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Assessing the Value of U.S. Army International Activities

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Summary

This study reports on the development of a conceptual approach to assessing the value of the U.S. Army’s non-combat interactions with other militaries. The first task was to take a fresh look at the objectives or “ends” of Army International Activities (AIA). Because the Army conducts security cooperation activities based on policies determined by the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD), the Department of State, and other governmental agencies, we reviewed all of the relevant national security documents: the National Military Strategy, the Defense Planning Guidance, the Quadrennial Defense Review, and OSD’s April 2003 Security Cooperation Guidance (SCG), as well as the AIA Plan and The Army Plan (TAP). The result was eight AIA ends (listed in italics, below), which we embedded within OSD’s three overarching security cooperation objectives (listed in bold, below):

• **Build defense relationships that promote specific U.S. interests**
  — Assure allies
  — Promote stability and democracy
  — Establish relations
  — Improve non-military cooperation
• **Develop allied and friendly military capabilities for self-defense and coalition operations**
  — Promote transformation
  — Improve interoperability
  — Improve defense capabilities
• Provide U.S. forces with peacetime and contingency access and en route infrastructure
  — Ensure access

The second task was to consolidate the large number of Army International Activities into a manageable set of AIA “ways” (see Table S.1). Because of Headquarters, Department of the Army’s (HQDA’s) interest in evaluating the progress of AIA as a whole, some degree of consolidation seemed appropriate. Furthermore, we were hopeful that if G-3 accepted our categories, we might gain support for their use within the context of the Army’s Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Execution System (PPBES). Currently, AIA are spread across several Program Evaluation Groups (PEGs) and a multitude of Management Decision Packages (MDEPs), which inhibits HQDA G-3 resource managers from making the best case for Army security cooperation activities.

Although the above list was developed before the SCG was published, the differences between OSD’s categories and ours are minor. For example, OSD’s category labeled “other” is largely identical to what we call “international support.”

Following the development of AIA ends and ways, we began focusing on our core task: deriving measures of effectiveness for AIA based on an 8 x 8 ends/ways matrix (see Table S.2). Ideally, we hoped to develop a method and produce measures for every cell in the matrix—e.g., the contribution of professional education and training activities to the ends of access, transformation, and interoperability.

Table S.1
Army International Activities “Ways”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Professional education and training</th>
<th>International support/treaty compliance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Military exercises</td>
<td>Standing forums</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military-to-military exchanges</td>
<td>Materiel transfer and technical training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military-to-military contacts</td>
<td>Research, Development, Technology, and Engineering (RDT&amp;E) programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------------------</td>
<td>---------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and training</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Exercises</td>
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<td>Exchanges</td>
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<tr>
<td>Military-to-military contacts</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>International support</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forums</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FMS + technical training</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RDT&amp;E programs</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Measures of Effectiveness (MOEs)
To develop the method, we reviewed relevant economics and behavioral sciences literatures and concluded that security cooperation is based on two types of relationships between countries: exchange and socialization. Exchanges are quid pro quo interactions operating mostly in the near term, usually at the program or activity level. They appeal to a target country’s self-interest and are generally quantifiable. Socialization operates mainly over the long term and is visible largely at the regional, theater, or HQDA level. It focuses on changing a target country’s idea of its national interest. Socialization may flow from repeated exchanges. It generally denotes a qualitative change in a country’s attitude or behavior that is often not amenable to quantitative measurement.

Making use of our theoretical work, we also looked for two specific kinds of indicators: output and outcome. Output indicators are the immediate products of AIA. They are usually the products of exchanges that improve a foreign country’s ties with the United States in the near term. They are immediate results that can be counted. Examples include number of graduates of U.S. security assistance training programs, senior officer visits, and scientific and technical exchanges. Output indicators lead to measures of performance (MOPs). Outcome indicators are often the by-products of prior outputs. They tend to be more qualitative in nature. They are usually derived from a socialization process that involves building trust and changing foreign perceptions of the utility of working together with the United States over the long term. Outcome indicators are closer to the ultimate goals of AIA and include new capabilities, knowledge, relationships, and standards. They help produce measures of effectiveness (MOEs).

We have developed an extensive set of proposed output and outcome indicators that we have been sharing with AIA officials at the program and command levels and modifying as we gain greater understanding of various programs.

Another task we have performed in cooperation with HQDA and their information technology contractor, COMPEX, is the development of a web-based tool that can be used to solicit AIA program and assessment data from the field. Beginning in the fall of
2004, the Army planned to employ this data collection and reporting tool—AIAKSS (Army International Activities Knowledge Sharing System)—to improve the AIA community’s knowledge of the variety of AIA programs and activities as well as to support an ongoing dialogue on how to improve the execution of AIA.

Our final task was to test our assessment concept and data collection and reporting method with AIA officials in three very different organizations: the Army Medical Department, the National Guard Bureau’s State Partnership Program, and U.S. Army South.

Key features that distinguish our assessment approach from those that have been developed, or are under development, within the Combatant Commands, OSD, and elsewhere are as follows:

**High-Level, U.S.-Centered Focus**
Before publication of the OSD Security Cooperation Guidance, the primary objects of U.S. security cooperation policy and analysis were the Combatant Commands and the countries with which the U.S. military has engaged in security cooperation activities. To a certain extent, this resulted in a situation where relatively short-term regional perspectives and foreign interests superseded longer-term global perspectives and U.S. national interests. Our conceptual framework can be used to assess AIA programs around the world according to longer-term goals and criteria approved by both the Army and OSD.

**A Solid Conceptual Foundation**
Our survey of the relevant social science and management literature—and talks with numerous AIA officials—indicated that exchange and socialization were the ultimate motives for security cooperation. Furthermore, these two concepts were linked in a sequential manner. Quid pro quo exchanges tended to be important early in a security relationship, whereas socialization became a more significant factor in a relationship over time as the number and breadth of international exchanges increased, facilitating a convergence of U.S. and foreign national interests. This theoretical understanding of the role of security cooperation assisted us in developing our AIA output and outcome indicators.
Emphasis on AIA Outcomes

Most systems of measurement used by both the private and the public sectors focus on the immediate results of particular processes: what we call “output” measures. They tend not to focus on the long-term results of programs—i.e., “outcomes”—because outputs are easier to specify and quantify than outcomes and they provide quicker answers to the question of how an organization is performing. Clearly, it is not enough to understand outputs alone if one wants to determine the full effect of AIA on Army and national security goals. Many AIA, such as professional education opportunities for international military students, cannot normally facilitate certain strategic ends, such as improved access to foreign military bases, except over the long term, as U.S.-trained officers rise in rank and gain influence with decision-makers in their countries. This is why we have emphasized the importance of assessing both outputs and outcomes, while working with AIA program/activities managers to develop measures appropriate for their specific programs.

Quantitative and Qualitative Measures

One consequence of our attention to AIA outcomes has been a willingness to consider qualitative, as well as quantitative, assessment techniques. Although quantitative methods have the advantage of succinctness and comparability of data across programs, qualitative measures are often the best or only way to evaluate the long-term effectiveness of particular international programs. For example, knowing the number of students who have passed through the doors of the Marshall Center is not as significant in assessing performance as knowing the ways its alumni networks have been tapped to achieve U.S. strategic goals, e.g., the establishment of stable and democratic civil-military relations.

Reporting Tool Tied to New AIA Database

Other databases and reporting mechanisms exist, or are under development, within the Combatant Commands, defense agencies, and services. However, we agree with HQDA that the Army needs a comprehensive, high-level database to understand and evaluate the
full range of international activities the U.S. Army performs. G-3’s database and reporting tool, AIAKSS, is not expected to replace existing theater- or program-level databases; rather, it will draw on information collected from these and other sources to provide an aggregated, strategic-level perspective of AIA for decisionmaking on security cooperation at HQDA.

AIAKSS will help AIA personnel to collect and collate data with an unprecedented level of transparency and consistency. It will enable different stakeholders to read the same “sheet of music” when making assessments about the strategic effect of international activities across the entire Army rather than within a program, command, or region. Finally, it will also support discussions among programs, commands, and HQDA for future planning and assessment needs.

For HQDA, the main task in launching and sustaining AIAKSS will be to underscore the high-level or “strategic” focus of the AIA assessment process. Past and current assessment efforts have focused on low-level inputs and outputs. A strategic assessment of the effect of international activities, however, will require evaluating how well AIA inputs and outputs have advanced the Army’s overall security cooperation objectives. This emphasis on the outcomes of international activities will likely require a shift in the mindset of some AIA personnel, who have not been asked or trained to document the connection between outputs and outcomes. In addition, AIA officials in HQDA and the Major Army Commands must continuously learn from their use of AIAKSS and make appropriate modifications to the tool in accordance with their analytical and reporting needs.