

## Pathways Nations and Regional Considerations

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The U.S. policy of rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific is a “whole-of-government” approach that relies heavily on a concomitant military rebalance to the region. President Barack Obama:

made a deliberate and strategic decision-- as a Pacific nation, the United States will play a larger and long-term role in shaping this region and its future. . . . So let there be no doubt: In the Asia-Pacific in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the United States of America is all in.<sup>1</sup>

To be “all in” requires recognition that the Asia-Pacific region is far from homogeneous.<sup>2</sup> Each nation represents a range of historical narratives, experiences, backgrounds, and traditions that directly impact on their policy and decision-making.<sup>3</sup> Notably diverse political systems, internal domestic security situations, and international outlooks likewise underlie the foundation of each Asia-Pacific nation.<sup>4</sup>

One common consideration for nearly all Asian-Pacific countries is their relationship with China. Smaller powers in the region worry about a more confident and diplomatically assertive China. Although these smaller powers benefit from China’s economic growth, they are concerned with China’s growing military power.<sup>5</sup> Despite the U.S. Rebalance to the Asia-Pacific, each country in the region is pursuing its own path to security and many, especially those outside the U.S. Mutual Defense Treaty System, want to retain some freedom of action in coping with the evolving U.S.-China relationship.<sup>6</sup> Although interested in security cooperation with the United States, most are unwilling to jeopardize trade and investment links with China and seek to remain on good terms with Beijing.<sup>7</sup>

Many Asian-Pacific countries regard the U.S. as a vital guarantor of security in the global commons, but in terms of alliance and partnership management, no amount of reassurance is excessive.<sup>8</sup> If nations lose confidence in the U.S. commitment and ability to serve as this guarantor, they could embark on potentially destabilizing security initiatives or become more accommodating to Chinese demands.<sup>9</sup>

U.S. Army Pacific Pathways offers one approach to providing essential reassurance to partners in the Asia Pacific region. In addition to building relationships and enhancing interoperability between military units at the operational level, Pathways is a strategic way to build and maintain confidence in U.S. security commitments to the region. Although there are no prohibitions on participation in Pacific Pathways vis-à-vis Chinese relations, security cooperation programs are designed to support the strategic political position of each country and to complement, each country’s interests and regional objectives.<sup>10</sup>

To enhance the concept, the Pathways design should incorporate, fuse, and balance host nation security cooperation priorities and evolving military roles and missions with U.S. strategic and military objectives in the region. This will help ensure that Pacific Pathways garners host nation domestic support and funding, compliments ongoing U.S. diplomatic and economic efforts, and avoids negatively influencing the strategic objectives of various participants. What follows is a brief examination of regional security concerns, security cooperation priorities, and evolving military roles/missions of eight Asia-Pacific countries—five that are

projected on a future Pathway (Japan, South Korea, The Philippines, Australia, Indonesia) and three (China, India, Vietnam) that currently are not. Combining this analysis with underlying regional concerns about the U.S. rebalance to the Pacific, this essay then identifies design considerations for Pacific Pathways: (1) advancing common security cooperation priorities, (2) nesting training with host nation evolving military capabilities, (3) integrating with other interagency partners, and (4) driving demand signals for future resource allocation.

## **Nations of Projected Pathways**

### **Japan**

Japan's consideration of constitutional changes and proposed revisions to the U.S.-Japan Defense Guidelines indicates a transformation in the country's security outlook as well as a fresh view of Japan's place in the international security arena. Facing serious security threats from China's recent expanded maritime/airspace claims (e.g., the Senkaku Islands) and North Korean aggression, the Japanese government perceives broad public support for strengthening its defense.<sup>11</sup> Japan's Dynamic Defense Force concept includes strengthening the defense of offshore islands, enhancing U.S.-Japan security cooperation, increasing engagement with South East Asian countries, and participation in global security objectives.<sup>12</sup> Incorporating the Japanese Self Defense Force's (SDF) variety of new roles and missions into the operational design of Pacific Pathways helps promote this transformation.

The Japanese 2005-2009 Mid-Term Defense Program established a Central Readiness Force comprised of mobile and special units underneath one command that oversees deployments and mobile operations focused on countering offensive operations on one or more of the small southwestern islands.<sup>13</sup> Viewing a potential power vacuum created by the departure of 9000 U.S. Marines from Okinawa, Japan's Ministry of Defense accelerated efforts to enhance capabilities to respond swiftly and seamlessly to attacks on offshore islands. Initiatives included improving SDF rapid deployment ability, boosting exercises on offshore islands, and introducing and enhancing ground SDF amphibious operations capabilities.<sup>14</sup> Japan appears to be moving away from heavy Cold War military platforms and toward more agile and flexible equipment adaptable for peacekeeping, disaster relief, and other rapid reaction requirements. The SDF focus on speed, strategic mobility, and strategic reach is tied directly to Japan's concern for security of outlying island territories.<sup>15</sup> Force structure changes and the procurement of lighter equipment illustrate a new strategy to replace regional brigades and divisions with rapid deployment, airborne helicopter, and amphibious brigades. The SDF is also pursuing new nuclear, biological, and chemical reconnaissance vehicles, amphibious assault vehicles, lightweight self-propelled artillery and MV-22 Ospreys.<sup>16</sup>

In the event of external aggression, Japan expects robust defense support from the U.S.<sup>17</sup> To support the dynamic defense concept, Japan's training priorities for security cooperation are: joint and amphibious operations, missile defense and chemical protection, joint Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) activities (including the use of Remotely Piloted Aircraft—RPA), cyber and space cooperation, improved interoperability, and joint military exercises defending offshore islands. Japan seeks to increase shared use of new training facilities on Guam and the Northern Mariana Islands with the United States.<sup>18</sup> Either location may prove valuable as a Pathway for both the U.S. Marines and our Japanese allies. In planning any military exercises on or near disputed territory, the Army must exercise thoughtful caution so as not to initiate joint exercises that counter U.S. national interests. Planning and decision-making for combined military training exercises requires diplomatic input and coordination with the U.S. Department of State.<sup>19</sup>

## South Korea

Another solid U.S. ally in the region, the Republic of Korea's (ROK) foreign policy focuses on the Korean "peace regime," the North Korean nuclear problem, and maintenance of the U.S.-ROK alliance.<sup>20</sup> With concerns for North Korean nuclearization and proliferation—what the ROK views as Japan's militarization—and China's increasing assertiveness and military modernization, South Korea already has a full plate of security cooperation initiatives with the United States. The Pacific Pathways design for South Korea, therefore, should implement already agreed upon activities (or pursue those already in active discussion) rather than identify new or additional initiatives.<sup>21</sup> The U.S. remains focused on developing ROK capabilities to provide leadership and command/control of its military forces as South Korea moves toward a more reciprocal and equitable relationship.<sup>22</sup>

From the ROK perspective, security cooperation training priorities with the U.S. include combined deterrence actions and enhanced defense capabilities. Two areas of particular emphasis are the development of the South Korean Theater Missile Defense system and realistic exercises based on the full range of possible North Korean actions. Pathways exercises can assist with contingency planning, re-examining U.S. and ROK approaches to planning for unexpected developments in North Korea, with the U.S. in a supporting role on the peninsula.<sup>23</sup> The demand signal from South Korea for U.S. security cooperation has been met for the past six decades with U.S. forces permanently forward-stationed on the peninsula. To create any additional resource demand for Pacific Pathways in Korea that moves beyond existing security cooperation exercises, therefore, may be a challenge.

## The Philippines

As the largest recipient of U.S. security assistance in the Asia-Pacific region, the Philippine government is primarily focused on internal threats from the Communist Party of the Philippines New People's Army, Southern Philippine secessionist groups, and the Abu Sayyaf Group with extremist ties to Al-Qaeda. Furthermore, maritime security is an area of growing concern for the government. Competing territorial claims of the Spratly Islands in the South China Sea (specifically Scarborough Shoal and Reed Bank) are causing conflict with China over the right to exploit the possibly extensive reserves of oil and natural gas.<sup>24</sup> The 2014 U.S.-Philippines Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement (EDCA) reopens the use of Philippine bases for U.S. forces, but prohibits positioning any permanently based forces in the country. The EDCA addresses interoperability, capacity building, maritime security, maritime domain awareness, and Humanitarian Assistance/Disaster Relief (HA/DR) cooperation. Domestically, rather significant opposition exists to the return of U.S. military forces to the Philippines, spurring, in fact, a challenge to the Philippine Supreme Court on the EDCA. Considerable political opposition to establishing closer security cooperation with the U.S. also exists, making U.S. military presence more difficult to sustain domestically.<sup>25</sup>

The annual Balikatan combined military exercise included on the Pathway focuses mainly on the counter-terrorism campaign in the Southern Philippines and aims to counter the internal threats that remain the country's primary security concern.<sup>26</sup> Improvements to the external defense capabilities of the navy and air force, however, also require attention after many years of neglect due to the primarily internal counter-terrorism focus. The Philippine government views improving naval and maritime air patrol as a way to enhance their capability to defend territorial and maritime claims.

Military planners should exercise caution regarding the Philippines given the gap that exists between the U.S. views of its obligations under the 1951 Mutual Defense Treaty with the Philippines and Manila's expectations. In June 2011, a Filipino Presidential spokesman stated that in the event of armed conflict, Manila would expect the U.S. to come to its aid. The U.S. has stated that the treaty does not cover the disputed islands

in the South China Sea.<sup>27</sup> Close coordination with the U.S. Department of State must, therefore, occur for any expanded military cooperation beyond the current Balikpapan counter-terrorism focused exercise. Any Pathways initiatives should not demonstrate unintentional support for a diplomatically unsupported position.

### Australia

Not under the direct threat of any country, Australia is concerned that competition between major regional powers may cause broader regional instability. Hugh White, from the Australian National University, stated that Australia is trying to avoid committing itself to either the U.S. or China in any confrontation that might arise and the Australian government says that both relationships are in good order.<sup>28</sup> The Australian government values a close defense relationship with the U.S. as a core strategic interest and seeks to keep the U.S. engaged in the broader security of the Asia-Pacific region. Common interests between Australia and the U.S. provide an opportunity to advance joint and multi-lateral Pacific Pathways exercises by including allies and close partners of both countries' militaries.

In 2013, Australia hosted a tri-lateral tabletop exercise between Australia, Indonesia, and the U.S. with a HA/DR Scenario (HADREX 2013) at Robertson Barracks in Darwin, Australia. Australia invited several East Asian Summit member countries to participate or observe the exercise with representatives from Cambodia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, and Vietnam. One explicit goal was to build habits of mutual respect, trust, and cooperation between and among militaries and the several nations in order to minimize the prospect of tension and miscalculation during other, possibly future, events.<sup>29</sup> Although not the type of training that contributes to high-end readiness of Pacific Pathways forces, including one of these exercises on a Pathway builds relationships and trust that will prove useful in the future.

The 2011 Force Posture Initiative between the U.S. and Australia allows for the forward-stationing of over 2500 U.S. Marines in Darwin, commits to closer cooperation between air forces, and enhances naval cooperation at Her Majesty's Australian Ship (HMAS) Stirling.<sup>30</sup> The minimal mention of U.S. Army initiatives in this document is likely due to the already extensive security cooperation between the U.S. and Australian Armies in military training, exercises, education, and intelligence cooperation. Socializing and synchronizing any Pathways exercise like HADREX 2013 early with our joint partners clearly articulates the roles of each service, benefits all forces involved, and will help avoid another inter-service debate on roles and missions of the U.S. military in the Pacific. The 2013 Australian Defense White Paper called for closer defense engagement in the Asia-Pacific—one that continues to grow between Australia and China.<sup>31</sup> A multi-lateral exercise like HADREX 2013 may also present an opportunity to build mil-to-mil relationships with China in a non-U.S. led exercise.

### Indonesia

Help with democratic transformation—politically, economically, and militarily—remains at the forefront of Indonesia's expectations of its partnership with the United States.<sup>32</sup> Internal security challenges including terrorism, separatism, communal conflict, drugs, corruption, and natural disaster continue to threaten domestic stability and are likely to dominate Indonesia's security environment for the foreseeable future. Over the past several years, external security issues such as illegal fishing, mining, logging, transnational crime, maritime security, and territorial disputes have emerged as increasingly vital interests for Indonesia.<sup>33</sup> Because the Army dominates the Tentara Nasional Indonesia (TNI)—Indonesian Armed Forces—U.S. Army engagements through Pacific Pathways are both a convenient and logical fit for building capacity for offensive operations that address internal threats as well as defensive operations for response to external threats.

The government of Indonesia has struggled, like many others, to fulfill annual national defense requirements, resourcing only approximately 30-40% of Ministry of Defense and TNI requests.<sup>34</sup> The Indonesian government, therefore, views non-military means, such as diplomacy, as a way to defend the country and consequently engages with over 32 other countries in defense diplomacy—the top three being the U.S., Australia, and China. Willingness for multi-lateral defense diplomacy with nearly all Association of South East Asian Nation (ASEAN) partners may be an opportunity to leverage multi-lateral Pacific Pathways exercises among these nations with Indonesia proactively encouraging participation. Indonesia attaches paramount importance to building regional security emphasizing the utility of multilateralism, but also recognizes the growing significance of bi-lateral engagement with major and regional powers, particularly the U.S. and China.<sup>35</sup> Both the Indonesian Foreign Minister and Defense Chief have suggested that China should be invited to take part in joint military exercises with the U.S. and Australia in order to improve overall preparedness for humanitarian disaster relief.<sup>36</sup>

Peacekeeping is one of the niche capabilities Indonesia possesses. In 2010, Indonesia was among the top 20 contributors of uniformed personnel to peace keeping missions and the largest contributor among ASEAN countries overall.<sup>37</sup> Wanting its peacekeeping training center in Sentul, West Java to become the hub for a network of peacekeeping centers in South East Asia, Indonesia would likely favor a Pacific Pathways security cooperation exercise that continues to build its peacekeeping capacity. Indonesia's Foreign Minister stated that the ultimate goal was for Indonesia to become one of the 10 largest contributors to UN peacekeeping operations in the world. Helping to build this capacity through training and resources would facilitate U.S. interest in supporting UN missions of this type while minimizing the U.S. signature and footprint in certain regions of the world.

## **Non-Pathways Nations**

### **China**

Not presently on a Pathway, China offers a different perspective. President Xi Jinping summarized the Chinese relationship to others in the region stating, “China cannot develop in isolation of the Asia-Pacific, and the Asia-Pacific cannot prosper without China.”<sup>38</sup> China's stated strategic perspective reflects a desire for a peaceful rise—one that is not belligerent, aggressive, or inherently militaristic.<sup>39</sup> U.S. policy supports this position politically. In an address to his party's Politburo, President Jinping also stated that China will:

stick to the road of peaceful development, but never give up our legitimate rights and never sacrifice our national core interests. . . . No country should presume that we will engage in trade involving our core interests or that we will swallow the bitter fruit of harming our sovereignty, security, or development interests.<sup>40</sup>

This description explains some recent Chinese actions, such as the establishment of the expansive Air Defense Identification Zone in the East China Sea: a cause of concern for China's Asian-Pacific neighbors and the United States.

Observers from both the U.S. and China recognize that the military-to-military dynamic is the weakest component of the relationship. The U.S. worries that this will contribute to strategic mistrust or cause miscalculations leading to heightened tensions and potentially conflict.<sup>41</sup> Miscalculations resulting in the exchange of fire could lead to further escalation and cause a military crisis unwanted by China, the U.S., and our Asian allies and partners. Engagements and exercises, therefore, which enhance the ability of the U.S. and China to cooperate are beneficial for this reason alone. Recommended areas of common interest for joint

exercises include counter-piracy, humanitarian assistance, and disaster relief operations.<sup>42</sup> Encouraging Chinese participation in a Pacific Pathways exercise focused on HA/DR would present an opportunity to build trust between armies and to create a more transparent relationship.

Chinese military modernization continues to progress steadily. The Chinese have actively demonstrated their enhanced maritime and naval force projection capabilities with sea trials of Liaoning—the new aircraft carrier aimed at protecting its borders, population, sovereignty, and jurisdictional claims. Efforts in the areas of missile and rocket technology, cyber and space warfare, and use of RPAs are also top priorities.<sup>43</sup> By shifting from a regional structure to a sub-regional structure, the People’s Liberation Army is able to adopt a more flexible approach with a contingency focus.<sup>44</sup> Although joint U.S.-Chinese exercises fall beyond the current planning horizon, at this time, our partners and regional allies are very much focused on countering these capabilities in the interest of their own security. Pacific Pathways exercises designed to build partner capacity in countering potential threats and missteps would likely draw support from our partners while advancing overall U.S. interests in the region.

## India

As the U.S. rebalances to the Pacific, India has begun to “Look East.” Although primarily viewed as economic in nature, the “Look East” policy forces India to rethink its inward-looking strategic orientation.<sup>45</sup> Historically, unresolved territorial and boundary disputes with China and Pakistan (as well as security challenges in Kashmir and Jammu) have driven India’s internal focus. Freedom of the seas, maritime security in the Indian Ocean, and concern with a strategic encirclement by China, however, have turned India’s eyes outward and primarily eastward. The new 10-year Defense Framework signed with the U.S. in January 2015 is more ambitious than the 2005 agreement as it strengthens the bilateral defense partnership and increase the scope and intensity of joint military exercises.<sup>46</sup> While discussing joint military operations, India’s Defense Minister, Manohar Parrikar, stated that “it was already going on and enhancing it is not a big problem,”<sup>47</sup> potentially opening the door for a future Pacific Pathways engagement.

China’s rapid military modernization has influenced India to accelerate the modernization of its military. Although India is spending considerably more money than it has in the past, the pace of modernization has been slow due to a low-technology defense industrial base, a lack of adequate funding, and delays in government decision-making.<sup>48</sup> As Defense Minister A.K. Antony noted, “new procurements have commenced, but we are still lagging by 15 years.”<sup>49</sup> With a 1.1 million-soldier army, India is trying to enhance capability without reducing the manpower for large-scale operational commitments to border security and counter-insurgency. The Indian Army’s weapons and equipment are bordering on obsolete and the term “night blind” describes most forces due to their inability to operate under darkness. The critical capabilities that India may seek to enhance include:

battlefield management systems, night-fighting capability, enhanced firepower . . . integrated maneuver capability to include self-propelled artillery, quick reaction surface-to-air missiles, the latest assault engineer equipment, tactical control systems, integral combat aviation support and network centricity.<sup>50</sup>

Nearly all of these capabilities are already part of the current Pacific Pathways design and would provide beneficial training and readiness for both armies. Other security cooperation priorities for India include intelligence sharing, counter-terrorism, enhanced capability for surveillance and target acquisition at night, signal communications, and ISR.<sup>51</sup> India’s goal to achieve joint warfare capabilities supports their desire to more easily undertake joint operations with multi-national forces should the need arise.

## Vietnam

Even with a shared, common interest in freedom of navigation and the free flow of commerce in the South China Sea, wide-reaching differences exist in Vietnam over the role of military cooperation with the U.S. in the broader context of U.S.-Vietnam relations.<sup>52</sup> The leadership of Vietnam has collectively stated that trade and economic cooperation anchor the relationship and the military-to-military element should not be the focus for the foreseeable future. This has slowed the pace of security cooperation between the two countries to the frustration of some U.S. military planners.<sup>53</sup> With respect to Vietnam, however, two key issues heavily influence U.S. decision-making: (1) how the U.S. influences and addresses human rights conditions in Vietnam, and (2) U.S. restrictions on lethal weapons sales to Vietnam. Vietnam leaders have stated they will not consider bilateral relations normalized until the U.S. makes a decision on lethal arms sales. Unfortunately, no precise roadmap identifies what Vietnam would need to do to lift that ban.<sup>54</sup>

Although Pacific Pathways will not likely involve Vietnam in the near future, areas of common interest allow the Army to continue building relationships with the Vietnamese military. Vietnam War legacy issues such as Agent Orange, unexploded ordnance, Prisoners of War, and soldiers Missing in Action continue today and offer opportunities for security cooperation. In a 2011 Memorandum of Understanding on Advancing Bilateral Defense Cooperation, both countries agreed on regular high-level dialogues and cooperation in the areas of maritime security, Search and Rescue, HA/DR, and peacekeeping.<sup>55</sup> Military medicine and other non-combat training have also been included in annual engagement activities. Fostering mutual trust and understanding with Vietnam remains a key objective. Vietnam seems to prefer remaining independent, however, with little desire for a formal military arrangement with any foreign power.<sup>56</sup> Vietnam's leaders do not necessarily see moving closer to the U.S. military as a simple and viable answer to their security challenges. Instead, Vietnam remains focused on improving their own self-defense capabilities by acquiring military assets from the United States.<sup>57</sup>

## Regional Concerns

Although very few nations, if any, in the Asia-Pacific region will turn away from engagement opportunities with the U.S. military, several governments in the region have concerns about the sustained U.S. interest and commitment to the rebalance strategy. First, questions remain about whether the enthusiasm for the Asia-Pacific region will endure beyond the Obama Administration.<sup>58</sup> The newly formed 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, now led by Republican majorities in both houses, brings with it a level of anger and disagreement with current administration policies that some fear will dominate all aspects of both U.S. domestic and foreign politics, rendering U.S. foreign policy somewhat unpredictable. Some Asia-Pacific nations are understandably cautious about keeping their strategic options open should the Congress or the next U.S. President take a different course.<sup>59</sup> In 2012, Thailand's Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Sihasak Phuangketkeow, expressed this concern, stating that "We wonder whether the U.S. is able to have a sustained engagement in the region, given its many priorities and given the state of domestic politics within the U.S."<sup>60</sup> The Indonesian government and population at large share this concern. Based on his policies and the time he spent in Jakarta during his younger years, President Obama is widely popular in Indonesia. Indonesia, however, strongly opposed the U.S. decision to invade Iraq in 2003 and hoped for "a more benign United States after years of a belligerent America under President Bush."<sup>61</sup> The Indonesian government is watching the 2016 U.S. presidential race very carefully.

The second concern focuses on U.S. fiscal realities. The U.S. debt ceiling debate, the government shutdown in October 2013, sequestration, and defense budget cuts have played out publicly on the international stage. Some feel that the U.S. commitment to the Asia-Pacific could well become hostage to pressing fiscal realities and question how the Department of Defense will ultimately resource the military components of the

rebalance strategy.<sup>62</sup> Rhetoric alone is not convincing when vital national security interests are on the line in some countries.<sup>63</sup> Another economic concern driving skepticism relates to the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) free trade agreement. Presented as the economic centerpiece of the rebalance, many Asian-Pacific countries are watching closely to see how TPP implementation affects the region, international relationships, and free trade.<sup>64</sup> Continued doubt regarding U.S. commitment to the rebalance will likely persist until the TPP is concluded.

The third concern is that the U.S. has placed too much emphasis on the military dimension of the rebalance.<sup>65</sup> A follow-on comment from the Thailand Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs observed “We’re also a little bit concerned, I think, with the emphasis on alliances and the military dimension of the strategic rebalancing because that gives an appearance of containment.”<sup>66</sup> This aspect of the rebalance strategy has drawn wide debate. The perception is real, however, and should be considered in the development of the size and intensity of Pacific Pathways force packages. The U.S. Army must maintain a conscious balance between reassuring our partners and engaging in activities that increase regional tensions. Advancing regional stability is the ultimate U.S. end state.

## Implications

Multiple opportunities, as well as several challenges, are associated with the future and design of Pacific Pathways. Several trends emerge from this brief analysis and are fundamental to successful implementation of the concept. Opportunities exist in four broad categories:

- building joint capabilities
- nesting with evolving military capabilities, roles, and missions
- leveraging common interests for multi-lateral exercises
- building the capacity of niche capabilities across the region

Each opportunity brings challenges that fall into four general areas:

- gaining diplomatic input to enhance a coordinated whole-of-government approach
- clarifying the extent and limits of U.S. commitments in the event of future disputes
- gauging the impact of Pathways initiatives so as not to embolden regional actors to become alarmed and possibly more assertive
- justifying funding for additional U.S. military presence in areas with existing forward-stationed troops.

## Opportunities

Like the U.S., many nations are looking to enhance joint capabilities through force restructuring, acquisition, and modernization. With maritime security quickly rising to the top of many nations’ priorities, the initial impulse may be to focus resources on naval partnerships. Maritime security priority, however, presents a great opportunity to make Pacific Pathways a joint operation beyond military airlift and sealift to reach each location. A scenario or exercise that included both on and offshore training partnerships would truly test the interoperability of not just multi-national forces, but our own joint forces, while reassuring our allies and partners in the area of maritime security.

Evolving militaries (e.g., India and Indonesia) as well as those militaries taking on new roles and missions (e.g., Japan and South Korea) offer opportunities for Pacific Pathways to build capacity and capability where these militaries need it most. To meet a wide array of missions from integrated maneuver, ISR, and signal communications to military medicine, humanitarian relief and training for headquarters elements, the composition of each Pathways task force will not vary. At times, Pathways should involve subordination of a few of the U.S. unit’s training objectives to those of the host nation while remaining focused on long term



mutual benefit for both. Close coordination with country teams and synchronization with Regional Bureau Strategies and Country Plans far in advance of planned execution will ensure the coordination of desired training objectives from both the U.S. and the host nation. Interagency coordination is critical for those countries with which we have less mature diplomatic relations to ensure Pacific Pathways enhances a coordinated whole-of-government approach.

Identifying where diplomatic and security ties are strongest between our allies and partners will help identify those countries with which to pursue tri-lateral or multi-lateral Pacific Pathways exercises. Strong bi-lateral ties between two U.S. allies or partners presents opportunities for the U.S. Army to participate in exercises on a Pathway that is not historically U.S. led (e.g., the Australian led HADREX in 2013 vice an exercise like Balikpapan or Cobra Gold known for U.S. leadership). Leveraging ASEAN focused security meetings provides another way to promote multi-lateral engagement such as the ASEAN Defense Ministers Meeting, ASEAN Chiefs of Defense Forces Informal Meeting, ASEAN Chiefs of Army Multi-lateral Meeting, and ASEAN Military Intelligence Meeting.<sup>67</sup> Socializing the initiative and opportunities in multiple venues with different members of the ASEAN Defense Ministries and militaries may build more widespread support for multi-lateral engagements.

The final category of opportunity focuses on building niche capabilities of certain countries to benefit the region as a whole and support larger U.S. initiatives. Training on a Pathway that mutually supports the U.S. Global Peace Operations Initiative—a joint endeavor between the DoD and the Department of State—may drive a demand signal for resources and draw interagency elements into the initiative. Precedence for this exists: the U.S. has paid to train and transport Indonesian personnel and equipment to Lebanon through the Global Peace Operations Initiative, and Vietnam conducted its first International peacekeeping deployment under this same initiative in 2014.<sup>68</sup>

## Challenges

The primary challenges to Pacific Pathways require interaction with the Department of State, congressional leaders, and host nation governments for resolution. First, the Army must gain diplomatic input to the greatest extent possible prior to planning, coordinating or committing to specific types of training events. This is particularly critical for those nations with whom we have less mature or strained diplomatic relations. Agreements made at the military-to-military level should enhance a coordinated, whole-of-government approach and complement U.S. positions, actions, and initiatives in the political, economic, and informational realms.

Second, the Army must seek as much clarity as possible on the extent of U.S. commitment and obligation in the region, as well as the limits of likely U.S. involvement in potential future disputes. This will “avert a setback in U.S. relations with regional nations due to perceptions of unfulfilled expectations.”<sup>69</sup> Third, the U.S. must avoid, through either words or actions, getting drawn into exercises too closely related to ongoing territorial or other disputes by nations who seek to use U.S. presence and partnership to back the legitimacy of their claims. Strengthening the capacity and capabilities of smaller powers in the region assumes some risk of emboldening them to challenge their adversaries more assertively and could unintentionally increase their expectations of U.S. assistance in a crisis.<sup>70</sup>

The final challenge relates to justifying resources for Pacific Pathways. Justification of additional funding beyond that already allocated for long-running annual exercises is more difficult when the Pathway moves through a location where U.S. forces are already forward-stationed, such as Japan or South Korea. If a premise for Pacific Pathways is that its method of forward-presence provides positive benefits without the large costs associated with extended overseas presence, then United States Army Pacific (USARPAC) must articulate

the additional benefits of Pacific Pathways to convince the DoD to properly resource both forward-stationed and forward-presence forces in the same location.<sup>71</sup> Under current fiscal constraints, the use of both types of forces in the same location may not gain traction. USARPAC should consider prioritizing locations without forward-stationed or forward-deployed forces to support cost saving initiatives.

The demand for U.S. military involvement throughout the world is not diminishing, and certainly not in the Asia-Pacific region. No amount of reassurance is excessive when it comes to our allies and partners, and nothing solidifies commitment like the presence of U.S. Soldiers. Incorporating, fusing and balancing host nation security cooperation priorities and their evolving military roles and missions into the Pacific Pathways design will enhance success. Understanding the perspectives of the Asian-Pacific countries in Pacific Pathways planning will ensure the mission is politically supportable within the host nation's security strategy and should help garner U.S. interagency support as a complementary part of a whole-of-government rebalance to the Pacific.

## Endnotes

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