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# A Capabilities-Based Strategy for Army Security Cooperation

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## Summary

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This study outlines a planning framework for cultivating multinational force compatibility (MFC) with armies that are not traditional allies. Such coalition partners are increasingly important to the Army in the post-9/11 security environment. Multilateral military operations are often now conducted by “coalitions of the willing” rather than by alliances, and many of these *ad hoc* coalitions include key contingents that have no history of sustained peacetime cooperation with the U.S. Army. The Army has only very limited resources available to enhance compatibility with non-allied partner armies, especially compared to the resources devoted to compatibility with traditional allies such as the United Kingdom. The challenge of enhancing compatibility and building partnership capacity with non-core partner armies therefore requires an innovative approach to planning.

### **Niche Capabilities: A New Approach to MFC Planning for Army Security Cooperation**

This study outlines an approach to MFC planning that focuses Army resources on potential coalition partners that possess, or with assistance could possess, niche capabilities that would augment U.S. Army capabilities in useful ways. The approach, which we term the Niche Capability Planning Framework, features a four-phase planning cycle. The first phase focuses on characterizing and prioritizing candidate niche capabilities to meet potential Army capability shortfalls. With global responsibilities and limited resources, the Army is obliged to accept

risk in its investments in future capabilities. This risk is manifested in decisions to eschew investment in capabilities that the Army desires but cannot afford and, also, in decisions to acquire limited quantities of some capabilities with the risk that there may not be enough of these capabilities under certain circumstances.<sup>1</sup> Some of these potential gaps and shortfalls are likely to be more important than others, due to the nature of the capability and the context in which it may be used. Some may also be easier than others to develop in partner armies. Capabilities in which the Army has decided not to invest, but which are nevertheless potentially important to the Army's effectiveness in a future contingency and cost-effective to develop in non-core partner armies, would be ideal niche capabilities. The first phase of the Niche Capability Planning Framework focuses on identifying such niche shortfalls or gaps.

The second phase of the Niche Capability Planning Framework focuses on assessing potential partner armies to identify those suited to becoming niche contributors. In seeking potential non-core partners from among the nearly 190 armies worldwide, Army planners must gauge the political acceptability, willingness to cooperate, and existing capabilities of each. Armies that are eager to work with the United States will make better niche partners than those that are ambivalent. Armies that are in good standing with the U.S. government, from the perspective of the broader bilateral political relationship, will make better niche partners than those with which the U.S. government maintains a contentious relationship. Armies that already possess a desirable niche capability, or the means to support a capability cultivated with U.S. assistance, will be better niche partners than those that do not. Phase two of the Niche Capability Planning Framework is devoted to analyzing these issues.

The third phase of the Niche Capability Planning Framework focuses on the development of an integrated program of military-to-

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<sup>1</sup> The recent cancellations of the Comanche scout helicopter and the Crusader artillery system are examples of the first type of decision. The Army's traditional reluctance to support a large active component Civil Affairs structure is an example of the second type of decision.

military contacts, security assistance, and other security cooperation activities designed to cultivate capabilities in selected partner armies. Ideally, this process will leverage Army security cooperation resources with the Department of Defense (DoD) and Interagency security cooperation resources to accomplish the Army's objectives at the least cost to the service and the nation.

The fourth and final phase of the Niche Capability Planning Framework is the execution of the phased program, coupled with continuing assessment and the development of appropriate measures of effectiveness. This will allow the Army Staff to ensure that its plans are being implemented and that lessons are learned and incorporated into the plan over time. We envision the Niche Capability Planning Framework as a cycle that will be repeated periodically by Army planners.

## **Recommendations**

We recommend that the Army incorporate a strategy for working with non-core partner armies into the Army Security Cooperation Strategy (ASCS). We further recommend that Army planners adopt a deliberate planning framework for designing and implementing a niche capabilities strategy. This framework should, at a minimum, incorporate analyses of projected Army capability gaps, key partner characteristics, and the resources required to match capabilities with partners in practice. This report outlines such an approach in the form of the Niche Capability Planning Framework.