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**BEYOND MANAGERS OF VIOLENCE:
THE REVOLUTION IN MILITARY ROLES AND THE FORCE OF THE FUTURE**

by

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Disclaimer

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Abstract

The Hoover Institution's Kori Schake recently described the spectrum of near-term threats to the United States this way: "Deterrence works. It certainly is working so far against great powers... The United States is so good at actual war that we have driven our adversaries to the polar extremes of the conflict scale."¹ *Foreign Policy* Editor-in-Chief David Rothkopf offers that the United States currently faces fewer existential threats than at any other time in its history.² Indeed, our prowess in conventional warfare and our credible nuclear deterrent provide two pillars of national defense which minimize the probability of large-scale conflict... for the time being. But military historian Michael Howard argued that "the fog of peace" can be even murkier than the fog of war, alluding to the daunting challenges of building, preparing, and equipping a military force for an uncertain future.³ Considering these viewpoints, the Department of Defense must maintain its conventional war-fighting capabilities and credible nuclear deterrent, yet prepare for an unpredictable future security environment. While we endeavor to marginalize our enemies' options through our own traditional sources of military strength, we must also recognize that our alliances, and the security and values upheld by our democratic international order, provide the United States a third comparative advantage over rival states and non-state violent extremist organizations.⁴

To maintain this third pillar of Western international security, the DOD must build a force better prepared to engage with allies, old and new. The military must pursue security cooperation opportunities prudently, in ways that enhance our own strength. The military must also recruit, train, and retain a broader array of Americans, with proven talents, skills, and language proficiency, in order to leverage the full spectrum of American will, intellect, and ingenuity against any future enemies and challenges.

**Beyond Managers of Violence:
The Revolution in Military Roles and the Force of the Future**

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The Revolution in Military Roles and the Force of the Future

Introduction

For some time now, in public forums and in private spaces, senior officers, civilian leaders, scholars, and research institutions have been discussing a troubling dichotomy in civil-military relations regarding roles and missions as well as the composition of the military and its relationship to society at large. The nation continues to ask an insular, non-representative subset of Americans to execute an ever-expanding set of global missions, in a context of never-ending war. Military officers today lead many non-combat missions that might be better entrusted to USAID, the State Department, the UN, or non-governmental organizations, particularly in the realm of stability operations, humanitarian assistance, and building partner capacity.

This situation is problematic. Recently, Georgetown University's Rosa Brooks argued that if the military is going to keep doing "everything," it's employing the wrong force.⁵ Despite numerous programs aimed at diversifying its human capital, the DOD still predominantly recruits conservative young men from suburban and rural areas in the South and Southwest, most of whom have pre-existing family ties to the military.⁶ While military services aggressively pursue diversity in terms of gender and race, too often the diversity argument is framed in terms of the military's *societal imperative*: to reflect the society it serves.⁷ While the societal imperative is important to good civil-military relations, the greatest benefit of a diverse force is enhanced *capability*. By building a more diverse and internationally-literate force, not just in terms of gender and race, but in terms of language and proven skills, the military could better fulfill its *functional imperative*—to defend the nation and advance its vital interests.

In this paper I address missing links among the problems above, predominantly through an Air Force lens. In a time of limited resources, what non-combat roles should the DOD divest, in order to ensure its continued warfighting prowess? On the other hand, what non-traditional missions must the military continue, thus requiring adjustments in recruitment and accessions?

Borrowing from G. John Ikenberry, I maintain that our alliances, and the security and shared values they uphold, provide an enduring comparative advantage over rival states and violent extremist organizations.⁸ To maintain this advantage, security cooperation must remain integral to our grand strategy. But respecting John Mearsheimer's structural realism, I acknowledge that alliances are risky.⁹ Therefore, I argue that to maximize our power, and to be better stewards of our limited resources, the DOD should only pursue security cooperation activities which strengthen our own war-fighting prowess or bolster our defense industry.

While eliminating wasteful and self-defeating security cooperation activities will effect better military stewardship of American power, there is no doubt that future threats will demand a more internationally-fluent force than is recruited, developed, and retained today. I suggest several policies and personnel programs as worthy of further consideration by the Air Force, such as incorporating regional recruitment and retention strategies into base realignment and closure (BRAC) decisions; returning Air Force ROTC to some of the campuses which have closed their detachments since the Cold War; increasing interagency training and fellowship opportunities for mid-career officers; leveraging accelerated paths to US citizenship for well-vetted immigrants; prioritizing language ability in the officer promotion process; and creating more military units dedicated to security cooperation and foreign internal defense (FID).

Part I: World Order, or Waste?

New Functional Imperatives

Security cooperation has been a fundamental element of American security strategy for decades, but activities such as foreign internal defense, foreign military sales, and “building partner capacity” are often marginalized and misunderstood. Many Americans in politics, academia, and the general public have conflicted feelings about sharing American defense technology, spending American resources, or worse yet, risking American lives for the sake of allies’ or partner nations’ military prowess. One can understand these widespread misgivings about security cooperation given the United States’ checkered history with interventionism—think Iran-Contra, or the collapse of Iraq’s US-trained military forces during the rise of ISIS. The United States pursues an astonishing spectrum of security cooperation activities around the globe. However, these activities are stove-piped within individual services, regions, and commands. These programs could achieve better unity of effort, and therefore better results, if tied more strictly to a common DOD security cooperation strategy.

An important by-product of a DOD security cooperation realignment would be the identification and elimination of wasteful security cooperation programs. Such programs often have public and embarrassing results, so identifying the programs and looking for trends or identifiers of bad security cooperation should be easy. Delineating between ill-advised pursuits and worthwhile activities may also help educate those who believe security cooperation is a diversion from the military’s proper role.

The President, Congress, the American people, academics, and military leaders have long debated the proper role of the military. In his 1957 work, *The Soldier and the State*, Samuel Huntington stated emphatically that a military’s “functional imperative” is “successful armed

combat,” agreeing with Harold Lasswell that military officers are professional “managers of violence.”¹⁰ Civil-military relations scholar Samuel Finer echoed this sentiment, saying that the military’s “principal object is to fight and win wars.”¹¹ Most citizens, military officers, and civilian leaders generally agree with these distillations of military purpose. But Finer himself foresaw the military’s role becoming far less clear: “Since 1945, events have made it less and less possible to divorce questions of defence from those of foreign policy.”¹² What today’s journalists decry as the “recent” militarization of American foreign policy is actually a trend decades in the making.

More recently, Naval War College professor Mackubin Thomas Owens defied Huntington’s narrow lane for the military, arguing instead that “US officers have been and continue to be responsible for activities, such as diplomacy, stability operations, and nation-building, that require them to plan, coordinate, and execute ‘interagency’ operations.”¹³ One Air Command and Staff College professor points out the irony of referring to such activities as “irregular warfare,” given the indisputable regularity with which the US performs these missions.¹⁴ Former soldier, diplomat, and foreign policy advisor David Kilcullen puts it this way: “American policy-makers clearly don’t like irregular operations, and the U.S. military isn’t much interested in them, either, as an institution. But the deep structure of American engagement with the world, over at least the past 150 years, has meant that the military ends up doing these operations anyway, much more often than it does conventional state-on-state wars.”¹⁵ Indeed, the George W. Bush administration declared before 9/11 that America would not engage in nation-building. Yet after 9/11, the United States engaged in relatively short, successful periods of conventional combat against the Taliban and then against Saddam Hussein’s forces, followed by long, complicated postwar phases of counterinsurgency, stability operations, reconstruction, and

building partner capacity. So while the new Trump administration certainly espouses some non-interventionist or even isolationist ideals, our history indicates that regardless of domestic politics, the United States will continue devoting significant resources to stability operations, building partner capacity, and proxy wars.

Though policy-makers and generals may not like irregular wars, our national strategy documents reveal that leaders in recent years have come to terms with or even embraced their inevitability. Reading the 2015 National Military Strategy of the United States, one finds a couched discussion of protecting and advancing interests, maintaining comparative advantages, and the over-nuanced statement, “Success will increasingly depend on how well our military instrument can support the other instruments of power and enable our network of allies and partners.”¹⁶ While this statement’s prima facie implication is that the military’s power may be reduced to a supporting role vis-à-vis other instruments of power, past and present civil-military relations scholars have argued convincingly that the military’s “support” to other agencies usually morphs into dominance of the given line of effort. As a result, for better or worse, the military’s influence pervades America’s use of diplomacy, information, and economics in addition to its leading role in the use of force.¹⁷

These concerns continue in the post-9/11 era. Because the military is well-funded, organized, and respected, civilian leaders increasingly rely upon the military for more varied initiatives abroad. The overall militarization of American foreign policy (at the expense of other departments and instruments of power) debunks the once-self-evident principle that the military’s job was simply to fight and kill, suggesting a wider set of roles and missions. Today’s military must be more politically aware, more culturally attuned, and better prepared with proven skills to advance alliance-building and security cooperation goals. Yet, as the military’s new

functional imperatives expand further into assistance and development realms, we must resist misappropriating DOD personnel to substitute for more qualified agents.

Wasting Talent

This trend is described by law professor and former Pentagon official Rosa Brooks in her book aptly titled, *How Everything Became War and the Military Became Everything*, and in an article titled “How the Pentagon Became Walmart.”¹⁸ Brooks writes, “Asking the military to take on more and more new tasks requires higher military budgets, forcing us to look for savings elsewhere, so we freeze or cut spending on civilian diplomacy and development programs. As budget cuts cripple civilian agencies, their capabilities dwindle, and we look to the military to pick up the slack.”¹⁹ Perhaps the most telling example of this vicious cycle is the AFPAK Hands program.

AFPAK Hands assigns young field-grade officers from across the services—pilots, tank commanders, sailors, staff officers—to four-year security cooperation tours *outside their military specialties*. Participants learn rudimentary Pashto or Dari and attend expeditionary combat skills training, then spend two of the following three years embedded in the Afghan government or liaising between US and Afghan authorities, in departments that rarely leverage their years of tactical and operational expertise.²⁰ Not surprisingly, the program’s participants are usually assigned on a non-volunteer-basis—“non-vol’ed” in military lingo. The program’s long deployments and proven negative career impacts inspire fear, disdain, and even separation from the military among frontline officers.²¹ Those who do complete the tours are rarely rewarded for their sacrifices...in fact, the program was specifically identified as a career-killer by a leaked DOD report. These negative impacts might have been acceptable, had the program yielded some strategic successes in Afghanistan—but it is widely regarded as an abject failure.²² The

program's failures represent the extreme of poorly institutionalized security cooperation—an ad hoc program, created with short-term focus (the immediate crisis of poor Afghan governance), leveraging the wrong people (non-vol'ed managers of violence) for a development initiative, in a combat zone.

Retired Army officer Jason Dempsey blames the military's "institutional culture and personnel management system that places a low priority on the advisory mission" for crippling both the execution of the AFPAK Hands program and the careers of its participants.²³ The Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph Dunford, expressed similar sentiments at the September 2016 Air Force Association convention. Speaking soon after a visit to USAF air advisors in Afghanistan, Dunford reminded his audience that building partnerships is a doctrinal "core function" of the Air Force. He emphasized that "our strategy today is based on building effective, indigenous forces."²⁴ Yet Dunford admonished the audience of airmen: "If our young captains think doing something like building the Afghan Air Force is not something that makes them competitive and is not valued by the institution, then we won't get the right people to go. And if we don't get the right people to go, we won't grow the right air force."

Wasting Money

The Chairman's "ifs" subtly refer to the slow and costly efforts to rebuild the Afghan Air Force (AAF). A *Defense News* article on Dunford's comments refers to "mixed results" of USAF efforts in this arena—the poorest result being the infamous C-27 Afghan Air Force medium airlift program.²⁵ In the early 2010s, the United States purchased 20 Italian G222 cargo aircraft (given the NATO designation C-27) and a sustainment contract from Italian defense contractor Alenia for more than \$480 million, in order to rebuild the air mobility arm of the Afghan Air Force. After experiencing "continuous and severe operational difficulties," including

management, logistics and maintenance problems with the new AAF fleet, 16 of the aircraft were ultimately scrapped for \$32,000, and the delivery of the last 4 aircraft cancelled.²⁶ The dollar figures become even more painful to contemplate when one remembers that the hundreds of millions were paid *not* to the US defense industry, but to foreign firms. (At least the Defense Logistics Agency got to keep the \$32,000!) If the medium airlift contract had gone to an American defense firm—as was the case with the Iraqi C-130 delivery and sustainment program—the US government could have, at best, corrected course and kept the C-27 program viable; at worst, owned the program’s failure and any lessons learned; and *at least* provided revenue for the American defense industry.

While the C-27 program was largely a joint NATO-and-Afghan failure in contracting and logistics, some blame lies squarely with the partner nation as well. Multiple expeditionary air advisor squadron commanders observed that “the tendency of senior Afghan officers and high government officials to task flying units under their control with airlift missions, sometimes on very short notice and on occasion of questionable legitimacy, made US and coalition advisors’ attempts to train Afghan pilots more difficult than it needed to be.”²⁷

Finally, a USAF evaluator pilot who served as an advisor and instructor in the ill-fated C-27 program expressed the common opinion that the air advisor mission is better suited to dedicated foreign internal defense (FID) units filled by volunteers trained in the discipline, rather than conventional aviators “non-vol’ed” for year-long deployments. The American C-27 instructors were neither experienced C-27 aircrew nor FID specialists. (We will return to this theme later.) While building partner capacity may be a key to American strategy in places like Afghanistan and other Middle Eastern nations, the failures of AFPAK Hands and the C-27 program reveal just how complicated, costly, and ineffectual such a strategy can be.

Wasting Time

The ISIS threat provides more damning evidence of our failure to properly leverage American power through security cooperation. The 2015 National Security Strategy and the 2016 US Central Command (CENTCOM) posture statement stress our train-advise-assist role with the Iraqi military and indigenous forces as the “sustainable” path to victory over ISIS.²⁸ But results thus far suggest otherwise. Despite all our engagement efforts, along with tens of thousands of coalition airstrikes, and some successes in re-taking territory, ISIS still endures as a physical fact, oppressing and murdering innocents while chipping away at US power in the Middle East. Furthermore, ISIS has proven itself a threat to human security by spreading a violent ideology, popularizing a transnational Jihadist identity, and inciting attacks worldwide with its twenty-first century media campaign.

Building Partner Capacity (BPC) is a way to tie US military prowess into whole-of-government aid initiatives. But BPC is not an effective primary means of winning a *war*, as evidenced by the rise and continued existence of ISIS. The United States spent \$25 billion rebuilding the Iraqi military from 2003 to 2012,²⁹ which failed to prevent ISIS from seizing northern and western Iraq. In October 2015 the Pentagon ended a failed program to train moderate Syrian rebels, which had yielded a shocking “four or five”³⁰ trained rebels at a cost of \$50 million.³¹ Despite more recent successes by the Iraqi military and the Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), the United States cannot keep its military on the BPC bench and expect a decisive victory. When the game is on the line, you put your best players in the game. The US government must be willing to commit more troops in combat roles when necessary, and let US troops accompany indigenous forces and even lead combat operations when the stakes demand it—for instance, to retake a major city.

Additional troops sent to Iraq in late 2016 and early 2017, supporting the operation to retake the city of Mosul, signaled a more productive US commitment.³² In the past year, US troop levels in Iraq have again risen above 5,000, and the “Train-Advise-Assist” military mantra for such missions has gained a third “A”—“Accompany.” “Train-Advise-Assist-*Accompany*” subtly indicates that perhaps we are learning our lesson. Security cooperation is best understood as a peacetime activity. When it comes time for a coalition use of force, the US military must have the right people ready to advise, “accompany,” fight...and lead.

Wasting Focus

For combat forces to focus on combat, other agencies must be able to execute the government’s non-combat foreign policy. Rosa Brooks, along with many in the defense community including former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates, believes that the United States needs to increase its investment in the State Department and USAID in order to implement a more balanced and ultimately more effective foreign policy.³³ Huntington, Finer, Brooks, and Secretary Gates all agree that the fundamental role of the military is to fight and win wars. Therefore, as Secretary Gates declared many times, the military should not substitute for diplomatic and development agencies, because doing so will detract from military readiness while robbing those agencies of the resources they need to perform their roles, with suboptimal results for US foreign policy.³⁴

To reverse this trend of the military becoming the “Wal-Mart” of foreign policy options, the Department of Defense along with Congress should continue former Secretary Gates’ exhortations to better fund other agencies.³⁵ Enabling other agencies to do their jobs will free the DOD from many of the mission-creep burdens of the post-9/11 era, thus allowing military organizations to re-focus on combat capability. There will be significant costs, in dollars and

man-hours, to develop the capabilities needed for a future near-peer conflict, such as: “Air-Sea Battle” training and assets to counter China’s anti-access and area denial technologies;³⁶ “Third Offset” systems to address the erosion of American technological superiority;³⁷ and the Ground-Based Strategic Deterrent (GBSD) nuclear missile modernization program.³⁸ These programs require the ingenuity and long-term commitment of experienced defense professionals, more than any engagement effort, and certainly more than any USAID substitute gig.

“Soft power” is largely the realm of non-DOD agencies. The credible threat of force provided by DOD is a hard power lever that makes our soft power overtures appealing. Secretary Gates demanded a dramatic increase in the State Department and foreign aid budgets because he recognized that institution-building and development can yield absolute gains in human security and international stability, but he knew that soft power is not the military’s job. There is a big difference between aiding partners in ways that increase US power and advance US interests (objective-oriented FID efforts, multinational exercises and foreign military sales), and the wasteful substitution of funded, extant military officers for unfunded or absent State and USAID employees.

The Department of Defense must be prudent in its engagement activities. When not actively involved in contingency operations, *most* military organizations should spend the majority of their finite resources not enhancing allies’ capacity, but preparing *themselves* for war. Meanwhile, the small military units dedicated to FID and BPC should be expanded or duplicated to further institutionalize this capability, and prevent conventional units from having to fill the gap between our niche FID capability and the ever-growing demand from partner nations.

Part II: Building Capacity (*Theirs and Ours*)

Building Power

AFPAK Hands and the C-27 represent extremes to be avoided, but security cooperation initiatives and the alliances they support, are vital to today's American military operations. In early 2017, the national debt exceeds \$19 trillion. US interests are besieged abroad while isolationism gains traction at home. China fortifies disputed claims in the South China Sea, building islands and airstrips despite its neighbors' protests. Vladimir Putin's Russia tests international norms regarding sovereignty, invading foreign lands and meddling in foreign politics. Islamist insurgencies endure, supported by Iran, despite decades of US operations in the Middle East. Meanwhile, as previously discussed, policymakers in Washington, DC look to the military to take on an ever-lengthening list of roles, missions, and demands. But despite such concerns, scholars G. John Ikenberry and David Rothkopf argue that US power remains "unrivaled"—that the United States currently faces fewer existential threats than at any other time in our history.³⁹ An Air Force senior leader recently reminded an audience of Air Force officers that historically speaking, we are in an "interwar" period.⁴⁰ I agree that the United States *currently* enjoys the ability to choose where to accept risk. But we cannot continue to demur in the face of aggression while competitors decisively pursue their interests. Without a clearer strategy and a force matched to that strategy, we slip toward a future in which more proactive states set the terms of the international order, and we are forced to act on *their* terms, or worse, rendered unable to act at all. To avoid such a future, given today's economic and political constraints, the United States must accept the risks inherent to alliances, and build a force that is better prepared for twenty-first century international security challenges.

The United States already maintains a great comparative advantage in coalition-building over its rivals. Ikenberry reports active US security cooperation with 60 nations, compared to

Russia's eight and China's one.⁴¹ These alliances are vital to our efforts abroad, such as countering Chinese intimidation in the South China Sea. As is well known to any interested observer at this point, China has built up reefs and artificial islands with military-grade airstrips in the region, despite international condemnation, in order to project power and solidify its grandiose claim of sovereignty over that entire maritime region.⁴² And for the time being, neither the United States nor even an increasingly expeditionary Japan can rationalize contesting Chinese expansion with force. Given its limited options, the Obama administration shrewdly increased diplomatic relations with Vietnam and Laos, and bolstered military partnerships with the Philippines and Australia, in order to counter Chinese influence in the region.⁴³

Of course, alliances have challenges of their own. John Mearsheimer of the University of Chicago points out that alliances require resources, maintenance, and patience, and they always involve discord.⁴⁴ But working to overcome these challenges can benefit partner nations' security while enhancing the US defense posture in tense regions, and providing domestic benefits. As a case in point, during a 2016 visit to Hanoi, President Barack Obama repealed the US ban on arms sales to former enemy Vietnam. The repeal is one step in a long process, but it is a good first step. Foreign military sales increase partner nations' capabilities and our diplomatic ties, while enriching our defense industry by keeping weapons programs alive long after the last US purchase.⁴⁵ The F-16 is a good example: the USAF received its last F-16 in 2005, but exports continue, providing a long list of allies—including former enemy Iraq—with proven aircraft that enhance their defenses and increase interoperability with US forces.⁴⁶ Foreign military sales must also satisfy a great deal of government, military, legal, and business rules in order to prevent compromising US technological advantages, inadvertently shifting regional balances of power, or inviting corruption. Improving our alliance with former enemy Vietnam within the

prudent framework of foreign military sales will benefit the US defense industry and build mutual trust with a relatively new partner nation, helping to deter against Chinese aggression. FMS programs with allies can be expected to yield synergistic benefits in Eastern Europe and the Middle East as well, strengthening our partnerships at the expense of Russia, Iran, and radical Islamists.

Building Synergy

Today's military and government elites love the term "synergy," from the ancient Greek *synergos*, meaning "working together." "Synergy" appears throughout joint warfighting doctrine, and is liberally applied whenever two or more organizations interact. Synergy can be deliberately planned for, as in the aforementioned diplomatic, military, and economic benefits of foreign military sales. At other times, synergy can be less deliberate, the result of a confluence of related events or geographical proximity of interested groups. Examples include the new levels of US-allied military interoperability achieved during recent Pacific disaster responses, and the frequent public-private partnerships between the US Department of State and neighboring Georgetown University. The value of multinational security cooperation rests upon an institutional belief in synergy: US interests are too broad even for our ample resources; therefore, alliances must be nurtured, so that they remain a third pillar of our national defense.

For example, bilateral and multinational large-force military exercises such as Cope India, Cobra Gold (Thailand), Combined Resolve (Eastern Europe), and Eager Lion (Jordan) bolster allied cooperation while honing US forces' combat skills and exposing areas for improvement *in their primary war-fighting capacities*. While these exercises might not compare to the realistic operational and tactical challenges offered by the US-based Red Flag exercises, multinational exercises abroad have multiple, *synergistic* purposes. While there is certainly a

benefit to honing one's tactical skills against any opponent, especially against dissimilar types and tactics, the "optics" of such exercises also demonstrate America's resolve to act as an offshore balancer in tense regions such as Eastern Europe and the South China Sea. Furthermore, large-scale multinational exercises can provide cover for actual combat deployments, leveraging the global access our alliances provide. Ikenberry summarizes the multiple rewards in simple terms: "Not only do alliances provide a global platform for the projection of US power, but they also distribute the burden of providing security."⁴⁷ Given the unappealing cost-benefit conclusions of more forceful options, for the foreseeable future the DOD should continue partnering and training with allies, old and new, in order to distribute the burdens of challenges like Chinese expansionism, Russian revanchism, and violent extremism.

Many security cooperation activities fall under the ever-expanding banner of irregular warfare. Specifically, irregular warfare tasks, such as FID, BPC, and foreign humanitarian assistance (FHA), provide a range of foreign policy benefits that appeal to traditional realists and Wilsonian liberals alike. Professor David Capie provides an excellent example of this synergy in an article about "connecting coercive and non-coercive uses of military power."⁴⁸ When a typhoon ripped through the Philippines in November 2013, the United States deployed 13,000 service members to deliver aid workers, provide medical care, and assist with evacuations. The joint task force for Operation "Damayan" included 66 aircraft and 12 ships, including the aircraft carrier USS George Washington.⁴⁹ The rapid, substantial, and highly-visible US response was described by CNN as a "public relations goldmine for the US military at a time when the US is perceived as losing influence in the region to China."⁵⁰ It is worth noting that China, by comparison, initially offered a paltry \$100,000 in aid to the Philippines.⁵¹

The 2014 humanitarian airdrops to Yazidi refugees on Mount Sinjar in Iraq provided a similar showcase for US military might and human security ideals, using an array of Air Force and Navy aircraft, along with special operations forces and USAID personnel on the ground, to deliver 114,000 meals and 35,000 gallons of drinking water to displaced Iraqi citizens besieged by ISIS.⁵² For the realists, operations like these demonstrate the capability, will, and global reach—in a word, the *power*—of the United States, to enemies and allies. For the liberal and constructivist types, these activities demonstrate the appeal of a liberal democratic world order that embraces human security, while providing “opportunities for coalition building and engagement with new allies.”⁵³ The UN, USAID, and NGOs on their own will never be able to muster the magnitude of airlift, sealift, and personnel required for a Damayan or Mount Sinjar scenario. For the United States to maintain even a fraction of its current international influence, the US military must continue to devote resources and training to these stability, assistance, and humanitarian roles.

The United States must pay attention to traditional allies as well as the new potential partners coming out of the bamboo woodwork in the Indo-Pacific, as the Chinese run roughshod over international norms and court decisions in their quest to project power further from their coasts. Exercises and combat force rotations in Eastern Europe must continue, in order to keep US forces primed to respond should Russia show further signs of territorial aggression. Likewise, the specialized “train-advise-assist-accompany” missions in Iraq and Afghanistan should continue so long as they continue marginalizing violent extremist organizations and bolstering legitimate governments. At the same time, the DOD cannot be a gap-fill for diplomatic and aid agencies, lest it lose focus on combat capability. The DOD must invest in strategies, organizational structures, and people that will ensure we can continue to deter great

powers from challenging us militarily. By strengthening regional partnerships to counter rivals like China and Russia, and supporting partner government agencies in order to renew its combat focus, the DOD will reinvigorate its international leadership role while maintaining dominant war-fighting capabilities. To better foster regional partnerships and interagency coordination, the DOD must improve its recruitment, retention, and education of officers with language skills, cross-cultural ties, proven credentials in international affairs and interagency experience.

It is clear from the National Military Objective of strengthening partnerships—addressed by other national strategy documents, from the National Security Strategy and NATO’s Strategic Concept down to US combatant commanders’ posture statements—that engaging with allies, with the goal of addressing root causes of violent extremism and enhancing partners’ security capabilities, is a fundamental plank in US foreign policy.⁵⁴ If we can develop a warrior class and a national security enterprise that collectively strive to understand not just our current enemies, but potential enemies and allies as well, perhaps we can stay “left of boom” by strategically strengthening military partnerships with allies, old and new. Remember, Kilcullen reminds policy-makers and military leaders that irregular warfare, proxy wars, and security assistance have been the American norm for more than a century.⁵⁵ A clear-eyed strategy *embracing* the regularity of irregular war envisions multiple potential conflict zones and trans-regional threats, each on “a timeline running left to right, with potential calamity [the ‘boom,’ as in an explosion] looming off to the right.”⁵⁶ Given this construct, an attractive strategy for a nation with ample military power is to stay “left of boom” on the timeline by engaging in “Phase Zero” operations with partner nations—enhancing allies’ security capabilities, providing humanitarian assistance, addressing root causes of conflict, and advancing a strategic narrative favorable to US interests *before* armed conflict breaks out.⁵⁷ This is a strategy more attuned to today’s security

environment—a strategy that will prepare us for the next military campaign, whether that campaign is a war, an “irregular” war, a hybrid war, or not a war at all. This strategy is reflected in the national military objective of strengthening our global network of allies and partners, as well as in the Air Force core function of building partnerships.⁵⁸

So if the strategy is valid, the next question becomes, whom shall we send?

Part III: Force of the Future

Human Capital

Our national strategy documents state repeatedly that security cooperation and alliances are vital to the nation’s defense. Kilcullen frames the argument in terms of frequency: “State-on-state conflict has always been relatively rare, and it is getting rarer...Meanwhile, operations involving nonstate groups—from humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to peacekeeping, evacuation, military assistance and (somewhat less often) counterinsurgency and stabilization operations—are happening just as often as in the past.”⁵⁹ The Department of Defense must keep that reality in mind as it looks to recruit and retain “the force of the future.” Service members should not be misappropriated for nation-building missions. But going forward, officers must be recruited, developed, and retained with an eye towards “Information Age” skills including language and cultural fluency, so that they can better execute the security cooperation tasks that align with their *military* missions.

Given today’s economic and political constraints, the United States cannot afford to go it alone in international security, and our senior military leaders emphasize that we do not intend to. Speaking as a retired Marine Corp general in 2015, James Mattis advised the Senate Armed Services Committee that they should “track closely an increased military capability to work with allies.”⁶⁰ For the Air Force, this “increased capability” should be pursued by continuing the

sustainable security cooperation activities described in the previous section, while reforming the military personnel management system to better develop Airmen for the security cooperation enterprise.

Who Serves?

Naval War College professor Mackubin Thomas Owens' *US Civil Military Relations After 9/11* addresses the fundamental question regarding military personnel: "Who serves?" Owens points out that a state needs not only an effective defense strategy, but the right force to implement the strategy. "One of the most important undertakings of a state," he writes, "is to recruit, retain, train, and properly employ its soldiers."⁶¹ Similarly, as Secretary of War in the 1820s, John C. Calhoun declared that for the sake of the nation's survival, citizens with "talents and character...should make arms their profession."⁶² Calhoun in the 1820s, Owens in the 2010s, and current Air Force leaders have emphasized that the makeup of the military is a national security concern. This article addresses the question of who serves, in terms of our national strategy's increased reliance upon security cooperation and alliances.

An Air Force senior leader has stated that the Air Force's top strategic concern *vis-à-vis* human capital is accessing and retaining a diverse force.⁶³ While the term "diversity" has become a buzzword in recent decades, American leaders have actually viewed the diversity of America's military as a national security concern for centuries. Congressmen throughout the 1800s fretted about geographical and political diversity in the officer ranks, just as today's legislators focus on diversity of gender and race.⁶⁴ These multi-generational concerns reflect Samuel Huntington's societal imperative: The military should reflect the broader society it serves, lest it be appropriated by a certain region or interest group.

Today's Air Force senior leaders are shifting the diversity discussion toward the military's functional imperative—to defend the country, to fight and win wars, and now, to

engage with allies. They argue that the Air Force must “maximize the strategic impact of our nation’s diverse population” by ensuring “access to all talent pools across the country.”⁶⁵ They argue that our diverse population can provide “asymmetric capabilities other nations cannot yet duplicate,” especially when the abilities and perspectives of the entire nation are leveraged by a military force committed to the same set of values.⁶⁶ To many, this focus on improving DOD *capability* provides a more objective, forward-looking lens for examining military diversity than the old identity politics approach.

To continue focusing the personnel system on combat capability, those leading the Air Force human capital enterprise should seek diversity of *proven skills and abilities* in their recruitment and retention programs. While gender, racial, and geographical diversity in recruitment may improve our combat capability by growing the available talent pool, the Air Force’s human capital would be more objectively strengthened through the pursuit and development of documented abilities in foreign languages, international relations, information operations, and interagency work, as advised by Army counterinsurgency expert Lt Col John Nagl.⁶⁷ This manpower realignment is a tall order, given that the military in recent decades has actually become more insular in terms of families, cultures, and regions, causing widespread concerns about a civil-military cultural gap.

The Gap

For the past two decades, researchers at the Triangle Institute for Security Studies (TISS), the Pew Research Center, the YouGov research firm and the Hoover Institution have analyzed the emergence of a “warrior class” in American society. As of January 2015, 1.4 million people served on active duty—about 0.4 percent of the US population.⁶⁸ Combining active and veteran numbers, just over 7 percent are serving or have served in the military.⁶⁹ The 1998 TISS survey

and the 2013-2014 YouGov surveys provided ample evidence of a civil-military “gap,” especially between the beliefs and attitudes of civilian elites and military officers, that has driven the civil-military relations discussion for two decades.⁷⁰ Another study revealed that “as many as 80 percent of those who serve come from a family in which a parent or sibling is also in the military.”⁷¹

The gap exists between the military and the general public as well. Recent YouGov surveys report that the American public supports and trusts the military, but admits to ignorance and even disinterest regarding military affairs.⁷² In the past 20 years, nationwide supportive attitudes toward the military have not translated to nationwide desires to join, so the cycles of familial and regional insularity among military accessions continue.⁷³ This increased insularity of the warrior class, combined with a steadily declining percentage of veterans among sitting Congressmen and civilian policy makers, contributes to widespread misunderstanding within the decision-making apparatus of government.⁷⁴ Such misunderstanding becomes more problematic as the military takes on a widening array of foreign policy roles.

The Warrior Class

Some view the existence of a warrior class as a deficiency in civil-military relations, believing that a distinct culture within the military constitutes some sort of dangerous divergence from American society as a whole. Some civil-military relations scholars have argued that the United States only developed a professional military in the twentieth century, but Owens asserts that from the “provincial” long-term enlistees of the Colonies, to today’s service members, for whom “military service *is* their life,” a professional, expeditionary force has fought the nation’s wars for most of our history.⁷⁵

Indeed, a professional warrior class is nothing new among great civilizations. The world's oldest historical document describes a professional army in ancient Sumeria and its decisive victory over a rival kingdom.⁷⁶ Sparta's warriors are well known in history and popular culture. Professional Roman legionnaires defended Rome for centuries. Knights and professional armies enabled generations of European power struggles.⁷⁷ Japanese samurai defined eras of the country's politics and culture. The trend is clear: a distinct warrior class has been a hallmark of world powers for thousands of years. The United States is no exception. The demographics of the American warrior class have changed and must continue to change over time, but the warrior class and its military culture will endure.

The Military Culture

Owens relates American military culture back to the military's functional imperative: the security of the state. He describes the enduring military values as discipline, professionalism, ritual, and cohesion.⁷⁸ He holds cohesion above all others in terms of explaining why men fight and how they overcome the rigors of battle. To arrive at this conclusion, Owens recalls Carl von Clausewitz's focus on the visceral experiences of war: "fear, the impact of danger, and physical exhaustion."⁷⁹ Next, he highlights Clausewitz's concept of *friction*: "Everything in war is simple, but the simplest thing can be difficult."⁸⁰ The battlefield is an uncertain, frightening place, often dislodged from reason even if the military objective is clear.⁸¹ All this to explain that the purpose of a rigid, professional, insular military culture is to enable the human soldier to fulfill his functional imperative in such an environment. Owens' point is that the cohesion of a military unit—not loyalty to political leaders or objectives, but loyalty to fellow war-fighters and fear of letting them down—is the primal motivating force on the battlefield.⁸² To that end, Owens concludes, "the functional gap between society and the military must exist to some degree."⁸³

Having evolved to increase survival in the harrowing environment of war, the military culture, with loyalty to one's fellow soldier at its core, provides the means by which rational, fearful humans can achieve their purpose as soldiers together. The military culture is what makes the military work, and it has proven strong enough to accommodate many new members throughout American history.

The existence of a warrior class and perpetuation of a distinct military culture are not troubling trends. They are realities of a democratic society with an effective all-volunteer force. Military culture has evolved and will continue to evolve, not as a clear reflection of American society as a whole, but as a manifestation of some of society's greatest qualities—service, patriotism, honor, courage, the pursuit of excellence, and respect for authority. In a time of rapidly evolving threats, when there is no mandatory national service, and when fewer citizens want to serve than in earlier generations, rational Americans might be glad that there *is* a self-perpetuating warrior class. In any regard, the warrior class is who we make it: all who make it through training and actively serve will be infused to some degree by military culture, to the nation's great benefit.

Force of the Future

The warrior class is composed of whomever volunteers to join. But after analyzing the 1998 TISS study, political scientists Peter Feaver and Richard Kohn concluded that “the way we recruit, promote and manage the precious human resources of the armed forces has changed remarkably little over the last half century, and the system has, in any event, been a response to two world wars and the Cold War—an industrial age system now trying to field an information age force.”⁸⁴ Quota-based diversity initiatives may have their own benefits, but they fail to directly attack this problem.

With the evolution of military culture and the warrior class in mind as we face an unpredictable array of conventional, hybrid, and unconventional threats, the DOD should not only pursue “diversity” in terms of gender and race, but also in proven skill sets that apply to multi-domain, international operations. Diversity efforts should focus on increasing military *effectiveness* by accessing and cultivating specific skill sets through recruitment, retention, incentives, and promotions. The United States can boast success stories spanning many decades to validate such a skill-specific approach. World War II examples abound: Navajo code-talkers were embedded with Marines in the Pacific theater; airline executives were commissioned as officers to lead airlift operations; and lumberjacks and prospectors were recruited for the irregular 1st Special Service Force.⁸⁵ Today, lateral-entry programs for doctors, nurses, and lawyers display a surprising flexibility in military accessions. While they actively consider similar programs for cyber professionals, DOD leaders should also recognize the enduring demand for security assistance from partner nations, and consider creative recruiting and accessions if a more coherent, sustainable security cooperation strategy is to be implemented.

Mark Moyar of the Center for a New American Security argues that the United States is actually very good at security assistance, when we send the right people and actually address the partner nation’s needs.⁸⁶ We cannot afford to keep pulling people *out of* their military specialties and thrusting them into ad hoc nation-building or foreign governance roles *a la* AFPAK Hands. We should not pull individual non-volunteers out of their units and deploy them to do air advising, as discussed earlier.⁸⁷ Instead, we must use military units devoted to foreign internal defense and security assistance as their primary mission.

We already have such units, but their efforts are disjointed, and there are not enough of them. The following is a survey, though it is by no means exhaustive.

The Army's Green Berets and the Air Force's 6th Special Operations Squadron (SOS) have carried out foreign internal defense (FID) missions for decades, using US Code Title 22 funding, which allows them to officially train foreign forces for the partner nations' own benefit.

The Air Force's Air Mobility Command boasts two high-demand Mobility Support Advisory Squadrons (MSAS), which perform security assistance in air mobility and logistics disciplines. One MSAS is oriented toward Latin America, the other toward Africa, but the units are stationed in the continental United States. They also lack a permanent Title 22 mandate and funding to officially *train* foreign forces—without special Congressional approval, they can only advise, assist, share releasable tactics and techniques, provide informational briefings, and so on.

US Air Forces Europe and US Air Forces Pacific Command each have a handful of trained air advisors permanently assigned; they are stationed in Germany and Guam, respectively. Meanwhile, US Air Forces Central Command creates and fills air advisor positions on an as-needed basis through 6- or 12-month individual deployments, requisitioning airmen from the general purpose force (as opposed to special operations forces), and providing just-in-time air advisor training *en route* to the AOR.

The Navy has better institutionalized these missions, employing forces dedicated to Maritime Civil Affairs and Security Training, under its Expeditionary Combat Command. MCAST “mans, equips, trains and deploys sailors...to establish and enhance relations between military forces, government, and non-government organizations and the civilian population.”⁸⁸

There are other civil affairs units throughout the DOD. Some in the National Guard and the reserves are manned by personnel who work as mayors, policemen, and civil servants in their civilian lives.

Finally, the international affairs specialists of each service constitute legions of professionals engaged in security cooperation, foreign military sales, and interagency, whole-of-government programs.

All told, these assets make up mere slivers of their parent organizations, and while their activities often make for great press releases, too often they are peripheral to the respective combatant commanders' main efforts. Recognizing the unique and expanding role of DOD in US foreign policy, the DOD should create more dedicated security cooperation units and fill them with internationally-fluent warriors recruited, groomed, and retained for the purpose. Expanding and institutionalizing this vital capability will lead to such activities being better rewarded by military personnel systems, allowing the DOD to better maintain its internationally-fluent human capital.

One might ask, how will the military fill these expanded security cooperation billets? Do we have enough military-inclined people who *want* to live with and teach foreign forces? These questions bring us back to our discussion of the force of the future. Right now, the military doesn't have the manpower or the institutional structure to meet our allies' need for more BPC. The current warrior class has excelled in conventional conflicts, and performed reasonably well in counterinsurgency after some painful lessons learned. However, it may not be optimized for the expanded array of activities that constitute the military's twenty-first century functional imperative. This is not to say that a young southern man is a poor choice for FID, but instead to ask, is the organization built to prepare him for such a role? If so, will it reward him for his unique, demanding, and dangerous work? On the other hand, is the organization structured to recruit those with linguistic abilities and cultural affiliations that *predispose* them to FID and BPC, and develop those individuals into American warfighters?

New solutions are needed. The old quota-based or optics-based “diversity” is not enough.

New Solutions

Rosa Brooks makes a novel suggestion for increasing military diversity, pointing out that base locations play an outsized influence in recruitment. Those who grow up near large military installations are more likely to pursue military careers than young populations who lack such exposure.⁸⁹ And for reasons dating back to Reconstruction and the Mexican and Indian Wars, “the South and the Southwest have long hosted a disproportionate share of America’s major military bases.”⁹⁰ The Air Force’s needs exacerbated these trends. Flying training requires good weather and large, unpopulated tracts of land for range use. Therefore, remote bases in the South and Southwest grew (e.g., Cannon AFB, New Mexico), while bases in more urban, coastal areas lost their flying missions, consolidated into joint bases, or closed entirely (e.g., Hanscom AFB near Boston, Bolling AFB in Washington, DC, Mather AFB in Sacramento). To recruit a more diverse force, the DOD and Congress could incorporate the recruitment factor into future Base Realignment and Closure (BRAC) deliberations, preserving or even building up bases outside the South and Southwest.

For background, the Pentagon has repeatedly requested another BRAC since the last one was completed in 2005. And despite drawdowns in manning, cancellation or curtailment of weapons programs, sequestration, and the explicit requests of Air Force senior leaders during the period since then, Congress has refused to do another BRAC, largely out of fear of losing assets or even bases in their home districts and states.⁹¹ The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 continues the trend, prohibiting a BRAC for the time being.⁹² But with the new Trump administration’s business ethos, a BRAC could be on the horizon. If Congress does eventually execute a BRAC, those guiding the process should exercise some leadership to raise

the process above local concerns, to a strategic level, and consider recruitment, retention, and cross-organizational synergies when deciding which bases to close, and which ones to bolster.

Along the same lines, ROTC detachments have declined from a Cold War high of 188 Air Force detachments nationwide, to the current number of 145.⁹³ The Army numbers are even worse—from 420 detachments down to 275, a 35 percent reduction.⁹⁴ Many of the programs that survived the drawdowns were so-called “high-yield” detachments, those that produced more cadets relative to their budget and the size of their instructor corps.⁹⁵ Many of those detachments belonged to, of course, colleges in the South and Southwest. To ensure that ROTC produces a more diverse force, and to narrow the civil-military gap among the nations’ youth, the services must return ROTC to some of these campuses and accept lower-yielding detachments for the time being.⁹⁶

When seeking a certain intellectual capability from the military force, adjusting PME is an obvious avenue. PME institutions have already incorporated interagency studies and area studies into their curricula, and students are offered language electives for course credit. A select few Air Force officers each year pursue a masters in regional studies at the Naval Post Graduate School and intensive language training at the Defense Language Institute, in preparation for embassy work as attaches or security cooperation officers. But these courses, at least at the intermediate level (command and staff colleges for officers with 10 to 14 years’ service) still take place in military environments. The interagency process could be better infused at these levels by sending more military members into the government and civilian sectors for fellowships and exchange assignments. With State and other departments chronically under-resourced, surely they would be happy to accommodate a greater number of promising officers for fellowships and interagency work, with DOD footing the bill.

If the goal is to access strategic language skills and cultural knowledge, the DOD should also look to immigrant communities for potential service members. Would-be citizens can initiate expedited naturalization after completing their first *day* of military service, so long as they fulfill the other basic requirements for naturalization, including “an attachment to the principles of the US Constitution.”⁹⁷ Former Secretary of Defense Robert Gates and former Secretary of State Colin Powell advocated for the DREAM Act—a proposed piece of legislation to “give undocumented immigrants who came to the United States as children a path toward legal status if they attend college or serve in the military.”⁹⁸ The DREAM Act fell five votes short in the Senate in December 2010, and it seems unlikely to be revived for the time being. But there is a sizable population of immigrants and foreigners who are willing to serve in order to earn their citizenship.⁹⁹ While the would-be citizens we need most may be the ones who require the most “vetting,” these avenues for diversifying the military in a skills-based sense should not be overlooked.

Finally, if the Air Force wants to build a force that is “coalition at the core,” it should reward language ability in the promotion process.¹⁰⁰ The Secretary of the Air Force provides promotion boards with written guidance to convey current priorities.¹⁰¹ Unfortunately, the current memorandum, from former Secretary Deborah Lee James, stops short of naming language ability as a priority. The memo mentions a need for international experience, but the statement is buried in a laundry list of desirable qualities.¹⁰² The memo goes on to demand, “most importantly,” officers who can “nurture and lead in a diverse and inclusive Air Force.”¹⁰³ But many airmen fear that this guidance advocates “diversity” in the superficial sense—quotas and “optics.”¹⁰⁴ James asks promotion boards to “find officers who reflect the nation,” as if the Air Force has not done so already. This obsession with “diversity” in the identity politics sense

distracts from the need for international fluency to enhance the officer corps' capability. To begin building a force that is "coalition at the core," the next Secretary need only say the word, by directing promotion boards to reward foreign language ability.

Of course, unless the Air Force better *institutionalizes* security cooperation, changes in recruiting, PME, and interagency opportunities will be wasted. The Air Force must create more organizations in the mold of its 6th Special Operations Squadron, wherein aviation-focused foreign internal defense is the *raison d'être*, and therefore foreign language and interagency training opportunities are viewed as core tasks instead of peripheral concerns.

Conclusion: Redefine Diversity, Institutionalize Engagement

In conclusion, the goal of the Air Force personnel system and any military manpower enterprise must be to recruit, develop, and employ human capital that will enable us to combine our domestic and international comparative advantages, to better defend our citizens, interests, and allies. Our strong military and our alliances—based on security *and values*—give us a qualitative edge against less internationally-minded adversaries. We hold a comparative advantage over insular and repressive nations because of our individual liberties and diverse population at home, and our leadership abroad. By incentivizing the skills needed for successful international partnerships, while cultivating military manpower and organizations for security cooperation, we can build and maintain a more effective force of the future.

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