



2025 Security Cooperation Conference

Learning from the Past to Shape the Future

Call for Proposals

The Defense Security Cooperation University (DSCU) announces a call for proposals for the fourth annual security cooperation (SC) conference to be held in the National Capital Region in late October 2025. Conference organizers welcome paper and poster proposals that illuminate the breadth of expertise and interests of the wide-ranging security cooperation enterprise. DSCU will consider only individual papers and posters for acceptance, although individuals are welcome to suggest panel ideas and volunteer to serve as panel chairs. We encourage submissions from members of the academic community, the armed forces, government agencies, museums, archives, and international partners. Priority will be given to individual paper and poster submissions that present original research, new interpretations, and topics of immediate interest to the security cooperation workforce.

Conference Goal

The 2025 SC Conference will focus on how knowledge and lessons from history can advance the theory and practice of security cooperation to better address current and emerging national security challenges. The use of the word practice here is all-encompassing, and topics may include, but are not limited to, policy formulation, doctrine development, institutional reforms, and the planning and implementation of security cooperation activities.

On April 29, 2024, the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) launched the Brigadier General Charles Young Research, Analysis, and Lessons Learned Institute within DSCU. The Young Institute supports DSCU's mission by fostering analysis, research, scholarship, and critical inquiry that advances the field of security cooperation, enables application of lessons learned, and promotes evidence-based decision-making. Key to this mission is the study of history, which sheds light on past experiences, challenges, and lessons of security cooperation. This is no better illuminated than by the institute's namesake, BG Charles Young. Young served as an Army officer, scholar, author, educator, and diplomat. Understanding Brigadier General Young's experience as a leader in the nation's long history of working with allies and partners exemplifies how and why the study of history is relevant to the theory and practice of security cooperation.

Themes

The 2025 SC Conference provides opportunities for individuals to share research, reflections, observations, or lessons learned that address any of the eight themes:

The Practice of Security Cooperation: The practice of security cooperation goes beyond understanding how various organizations work together to implement security cooperation policy. Stakeholders involved in the broader security cooperation process, such as country

teams, geographic combatant commands, and non-Department of Defense agencies, must understand each other and their respective institutional processes and policies to work effectively. Yet throughout U.S. history, implementation has not been without difficulty and institutional stumbling blocks can determine the success of security cooperation in a country. Exploring these potential obstacles and challenges throughout history, how they arose, and how they were overcome or not overcome is key to understanding the implementation of security cooperation in the future.

Changing Theory of Security Cooperation: In 1961, President John F. Kennedy signed the Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) into law. The FAA outlined the political and ideological principles of U.S. foreign aid and restructured U.S. foreign assistance programs. Ten years later, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird re-designated the Military Assistance and Sales Directorate as the Defense Security Assistance Agency (DSAA). In 1998, DSAA became the Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA). Inherent in these organizational changes were questions regarding the definition, rhetoric, and theory of security cooperation. Conference organizers invite papers that analyze how the theory of security cooperation has changed over time or remained the same.

Why We Succeed or Fail: Beyond the headlines of Afghanistan, Iraq, Israel, and Ukraine, case studies from across the world offer insights into successes and failures in security cooperation. The larger security cooperation enterprise has taken steps to learn lessons from the past, including changing security cooperation planning approaches, integrating institutional capacity building, and requiring the assessment, monitoring, and evaluation (AM&E) of outcomes. But what does it mean to fail? What does it mean to succeed? Why are some security cooperation missions considered successes, while others are not? Conference organizers invite submissions that explore these questions.

Implications of Security Cooperation: Security cooperation with allies and partners is not without challenges and unintended consequences. In exploring successes and failures of security cooperation, it is also necessary to assess what has worked and what has not worked in relation to domestic concerns, human rights, civilian harm, regional violence, political stability, and coups. For instance, what are the implications associated with long-term assistance to a particular region, ally, or partner? Conference organizers invite papers that explore how past cases inform current and future assistance programs, especially in regions of increasing national security concern, such as the Indo-Pacific.

Informing and Responding to Crises: The long history of security cooperation in the United States offers plenty of examples of how the U.S. government has responded to both large-scale and small-scale crises across the globe. U.S. policymakers and military leaders have engaged in security cooperation and security assistance activities since the late-eighteenth century. Understanding how the United States alongside its allies and partners have responded to past and current crises is crucial to informing the theory and practice of security cooperation and helps the security cooperation workforce prepare for future crises.

Preparing in Peacetime: Preparation for crises starts in peacetime. Working with allies and partners is key to upholding and strengthening the principles and institutions that enable growth, prosperity, and security across the world. Some topics that may contribute to this theme are post-World War II decolonization and the non-alignment movement; post-Cold War burgeoning democracies and their relationship with the United States; the use of security cooperation as a tool of influence between wars; readiness among allies and partners; building the defense industrial base, and resilience building prior to conflict.

Security Cooperation in Times of Change: Since the turn of the twentieth century and the emergence of the United States as a world power, the U.S. government has evolved and adapted its national security policies and strategies to consider allies and partners, emerging technologies, social and political changes, revolutions in military affairs, and more recently, an increasing demand on the security cooperation workforce. Using the DOTMLPF-P (doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership, personnel, facilities, and policy) framework as a guide, conference organizers invite papers that explore how the security cooperation enterprise has adapted to change and can prepare for future changes.

Capturing History of Security Cooperation: The study of history provides understanding of the past. Historians achieve this by analyzing primary sources, considering different perspectives, and constructing narratives that connect the past to the present. The study of security cooperation history requires the examination of a variety of primary sources, both government and non-government, understanding of the partners and allies involved, as well as the construction of evidence-based arguments to be shared with the larger workforce. Questions of where to look for sources, how to capture this history, and how to disseminate it are key to the practice of security cooperation history.

Proposal Submissions

Submissions must be made through an online form. The only means of submitting a paper or poster proposal for the 2025 SC Conference is through a simple online form: <https://forms.osi.apps.mil/r/mPn549pRK5>

Analytical Papers

Once accepted, presenters will be asked to submit a short paper articulating the key points they will highlight in their conference presentation. These analytical papers are expected to be about 1,500 words. The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate reflection on how the knowledge of history informs the theory and practice in security cooperation, and to provide presenters the opportunity to organize their thoughts. DSCU will privilege papers that represent a multitude of security cooperation perspectives, so conference organizers encourage proposals that include a mix of reflection, observations, lessons learned, and evidence-based research. Conference organizers will organize accepted papers into panels based on conference themes.

Given the focus on how historical knowledge, analysis, and lessons learned can inform and improve the theory and practice of security cooperation, submissions will be selected according to the following criteria:

- Relevance and likelihood for contributing knowledge to one of the conference themes
- Broad participant representation across communities of interest and practice
- Demonstrated willingness to produce an analytical paper
- Demonstrated evidence-based approach

Poster Session

A poster session will be available for organizations to showcase how they conduct security cooperation or security assistance programs, or how they use history to inform the practice of security cooperation or security assistance. In this session, presenters will share information about the approaches to and tools for executing their programs and projects. Conference organizers will set aside time each day for the poster session to allow participants to attend both panels and poster sessions. Submissions should include a staff member poised to answer questions during the poster session. Posters may be descriptive or analytical in nature, but they must connect to the practice of security cooperation.

Information Session

2025 SC Conference organizers will schedule an information session online for 17 March 2025 at 12:00pm Eastern Time. Individuals interested in attending should write to the 2025 SC Conference team at dscn.dscu.mbx.conference@mail.mil. This session will provide information on submissions and answer any questions on conference themes, proposals, presentations, or other topics of interest to those considering a submission.

Timeline

The intended timeline is as follows:

- 1 April 2025: Potential contributors submit via the online form available at <https://forms.osi.apps.mil/r/mPn549pRK5> (submissions must be unclassified and not contain any controlled unclassified information (CUI) or sensitive information)
- 1 June 2025: Selected contributors notified
- 1 September 2025: Contributors submit analytical papers to conference organizers and panel chairs (submissions must be unclassified and not contain any controlled unclassified information (CUI) or sensitive information)
 - Approximately 1,500 words (including notes, if used), double-spaced, 12-point font, Microsoft Word file
 - Citations (if used): Shortened notes and bibliography style, *Chicago Manual of Style*
 - Failure to submit a paper may result in removal from conference program
- 30 September 2025: Final conference schedule set