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From the Editors

As we present the Spring 2025 edition of the *InterAgency Journal*, I am reminded that the work of ethical leadership and interagency cooperation remains as vital—and as complex—as ever. Each issue of the *IAJ* aims to shed light on the evolving challenges and enduring principles that guide practitioners across government, military, and civil society. This volume continues that mission.

We begin with Maj. Michael Nilson’s “The Only Constant in Policy is Change,” which explores the National Security Council’s organizational evolution. Nilson’s analysis of the enduring Scowcroft Formalistic Model highlights the necessity of systematic, adaptable policy processes—an anchor amid the shifting tides of presidential leadership and global demands.

Colonel Russel McKelvey’s “Diplomats and Warriors: Interagency Cooperation in Operation Torch” offers a compelling historical case study. Through the experiences of Robert Murphy, McKelvey demonstrates how diplomatic and military coordination was essential to Allied success in North Africa, underscoring the timeless need for trust, negotiation, and alignment of political and operational objectives.

This edition also features a thematic pair of articles by Lt. Col. Phil Kerber and Dr. John Ringquist, examining China’s ambitions in both the Arctic and Antarctic. Their twin articles, “Frozen Ambitions: Concerns Regarding China’s Arctic Polar Policy” and “Southern Polar Dominance,” dissect China’s strategies and the implications for U.S. interests. Their work calls for integrated, whole-of-government approaches to address emerging competition in these critical regions.

Major Alicia Jobe’s “Alliance Cohesion: A Historical Perspective for the Operational-Level Challenges” draws lessons from NATO’s Cold War evolution and West German rearmament, applying them to today’s Indo-Pacific context. Jobe argues that alliance cohesion—rooted in interoperability, shared values, and persistent engagement—is indispensable for credible deterrence and effective multinational cooperation.

Turning to leadership and team dynamics, Lt. Cmdr. Adam Biggs’ “Building Psychological Safety among Teams during Defense Support of Civil Activities” addresses the unique pressures of crisis-driven, rapidly assembled teams. By translating psychological safety into actionable procedures—visibility, ownership, accountability, and transparency—Biggs provides practical guidance for leaders working under urgent, high-stakes conditions.

Chaplain (Maj.) Brett Newman’s “Unprofessional Conduct: The Dangers of Unprofessional Leadership in a Large-Scale Combat Operation” reminds us that ethical leadership is not a luxury but a necessity, particularly in times of rapid force expansion. Newman’s call for renewed emphasis on ethical instruction and professional standards is timely, as the character of our leaders will shape outcomes as much as their competence.

We close with a thoughtful book review by Col. Andy Morgado, whose engagement with contemporary scholarship adds further depth to this edition.

Collectively, these articles reflect the breadth and urgency of today’s interagency and leadership challenges. They offer not only analysis but also hope—grounded in history, rigorous scholarship, and practical insight—that we can meet the future with integrity, adaptability, and a steadfast commitment to ethical leadership.

Thank you to our contributors for their scholarship and to our readers for your dedication to the mission of the Simons Center. I invite you to engage with these articles and continue the dialogue on the future of interagency cooperation and ethical leadership. – **JJN**

Contributors Wanted!

The Simons Center is looking for articles that involve contemporary interagency issues at both the conceptual and the application level.

The *InterAgency Journal* is a refereed national security studies journal providing a forum to inform a broad audience on matters pertaining to tactical and operational issues of cooperation, collaboration, and/or coordination among and between various governmental departments, agencies, and offices. Each issue contains a number of articles covering a variety of topics, including national security, counterterrorism, stabilization and reconstruction operations, and disaster preparation and response.

The *InterAgency Journal* has worldwide circulation and has received praise from various military, government, and non-government institutions, including the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.



We're also looking for book reviews!

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The Only Constant in Policy is Change

by Michael R. Nilsen

Since its inception in 1947, the only constant for the National Security Council (NSC) has been change. Over the last seventy years, the NSC constantly rotated with each President having different preferences for either competitive, collegial, or formalistic models. The competitive model is a free debate while the formalistic model is a systemic planning process similar to Army Design or Military Decision Making Process (MDMP). The collegial model is a combination of the two. Despite these challenges, there is one organizational change that survived multiple administrations: the Scowcroft Formalistic Model. Since President George H. W. Bush, Scowcroft's NSC four level model endures today (Figure 1, page 6).

This paper argues that the Scowcroft model persists because it maximizes the policy formulation process regardless of Presidential personality. President H.W. Bush with Scowcroft's expertise established a formalistic structure to prevent NSC policy formulation mismanagement which remains critical by providing a systematic, but flexible process for national security policy formulation to maximize Presidential decision-making.

With Scowcroft as the National Security Advisor (NSA), President H.W. Bush established a formalistic NSC structure in response to what they viewed as policy mismanagement of national defense policy formulation since JFK. Based on presidential preference since its inception, the NSC was either the competitive, collegial, and formalistic models. The competitive model allows individuals and groups to openly compete for the President's policymaking while the formalistic model attempts to impose a structured process to provide options for the President. Though it usually fails to achieve its intent, the collegial model attempts to combine the two other models with a team

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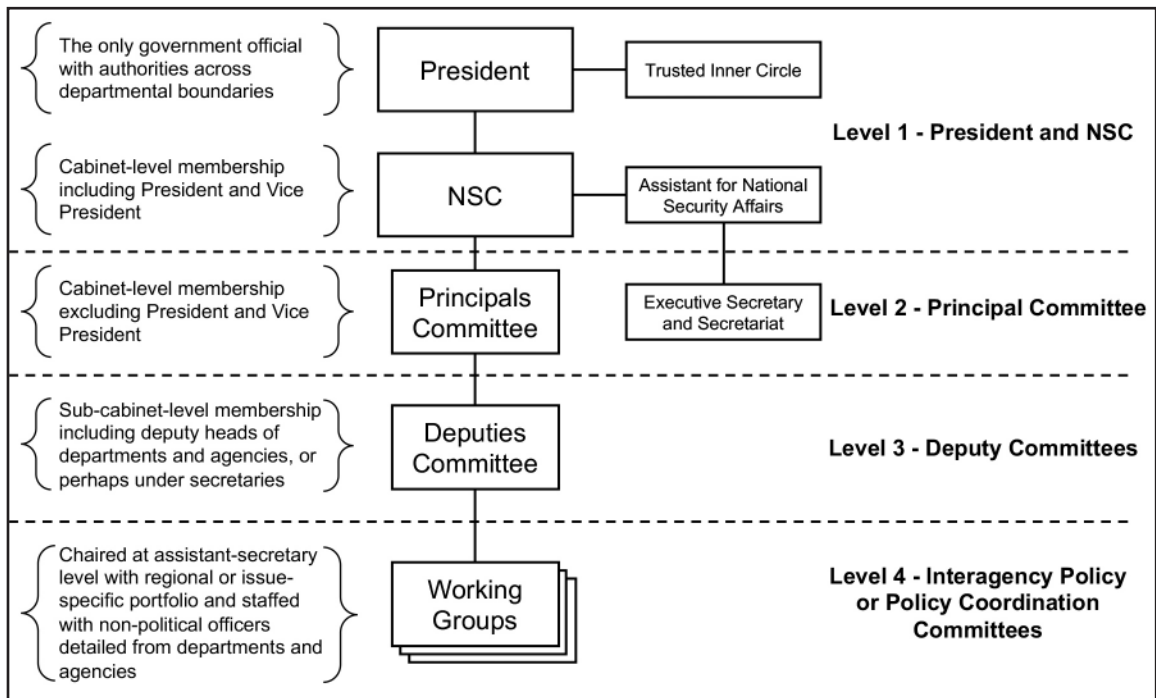


Figure 1. Scowcroft National Security Council Structure

Source: Author modified table based on *The National Security Council: Recommendations for the New President*, Dr. Robert Worley. Major James Dawdy provided feedback on Figure 1 to better communicate the different levels.

of experts and aids to help the President with national security policy formulation.

Except for a few presidents, each one used a combination of different models with one usually taking precedent during the policy formulation process. For instance, President Truman employed a competitive model initially, but this changed dramatically over the years as the United States (U.S.) found itself in a position of global leadership during the Cold War. In contrast to Truman, and due to his extensive experience with higher level military staffs, President Eisenhower employed a formalistic model that produced a yearly national security strategy.

Though initially seen as a “do nothing” President, history later revealed that President Eisenhower’s formalistic structure resulted in numerous long term US policy successes like setting conditions for continued economic growth with a balanced budget, achieving the Korean War Armistice, and cementing the US

as the leader of the Western World.¹ Presidents JFK and Johnson employed an informal policy process through the collegial and competitive models, resulting in several strategic issues like the failed Bay of Pigs Invasion and escalation into the Vietnam War.²

Once taking office, President Nixon transitioned the NSC to a more formalistic structure, but this became ineffective as Kissinger used his position as the NSA to circumvent the process and centralize power between him and the President.³ Nixon’s resignation also threw the NSC into disarray as his successors struggled to develop policy.⁴ For instance, President Reagan went through four NSAs in as many years before arriving with Carlucci who could actually manage the national security policy formational process.⁵ The constant shifting organization of the NSC and subsequent policy mismanagement shaped how Bush and Scowcroft established the current formalistic model.

This NSC mismanagement coupled with

numerous international issues shaped both President H.W. Bush and NSA Scowcroft's perspectives for the NSC's organization. Both were NSC veterans that personally observed how the constantly shifting NSC organization hurt national policy formulation. As a Vice President, Bush saw how the NSC implemented policy rather than formulate it leading to international problems like the Iran-Contra Scandal. He also viewed how a strong personality could derail the process. For instance, Kissinger abused the NSA and Secretary of State positions through absolute policy control, eventually throwing the NSC into disarray once Nixon resigned.

As for implementing policy, Bush also saw how the NSC strayed from its intent under Reagan, especially when the 1986 Tower Commission confirmed that the NSC implemented Iran-Contra crisis rather than formulated policy.⁶ Scowcroft's NSC experience also shaped his management as the NSA under President H.W. Bush. During his first tenure as NSA under President Ford, he attempted to enforce a formalistic model but was largely unsuccessful due to Ford's limited time as President and Kissinger's personal influence. Additionally, Bush and Scowcroft saw how the NSA became a revolving door position during Reagan's administration, causing additional friction for policy formulation. Viewing how turbulent the formulation process became from JFK to Reagan, Scowcroft knew that his second tenure as the NSA needed to assist President Bush with creating a formalistic structure that would survive multiple administrations. President H.W. Bush shared this sentiment and sought to employ a collegial model with a formalistic structure to support his decision making and policy formulation process.⁷

As the first NSC executive secretary, Sidney Souers warned the NSC can fall into two extremes, either an ivory tower or a rotating door. He proposed that it must chart a middle course that embraces varying perspectives and maintains

continuity despite a continuously rotating staff.⁸ Viewing the constantly changing NSA structure to be the latter extreme, Bush established that a formalistic structure consists of four levels through the National Security Directive 1 (NSD-1). As illustrated by Figure 1, NSD-1 reiterated that the first level is the President and the NSC with its statutory members by law. In 1990, this included the President, the Vice President, the Secretaries of State and Defense. Now, the Secretaries of Energy and Treasury are also part of the first level. NSD-1 then established three

Scowcroft's formalistic NSC allowed the NSA to run the policy formulation process, freeing the President to focus on making decisions rather than the process itself.

more sublevels. Next is the principal committee, chaired by the NSA and consisting of cabinet-level members excluding the President and Vice President. Below the principal committee is the deputy committee chaired by the deputy NSA and consisting of the deputy cabinet members. The final level is the working groups known either as the interagency policy or policy coordination committees.⁹

Scowcroft's formalistic NSC allowed the NSA to run the policy formulation process, freeing the President to focus on making decisions rather than the process itself. By having multiple levels with a wide array of experts, the NSC staff provides multiple options to the President. Working groups define the problem and generate policy options for presentation to the deputy committee. After vetting those options, the deputies will distill the most relevant recommendations for the principal committee. After final input from all three levels, the NSC will present the President with options and recommendations for national security policy.

If the NSA acts as an honest broker and can mitigate extreme personalities, the Scowcroft Model allows the President to maximize time and decision-making.¹⁰ This model led to numerous policy successors through the decisive victory of Desert Storm, unification of Germany, collapse of the Soviet Union, Kosovo peacekeeping operations, and numerous other post-Cold War policies.¹¹ This model was also adaptable as the H.W. Bush and Obama administrations corrected deficient policies when Secretary Rumsfeld attempted to run the national security policy formulation process during the early 2000s.¹² Finally, Scowcroft's structure allowed additional flexibility in the policy process for the President to simultaneously employ other NSC models when necessary. Presidents H.W. Bush and Clinton employed more of a collegial model for crises and conflicts but also relied on the structured process of Scowcroft formalistic model for routine policy formulation.¹³ When employed correctly, Scowcroft's Model allowed multiple administrations to formulate effective national security policy, furthering US interests.¹⁴

The Scowcroft Formalistic Model continues to exist because it is the most effective policy formulation for presidential decision-making regardless of personality. With Scowcroft's expertise, President H.W. Bush established a formalistic structure to prevent NSC policy formulation mismanagement. This was essential in wake of the Tower Commission that found that the NSC deviated from its initial intent and multiple post-Cold War problems that the Bush and Clinton administrations had to navigate. It also allowed the President flexibility for decision-making, relying on the formalistic system during the routine policy decisions or taking a more collegial approach during crisis and conflict. Since the Scowcroft NSC Model has guided multiple administrations to formulate effective policy, minimized policy mismanage, and facilitated Presidential decision-making, it continues to exist today. **IAJ**

Author Note: Major Clyde Daines, Major Jared Hampson, and Major James Dawdy reviewed and provided the author grammatical feedback on the paper.

Notes

1 <https://millercenter.org/president/eisenhower/impact-and-legacy>; <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/americanexperience/features/eisenhower-legacy/>

2 Donald M. Snow, *Puzzle Palaces and Foggy Bottom: U.S. Foreign and Defense Policy-Making in the 1990s*, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 47-50; Congressional Research Service, "The National Security Council: Background and Issues for Congress," <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL30840.html>, 10-12.

3 Snow, *Puzzle Palaces and Foggy Bottom*, 50-52; Congressional Research Service, "The National Security Council: Background and Issues for Congress," <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL30840.html>, 12-20; Alan G. Whittaker, Frederick C. Smith, and Elizabeth McKune, "The National Security Policy Process: The National Security Council and Interagency System," p. 8, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep11925.6>

4 Congressional Research Service, "The National Security Council: Background and Issues for Congress," <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL30840.html>, 12-20.

5 Ibid., 18-20.

6 Ibid., 18.

- 7 Ibid.; Snow, *Puzzle Palaces and Foggy Bottom*, 60-64; Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, “The National Security Policy Process,” p. 9, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a502949.pdf>
- 8 Sidney Souers, “Policy Formulation for National Security,” *The American Political Science Review* 43, no. 3 (June 1949), 537-538, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1950074>.
- 9 Congressional Research Service, “The National Security Council: Background and Issues for Congress,” <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL30840.html>, 20; Snow, “Puzzle Palaces and Foggy Bottom,” 60-70; Whittaker, Smith, and McKune, “The National Security Policy Process,” p. 9, <https://apps.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a502949.pdf>.
- 10 Congressional Research Service. “The National Security Council,” pp 25-26, <https://www.everycrsreport.com/reports/RL30840.html>.
- 11 Ibid, 20-23.
- 12 Ibid., 20-24.
- 13 Snow, *Puzzle Palaces and Foggy Bottom*, 60-70.
- 14 Ibid., 25-26; Roger Z. George and Harvey Rishikof, *The National Security Enterprise: Navigating the Labyrinth* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017), 23-30.

Diplomats and Warriors: Interagency Cooperation in *Operation Torch*

by Russell McKelvey

The North African theater played an active role in the period prior to the U.S. entry into the war; its political trends were important to our policy-makers. The State Department had direct responsibility in the preparatory stage leading up to the invasion. It was directly concerned in the political decisions inevitably to be made during the military operations, and it will have to deal with the postwar political effects of this campaign.

– Robert D. Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*

Will you please tell me what in the hell the State Department has to do in an active theater of war?" asked an American major general during World War II.¹ Diplomat Robert Murphy's answer to that question may be as instructive today as it was eighty years ago, during another period when the United States (U.S.) government was innovating to integrate diplomatic and military power in competition and war. As the first major allied operation in World War II, numerous histories detail the alliance formation, political and military leaders, and the operational details of Torch. However, only a few studies highlight the crucial role of diplomats before, during, and after the operation.² This article analyzes American diplomat Robert D. Murphy's experiences prior to and during Operation Torch to better understand the interdependencies between diplomats and warriors in competition and conflict. Operation Torch underscores the need for close coordination between diplomacy and military operations across the competition continuum to consolidate gains at the strategic level. Murphy and his team shaped conditions in the North African

Colonel Russell McKelvey is an infantry officer and a seminar leader at the School of Advanced Military Studies. He is a graduate of the Advanced Military Studies and Advanced Leadership Studies Programs at SAMS. Russ is a Colorado National Guardsman who has worked at National Guard Bureau and with the governor's office in his home state. His research interests are interagency and allied cooperation, military theory and strategy, operational art and design, and space policy. His next assignment is the chief of strategic engagements at the U.S. Space Command where he will work with the interagency, allies, and partners to advocate for agreements and cooperation that achieve U.S. and allied interests.

theater by gathering intelligence, developing coalitions, negotiating military support, and supporting strategic and operational planning. During crisis and conflict, Murphy directly negotiated conflict termination, facilitated the transition from combat to cooperation, and mitigated political risks associated with unpopular but militarily necessary decisions. Analysis also illuminates how the military supported diplomatic operations, conducted military diplomacy, and achieved tactical conditions enabling diplomacy.

Well before America entered the war in December, 1941, Murphy worked as a Personal Representative of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and later as General Dwight D. Eisenhower's political advisor. During this period, America operated across the competition continuum cooperating with Britain; shifting between competition and conflict with French factions; and at various times in competition and conflict with Germany. Wes Gallagher, an Associated Press correspondent embedded with Eisenhower's command, captured this complexity, writing: "Not since the Middle Ages were military and political moves so closely tied together."³

Murphy Before America's Entry into World War II

At the outbreak of WWII, Murphy spent eight months in Paris shaping American policy during the Phony War. The rapid collapse of France to Nazi Germany in 1940 shocked the world, forcing French leaders to choose between continuing to fight or entering an armistice with Germany.⁴ On June 22, 1940, France opted for the latter, establishing Marshal Pétain's Vichy government.⁵ This created years of "painful choices of evils" in American policy decisions such as maintaining relations with Vichy while preventing Axis expansion into French North Africa.⁶

Murphy became Chargé d'Affaires to Vichy

after Ambassador Bullitt returned to America.⁷ His mission was to convince Vichy leaders that the war was not over, that America backed Britain despite its neutrality, and to prevent further French capitulation to Nazi demands. Roosevelt and Churchill hoped to deny the Axis access to the French Navy and North African colonies.⁸ British fears of the Axis gaining control led them to attack the French Fleet, causing over 1,000 casualties and prompting Pétain to sever diplomatic ties with Britain.⁹ This left America as Vichy's sole Allied contact with Murphy as the critical intermediary.

...Murphy directly negotiated conflict termination, facilitated the transition from combat to cooperation, and mitigated political risks associated with unpopular but militarily necessary decisions.

In September 1940, Roosevelt saw strategic potential in North Africa after Murphy endorsed a report highlighting over 350,000 French forces there.¹⁰ A month later, Murphy met with Roosevelt and Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles. The three discussed Vichy policy and developed the idea of bringing French North Africa, the French fleet, and a French Colonial Army back into the war on the Allies' side.¹¹

A month later, in October 1940, Murphy met with Roosevelt and Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles. The three discussed Vichy policy and developed the idea of bringing French North Africa, the French fleet, and a French Colonial Army into the war on the Allies' side.¹² Roosevelt was interested in the economy and the attitudes of the French factions in North Africa.¹³ He also hoped to find a French leader, other than Charles De Gaulle, capable of rallying French forces behind the Allies.¹⁴ Roosevelt was aware that Vichy had appointed French five-star

General Maxime Weygand as Delegate General of French Africa, and he wanted to assess the extent of his authority, plans, and intentions.¹⁵ The President identified Murphy as his personal representative, increasing his authorities, and ordered him to circumvent State Department protocol and report directly to himself. Murphy's subsequent political reconnaissance mission revealed opportunities for cooperation with French leaders like General Weygand.

...the French viewed North Africa as their most significant remaining source of power...

Political Reconnaissance

Murphy arrived in Algiers mid-December 1940 and traveled to meet General Weygand in Dakar.¹⁶ The two discussed the precarious independent status of French Africa and its dependence on U.S. economic support. Weygand told Murphy that French forces in Africa were prepared to resist an Axis occupation expected in the spring of 1941.¹⁷ The French sought war materials such as equipment, petroleum, and arms, which Murphy could not offer. He could, however, offer them the purchase of American “non-strategic” materials using frozen French funds. He could also advocate for those goods to pass through the British blockade.¹⁸ The economic aid accord resulting from their negotiations became known as the Murphy-Weygand agreement. Although the aid was never fully delivered despite Murphy's relentless efforts, elements of the accord facilitated the expansion of consular services in French Africa, which became essential for gathering intelligence and shaping the political and military environments before Torch.¹⁹ The agreement also provided the basis for later economic and military aid agreements that brought the French back into the war.

William Leahy, Roosevelt's Chief of Staff,

wrote in his memoir that Murphy “succeeded in making a thorough survey of the political and economic factors involved and laid the groundwork for success in these areas.”²⁰ Murphy learned where the French hid the gold he helped evacuate from Paris during the early days of the war in 1940 and received assurances that neither the gold nor the French Fleet would fall into German hands. He also learned the French were hiding artillery and other war equipment in mountain hideouts to resist Italian or German occupiers.²¹ Murphy could not have known then, but the French intended to resist all invasions of French Africa, not just those of the Axis.²² Visiting the port at Dakar three months after the British-backed De Gaulle forces attacked, Murphy gained a deeper appreciation for the complex French politics at play. He was surprised to find less anti-British sentiment than expected with resentment directed at De Gaulle. These observations indicated that the French viewed North Africa as their most significant remaining source of power and that all parties should avoid hasty operations that may provoke further Nazi control.²³

In Casablanca, the German Consul General summoned Murphy, whom he knew from a past assignment. The consul was building a German team to replace the Italian-led Armistice Commission in North Africa. Their missions were to determine what resources the Nazis could extract from Morocco and to direct German intelligence efforts. The consul's aggravation that Hitler continued to ignore Africa seemed to confirm Roosevelt's assumption that the Führer was focused elsewhere.²⁴ Neither man knew that Hitler had already ordered an attack on Russia in the summer of 1941. Murphy then surveyed Morocco, Algiers, and French West Africa and was impressed that French administrators maintained “surprisingly firm control of their African colonies, despite defeat and chaos in France.”²⁵

On January 14, 1941 Murphy sent the report

on his survey to the White House.²⁶ According to Vaughn, “Murphy’s work was to be the basis of President Roosevelt’s North African policy and the first step in the planning of Operation Torch.”²⁷ Additionally, the Murphy-Weygand economic agreement became a major win for the Allies once Vichy and London signed it in February and March 1941. Murphy knew that British opposition to the agreement stemmed from Churchill’s mistrust of France and suspicion that French African administrators were pro-Nazi. The underlying concern was that U.S. goods intended for Africa would end up in Nazi hands.²⁸ Leveraging this knowledge, he negotiated with Weygand and Vichy to permit American officers to supervise the delivery of U.S. goods.²⁹ This laid the groundwork for selecting a group of vice consuls to inspect cargo in North Africa. Weygand further agreed to allow the consuls to “transmit coded messages, use diplomatic pouches, and employ diplomatic couriers.”³⁰ Murphy’s *12 Apostles*, as the consuls came to be known, became the “first organized U.S. overseas intelligence operation in World War II.”³¹

Despite promising opportunities for intelligence gathering in French Africa, implementation of Murphy’s plans stalled for five months due to interagency friction and bureaucratic challenges. Murphy lamented the lack of military and economic aid, citing recurring interference from U.S. agencies like the Treasury, which blocked the use of French funds for critical supplies.³² Recruiting vice-consuls proved equally difficult, as few State Department personnel had relevant expertise. Concerns about their safety led to complex arrangements involving commissioning civilians into reserve military service and paying them from the president’s emergency funding.³³ Additional delays arose when State Department personnel denied special passports, preventing full deployment until June 1941.³⁴ Despite persistent rumors of German intervention, a lack

of internal coordination and bureaucratic delays hindered progress.

Murphy returned to Algiers in February 1941, hoping to announce the approval of the Murphy-Weygand Agreement, but rumors of large numbers of Germans arriving in North Africa to take over administration of the colonies further delayed plans. These rumors, later revealed as German deception supporting Hitler’s invasion of Russia, further delayed aid packages that were intended to incentivize French and Arab cooperation for an Allied landing.³⁵ Hitler’s attack on Russia marked a political turning point, with General Weygand declaring, “Germany has lost the war!”³⁶ Murphy relayed this shift to Washington, prompting Roosevelt to tentatively offer military support to French Africa. Roosevelt’s instructions emphasized secrecy to avoid public leaks while signaling America’s move toward becoming active in the war.³⁷ Weygand welcomed the news, recognizing the growing U.S. commitment to the war effort.

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Intelligence Gathering and Covert Operations

Once the vice consuls arrived, Murphy deployed them to the political centers of French Africa: Algiers and Oran in Algeria, Casablanca in Morocco, and Tunis in Tunisia.³⁸ Vichy intelligence and the Armistice Commission quickly detected their presence, and Murphy forwarded an intercepted German intelligence report to Washington. It read “We can only congratulate ourselves on the selection of this group of enemy agents who will give us

no trouble. [Since] they are totally lacking in method, organization and discipline, the danger presented by their arrival in North Africa may be considered as nil.”³⁹

Despite this inauspicious beginning, Murphy’s twelve vice-consuls significantly contributed to Operation Torch’s success. Their primary mission was to collect information relevant to Allied political and military objectives, with planners in Washington and London using it to inform planning assumptions.⁴⁰ In their secondary mission, they served as clandestine operatives establishing contacts with anti-Nazi resistance groups and planning subversion activities to enable Torch.

...Murphy’s twelve vice-consuls significantly contributed to Operation Torch’s success.

Murphy worked tirelessly to sustain the Murphy-Weygand Agreement despite significant challenges. In May 1941, General Weygand was recalled to France, likely due to his association with Murphy, as German intelligence had been intercepting their communications.⁴¹ Murphy continued his efforts, but progress stalled until the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in December 1941 shifted Allied priorities. Afterwards, strategic planning for an invasion of North Africa accelerated, and the Allies reinforced Murphy’s vice consuls with agents from the Coordinator of Information (COI), later the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).⁴² This support allowed Murphy to focus on diplomacy while intelligence officers handled espionage and resistance-building.

Murphy particularly respected and agent named Colonel William A. Eddy, who coordinated covert operations under Murphy’s oversight.⁴³ Despite his accolades for the OSS team in Africa, Murphy averted a near catastrophe thanks to close coordination between him and Eddy. The OSS was planning to pay a

pro-Allied Arab leader to oust a pro-German one. Once Eddy brought this to his attention, Murphy quickly intervened to avoid policy fratricide with his repeated reassurances that America had no intentions to disrupt French-Arab relations.⁴⁴

During this phase of competition, Murphy and his team contributed to diplomatic-military coordination in several ways. Initially Murphy helped Roosevelt identify and investigate opportunities in the theater. He negotiated military and economic aid to mitigate French resistance during the landings and set conditions to bring the French back into the Alliance and the war. He and the twelve Apostles conducted robust political and physical reconnaissance and assisted OSS operatives in shaping resistance and subversion activities. On at least one occasion, he also ensured that covert OSS plans did not violate U.S. policy principles and helped maintain a coherent strategic narrative.⁴⁵

Contributions to Strategic and Operational Planning

The Allied decision to open a second front in North Africa put to rest lingering debates about a cross-channel invasion. Planning for the campaign was to start at once with the final decision on execution delayed until mid-September.⁴⁶ Murphy was called to America to contribute to planning efforts of the War and State Departments. Arriving in Washington on August 30, 1942, he detected a more positive attitude about French Africa.⁴⁷

Murphy shared that many French officers still envisioned fighting in Europe in Spring 1943 and not any earlier in French Africa. According to Murphy, Marshall did not hide his “lack of enthusiasm” for the operation and repeatedly expressed his concern about sharing plans with any Frenchman or relying on French collaborators.⁴⁸ Marshall’s opinion never changed, and the resulting last-minute coordination caused “serious misunderstandings” with the French.⁴⁹

Murphy captured his views on the significant political factors in a document named *Elements for Consideration in the French North African Situation*. Murphy assessed that French factions would support an Allied intervention if: equipment and supply needs were met, Allied forces were sizable, restoration of the French Empire was guaranteed, Allies accepted French command of forces in North Africa, and the British and De Gaulle were not involved.⁵⁰

Murphy then flew to Hyde Park where he and the President discussed the problem of justifying the deployment of uninvited American troops into the empire of a neutral government. Eisenhower described this as “invading a neutral country to gain a friend.”⁵¹ They assumed that without Pétain’s support, the operation would meet at least some French resistance. Mitigating this risk required ensuring that Allied forces were sizeable enough to overpower the French forces in Africa and diplomatically convincing the French that their loyalty should be to France rather than Pétain.⁵² On the same day of this meeting, Roosevelt cabled Churchill with a final commitment of U.S. forces.

After receiving the President’s guidance, Murphy met with Torch’s other major planners. Admiral Leahy recalled the group discussed relevant French political personalities and which ones were likely to resist or support U.S. efforts.⁵³ Afterwards, General Marshall decided that Murphy should meet the planners in London.⁵⁴

To maintain secrecy, Murphy traveled to London disguised as Lt. Col. MacGowan and narrowly avoided exposure when a vice consul recognized him in Scotland.⁵⁵ At Eisenhower’s headquarters, Murphy spent the day in an “almost continuous conversation with the General and his planners.”⁵⁶ He also hand-delivered planning documents and a presidential directive, which he had helped draft.⁵⁷

Allied Forces Headquarters created a special staff section to provide political information

to Eisenhower and to draft plans relating to political aspects of the operation. This section also coordinated secret and special operations with propaganda operations to integrate military and political objectives.⁵⁸ Despite having experienced diplomatic staff, the section had inaccurate views of French North Africa, and Murphy worked to refine planning assumptions on logistics, weather, and conditions in cities like Algiers and Casablanca. Here, Murphy began to reflect on how little he knew about military matters, consoling himself in the knowledge that the “expedition to North Africa would require political as well as military strategy.”⁵⁹ This assertion was supported by Eisenhower, who later wrote that the operation was too risky on purely military grounds and that success depended on many political matters such as accurately predicting French and Spanish reactions to the landings. These matters dominated the remaining discussion in London.⁶⁰

...Eisenhower...later wrote that the operation was too risky on purely military grounds and that success depended on many political matters...

“Eisenhower listened with a horrified intentness,” as Murphy described the complications that could arise from various political factors.⁶¹ Murphy raised concerns about French loyalty to Pétain, French concern about insufficient U.S. forces, and the challenge of finding a credible French leader to support. Planners debated between Admiral Darlan, with legitimate Vichy authority, and General Giraud, leader of the resistance. Planners reached no decision, which complicated later Allied efforts.⁶² Discussions also addressed the timeline for notifying collaborators and administrative continuity in North Africa.⁶³

Murphy’s deep knowledge of the many

ethnic and administrative divisions in French Africa provided the contextual basis for making necessary planning assumptions. Structurally, the French colonies differed from French protectorates under independent Arab rule. Culturally, there were tribes of Arabs, Berbers, and native Africans loosely united by Islam. Additionally, almost 200,000 Europeans of various political, socio-economic, and national backgrounds moved to Africa after the outbreak of war. This cohort contained communists, Spanish Loyalists, European Jews, and Poles. Murphy later reflected:

...almost 200,000 Europeans of various political, socio-economic, and national backgrounds moved to Africa after the outbreak of war.

The more I learned, the more I realized what a potentially explosive area this was, and the more I was impressed by the skill with which the French administrators had retained control over these diverse and often hostile communities, even during years of French defeat and occupation. What would these mixed-up people do if French Africa should become a battleground? The answer, it seemed to me, was that only French administrators already familiar with the complexities of these variegated local situations could possibly maintain the order in French Africa which an Allied Expeditionary Force would require. This was a point which I particularly stressed when the time came for me to discuss the African expedition with its planners in Washington and London.⁶⁴

All agreed there should be no change to the civil administration of North Africa if possible.⁶⁵ Murphy's grasp of military matters and judgement gained General Eisenhower's confidence which may have influenced his next assignment.⁶⁶

Preparing for Operations and Becoming Eisenhower's Political Advisor

During another brief stop in Washington, Murphy clarified his authorities and received his final directive on September 22, 1942.⁶⁷ The directive separated Murphy from the State Department, appointing him as Roosevelt's personal representative and requiring close coordination with General Eisenhower. After the landings, Murphy would become the Head of Civil Affairs and Eisenhower's Advisor for Civil Affairs. Eisenhower believed that subversive activities, propaganda, and political warfare needed tight integration with military operations to avoid complications.⁶⁸ Murphy claimed he became "the first civilian in American history to serve on the inner staff of a military commander's headquarters in a war theater, with access to all military information."⁶⁹

This directive resolved debates between the generals, who wanted Murphy in a formal chain of command, and Murphy's desire to retain civilian status. The compromise allowed him to maintain two-way communication with Roosevelt while routing all messages through Eisenhower to ensure unity of command. It also outlined what Murphy could share with French contacts in the weeks leading up to D-Day. Before returning to North Africa, Murphy worked with OCI-OSS's Bill Donovan to secure radio transmitters for better communication with AFHQ which he smuggled into Africa in sealed diplomatic pouches.

Three weeks before the invasion, Murphy mobilized his network of French contacts spanning diverse political factions: royalists seeking a restored monarchy, De Gaullists advocating for a reformed republic, and supporters of the authoritarian Vichy regime. Beyond these groups were factions pushing for independent French Africa or improved local economic conditions.⁷⁰ Some groups were fifth-column entities willing to cooperate with

the Allies to undermine Vichy efforts. In Algiers, Murphy worked closely with the Group of Five resistance network and maintained contact with De Gaullist factions. Despite mutual distrust, both groups cooperated to counter Vichy loyalists and other French officers who were committed to resisting Allied forces.⁷¹

Searching for a French Leader

The key French leaders in North Africa were Admiral Darlan, representing the legitimate Vichy government, and the Group of Five, aligned with General Giraud. Both groups contacted Murphy upon his return to Algiers in October 1942, sensing American intervention was imminent. Admiral Darlan, Commander in Chief of all French forces, was viewed as a political opportunist, anti-British, and an enemy of De Gaulle.⁷² Allied planners initially dismissed him due to his unpredictability, but Darlan opened communications with Murphy through Delegate General Raymond Fenard. Fenard emphasized Darlan's willingness to collaborate and urged the Americans to view French African forces as a separate fighting unit capable of resisting Germany with adequate support.⁷³ Darlan's concerns included ensuring the quantity of Allied forces planned were sufficient to win, and that he could maintain the appearance of cooperation with Germany.⁷⁴

General Giraud was widely respected by both French and Arabs for his leadership and experience in Africa. Having escaped German captivity twice, he held no obligations to the Nazis.⁷⁵ Giraud communicated through Jacques Lemaigre-Dubriel of the Group of Five, setting conditions for his participation: an American-only operation, near-simultaneous landings in France, and French command over troops on French soil.⁷⁶ Giraud designated General Charles Emmanuel Mast as his representative in Algiers, who became the first French general officer to decisively commit to the Allies.

Murphy reported these meetings to

Roosevelt and Eisenhower the next day. He received a same-day response from Admiral Leahy on behalf of the President authorizing Murphy to make "any arrangement with Darlan which, in (Murphy's) judgement, might assist the military operations."⁷⁷ Further negotiations with Mast on behalf of Giraud continued.

The key French leaders in North Africa were Admiral Darlan, representing the legitimate Vichy government, and the Group of Five, aligned with General Giraud.

General Clark's Secret Mission

Murphy was key in organizing a secret mission for General Mark Clark and other planners to meet with French officers in North Africa in mid-October 1942, just weeks before the invasion.⁷⁸ On October 18, Clark received an urgent cable from Murphy, relayed through General Marshall, stating that General Mast had requested a senior officer delegation to consult on Allied invasion plans. This meeting offered hope that the French Army might cooperate and that a leader could emerge to unify French support.⁷⁹

Clark was accompanied by Brigadier General Lyman L. Lemnitzer (future Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff) and Colonel Julius C. Holmes (future Assistant Secretary of State).⁸⁰ The plan involved flying separately to Gibraltar and infiltrating via submarine through U-boat-patrolled waters to Cherchell, where Murphy would guide them ashore. The planners worried that if Mast knew about invasion planning, Hitler likely did, too. Reports from Vichy intelligence suggested Hitler had ordered French leaders to forcefully resist any invasion increased these concerns. Despite these concerns, Clark's party arrived undisturbed for the risky linkup on the beach. "Welcome to North Africa," Murphy called out in a hushed voice, and Clark answered

with an uncharacteristically stressed “I’m damned glad we made it.”⁸¹

The meeting began carefully as both parties determined the levels of sincerity and trust. Clark and Murphy communicated Allied strategy in very general terms, fully aware that the amphibious forces were already at sea. Their orders were to collect intelligence without revealing that the invasion was imminent or providing essential details.⁸² Clark and Murphy avoided revealing specifics on location and size, claiming a force size of 500,000 troops instead of the planned 112,000. Mast was impressed by the size of the invasion force and approved his officers to coordinate with the Americans. French officers provided the Americans with, “locations and strengths of French army and naval units; sites where gasoline, ammunition, and supplies were stored; details about which airports would be heavily defended and others on which paratroopers could land with less opposition.”⁸³

As the period shifted from competition to open conflict, Murphy aided the military by generating local support for Allied plans...

Clark broached the discussion of French leadership by posing the idea of shared leadership between Darlan and Giraud. Mast dismissed this at once arguing that Darlan was an opportunist and not needed for success of the operation.⁸⁴ When local police interrupted the collaboration Murphy and one of his vice consuls claimed they were American diplomats having a party. After the police left, Clark and team escaped to the beach and eventually returned to the *Seraph*. On October 24, a week after leaving Gibraltar, the Allied planners were picked up by a flying boat to ensure new information was included in the final plans.

Murphy’s role was pivotal in arranging

the meeting and facilitating collaboration with French officers.⁸⁵ Eisenhower credited it as an essential introduction to French leaders, while Clark noted the accuracy of the intelligence provided.⁸⁶ However, one key assumption proved false: General Giraud lacked the political influence to command French forces effectively. Despite this, Murphy continued coordination with Giraud and Mast in the weeks leading up to D-Day, ensuring continued diplomatic engagement to set conditions for military success. Giraud insisted he would not participate without a written guarantee that Eisenhower would place him in command within forty-eight hours of an invasion and that Allies would share more information about plans for intervention in France. Murphy replied with deliberately vague language that Eisenhower intended to establish French military command “as soon as possible,” but there was a need to keep American command during the early stages of the operation.⁸⁷ Murphy finally received permission to tell General Mast the planned day of the landings on his birthday, October 28.⁸⁸ For the next week, Murphy tried to act normal and continued to meet with those looking to gain American support for their interests.

As the period shifted from competition to open conflict, Murphy aided the military by generating local support for Allied plans, facilitating collaborative planning sessions, discussing command relationships, and setting conditions for the invasion. Diplomatically, he maintained a senior U.S. channel of communications for the Vichy government to approach Americans about cooperation. The military aided Murphy’s efforts by providing communications and logistics support and planning for a sizeable enough force to garner French cooperation.

Landings and Conflict Termination

Three hundred British and American ships moved toward their objectives on November

7, 1942. Deception plans convinced French, Spanish, and Axis forces that Malta was the destination. Murphy recalled “the time had come to test our two years of hopeful soundings and schemings...the French had it in their power to be an immense help or hindrance to our expedition.”⁸⁹ Around midnight a BBC broadcast rang out, “Allo Robert. Franklin Arrive,” marking the start of the landings.⁹⁰

Murphy had arranged for resistance forces to secure key infrastructure in Algiers while Clark and Mast negotiated surrender terms.⁹¹ The plan called for Giraud’s arrival on November 7 and British submarines to deliver military equipment to resistance forces. Giraud arrived three days later and “the political situation had drastically changed.”⁹² Giraud’s delayed arrival disrupted plans, leaving Murphy to negotiate directly with General Juin, who insisted on Darlan’s approval for cooperation. Murphy was surprised to learn that Darlan was in Algiers visiting his sick son.

Darlan joined them at Juin’s residence and met Murphy’s news with “complete and disagreeable surprise,” insisting that he needed Petain’s approval from Vichy.⁹³ During the negotiation, Murphy was arrested by French authorities and later released when Darlan directed him to contact American Major General Charles W. Ryder, whose East Task Force landed in Algiers. Despite initial resistance, Darlan eventually directed a local cease-fire in Algiers while allowing fighting to continue in Morocco and Oran. AFHQ credited Murphy’s groundwork with Mast and Juin for this outcome.⁹⁴

The unexpected arrival of Admiral Darlan presented a significant political challenge and military necessity required quick decisions.⁹⁵ Murphy made independent decisions until Clark arrived on November 9.⁹⁶ Murphy aptly described that Clark’s “immediate responsibility was the negotiation of an agreement with French authorities that was more political than military.”⁹⁷ Together, they negotiated with Darlan arguing that “the longer Darlan delayed

committing to the allies, the more costly the ensuing battle would become.”⁹⁸ Only after Clark threatened to arrest him, Darlan reluctantly issued orders for a general cease-fire across French Africa.⁹⁹ The order directed French forces to cease fighting against American and Allied forces, directed commanders in Algiers and Morocco to liaison with local American commanders, and reasserted Darlan’s authority

Murphy had arranged for resistance forces to secure key infrastructure in Algiers while Clark and Mast negotiated surrender terms.

in French Africa.¹⁰⁰ It further reiterated that the Americans would not change military or administrative arrangements.¹⁰¹ Meanwhile, Giraud agreed to serve under Darlan if appointed Commander in Chief of French forces. The resulting “Darlan Deal,” reached through military diplomacy, ensured French cooperation, re-equipped French troops, and preserved administrative control in North Africa.

Neither Murphy nor Clark anticipated the deal would produce such significant backlash in domestic public opinion that it would require the involvement of Eisenhower, Stimson, and the President. They were focused on the pragmatic facts that fighting continued in Morocco and that Darlan was the only one with enough influence to enact a cease-fire.¹⁰² After Eisenhower traveled to Algiers to finalize the agreement, he took Murphy to Gibraltar to explain the agreement’s necessity to the Allied governments. Eisenhower’s letter to Washington, presumably based on Murphy’s draft, explained the decision, and promised to watch Admiral Darlan’s activities closely. Six weeks later, Darlan was assassinated after confiding potential successors to Murphy.

The Darlan Deal helped extend the cease-fire throughout French Africa and Tunisia and

underpinned the military aid program that brought the French back into the war. Darlan helped the Allies secure the civil and military support of Morocco, Dakar, and Tunisia, which were critical to logistically supporting fighting in North Africa and future Mediterranean campaigns. The only objective he failed to deliver was the French fleet.¹⁰³ As Operation Torch culminated and the Allies shifted their focus to Tunisia, Eisenhower awarded Murphy the Distinguished Service Medal and requested he serve as political advisor in Italy. Murphy continued working for military leaders through the end of the war and served in key roles during the occupation of Germany and the administration of the Marshall Plan.

Murphy mitigated risks by ensuring covert operations aligned with U.S. policy...

Analysis

In a lecture to the National War College after the war, Murphy remarked “Our African adventure proved the truism that political considerations can never be wholly separated from the military.”¹⁰⁴ His contributions before and during Operation Torch highlight the interplay between political and military considerations.

Before the Allies entered the war, Murphy shaped national policy that guided strategy and operational planning. As a diplomat in Vichy, he was part of an opportunity scanning system for Roosevelt. His reports identified an opportunity for the U.S. to cooperate with the French administration in North Africa, aid the British war effort, and possibly bring the French back into the war. As Roosevelt’s personal representative, he conducted political reconnaissance, to identify shared interests across local, U.S. and Allied aims. The Murphy-Weygand Agreement laid groundwork for future

cooperation by securing limited economic aid and intelligence access while avoiding German retaliation.

Additionally, Murphy built a robust political network for emerging cooperation that supported U.S. and British interests. Murphy’s team collected information that became useful to Torch’s operational planners. Murphy also deployed vice-consuls to build networks with anti-Nazi factions, shaping conditions for competition and conflict. Murphy mitigated risks by ensuring covert operations aligned with U.S. policy, such as halting an OSS plan that could have disrupted French-Arab relations.

Once America entered the war, it was simultaneously in conflict with the Axis Powers, in an ambiguous cooperation-conflict relationship with official French authorities, and in cooperation with the British and sub-national French factions inside and outside North Africa. This required close coordination of military and diplomatic activities. Once President Roosevelt ordered the U.S. military to plan Operation Torch, Murphy contributed to strategic planning in Washington and London, refining assumptions, assessing risks, and planning for conflict termination.¹⁰⁵ He worked to maintain multiple military end states—cooperation, coercion, or conflict with French forces—and prepared for transitions from U.S. military to French civilian leadership. He prepared for both military governance and civil affairs approaches, claiming that “Washington’s neglect of this phase of waging war created unnecessary difficulties.”¹⁰⁶ Murphy’s recommendation to rely on French administration of the colonies was ultimately successful.

Murphy facilitated early collaboration with French leaders, helping draft declarations of Allied intent, and conducted in-person diplomacy during the operation. Murphy contributed to meaningful discussions about French leadership, possible reactions of various actors, and their potential for resistance or support. He helped

the Allies draft pre-written declarations about national and military intentions for various political audiences. While some resistance coordination faltered, he maintained channels for Vichy leaders to explore cooperation, which became critical in negotiating cease-fires, managing leadership transitions, and consolidating gains at the strategic level.

Once the fighting ended, Murphy worked closely with Clark and Eisenhower to negotiate the agreements that brought French forces back into the war on the side of the Allies, accomplishing one of the primary strategic objectives of Torch. He also negotiated cooperation with the French to administer French North Africa and support the logistics required to continue the North Africa Campaign and future Mediterranean campaigns.¹⁰⁷ Murphy was a key contributor in securing the cooperation of Vichy French military leaders during the operation.¹⁰⁸

Conclusion: Implications for the Interagency in Integrated Campaigning

Political-military alignment through close coordination between diplomatic and military instruments of power is increasingly critical as the U.S. adapts to modern competition and conflict. Interest-based strategies, strategic consolidation of gains, and effective implementation of military activities all require enhanced coordination between military leaders and diplomats. Several key implications from this case study are worth considering for improving interagency coordination during competition and early conflict phases.

Interagency coordination at the national level faces challenges, as evidenced by frictions during the Murphy-Weygand agreement, including conflicts with the Board of Economic Warfare and the Treasury Department. Coordination between national and theater-level policies is essential to avoid such issues. Today's Political Advisors (POLADs) must ensure two-way

communication across military and diplomatic channels, as Murphy did, to remain effective across the competition continuum.

Conflict often creates tensions between long-term policy goals and immediate military necessities.

Murphy later reflected on the degree to which political factors dictate military strategy and may be permitted to compromise military effectiveness.¹⁰⁹ The opposite is also true in cases where military necessity may dictate actions that compromise political effectiveness. Conflict often creates tensions between long-term policy goals and immediate military necessities. Murphy's role in Operation Torch demonstrated how dialogue between military and diplomatic actors can balance these priorities. His presence ensured effective communication with foreign leaders while helping Clark and Eisenhower weigh the consequences of political decisions. In today's environment—marked by complex alliances, influence operations, and direct political outcomes from military actions—political expertise in military commands is essential.

The Department of State and Department of Defense (DoD) Exchange Program, modeled after Murphy's work with Eisenhower, is a valuable tool but requires improvement.¹¹⁰ After WWII, Murphy argued for POLADS at the division level.¹¹¹ Commanders during the height of the Global War on Terrorism made similar recommendations. However, resources limit the State Department's ability to provide sufficient POLADs to lower echelons despite growing demand from multinational operations and exercises like Olympic Defender, Defender Europe, or Pacific Pathways, which are critical to campaigning in strategic competition. The Interagency needs to explore options to meet this

requirement. DoD should advocate for increased State Department funding, fill all Military Advisor (MILAD) positions at the State Department, and explore training options for former MILADs or Civil Affairs personnel to address gaps.

Closing knowledge gaps between military officers and foreign service personnel is vital. “Diplomat warriors” must understand how military operations achieve diplomatic objectives, while “warrior diplomats” must grasp how diplomacy supports military efforts.¹¹² The Department of Defense must educate and train politically astute officers capable of navigating these intersections without engaging in partisan politics.¹¹³

Lessons from this 1941-1942 case study echo findings from a Global War on Terror report: interagency coordination suffers from inconsistent participation, policy gaps, resource constraints, and cultural differences.¹¹⁴ Addressing these challenges is crucial to avoid repeating past mistakes in future conflicts. **IAJ**

Notes

1 Roger Z. George and Harvey Rishikof, eds., *The National Security Enterprise: Navigating the Labyrinth*, 2nd edition (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017), 13; Robert Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, INC., 1964), 156.

2 Arthur Layton Funk, *The Politics of TORCH: The Allied Landing and the Algiers Putsch 1942* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1974); William F. Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton & Company, 1966); Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Weinberg, *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors*, United States Army in World War II, CMH Pub 11-3 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964), <https://history.army.mil/books/wwii/civaff/index.htm>; Hal Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles: The Spies Who Paved the Way for the Invasion of North Africa* (Guilford, CT: Lyons Press, 2006); Meredith Hindley, *Destination Casablanca: Exile, Espionage, and the Battle for North Africa in World War II* (New York, NY: PublicAffairs, 2017). Funk and Langer wrote specifically about the political aspects of Operation Torch. Funk wrote from the U.S. perspective and Langer was commissioned by the State Department and added French and German perspectives to his accounts. Coles and Weinberg edited an official documentary history of Army civil affairs with one chapter devoted to Torch. Vaughn and Hindley's accounts provide insight into Murphy's activities and politics but are generally focused on covert operations than conventional diplomatic-military relations.

3 Wes Gallagher, *Back Door to Berlin: The Full Story of the American Coup in North Africa* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, Doran & Co, 1943), 8.

4 “The Deputy Ambassador in France (Biddle) to the Secretary of State,” Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1940, General, Volume I - Office of the Historian, June 15, 1940, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1940v01/d219>.

5 Lorraine Boissoneault, “Was Vichy France a Puppet Government or a Willing Nazi Collaborator?,” Smithsonian Magazine, November 9, 2017, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/vichy-government-france-world-war-ii-willingly-collaborated-nazis-180967160/>.

6 Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble*. Langer provides the best description of the reasoning behind this policy.

7 Funk, *The Politics of TORCH*, 8. The Chargé d’Affaires is a diplomatic official who temporarily takes the place of an ambassador.

8 Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 542; William D. Leahy, *I Was There*, The American Military Experience (New York, NY: Arno Press, 1979), 443-46.

- 9 Robert Murphy, “Document 463 The Chargé in France (Murphy) to the Secretary of State,” Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1940, General and Europe, Volume II - Office of the Historian, July 29, 1940, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1940v02/d463>; Robert Murphy, “D464 The Chargé in France (Murphy) to the Secretary of State,” Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1940, General and Europe, Volume II - Office of the Historian, August 7, 1940, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1940v02/d464>; Vaughan, *FDR’s 12 Apostles*, 23. Murphy states in *Diplomat Among Warriors* that French diplomat Baudouin was so angry “he even hinted the French Navy might cooperate with the Germans,” but does not indicate he played a role in avoiding this. A search of the *Foreign Relations of the United States* from the time also lacks evidence for this claim.
- 10 Vaughan, *FDR’s 12 Apostles*, 30. Vaughn claims that Murphy endorsed the report offering that if France were to fight anywhere, “North Africa would be the place,” however Murphy’s memoir attributes the statement to the report’s author Commander Hillenkoetter.
- 11 Funk, *The Politics of TORCH*, 9; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 67–70.
- 12 Ibid.
- 13 Funk, *The Politics of TORCH*, 9; The Murphy Papers, “Letter from Undersecretary of State Sumner Welles to American Embassy Vichy,” November 18, 1940.
- 14 Vaughan, *FDR’s 12 Apostles*, 31–33; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 70; “The Secretary of State to the Chargé in France (Matthews),” Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1940, General and Europe, Volume II - Office of the Historian, December 2, 1940, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1940v02/d703>. Murphy learned that Roosevelt was not fond of De Gaulle or the Free French after their failed raid in Dakar.
- 15 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 73.
- 16 Vaughan, *FDR’s 12 Apostles*, 36–41.
- 17 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 73.
- 18 Vaughan, *FDR’s 12 Apostles*, 37–39; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 82.
- 19 Leahy, *I Was There*, 21, 23, 29, 57, 71.
- 20 Leahy, *I Was There*, 21.
- 21 Vaughan, *FDR’s 12 Apostles*, 38.
- 22 Vaughan, *FDR’s 12 Apostles*, 37.
- 23 “The Minister in Portugal (Pell) to the Secretary of State,” Foreign Relations of the United States Diplomatic Papers, 1941, Europe, Volume II - Office of the Historian, January 14, 1941, <https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1941v02/d167>. This is Murphy’s forwarded report.
- 24 Hindley, *Destination Casablanca*, 84–85.
- 25 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 80.
- 26 “The Minister in Portugal (Pell) to the Secretary of State.”
- 27 Vaughan, *FDR’s 12 Apostles*, 41.
- 28 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 86.

- 29 Hindley, *Destination Casablanca*, 83.
- 30 Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, 39; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 90.
- 31 Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, 45.
- 32 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 86.
- 33 Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, ebook, location 653; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 90.
- 34 Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, ebook, location 804.
- 35 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 82-85.
- 36 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 85.
- 37 Ibid.
- 38 Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, ebook, location 813
- 39 The Murphy Papers, "Copy of Intercepted Confidential Report to Berlin, Declassified 3/21/13," n.d.; Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, ebook, location 841; Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 91.
- 40 Leahy, *I Was There*; Mark W. Clark, *Calculated Risk: The Story of the War in the Mediterranean* (New York, NY: Harper & Brothers, 1950); Vaughan, *FDR's 12 Apostles*, ebook, location 72; Funk, *The Politics of TORCH*. Leahy's memoir states that "Everyone knew what they were up to," and Clark's memoir indicates that planners were impressed with the information provided reinforcing Funk's assertion of success.
- 41 "Robert Murphy Cable to Secretary of State Regarding General Weygand, with Attachments," Robert D. Murphy papers, Hoover Institution Library & Archives, November 21, 1941, <https://digitalcollections.hoover.org/objects/62378/robert-murphy-cable-to-secretary-of-state-regarding-general>.
- 42 George F. Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West* (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1991), 24.
- 43 Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West*, 55.
- 44 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 92.
- 45 Ibid. Despite his accolades for the OSS team in Africa, Murphy averted a near catastrophe thanks to close coordination between him and Eddy. The OSS was planning to pay \$50,000 to a pro-Allied Arab leader to oust a pro-German one. Once Eddy brought this to his attention, Murphy quickly intervened to avoid policy fratricide resulting from his repeated reassurance to the French that America did not intend to disrupt French-Arab relations.
- 46 Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West*, 13.
- 47 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 100.
- 48 Funk, *The Politics of TORCH*, 101.
- 49 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 101.
- 50 Langer, *Our Vichy Gamble*, 311-12; Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West*, 55.

- 51 Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe* (New York: Doubleday, 1990), 88.
- 52 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 101-102. Roosevelt's wartime policy was to avoid recognizing any entity as the Government of France until liberated French people could elect their own government. Murphy recalled this policy guided all his actions up to and after the landings.
- 53 Leahy, *I Was There*, 112.
- 54 Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 32.
- 55 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 103. Marshall suggested Murphy be disguised, and because "nobody ever pays attention to a lieutenant colonel," he became Lt. Col. MacGowan.
- 56 Ibid.
- 57 Funk, *The Politics of TORCH*, 102; Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 54.
- 58 Howe, *Northwest Africa: Seizing the Initiative in the West*, 55.
- 59 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 102.
- 60 Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 88.
- 61 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 104.
- 62 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 117.
- 63 Harry C. Butcher, *My Three Years with Eisenhower: The Personal Diary of Captain Harry C. Butcher, USNR, Naval Aide to General Eisenhower, 1942 to 1945* (New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, 1946), 103-10.
- 64 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 98.
- 65 Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 56.
- 66 Ibid.
- 67 Franklin D. Roosevelt, "Directive for Mr. Robert D. Murphy," September 22, 1942, Robert D. Murphy papers, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.
- 68 Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 55.
- 69 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 106.
- 70 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 102.
- 71 Murphy, 112. Nogues told Murphy he did not support intervention and would fight any foreign forces. The Vice Consuls coordinated with one of his subordinates Bouthard who agreed to arrest Nogues during the invasion, however Bouthard failed to accomplish this during the landings.
- 72 Leahy, *I Was There*, 113.
- 73 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 113.
- 74 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 114.
- 75 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 115.

- 76 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 116-117.
- 77 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 118.
- 78 William B. Breuer, *Operation Torch: The Allied Gamble to Invade North Africa*, 1st ed (New York, NY: St. Martin's Press, 1985); L. James Binder, *Lemnitzer: A Soldier for His Time* (Washington, DC: Brassey's Books, 1997).
- 79 Breuer, *Operation Torch*, 68-90.
- 80 Breuer, *Operation Torch*, 70.
- 81 Breuer, *Operation Torch*, 75.
- 82 Binder, *Lemnitzer: A Soldier for His Time*, 82.
- 83 Breuer, *Operation Torch*, 76.
- 84 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 119; Howe, *Northwest Africa*, 81.
- 85 Binder, *Lemnitzer: A Soldier for His Time*, 81. Lemnitzer would recall that "the opportune time of the meeting was due to the persistent efforts of Murphy, whose vital part in bringing about the meeting was known only a few persons in the highest levels of American government."
- 86 Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 88. General Clark later recalled that he was impressed by how closely the French plans were to Allied plans and that everything the French told Clarke's delegation "turned out to be accurate in every respect."
- 87 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 123.
- 88 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 120.
- 89 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 124.
- 90 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 124.
- 91 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 127.
- 92 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 126; Gallagher, *Back Door to Berlin*, 33.
- 93 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 129.
- 94 Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, 115. AFHQ's record of events at the end of D-Day recorded: "During the course of the night and in the early morning hours of November 8, operational reports began to come in that were encouraging in tone. As anticipated, the landings at Algiers met almost no opposition and the area was quickly occupied. This was largely due to the prior accomplishments of Mr. Murphy, working through General Mast of the French Army, and to the sympathy, even if cloaked in official antagonism, of General Alphonse Pierre Juin."
- 95 Gallagher, *Back Door to Berlin*, 65.
- 96 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 136.
- 97 Ibid.
- 98 Charles R. Anderson, *Algeria-French Morocco*, The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II, CMH

- 72-11 (Center of Military History, 2004), 4; Charles R. Anderson, *Tunisia*, The U.S. Army Campaigns of World War II, CMH 72-12 (Center of Military History, 2004).
- 99 Gallagher, *Back Door to Berlin*, 67.
- 100 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 139.
- 101 Gallagher, *Back Door to Berlin*, 69.
- 102 Stimson and Bundy, *On Active Service in Peace and War*, 543.
- 103 Carlo D'Este, *Eisenhower: A Soldier's Life*, 1st ed (New York, NY: Henry Holt & Co, 2002), 354.
- 104 Robert D. Murphy, "The Influence of Politics Upon Military Operations Operation Torch," January 13, 1954, 17, Robert D. Murphy papers, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.
- 105 Murphy contributed to interagency planning for conflict termination prior to the operation. His understanding of the interests of various actors helped planners develop multiple versions of negotiated military agreements for the two likely outcomes. He also reviewed official diplomatic notes for delivery on D-Day and notified various political and military leaders in person after the operation commenced.
- 106 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 79.
- 107 Murphy, *Diplomat Among Warriors*, 119; Murphy, "The Influence of Politics Upon Military Operations Operation Torch."
- 108 Binder, *Lemnitzer: A Soldier for His Time*, 73.
- 109 Robert D. Murphy, "Political Factors in War: Text of Remarks Made to War College," January 7, 1952, Robert D. Murphy papers, box 23, folder 2, Hoover Institution Library & Archives.
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- 111 Murphy, "Political Factors in War: Text of Remarks Made to War College," 8.
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Frozen Ambitions: Concerns Regarding China's Arctic Polar Policy

by Phil Kerber and John P. Ringquist

In the new era of strategic power competition with the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Arctic and Antarctic regions present unprecedented opportunities and challenges in commerce, strategic posture, and natural resource exploitation. New sea routes through the Arctic region strategically shorten distance between European and Asian markets. Such sea routes offer China an enticing means to advance both military and commercial interests.

As sea ice melts and exposes new sea lines of communication through the Arctic, Greenland and its periphery increasingly present tremendous economic and posture opportunities for those nations with secure Arctic access. Expansionist Chinese presence in the polar regions, coupled with new technology investment, demonstrate both the will and capability to advance commerce, posture, and resource exploitation opportunities.

China regards its presence and activities in the Arctic and Antarctic as essential to its global ambitions. In two articles in this edition of the *InterAgency Journal*, the authors explore PRC polar interests—first in the Arctic, continued in part two with an interpretation of parallel PRC influence in the Antarctic.

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PRC Arctic Context

Since President Xi Jinping came to power in 2012, the Arctic region acquired a position of national prominence in China. In 2014, Xi Jinping linked the Arctic's importance to China's rising role as a great maritime power.¹ Liu Cigui, former director of the China State Oceanic Administration, identified in 2014 China's commercial and scientific interest in Arctic waterways, its interest in oil and gas reserves, and China's intention to "not be left behind" as catalysts in the creation of a polar policy. Such policy identified strategic objectives and resources.² Three years later, on January 17, 2017, President Xi Jinping, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, emphasized Chinese global economic dominance depended on the Belt and Road initiative and the "opening up" of the Arctic to common development and exploitation.³ Arctic shipping routes are considered the third Silk Road corridor of the Belt and Road Initiative, and, therefore, China sees them as a major component of its geopolitical and economic goals and as a way to demonstrate its ability to innovate and adapt to changing conditions. However, polar regions offer potential for non-commercial and non-scientific purposes. Chinese strategy considers the polar regions to also serve as strategic terrain on par with the ocean seabed or space.⁴ The Arctic sea lanes provide a solution to some of China's economic goals. Estimates from Chinese military strategy documents claim the Arctic's northern route will save twenty-two percent of the distance versus the traditional routes from China through the Red Sea to Europe. Additionally, admitting freighters through Arctic routes present few transit limitations related to hull size or draft—both of which are significant transit constraints for Panama Suez Canal transits.⁵ The China Ministry of Foreign Affairs claims Chinese freedom of navigation is guaranteed passage in accordance with

international law and China's hydrographic surveys conducted in recent years are for the betterment of all nations who may choose to transit the Arctic waters.⁶ Such statements and references clearly indicate PRC intent to exploit new sea lanes through the polar regions.

In 2014, Xi Jinping linked the Arctic's importance to China's rising role as a great maritime power.

The Arctic region also provides significant strategic posture opportunities to include potential placement of missile defense capabilities, terrestrial space tracking, and command and control (C2) locations to direct both undersea and aerial drones. The Chinese military document, *The Science of Military Strategy*, identified the ongoing efforts to reinforce sovereignty rights in the Arctic through military bases, exercises, and demonstrations as an important way for Arctic nations to prevent competitors from undercutting their use of Arctic space for security purposes.⁷ China recognizes that having a voice is not enough and claims must be backed up by physical presence.

In recent months, Greenland's position in the Arctic has captured significant attention by the Trump Administration due partially to the strategic posture possibilities its location holds. Greenland's natural resources also invite great international interest, which is unlikely to diminish at a time when competition over rare earths and strategic metals are so essential to meet the demand of electric vehicle construction, other manufacturing needs, and alternative energy technologies. Greenland's resources are naturally alluring to the Chinese government and Chinese companies.

In such a competitive environment, only comprehensive interagency and national efforts through the employment of the U.S. diplomatic,

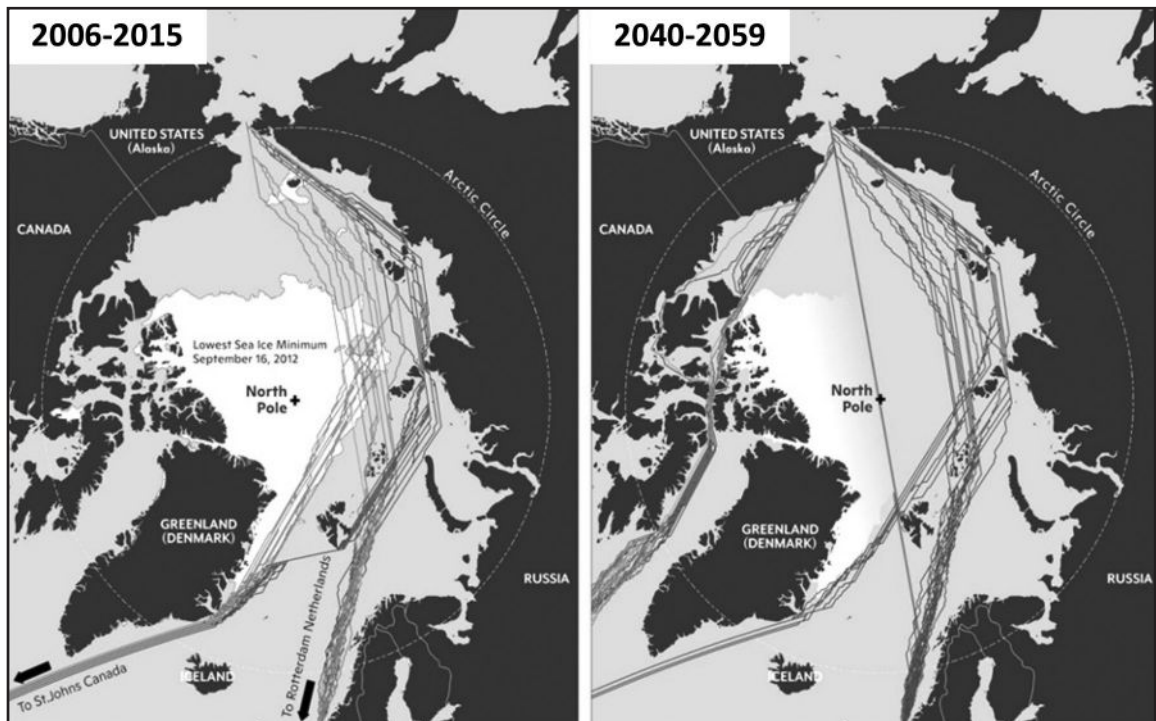


Figure 1. Arctic shipping routes current and future.

The security implications for the United States, Canada, and Russia are evident.

Source: Adapted from NOAA Arctic <https://arctic.noaa.gov/report-card/report-card-2022/satellite-record-of-pan-arctic-maritime-ship-traffic/>

information, military, and economic (DIME) levers of power will secure U.S. polar interests. Given Chinese activities in the South China Sea characterized as “gray zone”...or rather ICAD,⁸ coupled with debt trap diplomacy efforts through various Belt Road Initiatives (BRI), the world must exercise caution when considering the true methods and nature of Chinese global intentions.⁹ The U.S. and the international community must closely monitor, and both deter and prepare to counter potential destabilizing activities in the polar regions, especially as China advances its capacity for Arctic power projection. China already utilizes its growing fleet of ships to demonstrate capacity to conduct long-duration operations in the Arctic. As of mid-2024, its three icebreakers could simultaneously operate in the Arctic to showcase a mobile, yet potentially semi-permanent Arctic presence. Chinese employment of icebreakers in 2024 occurred during the backdrop of Chinese efforts

to “acquire land in Finland, ports in Norway and Sweden, and airports in Greenland.” Such acquisition efforts were resisted by these Arctic states—wary of China’s intentions and the potential for militarization of such infrastructure and locations. China’s policy of civil-military fusion also avails Chinese scientific research in the polar regions to the military, especially oceanographic and hydroacoustic studies, like those conducted in the South China Sea.¹⁰ Given the breadth of such activities, the U.S. must address any perceived malign actions “across the DIME” synchronized with allied and partner efforts.

Potential Chinese threats to U.S. interests could originate from overtly military means, or perhaps more probably from the non-military “levers of DIME” to secure territory, shape access and global perception in these regions. New climate and technology advancements coupled with polar climate change currently

afford new opportunities in the previously-ice bound polar regions. Figure 1 and its corresponding maps demonstrate how the security and economic situation will change over the next three decades as anticipated melting of polar ice form new sea lanes for shipping, military maneuvers, and resource extraction. Sea lane and airspace dominance take on greater importance when space and undersea dimensions of competition are factored into the security calculus. The Chinese policy of creating economic and diplomatic opportunity where other nations fail to challenge claims can be expected in this region.

Legal and Diplomatic Concerns Regarding China in the Polar Regions

China defined itself as a “Near-Arctic State” in 2019 and claimed itself as one of the continental states closest to the Arctic Circle despite its approximate 900-mile distance¹¹ from the Arctic Circle. Despite its notable geographic distance from the Arctic, the PRC claims it has the right to address regional and global issues in the Arctic, especially in areas it considers to directly impact Chinese security and economic interests. In short, the PRC possesses no geographic claim but recognizes the region’s current and potential value. Given the PRC’s past actions “across the DIME” with regards to extraterritorial claims in other parts of the world, the U.S., its allies, and its partners should naturally exercise concern regarding Chinese ambitions. China’s security claims in the Arctic naturally draw international interest given its aggressive and legally dubious claims in other parts of the world. Perhaps the most notable and dubious declaration China’s made is the now “Ten-Dash Line”¹² claims in the South China Sea (SCS). However legally questionable, the PRC SCS claims are loosely based on printed lines found on an old Republic of China (ROC) map. Without international legal legitimacy, the PRC employs such map as a basis to exclude concerns

and claims of other South China Sea claimant nations. Fortunately, other nations do appeal to international law regarding disputed claims. The 2016 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Seas (UNCLOS) Arbitral Ruling ruled in favor of Philippines claim which runs counter to China’s assertions.¹³ The U.S., its allies, and partners must anticipate PRC efforts to construct claims or exert efforts to secure interests in the polar regions, even with no international legal standing and at the expense of the international rules-based order. The logic for China’s current legal and diplomatic maneuvering is involves access to Arctic shipping routes and the energy resources to provide China geostrategic advantages. A 6,000-kilometer sea lane through the Arctic provides a better option rather than the existing principal trade route passing through the Malacca Strait and Suez Canal to European markets. Further, the Arctic contains significant gas and oil energy reserves yet to be fully exploited.¹⁴ China, therefore, relies on shaping existing agreements or laws to justify access to the Arctic including the use of UNCLOS.

...the PRC claims it has the right to address regional and global issues in the Arctic...

Diplomatically, the PRC claims its various treaty memberships and its role as a permanent member of the UN Security Council entitles China influence in decisions concerning Arctic peace and security issues. Through such memberships, China also claims various rights in the Arctic Sea to include entitlements to conduct research, overflight, navigation, fishing, laying infrastructure (cables and pipelines), and resource exploration/exploitation in the Arctic Sea areas. China also leverages its membership in scientific bodies and through its membership in the Svalbard Treaty¹⁵ to expand research related to economic development and

climate studies. As per the 2018 policy paper “China’s Arctic Policy,” the idea of a “Polar Silk Road” ties into China’s Maritime Silk Road concept. Chinese relations with Arctic nations support development of potential shipping routes and economic development. China supports hydrographic and route studies for Arctic shipping lanes and employs the Arctic Council to influence Arctic-related treaties and agreements.¹⁶ However, history shows the PRC selectively obeyed or exploited laws to suit Chinese interests.

The abuse of the scientific access is part of Chinese strategy to gain an advantage for future operations in the Arctic and Antarctic...

Successfully defending U.S. interests will require an adroit U.S.-led interagency and multinational approach given China’s penchant to manipulate agreements and treaties in China’s favor. One example of such manipulation of existing treaties involves the 1925 Spitzbergen Treaty (now commonly referred to as the Svalbard Treaty), that gave signatories¹⁷ commercial access to the Norwegian islands. The PRC later exploited the treaty to gain China a place on the International Arctic Science Committee in 1996, and the establishment of a research station in 2004 on Spitzbergen Island in the Svalberg archipelago. In 2013, China gained observer status on the Arctic Council, and by 2019 utilized its scientific research station on Spitzbergen Island to test the BeiDou satellite system.¹⁸ The BeiDou satellite system is a dual-purpose system, like most Chinese commercial endeavors, and can both monitor the weather or provide precision weapon guidance. The BeiDou satellite ground stations in the Arctic are ostensibly for scientific research, but satellite tracking efforts provide a blueprint for how China will employ the Arctic for scientific,

security, and economic matters. These multiple use efforts contradict the Ottawa Declaration,¹⁹ which emphasizes the Arctic Council would not deal with matters related to military security.^{20,21} Such negotiations clearly fall under the U.S. Department of State authorities to confront in international forums such as the United Nations and the G20.

The abuse of the scientific access is part of Chinese strategy to gain an advantage for future operations in the Arctic and Antarctic, as well as prevent competitors from gaining strategic advantage from their research. The PRC autocratic structures and military strategy support the natural fusion of civil and military power. Civilian science missions provide justification for Chinese military support to operations, or so China asserts. Its professional literature urges the military use every opportunity to engage in polar missions to gain the change to “test equipment, technology and medical support alongside missions that enhance the military’s long-distance force projection capabilities, while also increasing the use of military transport, ships and special polar vehicles.” The military is encouraged to demand the right to exercise these capabilities and to advocate for search and rescue training or mission participation. Such military-civilian fusion increase military capacity with polar monitoring, air, sea, and land maneuver, and operational success in challenging conditions.²² China’s military continues to actively engage in developing the capabilities necessary to successfully operate in the polar regions.

Strategic Positioning in the Arctic: The Diplomatic, Military and Economic Ways and Means

China claims “freedom of navigation” patrols as justification for Chinese military patrols in the Arctic, around the Aleutian Islands, and within the U.S. exclusive economic zone. Chinese naval patrols in the Arctic are designed

to gain experience operating in northern waters while gauging U.S. and Canadian reactions. China's "freedom of navigation" claims and Chinese ventures into the Arctic demonstrate the expansion of China's global blue water and polar ambitions. China cannot operate effectively in the north without substantial knowledge of the Bering Strait, Aleutian Islands and the Strategic Sea Line of Communication (SLOC) they form. As a self-declared "near Arctic" state, China's efforts include designing and building a fleet force capable to successfully operate and support its Arctic ambitions. Plans for such a force include icebreakers, Coast Guard vessels, and other specialized ships. Such plans already manifested completion of at least three icebreakers by 2024 and additional research icebreakers for oceanographic and bathymetric studies under various stages of construction or development.

The Chinese military recognize the value of the polar regions and name them the "strategic commanding heights" implying the strategic value these regions possess. The PRC also recognized the air distance advantages between the two hemispheres, which make the polar regions "aviation key positions" that increase flight penetration capability. The Arctic also presents opportunities as the ideal region for concealing nuclear strikes from submarines and continues to get probed by various PRC military vessels.²³ Since 2021, PRC military incursions often feature a mix of military and Coast Guard ships. In 2021, a four-ship Chinese People's Liberation Army Navy group included a guided-missile cruiser, a guided-missile destroyer, a general intelligence vessel, and an auxiliary vessel that passed within 46 miles of one of the Aleutian Islands. During this patrol, the U.S. Coast Guard cutters Bertholf and Kimball tracked the vessels.²⁴ Although Chinese commentators and government spokesmen claimed the ships were entering the region in response to U.S. ships in the South China Sea, a

pattern of Chinese naval intrusions in subsequent years reveals a conscious intent to test and probe U.S. reactions in the Aleutian -Bering Strait SLOC. Only a year later in September 2022, the Coast Guard cutter Kimball and a C-130 tracked a flotilla that contained three Chinese ships and four Russian ships in the region. The flotilla was spotted eighty-six miles north of Kiska Island in the Aleutians.²⁵ Such military voyages off the coast of Alaska will likely increase in frequency and assertiveness as the PRC tests developing polar sea routes and U.S. maritime and air defenses.

The Chinese military recognize the value of the polar regions and name them the "strategic commanding heights"...

Such activities increasingly show evidence of bilateral participation with Russia. One such naval contingent was tracked in 2023 when eleven Russian and Chinese vessels patrolled near the Alaskan coast with the standard "freedom of navigation" exercise excuse. The contingent attracted an escort of four U.S. destroyers and anti-submarine aircraft due to its unprecedented size.²⁶ China repeated the exercise without Russian partners in 2024 with a four-vessel group, which again contained a guided missile destroyer and a guided missile cruiser sailing within the U.S. economic exclusion zone.²⁷ China's named "Coast Guard," already known to travel well beyond Chinese territorial waters, will likely also joint in Arctic operations. Such activities indicate not only a growing blue water capability, but an Arctic capability near U.S. shores.

China's declaration of a new "Polar Silk Road" through northern polar waters signaled PRC intent to expand power into the region to protect shipping and establish conditions favorable to Chinese trade and security.

Much is written concerning Chinese efforts to strengthen access to natural resources and mitigate risks posted to Strategic SLOC such as the Malacca Strait. BRI projects provide various capabilities such as extending overland pipelines and trade routes through neighboring countries like Myanmar and Pakistan, while other infrastructure efforts increase access to trade and hydrocarbons from Russia. The PRC is aggressively establishing natural resources and market resilience. The global economy demands secure and reliable access through SLOCs such as the Strait of Malacca, Strait of Hormuz, Bab el-Mandeb, and the Suez and Panama Canals. A loss or degraded access to such SLOCs would significantly damage the Chinese economy.²⁸

Due to its proximity and potential posture placement capabilities, a permanent Chinese presence in Greenland would threaten Canada and U.S. interests.

The Northeast Passage, Northwest Passage, and the Central Passage in the Arctic increasingly provide important trade route options, and, as China asserts, freedom of navigation and access to these routes should be regulated by international law. However, this assertion counters China's own efforts to deny other nations access to Chinese exclusive economic zones and ability to conduct freedom of navigation patrols in waters China perceives as strategic including the Taiwan Strait and South China Sea. Threading the diplomatic needle with China in the Arctic requires close cooperation between the U.S. and Arctic allies to ensure adherence to international rules and norms in both international waters. As China increases the number of sea and air patrols, the U.S. must also increase its regional presence.

One example of how China could potentially affect the security and economic situation in the

region could involve China securing access to Adak Island in the Aleutian Island chain. A Chinese shipping company suspected of being a military front reputedly offered to lease the Adak naval base annually; the current owner, the Aleut Corporation has declined.²⁹ NORTHCOM and INDOPACOM recognize the base's usefulness and importance: its three usable piers and two 8,000-foot runways, a hangar, and storage for over twenty million gallons of fuel.³⁰ Adak, Alaska represents contested space and another example of a multiple use strategic access point to enable trade routes, science and security in the Arctic region.

China has demonstrated that the northern route can be commercially viable. Since 2018 Chinese shipping lines have completed repeated voyages from Asia to Europe, and recently from Shanghai to St. Petersburg. The route the Chinese have chosen follows the Russian coast and offers China an alternative to southern routes for energy and trade to flow into China. Although PRC's attempts to acquire land along this route failed, such efforts highlight the importance of better cooperation between U.S. alliances with EU partner states and the strategic importance of U.S. and EU partner states' involvement in Greenland.³¹ Chinese ambitions in Greenland are well-known. The U.S. must work with NATO and EU partners to develop and action a strategy to provide Greenland with viable commercial partners as well as security guarantors that enable Greenland's use as a hub for dual use technologies for U.S. and EU. Due to its proximity and potential posture placement capabilities, a permanent Chinese presence in Greenland would threaten Canada and U.S. interests.

The international community should expect China to continue to develop and employ Arctic trade routes to Europe and eventually seek and set conditions to extract resources from the Antarctic. The U.S. and European allies must monitor such trade route developments. Until

the international community is in a post-Ukraine conflict scenario, few opportunities will exist to collaborate with Chinese and European nations in Arctic trade route development.

Unfortunately, the entry of Chinese naval or supposed “Coast Guard” platforms into the Arctic in recent years created a dangerous precedent with potential for escalation of U.S. and NATO force presence. By most western Pacific analysts, the China Coast Guard is a paramilitary law enforcement force, used aggressively to pursue China’s maritime strategy goals. Perhaps ironically and despite aggressive actions in places like the South China Sea, China’s Coast Guard could conceivably and eventually participate in environmental preservation efforts. Logistically, the PRC Coast Guard does not lack capabilities. The PRC Coast Guard fleet comprises over 150 vessels augmented by two 12,000-ton ships—the largest maritime law enforcement ships in the world.³²

Chinese ships have trained for at-sea replenishment and can expect to demonstrate a force presence across the world’s sea lanes including both polar regions. The Chinese Coast Guard likely intends to regularly operate in the Arctic where it can support Chinese intentions to access energy and mineral resources. The commercial and military implications of these research studies will demonstratively showcase PRC presence in the region.³³ In a similar manner to the Arctic, the Chinese Coast Guard is a formidable force, which will undoubtedly increase periodic presence in the Antarctic. Developing a means in which the PRC can responsibly contribute to reducing illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing and illegal maritime activities could significantly share environmental protections costs while protecting global fisheries. Unfortunately, the PRC faces monumental challenges to rehabilitate its reputation and nurture sufficient trust with the international community to potentially contribute to such efforts.

Hybrid Activities, Cables, and Polar Information Flow

Many of China’s Coast Guard vessels are re-purposed naval vessels and as such retain military weaponry.³⁴ Although it is unknown if the Coast Guard will employ force to safeguard China’s interests in the Arctic, China’s use of hybrid warfare techniques would not bar the Coast Guard from augmenting military ship missions or providing support to “research and scientific discovery ships.” China’s threat to the Arctic and Antarctic is not confined to overt military measures and fleet operations. China’s hybrid war doctrine includes measures to ensure its security and the security of Chinese investments. With emerging PRC technologies, Chinese capabilities to enhance both information gathering and information denial operations will continue to grow. China now claims a deep-sea cable cutting capability, which could sever underwater cables as deep as four kilometers below the surface—twice the depth of current telecommunications cables placement.

China now claims a deep-sea cable cutting capability...

Widely reported last year, China allegedly severed underwater cables by dragging anchors in the Baltic Sea behind the “Yi Peng 3” ship, but this novel cable cutting capability can now be deployed by China’s submersible vehicle crews to target “armored” cables. Chinese researchers claim such a device will be used for innocuous salvage and seabed mining.³⁵ Global information flow, not to mention the sparse and remote civilian infrastructure and populations in the Arctic would disproportionately suffer if any such subsea cables were severed.

Most hostile actions against cable communication networks will directly harm multiple countries. There are some exceptions

where a cable's disruption will principally harm only one country. Russia's Polar Express Undersea Cable is one such example. It is solely owned and operated by Russia with over 400 km established.³⁶ The Russian cables serve Russia's interests, but other proposed cables could threaten Chinese security interests in East Asia and Greenland. European nations proposed new subsea cable routes from Europe to Asia and North America under the Arctic Sea and ice. One of these proposals includes the "Polar

The internet communication pushed through subsea cables poses significant vulnerabilities to cutting, tapping, or damage.

Connect Cable," which will originate in Norway and pass through the North Pole and onward to Japan, South Korea, and the Asia-Pacific region via the Bering Strait. The 10,000 km distance from Norway to Japan would reduce latencies and provide greater network resilience. Another such cable, the 14,000 km-long "Far North Fiber Project" runs from the Nordic Countries to Japan, via Greenland, Canada, and Alaska and the West Coast U.S. The cable will run through the Northwest Passage—the sea lane running through the Arctic Archipelago of Canada and south of Greenland. The loss of such a critical communication capability could take eighty days to replace, only if the icebreakers and cable laying ship could be deployed.³⁷

Potential Chinese malign actions against these new subsea cables could give China an information advantage if China chooses to employ cable cutting technology against Arctic telecommunication cables. Furthermore, if China could tap these subsea cables, the intelligence value would be significant. The underseas cables in the Arctic and emerging PRC technology to cut or tap into these cables pose a significant security challenge to information flow across the

global community.

The internet communication pushed through subsea cables poses significant vulnerabilities to cutting, tapping, or damage. Such actions can catalyze significant communication and data blackouts. These interruptions would significantly degrade civilian, commercial, mining, and hydrocarbon industries operating in the Arctic. An example of such a cable is the Alaska Quintillion Arctic Subsea Cable system as the only U.S. subsea fiber network in the Arctic. The 1900-kilometer-long system runs from Nome to Prudhoe Bay. The cable is "100% armored with cable landings shielded within a steel conduit up to a mile offshore and buried over ten feet below the seabed," but even with such protection, remains vulnerable to compromise. The cable must come onshore to six stations, five of which are remote and half without port facilities.³⁸ Though the energy and economic degradation caused by the cutting of an undersea cable may be difficult to imagine, it is not inconceivable. Last year's cable cuts in the Baltic could be replicated in the Arctic. Conceivably, China and Russia both possess a capability to conduct such globally disruptive actions, if they deem their interests would benefit.

Arctic Data Collection – Not Simply "Science"

China augments its surveillance in the Arctic with new technology that may inform future battle plans. Chinese icebreakers drop surveillance buoys into Arctic waters with scientific instruments, which could gather information essential for submarine operations or submarine tracking. Scientific studies in the Arctic can serve dual use purposes and should be suspected of direct government links to the Chinese People's Liberation Army where any information of strategic value will be used accordingly. This included research conducted as part of an international team.³⁹ The information

on ice, sea salinity, and competing naval forces will be useful for China's Shang 3 (Type 093B) Class Nuclear Attack Submarines were built for Arctic use.⁴⁰ Chinese data collection efforts in the Arctic clearly serve a military purpose.

The data Chinese intelligence efforts are gathering is being actively incorporated into China's operational plans as part of China's efforts to create "informationized" and "intelligentized" AI-driven data to create autonomous battlefield decision making programs. The knowledge of the Arctic and Antarctic China lacks is bolstered by sensors and scientific studies in these regions.⁴¹ China's access to the Antarctic region facilitates dual use scientific research centers, which likely also collect intelligence. Attempts to deny China access to intelligence gathered through sensor emplacement must be coordinated by U.S. intelligence agencies with multilateral partners and allies. Such partner and ally efforts must block China's capabilities to disrupt U.S. and NATO Command and Control efforts. Efforts to limit PRC capacity to disrupt intelligence collection in the Arctic require broad multilateral cooperation across each nation's interagency environment.

Greenland's Riches and Strategic Position

Greenland has pursued a variety of projects that China has been a major partner in financing and exploring. Greenland's Large Scale Project Act gave it the authority to recruit foreign workers, and, in consequence, China attempted to bring in large numbers of employees to help develop Greenland's rare earths and zinc deposits. Chinese foreign policy objectives have expressly identified control of rare earths and strategic metals sources, and Chinese tariffs in 2025, combined with earlier restrictions on rare earths magnet exports in 2024, emphasize China's intention to dominate exports and production worldwide.⁴² However, Greenland's

environmental regulations and its harsh climate stymied Chinese intentions. The two rare earth mines in operation are unlikely to serve as enclaves for Chinese investment unless domestic political and legal conditions change.⁴³ China's failure to gain a lasting foothold in Greenland is in part due to environmental policies, but U.S. companies and the Department of State played a significant role since the beginning of the Trump administration putting global attention on Greenland's value and importance to the United States and NATO.

United States officials who visited Greenland in 2024 convinced the CEO of Tanbreeze Mining, a rare earths mining company, to not sell their mine to the Chinese. Ultimately the American company Critical Metals acquired the Tanbreeze holdings and projects mining for eudialyte, which is rich in rare earth elements such as neodymium, cerium, lanthanum, and yttrium, and gallium. These rare earths are used to make rare earth batteries that are essential to American national defense. The American company Green Roc is also exploring graphite deposits, a potential source of the material after China's decision to restrict access to minerals necessary for electric vehicles and batteries.⁴⁴

Of the thirty-four critical raw minerals, Greenland has twenty-five.

Greenland's mineral wealth is not bounded by rare earths. Greenland also has significant deposits of copper, nickel, zinc, gold, diamonds, iron ore, and tungsten. Of the thirty-four critical raw minerals, Greenland has twenty-five.⁴⁵ Chinese control of these resources would provide a vast array of commercial and strategic advantages. However, given China's inability to create significant political change despite attempting to provide financial incentives, any future Chinese economic moves would be

constrained by an international presence led by the United States to deny China a commercial position like its domestic rare earths hegemony.

Additionally, Greenland's strategic position is defined by the modern weapons, sensors, and communications systems that could operate from the island as well as the potential for the sea lines of communication around the island to be used for naval transit from the Pacific Ocean to the Atlantic Ocean. Chinese submarines could employ the same sea approaches Soviet

The need for icebreaker polar support for commercial and military activities will necessitate cooperation across government agencies and through multinational relationships.

submarines once. The existing U.S. Pituffik Space Base in Greenland is used for missile defense and space surveillance. China could create similar capacity if granted land leases for commercial ventures. China attempted to gain a presence in Greenland in 2016 when a bid by Hong-Kong based company General Nice to assume control of the abandoned naval base at Grønnedal was blocked by the Danish government. Further, China wants to establish research stations in Greenland like those in the Antarctic that could serve as BaiDou-2 satellite ground control stations. These efforts require consistent monitoring; Greenland as of 2025 can negotiate international agreements with foreign states.⁴⁶ Emplacing dual-use sensors in the Arctic circle would help China control their own satellites and gather intelligence on U.S. systems.⁴⁷ As suspected in the Antarctic, "scientific" research stations could also be employed to gather data that could inform Chinese military responses or shape Chinese plans.

Recommendations for Competition with China in the Polar Regions

Our recommendations are fourfold and concern a mix of material, tactical, and diplomatic efforts. First, we recommend that the U.S. commission additional icebreakers. As of 2025 the U.S. has two icebreakers. President Trump claims that he has ordered forty to be built.⁴⁸ It is uncertain how long such procurement efforts will take, but international companies from amongst U.S. partner countries expressed interest in this proposal. Outside the U.S., this effort could even leverage partner shipyards in Canada, Finland, and elsewhere to meet Canadian and U.S. needs.⁴⁹ These icebreakers should be operated through a collaborative relationship between the Coast Guard under the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense.

The need for icebreaker polar support for commercial and military activities will necessitate cooperation across government agencies and through multinational relationships. The U.S. must possess sufficient capability to support effective interagency and multinational missions and maintain sufficient polar presence. China's construction and polar deployment activities indicate intent to maintain a permanent or semi-permanent polar presence through heavy rotation of its icebreaker fleet which will soon number between four and six vessels depending on when China's nuclear-powered icebreaker ship project is completed.^{50,51} Such capability supports China's rights of passage claims through polar waters while straining U.S. partner and allied aircraft and maritime vessel surveillance coverage. Even if the production of forty icebreakers proves unaffordable or the construction requirements produce a low number of vessels, the addition of any number will significantly enhance U.S. Arctic presence capabilities. The U.S. can also request the assistance of NATO allies for Arctic

icebreaker support, but in the realm of Great Power Competition possession of capabilities and numbers of ships conveys capability to other nations.

Our second recommendation involves U.S. negotiation of a permanent naval presence at the Grønnedal Naval Base in Greenland. Like parallel efforts involving the potential reactivation of the Adak Naval Base in Alaska, through Grønnedal the U.S. government can posture a forward deployed presence near Chinese arctic areas of interest. The Grønnedal base requires significant diplomatic effort with NATO and the EU, of which might serve to partially resolve the Trump Administration's desire to acquire Greenland. A U.S. base would reinforce mutual security requirements and assuage partners that Greenland's periphery could eventually be secured through multilateral and joint monitoring and patrol efforts. Such actions would better secure sea lane northern approaches to Europe and Canada. U.S. diplomatic efforts will function best if synched with cooperative development plans for Greenland's mineral wealth while assuring the residents of Greenland such arrangements are in their best interests. Although U.S. companies purchased mining rights to some of Greenland's inland resources, resources offshore from Greenland require commensurate attention. The U.S., EU, and NATO share interests to prevent China from monopolizing Greenland's resources and exploiting its strategic location. Permanent U.S. access to Grønnedal will secure such interests.

Conclusion

For decades, the People's Republic of China communicated its polar intentions in government speeches, news releases, and military documents. Coupled with the formulation of a significant icebreaker fleet, other PRC multiple-use maritime and polar capabilities increasingly raise global security concerns regarding Chinese

intentions. Given PRC actions in recent years in other maritime and disputed environments, the PRC proved its willingness to probe and test the viability of international norms, national boundaries and the national resolve of those nations who have long adhered to the rules-based international order. China's broad partnership and cooperation with Russia in the Arctic has forged new opportunities for commercial and military ventures. The world will closely watch how the PRC manages its Arctic and Antarctic relationships with Russia and others as China pursues new transit opportunities and commercial interests in the "Near Arctic." China's efforts to leverage "scientific" investment to simultaneously gain valuable dual-use data for both military and scientific purposes demonstrate China's capability and willingness to employ destabilizing ICAD methods. If questionable PRC actions in the South China Sea and elsewhere are indicative of Chinese intent in the polar regions, the U.S. must strengthen interagency and multilateral cooperation to reinforce the rules-based order that historically stabilizes the Arctic and Antarctic regions.

China's drive for rare earth mineral dominance poses economic and security risks for all countries with limited or nonexistent access to such resources.

China's drive for rare earth mineral dominance poses economic and security risks for all countries with limited or nonexistent access to such resources. The possibility of a Chinese owned and operated mining and port facility with dual use capability poses a security nightmare for the U.S., Canada, EU, and NATO. Despite contemporary arguments in various political arenas, Greenland sustains strategic prominence in the northern hemisphere not only

for metals and minerals, but for new shipping lanes as Arctic ice continues to melt. In recent years, the U.S. belatedly responded to potential Chinese strategic moves by slowly reenergizing military and diplomatic efforts. China's employment of diplomatic, commercial, and military pressure will escalate as economic and security demands for reliable food, energy, and mineral sources continue to grow.

The U.S. must lead development of a comprehensive multilateral effort to reinforce existing agreements designed to minimize conflict in the polar regions and assist polar region states to resist Chinese encroachment. Failure to act in a whole-of-government multinational approach synchronized with our allies and partners risks the PRC achieving commercial and security goals which may conflict, or worse, harm the collective interests of the U.S. and its allies and partners. The U.S. risks creating opportunities for PRC and Russia efforts harmful to U.S. interests through U.S. indecision coupled with indistinct priorities and fractured alliances and partnerships. Competition is healthy, but monopolizing resource access and deliberate undercutting the international order risks potential conflict...even at the ends of the world. **IAJ**

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Southern Polar Dominance:

China's Strategic Rationale for an Antarctic Polar Policy

by Phil Kerber and John P. Ringquist

In the new era of strategic power competition with the People's Republic of China (PRC), the Antarctic region presents unprecedented opportunities in commerce, strategic posture and natural resource exploitation. Growing Chinese presence in the southern polar region and Antarctica, specifically coupled with new technology investments in icebreakers, satellite tracking stations, and scientific exploration vessels, demonstrates the will and capability to develop options for sustained commerce, posture, and resource exploitation in Antarctica and the surrounding waters. China regards its presence and activities in the Antarctic region as essential to its global ambitions.

The Arctic region has acquired a position of national prominence since President Xi Jinping came to power in 2012; in November 2014 Xi Jinping announced in a speech that China wanted to “better understand, protect and exploit the Antarctic.”¹ Liu Cigui, director of the China State Oceanic Administration in 2014, identified China's commercial and scientific interest in the Antarctic during the signing of an agreement with Australia on the Chinese icebreaker *Snow Dragon*. China has engaged in Antarctic scientific missions since the 1950s and regards its presence in the Antarctic as proof of its seriousness to increase its role in Antarctic governance. Liu stressed that China regarded the period 2015-2030 to be a period for increasing China's claim to be a polar

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power.² China has pursued those commercial and security goals through a policy that China has pursued with vigor by spending more than any other Antarctic state on icebreakers, planes, and bases.³ China's exploration and engagement with Antarctica reveal a strategy for future posture and resource exploitation that challenges the established rights of other polar states and cements China's interests in a geostrategic region. Some of the answers lie in the wording of the Antarctic Treaty. It prohibits military activity, bases, weapons testing and maneuvers in the Antarctic, but it permits scientific research, as well as personnel and scientific data exchange. The treaty also covers the area to sixty degrees south, which includes the waters around Antarctica as well as the continent.⁴ China's research stations are part of a strategy to draw together regional commercial interests, shared security projects, and China's geostrategic plans for telecommunications and space. The military is part of these plans and operates through overt military diplomacy and opaque Chinese scientific mission manning choices.

Science, Research Stations, and Dual-Use Technologies

China has worked with Belt and Road partners for access to their ports and infrastructure to support the Chinese vision for Antarctica. China's Argentinian and Chilean partners also have sectors of Antarctica under their jurisdiction and those continental claims could be useful to China in the future for commercial development alongside Argentina and Chile. China has also made establishing and expanding its physical presence in Antarctica a priority. Although China's Quinling Station is in the Antarctic sector assigned to Australia, the latter lacks China's resources. China relies on Australia to support its territorial presence because China lacks an assigned sector of Antarctica. Australia's sector encompasses forty-two percent of the Antarctic continent,

but it isn't an exclusive territorial claim and agreements between Australia and China have allowed China to establish research stations. China in turn has relied on claims of scientific exploration to justify increasing the number and size of its scientific research centers and bases. China is also engaged in research in Antarctic waters that could have dual use applications for commercial as well as military purposes.

The importance of Antarctic waters to shipping has increased significantly over the last decade...

The importance of Antarctic waters to shipping has increased significantly over the last decade and observers from Oxford University claimed that hundreds of ships were traversing the southern waters transforming the region into a power projection hub.⁵ China has systematically increased the number of hydrographic surveys that its vessels conduct. As of 2024, China had completed forty-one Antarctic scientific expeditions and has a fleet of three icebreakers capable of operating in the Arctic or Antarctic. The forty-first expedition was ostensibly similar in scope to other international efforts encompassing studies of climate change, surveying of the surrounding Antarctic waters, and Antarctic ice sheets. However, the Chinese expedition is also conducting construction and expansion of the five existing scientific research centers in Antarctica.⁶ Although scientific research centers are not excluded by the Antarctic Treaty, China has made no secret of their intention to use the research centers for research with direct military and commercial applications that violate the spirit and word of the treaty.

Chinese scientific research centers in Antarctica pose a unique security threat to scientific partners and western scientific research centers in Antarctica because of their

military-civil fusion (MCF) strategy that is likely providing the Chinese military with data that identifies routes for icebreakers, salinity levels, and underwater hydrographic survey results that could influence future submarine operations and map undersea communication cable locations. Further, since China's first expedition and membership in the Antarctic Treaty System (ATS) in 1983, China has built five stations and will complete a sixth by 2025. By early 2000, China was a consultative party with voting rights in the ATS, and by 2024, it is

Any research that China conducts alone or in conjunction with other countries is subject to appropriation by the Chinese military.

suspected that China is using its research stations to conduct surveillance, intelligence gathering and underwater warfare research. Expanding Chinese presence in Antarctica could support future claims for a permanent presence and rights to resources should the ATS be renegotiated.⁷ The United States (U.S.) has one research station in the Antarctic and when the explosive growth of Chinese research station numbers, size, and capability is considered in conjunction with unauthorized (PLA) presence at those stations, China's claims of transparency should be held suspect.⁸

Antarctic Data Collection – Science as Justification for Presence and Posture

Another factor to consider regarding Chinese research efforts in Antarctica involves their military-civil fusion law that makes research subject to military appropriation for strategic purposes. Any research that China conducts alone or in conjunction with other countries is subject to appropriation by the Chinese military.⁹

The Chinese State council recognizes that military-civil fusion provides the best route for projecting military power into the Arctic.¹⁰ What Chinese scientists discover is subject to military use, and when the data can be incorporated into China's military strategy through AI analysis or intelligentized data aggregation. Such a law pulls all scientific research under government access, control, exploitation and potential militarization. In one sense, no Chinese research station can ever simply be scientific for civilian research purposes only. Scientific studies in the Antarctic can serve dual use purposes and should be suspected of direct government links to the Chinese PLA where any information of strategic value will be used accordingly. This included research conducted as part of an international team.¹¹ The same scientific information on ice, sea salinity, and sea floors that could be useful to climate change studies could also be useful for China's Shang 3 (Type 093B) Class Nuclear Attack Submarines, which were built for polar use.¹² The data Chinese intelligence efforts are gathering is being actively incorporated into China's operational plans as part of China's efforts to create "informationized" and "intelligentized" AI-driven data to create autonomous battlefield decision making programs. The knowledge of the Antarctic that China lacks is bolstered by sensors and scientific studies in these regions.¹³

China consistently messages itself as a champion for transparency, but its actions in the Antarctic do not match governmental rhetoric. The increasing presence of Chinese ground stations for satellite monitoring as well as their potential role as coordination sites for intelligence collection is a significant security concern. Furthermore, their potential use in an actual conflict in space is a matter of concern to the interests of other nations with research and commercial stations in Antarctica.¹⁴ Reportedly, China plans to increase the number of research stations in Antarctica and expand its Quinling

station to facilitate increased operations. Not coincidentally, the Quinling station is also adjacent oil and natural gas deposits.¹⁵ China's scientific research centers in Antarctica also operate as ground control stations for the thirty or more BeiDou satellites in orbit. The satellites increase China's C4ISR¹⁶ capabilities and could be used for missile targeting, space warfare, and tracking military movements. Chinese military thinkers understand that domination over Antarctica's airspace could control access to Oceania, South America, and Africa.¹⁷

China's Antarctic bases located within previously accepted Australian Antarctic Territory¹⁸ are a concern for Australian historic claim of sovereignty and security. Australia's Antarctic Territory claim covers over forty-two percent of the continent. China's scientific justification for exploring coal reserves, undersea metals deposits, and maritime resource exploitation is an example of how China is defying existing relationships, agreements and treaties to pursue its own interests.¹⁹ China is a member of the ATS, but has developed capabilities and expanded its research stations in the Antarctic for purposes that violate the ATS non-military, scientific-study-focused basis for treaty members activities in the Antarctic.

China's fleet of nuclear-powered icebreakers, expanding bases, advanced communications capabilities, and logistics support expansion are in line with historical pronouncements made by Chinese military and the Chinese Communist Party. China wants Antarctica's krill protein, its mineral resources, and its gas and oil reserves. Additionally, China also looks to develop the Antarctic's potential sea lines of communication to gain new shipping routes south of Australia, South Africa, and Chile.²⁰ The same shipping lanes that would prove useful to commerce would be employed by military vessels seeking to utilize southern routes to gain access to regions of the various continents that conceivably may be less protected. Monitoring and countering

any Antarctic Treaty violations incurred through unauthorized Chinese expansion in the Antarctic will require the Department of Defense to work closely with security cooperation partners in Chile and Argentina. Such cooperation can also deter China from engaging illegal, unreported and unregulated (IUU) fishing or krill harvesting. Such security cooperation relationships can monitor and deter potential aggression from Chinese PLAN and Coast Guard vessels deployed in protection of Chinese commercial interests.

China at present does not seek international support to overturn existing treaties governing international activities in Antarctica, but...

China at present does not seek international support to overturn existing treaties governing international activities in Antarctica, but China is shaping the environment for maximum exploitation when the time comes. Chinese policy statements confirm Antarctica's future role in China's economic and security plans. Throughout the first two decades of the twenty-first century China has focused on increasing capabilities and technologies while pushing the boundaries of what is possible under current agreements. While China works to create strategic advantage in Antarctica through its physical bases and their respective capabilities, China is also building partnerships to eventually challenge the ATS and the 1991 Protocol on Environmental Protection which prohibit Antarctic mineral prospecting except for scientific research.

Amending the ATS requires China to convince three-quarters of the consultative parties to revise both agreements.²¹ Members of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa), which are also consultative

members in the Antarctic Treaty Consultative Parties (ATCPs) and the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR), have not currently reached a consensus on challenging the existing agreements. These nation's positions could change if member nations unite in recommending revisions of the treaties in a manner that could conceivably favor their individual or collective national interests.²²

Chinese plans to exploit Antarctic fisheries are surfacing as its resistance grows to expanding protected Antarctic maritime areas against commercial fishing.

Contesting China's efforts to amend the agreements in favor of Chinese policy goals will necessitate consistent diplomatic and economic engagement to preserve the existing protocols and rules-based order against growing pressure to make Antarctica's mineral riches available for extraction by the best prepared nations. China will may leverage its Belt and Road partnerships and investments to gain support for its diplomatic and political aims and take advantage of the infrastructure built in nations China can use for logistics support for its icebreakers and other naval vessels. Icebreakers, especially nuclear powered ones are a key component of China's strategy in the Arctic and Antarctic given the distance from Chinese home ports and the need to decrease dependence on foreign partners to sustain those vessels.²³ Chinese plans to exploit Antarctic fisheries are surfacing as its resistance grows to expanding protected Antarctic maritime areas against commercial fishing.²⁴ China's need for maritime protein is a compelling force for its support of IUU fishing in poorly protected waters such as those off Antarctica's coast and Argentina.

China's Military Posture in the Antarctic Region

The Antarctic offers China potential options for military operations and strategic positioning. Chinese strategy considers the polar regions to be strategic terrain on par with the ocean seabed or space.²⁵ China's military has recognized for nearly twenty years the vertical world map that prominently features Antarctica as an official military map since it was unveiled in 2006.²⁶ The map provides an unmistakable guide to where China has chosen to place research stations and logistical support facilities including ports, airfields, and helicopter landing areas. Understanding the waters around the Antarctic also provides China with an opportunity to plan for how it would control access in the future. The Antarctic sea lanes could provide a solution to some of China's strategic dilemmas like competition in the Strait of Malacca. Freighters or warships transiting through Antarctic waters have few transit limitations related to hull size or draft—both transit concerns when transiting the Panama Canal and the Suez Canal.²⁷ The Chinese military document *The Science of Military Strategy* identified the ongoing efforts to reinforce sovereignty rights in the Antarctic through military bases, exercises, and demonstrations as an important way for nations to prevent competitors from undercutting their exploration rights in Antarctica.²⁸ China recognizes that having a voice is not enough and claims must be backed up by physical presence.

Chinese strategy includes using scientific access to gain an advantage for future operations in the Antarctic as well as prevent competitors from gaining strategic advantage from their research. China's professional military literature urges the PLA use every opportunity to engage in polar missions to gain the change to "test equipment, technology and medical support alongside missions that enhance the military's long-distance force projection capabilities,"

while also increasing the use of military transport, ships and special polar vehicles.”²⁹ The military is encouraged to demand the right to exercise these capabilities and to advocate for search and rescue training or mission participation. Such military-civilian fusion increases military capacity with polar monitoring, air, sea, and land maneuver, and operational success in challenging conditions.³⁰ These plans and their exact wording violates the Antarctic Treaty System prohibitions against military activities in Antarctica, so China conducts them as part of its logistics support, scientific research, and sensor testing programs. China’s military continues to actively engage in developing the capabilities necessary to successfully operate in the polar regions.

Other nations operating in Antarctica do use military aircraft to facilitate their scientific missions. However, the U.S. aircraft are openly declared and marked accordingly. They aren’t claiming to be engaged in search and rescue or science missions. They deliver people and materiel. Staging from Christchurch, New Zealand, the U.S. military, through Joint Task Force-Support Forces Antarctica and Operation Deep Freeze, provide “joint service, inter-agency support for the National Science Foundation, which manages the United States Antarctic Program” and Joint Task Force-Support Forces Antarctica (JTF-SFA) “coordinates strategic inter-theater airlift, tactical deep field support, aeromedical evacuation support, search and rescue response, sealift, seaport access, bulk fuel supply logistics, port cargo handling, and transportation requirements for the NSF mission.”³¹ JTF-SFA is able to utilize C-17 and LC-130H aircraft for these missions.³² China utilizes its icebreakers and organic helicopter support to deliver personnel, but mixed into China’s scientific expedition staff are PLA personnel.

China employs the same scientific and legal justifications to advance its interests in the Antarctic. Despite becoming party to the

Antarctic Treaty in 1983 and signing the Madrid Protocol, which banned any military and mining activity until the Treaty could be renegotiated in 2048, China actively expresses interest in Antarctica’s oil, gas, and minerals. The Polar Institute of China mapped Antarctica’s resources and official Chinese documents attempt to justify

Other nations operating in Antarctica do use military aircraft to facilitate their scientific missions.

scientific expeditions as preparatory to economic ventures in the Antarctic.³³ The Chinese dual use approach with scientific expeditions also undergirds China’s intent to increase military intelligence and domain awareness. Furthermore, such research enables experience that can leverage benefits in military cold weather operations and establishes the necessary engineering and design knowledge required for a network of Antarctic Ocean listening devices and a fleet of polar-specific satellites.³⁴ Strategic positioning and access to polar resources are China’s goals, poorly justified as development of new shipping routes and scientific research. China has deployed the PLA on multiple occasions to construct and activate high-frequency radar systems that reputedly could block military satellites and interfere with the GPS satellite system.³⁵ China’s moves have been noted by Australia and, in response, Australia has started improving its situational awareness and equipment to monitor China’s efforts.

Australia is attempting to preserve its equities in Antarctica with a ten-year, \$578 million plan to purchase drones, helicopters, and mobile research stations. Although Australia already operates four permanent research stations in Antarctica and the sub-Arctic, it intends to augment its own exploration and surveillance capabilities with the new acquisitions. The

Australian effort intends to explore East Antarctica and map areas previously unexplored by other nations. The drones are intended to also provide surveillance of Antarctic areas that can send real-time information to its scientific centers.³⁶ Australia's acquisition of a new icebreaker will provide a platform from which four medium lift helicopters can operate.³⁷ Other nations in the Antarctic are engaged with China, but in ways that attempt to leverage Chinese development and military programs that assist the nations of Argentina and Chile while also leaving open the possibility for agreements with the U.S.

The Chinese military recognize the value of the polar regions and name them the “strategic commanding heights” implying the strategic value these regions possess.

The Chinese military recognize the value of the polar regions and name them the “strategic commanding heights” implying the strategic value these regions possess. The PRC also recognized the air distance advantages between the two hemispheres that make the polar regions “aviation key positions” that increase flight penetration capability.³⁸ The incentive for Chinese access to airbases and ports in the region is the Chinese offer of development funding and mutual security assistance. China is working hard to ensure access to Antarctica and a regional presence through multiple strategies including diplomatic, military and commercial ties.

Diplomatic and Military Cooperation with Antarctic Polar Nations

Argentina and Chile are of fundamental importance to China's regional strategy due to their proximity to the Antarctic and their physical presence on the continent. Both have

bases capable of operating year-round.³⁹ China's 2015 agreement with Argentina to construct a space tracking and control station with military ties and dual use potential at Neuquen was an important step in China's strategy to increase its operational capabilities in the region. The station is operated by a subsidiary of the PLA and provides communications and spacecraft communications capabilities when these craft pass over the region. This enables data analysis and sharing directly from these satellites or craft as they pass overhead instead of waiting for these surveillance platforms to enter Chinese airspace. Argentina gets access to ten percent of the station's communication time and satellite images as needed for localized targets. In addition to the satellite monitoring center, Argentina arranged for China to build and deliver a replacement for its aging icebreaker.⁴⁰

While China was negotiating rights to build a satellite tracking center in Argentina, it was developing similar arrangements with Chile that, in 2025, have resulted in a Chilean government amenable to Chinese presence in the region and access to facilities that China uses to facilitate its Antarctic mission. The Chinese PLAN has conducted naval exercises with their Chilean counterparts in the Magellan Strait as well as hosting military exchange visits. China also seeks access to the Chilean base at Punta Arenas in order to conduct resupply for its Antarctic stations.⁴¹ China also provides Chile with telecommunications assistance and in 2020 Huawei opened its second AI and Big Data-focused center.⁴² Such a center could serve China's interests by providing it with a way to rapidly analyze and collate large amounts of data such as those generated during scientific surveys in the Antarctic. Future Chinese technical and commercial agreements could encompass dual use in this area of technology much in the same way that China shares imagery with Argentina.

However, not all of China's engagement with these two important nations is welcome.

Chinese fishing ships are conducting harvesting operations in the region year-round and the ships are accused of frequent illegal fishing in Argentinian and Chilean waters. The Argentine Sea is an area of strategic value due to its natural resources, sea lanes, and its function as the gateway to the Antarctic. Both nations note that China's fishing fleet in Antarctic waters is the largest and maintains a year-round presence. The Chinese refrigerated cargo ships anchor at the edge of Argentina's Exclusive Economic Zone and receive fish from ships that frequently turn off their Automatic Identification System to allow them to enter Argentine waters to illegally fish. In the past ten years their numbers have increased approximately 800 percent.⁴³ The Argentine Navy has increased air and sea patrols, but the sheer numbers of Chinese ships are straining resources. Chile and Argentina lack the capacity to contest China's growing commercial and military presence. Diplomatic and security cooperation with the U.S. will be significant in helping these states preserve their claims to Antarctic territory against Chinese efforts to dominate efforts to develop resources despite existing claims and agreements.⁴⁴ The events in Greenland and the Arctic with Chinese economic ventures are echoed in Antarctica with the exception that China is not able to commercially access resources, at least not yet.

Economic Incentives

China's presence in the Antarctic region grows with each passing year. Additionally, in Antarctic regions, often overlooked natural resources such as krill and polar fisheries are under pressure as world demand for agriculture and protein needs grow. Chinese strategy for the polar regions involves a long-term investment in costly tools such as icebreakers. Furthermore, the PRC actively expands its influence and regional presence through exploitation of scientific treaties and economic agreements coupled with incremental attempts to establish

a regional foothold in the polar regions. In 2019 President Xi warned that China needed to be ready for "grey rhino" and "black swan" events. The former means that China must be present to exploit lapses in competitor commitment in the polar regions to shape decision making, whereas the latter communicates that China must be positioned to take advantage of Black Swan crises to its own benefit.⁴⁵

China's presence in the Antarctic region grows with each passing year.

While the Arctic offers more potential advantage in expediting trade transit between China and Europe, the Antarctic region also offers tremendous potential access to natural resources. A region historically transited for whale and seal hunting in the nineteenth century, the Southern Ocean is perhaps now known most for its vast populations of krill. According to the United Nation's Food and Agriculture Organization State of World Fisheries and Aquaculture 2022 report, 455,000 tons of krill were harvested in 2020 from the Antarctic region. The intrusion of PRC fishing vessels and their reputation for IUU fishing in other parts of the world highlight the danger and great potential to damage Antarctic fisheries. Much needs to be done to establish monitoring and enforcement mechanisms in the region. Nations, including the PRC, could irreparably harm arctic fisheries without firm compliance with international rules and norms such as those provided by agreements such as the Commission for the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR).

Aside from Antarctic krill and fish, studies assess vast natural resources exist under the continental shelf and the surrounding Southern Ocean. Some locations explored by Russia indicate there may be upwards of 500 billion barrels worth of oil under some areas

of the Ocean.⁴⁶ The Antarctic Treaty and the subsequent Madrid Protocol, of which China is a signature, currently prohibit development in the area but doesn't exclude the possibility for hydrocarbon exploration and future development if the Antarctic Treaty and Manila Protocol are abrogated or renegotiated. China possesses five substantial "research bases"⁴⁷ located in the Antarctic – Quinling Research Station, a recently opened base rests adjacent to the Ross Sea near the U.S. McMurdo base.⁴⁸ However small, in the future, such stations could serve as monitoring or force projection platforms to secure future security and economic interests in the region.

The U.S. and other Antarctic Treaty signature nations must continue to strongly reinforce principles in the Antarctic Treaty and Madrid Protocol.

The U.S. and other Antarctic Treaty signature nations must continue to strongly reinforce principles in the Antarctic Treaty and Madrid Protocol. Furthermore, treaty members must effectively collaborate across the multinational interagency environment in resource scientific exploration, fishery monitoring and fishery enforcement patrols. The military is not always the best mechanism to protect global environmental interests given global law enforcement capabilities. Strengthening and reinforcing the rules-based order in the Southern Ocean is just as important as such efforts in the broader Indo-Pacific region.

Recommendations for Competition with China in the Polar Regions

Our recommendations are fivefold and concern a mix of material, tactical, and diplomatic efforts. First, we recommend that the U.S. commission additional icebreakers and aircraft for Antarctic operations. As of 2025

the U.S. has two icebreakers, both based in the Northwest United States. President Trump claims that he has ordered forty to be built and international partners have expressed their support for this plan.^{49,50} We recommend that the U.S. dedicate at least three of the new ships to the Antarctic region. This would provide U.S. with the ability to logistically sustain its research stations, as well as provide icebreaking capacity for any U.S. naval forces passing through the region between the SOUTHCOM and INDOPACOM regions.

These icebreakers should be operated through a collaborative relationship between the Coast Guard under the Department of Homeland Security and the Department of Defense. The need for icebreaker polar support for commercial and military activities will necessitate cooperation across government agencies and through multinational relationships. The U.S. must possess sufficient capability to support effective interagency and multinational missions and maintain sufficient polar presence. Supporting our regional alliances will also mean working to cement operational capabilities with Australia on icebreaker missions to support scientific and security imperatives. Although Australia operates one icebreaker and has plans for a second, additional logistical support for research bases will guarantee a sustained polar presence.⁵¹

Aerial platforms such as drones and polar capable LC-130 H aircraft should become part of the effort in Antarctica. Australia and New Zealand are more distant from the continent than Chile or Argentina, but Australia has already dedicated funds for drones and aircraft. It is important to note that China's National Defense University's document *The Science of Military Strategy* identifies the polar regions as an area of special focus for "new issues and tasks for the use of our country's military power."⁵² China is testing new equipment and deploying drones to support its efforts.^{53,54} In the process of

performing scientific studies, Chinese scientists have garnered valuable information about drone capabilities, weather impacts, and sensor functions at a time when efficient and effective drone coverage is one of the PLA missions for Antarctic operational environments. The U.S. needs to deploy drones for similar missions and develop the ability to operate drones in the Antarctic as soon as possible. The 10 LC-130 H polar capable aircraft currently available are divided between the Arctic and Antarctic. The U.S. Antarctic Program (USAP) annually builds and operates two fully operational airports with three permanent runways, plus up to twelve temporary landing sites.⁵⁵ These runways should receive additional construction and maintenance funding/support as well as the creation of drone-capable facilities to increase regional surveillance and awareness.

Our second recommendation concerns the creation of new permanent bases and mobile bases like the Australian model. China has established that permanent presence and persistent expansion of its scientific facilities will continue until challenged or matched by those of the U.S. and its allies. Although we have not discussed Russia, it can be expected to follow a similar path to China in its own preparations for the fisheries and hydrocarbon wealth of Antarctica.

An expanded and permanently resourced series of bases should provide the U.S. with the same sort of data that China is receiving from its own scientific missions while also providing close surveillance on Chinese space capable ground stations in Antarctica and regional sites in Chile and Antarctica. This effort will naturally involve an interagency approach to ensure that the U.S. properly communicates its objectives, counters any Chinese disinformation or cognitive warfare, and a dedicated cadre of scientists and subject matter experts capable of ensuring that U.S. equities are supported domestically and in international bodies. This should not be

deferred. China has demonstrated a willingness to undercut international norms and treaties for its benefit. If the U.S. lacks the ability to contest China should this situation occur, the U.S. stands to lose any potential opportunities to conduct surveys of resources in support of itself or allies before China renders the Madrid Protocol and the Antarctic Treaty irrelevant. China has attempted to use exclusive economic zones in the INDOPACOM area of responsibility. Similar measures could be appropriate for the U.S. and its allies to declare if China attempts the same in Antarctica.⁵⁶

China has established that permanent presence and persistent expansion of its scientific facilities will continue until challenged...

Our third recommendation for competing with China is to hold China to the same requirements as other ATS signatories. China's facilities should be inspected annually to monitor compliance with the non-militarization clauses of the ATS. If China is employing PLA personnel for military missions, China should not be exempt from inspections if it is suspected of creating space warfare capabilities or unauthorized resource exploration. The failure of U.S. personnel to inspect non-U.S. stations since 2020 has left a gap in awareness of China's activities at its Zhongshan and Dome A Kunlun stations.⁵⁷ This is especially important since the latter is a potential space warfare site and China has proposed that Kunlun be declared an Antarctic Special Managed Area, the first step to declaring an area under Chinese control before the 2048 Antarctic Treaty can be renegotiated.⁵⁸

Our fourth recommendation involves revitalization of existing relationships with regional polar nations. Our relations with NATO, AUKUS, and New Zealand have different

parameters than our relationships with Chile and Argentina. Nordic partners familiar with China's civil-military "scientific" programs' territorial acquisition efforts frequently express concerns about PRC intentions. The U.S. can help assuage such concerns by increasing intelligence sharing, training, and cooperative efforts to more closely partner and cost share in polar operations and interoperability efforts. Australia and New Zealand have recently been subjected to unwelcome PRC visits or unexpected naval "scientific expeditions." Such visits challenge China's portrayal of its role in the polar regions. A third pillar for the AUKUS treaty could include Antarctic monitoring and joint operations designed to encompass contesting potential Chinese efforts to establish and permanently maintain a presence in the Antarctic land and water domains.

...the U.S. must enhance partnership and security cooperation efforts with Chile and Argentina...

Potential exists for New Zealand, Chile, and Argentina to join an AUKUS-like agreement to build greater maritime domain awareness in the Antarctic. Such security cooperation efforts can greatly enhance multilateral capabilities to track and surveil all vessels in the region to include Chinese. Diplomatic efforts through an AUKUS+ arrangement combined with security cooperation activities with member partners can monitor Antarctic activities and ensure compliance with international rules and norms. The international community must deter any destabilizing expansion in Antarctica to include potential malign PRC activities. Chinese military doctrine recommends using polar science missions as a cover for military efforts. Partners through an enhanced AUKUS+ arrangement could better deter, identify and challenge any

treaty violations and the growth of ground stations. It may be more diplomatically feasible to create a new agreement between Argentina and the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand. However, Argentina's history with the UK may make any diplomatic efforts a dead end due to Atlantic Ocean equities (Malvinas/Falklands).

In addition to the aforementioned diplomatic and military initiatives, the U.S. must enhance partnership and security cooperation efforts with Chile and Argentina to assist counter Chinese IUU fishing efforts. Chile and Argentina control the southern door to the Antarctic but are also recipients of Belt and Road Initiatives. These relationships will further complicate and require the U.S. and like-minded partners to provide new economic, military, and diplomatic options. In recent years, China has pursued permission for a naval base in Ushuaia, Tierra del Fuego province, which would better open the Antarctic to China. Such access would complement China's space station already present at Neuquén, Argentina.⁵⁹ Given China's efforts to establish a southern polar presence, Ushuaia in Tierra del Fuego would unite satellite communications and surveillance with a naval response capability with more proximate access to the Atlantic, Pacific, and Indian Oceans. U.S. Southern Command planners, synchronized with U.S. State Department's Bureau of Western Hemisphere Affairs, must align efforts to provide viable security and economic alternatives to PRC encroachment and IUU fishing activities. Creating shared interest in curbing Chinese IUU fishing could provide Argentina's naval posture and economy more palatable options to those offered by proposed PRC military base access and BRI enticements.

The fifth recommendation concerns the integrated naval base being constructed at Ushuaia in Argentina. The distance from Ushuaia to the Antarctic is only 620 miles. The Argentinian plan to construct a base that integrates naval facilities and a large Antarctic

logistics hub is attractive to China and the U.S. Could the U.S. and China share the base? That appears to be possible under the current Argentinian administration. A similar arrangement exists in Djibouti and much like the base at Ushuaia, the African base provides regional support capability as well as monitoring capability for the nearby strategic strait. A U.S. presence at Ushuaia will be one way to closely monitor and assess China's efforts in Antarctica, but as with any relationship with Argentina, the U.S.-UK relationship will cause some domestic observers to make concessions barring any UK access to U.S. facilities if basing permission is granted.⁶⁰ The Department of State must take lead in this endeavor, but the Department of Defense could support the effort through military diplomacy and increased security cooperation with Argentine security forces.

Conclusion

For decades, the PRC communicated its polar intentions in government speeches, news releases, and military documents. Coupled with the formulation of a significant icebreaker fleet, other PRC multiple-use maritime and polar capabilities increasingly raise global security concerns regarding Chinese intentions. Given PRC actions in recent years in other maritime and disputed environments, the PRC proved its willingness to probe and test the viability of international norms, national boundaries and the national resolve of those nations who have long adhered to the rules-based international order. China's broad partnership and cooperation with Russia in the Antarctic has forged new opportunities for commercial and military ventures, particularly protein sources and hydrocarbons. The world will closely watch how the PRC manages its Antarctic relationships with existing Antarctic powers as China pursues new security and commercial interests in Antarctica. China's efforts to leverage "scientific" investment to simultaneously gain valuable

dual-use data for both military and scientific purposes demonstrate China's capability and willingness to engage in "grey zone" warfare. If questionable PRC actions in the South China Sea and elsewhere are indicative of Chinese intent in the polar regions, the U.S. must strengthen interagency and multilateral cooperation to reinforce the rules-based order that oversees the Antarctic region.

For decades, the PRC communicated its polar intentions in government speeches, news releases, and military documents.

China's drive for mineral and hydrocarbon dominance poses economic and security risks for countries with territorial rights to Antarctica but who lack the ability to exploit such resources. The possibility of a renegotiated Antarctic Treaty that could open Chinese access to areas that China occupies and has extensively surveyed poses a security nightmare for the U.S., its South American partners, Australia and New Zealand. Despite contemporary arguments in various political arenas, Antarctica's rising strategic importance in the southern hemisphere is due not only to metals and minerals, but for new shipping lanes and protein sources as the world's oceans feel the impact of illegal and unregulated fishing. In recent years, the U.S. has responded to potential Chinese strategic initiatives by slowly expanding and reinvigorating military and diplomatic efforts. China's employment of diplomatic, commercial, and military pressure will escalate as economic and security demands for reliable food, energy, and mineral sources continue to grow.

Contesting China's efforts in the Antarctic will require a significant change in current United States and allied approaches to the region. SOUTHCOM operates in a resource constrained

region where some of our closest allies lack the ability to challenge China's naval numbers or capabilities. However, efforts to compete with China must consider not only diplomatic measures to prevent China from shaping the ATS to its desired outcomes, but also to ensure that China is prevented from retroactively claiming precedence and territorial ownership over areas where it has mapped the seabed, built scientific stations, and constructed airfields. China has acted in its own interests as many other nations do, but China has done so through with a mix of hybrid warfare tactics and economic inducements backed by high pressure demands for access and support from Antarctic states.

The U.S. must lead development of a comprehensive multilateral effort to reinforce existing agreements designed to minimize conflict in the polar regions and assist polar region states to resist Chinese encroachment. Failure to act in a whole-of-government multinational approach synchronized with our allies and partners risks the PRC achieving commercial and security goals which may conflict, or worse, harm the collective interests of the U.S. and its allies and partners. The U.S. risks creating opportunities for PRC and Russia efforts harmful to U.S. interests through U.S. indecision coupled with indistinct priorities and fractured alliances and partnerships. China has made claims regarding expanding commerce and scientific studies opportunities in Antarctica. However, to take China's word at face value would be to ignore the other signs that China is continuing with a policy of China First despite claims to the contrary. Ignoring China's efforts to position itself at the poles and in areas where it can exploit advantageous security postures could be another step toward achieving its geopolitical goals without firing a shot or reaching a consensus with the international community. **IAJ**

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Alliance Cohesion at the Operational Level

The United Kingdom and Germany, Cases of Nato Alliance Opportunities in the Indo-Pacific

by Alicia M. Jobe

The most serious danger to the security of the United States (U.S.) emerges from a war in Asia on a scale unseen for generations.¹ Defense alliances form a central pillar of U.S. security and defense—a fact that applies to Asia.² In the face of a possible U.S.-China regional conflict with global repercussions, alliance cohesion among European allies provides the U.S. with enhanced capability and numerical advantage, where the operational level of war is imperative for achieving strategic aims in war termination.³

America's current challenge is that it cannot deter or fight a war with China on its own; allied cohesion at the strategic and operational levels is required to facilitate credible deterrence and war preparation. Bilateral alliances in the Indo-Pacific theater are not enough to support U.S. strategic aims, so European Allies should be leveraged to bolster support for shared objectives. However, European cooperation at the operational level in the Pacific is yet to manifest due to disunified U.S.-European strategic guidance, the Indo-Pacific being out of area for NATO operations, U.S. and European perceptions of limited European Indo-Pacific interests, underappreciated European capabilities and reliability, and the separation in strategic military thinking regarding regional military activities.⁴

U.S. strategic policies, such as the National Security Strategy, National Defense Strategy, National Military Strategy, and applicable regional strategies, recognize the need for alliances, partnerships, and combined efforts to achieve success, however, this goal has yet to be actualized between the European Allies alongside the U.S. in Asia—especially at the operational level.⁵

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Operational level issues of today defy easy solutions, and are often the butt of heated invective and little sound military analysis vital to fighting and winning wars. To best prepare for these challenges, operational-level U.S. military planners and commanders must familiarize themselves with the challenges of alliance cohesion that do not normally appear in documents of policy, strategy, and doctrine.

European nations have a long economic connection to Asia, and war across the spectrum of the conflict continuum has increased their participation in bilateral and alliance efforts in the region. These NATO allies seek to gain influence in Asia; however, misunderstood steps in policy, strategic and operational level coordination, operations, and forces have hindered coordinated geopolitical responses to meet the aggressive revisionist leaders of Eurasia in the last decade.⁶ Today, these countries work to renew their strategic and security policy connections within the region, aligned with their national interests. The result has been competition and disagreement amongst alliance partners operating in an area outside of the traditional European focus for NATO's security concerns. To preserve U.S. national interests and peace in the Indo-Pacific while enforcing the rules-based world order, a cohesive effort must be made among Western and regional allies at the operational level and beyond.⁷

One can use parallels and themes of early U.S. contemporary history to navigate the current deterrence and collective defense challenges brought about by the PRC. One prime case for examination is that of West German armament in the early Cold War between roughly 1948 to 1958. Rearming the Germans after the Second World War was a controversial and complicated task for the Western victors in the face of a nuclear-armed superpower—The Soviet Union. Recognizing themes in the historical challenges at the operational and strategic levels can provide profound insights into how leaders of today can

plan and coordinate with allies to face the rising threats of another nuclear power—China.

The operational problem of collective defense in Central Europe in the years 1948-1956 was how and where to defend against the Soviet threat in an efficient means granted the international situation and the forces at hand. To achieve the NATO strategic objective of deterrence, or if deterrence failed, be prepared to win a nuclear war—"to destroy by a strategic offensive in Western Eurasia the will and capabilities of the USSR and her satellites to wage war"—operational level plans had to develop capabilities that could absorb and survive enemy attacks, develop combined arms defense in the NATO area, and push as far forward as possible.⁸ These solutions

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were developed by both the operational-level planners and strategic leadership, relying on vastly hypothetical scenarios of crisis.⁹ The staff practices of joint and combined operations in multinational staffs, Eisenhower's Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force, carried over from the Second World War, were admirable where relations among alliance members at the highest and lowest levels enabled creative problem-solving.¹⁰

The new Supreme Allied Commander Europe (SACEUR) and other West German politicians made a public declaration of the Wehrmacht military's honorable character, contributing to West German and even U.S. society a myth of a clean Wehrmacht.¹¹ Once the role was filled, the NATO structure changed

to a more decentralized system of regional groups.¹² The Western Europe group now had the task and tackled the political and economic issues in raising forces to properly defend Western Europe.¹³ The Soviets were expanding communism among nations across the globe and had just broken the U.S. monopoly on nuclear weapons.¹⁴ Military planners now had to contend with the potential for Soviet atomic weapon usage on the battlefield and provide recommendations, estimates, and realistic courses of action to counter such threats.¹⁵

Operationally, arming West Germany was deemed a clear choice to achieve the strategic aim of deterring the now-atomic Soviet Union.

Operationally, arming West Germany was deemed a clear choice to achieve the strategic aim of deterring the now-atomic Soviet Union.¹⁶ Operational-level planners had to work through resource limitations, defense budget calculations, the indirect effects of that defense spending, economic strengths, limitations impacting the Allied powers, and military effectiveness in the face of unprecedented defense requirements.¹⁷ Planners also had to contend with issues of limited Soviet military threat assessments, resulting in widely speculative and imagined estimates of strengths and capabilities.¹⁸

The planners in the newly established NATO Standing Group (SG), were tasked with coming up with a plan to gain air superiority, defend lines of communications, protect base areas, and conduct an early counteroffensive against the Soviets if deterrence failed.¹⁹ Many U.S. planners speculated that the Soviet threat was to be implemented by means other than war, however, the Soviet intervention in the Korean War in June 1950 persuaded Washington to see Soviet aggression in the starkest terms of

the path to a world war.²⁰ After the outbreak of the Korean War in June of 1950, Soviet threat concerns mounted amongst U.S. planners and policymakers, and America had to bolster the gap in the defense of Central Europe.²¹ In late 1950s, the U.S. overturned its disarming Germany policy in favor of armament with political, economic, and strategic rationale.²² The link between the Soviet intervention in Korea and Soviet aggression in Central Europe was made by NATO planners. NATO planners recognized the geographical location of Germany as vital in case of a Soviet attack, where West German troops would already be in a position to defend, thus reducing logistics transportation requirements.²³

Another challenge for operational planners was the grey zone subterfuge and fifth-column threat of Soviet propaganda and the problem of countering it. Planners observed that German troops had significant experience with Soviet occupation and were not vulnerable to communist propaganda, which made for a perfect frontline against the Soviet threat.²⁴ Other European nations were not as experienced in this regard, such as France and Italy, which had large communist political groups throughout their nations.²⁵ Evidence reported by the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency indicated that France's domestic population, with its powerful Moscow-directed French communist party, was significantly influenced by USSR propaganda.²⁶ This factor resisted new U.S. bases in France during the Korean War and increased the internal strife in the beleaguered Fourth Republic regarding the French position on West German armament.²⁷ The French were still unable to grapple with the notion of Germany arming again and were unhappy with not gaining all the benefits proposed in their Pleven Plan.²⁸

Between 1950 and 1951, the U.S. European Command and U.S. Army Europe planners worked on a way forward in rearming the West Germans while enduring Soviet diplomatic

outrage short of all-out war.²⁹ The U.S. endorsed the U.S. European Army plan in February of 1951, but indecision and refusals to compromise among the allies resulted in continual disagreements well into the Summer of 1951 as the war in Korea dragged on.³⁰ Within that time, in April 1951, the U.S. Congress allocated significantly increased troop commitments for European security and pressed for the NATO Europeans to put their troops into play to counter the Soviets as a matter of necessity for their defense.³¹ In April 1951, the NATO unified command structure (SHAPE) was established, allowing for true joint planning and vigorous exercises to begin.³²

The U.S. proposed to the foreign ministers of France and Britain, carried by Secretary of State Dean Acheson, to raise and incorporate ten West German divisions into NATO.³³ The U.S., however, neglected to identify that consensus among the occupying allied nations was necessary to implement armament plans.³⁴ This arrogant oversight concerning consultations resulted in animosity among allies such as France and stalled forward operational planning progression.³⁵

Operational planners worked around these strategic difficulties by proposing to devise solutions from the bottom up.³⁶ Planners offered to bolster the newly created West German paramilitary border police to increase fighting forces without maximum negative militaristic stigma.³⁷ This force would be a highly mobile unit of approximately 20,000 quasi-infantry troops, light arms, machine guns, and light vehicles with nominal armor.³⁸ This force was deemed adequate not to be considered a regular full-fledged army, but might well serve as the center of a German contribution towards a European Defense Force (EDC).³⁹ Operational-level challenges seen with this border police plan were initially limited in intelligence sharing, which restricted the flexibility of the forces, so the plan was altered to allow for

greater operational integration between the Seventh Army and the new paramilitary German border police.⁴⁰ This eliminated organizational misunderstandings, and in a further step to improve combat effectiveness, the Seventh Army was tasked with commanding the border police under its control during emergency operations with clearly defined roles within its mission.⁴¹ This integrated command structure in case of crisis and information sharing, including classified plans, allowed for mutual trust and greater combat readiness among the NATO line. U.S. forces also allowed the Germans to use their facilities for training and established liaison teams between the Seventh Army and reduced the circumspect between the two forces.⁴²

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By June 1951, the new NATO Supreme Commander, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, took matters into his own hands at the strategic/operational level, recognizing the need to gain support for a plan by both the Germans and the French before gaining any German troops under his command.⁴³ Through renewed negotiations in May 1952, an agreement on forming an EDC was achieved through significant operational-level compromise by all contingents.⁴⁴ However, this agreement would not see lasting success due to irreconcilable shortcomings among the many nations' desires that arose not the least because of conflict outside of Europe that intruded forcefully into these operational plans—the French defeat in Indochina and the Anglo American refusal to aid the lifting of the siege of Dien Bien Phu in 1954.⁴⁵

As the strategic-level political disputes continued and to contend with the Soviet threat,

not waiting for Western resolutions, Strategic Air Command Zebra was created to plan how to employ nuclear weapons in support of the European Command war plans and, in turn, those of NATO.⁴⁶ The air and nuclear weapon plan still required ground troops, and in the famous NATO Lisbon Force Goals 1952, the proposal was to have 96 divisions by the planning goal of the year 1954.⁴⁷ Therefore, also in 1952, a shield force (as part of a nuclear sword and a conventional ground/air shield) was deemed necessary to protect the NATO line without swiftly having to resort to nuclear weapons.⁴⁸ This increase in manpower was a significant challenge given the social status of the rebuilding nations of Europe at the time, but there would be no compromise to the requirement set. Socialist governments clashed with the rearmament goals, as costs mounted and domestic social welfare plans were deemed more important, but this challenge paled in comparison to the beginning of the unexpected Soviet involvement in the Korean War.⁴⁹ The twelve-division shield force would

During the October 1954 Paris Treaties, the American proposal for a national German army resurrected itself...

not be realized for years to come due to delays in West German efforts to create its new army and join collective defense.⁵⁰ NATO Standing Group/Military Committee planners quickly established that a nuclear-armed strategic air offensive would be required immediately if deterrence failed.⁵¹ This idea was not met with unanimous approval among allies, but a compromise soon allowed for an approved Allied Strategic Concept MC 14/1.⁵²

In addition to the air forces, a strong maritime force was required both in the North and the Mediterranean Seas to protect NATO's flanks, where the navy air power would combine with European land-based air forces

vital in conducting defensive actions against Soviet offense.⁵³ The maritime powers in what became NATO preferred a limited continental commitment, whereas the continental allies demanded a defense against the Soviets as far eastward as practical with sufficient force, without, however, imposing too heavy a burden on the democracies.⁵⁴

In December 1954, Eisenhower had gone from being SACEUR to President of the United States and introduced the New Look with a heavy emphasis on thermonuclear striking power. The use of nuclear weapons was deemed a basis for NATO strategic plans, and they were no longer just for Strategic Air Command usage—now available for use under SACEUR.⁵⁵ This strategic change meant operational-level plans for the use of tactical nuclear weapons (artillery and missiles) at the lower level.⁵⁶

The West German NATO planners wished to contribute to the defense by allocating armored divisions; however, NATO plans as a whole looked for mass, measured in kilotons, not force levels,” centered on destruction in place of mobility and capture.⁵⁷ Thus, NATO planners were back to relying on atomic weapons to defend the Rhine and an eastward line moving slowly to the inner German border.

During the October 1954 Paris Treaties, the American proposal for a national German army resurrected itself in armament negotiations after the EDC had failed that summer.⁵⁸ While the negotiations continued, the Federal Republic gained sovereign national recognition and joined NATO in May 1955, while the domestic struggle to create a West German army was in full swing, with the unnamed Bundeswehr being formally established on November 12, 1955.⁵⁹ After much deliberation and complicated debates among the allies, West Germany was finally rearmed in support of the defense of NATO against the Soviet threat, just after it formally joined the alliance.

Now that the West Germans were in and

the alliance was cohesive enough to coordinate plans with the added forces on the NATO front, it was time to exercise operational plans. In June of 1955, NATO conducted a field exercise called Carte Blanche, where the nations of West Germany, Luxembourg, Belgium, the Netherlands, and a portion of France rehearsed a scenario using tactical nuclear weapons to defend NATO.⁶⁰ The simulated devastation of this exercise caused negative responses on the political stage and condemned the use of nuclear weapons.⁶¹ The condemnation of using nuclear weapons was cause for a call to limit the use of nuclear weapons in the defense of NATO.⁶²

By 1956, three long years after Stalin's death, the Soviet threat of war in Europe was relaxed compared to that seen in the world of 1950, and West Germany had a new army quickly being trained for its role in alliance defense.⁶³ However, allied cohesion was far from perfect, as the war in Indochina had ended and a new, more desperate war had begun in Algeria, and war also came between Israel and Egypt, diverting the alliance's strength via France, with nominal ground forces in West Germany.⁶⁴ Great Britain was spending double the amount on defense as any of the other NATO members, and reducing troops in West Germany became an attractive notion.⁶⁵ Adding incalculable nuclear effects to the mix reduced planners to the attitude of simply hoping the Soviets would not attack, placing a small force in the threat area, and using nuclear weapons if attacked. (the so-called Sword and Shield)⁶⁶ As perhaps improbable as this deterrence plan seemed, it was known as the trip-wire strategy, whereby the defense policy would revert to that which prevailed before NATO's establishment.⁶⁷ This policy meant the German problem would once again need a new Western approach.⁶⁸ The U.S. would continue to press for West German armament.⁶⁹ Concerns about American isolationism after Korea and throughout the Cold War in the 1950s were alarming to many

European nations.⁷⁰ Conventional troops on the ground were preferred by the Europeans, and discussions of replacing them with the new Nuclear weapons were at the forefront of planners' discussions.⁷¹ The nuclear age had come and the NATO planners were not prepared to confidently anticipate the impacts or moral implications of such weapons.⁷²

The nuclear age had come and the NATO planners were not prepared to confidently anticipate the impacts or moral implications of such weapons.

Relevance For Today

After reviewing this case, themes show themselves in the current Pacific security situation. The practices and customs of combined joint operations that have worked well in one theater of deterrence and collective defense can be a basis for planning in the Indo-Pacific. Europeans have reason to plan for the use of military forces in the Pacific and should do so alongside the U.S.. However, these forces should not engage without practice and integrating staff officers to plan alongside each other in the region.

This multinational and multi-level cooperation indicates that, although the levels of warfare are perfunctorily separated by title, and in many ways arbitrarily separated on paper and not in fact, these levels of war find themselves more blended in times of relative peace than they do in wartime.

The challenges of operational cohesion in an alliance show themselves as multinational strategy and policy gridlocks, national caveats, introductions of new enemy technology and capabilities, intelligence and information sharing concerns, manpower limitations, equipment shortages, and uncertainty. All of which played

a difficult hand for the NATO planners of the early Cold War. To be sure, the new West German army joined NATO and put classic German fighting power into NATO's central front, and the coming years of alliance cohesion and operational level ups and downs were just as challenging. This phenomenon was constant throughout the Cold War, and it remains the case with the return of war to Europe since 2014.

The key to achieving effective operational-level interoperability is employing standardization, allied training and exercises...

The complicated nature of peacetime cohesion makes blending efforts in an integrated military structure at both the strategic and operational levels imperative. Orders were not as clear-cut, communication and collaboration on matters took more time, and expert thought by all involved was critical. Newly introduced atomic and then thermonuclear weapons, national differences in interests, adversarial threats, Soviet and East German covert subterfuge and sabotage, internal alliance frictions, and the burdens of the past war were all factors to overcome in calculating a way forward of allied cohesion. All components of national power must be involved in allied cohesion, where operational-level planners must recognize the opportunities and implications of each arm's actions.

Interoperability at the operational and tactical level is one such tool. NATO Interoperability is defined as "the ability for Allies to act together coherently, effectively and efficiently to achieve tactical, operational and strategic objectives."⁷³ Such an ideal can be said to apply in the Indo-Pacific. This interoperability enables communication sharing among allied forces and systems, as well as the use of common doctrine and operating procedures.⁷⁴ The use

of each other's bases, infrastructure, and the pooling of resources drastically increases the lethality of the allied forces.⁷⁵ The components of interoperability do not always need common military equipment; technical, procedural, human, and information dimensions can support allied initiatives regardless of the equipment used.⁷⁶

The key to achieving effective operational-level interoperability is employing standardization, allied training and exercises, shared lessons learned, allied demonstrations, and tests and trials. Vital in the case under review, relationships with industry are still essential to gain defense and security standards that are open to all alliance members.⁷⁷ NATO alliance members have decades of successful experience practicing interoperability and can more easily put it into practice in the Pacific at the operational level to the benefit of this level of war and the strategic level.⁷⁸

Within interoperability, exercises are a huge component to gain the operational level advantage, both for deterrence aims and in preparation for large-scale combat operations. The interoperability was demonstrated in the West German case, albeit implemented slowly over many years of trial and error. Testing the operational and tactical use of concepts, procedures, and systems prepares commands and their forces for war through validation at proficiency levels.⁷⁹ Specialized training structures are another significant operational level interoperability need that can be practiced within exercises.⁸⁰ Exercises help inform defense reform, if needed, across the allied nations.⁸¹ This reform can be seen in the West German case, where the NATO nuclear exercise demonstrated a negative reaction to the alliance's dependence on nuclear weapons at the operational level as the primary frontline deterrence and collective defense.

Practicing operational-level planning and execution in the Indo-Pacific theater

should involve allied and partner countries alike. Together, these nations should practice the use of command and control structures, operational theater level contributions, and share shortfalls, best practices, and lessons learned for improvement or reevaluation to best prepare the forces for achieving the shared strategic aims.⁸² The practice of using standardized multinational operations exercising mission command, intelligence, employing fires, deconflicting fires, sustainment, protection, a common operating picture, movement, and maneuver to determine a common interoperability validation assessment is critical to improving campaign plans or estimating deterrence measures.⁸³ Practicing combat arms employment and service support is vital in achieving interoperability among allies and partners. The employment of echelons at the operational level for mutual logistics will be essential in today's Pacific theater operational environment.

Beyond exercises, education and cultural understanding must manifest before combat operations. More training and education with suitable command emphasis and recognition in officer promotion criteria between allies and partners allow cultural familiarity for staff and commanders in school settings with peers from allied nations. These educational opportunities also help expand the common operating picture, logistical needs, and capabilities of allied members, and a force multiplier, as well as a weapon of lethality in the truest sense of these terms.

Adaptations will inherently be made in combat situations, and it should not be the U.S. allies doing all the work in this connection. The Americans must also adapt at the operational level and with structures that allow them to do so. Allied practices of combined and joint command at the operational level are seen in the alliance formation and collective defense enterprises of the early Cold War. This generalization especially applies to the problem of arming the

West Germans in the 1950s and their integration into a new NATO.

Practicing combat arms employment and service support is vital in achieving interoperability among allies and partners.

In the Face of a Conflict in the Year 2027

The European allies bring significant forces to bear in the Pacific, now it must be determined how to integrate them at all levels to gain the desired outcomes. The historical success of operational alliance cohesion in the West German case should be built upon for the threat posed in the Pacific today and belie common prejudices against traditional allies that resonate among many.

The U.S. and its allies and partners must maintain support to solidify Indo-Pacific stability enough to cooperate at the operational level for deterrence and some form of collective defense in crisis and conflict. The strategic and operational levels, blending at times, make differentiation of which level of war forms the center of gravity analysis difficult for those unfamiliar with the levels of war and ignorant about the rigors of alliance cohesion. All the same, operational-level commanders and staff can and must overcome this ambiguity by recognizing their role in linking the strategic aims to operational and then tactical actions and executing what is necessary for victory in deterrence and combat. This goal deserves command emphasis at the operational level and a greater role in training and exercises.

The institutions of security cooperation expanded with a view to an imminent future conflict are an ideal way to achieve these goals, and this facet of service deserves the full support this combat multiplier can well offer

at the operational level. Security cooperation, which is well executed, is lethality in a very powerful form. The operationalization allows for operational designs that can integrate more actors along the line of common interests.

Recognition of allied capabilities, doctrinal practices, and resources can assist leaders in better appreciating allies. Borrowing from the successes of security cooperation and collective defense with European Allies in a conflict in the Pacific can be done well before conflict to uphold deterrence. There is an ongoing need to incorporate allied capabilities across all domains, establish command structures, integrate multinational operational planning, and exercise planned combat operations using emerging technologies. These cohesive efforts can refocus energies to best achieve mutual

Recognition of allied capabilities, doctrinal practices, and resources can assist leaders in better appreciating allies.

political, strategic, and operational aims. The military command and operational challenges in alliance cohesion of NATO members, then in an “out of area” contingency, specifically focused on interested European nations, as they engage in defense and deterrence within the Pacific theater, are numerous. Operational leaders must focus on warfighting requirements and expand their knowledge of other national contributions. Biases, preconceptions, and different interests inherent in the subject and the reality of conflict, policy, strategy, and armed forces will limit a planner’s ability to achieve the best solutions for operational-level success.

Today, the U.S. and European allies cooperate and should continue to do so in all domains and many areas across the globe. European national interests in the Pacific should not be underrated in today’s geopolitical context.

Although the German case study is not focused on the Indo-Pacific geographical area, one can well suggest that the facts of the allied cohesion of the West German armament challenge i.e. a very severe strategic and operational problem, the necessity to resolve allied friction, patience, and innovation in the face of many setbacks, can assist. A cohesive alliance can cooperate on the difficult decisions of deterrence against another nuclear-armed and potentially hegemonic power—China. The similarities of Taiwan to former West Germany as a strategic problem are manifest in historical terms and in a global context.

In the case of West German armament, Allied nations, ravaged by war, carrying burdens of debt, poverty, political turmoil, and threats of a possible new total war with an aggressive and ideologically driven superpower, were hard-pressed to come up with a solution to satisfy all national interests. The operational level planners overcame challenges through drafting and re-drafting plans, facilitating military-to-military communication, sharing intelligence and information, assessing capability needs, assessing threats, and constantly blending strategic-level aims. One cannot gainsay the virtue of shared professional military expertise and mutual respect, even among former enemies in this case. Such an imperative is also needed in Asia with the frictions and fractures there. The strategic and operational challenge of the Soviet Union obtaining atomic weapons in 1949, along with its huge ground and air forces, meant an entire rewrite of how operational environment preparations would be written, practiced, and implemented by NATO allies struggling to match Stalin’s combat power. Deterrence was critical for all nations involved as they were ill-prepared to fight against such a rival with limited capabilities, manpower, force generation, and financing.

Similar to today, none of the Western allies, including the U.S., wish to go to war with China.

Deterrence is once again the desire to achieve U.S. and allied policy aims. This deterrence must be balanced with the growing Chinese expansionism, a fact that recalls the Soviet land grabs in the years 1945-1949. Although not identical and the expansions are starkly different in method and goal, the aggression can be seen as a parallel on a global scale.

The challenges for operational-level planners and commanders in peacetime are significantly more complicated, as many of their efforts are sidelined or discounted due to emphasis on more strategic and operational-level problem-solving. A larger part of this challenge is to identify the roles of operational-level commanders and planners in preparing for large-scale combat operations in a time of relative peace. Proper steps to produce such plans for strategic review and approval, and subsequent execution of such plans through exercises, are essential to modify and refine them for the best possible preparation. The role of the operational level in deterrence is complicated and defies simple generalizations to those unfamiliar with this realm. Operational-level leaders must understand their role to integrate with the strategic level to support the strategic deterrence measures and be fully prepared to start preparations for war if that deterrence fails.

As seen in this case, financial and burden-sharing concerns about gaining enough capabilities to face a rising nuclear power were limited. Creative solutions to solving such a dilemma had to be overcome by diplomatic and strategic ingenuity and breaking with earlier policies.

In an increasingly multipolar and dangerous world, the U.S. will need all the allies it can muster for support in its competition with China to manage crisis and deter a major war. Despite the current debate on burden sharing, NATO substantially reduces the number of hostile geopolitical competitors for Washington. NATO can be considered an asset to leverage when

facing threats in Asia. The Ukrainian conflict since 2014 has shown that NATO support for Washington can prevail regardless of internal national differences, and many countries are willing to act in concert with the United States against aggression from Russia and, by extension, with a belligerent Beijing.

The challenges for operational-level planners and commanders in peacetime are significantly more complicated...

The goal is to limit China's ability to weaken Western competitors. NATO in Asia needs cohesion from the same liberal, value-minded Western allies in Europe. Given the headlines in the year 2025, as this thesis is being written, the U.S. and European Union (EU) policy area tensions during the second Trump administration pose significant obstacles to continued allied cohesion for national and military strategic unity. The case expressed in this article suggests that temporary strategic misalignment does not necessarily mean irreconcilable security policy and subsequent lack of operational cohesion.

Since 1991, NATO has experience in out-of-area operations, namely Kosovo, albeit not without its controversy, but also in Afghanistan. However, the concept of out-of-area activities is not unprecedented for NATO and should be viewed as an option for Western deterrence against Chinese aggression threatening the Western international rules-based order. If NATO deems the USINDOPACOM out of the alliance's scope, bilateral cooperation among NATO allies can still bolster deterrence credibility, preserve the current rules-based world order, and increase the likelihood of preventing a war with China. Some could argue that even though these nations have worked so closely in Europe in principle, this does not mean they will see the same strength in the Pacific. However, the principles

of cohesion on the operational level remain, and if taken seriously, a cohesive effort bound to shared values is viable. There might be different strategic interests, but there is enough overlap in values and common ground that operational cooperation can succeed.

Conclusion

Military command and operational challenges in the alliance cohesion of U.S.-European Allies as they engage in defense and deterrence within the Pacific theater have shown themselves in both historical and present circumstances. Commanders and planners at the operational level can look at historical cases such as the West German rearmament study to gain an understanding of the challenges and address current issues of deterrence and defense with a wider lens to draw from. A recent increase in notable NATO interest in the region shows the rise in acceptance of the China threat and the need to counter it as an alliance.⁸⁴ The U.S. must take advantage of its leadership at the strategic level to exploit the potential for operational-level cohesion with its allies to face threats in the USINDOPACOM theater.⁸⁵ **IAJ**

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Building *Psychological Safety* among Teams during Defense Support of Civil Activities

by Adam T. Biggs

The views expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official policy or position of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College, Department of the Navy, Department of Defense, nor the U.S. Government. The author is a military service members or employee of the U.S. government. This work was prepared as part of his official duties. The author has no financial or non-financial competing interests in this manuscript.

Crisis response must prioritize saving lives, restoring essential services, and maintaining law and order during defense support of civil authorities (DSCA). These urgent scenarios create many challenges for interagency coordination that thwart several otherwise effective principles of team building. For example, psychological safety is often essential for teamwork and teams normally build psychological safety through effective communication while approaching failure as a learning opportunity. This context would seem to place psychological safety at odds with a crisis event that perceives mistakes in a very different manner. Nevertheless, developments in dynamic teaming provide the opportunity to build psychological safety among teams with fluid membership or fluid task assignment by focusing on procedures rather than cultivating psychological safety over time.

The specific procedures can be broadly categorized by linking four principles of psychological safety among dynamic teams to four essential procedural tenets: (1) willingness to help—visibility; (2) inclusion and diversity—ownership; (3) attitude toward risk and failure—accountability; and (4) open conversation—transparency. The discussion here first covers the core concepts of dynamic teaming and then identifies how to establish psychological safety among interagency disaster response teams. As such, the goal is to develop a psychologically safety environment among

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dynamic teams during crisis events through procedures rather than the typical methods used to build psychological safety.

Few scenarios require effective teamwork as much as crisis events. Disaster relief and humanitarian crises bring together diverse teams with urgent imperatives that require clear communication and coordination. This problem set is a persistent reality in DSCA mission activities, where multiple challenges arise when attempting to build an effective team. Although existing agreements and programs can help establish lines of communication and a chain of command, on-the-ground realities dictate that people who may have never met must work together efficiently to resolve a crisis. Specific to the context of team building, DSCA operations cannot utilize some of the classic techniques to create trust and communication among the team. For example, time is a critical challenge to team building as simply coordinating among dispersed teams imposes enormous communication challenges.¹ Moreover, DSCA operations have dual time-based complications in building teamwork. The combined team will have scant time to build trust, and once the mission is complete, the team will disperse. Temporary team membership further discourages people from building lasting relationships. Both aspects do not engage the normal processes by which organizational teams build teamwork and thus require some alternative methods to construct an effective team-based working environment.

Within the organizational psychology literature, there is one particularly effective construct in building effective teams—psychological safety. This concept describes the belief that an individual will not be punished, insulted, or denigrated for speaking up with concerns, questions, or ideas.² Psychological safety helps establish a working environment that fosters clear communication and innovation as individuals within the team willingly convey any problems or possible solutions. Trust

becomes inherent among teams with high psychological safety and its impact has been demonstrated both in hybrid workplaces³ and across various domains, including business,⁴ healthcare,⁵ and education.⁶ Some aspects of building psychological safety focus on communication, such as approaching conflicting ideas as a collaborator rather than an adversary or replacing blame with curiosity.⁷ Other ideas suggest avoiding the desire to create a “perfect” team—allow the team to make mistakes and celebrate their accomplishments.⁸ Whatever the specific lesson, decades of research have provided enormous insights into the importance of psychological safety and how to create it among teams.

Few scenarios require effective teamwork as much as crisis events.

Despite the well-established values of psychological safety in effective organizations, the problem remains that many of its tenets do not easily adapt to crisis scenarios in DSCA operations. However, the general purpose of psychological safety can be achieved and applied through different means. One development has been the dynamic teaming model that specifically addresses the process of working among groups with fluid membership.⁹ The intent largely revolved around building teamwork across industries, functions, or even time zones, although the premise applies well to DSCA operations. According to dynamic teaming, psychological safety includes four key dimensions: (1) willingness to help, (2) inclusion and diversity, (3) attitude to risk and failure, and (4) open conversation.¹⁰ Each aspect can be translated to DSCA operations through dynamic team-building procedures. That is, if the team has neither the time nor the incentive to build long-lasting relationships, then dynamic team

processes become the vehicle through which to create psychological safety. This approach can establish the conditions for effective teamwork even in an environment of uncertainty and shifting team membership.

The current discussion outlines the basics of dynamic teaming as an effective process for team membership in fluid scenarios. Next, the discussion shifts to four key principles that can build upon the four dimensions of psychological safety in dynamic teaming, including: visibility, ownership, accountability, and transparency. Each principle aligns with a dimension of psychological safety while providing tangible team processes to fully engage the dynamic teaming dimension. Furthermore, these dynamic team processes are adapted from informal recommendations and observations from U.S. Navy shipboard operations via the planning board for training. This touchpoint allows ship personnel to communicate effectively

At its core, dynamic teaming embraces the reality that groups can be fluid in either membership...or fluid task requirements...

even as members rotate in and out of various assignments, and because the principles are aligned to procedures rather than personnel, they should adapt well to a fluid environment. Taken together, the goal is to provide guidance based on a combination of the psychological safety literature and naval operations that will enable effective teambuilding for DSCA operations despite the challenges of navigating team processes in emerging crisis situations.

Dynamic Teaming

Dynamic teaming arises from “top management teams,”¹¹ which itself comes from the organizational psychological literature with

a focus on senior executives. Top management team research originally focused upon how senior leaders managed teams in rapidly changing or challenging situations.¹² The central premise involves improving the organization by installing the right leadership in a top-down fashion, though the core premise itself became widely disputed.¹³ Still, the dynamic nature of organizational management emerged as a critical factor that leadership could only control to a certain extent. This approach led researchers to explore how particular tasks and information management contributed an important part of the variance in the success of senior leadership.¹⁴ Essentially, senior leader effectiveness depended not upon the innovation of a few senior leaders, but rather the role of leadership, management, small group processes, and negotiation in producing more favorable outcomes. As technology continues to evolve and team dynamics become more complex, these changes only emphasized the need for capable leaders who can adapt in the face of adversity and uncertainty. Thus, dynamic teaming does not seek to prevent fluid or ambiguous scenarios, but rather to develop teams capable of performing under shifting circumstances.

At its core, dynamic teaming embraces the reality that groups can be fluid in either membership, where the core members come from diverse backgrounds and settings, or fluid task requirements, where the team itself might approach their task with an imperfect understanding of its procedures and challenges.¹⁵ This latter component highlights the difference between a traditional team and a dynamic team. Whereas a traditional team has regular workflow and rotations, a dynamic team will face different requirements and likely different staff every shift or performance cycle. An excellent example for each comes from routine dental work versus being rushed to the emergency room.¹⁶ Routine dental work likely involves the same dentist, same hygiene team, and possible the same

patients—all planned by appointment with time to prepare. The team knows the skills and experience of its different members and allows them to develop trust and communication over time. Meanwhile, a dynamic team would be better represented by emergency room staff. These personnel will not know in advance how many patients they will have, what the injuries would be, and the specific team will be different every shift. Dynamic teams must therefore adapt to volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) challenges.¹⁷

When considering the DSCA mission set, dynamic teams are the expectation rather than the exception. The only consistency might be some familiarity among senior leadership and managerial personnel who have completed similar missions or know their counterparts in other organizations. For example, National Guard personnel may have worked with Federal Emergency Management Agency personnel on previous hurricanes that hit the Florida coastline. Nevertheless, every natural disaster will be different, unpredictable, and every situation requires so many personnel that some members will be new. DSCA activities list restoring law and order as doctrinal purposes in their execution, and so the expectation should be a fluid scenario where urgency places an emphasis on lives and essential services.¹⁸ As such, leaders have limited time and opportunity to prepare teams in advance for DSCA activities. Furthermore, joint and interagency partners will be integral to mission success. Because teams will have interagency partners working together for short periods, possibly with little-to-no-advance contact among members who will be on-stie, there are significant challenges to building an effective dynamic team.

One possible solution is then to focus on dynamic team processes to install psychological safety rather than utilizing the slower dynamics of organizational culture and climate to cultivate psychological safety. The following principles

can help align psychological safety in dynamic teams with team processes that can accomplish a similar purpose in the absence of the time to build solid fundamental teamwork. Each following dyad links a tenet of psychological safety among dynamic teams with a team process informally applied during naval planning and training: (1) willingness to help—visibility; (2) inclusion and diversity—ownership; (3) attitude to risk and failure—accountability; and (4) open conversation—transparency.

When considering the DSCA mission set, dynamic teams are the expectation rather than the exception.

Willingness to Help—Visibility

Psychological safety enhances team performance, in part, by mitigating obstacles to teamwork.¹⁹ Dynamic teaming supports psychological safety foremost through the dimension of willingness to help. Essentially, personnel believe that asking for help is an appropriate action and colleagues will freely provide their help. In a DSCA mission, willingness to help could have a secondary meaning related to the purpose of each organization and its involvement in solving the crisis. For example, federal and state authorities are likely to interact in these situations, and local governments may feel as though their authority is being trampled upon by outsiders without understanding or long-term concern for their community. Local partners may then question why federal or state personnel are involved and what their full intentions might be. Interagency trust is a prominent concern in building an effective team from multiple organizations.

Without the time to establish interagency trust through teambuilding exercises, visibility is the first procedure tenet that can help foster

trust and psychological safety. Visibility simply means that individuals are seen and heard during interactions. For example, many reports will need to be given throughout the crisis to update current conditions. Where possible, reports should be given by the lowest level person who assembled the information and with the highest team visibility. Naval planning and training boards achieve this visibility by having the relevant person stand before the wardroom and brief the status of their program. Rather than pass the information to a training officer who assembles everything and gives a combined overview brief, the training officer acts as a process manager and coordinates the

Trust is created through visible interactions in content, atmosphere, and the briefing process.

meaning. Each individual team member thus receives visibility for their assigned area of responsibility. This process is underscored by standing and speaking aloud rather than sitting because standing literally enhances visibility in a room full of seated personnel. Trust is created through visible interactions in content, atmosphere, and the briefing process.²⁰ That is, the potential for trust is enabled by visibility. Subsequent principles are needed to refine and optimize this impact, yet visibility first creates the potential.

Specific to the DSCA mission, visibility can be achieved through reporting and updating. Teams will be too decentralized to have constant, regularly scheduled meetings with many personnel. Nevertheless, the reporting process allows an individual not only to gain visibility for their contributions, but visibility is achieved implicitly as they see the contributions of others. This latter point is how visibility

becomes a compounding principle as visibility is achieved through both receiving visibility and giving visibility to others. Where possible then, reports can be given in small groups at the appropriate level in the chain of command with the upward flow of information used as a mechanism to achieve visibility. Downward flow of information, such as passing assignments from a coordinator to local personnel, does not achieve the same level of visibility as only the team leader is seen taking action. If improperly applied though, visibility could further exacerbate inequality in the types of orders and responsibilities assigned to different personnel. That said, leaders can help individual visibility when they assign specific actions to specific members in group meetings. This approach also helps reduce the diffusion of responsibility that can lead to confusion and inaction within group dynamics.²¹

Nevertheless, visibility is only an enabling function and not sufficient to develop psychological safety on its own. Its contribution is derived primarily from creating visibility of individual contributions and team interactions. Visibility implicitly establishes a teamwork dynamic because personnel can see for themselves the behavioral and communication expectations among the team. Leaders do not need to lay out a vision for dynamic team processes. Instead, team members see firsthand the expectations through procedures—individual visibility rather than leadership vision.

Inclusion and Diversity—Ownership

The next dimension, inclusion and diversity, helps build psychological safety by cementing how individuals feel about their contribution and role on the team. Note that the inclusion and diversity terminology is how dynamic teaming theory describes these concepts within the organizational psychology literature. Their application in a combined civilian-military environment requires some clarification. The

inclusion component describes the psychological perception that someone is a respected member of the team.²² More importantly, this component can be developed through observable behaviors undertaken by leaders, such as accessibility and openness when interacting with subordinates.²³ A leader can further amplify this effect when demonstrating these behaviors in group settings. For example, in a DSCA mission, a military leader should visibly interact with state and local authorities while demonstrating the same respect when interacting with military personnel. This approach to leadership incorporates and values the relative contribution different backgrounds can offer. In this setting, the experiences and expertise of each team member also contribute to team success. A real-world application might be the federal official who listens to local authorities during a crisis about hazards in the surrounding area because the local authority knows the local area better. In practice, these ideas are akin to the high reliability organization principle of deference to expertise, where leadership incorporates relative expertise and skills when making decisions.²⁴

Leadership further develops psychological safety in dynamic teaming by building upon the dimensions of willingness to help and visibility. Whereas visibility creates the opportunity for building trust, ownership is essential to cement psychological safety within the individual. Psychological ownership implies that an individual has feelings of possession regarding ongoing activities or organization.²⁵ This mechanism helps establish psychological safety because people feel responsible for a particular subset of the mission. After all, if the individual felt no responsibility for actions or problems, then there is no need to build trust since neither fault nor favorable result could be attributed to them. The DSCA implication would also be that the individual does not share any particular concern for a given area relative to the local population. Lack of ownership prevents

a positive working environment because it discourages the action and initiative necessary in a crisis scenario.

Ownership can be established in dynamic teaming through how the team addresses problems. Foremost, individuals should brief current conditions at the lowest level possible to achieve visibility. This procedure enables ownership, but it does not establish ownership as individuals may fear a “shoot the messenger” mentality or otherwise brief without concern because the problem set is not theirs to fix. The ownership caveat is thus that an individual should only brief things for which they have direct responsibility for the outcomes. This element reinforces the idea that someone should be the first to act on the problem at hand. The potential benefit is more detailed attention to the problem set and clear responsibility, which enables both innovation and initiative.

The ownership caveat is thus that an individual should only brief things for which they have direct responsibility for the outcomes.

When conducting a briefing that includes a deficiency, ownership is further reinforced by how the team approaches the problem. If any individual has shared or limited responsibility for an issue, then the remainder of the team will assume responsibility and develop their own solutions. Alternatively, if the briefer has ownership, the team dynamic becomes focused upon getting the individual the right resources they need to solve a problem. Briefing a deficiency then reinforces ownership because negative reports do not immediately mean changed authority or responsibility. This process establishes that it is acceptable among the team to speak up about problems, which further underscores visibility and implicitly builds stronger psychological safety among the team.

In essence, team attitudes toward ownership should be asking the individual what help they need rather than seeking blame for problems or deficiencies.

Granted, there is negative potential in ownership as people can become territorial about their responsibilities and performance.²⁶ This possibility is especially common among interagency operations as existing authority becomes intermingled due to operational needs. Within the DSCA mission set, one solution is to create a sense of collective psychological ownership.²⁷ This approach creates a shared mindset for the wider mission and emphasizes that each individual is responsible for the ultimate outcome. Collective psychological ownership can facilitate team communication and allow individuals to feel responsible for the outcomes.

Crisis scenarios are not learning events and there is limited continuity across interagency actions to establish a learning environment.

Of course, ownership is primarily about leadership and team behaviors that reinforce the opportunity created through visibility. Psychological trust develops because the team enacts a healthy attitude toward individual responsibilities and team processes become supportive rather than attributional. This latter point does not mean a lack of accountability. In the moment, the attitude should be about finding solutions to problems rather than assigning blame. Especially in the context of a DSCA mission that involves an emerging crisis, this team attitude establishes ownership and leads to enhanced psychological safety.

Attitude to Risk and Failure—Accountability

Psychological safety regularly invokes how a team addresses—or worse, punishes—an individual for mistakes as a critical component of a psychologically safe environment.²⁸ The dynamic teaming principle is that psychological safety develops when mistakes and failures are considered acceptable for individual learning and experience.²⁹ Specifically, psychologically safe environments preserve the potential for learning as part of gaining experience.³⁰ Mistakes are seen as a natural and acceptable part of the learning process. When in a normal training environment, the dilemma is often that an individual risks exposing personal limitations or offending the instructor if they ask questions or dispute ideas.

Meanwhile, DSCA operations occur within a context that prioritizes saving lives, restoring essential services, and maintaining or restoring law and order.³¹ Crisis scenarios are not learning events and there is limited continuity across interagency actions to establish a learning environment. As such, these operations are not prime opportunities to explore mistakes or use the scenario as a learning opportunity. This disparity would seem to place psychological safety at odds with a DSCA environment since these scenarios typically eschew learning through mistakes as an acceptable on-the-ground course of action. Nonetheless, accountability can be achieved and psychological safety preserved based on the attitude the team adopts during the crisis.

The adaptation occurs around how DSCA operations approach risk and failure either during a crisis event or before/after a crisis event. DSCA operations must shift the learning component to planned training evolutions or after-action reviews. Risks can be explored during planned training evolutions and failure can be addressed from case studies or during debriefings. In these scenarios, the application is no different

than other adaptations for dynamic teaming. During a crisis event, risks and failure cannot be acceptable consequences of learning. Risk mitigation techniques must remain prioritized, but the attitude toward failure is important. Leaders cannot seek to place blame in the moment. The emphasis should be upon problem solving rather than assigning blame.

For the individual, accountability becomes important through individual action in developing team psychological safety. In this sense, accountability is not leadership holding personnel accountable, but rather individuals holding themselves accountable for risk and failure. Accountability should be a natural extension of ownership while leadership intervention happens only as a last resort. If an individual truly accepts ownership for some component of a mission, then they should hold themselves accountable for failure and errors. Indeed, there are some definitions that align psychological ownership and accountability as highly related factors.³² The reason for dissociating them here is to clarify how ownership and accountability differ when limited to procedural applications in DSCA operations. Ownership is a public demonstration where leadership allows an individual to take responsibility. Accountability is where the individual holds themselves responsible for their actions. This procedure involves clearly identifying roles and desired outcomes while allowing the individual to assume responsibility for the subsequent action.

Accountability is demonstrated in actions undertaken by the individual. If they fail at some assignment, then the individual must ask for help or admit that they do not have the resources to perform a particular task. Leadership can further enable accountability by asking the individual in a group setting what their plans are to hold accountability for any errors. This moment creates an opportunity for the individual to retain ownership in a visible way before the assembled

team. Possible actions might include how they will address the shortcoming either immediately or after the crisis passes. If the individual refuses to admit what has become apparent to the team, then it is the responsibility of leadership to intervene and demonstrate for the wider team that standards and expectations must be met.

Leaders cannot seek to place blame in the moment. The emphasis should be upon problem solving rather than assigning blame.

The subtle difference between ownership and accountability warrants further restating. Ownership is a byproduct of leadership assigning clear roles and responsibilities that allow subordinates to assume control of some action, whereas accountability is the individual holding themselves responsible for actions that go wrong within their declared sphere of influence. Upon assigning ownership, leadership should also specify the expectations that an individual must meet or else risk being relieved or reassigned. This delicate balance is why psychological safety and accountability can sometimes appear at odds. Leadership must establish expectations for accountability as far in advance as possible, although there is one final caveat that can help preserve psychological safety. Growth-oriented accountability can emphasize that failure is not necessarily the end of all future possibilities, as might be expected in a zero-defect mindset. Instead, growth-oriented accountability would emphasize that the individual is not ready for a certain responsibility now—not that the individual will never be ready at some point in the future. If the organization can enforce a growth-oriented accountability mindset, then there is the possibility of achieving psychological safety and creating scenarios where an individual will accept responsibility for failure rather than

dodging responsibility.

Open Conversation—Transparency

Like the preceding dyads, open conversation and transparency augment the relationship between attitude toward risk and accountability. According to dynamic teaming, open conversation occurs when employees observe and receive candid feedback among teams where they may also freely contribute.³³ Subordinates could interject to respectfully raise critical points or offer helpful suggestions. The complication arises when leadership must pass important information or hand out assignments in a time-critical manner that does not permit open discussion. In these situations,

Ironically, transparency can still occur with restricted information if leadership explains in advance that some information might be restricted for security purposes and that higher headquarters will be responsible for those decisions.

leadership must make clear before opening the communication whether there will be an opportunity to contribute to the discussion or whether urgency does not readily permit a lengthy discussion. Psychological safety can still be preserved if the leadership identifies another time when open discussion about the topic will be addressed. Of course, leadership must then follow through with this promise, but the point is that open conversation remains intact whenever possible and limited only in situations of extreme urgency.

The procedural implication is that open conversation depends upon transparency. Leader transparency impacts subordinate psychological safety, which augments subordinate ability to focus attention.³⁴ Partners and subordinates must believe that leadership is proactively sharing

relevant information while remaining open to giving or receiving feedback. Thus, authenticity is a critical component underlying this relationship.³⁵ If the team believes that leadership or other team members are withholding information for some reason, then suspicion breeds distrust that thwarts psychological safety and impairs team performance.

In practice, transparency can be difficult to achieve. Individuals meeting for the first time will have difficulty ascertaining whether an individual is truly behaving in an authentic manner since they will have no baseline for comparison. As such, authenticity is not an ideal principle on which to build transparency in DSCA missions. Instead, the same purpose can be achieved in how leaders share information. Open conversation depends upon transparency in communication, and there will be rapidly updated information throughout interagency operations. If one partner organization refuses to share information, it could foster distrust among the interagency partners. However, the best procedure is to identify immediately what information has been authorized to be passed. Identify whether some information must be restricted for security purposes and let team members know up front if that possibility could arise. Ironically, transparency can still occur with restricted information if leadership explains in advance that some information might be restricted for security purposes and that higher headquarters will be responsible for those decisions. The immediate concern is psychological safety among the team with direct interactions. Likewise, leaders must be able and willing to say, “I don’t know.” Pretending to know more will come across as inauthentic and could also lead to confusion or misunderstanding. Crises will breed uncertainty, and leaders must feel comfortable sharing a lack of information with the team as much as they are open with the information that is shared.

Ultimately, transparency is the principle

that ties together all the preceding principles, but the link between accountability and transparency is especially important. Leadership should make it clear what the expectations and requirements are in fluid situations. If something is withheld—that is, leadership is not transparent about responsibilities or expectations—then accountability becomes difficult to achieve. The DSCA procedure most likely to accomplish transparency is in how leadership shares information. Promises, feedback, and placing blame all typically require more time than a DSCA mission has available to truly build psychological safety among the team. As such, leadership must ensure transparency in their communication through open conversation based upon how they share information during a crisis.

Summary

DSCA operations regularly involve supporting civil authorities to save lives, restore essential services, maintain or restore law and order, and more during a crisis event.³⁶ These activities will inevitably incorporate interagency partners across federal, state, and local authorities. Although each organization has the potential to contribute to DSCA operations in a meaningful way, the scenario itself likely creates multiple problems for building an effective team. Two time-critical aspects, in the urgency of the situation and the temporary nature of the team, actively work against most organizational psychological principles that would normally help establish an effective teamwork environment. However, if using dynamic teaming models, it is possible to build a psychologically safe environment through procedures rather than personal relationships and create effective, albeit short-lived team environments.

The discussion here combined the four elements of psychological safety in dynamic teaming (willingness to help, inclusion and diversity, attitude toward risk and failure,

open conversation) and aligned them with four principles informally developed among the dynamic teamwork of naval planning and training (visibility, ownership, accountability, transparency). Notably, these ideas describe mutually reinforcing concepts. They build upon one another to take advantage of the opportunity created by the preceding concept. Visibility establishes a foundation for psychological safety because people will be seen and heard. Next, ownership allows the individual to take responsibility for certain actions while accountability reinforces the importance of a team holding an individual responsible. The ownership-accountability link in particular represents a distinction between the organization allowing the individual to assume responsibility and then creating an opportunity

...using dynamic teaming models, it is possible to build a psychologically safe environment through procedures rather than personal relationships and create effective, albeit short-lived team environments.

for the individual to hold themselves accountable before organizational leadership must intervene. Finally, transparency through leadership communication reinforces psychological safety because the team can be confident in the intentions, expectations, and decisions of their leaders. If applied in conjunction with the dimensions of dynamic teaming, it is possible to develop a psychologically safe environment among DSCA teams through procedures rather than through personal relationships. (see Figure 1, next page) – **IAJ**

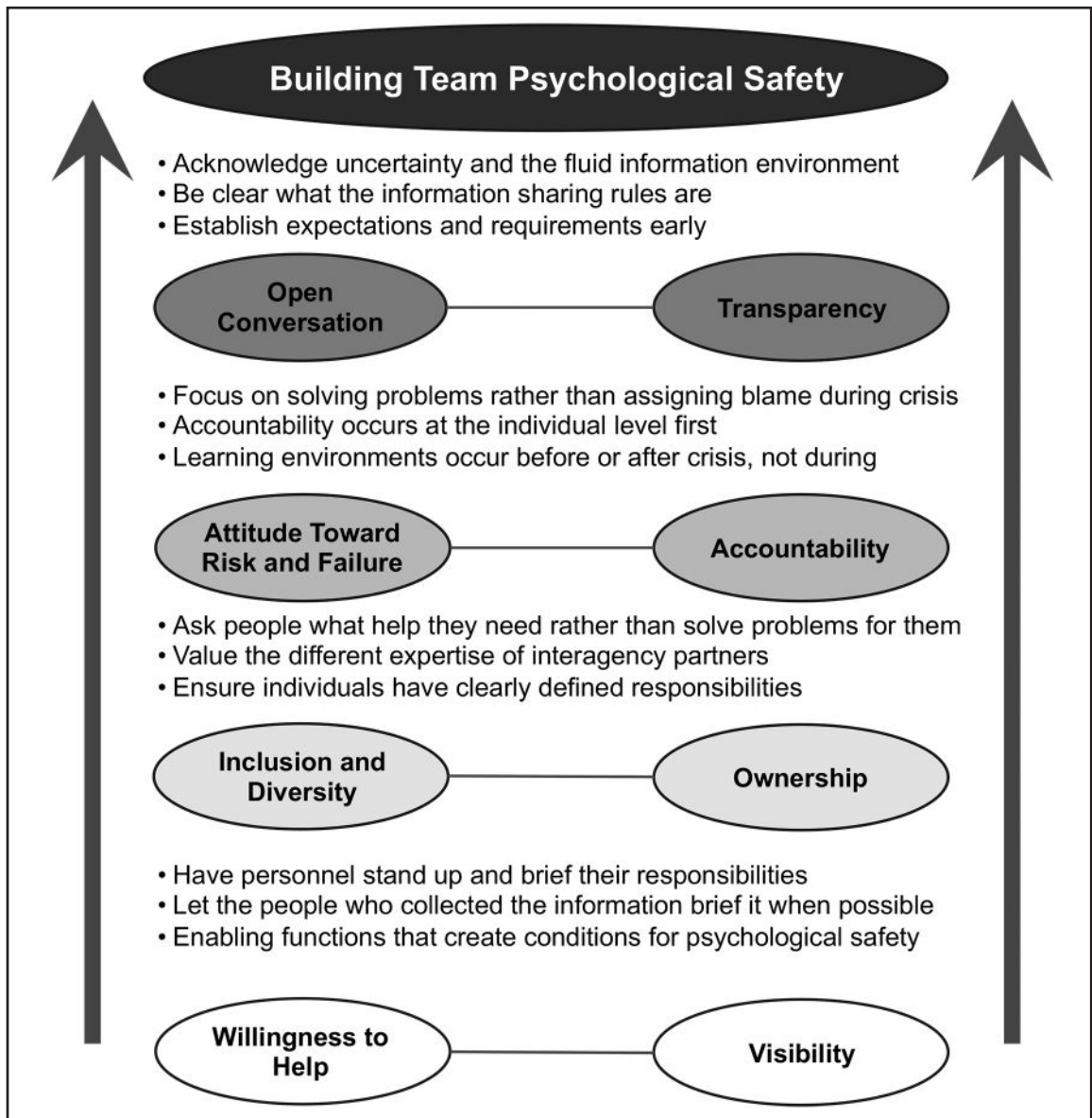


Figure 1. Graphic overview and simple guidance for building psychological safety among teams in defense support of civil authorities (DSCA) activities.

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Unprofessional Conduct:

The Dangers of Unprofessional Leadership in a Large-Scale Combat Operation

by Brett Newman

The United States (U.S.) has long relied upon the quality and fortitude of America's Citizen Soldiers to fight and win our nation's wars. For much of our history, this dependence was due, in large part, to the fact that the framers of our Constitution were leery of the power of a standing Army and the threat such an institution could pose to liberty and freedom.¹ Yet, this system changed dramatically in 1973 when the U.S. Military transitioned to an all-volunteer force.² Thus, for the past fifty years, our nation has depended upon the skill, courage, and professionalism of a relatively small professional force. While this force has distinguished itself in conflicts around the globe, the one challenge it has never faced is a protracted large-scale combat operation (LSCO).

If the U.S. were to engage in a LSCO fight against a near-peer adversary, it is doubtful that such a war could be waged by the small professional standing military of today. In such a contingency, the U.S. Army would need to rapidly expand its fighting capability, yet such rapid expansions carry with it the moral risk of sending an unprofessional force into the fray. With the changing demographics of the U.S. as a whole, it can no longer be assumed that the Citizen Soldiers of today would intuitively reflect the Army's professional ethic or bear the moral risk of entering into war without an ethical framework to guide and restrain their actions. If we do not wish to see the Just War Tradition as the first casualty of war, we need to prepare now for how we will prepare our Soldiers to fight this next war. This preparation can be accomplished, in part, through prioritizing ethical instruction for all Soldiers, and through reorienting the Army back towards normalizing religious observance for all Soldiers.

Professionalism and LSCO

When the U.S. engages in the next LSCO fight, we can expect massive growth in the Army. To illustrate this reality, it is helpful to examine some historical context to frame the scope of

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this problem. As the U.S. sat on the precipice of World War II (WWII), the last protracted LSCO fight in which the U.S. has engaged, the U.S. Army sat at just under 270,000 Soldiers. Yet, by the end of the war in 1945, the total end strength of the Army was well over eight million Soldiers.³ This massive growth was due to war time volunteers as well as conscription—both classes being non-professional Soldiers. For the majority of these Soldiers, their initial military training was measured in weeks rather than months before they were thrown into the gauntlet that would become the defining moment for America’s Greatest Generation.⁴ Understandably, this training was narrowly focused on the most basic concepts and skills they would need to fulfill their duty as a Soldier at war. “The goal was to turn the wide variety of individuals who entered the service into teams of fighters who could work seamlessly with one another to achieve their objectives. To do this, basic training taught a new recruit to think of himself less as an individual and more as an integral part of his unit.”⁵ With the urgency of the war, there was little time to focus on anything other than these narrowly tailored goals.

The training for officers fared little better than on the enlisted side.

Four Pathways to entering that class existed: the United States Military Academy, Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programs, direct commissioning, and Officer Candidate Schools (OCS). Combined, the first three produced less than half of officers during WWII. The most common pathway was an OCS program. Created in 1941, OCS turned enlisted men into officers through twelve- to seventeen-week courses.⁶

The vast majority of these officers arrived at their units unprepared for the tactical realities of leading men in combat. Many eventually grew into the job, but much of this was due to on-

the-job experiences they received rather than the quality of their training. Between the massive growth of the Army coupled with the high attrition rate during the war, it is understandable that Soldiers with any professional experience rose rapidly through the ranks to senior levels of leadership—leaving the tactical leadership to the freshly minted leaders in both the NCO and Officer corps.

...if history is any teacher, the U.S. should not expect that it will be able to fight the next LSCO fight with its all-volunteer force.

While the U.S. cannot know the exact threat it will face in the next LSCO fight, there are many troubling adversaries currently on the world stage. And, if history is any teacher, the U.S. should not expect that it will be able to fight the next LSCO fight with its all-volunteer force. Rather, the likelihood is that the breadth and depth of the U.S. military will expand—maybe even beyond the numbers seen during WWII. In such an eventuality, the U.S. will be sending a largely unprofessional force into the fray with the bare minimum of training necessary to be combat effective. The danger with such a situation is that the U.S. may have a force myopically focused on mission success without having their actions tempered by the Army’s profession and ethic.

Challenge of an Unprofessional Force in the Modern Era

Some might argue that such fears of an unprofessional force are unfounded. After all, throughout U.S. history, the Army has fought with distinction utilizing such unprofessional Citizen Soldiers. And, while this is true, we have to recognize that the situation in which the U.S. finds itself today is not the same situation as in previous eras.

One of the largest distinctions today is the changing religious makeup of the U.S.. According to the Pew Research Center, “As recently as the early 1990s, about 90% of U.S. adults identified as Christians. But today, about two-thirds of adults are Christians.”⁷ This change is due, in large part, to the rise of the so-called “nones”—i.e., no particular religious affiliation.

As recently as the early 1990s, about 90% of U.S. adults identified as Christians. But today, about two-thirds of adults are Christians.

According to this study, the current state of “nones” is nearly a third of the entire U.S. population, and, furthermore, the “stickiness” of “nones” has increased from one generation to the next. “The core population of ‘nones’ has an increasingly ‘sticky’ identity as it rolls forward, and it is gaining a lot more people than it is shedding in a dynamic that has a kind of demographic momentum.”⁸ In other words, while “nones” may represent nearly a third of Americans today, we have every reason to expect they will represent a rapidly increasing percentage of the American population in the years to come.

The changing religious makeup of America is important because of the way in which our country was designed. President Adams famously quipped,

Because We have no Government armed with Power capable of contending with human Passions unbridled by <...> morality and Religion. Avarice, Ambition <and> Revenge or Galantry [sic], would break the strongest Cords of our Constitution as a Whale goes through a Net. Our Constitution was made only for a moral and religious People. It is wholly inadequate to the government of any other.⁹

Religion was seen as an essential component of our governmental system because liberty and freedom lead to licentiousness when unconstrained by the bonds of duty. The undeniably universal characteristic of religions the world round is the duties and responsibilities placed on those participating in religious observance. And, for most of the world’s religions, the duties of faith extend beyond the walls of the sanctuary. Christians, for instance, are commanded to love their neighbors as themselves,¹⁰ to treat others fairly in business practices,¹¹ and to obey the government authorities.¹² The freedoms and liberties guaranteed by our constitutional order work best when constrained by duties such as those represented by religious affiliation.

Additionally, the changing religious demographics of America impact the intuitive nature of the Army’s professional ethic. According to the Army’s leadership manual, “The Army ethic has its origins in the philosophical heritage, theological and cultural traditions, and the historical legacy that frame our Nation.”¹³ While we undoubtedly live in a pluralistic society, it is equally undeniable that the U.S. was founded on a worldview informed by the Judeo-Christian worldview. David Tal, Chair in Modern Israel Studies at the University of Sussex, describes it this way,

The Old Testament taught how the Jews established a government that was ‘a perfect republic’ under the guidance of their deity, and the Americans should do likewise. And indeed, the American Revolution produced a constitution that was based on those themes and principles, the existence of higher, fundamental law; a system of government based on the consent of the governed; and the preservation of individual liberty. While phrased in secular manner, these ideas were all drawn from the scriptures.¹⁴

Since the Army Ethic is built upon the “theological and cultural traditions” of the U.S., it is clear that the Judeo-Christian worldview is a foundational element of the Army Ethic. This does not mean that other faiths, or those with no religious preference, are not welcome in the U.S. or the Army (quite the contrary since religious liberty has been one of the core principles upon which the U.S. was founded), but it is a recognition that changing religious dynamics will undoubtedly impact the intuitiveness of the Army Ethic. In eras past, “the philosophical heritage, theological and cultural traditions, and the historical legacy that frame our Nation” would have been intuitive to the vast majority of America’s citizenry because they had been steeped in these traditions from a young age. Thus, many Citizen Soldiers would have come to Army service with an inherent understanding of the Army’s professional ethic even if they could not articulate it in the codified manner present in the Army’s doctrine.

Today, however, the Army cannot assume that Soldiers enter its ranks with such an intuitive grasp of its professional ethic. Given the diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds of Soldiers today, the Army has had to instill the professional ethic into the force through tools like the Army Values, the Soldier’s Creed, the NCO Creed, and the Warrior Ethos. This is a monumental task that cannot be understated. In his book *True Faith and Allegiance*, James H. Toner records this story,

Gen. Mark Clark put it this way: “A woman once wrote me that she hoped I would make a man of her son, who had just entered the Army, that I would develop his character. I replied to her that I would do my best, that I was sure his military service would help him, but that she should realize that we would have him for eighteen months and she had had him home for eighteen years. I added that the job of developing character in our youth was primarily the

responsibility of the home, the churches, and the schools.”¹⁵

When our society fails to produce young men and women of character, there is only so much shaping that can be expected from institutions like the U.S. Army. And what shaping does occur takes place over time. Martin L. Cook, professor of professional military ethics at the U.S. Naval War College, in speaking about one’s professional identity, states, “While many military members do in fact embrace important elements of that identity, by and large they ‘get it’ (if indeed they do) by osmosis and immersion in the culture, rather than by systemic efforts to address that identity.”¹⁶ If it is true that a developed professional identity, which includes a deep seated commitment to a professional ethic, occurs slowly over time, then the U.S. Army should not expect that large cohorts of recruits will develop such a professional identity in time to engage the enemy in a LSCO fight.

Given the diverse religious and ethnic backgrounds of Soldiers today, the Army has had to instill the professional ethic into the force...

One might ask, “What practical difference will it make whether a Soldier has fully embraced the Army’s professional ethic so long as they can do their job?” Such a question is understandable given the foreseeable time constraints to train and equip Soldiers in the event of a future LSCO fight. In such a scenario, time will be our most limited resource, and we cannot afford to waste it on pie in the sky philosophizing that does not translate to actual effectiveness on the battlefield. Yet, Soldiers who are unprepared ethically to face the challenges of a modern battlefield are at much greater risk of committing atrocities and war crimes. For instance, the Just War Tradition

(JWT) is a moral foundation for both the Army's ethic as well as the DoD Law of War.¹⁷¹⁸ Under JWT's just actions in war (*jus in bello*) is the principle of distinction, which states that it is not permissible to target people and objects that are primarily non-military in nature (i.e., civilian). Yet, the My Lai massacre, which has come to be known as one of the most infamous atrocities in recent U.S. military history, was heinous precisely because the combatants at My Lai violated the principle of distinction. Without a solid ethical foundation, we have every reason to expect atrocities like My Lai will be committed in the future.

While we may strive to achieve perfect justice in war, the reality is that such perfection is beyond our human capabilities.

One might argue that atrocities like My Lai actually argue against the importance of a religious and ethically motivated force since, according to the Pew Research statistics previously stated, the U.S. was much more religiously homogenous during the Vietnam War. Thus, if atrocities can still be perpetrated when, presumably, most if not all participants in the My Lai massacre were broadly "Christian," then a religiously motivated ethic is no sure guarantee of ethical behavior on the battlefield. This objection is, to some degree, undeniable since the atrocity of My Lai was not prevented by the religiously motivated ethic of the day. This does raise an important point about the nature of ethics and ethics training—it is more like an inoculation than a cure. While we may strive to achieve perfect justice in war, the reality is that such perfection is beyond our human capabilities. This is not to say that the horror of My Lai can simply be forgotten with a wave of the hand, but we cannot allow the perfect to become the enemy of the good. Every war

will have its moral blemishes, but we cannot allow such blemishes to deter us from striving for ethical and moral conduct nor from holding Soldiers morally accountable for their actions in war.

In point of fact, the very moral condemnation of the atrocity at My Lai demonstrates the moral character of the U.S. as a whole at that time. If there was no moral consensus against the rape and murder of the civilian population, then My Lai would not be remembered as an atrocity. By contrast, the United Nations Human Rights Commission, speaking about Russian actions in Ukraine, "has documented violations, such as the illegal use of explosive weapons, indiscriminate attacks, violations of personal integrity, including executions, torture and ill-treatment, and sexual and gender-based violence. It also found that the rights of children have been violated."¹⁹ While such atrocities are not different in kind from the massacre at My Lai, the allegations against Russian activities in Ukraine are of a much greater degree than My Lai. Yet, despite the horrific nature of these allegations, there is no evidence of moral outrage coming from within Russia against the actions of Russian troops. While the moral silence from Russia is, indeed, deafening, an honest analysis of the situation recognizes that there are, potentially, several different factors that play into the Russian people's response. Not least among these factors must be the more tightly controlled media landscape within Russia, but neither can it be denied that Russia operates in a much different moral universe than we do here in the U.S.. The fact that Americans demonstrated moral outrage over My Lai betrays the deeply held moral and ethical intuitions that persisted at that time. While a deeply held, and religiously motivated, ethic is no guarantee of ethical behavior on the battlefield, it is certain that the lack of a deeply held ethic will lead to an exponentially increasing number of such atrocities.

A Pathway Forward

Recognizing the ethical dangers with an unprofessional force in a LSCO fight, how exactly should the Army prepare to mitigate against these risks? At least three proposals present themselves. First, ethical knowledge and expertise must be seen as the responsibility of every Soldier. In the Army today, there is a pervasive perspective that ethics is exclusively the domain of the Judge Advocate General (JAG) Corps or the Chaplain Corps. Yet, this cannot be further from the truth. According to Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 1, “Tough, *professional*, highly trained Soldiers, *guided by the Army Values* and Warrior Ethos, remain our *core advantage* and ensure we can adapt to any mission” [emphasis added].²⁰ Having a professional force that is consistently guided by the Army Profession and Ethic is described as part of the U.S. core advantage against our adversaries.

When our Army consistently acts in a professional and ethical manner, we build trust with the American people and our partner forces. And, conversely, when the Army acts in a manner that is inconsistent with its stated professional and ethical values, it does incalculable harm to U.S. national interests around the globe. It is for this reason that ADP 1 also states,

The Army’s essential characteristics of trust, honorable service, military expertise, stewardship, and *esprit de corps* enable the Army to serve America faithfully as an established military profession. These characteristics of the Army Profession reflect our national ideals, the Army Values, the Army Ethic, and the Army’s approach to accomplishing its mission to defend the Constitution and the American people. Soldiers and Department of the Army (DA) Civilians are professionals, guided in everything they do by the Army Ethic. They are certified and bonded with other Army

professionals through a shared identity and service within a culture of trust.²¹

In other words, a deep commitment to professional Army values and the Army Ethic is such an important component of being an Army professional that it is required of every Soldier and DA Civilian. There are no exceptions to this standard and there are no excuses for Soldiers and DA civilians who fail to live up to this professional calling. Army professionals who abdicate their responsibility to develop knowledge and expertise in the Army Ethic do so at their own peril. And, because it is so important for Army professionals to live out the Army Ethic, it is essential that Soldiers are firmly rooted in its teaching. This leads into the next proposal.

...ethical knowledge and expertise must be seen as the responsibility of every Soldier.

Second, the Army must prioritize ethical training, including JWT principles, in the training of Soldiers. Yes, we need Soldiers who can shoot, move, and communicate, but we also need them to do so in a way that does not discredit the virtue of our military operations. It is likely that such education will be of even greater importance in a LSCO fight than even what the Army experienced in the twenty years of the Global War on Terror (GWOt). During GWOt, the U.S. Army was so technologically dominant that it was able to project command and control even across vast distances with virtual impunity. Yet, as anyone who has participated in a rotation at the Joint Readiness Training Center or the National Training Center can tell you, it is very likely that command and control will be severely contested in a fight against a near-peer adversary. If that is the case, Soldiers must be equipped and trusted to operate semi-autonomously. Gone

will be the days when ethical questions can be run up the chain for resolution—leaders at the tactical level will need to work through these issues on their own. If they are not equipped for that fight, the Army will be setting up those leaders for failure.

Instituting training on JWT principles is best done early in the career of Soldiers before they have time to develop bad habits of lazy thinking. In my own experience as an instructor at the Sergeants Major Academy, I have found there is a strong backlash to training on JWT among some of the students because they believe their job is to do what they are told without question so long as it complies with the Rules of Engagement

...if Soldiers are not equipped and challenged to think in a principled way about ethical situations, the Army cannot be surprised when Soldiers fail to act in accordance with its professional ethic.

(RoE). The antidote to this abdication of moral responsibility is to build JWT training into initial military training (IMT). This training should focus on familiarization with JWT principles, and the practical application of JWT principles to realistic military scenarios. Such training should be oriented in such a way that Soldiers move beyond trying to arrive at the “correct” answer. Instead, Soldiers should be forced to think through the impact of various JWT principles on a given situation and weigh the relative value of those implications on the given scenario. If the Army can guide Soldiers along to principled thinking about realistic military situations, then those Soldiers will be better equipped to deal with the unforeseen circumstances that inevitably develop in the chaos of war.

Additionally, JWT principles should be reinforced throughout the careers of Soldiers. Such reinforcement should, at the very least

be included at every level of institutional professional development training to further develop the ethical muscle memory of Soldiers. As Soldiers progress in their military careers, the complexity of ethical situations should grow in order to force Soldiers to think in increasingly mature ways about ethical situations. Ethics Leader Professional Development (LPDs) at unit level training can also continually reinforce principled ethical thinking across the force. Yet, for such LPD training to be uniformly effective, the ethics community of practice must develop curriculum that can be utilized by officers, NCOs, and Chaplains at the unit level. This curriculum must be focused on JWT principles and applied to realistic scenarios that Soldiers face on and off the battlefield. The Army has a responsibility to actively train its force because, at the end of the day, if Soldiers are not equipped and challenged to think in a principled way about ethical situations, the Army cannot be surprised when Soldiers fail to act in accordance with its professional ethic.

Lastly, the Army must change its orientation toward religion and religious observance. As American society has become increasingly secularized, so too has the Army’s orientation become more secularized. While it is not permissible for the Army to promote one particular religion or religious observance, it can, and should, promote (in a pluralistic way) religious practice among Soldiers. Besides the inherent benefits with resilience, the Army would be promoting the very worldview upon which its professional ethic is based and for which the Constitution was designed. What exactly could this look like? Primarily, it would look like destigmatizing the discussion of faith within the Army. Yes, there are many Soldiers of deep faith in the Army, but many leaders are afraid to speak of their faith publicly for fear of backlash. Yet, there is a way to normalize the expression of one’s faith without going over the line of overt proselytization. Leaders should not

fear disclosing their faith nor fear speaking about how their faith has impacted their lives and leadership philosophies. Such normalization of faith and its expression, without prioritizing one faith over another, would fit within the constitutional framework of free expression.

For destigmatization to be effective, leaders must first model the change in the Army. After all, if leaders are afraid or unwilling to break the religious stigma in the Army, one can hardly expect the average Soldier to demonstrate more moral courage than their leaders. These changes can take the form of leaders prioritizing religious observance in their own lives and making it clear to their subordinates that they will be unavailable at certain times because they are practicing their faith. Or it may look like leaders leading from the front on attending Building Strong and Ready Teams (BSRT) events—and especially when it requires taking time out of a busy training calendar. These are only a couple of ways leaders can begin to normalize the practice of faith in the military, and, undoubtedly, there are many, many more practical ways religious observance can be destigmatized. What we do know is that leaders must *lead* if the Army desires its Soldiers to follow.

Conclusion

With the prospect of a future LSCO fight looming large on the horizon, the U.S. Army cannot approach the training of future Citizen Soldiers in the same way it has historically. With the fundamental changes to American society come new challenges that must be faced and overcome if the Army is to be victorious on the battlefields of the future. Not least among these challenges is the inculcation of essential elements of the Army's professional ethic among Soldiers assuming various levels of leadership at the tactical level. The Army cannot assume such Soldiers arrive with the consistently and historically "American" ethic, and the consequences of training and equipping these Soldiers to kill without the necessary moral constraints may be nothing short of disastrous. As the Army prepares new Soldiers for war, it must also train them to do what is right even when it is hard and especially when they must operate without an effective chain of command. If we fail in this task, even if we win the war, we may not recognize America on the other side. **IAJ**

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Book Review



Practicing Excellence: Restoring Civility, Faith & Trusted Leadership in the Public Square *by Anthony Randall*

E.P. House, Las Vegas, NV, 2024, 182 pp.

Reviewed by Colonel Andrew Morgado

Director, Army University Press, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas

Fighting the Bathsheba Syndrome

***"A few honest men are better than numbers. If you choose godly,
honest men to be captains of horse, honest men will follow."***

Oliver Cromwell, September 1643¹

All people want to be led well. There is an equal expectation that leaders, particularly in organizations that share in the common trust, exercise their role with virtue and ethical propriety. Too often however, leaders fall short of expectations and the cause of this downfall is usually traced back to the corrupting influence of exercising power at the apex of an organization. This is commonly known as the Bathsheba Syndrome, a reference to the biblical story centered on the ethical failures of King David, where people succumb to the influence of power due to access, an inflated perception of ability, and the loss of strategic focus.² Anthony Randall offers an antidote to this malady of leadership and a guide to more positive leadership in his book, *Practicing Excellence*.

Randall's prescription focuses on individual reflection and practice as the key elements of character development. The path to ethical leadership starts within the individual and can only become a true component of one's existence through active and repeated application. Randall, a retired Army officer and chaplain, ties this development of character and leadership as complementing activities. Specifically, he studies how "a morally autonomous agent within a greater heteronomous ethos" can remain true to their moral center and positively influence the larger organization to function ethically and for the common good.³ More simply, how can a person and leader remain true to themselves working in an organization whose ethos may differ.

Aristotle's "Golden Mean" and focused self-reflection provide the basis of this approach. Aristotle observed that "every virtue consists of two vices, one of deficiency and one of excess."⁴ The vice related to wisdom is not folly, but rather both arrogance and foolishness. Avoiding the extremes involves self-reflection and habitual practice. Randall provides a series of six questions an

individual employs to help this introspection to establish their identity, role, and ultimate function as part of a larger organization. The constant interplay of acting, reflecting on that action, and applying positive changes creates a cycle of virtue.

Randall's book is practical and accessible. A certified coach with decades of leadership experience, the author provides examples from his diverse career paths to illuminate both his successes and failures. These examples provide texture to a well-developed philosophical foundation. The combination of theory and application creates a well-marked path for any aspiring or current leader to follow.

A more avid student of leadership and the military professional may find some scholarly gaps and lapses in domain knowledge. Light on footnotes, the reader must make some associations from the bibliography to substantiate some of the foundational theory and trace the logic of the reflective approach. The military practitioner may also be dismayed by some of the inaccuracies found within the doctrinal references and acronyms, but perhaps a former chaplain can be cut some slack on doctrinal accuracy. Neither flaw detracts from the book's principal message.

Leaders seem to be in great supply, but the application of true, trust-based leadership within the current environment is often notable by its absence. "Knowing" ethics and leadership is not the same as "doing." This "know-do" gulf only deepens as trust erodes between the leader and the led when the basic deliverables expected of leaders do not materialize. Anthony Randall's book is a practical guide and useful tool for those who aspire to lead in a complex, contentious, and skeptical world. **IAJ**

Notes

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