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The RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool: Background, Assessment, and Applications

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Measuring success has been a long-standing challenge in security cooperation – looking backward in terms of returns on investment and forward to predict outcomes. The 2017 National Defense Authorization Act highlighted this where Congress called upon the Secretary of Defense to "develop and maintain an assessment, monitoring, and evaluation [(AM&E)] framework for security cooperation with foreign countries to ensure accountability and foster implementation of best practices."[1] This framework, it stated, "should be used to inform security cooperation planning, policies, and resource decisions as well as ensure the effectiveness and efficiency of security cooperation efforts."[2] Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs), Army Service Component Commands (ASCCs), and others involved with security cooperation have since developed or improved databases and AM&E tools to measure security cooperation operations, activities, and investments (OAIs). Recent assessments, however, explain that further refinement is necessary to ensure that security cooperation OAIs align with U.S. foreign policy objectives and optimize returns on investment.

To address these challenges and improve planning, the Office of Cost Assessment and Program Evaluation in the Office of the Secretary of Defense sponsored research conducted within the International Security and Defense Policy Center of the RAND National Defense Research Institute that yielded a security cooperation diagnostic algorithm: the RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool.[3] The tool incorporates inputs from several publicly available databases to determine propensity for successful U.S. security cooperation, rooted in nuanced analysis and validated with case studies. However, the tool's challenges in data currency and other factors such as limited inputs accounting for international dynamics demonstrate why results should inform nuanced studies rather than provide definitive conclusions. In other words, this tool "is not a substitute for strategic thought."[4] Past applications and potential research topics outline some appropriate approaches to harness this tool in security cooperation studies. The RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool offers a structured, data-driven way to assess partner nation potential for U.S. security cooperation success, serving as a valuable planning aid when used

alongside strategic judgment and context-specific analysis.

This article seeks to inform security cooperation planners about a diagnostic tool developed by RAND that can aid in quantitative analysis for a variety of security cooperation studies. Planners at GCCs, ASCCs, the National Guard Bureau, and other locations, as well as Foreign Area Officers conducting advanced civil schooling or in-region training, can apply this tool toward security cooperation research, policy papers, plans, and other products for a unique dataset that may challenge or bolster findings. The article first describes this tool's characteristics and provides context for its creation. Next, the article lists the tool's key strengths, weaknesses, and considerations based on developers' intent and personal experience. Explanations of previous applications provide a sampling of research questions or problems the tool helped to explore. Outlining potential applications for future studies offers additional research avenues that may benefit from the tool. The article concludes by summarizing this tool's characteristics and applications and proposes areas for further research.

Diagnostic Tool Background

The RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool is designed to assess the likelihood of successful U.S. security cooperation with any country. It is a Microsoft Excel workbook with 17 nested worksheet tabs that organize data inputs, scores, and visualizations across multiple dimensions of security cooperation.[5] The tool analyzes 195 countries using 66 publicly available measures grouped into 27 constructs and 10 categories. These figures generate an overall security cooperation propensity score for each country which ranges from 0 (highly unlikely) to 1 (highly likely). Key values, such as overall propensity scores, are listed on the top sheet, while other tabs include data tables for raw data inputs and weights for measures and constructs. The top sheet (truncated version shown

Sort by		Overall	Priority	$$$	$$$	CAT 1	CAT2	CAT 3	CAT 4	CAT 5	CAT 6	CAT 7	CAT 8	CAT 9	CAT 10	Strategic/Policy Considerations					
Country / COCOM / Overall Score / Priority / SC/SFA/BPC Expenditures / SC/SFA/BPC Expenditures by PN Troop	Category #1 … Category #10	OVERALL SUMMARY PROPENSITY Weighted average of CAT 1–CAT 10	PRIORITY/PRIORITY RANK	TOTAL SC/SFA/BPC EXPENDITURES FY10 US Expenditures ($M for security cooperation with PN	TOTAL SC/SFA/BPC EXPENDITURES PER PN TROOP	HISTORICAL QUALITY OF US SC/SFA/BPC PROVISION	HISTORICAL TRACK RECORD OF SUCCESS WITH PN	US-PN RELATIONSHIP	SUPPORT FOR MILITARY IN/BY THE PN	ABSORPTIVE CAPACITY OF PN MILITARY	STRENGTH OF PN GOVERNMENT	PN GOVERNANCE	PN ECONOMIC STRENGTH	PN SECURITY SITUATION	PRACTICAL EASE OF ENGAGING WITH PN	Largest allied contributor of foreign aid	Percentage of total arms shipments that is from China or Russia	Efficacy of security forces (1=low, 2=medium, 3=high)	PN on the State Department list of state sponsors of terrorism	NBC weapons proliferator	PN size index (population)
#	Country or Territory	ISO	FIPS	COCOM																	
1	Afghanistan	AFG	AF	CENTCOM	0.36	X	10,265.4	22,603	0.76	0.08	0.32	0.70	0.22	0.11	0.23	0.20	0.23	0.16	USA	14	1	0	0	0.77
13	Bahrain	BHR	BA	CENTCOM	0.52	X	15.9	1,033	0.37	0.50	0.36	0.69	0.51	0.74	0.45	0.73	0.61	0.57		0	2	0	0	0.23
52	Egypt	EGY	EG	CENTCOM	0.42	X	1,298.7	1,589	0.55	0.41	0.31	0.64	0.41	0.39	0.22	0.44	0.59	0.34	FRA	55	2	0	1	0.83
78	Iran	IRN	IR	CENTCOM	0.36	X	0.0	0		0.62	0.09	0.57	0.33	0.28	0.23	0.53	0.31	0.34	DEU	100	2	1	1	0.82
79	Iraq	IRQ	IZ	CENTCOM	0.40	X	963.7	1,346	0.23	0.57	0.39	0.63	0.43	0.18	0.25	0.47	0.34	0.16	USA	13	2	0	1	0.77
85	Jordan	JOR	JO	CENTCOM	0.57	X	319.2	2,804	0.55	0.36	0.48	0.83	0.57	0.61	0.43	0.56	0.65	0.41	USA	43	3	0	0	0.46
86	Kazakhstan	KAZ	KZ	CENTCOM	0.43	X	5.1	219	0.27	0.63	0.37	0.37	0.40	0.44	0.28	0.66	0.55	0.50	USA	91	2	0	0	0.67
92	Kuwait	KWT	KU	CENTCOM	0.58	X	0.0				0.39	0.77	0.56	0.60	0.47	0.73	0.73	0.55		25	2	0	0	0.33
93	Kyrgyzstan	KGZ	KG	CENTCOM	0.38	X	16.2	755	0.25	0.45	0.37	0.64	0.35	0.33	0.35	0.38	0.35	0.31	TUR	0	1	0	0	0.45
96	Lebanon	LBN	LE	CENTCOM	0.43	X	79.6	32	0.27	0.42	0.26	0.74	0.57	0.45	0.40	0.49	0.29	0.40	USA	0	2	0	0	0.40
130	Oman	OMN	MU	CENTCOM	0.56	X	14.6	226	0.52	0.42	0.31	0.88	0.56	0.70	0.53	0.65	0.74	0.50	KWT	0	2	0	0	0.33
131	Pakistan	PAK	PK	CENTCOM	0.39	X	673.2	1,000	0.74	0.34	0.25	0.76	0.32	0.26	0.25	0.28	0.22	0.39	USA	47	1	0	1	0.87
133	Palestinian Authority (Palestinian Territories)	WBG	0	CENTCOM	0.23	X	0.0			0.20	0.03		0.21	0.44	0.26	0.57	0.04	0.28	USA	50	1	0	0	0.39
141	Qatar	QAT	QA	CENTCOM	0.60	X	0.0				0.31	0.66	0.57	0.76	0.59	0.84	0.83	0.58		0	2	0	0	0.25
151	Saudi Arabia	SAU	SA	CENTCOM	0.56	X	0.0	0		0.84	0.36	1.00	0.59	0.50	0.25	0.77	0.67	0.50		0	2	0	0	0.76
170	Syria (Syrian Arab Republic)	SYR	SY	CENTCOM	0.35	X	0.0			0.39	0.10	0.76	0.27	0.34	0.22	0.49	0.35	0.26	DEU	91	2	1	1	0.72
172	Tajikistan	TJK	TI	CENTCOM	0.27	X	8.3	1,037	0.27	0.31	0.23		0.27	0.21	0.24	0.33	0.37	0.29	USA	0	1	0	0	0.49
181	Turkmenistan	TKM	TX	CENTCOM	0.25	X	3.3	482	0.17	0.51	0.14		0.39	0.10	0.21	0.48	0.41	0.31	TUR	91	3	0	0	0.43
185	United Arab Emirates	ARE	AE	CENTCOM	0.66	X	0.0	0			0.39	0.85	0.57	0.74	0.58	0.80	0.82	0.60		33	2	0	0	0.50
189	Uzbekistan	UZB	UZ	CENTCOM	0.36	X	5.2	78	1.00	0.58	0.17		0.36	0.20	0.13	0.44	0.40	0.37	KOR	0	2	0	0	0.76
193	Yemen	YEM	YM	CENTCOM	0.30	X	21.1	101	0.24	0.31	0.26	0.72	0.32	0.20	0.19	0.20	0.27	0.17	DEU	21	1	0	0	0.75

Figure 1: RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool, Top Sheet sorted for U.S. Central Command, 2013

n Figure 1) serves as a dashboard where users may filter and compare countries by region, time frame, or measure category. The tool's features allow decisionmakers to compare a country's potential for success with current funding levels and strategic priorities, helping to identify potential mismatches.[6]

Developers validated the tool by applying it to 29 historical case studies across a range of countries, conflict types, and outcomes. Results indicated that the tool's measures and scores aligned well with expert assessments. This demonstrated strong reliability and a consistent ability to differentiate between cases of successful and unsuccessful security cooperation. Insights from the case studies informed adjustments to the weights assigned to measures and constructs within the tool, ensuring they better reflected real-world factors contributing to security cooperation success or failure. The tool permits users to toggle weights, which are included on the last tab of the tool's Excel file.

RAND published the original tool and user manual in 2013. A newer version, published in 2017, retained all the same measures, constructs, and categories, but included raw data updates through 2016.[7] As the diagnostic tool "is designed to be reusable and updated by a generalist user (i.e., someone who is familiar with basic Excel) without the assistance of RAND authors/analysts," updates to raw data inputs have yielded two additional user-generated versions – one with data through 2019, and the other, through 2022.[8] Together, these four versions render four complete datasets with values for each of the tool's 66 measures and overall propensity scores for each country that are equidistant across time. Collectively, this enables users to conduct longitudinal studies or other analysis on a global, regional, or country scale over time and across measures of interest.

Assessment of the Diagnostic Tool: Considerations and Cautions

The RAND tool's features bear different favorable or unfavorable impacts depending on the scope of applications. Rather than clear strengths and weaknesses, there are important considerations based on the analysis at hand. For instance, its unclassified nature simplifies user updates since raw data comes from "publicly accessible global data sources," and analysis derived purely with the tool is releasable.[9] However, the quality and relevance of data inputs have limitations, accounted for in their relative weights for the algorithm determining overall propensity scores. For instance, an ASCC might determine and track levels of interoperability with a partner nation across warfighting functions, directly related to security cooperation returns on investment and trajectories, which would likely be controlled unclassified information or classified information.

The tool's data-driven prioritization of

countries is another unique feature. AM&E tools have improved in this regard, but this tool contains an algorithm more complex than other tools, which has been verified with case studies. The tool's robust supply of raw data provides a quantitative foundation for its prioritization of countries. This approach encourages users to move away from biased analysis toward a more objective baseline for assessments. Luckily, users can toggle weights for criteria if they believe certain measures bear a greater or lesser impact on the aspect of security cooperation under study than default weights, which may be the case for cases like special operations engagements or defense institution building.

One drawback from the tool's design is that for some of the variables, datasets are behind subscription walls or no longer exist. For example, raw data inputs for Measure X.3.1 "PN baseline military capability," remain from 2012, since this value pulled from Jane's Country Stability Ratings has been discontinued. Similarly, Measures 5.3.3 "State control of security forces" and 5.3.4 "Professionalism of security forces" remain with data from 2014, since the source of Jane's Country Risk Intelligence Centre Module no longer exists. In one instance, data never existed; Construct 10.1 "US-PN agreements – information sharing" has been a placeholder variable since the tool's creation because "no proxy measure [has been] identified."[10] Of note, based on RAND's case studies to validate the tool, that construct's default weight in the algorithm is 0.013 —equal to Construct 10.2 "US-PN agreements – legal status of US forces."

Another challenge in the tool's application is a lag in data compared to the latest conditions for partner nation dynamics and the bilateral relationship. Even though data sources for the 66 measures are updated annually, a lag between current conditions and those reflected in values of the measures can render results that reflect the past rather than the present. Aspects of these measures can be quite dynamic, such as measures related to governance or security after a coup. Similarly, effects of bilateral policies, such as economic tariffs, could potentially influence security cooperation, but the diagnostic tool would fail to account for such policy changes as it relies on data published prior to those changes. Under certain circumstances, users can adjust values to reflect present conditions, such as depleting foreign aid figures to see possible impacts to security cooperation, but these actions are intended to project theoretical outcomes rather than understand effects based on historical figures.

The tool's nature also generally limits the scope of analysis to bilateral relations – not international dynamics. Its constructs and measures focus on bilateral security cooperation, so it is severely limited in terms of how those variables influence great power competition and international dynamics. Measures like 9.1.7 "External Security Stability Rating" account for some interactions with

other countries and regional security factors, and the "Strategic/Policy Considerations" section of the tool (unweighted and independent of the security cooperation propensity scores) broadens analysis to consider "percentage of total arms shipments that is from China or Russia."[11] Ultimately, however, the tool is designed to determine security cooperation prioritization and propensity as it relates to bilateral relations between the United States and individual countries.

Finally, although this tool aims to assess the propensity for successful U.S. security cooperation with a given country, the tool does not specify what, exactly, successful might look like. Indeed, quite distinct outcomes can constitute success based on the context. Framing success in terms of who will fight with us is an oversimplification that does not account for partner nation dynamics and the myriad ways in which partner nations can contribute to integrated deterrence or burden-sharing. Constitutional restrictions on the use of military forces may prohibit a country from deploying to join a coalition or confront a type of adversary, but those partners could contribute forces to a United Nations Peacekeeping Operation or conduct training with regional partners instead of U.S. soldiers doing so. In a similar sense in terms of specificity, the RAND tool does not include nuanced measures for security cooperation programs, such as dollar amounts for International Military Education and Training (IMET). Rather, IMET is grouped into the total "security cooperation expenditures" value, along with Foreign Military Sales, Excess Defense Articles, Foreign Military Financing, and other accounts listed in the USAID Greenbook.[12] Hence, it can aid analysis on returns on investment for collective security cooperation rather than types or specific programs.

this tool "can serve as a starting point to build the case for security cooperation mission[s]."

Despite this tool's accessibility and practical utility, few papers or articles mention it or harness the tool to investigate research questions. Those that do demonstrate the tool's versatility across a variety of problem sets. Some also highlight its flaws and discrepancies through analysis.

One publication demonstrated the tool's application in assessing the propensity for successful security cooperation for a particular program or enabler across all Department of State-recognized countries in the world to prioritize where to dedicate a limited resource. A Naval Postgraduate School master's student utilized the algorithm to "assess which factors are most critical for special operations forces (SOF) efforts to build partnership capacity."[13] The author determined that "when national policy or campaign plans call for capacity building" involving SOF, this tool "can serve as a starting point to build the case for

security cooperation mission[s].”[14] Circumstances linked to changes in security situations or policy may also “override the ‘matching tool’ recommendations or ideal partner countries.”[15] Nevertheless, the default weights associated with the tool’s 10 categories were adequate for the purpose of this study, despite the unique nature of SOF missions and potential for greater relative weights of some factors when considering likelihood of achieving mission objectives. According to the author, who did not adjust the “practical ease engaging with the partner nation” category’s default weight of 3% toward a country’s overall propensity score, “although it may be easier to build capacity with countries that have a common language or have standing legal agreements with the U.S., this should not be a heavily weighted factor for SOF when choosing partners.”[16]

Another publication, in response to a prompt seeking to identify on the “Least Valuable Player” among U.S. Allies in terms of contributing to U.S. national security, used the tool to compare overall security cooperation propensity scores among U.S. Allies over time.[17] Using the default weights, the algorithm revealed that the Philippines consistently ranked last.[18] Other indicators corroborated this assessment, such as defense spending as a percentage of gross domestic product (GDP) to reflect cost-sharing toward shared security interests. Hence, the paper argued that there was a disconnect between U.S. investment and prioritization compared to likely returns. Even so, this study did not account for a variety of strategy and policy factors, such as territory disputes and deterrence in the arena of great power competition, that might lead policy- and decision-makers to continue prioritizing that ally. Of note, the RAND tool contains six variables under the category “Strategic/Policy Considerations,” unweighted and independent of the security cooperation propensity scores, but these mostly relate to the bilateral relationship rather than influences on third parties —a limitation when considering the returns on investment of defense pacts in terms of influences on adversaries.[19]

In a different study, the RAND tool yielded insights when analyzing the durability of U.S. security cooperation across significant political shifts in Latin America, where countries have undergone pendulum shifts between left- and right-leaning administrations in recent elections. The algorithm indicated that during the 2010s and early 2020s, in general, right-leaning administrations favored the United States while left-leaning sought to strengthen relations with China, often maintaining pragmatic relations with the United States.[20] Published findings included case studies of Argentina and Brazil, where this algorithm helped to identify how specific variables like economic policies and governance issues influenced security cooperation.[21] Unpublished findings included details on Ecuador’s overall propensity score. It had been

0.44 during Rafael Correa's presidency, when the U.S. left Manta Air Base after the Ecuadorian government did not renew the agreement and the U.S. Embassy's Security Cooperation Office closed. The score rose to 0.51 under President Lenín Moreno, when the Security Cooperation Office reopened, and the U.S. Air Force was permitted to utilize the San Cristobal Airport in the Galapagos Islands for counternarcotics patrols. This application demonstrates the utility of the tool for longitudinal studies involving frameworks like Diplomatic, Informational, Military, and Economic (DIME) to investigate correlations between security cooperation and variables beyond the Military instrument of national power.

Each of these previous applications enhanced investigations about security cooperation at different scopes or scales in terms of geography, policy, and time. They provided some quantitative insights into complex problems and demonstrated the tool's utility in various scenarios. In all studies, users applied default RAND weights rather than define new weights for the diagnostic tool's 66 measurements, but future applications may help to identify situations where user-defined weights are more appropriate for particular studies.

Intended Applications and Potential Research Paths

Based on the nature and purpose of this diagnostic tool, aware of its strengths and weaknesses, political-military practitioners can use this algorithm to analyze several aspects of security cooperation. The tool's developers highlighted two intended applications.

The first is "identifying mismatches between propensity for security

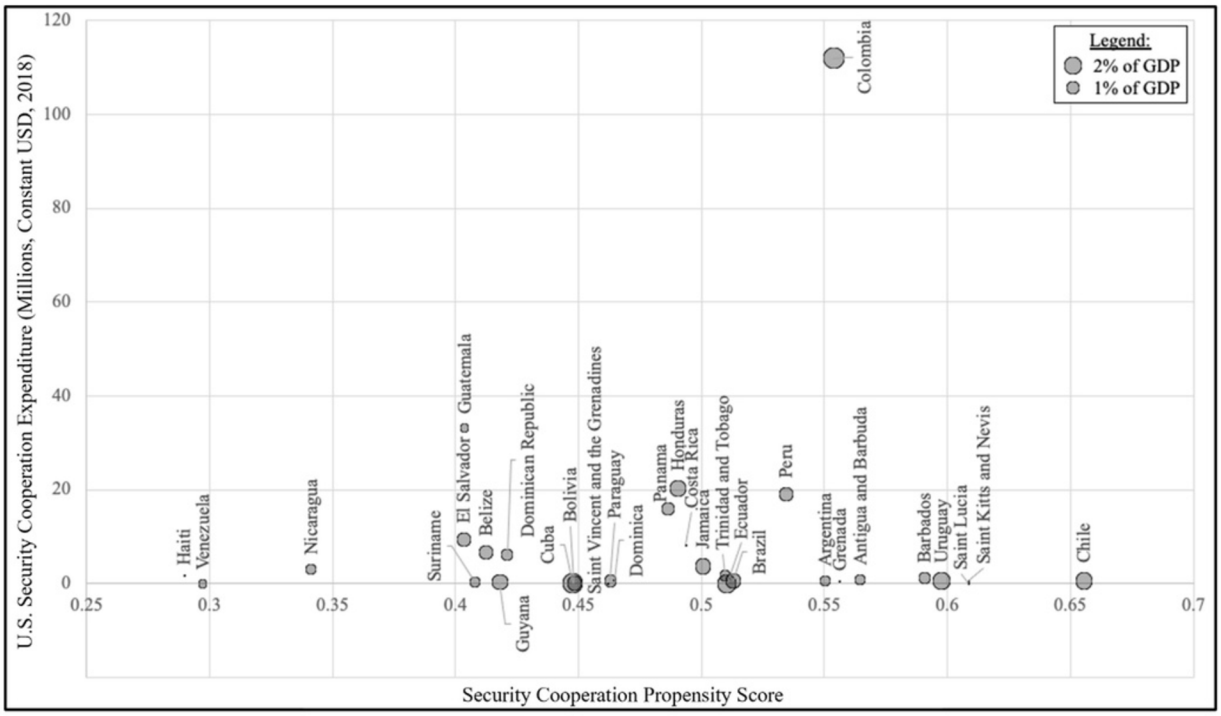

Figure 2: U.S. Security Cooperation Expenditures compared to Security Cooperation Propensity and Military Expenditure as a Percentage of GDP in U.S. Southern Command, 2019

cooperation and current funding levels, and conducting detailed country-specific analyses of those mismatches." [22] The National Guard Bureau could consider the RAND diagnostic tool for analysis and prioritization of new partnerships. Geographic Combatant Commands (GCCs) and Army Service Component Commands (ASCCs) could compare findings using the RAND diagnostic tool (example in Figure 2) with their own security cooperation assessment tools to see how prioritization among countries in their areas of responsibility compares between internal tools and the RAND diagnostic tool.

Criteria used by GCCs and ASCCs are likely more specific than the RAND tool's measurements, such as interoperability levels across warfighting functions or dollar amounts by security cooperation program. They also benefit from classified inputs to render a more relevant and precise means to prioritize countries and track progress toward policy objectives. Nevertheless, investigating the RAND tool may help planners or operations research and systems analysis (ORSA) personnel challenge the objectivity of measurements for internal tools, develop more refined criteria, and possibly incorporate unclassified sources to inform analysis and introduce variables beyond the "Military" instrument of national power. The RAND tool also demonstrates the importance of consistency of the types of measurements and sources over time for reliable and meaningful assessment, monitoring, and evaluation (AM&E); experimentation with the RAND tool may help to improve Department of Defense tools like SOCIUM to track security cooperation operations, investments, and activities to determine returns on investment and optimize efforts.

If one were to investigate outliers among countries, a mismatch for Afghanistan is readily apparent. A clear outlier for security cooperation expenditures, Afghanistan ranked first globally for total expenditures and among the top two or three globally for expenditures per partner nation troop. However, it consistently held among the lowest overall security cooperation propensity scores, with abysmal ratings of 0.36 (2013), 0.23 (2016), 0.23 (2019), and 0.22 (2022). Even after the U.S. withdrawal in 2021, the overall propensity score dropped by just 0.01 – an indication of the dismal conditions for successful security cooperation well before the withdrawal. Analysis of each category and measure during this period may aid a case study of security cooperation in Afghanistan to consider potential consequences of different policy options in hindsight. It could also help to identify what measures may help to accurately assess partner nation willingness and capability, or reinforce the perceived difficulty in doing so.

Applications to fragile states may reinforce results in the RAND paper

Assessing Security Cooperation as a Preventative Tool. The study found that "on average, security cooperation has a statistically significant relationship with reduction in fragility," but that, among other details, "the strength of correlation did not increase proportionally with additional funding; most of the effect was concentrated at the low end of SC funding."[23] Nuanced analysis assessed influences by types of security cooperation programs, but applications of this RAND diagnostic tool involving fragile states can help to determine if there are mismatches between the amount of security cooperation funding and propensity for success based on changes in overall stability and institutions. Longitudinal studies can also reveal how security cooperation dynamics have changed over time as state fragility has improved or worsened. Investigating Colombia – a clear outlier in the western hemisphere for security cooperation expenditures – may help in studies seeking to understand spending thresholds for optimal returns and discern legacy programs carried over from an earlier period of turbulence.

Another example could be exploring a specific construct over time for countries to see how the security cooperation relationship has evolved, which may help to identify potential opportunities where conditions are favorable or analyze factors hindering bilateral security cooperation. For instance, Construct 3.2 "PN citizen perception of U.S." with a default weight of 0.08, is an important factor when considering information operations, permanent basing, combined exercises, personnel exchanges, and training. On a broad scale, India's improving values for that construct—from 0.32 in 2013 to 0.55 in 2022—mirrored the expanding defense cooperation relationship as India gained Major Defense Partner status (2016) and signed a Communications Compatibility and Security Agreement (2018) and Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement (2020). Values for this construct could inform planners about likely PN perceptions for U.S. presence as a factor for decisions on persistent or episodic employment of advisors with a Security Force Assistance Brigade.

Developers' second intended application was "to conduct 'excursions' or 'thought experiments,' looking at specific cases, making changes to the underlying data or assumptions to see what changes, and creating and exploring 'what if?' scenarios (e.g., 'What if construct X were improved in country Y?')."[24] This approach may contribute to studies on possible policy changes and their consequences for bilateral security cooperation. The tool also provides planners with a means to understand and anticipate possible effects of new policies that have yet to yield measurable results in security cooperation.

Comparing various measurements relating to governance, human rights and civil liberties, security and military,

and diplomatic alignment can help analysts and planners understand post-coup alignment with the United States and potential changes. The tool can also aid analysis in a scenario where a previously stable region experiences sudden aggression by a hostile neighbor, such as China toward Taiwan or Russia toward eastern Europe. Toggling values for measures in Construct 9 "PN Security Situation" and Measure 10.2.1 "PN status of forces (SOFA) agreements with the U.S." could reveal potential impacts of a change to the external security conditions and how propensity for successful bilateral security cooperation might change. Adjusting values and analyzing changes may provide insights on access and potential basing opportunities to set the theater or respond to a crisis, PN willingness to join coalitions, and country prioritization.

One potential thought experiment could focus on policy changes regarding foreign aid and potential impacts to propensity for successful security cooperation. Measure 2.2.1 "Lag correlation between all foreign aid to PN and PN Human Development Index" draws from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development and United Nations Development Programme. Toggling that measure and its default weight of 0.08 may help planners understand how, and to what degree, ceasing foreign aid may impact security cooperation.

Conclusion

The RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool offers a structured framework with substantial potential for informing security cooperation planning. However, users should apply it with a critical understanding of its assumptions, data limitations, and the evolving strategic environment. This comprehensive algorithm, validated through case studies, permits users to update raw data and toggle weights to improve currency and relevance for applications. The tool, grounded in data, encourages objectivity with measurable comparisons and predictive analysis. However, data fidelity or access degrades over time as sources cease to exist or may continue behind subscription walls, and the tool focuses on factors influencing collective security cooperation rather than types or for individual programs. The tool's main applications include comparing U.S. security cooperation expenditures with propensity for successful security cooperation to identify misalignments, and thought experiments to see how changes to relevant measures may influence bilateral security cooperation dynamics.

Opportunities for further research abound, as security cooperation AM&E will continue to inform decision-makers and influence the management of security cooperation programs. Future research might investigate how open sources can inform security cooperation, and how automation,

machine learning, and artificial intelligence might enhance analysis.

Comparing this tool with GCC and ASCC internal security cooperation assessment tools may also yield important findings. Such studies may help to refine methodologies for evaluating effectiveness of security cooperation programs. Discrepancies between internal tools and this algorithm may help cue planners to gaps they may bridge through interagency collaboration, depending on the particular construct or measure.

Additional attention regarding this tool's measures can potentially improve the tool's data currency and relevance. As mentioned, values for one of the tool's constructs—Construct 10.1 "US-PN agreements – information sharing" —remain blank because an adequate source has yet to be identified. This may be a topic for further research to determine the appropriate categorization and scores for types of agreements. This is probably not feasible in an unclassified diagnostic tool. Rather, a construct similar to that of 10.2 "US-PN agreements – legal status of US forces" is possible for information sharing agreements, but only if that construct is classified. Finally, the tool may contribute to peripheral studies on related topics like language, regional expertise, and culture (LREC). Studies on LREC and interoperability, for instance, could incorporate Measure 10.3.1 "English is an official language (yes/no)" and its associated weight for the formula in the RAND tool.

Ultimately, the RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool stands as a valuable, if imperfect, asset for planners and analysts seeking to navigate the complexities of security cooperation. When applied with critical judgement and supplemented by additional research, it offers a means to sharpen analysis, challenge assumptions, and contribute to informed decision-making. As security cooperation evolves in response to new strategic demands, continued refinement, critical assessment, and creative application of tools like this one will be essential to ensure efforts are not only measurable, but meaningful.

End Notes:

1. U.S. Congress, *National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017*, Public Law 114-328, 114th Cong., 2nd sess. (December 23, 2016)," § 1205.
2. U.S. Congress, *NDAA for FY2017*, § 1205.
3. Christopher Paul, Michael Nixon, Heather Peterson, Beth Grill, and Jessica Yeats, *The RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool* (RAND Corporation, 2013), iii.
4. Paul, et al., *RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool,* 28.
5. Paul, et al., *RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool,* 21.
6. Paul, et al., *RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool,* x-xi.
7. The original version from 2013 and the 2017 update (with data from 2016) are available for download at https://www.rand.org/pubs/tools/TL112.html.
8. Paul, et al., RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool, xi

and 3. Although RAND has received these user-updated versions for 2019 and 2022, RAND will not post them for download as they were not compiled by RAND authors/analysts. Due to copyright, they may not be posted elsewhere in the public domain but may be shared through correspondence. To obtain these updated versions, email the author (and producer of these updates) at matthew.a.hughes22.mil@army.mil. To make updates to the diagnostic tool and update raw data, consult Paul, et al., *RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool,* Appendix D.

9. Paul, et al., *RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool,* 21.

10. Paul, et al., *RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool,* 37 (footnote 2).

11. Paul, et al., *RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool,* 17.

12. Paul, et al., *RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool,* 22.

13. William R. Hermann III, "Choosing to Win: How SOF can Better Select Partners for Capacity Building" (Master's thesis, Naval Postgraduate School, 2014), available at https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/tr/pdf/ADA607835.pdf (accessed 16 April 2025), V.

14. Hermann, "Choosing to Win," 3.

15. Hermann, "Choosing to Win," 51.

16. Hermann, "Choosing to Win," 46.

17. John Quincy Adams Society, "2021 Student Foreign Policy Essay Contest," https://jqas.org/2021-student-foreign-policy-essay-contest/ (accessed 17 April 2025).

18. Matthew Hughes, "Is the U.S.-Philippines Alliance Obsolete?," *The National Interest,* 24 May 2021, https://nationalinterest.org/blog/skeptics/us-philippines-alliance-obsolete-185722 (accessed 17 April 2025).

19. Paul, et al., *RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool,* 17.

20. Matthew A. Hughes, "Riding the Waves of Change: U.S. and Chinese Security Cooperation in Latin America During the Pink Tide and Blue Wave" in DSCU 2024 Security Conference Report (Defense Security Cooperation University, 2025), https://www.dscu.edu/bgcy-ralli/sc-conference.

21. According to the tool, propensity for successful security cooperation with Brazil decreased from 0.53 (2016) to 0.51 (2019) due to decreasing foreign direct investment flows and governance challenges, and then to 0.48 (2022) with decreased government effectiveness and worsening security conditions. Yet, the bilateral security cooperation relationship grew substantially during the Jair Bolsonaro administration with new agreements, combined exercises, personnel exchanges, and a partnership with New York through the State Partnership Program. This is one example of the tool's limited scope and incompleteness regarding security cooperation success or failure, as well as the inherent lag between metrics in the tool and current conditions (data currency).

22. Paul, et al., *RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool,* 27.

23. Michael J. McNerney, Angela O'Mahony, Thomas S. Szayna, Derek Eaton, Caroline Baxter, Colin P. Clarke, Emma Cutrufello, Michael McGee, Heather Peterson, Leslie Adrienne Payne, et al., *Assessing Security Cooperation as a Preventative Tool* (RAND, 2014), https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR350.html.

24. Paul, et al., *RAND Security Cooperation Prioritization and Propensity Matching Tool*, 27.

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