



DEFENSE SECURITY
COOPERATION AGENCY

Security Through Global Partnerships



Elliott School of
International Affairs

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY

2022 Security Cooperation Conference Report



Overview

The 2022 Security Cooperation Conference, co-hosted by Defense Security Cooperation University and The George Washington University Elliott School of International Affairs, brought together approximately 130 security cooperation experts from across the policy, practitioner, and academic communities. The conference examined the state of security cooperation today; the implications of recent global security trends and demands on the security cooperation enterprise; and whether, and how, the Department of Defense (DoD) should adjust its approach to security cooperation in the future. The dialogue generated new thinking on frameworks, innovative approaches, and key challenges.

Speakers framed challenges facing the security cooperation community and provided opportunities for direct engagement on how the Department should adjust its approach to security cooperation in the future. Senior government leaders included Mara Karlin, Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities; Dafna Rand, Director of Foreign Assistance, U.S. Department of State; James Hursch, Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency; Stanley Brown, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs; Michelle Strucke, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global Partnerships; and Celeste Gventer, President of the Defense Security Cooperation University (DSCU). Participants and panelists represented diverse perspectives from across the Department of Defense, interagency partners, industry, think tanks, and academia.

The conference, held at The George Washington University's Washington, DC, campus on October 18, 2022, explored the increasingly complex U.S. security cooperation environment. The end of the war in Afghanistan, the resurgence of state-on-state warfare in Ukraine, and the increasing threat of strategic competitors compel DoD to rethink how the United States cooperates with allies and partners to deter, deny, or defeat threats to national security. The 2022 U.S. National Defense Strategy (NDS) sets out how DoD will contribute to advancing and safeguarding vital U.S. national interests—protecting the American people, expanding America's prosperity, and realizing and defending our democratic values—through integrated deterrence, campaigning, and actions that build enduring advantages for the future Joint Force.

The nation's network of alliances and partnerships is arguably more important now than it has ever been, with increased competition in new domains (cyber and space), dangerous transboundary threats, including the challenges of climate security and COVID, novel emerging technologies, and a rise in authoritarianism around the world. The conference explored the extent to which these changes are era-defining, and the implications this has for security cooperation.

This inaugural 2022 Security Cooperation Conference demonstrates commitment by the DoD to promote critical inquiry and scholarship that improves the quality and professionalism of security cooperation. It is the first of a series of efforts DSCU is undertaking to bring diverse stakeholders together to begin to bridge the gaps between scholarship, policy, and practice.

Three major themes ran through the conference discussions:

1. How security cooperation contributes to the 2022 National Defense Strategy
2. Integrating lessons learned and best practices in security cooperation approaches
3. Professionalizing the security cooperation workforce

First, speakers and panelists emphasized the central role that security cooperation plays in integrated deterrence, a key concept in the 2022 National Defense Strategy that emphasizes working even more closely with our unparalleled network of allies and partners to deter aggression. Panels reflected on the effectiveness of security cooperation and the extent to which it works to complement other foreign policy tools. Understanding the potential for impact rooted in partnership realities, and how that applies to a changing global security environment, was foundational to discussions during the conference.

Second, conference participants debated various approaches and frameworks for increasing the effectiveness of security cooperation efforts. This includes the centrality of understanding partner perspectives, incentives, co-development, and security sector governance to set the conditions for successful security cooperation partnerships. Conversations throughout the day reiterated the importance of building our evidence base through assessment, monitoring, and evaluation efforts, addressing bureaucratic impediments to change within the DoD, and more effectively integrating institutional capacity building efforts. Panelists reflected on applicability of lessons learned and relevance of frameworks, such as that of “principal-agent,” to the new and changing priorities for security cooperation.

Third, discussion during various sessions recognized the foundational importance of a professional security cooperation workforce. The quality of training and education provided by our uniformed services and our professional military education institutions is renowned in comparison to our strategic competitors. Yet the Department continues to face shortfalls in effectively developing and managing its own security cooperation workforce. The increased reliance on successful security cooperation to implement integrated deterrence approaches requires further investment in professionalizing the workforce responsible for assessment, planning, monitoring, execution, evaluation, and administration of security cooperation programs and activities.



Opening Remarks



Dr. Alyssa Ayres

Dean of the Elliott School, The George Washington University



Dr. Celeste Gventer

President of the Defense Security Cooperation University

The co-hosts welcomed participants, touching on all the conference themes. Dr. Ayres emphasized the importance of bringing policy, practice, and research together to sharpen our capability and understanding of security cooperation. Dr. Gventer commented that security cooperation cannot succeed without better thought processes, encouraging attendees to take a gamble and think big. She noted that Congress mandated the Department to implement its authority to develop the security cooperation workforce expansively, which will require input and cooperation from the entire community.

Keynote Address



The Honorable Dr. Mara Karlin

Assistant Secretary of Defense for Strategy, Plans, and Capabilities

Dr. Karlin's keynote address noted that the United States' unmatched network of allies and partners is key to integrated deterrence. This network serves as a competitive edge over the People's Republic of China, while constraining an increasingly aggressive Russia. Robust and frank dialogue with our allies and partners is needed to avoid a transactional approach to security cooperation—and to ensure that where security cooperation has helped to build relationships, those relationships can be translated into true partnerships.

Dr. Karlin emphasized three priority areas of reform for security cooperation: (1) prioritizing who and what the United States invests in; (2) focusing on sustainable impact; and (3) adopting a holistic, integrated approach to how we plan for and execute security cooperation within the DoD and with the interagency.

Dr. Karlin observed that, as an instrument of defense policy and practice, security cooperation requires specialized skills and knowledge as both a political and technical endeavor. As such, she emphasized the need to build a culture of learning and adaptation across the Department, rooted in evidence and scholarship. A key challenge for such an approach will be to find ways to present analysis and data to senior leaders in a way that will resonate, especially when it is at odds with what their personal experience tells them. Finally, she reiterated the importance of launching the Department's first learning agenda for security cooperation and encouraged participants to help transform ideas into actions. In particular, she highlighted the need for meaningful institutional capacity building, good interagency collaboration, workforce development, and public-private partnership.

Panel 1: The New Global Security Environment and Its Implications for Security Cooperation

Moderator: Mr. Robert Timm, Defense Security Cooperation University



Dr. Leigh Nolan

Principal Director for Global Partnerships, Office of the Secretary of Defense



Dr. Michael Mazarr

Senior Political Scientist, RAND Corporation



Dr. Charles Glaser

Professor of Political Science and International Affairs and Co-Director of the Elliott School's Institute for Security and Conflict Studies at The George Washington University



Dr. Stephen Tankel

Senior Advisor, Office of Foreign Assistance, U.S. Department of State



Dr. Renanah Joyce

Assistant Professor of Politics, Brandeis University

The first panel focused on what defines this as a new era and the demands this places on the security cooperation community to change to meet the challenge. Panelists agreed that the environment is complex and dynamic, with new threats layering on top of old ones (e.g., violent extremism, insecurity in fragile states). While the new era of strategic competition has elements reminiscent of the Cold War, panelists emphasized the diversity of economic and military ties and interests that makes competition more complex and which requires a more strategic and calibrated approach than might have been the case during the Cold War.

While the emphasis on allies and partners in the National Security Strategy (NSS) and National Defense Strategy (NDS) means that security cooperation will be critical in this new era, panelists highlighted the challenges and inherent tensions that will be faced. While we need to offer reassurances that we are a credible ally, those assurances can often work against our desire for partners to contribute to their own defense, requiring a balance to be struck. While security cooperation is theoretically a flexible tool that can be used to address both old threats and new, it is a limited resource and we will need better frameworks (based in part on learning from the past) to help understand where it can have the most impact and use that to prioritize our efforts. While security cooperation can be used to advance both warfighting readiness objectives as well as broader strategies for influence, the rationale behind the two is often different and security cooperation planners will need to think carefully about what they are trying to achieve.

Finally, conference participants engaged panelists on two challenges that they expect to be particularly prominent in the new era. One is the emphasis on the competition between democratic and authoritarian models of governance in the 2022 NSS and debates over the extent to which security cooperation can be used to advance our values—or whether “strings attached” approaches will make us less attractive in an era of strategic competition. While some saw an emphasis on governance hindering our efforts, others emphasized the way that attention to governance can advance our strategic objectives—by offering support for outcomes other countries value and through more carefully considering and addressing the risk created by security cooperation approaches that don’t take negative second- and third-order effects into account. The other challenge that participants flagged is the way they see the military departments interpreting the new NSS and NDS—as requiring a laser focus on high-end warfighting readiness, with an accompanying reallocation of personnel and resources away from security cooperation missions to meet this focus. While policymakers, planners, and practitioners can debate the most effective way to use security cooperation, the loss of military services as key providers will likely greatly limit options.

Fireside Chat



Dr. Dafna Rand

Director of Foreign Assistance, U.S. Department of State

Director Rand sat down with the president of DSCU to discuss her role in overseeing the entire foreign assistance budget, twenty percent of which goes to security sector assistance (SSA). Invoking the earlier panel, she flagged the central challenge of ensuring SSA is used strategically and effectively—and the need for subtlety and nuance in ensuring that SSA is a tool that is fit for purpose. Every day, she asks how security cooperation is integrated into foreign policy statecraft. She noted that the emergence of strategic competition focuses attention on how we engage with, support, and train our stronger partners (in addition to a continued concern with fragile states).

Director Rand indicated that the need for coordination between the State Department and DoD is paramount as the 2017 National Defense Authorization Act made permanent many of the temporary security cooperation authorities that had been granted to DoD in the years following 9/11. She noted that State Department concurrence is an imperfect tool for achieving strategic coherence, as the requirement to review and ask fundamental questions of every individual security cooperation package exceeds the bandwidth of the State Department workforce. Part of the solution is improved training of Political and Political-Military officers at the Foreign Service Institute so that they can engage more effectively with DoD security cooperation officers on Embassy country teams to reach shared approaches “within the family” on how to engage with partners and allies.

Dr. Rand weighed in on the debate over incorporating human rights and other governance considerations into security cooperation, noting that the debate is largely based on the false hypothesis that any critique will lead to an unacceptable loss of influence. She argued for a more nuanced understanding of whether this is really the case and advanced an alternative hypothesis that embracing our norms and promoting them can be effective foreign policy.

Evidence and evaluation are also important aspects of security cooperation. Congress holds the State Department to account for its foreign assistance and the taxpayers dollars spent, so the State Department exerts tremendous effort to measure, evaluate, and learn. Without evidence and accountability, SSA will not improve.

Panel 2: Past Security Cooperation Experience: What Works, What Does Not, and How Does It Matter?

Moderator: Mr. Gregory Roberts, U.S. Department of State



Dr. Alexander B. Downes

Professor of Political Science and International Affairs and Co-Director of the Institute for Security and Conflict Studies at The George Washington University



Dr. Marc Grinberg

Postdoctoral Research Associate in The Watson Institute of Public and International Affairs at Brown University



Mr. Alan Gorowitz

Assistant Director for Strategy, Plans, and Policy at the Defense Security Cooperation Agency



Dr. Jennifer D. P. Moroney

Senior Political Scientist, RAND Corporation

The second panel asked what we have learned about what works and what doesn't from past experience in security cooperation—especially but not only during the global war on terror—and whether these lessons are applicable to the new era. Panelists focused largely on sharing lessons that are applicable to the new era, considering the likely focus on more capable partners that are relevant in strategic competition (compared to the emphasis on fragile states in

past decades). They started by noting that answering the question of “what works” is predicated on the assumption that there is some level of agreement on what we were trying to achieve with our security cooperation efforts, but that is often not the case. The security cooperation enterprise is a large, decentralized, and distributed bureaucracy—with multiple stakeholders who have different organizational objectives, multiple activities and little incentive to coordinate, and potentially different views on what is relevant for achieving overarching U.S. objectives. Efforts that worked in focusing the bureaucracy on “one sheet of paper” usually included just that: a clear and concise sheet of paper that states achievable objectives. Even in the best cases, emphasis is placed on the U.S. actions in the partnership, and not enough on understanding the partner’s incentives and will to change within their own bureaucracies.

A lack of clarity on outcomes is often accompanied by different views on what can feasibly be attained through security cooperation with any partner, which varies depending on partner will and ability, what we are trying to achieve, and how we choose to utilize the influence and tools at our disposal. Political scientists on the panel cited the principal-agent framework, noting that it was a mistake to assume congruent interests with our partners and stressing that decisions are frequently made with uncertain information about partner preferences and actions. They described the pros and cons of various mechanisms for dealing with this dilemma, including monitoring, “sticks and carrots” (inducement, conditionality), and other strategies that their research suggested. Security cooperation stakeholders emphasized the need to address this with a change of mindset, listening more, embracing empathy (putting ourselves in the partner’s shoes and understanding their perspectives), and acknowledging the centrality of partner contributions by planning with them and including them early in requirements determination. Some more provocative suggestions included changing terminology on “allies and partners” to not categorize certain partner relationships, as well as starting all planning from the assumption that the partner does not share our objectives and leveraging various strategies from that starting point.

Perspectives on Security Cooperation Today



Mr. James Hursch
Director of the Defense Security Cooperation Agency

Director Hursch provided a practitioner’s perspective in his remarks on the state of security cooperation today. He observed that the current National Security Strategy contains 68 references to “allies” and 109 to “partners” in a 48-page document, which suggests the importance of an unrivaled network built on diplomacy, shared interests, and values. The DSCA Director shared his perspective on what it means to lead an enterprise of practitioners responsible for making real the commitments and strategic guidance of the Secretary of Defense. The Ukraine crisis has demonstrated the importance of security cooperation in a pivotal moment in history, especially with a focus on

integrated deterrence. The global U.S. partnership network forms the bedrock of the security cooperation enterprise, especially alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Overall, Director Hursch noted the importance of the defense industry as a key enabler to security cooperation and flagged the need to address procurement and production constraints, to protect as well as share emerging technology, and to engage in more collaborative planning with partners on capability needs to ensure the more effective and timely provision of equipment. He noted vast changes throughout his security cooperation career, to include the growth in foreign military sales, now at approximately \$50 billion per year. Finally, he stressed the importance that he and the Undersecretary of Defense for Policy place on investments in developing and professionalizing the security cooperation workforce, relying on DSCU as a resource for analysis, research, scholarship, and critical inquiry that advances the field of security cooperation and helps in applying lessons learned.

Panel 3: The Security Cooperation Enterprise: How Do We Need to Adapt?

Moderator: Mr. Kareem Oweiss, Defense Security Cooperation University



Dr. Rachel Tecott

Assistant Professor in the Strategic and Operational Research Department at the U.S. Naval War College



Mr. Stanley L. Brown

Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Political-Military Affairs



Dr. Joanna Spear

Research Professor of International Affairs and Director of the Foreign Area Officer (FAO) Regional Skill Sustainment Initiative at The George Washington University



Ms. Michelle Strucke

Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Global Partnerships

The third and final panel examined what adjustments the security cooperation community needs to make moving forward. Panelists highlighted key realities to making adjustments and implementing reforms within the Department and the interagency, including research on both historical efforts and current reforms. When the workforce embraces and prioritizes cultivation of relationships as the primary purpose of security cooperation, it leads to an approach that does not necessarily use the influence available to pursue national security objectives, echoing Dr. Karlin's keynote to transform relationships into partnerships. The security cooperation community has a wide range of tactics at its disposal, from influence and bargaining measures to keeping good governance front-and-center, and often recognizing that we are meeting our partners in their moment of need. Panelists argued for greater understanding of how bureaucracies function and the incentives for change, not only with our international partners, but also within our

own bureaucracies. There are times when the United States gets stuck, such as when we do not live up to our values, but security cooperation generally presents more opportunities than challenges in the future.

Policy leadership panelists laid out a series of ongoing reform efforts attempting to tackle the very challenges discussed throughout the day. Remarks focused on needing to better sequence and work with partners on security sector governance as key to successful SSA approaches, flagging growing interagency collaboration on those topics. Panelists presented a call to action for conference participants to collaborate more on some of the key issues raised, to include engagement on DoD's Learning and Evaluation Agenda for Partnerships (LEAP) framework. Participants and panelists closed the session sharing real experiences and solutions to ongoing challenges in budgeting, planning, prioritizing, and assessments that will inform future actions and reforms across the U.S. government.

Closing

To close the conference, Dr. Gventer thanked the speakers, panelists, and attendees for a vibrant discussion. She observed that the level of participation was excellent and that she looked forward to advancing the conversation in the future.

For the conference agenda and speaker biographies, please visit:

<https://elliott.gwu.edu/2022-security-cooperation-conference>

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