Defense Security Cooperation University

Defense Security Cooperation Agency

2023
SECURITY COOPERATION CONFERENCE REPORT
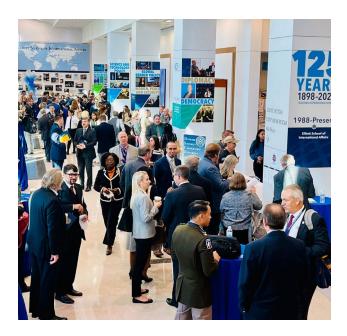
Contents

INTRODUCTORY LETTER

Though long a pillar of U.S. policy, security cooperation is now widely recognized as a "tool of first resort." The 2022 National Security Strategy asserts that "our alliances and partnerships around the world are our most important strategic asset." And the 2022 National Defense Strategy emphasizes that "close collaboration with allies and partners is foundational for U.S. national security interests."

Yet we need to continue investing in our understanding of security cooperation, especially in an increasingly complex global security environment. Our intellectual imperative is to understand the challenges we face in strengthening global security partnerships, and to identify how to do so effectively to advance U.S. national interests.

The Secretary of Defense assigned my team, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency's Defense Security Cooperation University (DSCU), the task of "building intellectual capital" to inform security cooperation policy and practice. DSCU and its newly established Research, Analysis, and Lessons Learned Institute are working to identify knowledge gaps, use research-based insights and practitioner experience to address those gaps, and refine the education and practice of the security cooperation workforce.

As part of these efforts, DSCU and The George Washington University's Elliott School of International Affairs hosted the second annual Security Cooperation Conference on October 12–13, 2023. The conference included 253 participants from 67 different organizations, including three U.S. Government departments, five combatant commands, four military services, five Department of Defense (DOD) regional centers, three congressional committees, and fourteen universities.

This conference report is not a restatement of what happened. Rather, it is an analytic account

of the conference: What major ideas were raised? What vital questions remain unanswered? What are the implications for the practice of security cooperation? Where does the enterprise go from here to deliver on its promise?

Together we will meet the challenge of this moment by linking knowledge from the social sciences and practitioner experience with security cooperation practice, supporting policy-relevant research, disseminating applied insights and best practices, and facilitating dialogue among practitioners to break down stovepipes and enable more effective action. In this way, we will be better prepared to successfully deliver on the promise of security cooperation.

L. Celeste W. Smith

MAJOR THEMES

Theme I. Security Cooperation as an Instrument of National Security Policy

We do not engage in security cooperation for its own sake. We engage in security cooperation because doing so can help advance U.S. national interests in a variety of important ways. It is a means to national security ends and not an end in itself. Though this is widely acknowledged it has numerous implications that are not currently reflected in U.S. security cooperation policy, practice, process, or institutions. Fully realizing the promise of security cooperation will require significant changes to the way we do business.

First, we need to refine our strategic planning approaches for using national security objectives to identify specific and feasible security cooperation outcomes backed by effective plans and activities. If security cooperation is to serve the national interest, its use should be directed by, and programs built around, strategy and priorities from the top down: start with a holistic perspective on what the United States is trying to accomplish in a region or country, determine whether security cooperation activities are available to help advance those objectives with a clear "theory of change," integrate with other instruments of national power since security cooperation rarely works on its own, and ensure that our policies and programs are consistent with our values, including respect for human rights and mitigating civilian harm.

This requires coordinating programs across authorities and departments—going beyond deconfliction to develop a shared understanding of what we're trying to achieve, and feasible approaches given the tools available to us and the nature of our current relationship with the partner. And it requires that we understand the complementarity and limitations of what security cooperation can accomplish relative to other tools of national power. Renewed efforts to develop and apply shared assessment frameworks and to integrate planning processes across the interagency aim to address these issues. Unity of effort across the many DOD entities responsible for security cooperation policies, resources, programs, capabilities development, and implementation is also improving as part of more deliberate planning processes, but more work remains to be done.

Second, our security cooperation posture needs to be able to adapt to changing requirements to ensure alignment with current priorities, the dynamic global security landscape, evolving adversary strategies, and shifting political contexts within partner countries. This already happens in response to significant events—for example, the war in Ukraine demonstrated our ability to rapidly mobilize resources and simplify normally onerous processes—but we need to be able to adjust outside of major crises. This will require working with Congress, policymakers, planners, and U.S. Embassy country teams to enable shifting of resources between countries or changing the focus of programs within countries, as circumstances demand.

Third, we need to find ways to achieve strategic alignment with elements of the security cooperation enterprise that lie outside the Executive Branch, including Congress and major allies. Congress initiated and continues to encourage security cooperation reforms through adjustments to authorities, while the Executive Branch strives to meet Congressional intent and proposes approaches needed to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. In addition, the Executive Branch is working more closely with Congress to align strategic priorities and budget appropriations, especially as increased earmarking restricts our ability to respond to changing realities. Our allies are not only recipients of U.S. security cooperation activities, but also important providers themselves. In many countries, they

have historical relationships and expertise that makes them the partner of choice. Our planning and prioritization need to account for this work and determine where it is acceptable—even preferable—for allies to take a lead role in meeting a country's equipping needs or providing quality education, advice, and assistance that serves as a counterweight to a competitor.

Theme II. Security Cooperation as a Political Activity

We often treat security cooperation as a technical or engineering problem, where our job is to simply create relationships or deliver equipment and training. But this overlooks the fact that security cooperation is, from top to bottom, a political activity. At the strategic level, we do security cooperation to change the behavior of other states: for example, to get them to contribute more power to deter a common adversary. At the programmatic level, we engage with and seek to influence people embedded in institutions and domestic-political contexts that are often far different from our own. Truly internalizing this reality has several implications for the practice of security cooperation.

First, it suggests that security cooperation is, foremost, about building true partnerships that are grounded in dialogue about what can and should be done to address shared security threats. This is necessary as even allies with shared values and strategic interests may not always have incentives to work with us toward our particular objectives—or may have different ideas on how to achieve them. Building more opportunities for frank dialogue will be essential for identifying and reconciling these differences and determining what needs to be done in areas of agreement. This is increasingly taking place, for example, in the form of scenario-based discussions and table-top exercises that bring together policymakers, planners, and implementers on both the U.S. and partner sides. It involves moving beyond bilateral staff talk agreements and country plans that simply list activities and investments to real joint planning built on shared baseline assessments and robust discussions of the requirements for capability development and operational readiness. Getting on the same page with the partner about what we're trying to achieve at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels—and the kinds of security cooperation activities needed— will help avoid leaping ahead to the provision of weapons systems based on cookie cutter approaches or in reaction to partner requests not informed by proper analysis. The challenge is to continue to innovate to find ways to move along the spectrum from security cooperation transactions to more robust partnerships.

Second, building these partnerships ultimately requires that we leverage the instruments of national power to shape the ideas, interests, and institutions of other countries when that dialogue reveals a divergence of interests. We have many "armchair" theories about how security cooperation can shape partner behavior—from conditionality to agenda setting to individual relationships—but these are often not developed systematically nor backed by good evidence. If security cooperation is to live up to its promise, we must prioritize intellectual inquiry to clarify and test theories of influence through security cooperation, with a focus on strategically relevant outcomes rather than programmatic outputs.

Third, to influence behavior and, when necessary, build effective and sustainable capacity, we need to understand our partners better—and incorporate their views and competencies earlier in the security cooperation planning process. Thankfully, it is now conventional wisdom that effective security cooperation requires that we gain an in-depth understanding of the partner's "will, ability, and absorptive capacity," and that institutional capacity matters for operational effectiveness. Less clear is what we need to look at to gain that understanding. What exactly do we

need to know about a partner's decision-making processes, inter-personal dynamics within the government, civil-military institutions, politics within the security sector, domestic political constraints, and baseline capabilities? And why: what are the implications of this analysis for our security cooperation strategies and plans? Practitioners are experimenting with ways to build a comprehensive understanding of the partner into the security cooperation planning process, but they still lack the standardized and implementable approaches for assessment and the decision support tools needed in the face of compressed timelines, limited bandwidth of stakeholders, and high turnover of personnel.

Fourth, we need to take "institutions" seriously. In any country, including our own, there are many factors that intervene to determine whether and how leadership priorities are operationalized. Understanding how the structure of partner institutions influences strategic choices, military effectiveness, and the possibilities of new capability development in a resource- and time-constrained world is essential. This can help ensure that we engage with the right stakeholders and at the right decision points, and identify the institutional changes needed to develop, employ, and sustain capabilities to achieve successful security cooperation outcomes. Of particular importance is the status of civil-military relations, how this affects the development and use of the military, and the implications for our security cooperation investments, including efforts to support the capacity and professionalism of civilian actors in the interagency, ministry, and civil society.

In some countries, institutional structures impose significant constraints on what is possible through security cooperation. We typically assume that governments exist to build the state or protect civilians, as in the United States. But often the role of the security sector, particularly in fragile, autocratic, and internally divided states, is to protect certain groups, institutions, or ideas. In these cases, military capacity building could threaten entrenched interests, who may seek to stymie security cooperation engagements or redirect them to myopic interests. This does not necessarily mean that security cooperation is unfeasible, but identifying what is possible—for example, what capacity building efforts or institutional reforms might be effective versus harmful—requires an understanding of partner institutional structures and incentives.

Theme III. Security Cooperation in the Context of Strategic Competition

Security cooperation has an integral role to play in the emerging strategic competition with major powers over the future of the international order. The United States has numerous partners acting with common purpose in strategic competition. We stand alongside our most enduring allies, as well as many countries that fear the disruption wrought by Russia's and China's revisionist foreign policies. In these cases, security cooperation plays a key role in facilitating sustained dialogues to determine how to navigate competition in contested environments and develop the capabilities needed to do this.

Yet we lack clear frameworks for how to think about security cooperation in countries where our competitors also actively seek partnerships in both the economic and security realms. Today China is a growing player in arms transfers and security cooperation, working to expand its footprint through basing agreements, development projects, and military-to-military relationships around the globe. Russia seeks to expand its sphere of influence directly—in Central Asia and Eastern Europe—and through irregular proxy forces elsewhere. International sanctions have forced it to rebuild a domestic arms industry that will certainly seek new markets when its war in Ukraine winds down. Meanwhile, demand for U.S. arms from multiple global crises has stretched our defense industrial base and limits our ability to use arms transfers as a tool of security cooperation.

This strategic context generates new challenges and questions for policymakers:

- How does security cooperation by our competitors threaten our interests? How do we assess the credibility of their security cooperation partnerships given that arms transfers are often transactional and not indicative of deeper cooperation?
- Do we need to try to out-compete or block Chinese and Russian security cooperation in every instance? What tools do we have to prevent our competitors from building partnerships or at least to keep those partnerships from threatening our fundamental interests? How do we approach countries that want to work with both the United States and our competitors?
- What "quality" trade-offs do we face in trying to do security cooperation everywhere in an era of constrained resources? Is it in our interest to loosen our standards and requirements just because we face competition?
- How do we sell ourselves as a partner in a competitive market? What motivates countries to partner with the United States? What is our value proposition?

More research is needed on security cooperation in contested environments to support decision-makers focused on protecting U.S. interests in the face of strategic competition.

Theme IV. U.S. Capacity and Capabilities Have Not Kept Pace with Demand

As we confront a changing global threat environment alongside multiple regional crises, the security cooperation enterprise is being asked to do more to build partnerships without a significant increase in personnel or financial resources. In fact, in many cases, the enterprise is asked to do more with less as U.S. troops are redirected to other theaters or away from training and advising to the core warfighting mission, and as the defense industrial base and foreign military sales (FMS) system struggles to meet demand for the weapon systems that have often been our main currency with partners. If security cooperation is truly to become a "tool of first resort," we must build the capacity of the U.S. Government and our defense industrial base to do more security cooperation—and to do it more effectively and more efficiently.

First, we do not currently have the trained manpower to deliberately plan for and execute the range of security cooperation activities required by U.S strategy. In some cases, funding is available for training and institution-building activities but we do not have an adequate supply of military and civilian personnel with the right technical skills, political know-how, and programmatic tools to provide the full spectrum of activities needed. The dramatic increase in demand for more and better-educated security cooperation officers, advisors, and planners highlights the need to strategically build, professionalize, and manage the security cooperation workforce. What skillsets and expertise do we need in the workforce to plan and execute the kinds of security cooperation activities we intend to undertake? What cultural competencies and diplomatic skills are needed for inherently political jobs? Selecting, educating, preparing, and supporting the right people is key to building and maintaining the intellectual capital to preserve America's qualitative edge in security cooperation. Centralized, evidence-based education curriculum;

formalized assessment and planning practices, supported by accessible documentation; and overlapping periods as people rotate into new positions can help provide institutional memory and ensure continuity of effort. The Security Cooperation Organization (SCO) at our Embassies have the important role of interacting with the partner and overseeing implementation of security cooperation efforts. The establishment of a Defense Security Cooperation Service is intended to ensure that the SCO workforce is right-sized, effectively administered, and appropriately educated.

Second, the ability of the U.S. Government to provide affordable and sustainable weapon systems to partners in a timely fashion is challenged by a foreign military sales system that has long needed to be streamlined and updated to account for the outsized role of arms transfers in U.S. security cooperation. Within DOD, the Program Management Offices for different weapon systems are designed to address Service needs, not those of our partners. There are not enough U.S. personnel working with partners to understand their requirements and to identify the releasability, availability, and pricing of systems in which partners are interested. As a result, partners are often unable to utilize even their U.S.-funded Foreign Military Financing for capabilities they need in the short-to-medium term, leading them, instead, to use their own funds to purchase systems from other providers that can be attained more quickly. State Department and Department of Defense FMS reform efforts are underway but will only succeed if there is sustained senior-level engagement. The long-standing mandate that U.S. personnel only discuss U.S. systems with partners could be updated with criteria to apply for when and how to discuss alternate systems and providers as part of our partnership management or capability development efforts.

Finally, improvements in the FMS system will mean little if the defense industrial base is unable to keep pace with the need to maintain a technological advantage for U.S. forces, provide appropriate systems to partners seeking to develop capabilities or shift away from Russian systems, and meet the urgent needs of partners in crises. The focus of the U.S. defense industrial base on systems developed for DOD means arms exports are often unavailable or ill-suited to partner demand. The United States has begun to explore innovative ways to incentivize the defense industrial base to meet both U.S. and partner needs, including co-production, third-party licensing, export-specific manufacturing lines, and entering the value arms market. Given limited government bandwidth and the complexity of the arms market, it will be important to prioritize the approaches most needed to advance U.S. interests and determine how to pursue them most effectively.

CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Panel Session I: Exploring the Promise of Security Cooperation

These panels examine the promise of security cooperation in the current strategic environment, which includes both newer and enduring issues.

What challenges do we face in leveraging partners to deter interstate threats and prevail in conflict? How do we preserve and advance our influence with partners in an era of strategic competition? What lessons have we learned to better address states facing internal conflict and transboundary challenges that imperil human security?

1A: Deterrence and Readiness for Interstate Conflict

The strategic environment is characterized by distributed power, multiple competitors, and increased globalization, leading to shifting alliances and partnerships, and creating new vulnerabilities in multiple domains. The utility of past deterrence theories—and resulting security cooperation priorities—needs to be reconsidered in this environment. Developing deployable warfighting capabilities, rather than focusing on the signals sent by the announcement of a new package, is key to deterrence. Time is a critical issue; we need to have hard conversations with partners about whether a given platform can become a useable capability, integrated effectively into new operational concepts within the needed timeframe, and if not, discuss alternative operational approaches or more affordable and more easily developed capabilities. We also need to work with partners to develop the capabilities needed to combat—and the societal, economic and government resilience needed to withstand—gray zone operations involving cyberattacks, disinformation campaigns, economic pressure, and other activities short of open conflict. Information and intelligence sharing is a powerful tool for shaping public opinion and partner views on how to respond to a threat, as in the case of developing a coalition to react quickly to the invasion of Ukraine.

1B: Political-Military Influence in Contested Environments

How do we use security cooperation to get partners to work with common purpose against strategic competitors? Three insights are key. First, because we still have a lot to learn about how security cooperation generates influence over partners, we should adopt a hedging approach by building a variety of security cooperation programs around different influence strategies. Second, we must prioritize on-the-ground U.S. presence in partner countries, since there are good reasons to think that this facilitates effective security cooperation regardless of the strategic approach. Third, we need to recognize that we are no longer the default partner of choice, and thus must refine how we market ourselves and how we exploit the seams between what potential partners need and what other major powers can provide, without abandoning the values that distinguish us from our competitors.

1C: Promoting Stability and Security in Conflict-Affected Regions

Promoting stability and security in conflict-affected regions begins with understanding the partner and the effect that U.S. intervention has on local political dynamics. The security sector in fragile states is inherently political, contested by different societal groups, and often designed to protect certain people and institutions. More security assistance does not necessarily translate into more stable, peaceful, or democratic societies. But successful security cooperation can help to build more resilient and stronger institutions. This requires indigenous institutional capacity, but achieving this is hard because reforming political institutions threatens entrenched interests. An integrated, interagency approach to security sector governance and reform relies on the ability to accumulate relevant local knowledge and understand how U.S. Government actions will influence partner political dynamics.

1D: Mitigating the Effects of Transboundary Challenges

The United States employs security cooperation to address a diverse threat environment. Many threat actors, including terrorist groups and transnational criminal networks adapt in response to U.S. and partner strategies. It is important to adopt a dynamic posture to keep up with these rapidly evolving threats. Security cooperation strategies must account for the root causes of these transnational threats. In many parts of the world, state fragility, climate change, migration and other transboundary challenges are threat multipliers leading to significant vulnerabilities to governance structures. In these places, we must use security cooperation to get partners to address political instability and human-security challenges, and to shape the strategies they use to combat threats, since heavy-handed responses to whole-of-society problems risk creating ripple effects that make societies more vulnerable. By working together to understand threats and design appropriate responses, we help to align interests and produce better security cooperation outcomes.

Panel Session II: Strategies for Delivering on the Promise

These panels consider how to enhance the strategies and design of security cooperation to deliver on its promise.

How do we improve prioritization, planning processes, and implementation through better analysis, interagency coordination, and collaboration with partners? How do we leverage arms transfers and international armaments cooperation to advance U.S. national interests, and how do we develop planning approaches and tools that ensure partner countries can absorb, sustain, and deploy new capabilities to advance shared objectives?

2A: Examining Security Cooperation Planning and Prioritization

An effective planning process requires explicit choices about what roles we want partners to undertake, what discrete time-limited objectives they can feasibly attain, and by extension, what capabilities they need to have. A "peanut butter spread" of resources gets us nothing; when resources are limited, we need to make difficult choices

about priorities, including deciding when to stop activities. But the fear of losing influence in strategic competition pulls us in the opposite direction. We often hear about the necessity of having a "foot in the door" to be able to seize opportunities when they arise because "you can't surge trust." But we need to be able to say why we want a foot in the door in each case—what future opportunity are we looking to seize? Is this program really "the in"?

2B: Working Collaboratively with Partners

We often approach partner engagements using American concepts and approaches. But security cooperation will fail if we do not understand and account for the uniqueness of the partner's history, culture, politics, resources, and formal and informal decision-making processes. When we attempt to identify security cooperation solutions that are partner driven, we need to consider the impact of U.S. presence, as it alters the context, the expectations of partners, and how partners define their interests. And it is important to keep in mind that the true partner is the national population, those whose security is in the balance. Local solutions require local engagements.

2C: Leveraging Arms Transfers and International Armaments Cooperation

Under the right conditions, the United States can leverage international arms transfers to advance specific national objectives. This is true not only in the context of high-end weapons, where the United States stands alone as a producer, but also in more competitive markets if the buyer is already integrated into U.S. defense platforms. Thus, we should approach arms sales as we do other areas of security cooperation: with a clear idea of objectives and a process to monitor and evaluate success. In an environment in which demand far outpaces the ability of the U.S. defense industrial base and the FMS system to respond, and recognizing that arms sales do not necessarily generate influence for the United States, FMS programs can no longer operate under the simple principle that "more is better." Rather, we must prioritize those engagements that advance national security objectives, ensure that partners convert platforms into real capabilities, maintain the United States' defense technological advantage, and secure access to value arms for ourselves and our partners, while strategically engaging in co-production, licensing, or ceding markets to partners to meet growing international demand.

2D: Developing Capabilities, Not Liabilities

We engage partners to build capacity for shared objectives. But if we are not careful, we are bound to provide training and equipment that partners cannot sustain or are likely to misuse. To avoid generating these liabilities, we must, first, assess and respond to the partner's ability to absorb and sustain new capabilities, politically and financially. Do partners understand the (often) costly and time-consuming changes required to develop a capability and the financial costs of keeping it operational over time? We also need to account for the partner's political and institutional context, including security-sector strategies and civilian oversight, and ask how new capability will be used. This necessitates conversations with the partner about scenarios and operational use, may require sustained engagement to support the development and implementation of new operational concepts and, in some cases, demands professionalization across both the civilian and military institutions needed to support responsible and effective use before new capabilities are developed.

Panel Session III: Delivering Security Cooperation

These panels explore the implementation of security cooperation to understand on-the-ground effectiveness and challenges, with implications both for in-country practice and for improvements to assessment, planning, and design processes.

What challenges do U.S. Embassy Security Cooperation Organizations and implementers in the enterprise face? What expertise, skills, tools, and institutional support do they need to be effective? What lessons for crisis security cooperation can we appropriately take from U.S. engagement with Ukraine since 2014? How do we improve security cooperation practice to ensure that our partners respect human rights?

3A: Ukraine Lessons for Crisis Security Cooperation

Security cooperation in the context of crises is a qualitatively different activity than steady-state security cooperation. Bureaucratic hurdles can be overcome and assistance provided in much shorter time frames when the urgency of the situation focuses the attention of senior leaders and the bureaucracy, and forces close interagency coordination. Certain U.S. Government decisions facilitated success in Ukraine, including the strategic choice to ramp up capability transfers only as Ukraine proved its ability to absorb them and Congressional support via Ukraine-specific authorities and appropriations. But there were also many idiosyncratic factors of success, including our work "setting the table" starting in 2014 alongside large increases in Ukrainian defense spending, the incredible will and absorptive capacity of the Ukrainian military, geographic proximity to allies who have provided their own material and non-material support, and the availability of large amounts of compatible equipment that had been intended for Afghanistan. And, of course, there remain many challenges, including the availability of U.S. personnel with Ukraine expertise and access, and limited management and oversight of programs. It is essential that we institutionalize approaches for crisis security cooperation that capture generalizable best practices and build on lessons learned. This applies not just to means for speeding up the bureaucracy once the crisis hits, but also reflecting on the kinds of pre-crisis security cooperation approaches that would facilitate quicker and more effective responses during a crisis.

3B: Understanding U.S. Embassy SCOs

The SCO within the Embassy Country Team is often referred to as the "tip of the spear"—playing a key role in requirements determination and planning, managing the implementation of complex and demanding security cooperation initiatives, and deconflicting our efforts with those of our allies. This requires SCOs to interact with a broad set of stakeholders with diverse interests and needs, ranging from Congressional delegations to State Department and DOD policy offices to the Combatant Commands, the Embassy country team, and an array of implementers. Despite growth in the diversity and number of security cooperation activities and in demand for more deliberate planning, implementation, and monitoring, SCOs continue to be organized based on Cold War realities. Right-sizing SCO offices and ensuring they have the right people with the right training and the right support is

essential for effective security cooperation. At the same time, incorporating SCOs more systematically and more quickly into lessons learned and continuous improvement efforts at the HQ level will be essential to ensure that on-the-ground realities are represented.

3C: Security Cooperation Tradecraft

We demand a lot of security cooperation implementers, but for good reason: the interactions between implementers and the partner can make or break a security cooperation program. We need to raise the professionalism of the security cooperation workforce and ensure that we are assigning people to security cooperation engagements that have the right expertise, skills, tools, and background. And we need to enable security cooperation professionals to establish long-term relationships with partners to better understand their needs and allow for smoother implementation. This is especially true in the context of strategic competition where our competitors are, increasingly, better prepared and more effectively resourced and staffed for interactions with partners. Key leader engagements can be a significant asset in setting up security cooperation activities effectively.

3D: Promoting Respect for Human Rights and Mitigating Civilian Harm

Mitigating civilian harm is not just about upholding U.S. values; it supports strategic effectiveness. In Afghanistan, for example, both targeting success and force protection increased after implementing civilian harm mitigation measures. To achieve better results and generate more accurate measures of harm, we must understand the process through which harm occurs. Degradation of civilian infrastructure often leads to harm even if there are no immediate civilian casualties. Procedures, processes, and institutions appear to matter as much as (if not more than) individual actors. Where security cooperation is likely to increase civilian harm, we can mitigate by providing non-lethal support, such as engaging partners in dialogue on planning military operations. This approach yielded positive results with Saudi operations in Yemen, with instances of civilian harm reduced over time. Just as civilian harm mitigation is being integrated into DOD activities, it should be built into all train, equip, and institutional capacity building programs. And the United States should learn from its allies, as many have a head start on implementing civilian harm mitigation in security cooperation.

APPENDIX: CONFERENCE AGENDA

2023 Security Cooperation Conference: Delivering on the Promise of Security Cooperation

October 12–13, 2023

The second annual Security Cooperation (SC) Conference, co-hosted by the Defense Security Cooperation University (DSCU) and The George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs, examines the practice of SC to inform U.S. policymakers, planners, and implementers responsible for advancing the National Defense Strategy (NDS) through global partnerships and international cooperation.

The 2022 NDS emphasizes the importance of close collaboration with our network of alliances and partnerships as "foundational for U.S. national security interests and for our collective ability to address the challenges that the [People's Republic of China] and Russia present, while responsibly managing the array of other threats we face."

The 2022 SC Conference focused on the implications of a changing global security environment on the practice of SC. The 2023 SC Conference builds on that event with a focus on the practice itself across policymaking, planning, and implementation of SC programs and activities, and how that practice can inform the future of SC. This annual gathering of scholars and practitioners helps to foster dialogue, analysis, and critical inquiry. Conference results will form the basis for continued collaboration across the community of interest on how to apply knowledge, improve practice, and ultimately deliver on the promise of SC.

This one-and-a-half-day conference features plenary sessions to hear from leaders in the field and three structured panel sessions. Each panel session, organized around key themes, consists of four concurrent panels, allowing for more topics to be covered and greater audience participation in smaller groups. During registration, participants may indicate preferences on panels for each of the three panel sessions. The conference will observe the Chatham House Rule.

Experts across the security cooperation and assistance enterprise and relevant research communities are invited to participate. The conference is organized in partnership with The George Washington University Elliott School's Institute for Security and Conflict Studies by DSCU's new Research, Analysis, and Lessons Learned Institute.

Thursday, October 12, 2023

0800–0830	**Registration & Check-In**
0830–0840	**Administrative Remarks**
0840–0900	**Welcome & Opening Remarks**

Dr. Alyssa Ayres
Dean, Elliot School of International Affairs, George Washington University

Dr. Celeste Gventer
President, Defense Security Cooperation University

0900–0930	**Keynote Address**

Ms. Madeline Mortelmans
Performing the Duties of Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities, U.S. Department of Defense

1000–1130	**Panel Session 1: Exploring the Promise of Security Cooperation**

1A. Deterrence and Readiness for Interstate Conflict

This panel explores the use of security cooperation to prevent interstate conflict through deterrence and create the conditions necessary to prevail in conflict, should it arise. SC activities are expected to enhance U.S. force posture and increase strategic readiness to appropriately respond to aggression, primarily through development of partner capabilities, but also through strengthened alliances with appropriate access, basing, and overflight rights. This panel examines the challenges posed by creating a credible deterrence framework through security cooperation while not provoking adversaries.

Moderator: Dr. Leigh Nolan, Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy

Panelists:

Dr. Stephen Biddle
Columbia University

Mr. Matan Chorev
U.S. Department of State

Dr. Joshua Hastey
Irregular Warfare Center

Dr. Jennifer Moroney
RAND Corporation

1B. Political-Military Influence in Contested Environments

This panel examines the challenges and opportunities of using security cooperation as a tool of statecraft intended to influence a partner's national security policy and defense decisions in strategically contested spaces. According to the 2022 NDS, "the most comprehensive and serious challenge to U.S. national security is [China's] coercive and increasingly aggressive endeavor to refashion the Indo-Pacific region and the international system to suit its interests and authoritarian preferences." While the U.S. has numerous partners acting with common purpose, many critical countries are determined to avoid taking sides in this emerging competition, a reality that the security cooperation enterprise is navigating.

Moderator: Dr. Marc Grinberg, Defense Security Cooperation University

Panelists:

Dr. Alexandra Chinchilla
Texas A&M University

Mr. Greg Hermsmeyer
U.S. Department of State

Dr. Bryce Loidolt
National Defense University

1C. Promoting Stability and Security in Conflict-Affected Regions

This panel explores challenges associated with conducting security cooperation in states weakened or in turmoil, where the objective is to strengthen host government institutional resilience to counter violent extremism, prevent atrocities, and react to internal and external security threats.

Moderator: Dr. Jason Fritz, Defense Security Cooperation University

Panelists:

Dr. Renanah Miles Joyce
Brandeis University

Mr. Peter Quaranto
U.S. Department of State

Dr. William Reno
Northwestern University

1D. Mitigating the Effects of Transboundary Challenges

This panel explores the impact of transboundary challenges on security forces and how security cooperation can contribute to building resilience. The 2022 NDS recognizes the destabilizing effect that catastrophic transboundary challenges, such as climate change and pandemics, can have on readiness for both U.S. and partner forces. Understanding the future implications for security sectors and working collaboratively with partners through security cooperation are important for enabling readiness and mitigating the effects of transboundary challenges.

Moderator: Mr. Robert Timm, Defense Security Cooperation University

Panelists:

Dr. Assis Malaquias
Africa Center for Strategic Studies

Dr. Tova Norlen
Defense Security Cooperation University

Mr. Andre Sekowski
Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy

1200–1245   **Hosted Lunch**

1300–1330   **Plenary: Fireside Chat**

Mr. Stanley Brown
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Bureau of Political-Military Affairs,
U.S. Department of State

1400–1530   **Panel Session 2: Strategies for Delivering on the Promise**

2A. Examining Security Cooperation Planning and Prioritization
This panel explores approaches to planning and prioritizing security cooperation activities. Despite progress made to improve assessments and develop comprehensive multi-year security cooperation plans, the impact of those efforts on delivering better results remains to be seen. Understanding the strategies used to produce realistic and comprehensive plans, conduct meaningful interagency planning, and reconcile priorities across decision-makers is important to inform future approaches and solutions.

Moderator: Mr. David Ferrari, Defense Security Cooperation Agency

Panelists:

Mr. Todd Gobeille
U.S. Department of State

Dr. Jennifer Kavanagh
Carnegie Endowment for International Peace

Dr. Leigh Nolan
Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy

Mr. Kevin Staley
U.S. Southern Command

2B. Working Collaboratively with Partners
This panel examines approaches for collaboration with partners across the planning and implementation continuum, offering insights and evidence to help address challenges and leverage opportunities. Developing collaborative relationships with partners is widely accepted as central to security cooperation effectiveness, but the nature and scope of these partnerships often remain mired in uncertainty in terms of purpose and process. Understanding partner realities, partner buy-

in, local ownership, and trust are concepts central to establishing a constructive relationship with partners, but they remain highly dependent on individual attributes and skills rather than systematic operationalization. The challenges that lay in the path of understanding and collaborating effectively with partners span political, strategic, doctrinal, operational, and tactical spheres.

Moderator: Dr. Julie Chalfin, U.S. Department of State

Panelists:

Dr. Linda Bishai
Institute for Defense Analyses

Mr. Bilal Saab
Middle East Institute

Dr. Jean-Loup Samaan
National University of Singapore

Major General Darrin E. Slaten, USA
National Guard Bureau

2C. Leveraging Arms Transfers and International Armaments Cooperation

This panel examines approaches to using foreign military sales and cooperative acquisition and sustainment strategies to advance national security objectives. Arms transfers can enhance the ability of reliable partners to develop critical capabilities but can also undermine partner readiness when not effectively executed. International armaments cooperation can create the more robust defense industrial base and resilient supply chains needed for combat ready U.S. and allied and partner forces but may create new dependencies. Concerns with arming less reliable partners persist and take on new dimensions in an era of strategic competition. The 2023 Conventional Arms Transfer Policy, recent reviews of the foreign military sales system, and ongoing research highlight the need for processes that effectively and responsibly develop and transfer arms, while also ensuring the intended impacts will be achieved.

Moderator: Dr. Hadd Jones, Defense Security Cooperation University

Panelists:

Dr. Jon Caverley
Naval War College

Mr. Alan Gorowitz
Defense Security Cooperation Agency

Mr. Patrick Mason
Department of the Army

Ms. Mira Resnick
U.S. Department of State

Ms. Rachel Stohl
Stimson Center

2D. Developing Capabilities, Not Liabilities

This panel focuses on the non-material aspects of security force effectiveness, and approaches to develop and sustain capabilities necessary to achieve shared security objectives. This often involves considering governance and management realities, including political and economic policymaking and their impact on security sector effectiveness, and supporting efforts to build institutional capacity necessary for effective integration and responsible employment of capabilities. Developing partner capabilities entails much more than arms transfers, or even the life cycle consciousness inherent in the total package approach. The question is, what happens to the left and right of arms transfers to create capabilities, and avoid liabilities for sustainment, resources, and readiness.

Moderator: Dr. Robin Bowman, Defense Security Cooperation University

Panelists:

Dr. Risa Brooks
Marquette University

Dr. Mathurin Houngnikpo
Independent Scholar

Mr. Kris Hughes
Defense Security Cooperation University

Colonel Scott Neiper, USAF

1545–1700

Plenary: International Partner Perspectives

Moderator: Mr. Kareem Oweiss, Defense Security Cooperation University

Panelist:

Mr. Tamim Asey
King's College London

1700–1830

Conference Reception

Remarks:

Mr. James Hursch
Director, Defense Security Cooperation Agency

Friday, October 13, 2023

0900-1030

Panel Session 3: Delivering Security Cooperation

3A. Ukraine Lessons for Crisis Security Cooperation
This panel explores the implications of security cooperation in Ukraine from 2014 to the present and how this experience could shape approaches to prepare for and conduct security cooperation in future crises. The ongoing crisis prompted unprecedented actions by the security cooperation enterprise that reveals both strengths and weaknesses in the existing system, with implications both for future crises and for steady state security cooperation. The security cooperation enterprise is likely to generate and apply lessons from the preparation for and response to this crisis in preparation for future scenarios.

Moderator: Mr. Jonathan Mitchell, U.S. Department of State

Panelists:

Dr. Polina Beliakova
Massachusetts Institute of Technology

Ms. Lauren Chapman
Defense Security Cooperation Agency

Ms. Alaina Garrett
Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy

Colonel (ret.) Cindy Matuskevitch, USA
Former ODC Chief

Colonel (ret.) Robert Timm
Defense Security Cooperation University

3B. Understanding U.S. Embassy Security Cooperation Organizations
This panel helps create a shared understanding of challenges and opportunities related to U.S. Embassy Security Cooperation Organizations (SCOs). SCOs operate as part of a U.S. Embassy Country Team at the tip of the spear, continuously in the planning and implementation cycles, managing complex and demanding initiatives, while collaborating with partner officials. Recent initiatives to improve education and management of personnel assigned to SCOs can be informed by an exploration of their realities and operating environment.

Moderator: Mr. Saul Bracero, Defense Security Cooperation University

Panelists:

Ms. Laura Cressey
U.S. Department of State

Mr. Kidd Manville
Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy

Lieutenant Colonel Erol Munir
U.S. Embassy Tblisi

Lieutenant Colonel Pete Roongsang, USA
Human Resources Command

3C. Security Cooperation Tradecraft

This panel explores the implementation of security cooperation, and approaches used to navigate across the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. In this context, the panel explores "tradecraft" as it refers to the skills and abilities necessary to effectively implement security cooperation programs. Implementers are expected to simultaneously deliver results, inform plans, advise counterparts, interpret guidance, remain within budget, coordinate with other implementers, and adjust to changes in direction, while enabling local ownership, continuously assessing partner will and ability, working across stovepipes, and cultivating positive partnerships. Understanding successes, failures, innovations, and the conditions necessary for these helps inform doctrine and education on implementing security cooperation in order to deliver better results.

Moderator: Dr. Scott Buchanan, Office of the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy

Panelists:

Dr. Barbara Elias
Bowdoin College

Dr. Crissy Gayagas
Institute for Security Governance

Major General Donn Hill, USA
Security Force Assistance Command

Lieutenant Colonel Jahara "Franky" Matisek
USAF, Naval War College

3D. Promoting Respect for Human Rights and Mitigating Civilian Harm

This panel reflects on practices and lessons of incorporating human rights principles in the provision of security by partners through security cooperation, as well as building the institutional processes to prevent and/or hold military units accountable for civilian harm. The recently released DoD Civilian Harm Mitigation and Response Action Plan (CHMR-AP) lays out a series of major actions DoD will implement to mitigate and respond to civilian harm, intended to improve accountability and transparency resulting from U.S. military operations. The security cooperation enterprise is building its capacity for greater analysis of civilian harm risk and respect for human rights to inform security cooperation approaches, while also learning from implementation of activities intended to mitigate civilian harm risk and influence partner behavior.

Moderator: Dr. Nathan Toronto, Defense Security Cooperation University

Panelists:

Dr. Larry Lewis
Center for Naval Analyses

Mr. Michael McNerney
DoD Civilian Protection Center of Excellence

Ms. Sahr Muhammedally
Defense Security Cooperation University

Dr. Patricia Sullivan
University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill

1100-1200	**Plenary: Development of the Security Cooperation Workforce**
	Dr. Celeste W. Gventer President, Defense Security Cooperation University
	Dr. Alexander Downes George Washington University
1200–1230	**Plenary: Key Takeaways and Conference Conclusion**