives is "someone commenting on how well an Asian American speaks English, which presumes the Asian American was not born [in the US]."[3] Professor Lilia Melani of Brooklyn College defines the *Other*as "an individual who is perceived by the group as not belonging, as being different in some fundamental way. Any stranger becomes the Other. The group sees itself as the norm and judges those who do not meet that norm (that is, who are different in any way) as the Other. Perceived as lacking essential characteristics possessed by the group, the Other is almost always seen as a lesser or inferior being and is treated accordingly."[4]

The process of "othering" can take place in a variety of manners. One American may scoff at the tendency of restaurants in Japan to have dine-in only options and not allow customers to take food to go. Another American might ask a German colleague, "Why do y'all always sound so angry when you speak?" When US citizens view host-nation (HN) citizens as the Other and act upon their biases either overtly or via microaggressive behavior, this often results in either party applying their personal experience to their view of the entire people group and eventually harboring dislike toward and distrust of "those people."

If Airmen and other USAF-affiliated personnel are introduced to the new culture's belief system(s), customs, traditions, and expectations, this would curb a lot of the unintentional offenses with local nationals like those described above. It would also allow for greater focus on mission-essential activities, such as mutual defense and strategic operations. In this article, I will briefly introduce a portion of the 2018 *NDS* as it relates to partner nations and allies. Next, I will explore three barriers that prevent the USAF from having numerous culturally intelligent Airmen through presenting my anecdotal evidence based upon personal experiences. Finally, I will propose a solution for the USAF to implement, with an end goal of creating culturally and linguistically competent Airmen and USAF--affiliated employees who are stationed OCONUS.

National Defense Strategy

There is often a power imbalance between DOD members stationed overseas and HN citizens. While the American is legally the visitor and guest, strategically he or she holds the power as an armed forces member of what some HN residents consider as the occupying force that perpetually projects global power and dominance through its presence. This dichotomy is important, particularly when tensions become fraught. To deter aggression and maintain regional hegemonic stability, the United States must work effectively with the HN's government and military. The 2018 *NDS* focuses on three lines of effort to achieve a capable alliance and partnership network.[5] An excerpt of the *NDS* detailing Washington's aim to strengthen alliances and attract new partners is below:

> 1. *Uphold a foundation of mutual respect, responsibility, priorities, and accountability*. Our alliances and coalitions are built on free will and shared responsibilities. While we will unapologetically represent America's values and belief in democracy, we will not seek to impose our way of life by force. We will uphold our commitments, and we expect allies and partners to contribute an equitable share to our mutually beneficial collective security, including effec-

> tive investment in modernizing their defense capabilities. We have shared responsibilities for resisting authoritarian trends, contesting radical ideologies, and serving as bulwarks against instability.
> 2. *Expand regional consultative mechanisms and collaborative planning.* We will develop new partnerships around shared interests to reinforce regional coalitions and security cooperation. We will provide allies and partners with a clear and consistent message to encourage alliance and coalition commitment, greater defense cooperation, and military investment.
> 3. *Deepen interoperability.* Each ally and partner is unique. Combined forces able to act together coherently and effectively to achieve military objectives require interoperability. Interoperability is a priority for operational concepts, modular force elements, communications, information sharing, and equipment. In consultation with Congress and the Department of State, the Department of Defense will prioritize requests for U.S. military equipment sales, accelerating foreign partner modernization and ability to integrate with U.S. forces. We will train to high-end combat missions in our alliance, bilateral, and multinational exercises.[6]

Given the three above-stated focus areas, maintaining amicable relationships with the HN is critical. Fissures that arise inevitably detract leaders from the missions of mutual defense, leading in technological developments, and maintaining security. On a micro scale, local communities may have qualms with American military presence. Negative encounters with citizens, whether criminal or a clash of cultures, exacerbate what may be an already unstable relationship. Protests and political threats could prompt municipal leaders to request hardline policies for military members, drive our armed forces' counterparts to avoid working with the USAF, or foster an overall distrust of the USAF. On a larger scale, problems that are broadcast on international news networks convey to our adversaries that a breakdown in the partnership either has occurred or is occurring. The frayed relationship may allow adversaries to inject negative influencers into it, which would have direct and indirect impacts to combined readiness and focus. Depending upon the magnitude of the story, opponents could view the distraction as an opportunity to infiltrate or disrupt networks or operations. Altercations between Airmen and HN individuals are not the only problems military leadership encounter. Even the most well-mannered, hardworking Airman can prevent mission accomplishment if he or she proves to be ignorant of regional, cultural, and basic linguistic matters.

Barriers to Cultural Competency

For the DOD, there are three main barriers that prevent the existence of culturally competent Airmen: a lack of regional expertise, inadequate cultural awareness, and insufficient language proficiency. In this section, I will explain how I concluded that these three barriers exist and briefly discuss their detrimental impact to national security and how they inhibit the fulfillment of the *NDS* objectives.

Lack of Regional Expertise

The first barrier to the USAF having culturally competent Airmen is the general lack regional expertise. In my 10 years on Active Duty and across five areas of responsibility (AOR), I have found that many Airmen and USAF employees do not have a basic knowledge of regional history, politics, or current events. Many could not convey a brief history of the country in which they are stationed, nor could they explain the development of the relationship between the United States and the country. I have encountered individuals from medical group, operations group, mission support group, and maintenance group, for example, who are stationed in Japan and do not know why there is animosity between Japan and China or Japan and North and South Korea. Additionally, while I was deployed to the Persian Gulf, I noticed some Americans were not aware of the conflict between Iran and Saudi Arabia. They were familiar with neither the development of their relationship to one another or the involvement the United States had in their histories and the influence over them that the United States currently holds. Not only is it important for individuals to be aware of the relationships among countries of a particular region but also imperative for them to have some familiarity with America's and other world powers' role in that area's modern history. Furthermore, some do not know what the US aims and intentions are within the country or the AOR in which they are stationed. Each Airman and every American who works for the USAF should be able to explain why there is a US military base at that particular location.

One may ask why this matters when a DOD employee's duty is simply to carry out orders. Other than being a responsible citizen of the globe, as the USAF transitions to execute the strategies of Agile Combat Employment (ACE), it needs Airman "X" and Flight Commander "Y" to be able to understand what is happening in the bigger picture and make well-informed decisions as authorities are being delegated to lower levels. The USAF needs multicapable Airmen to not only learn multiple tasks from another's AFSC but also to know how his or her efforts fit within the DOD's mission, which will better equip Airmen to make

strategically beneficial decisions. In fact, in 2008, the DOD identified regional expertise as a critical war-fighting skill that all deployed forces should possess.[7] Probable consequences of not possessing basic regional knowledge include insufficient, ineffective, or erroneous operational planning and may even intensify already contentious relationships in multinational operations.

Inadequate Cultural Awareness

The second barrier to the USAF having culturally competent Airmen is an overall lack of awareness of the culture(s) where individuals are stationed. Many times, there are unrecognized or stark cultural differences with no apparent bridge between gaps. The times when this appears include when there is an unwillingness to adopt flexibility and incorporate sensitivity into one's interactions with a person of another culture. The root of this behavior may stem from an elitist or prideful outlook that one's own way of thinking and acting is better than another's. While stationed in Japan, I bowed my thanks to a lieutenant colonel who then resolutely told me that he will never bow to anyone since it is akin to worshiping a false god, according to Christianity. I was initially taken aback at his firmness and then saddened by his decision. I too have a Judeo-Christian background and was raised in church; I know the Old Testament biblical stories about how God's people were punished for bowing to anyone or anything other than the "one true God." I also know that bowing in Japanese culture is a foundational sign of respect and has no connection to religion. In some cases, it is similar to the Western tradition of shaking hands. It concerns me that a representative of America and the US government who regularly meets with Japanese military members and business personnel is averse to this ingrained practice of cultural connection. It also concerns me that Japanese individuals might feel slighted and most likely will not know why the high-ranking officer is refusing to reciprocate this fundamental gesture of respect.

On a more basic level, nonverbal communication cues or gestures can build or erode relationships. Knowing the critical dos and don'ts of a counterpart's culture is an important way to preserve credibility and allow for the saving of face for all involved. Different hand gestures and body positions are just two among a plethora of ways that could make for awkward, embarrassing, or offensive situations if a taboo occurs. In the United States, for example, a thumbs up is an encouragement or an acknowledgment of affirmation, whereas in Iran, it is equivalent to flashing the middle finger in the United States and is thus highly offensive. After experiencing several infractions or offenses, mounting frustration is inevitable. If all parties involved have some semblance of cultural awareness, it can help prevent resentment and bitterness.

A lack of cultural awareness can have various mission impacts. While in the Middle East, for example, I planned exercises with various Arab military personnel. In most Arab cultures, relationship building prior to any type of "business" or "mission" talk is essential. To its credit, the operations center that hosted the exercise scheduled a social hour every morning prior to the first operational event. The Army and USAF members continually groaned at this perceived waste of time. Some tried to get out of participating, requesting to show up at the "actual start time." To its discredit, the operations center did not initially relay the cultural importance of this social hour. The Army lieutenant colonel in charge essentially told the Americans to "shut up and color." By the time the explanation was disseminated, attitudes and grudges were already established. The time to teach this important cultural concept was prior to deployment, or at the latest prior to the exercise start date—but definitely not several days into it. The result was a divide between the participating nations and several different lines of effort with little--to-no debrief; there was a lot of blame instead of humility, helping, and learning, which served to harden attitudes and solidify lines of division.

Insufficient Language Proficiency

The final category of challenges is a lack of language proficiency. The USAF reflects American society, and its members are a product of its values and morals. Unfortunately, non-English languages and education are not a nation-wide priority. I have interacted with American and non-US citizen language teachers since middle school, and the majority of them claim that for decades the pervasive mind-set in the United States has been that Americans do not need to learn other languages because it is neither geographically nor economically necessary, nor is it advantageous. In fact, many schools do not begin teaching a foreign language until late middle school or high school. According to a 2017 report by American Councils for International Education, only 20 percent of K-12 students are enrolled in foreign language classes.[8] Additionally, many universities are facing budget cuts, and the culture and language programs are often the first to go. Journalist Steven Johnson with *The Chronicle of Higher Education* reported in January 2019 that colleges closed more than 650 foreign language programs in a short three--year span.[9] Throughout my career, I have been on several TDYs and deployments to other countries and have witnessed DOD members make few attempts to connect linguistically. Everyday terms such as hello, goodbye, and thank you are conveyed in English to nonnative English speakers. This resistance to speaking commonly used terms does not place Americans in a positive light. One's language is such an integral part of identity, self-worth, and expression that simply

attempting a few words in the receiver's tongue conveys that he or she is seen, recognized, and valued.

Inadequate linguistic skills are apparent in operational settings as well. US forces regularly coordinate and mission plan in bilateral or multinational settings. While the assumption is that all representatives will speak English, that is not always accurate. I have planned operations with multiple languages occurring at the same event. It is helpful to have multilingual Airmen present to both break the proverbial ice and assist in liaising. For both training exercises and real-world operations, the involvement of these Airmen can serve to decrease ambiguities that may arise concerning matters of safety, planning, and mission execution.

Many USAF-affiliated personnel are not culturally competent because they are faced with one or more of these three barriers. Whether the American lacks regional expertise, does not possess adequate cultural awareness, or has insufficient language proficiency, these deficiencies negatively impact the USAF's ability to carry out the *NDS*. Consequently, upholding a foundation of mutual respect, responsibility, priorities, and accountability; expanding regional consultative mechanisms and collaborative planning; and deepening interoperability will be insurmountable objectives if the HN feels offended by, or distrustful of, the USAF. Thus, a negative correlation between the three barriers and the three aims of the *NDS* exists. The method to influence the relationship between these two variables is through mitigating that negative correlation by developing cultural competencies—as cultural competencies increase, the existence of barriers decreases.

Cultural Competency Model

To bolster or build cultural competencies within Airmen, I recommend utilizing a model from London's Research Centre for Transcultural Studies in Health (fig. 1) to first establish a common understanding of this term, then to propose a plan to achieve it. As an educator of nursing and the head of the research center, Dr. Rena Papadopoulos created a diagram for her students to walk them through the process of interacting with other cultures to ultimately gain and regularly practice cultural competency. Although the model was designed for nurses, it can be adopted and adapted to fit any situation where two cultures must engage each other.

Cultural awareness, the first quadrant, begins with an individual looking inwardly to gain self-awareness. An individual should define his/her own identity and explore what biases may exist within. The second quadrant is cultural knowledge. At this point, one can learn or be taught the overarching similarities and differences between the culture of the country in which he or she is stationed

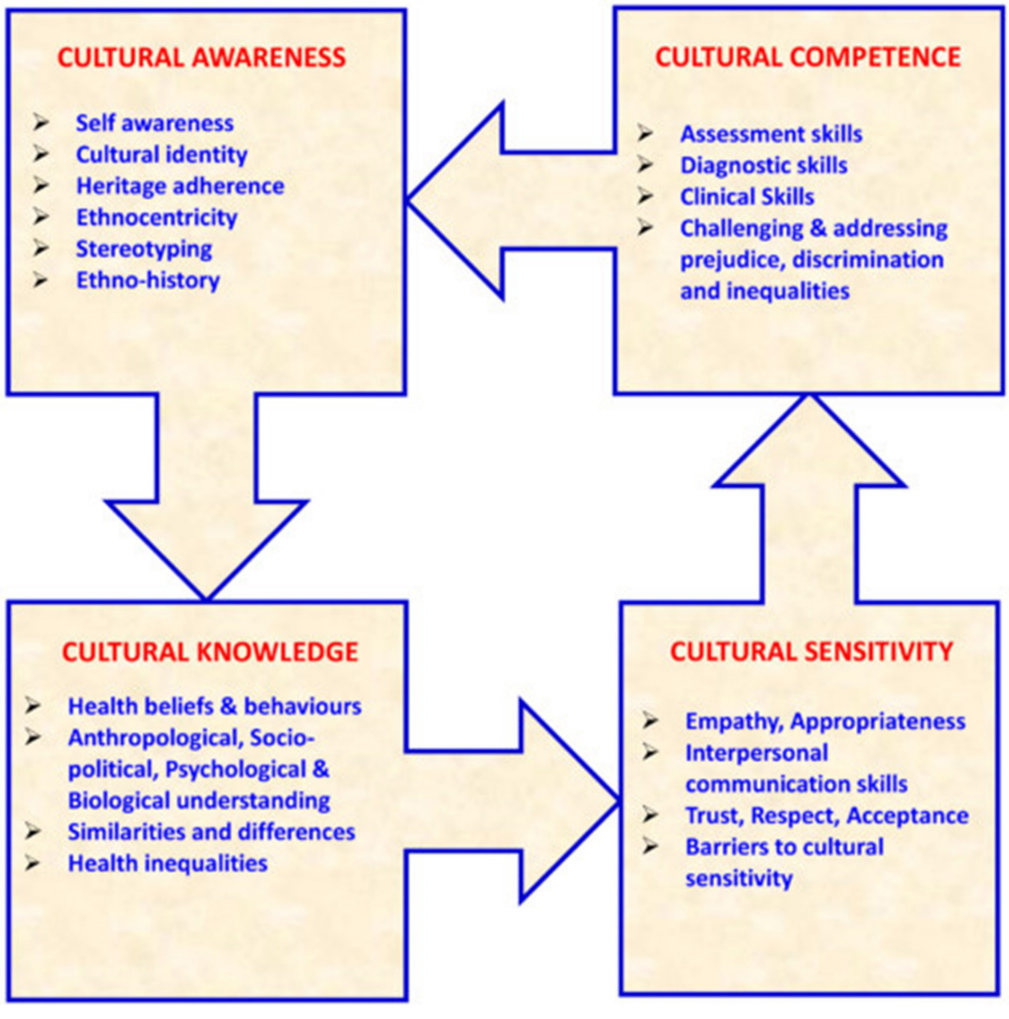

Figure 1. The Papadopoulos, Tilki, and Taylor model of transcultural health and cultural competence[10]

and that of the United States. Attaining cultural sensitivity is the next quadrant. When an individual can view a circumstance from the HN's perspective or foster a relationship where trust, respect, and acceptance of the Other exists, he or she is exhibiting elements of cultural sensitivity. Finally, when a person can identify and challenge prejudices, discrimination, and inequalities within oneself or among his or her fellow Americans, then subsequently address them, he or she is considered culturally competent, according to Papadopoulos' model.

The barriers can be juxtaposed to the model. First, learning how and why the HN makes a certain decision versus a choice that a US national might make is a process that develops regional knowledge. For example, when posturing for defense, one nation may prioritize defending a cache of weapons over other inanimate objects, while a second country may have natural resources at the top of its defended asset list and a third nation may list its metropolitans as the most important asset. Knowing the country's geography, geopolitics, and history will allow for a better understanding of the nation's objectives. Additionally, gaining awareness of the various facets of a culture will help learners become more cognizant of it. For instance, as a generally individualistic and low-context culture, Americans value direct and explicit verbal communication. Contrastingly, a collective and high-context culture usually relies more on nonverbal communication and previously established norms and customs. Moreover, many times standard practices fall on a spectrum rather than within binary models. Finally, building a repertoire of words and phrases can serve as a link between HN citizens and foreigners. Voicing a greeting that signifies friendship, peace, and fidelity, for example, may serve to build a foundation of trust that may not be possible without that expression.

USAF Program Implementation Proposal

Even though it is possible for individuals to achieve cultural competency through means other than formal education, when considering the multitude of USAF-affiliated persons abroad, as well as the inbound/outbound assignment rate, an established USAF program would be more beneficial and effective. The two primary ways to combat the barriers are through education and exposure. I propose all USAF military members, USAF DOD employees, and USAF--affiliated contractors attend a total of four weeks of language and culture training when assigned to an overseas location, whether it be a short tour or Permanent Change of Station (PCS). Preferably before arriving on station to the new overseas location, but no later than three months after arrival, members will receive language and culture training from qualified instructors. Ideally, the member will TDY in place and complete classes virtually with his or her cohort of no more than 15 other trainees. The Defense Language Institute–Foreign Language Center (DLIFLC) is flexible and has instructors who are equipped to instruct common languages. For languages in which there is not a faculty member established (Swahili, for example), DLIFLC will have to hire a contract instructor, which will likely have to be funded by the gaining major command (MAJCOM).

The language and culture training program should be mandatory for all USAF-affiliated personnel, including Active Duty, National Guard, Reserves, GS em-

ployees, and contractors. The precedent has been set with the Air Traffic Control career field. Controllers attend DLIFLC prior to arriving at their new overseas base. Since a certain language proficiency level is required, some controllers remain at DLIFLC for several months. Instead of mirroring that model, this proposal's requirement is only an initial four-week commitment. The training should be added as a mandatory readiness item just like chemical, biological, radiological, and nuclear (CBRN) and combat arms training and maintenance (*CATM*) lessons and qualifications. Successful completion of the program will be annotated in military members' permanent records. Furthermore, contracting squadrons should begin adding this stipulation to all overseas contracts.

According to the head of budgeting and scheduling at DLIFLC, the US Navy has a similar on-going program. Every few months, a group of 8–10 students attend a virtual language class with a DLIFLC instructor for two weeks. For my proposal, determinant upon the amount of personnel inbound, these courses may begin every 4–8 weeks, location-dependent. For individuals with special circumstances, such as the inability to interrupt job training, or operational currencies, a hybrid course that will have one full week of the most critical language and cultural materials will be offered. Then, every Friday for eight weeks, the member will complete the other course content. The hybrid schedule can be utilized for members whose gaining commanders have submitted a MAJCOM-level waiver stating the individual cannot attend the 4-week TDY and is needed in place as soon as possible for mission essential reasons.

Once Airmen arrive on station, guided cultural immersion should occur. This event or series of events would create a much-needed foundation for all Airmen serving overseas. At Misawa Air Base, Japan, for example, after the mandatory newcomer's brief, all personnel who in-process the base must take part in a cultural tour. Hosted by a HN employee, the tour consists of a brief history of the country and region and site visits to key places in the area. At one of the locations, several basic greetings are taught and distributed in writing for attendees to keep as a reference. This one-day tour should be expanded to provide depth and address key cultural how-tos, dos, and don'ts, because this rudimentary exposure to the local community is crucial for Americans and for their interactions with the HN.

Since conflicts between HN individuals and Americans may continue to occur after the initial training program is implemented, a continuation training program should be established as well. Airmen, GS employees, and contractors who commit infractions will be required to attend a course focused on acquiring, maintaining, and growing cultural sensitivity, awareness, and respect. Just as Airmen who fail their Physical Fitness Assessment must attend the Fitness Improvement Program, individuals who need remedial training will attend the cultural course. This

class should be hosted by the force support squadron (FSS) and taught by a HN instructor, most likely in the Airman and Family Readiness Center. It will focus on enhancing emotional intelligence and instilling cultural sensitivity and intelligence. The behavior for which an individual will need to attend this training should be established through a collaboration between equal opportunity, legal, a HN liaison element, and the FSS.

Conclusion

Through consistently providing language and culture training to USAF--affiliated personnel, the US relationship with the host country is bound to improve. While this proposal may have many nuances that still need to be discussed and dissected, it is not an impossible endeavor to implement. It is imperative for US Airmen to be armed with the necessary tools and knowledge to be stationed overseas. So much money and time is spent on other readiness items with lessons which thankfully do not come to fruition during real-world operations. I do not think the DOD should expend as many resources as it does on trainings such as CBRN and CATM, yet comparatively little time, effort and funding on programs that ensure Airmen know basic information about the people with whom they will interact daily.

Admittedly, the scope of this article could cover only a few areas. The USAF needs to know the current capabilities and levels of knowledge within its ranks. An official USAF-wide questionnaire of all Airmen, GS employees, and contractors should be conducted to gather analytical data. The topics can cover general AOR knowledge and questions on culture. Over a set span of time, Airmen should be required to take the Defense Language Proficiency Tests (DLPT) and Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) in whichever language they choose. The results of the questionnaire and language aptitude measurements will provide the military with a baseline upon which to formulate the proposed language and culture program. Additionally, several career fields within the USAF need to be consulted to capture the second- and third-order effects of implementing such a program and ensure any negative impacts are mitigated. For example, the Air Force Personnel Center should monitor personnel's career progression, PCS timings, and language and culture qualifications to aid in OCONUS placement considerations and quality checking credentials and training needs.

The desired end state should be a baseline of culturally aware and linguistically capable Airmen and USAF-affiliated employees at each OCONUS USAF site. After gathering the preliminary information that is needed, the USAF can build upon programs and curricula that already exist to save on cost and work hours. Next, a few OCONUS bases in different MAJCOMs can be selected to test the

program's implementation. Ultimately, the initial and continuation training program will yield a force of individuals who have a familiarity with the culture and language of the nation where they are stationed, as well as a general understanding of the United States' strategic purpose for being there, thus yielding Americans ready to support and execute the *NDS* along with partner nations and allies. ✪

Capt Jasmine "B-Fly" Bogard, USAF

Captain Bogard is an Assistant Director of Operations (ADO) at Misawa Air Base, Japan. As an ADO, she supports the management of the 35th Fighter Wing's $72 million F-16 flying hour program, the bombing and electronic attack range, and INDOPACOM's F-16 demonstration program. Operationally, Captain Bogard is a Senior Air Battle Manager in charge of the tactical command and control weapons team. She also instructs and evaluates tactical controllers and team leads. She studied Middle Eastern studies, Arabic language & literature, business, international relations, and human relations. She is a proud Texas native and an even prouder Longhorn. She mothers two fur babies. A few of her favorite pastimes include bonding with family and friends, traveling, volunteering, and studying cultures and languages. Captain Bogard is a member of the Language Enabled Airman Program for Japanese.

Acknowledgment:

This article is dedicated to my (3) parents, (4) siblings, (2) nieces, and friend, Shumi.

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COMMENTARY

What Would a North Korean Do?

Washington Must See Issues from Adversaries' Perspectives in Order to Move Past Outmoded Policies

1st Lt Shaquille H. James, USAF

On an unremarkable evening in Seoul, South Korea, I walked into an unmarked office space located on the second floor of a small office building. There, I met a short, middle-aged Korean man by the name of Choi Jong-hoon. The office itself belonged to the North Korean People's Liberation Front (NKPLF) —an organization of former North Korean soldiers opposed to the Kim regime in the North. Mr. Choi, a former North Korean soldier himself, was the commander in chief of the group.

I met with Commander Choi that day to get some answers. More specifically, I had some questions about a particular province in North Korea: Jagang province. During the course of my studies on North Korea, Jagang province proved to be an anomaly. Most North Korean defectors—about 80 percent—hail from one of the four North Korean provinces that share a border with China, of which Jagang province is one. All provinces in this area produce more defectors than almost any other provinces to the south, with the notable exception of Jagang province. Despite sharing a border with China, Jagang province accounts for a shockingly small portion—just 0.5 percent—of all North Korean defections, while its neighboring provinces account for a combined 79.5 percent of all defections. This was despite the fact that Jagang province had a greater population than at least one of the neighboring provinces. Something about Jagang province was leading to an extraordinarily low number of defections, and I wanted to know what it was. On that day, Commander Choi was going to give me some answers.

I divide my time spent as a North Korea watcher into two distinct phases: the time before I learned to speak and understand Korean, and the time after. Although there is a wealth of English-language resources on North Korea studies readily available online, being able to speak Korean changed the game entirely. While I understood much about North Korea before learning Korean, it was only after acquiring language skills that I have been able to learn about North Korea directly from the people who once lived there and to gain insight into issues with which only they are familiar. In essence, language allowed me to begin to think like a North Korean, by which I mean deeply understanding the circumstances, mind-set, and perspectives of our adversaries to the north.

It was out of a desire to think like a North Korean that I sought out Commander Choi that day. At our one-on-one meeting, he explained to me that Jagang province is heavily fortified and, because of its military importance to the regime, has very stringent security measures even by North Korean standards. Furthermore, he explained, due to the high security needed, only people deemed sufficiently loyal to the regime are allowed to live and work there. The result of these policies and other factors was that Jagang province, despite being perfectly positioned to be a significant source of defections, produced very few.

There was, however, also an ideological aspect to the issue as well. As Commander Choi explained, the other provinces along the border had been historically seen as less loyal to the regime and were thus subject to particular forms of neglect. With the exception of Jagang province, the northern provinces typically bore the brunt of the hardships that North Korea experienced over the years. As a result, these provinces tended to be more ideologically hostile to the regime.

It was not just a simple case of geography, or even just a case of Jagang province being a more regime-friendly province. In reality, there was a lot more at play in that the people of the other provinces were not just normal North Koreans but were actually on the opposite side of the spectrum—they were borderline *unfriendly* toward the regime. This meant that, despite the typical view of North Korea as a type of ideological monolith, there are, in fact, areas that the regime itself historically considered hostile, and this reality could be seen in the regime's treatment of the people there and the subsequent willingness of those people to defect. For us on the outside, this characteristic manifested itself in a statistical gap of defections by province.

Commander Choi was not the first North Korean defector with whom I spoke directly, nor would he be the last. Eventually, through speaking with many defectors from all walks of life—from poor, hostile northerners to loyal Pyongyang elites—I was able to attain greater insight into and better understanding of North Korea and North Koreans. This new insight did, in some cases, change my opinions on a number of issues regarding North Korea.

Fast-forward to the present day, and the United States once again finds itself at odds with the North Korean regime. With a new presidential administration in place in Washington and a North Korean weapons program that seems destined to press on, there may be a desire to hastily concoct and enact "new" (but perhaps not entirely novel) North Korea policy measures. By doing this, however, the Biden administration risks committing the same critical North Korea policy mistake of the past: failure to truly understand North Korean intentions, goals, and what can realistically be expected of them.

Previous North Korea policy initiatives were typically conducted while critical questions regarding North Korean intentions remained unanswered. In lieu of answers to these questions, Washington has instead tended to form and enact North Korea policy based upon assumptions. These assumptions filled in for valid information and clarification on Pyongyang's willingness to negotiate sincerely, denuclearize, liberalize its society and economy, go to war, and so on. These assumptions—often wrong—in part contributed to the sometimes predictable collapse and failure of most efforts at North Korea negotiations and policy. The result of these successive failures is a North Korea problem that is not only more dire now than ever before but is also still a mystery in a number of respects. In effect, many of the critical questions regarding North Korean intentions that confronted the policy makers of the past remain unanswered to this day.

If Washington wishes to not repeat the mistakes of the past, it must first seek answers to these critical questions. If the Biden administration wishes to succeed on the North Korea policy front and enact comprehensive and effective North Korea policy, then it must make every effort and leverage every resource to better understand North Korea and North Koreans.

Perhaps the most critical of questions regarding North Korean intentions is Pyongyang's willingness (or lack thereof) to truly denuclearize. Indeed, the answer to this question alone could have a dramatic effect on the direction of future North Korea policy and the prospect of success for that policy. Given just how long the issue of North Korean denuclearization has confronted Washington, the fact that North Korean intentions on this issue are still not well known or understood is troubling to say the least, and the lack of clarity makes for a great stumbling block for forming effective policy. Needless to say, policy vis-à-vis a North Korea that is sincerely willing to denuclearize can and should be very different from policy for a North Korea that is unwilling to denuclearize. Before the United States can settle on a direction for North Korea policy, it must first answer this key question.

The question of willingness to denuclearize is only one in a long list of questions Washington must seek to answer before formulating and enacting policy. Other key questions include whether or not Pyongyang is willing to open the country, allow liberalization of its society and economy, address its human rights record, dismantle its international and cyber-criminal enterprises, and so on. Answers to these questions will indicate how far, if at all, Pyongyang is willing to go in terms of reform and offer Washington multiple options for reducing the tensions felt between the two countries.

Washington must also understand, however, that an answer to a question does not necessarily indicate an end to the clarification needed on a particular issue. In

many cases, an answer—even a less than desirable one—can and should lead to further questions. If, for example, it is revealed that Pyongyang is not truly willing to denuclearize, policy makers should then consider exactly *why* this may be the case. This is also important because the answer to this question can also adversely affect the direction of policy and the options available. The policy "fix" for a North Korea that is, for example, unwilling to denuclearize out of insincerity and nefariousness is very different from a North Korea that will not denuclearize out of genuine fear or distrust. In the response to the latter, there is still room for progress, and Washington must also seriously consider whether the specific reason for not denuclearizing is an issue that itself can be resolved via other policy means.

In the same vein, policy makers must also understand that the North Korea issue is inherently a dynamic one and that negotiating with North Korea today is different from negotiation attempts of the past. North Korea, as a country, a society, and even as a government, today faces significant and verifiable stressors and crises because of the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, and failed economic policy. The failures were so significant that Kim Jong-un himself took the unusual and surprising step of publicly admitting to, and accepting responsibility for, the failures. At a time when North Korea is particularly stressed and vulnerable, the United States must consider whether there is more room to leverage Pyongyang's desires now. North Korea's current situation may provide an opportunity for the United States to better gauge North Korean intentions and, perhaps, provide a viable off-ramp from Pyongyang's current path. As the situation evolves, however, Pyongyang's willingness to denuclearize may also ebb and flow. This liability to change is also something about which Washington must remain aware.

Similarly, Washington must also take careful inventory of its own policy goals and, in response to clarification on North Korean intentions, reassess the best path forward. One key tendency of Washington's negotiation platform is the inclination to focus on denuclearization above, and sometimes at the expense of, other initiatives. Given Pyongyang's historical hesitance to negotiate nuclear issues outright and the failure of such a focus to produce tangible results thus far, Washington would do well to consider whether increasing efforts toward other initiatives may produce more favorable results. This is particularly worth exploring as Pyongyang already has some nuclear capability. Nominally, Pyongyang developed nuclear weapons for the singular goal of regime survival—specifically as a deterrence to outside aggression. In essence, Pyongyang believed that nuclear weapons were key to its survival, and therefore, it developed nuclear weapons. A possible approach by Washington can be to convince Pyongyang that nuclear weapons are *not* key to regime survival, and that such survival is better entrusted elsewhere—such as by collaborating with the United States and its allies. This can

be achieved by offering Pyongyang viable alternatives for survival that do not involve the more reprehensible activities typical of its state policy, including, for example, human rights abuses, international crime and terrorism, and cyber vandalism. Instead, Washington can offer economic, diplomatic, and military incentives for change. This method, though by no means guaranteed to succeed, cannot be conducted if negotiations on nuclear weapons continue to dominate Washington's diplomatic agenda. To that aim, Washington must consider first (or concurrently negotiating) other issues and build trust with the Kim regime—*if* it is determined that the lack of trust is a barrier to progress on the nuclear issue.

Though the temptation to enact North Korea policy and respond to the North Korea problem quickly may be strong, the Biden administration would be wise to resist the urge. The North Korea problem is far more complex now than ever before, and, to form effective policy and have a real shot at solving things once and for all, the outstanding questions regarding Pyongyang's desires, intentions, and willingness must be resolved. By working to better understand the true nature of the challenge, Washington can gain greater insight on exactly how to best address the issue and avoid the blunders of the past. Though by no means a guarantee of success, greater understanding of North Korea on the cultural, societal, political, economic, scholastic, and military levels will lead to better understanding of Pyongyang's greatest concerns and intentions. In turn, this would better equip Washington to negotiate with Pyongyang—particularly at a time when Pyongyang may be more open to sincere negotiations considering the dire conditions faced at home. While it is difficult to tell exactly where negotiations with Pyongyang will go from here, it is nevertheless clear that a new strategy is very much warranted.

The key to this strategy, however, is not the strategy itself but the principles and vision upon which it would be founded. Washington must develop a wider, more comprehensive vision of the North Korea problem now, the North Korea problem then, and the best direction in which to take the North Korea problem moving forward. This key first step that Washington must take before establishing a promising North Korea policy is best accomplished by, in essence, thinking like a North Korean—or carefully considering the issues from the North Korean perspective to better gauge and understand their scope and value within negotiations. Understanding how North Koreans think regarding economic, social, military, and other critical issues will better equip negotiators to avoid the diplomatic errors of the past and better understand—for better or for worse—the validity of negotiations with North Korea moving forward.

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Lieutenant James is a 13N intercontinental ballistic missile launch officer and graduate of Georgetown University. He has worked extensively with North Korean defectors as well as with multiple agencies, organizations, and university programs relating to North Korean affairs. Lieutenant James graduated with a major in linguistics, a minor in Korean, and a certificate in Asian studies and has studied in multiple Asian countries and territories, including South Korea, Japan, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. He is currently a member of the Language Enabled Airman Program (LEAP).

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The Air Force Culture and Language Center invites you to attend the sixth Annual Air University Language, Regional Expertise and Culture (AU LREC) Symposium. This year's LREC Symposium is themed, "The Great Power of Culture," and calls for participants to address the influence of culture in the workings of power, and to foster conversations about the role of language, regional expertise, and culture in the current U.S. national security and defense orientation to a world characterized by great power competition.

> ***"I was excited by the diverse array of topics that speakers presented at this symposium... I hope that future LREC symposia can continue to expand [these] topics and perspectives."***
>
> - 2020 AU LREC Symposium Attendee

QUESTIONS?

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