

Department of War Strategic Evaluation Public Summary
Partnership in Strength – Assessing Militaries’ Will to Fight in the Indo-Pacific

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Department of War
DEFENSE OFFICE OF PREPUBLICATION AND SECURITY REVIEW

Evaluation Purpose.

The Department of War (DoW) sponsors strategic evaluations of security cooperation (SC) programs and activities pursuant to 10 U.S.C. Section 383 and Department of Defense Instruction 5132.14, “Assessment, Monitoring, and Evaluation Policy for the Security Cooperation Enterprise.” The Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of War for Security Cooperation (ODASW(SC)) initiated a strategic evaluation with the Center for Naval Analyses (CNA), an independent, Federally Funded Research and Development Center (FFRDC), to test a previously developed framework to incorporate consideration of ally and partner (A&P) militaries’ will to fight (W2F) in SC planning, decision-making, and implementation. This evaluation summary provides an unclassified overview derived from CNA’s evaluation report.

Research Questions and Approach.

The evaluation included three questions:

1. What refinements to CNA’s 2024 W2F assessment framework are required to conduct a W2F assessment of A&P military forces?
2. What are the most important factors that affect the assessment of A&P readiness to participate in alliance operations under specific scenarios of conflict?
3. How can DoW use or adapt existing SC efforts (or undertake new ones) to strengthen an A&P military’s W2F?

To address these questions, CNA engaged in a four-part process. First, CNA modified its 2024 theoretical W2F framework to further operationalize it and develop its SC-to-W2F model. Second, CNA adapted the framework to an ally-specific case study. Third, CNA conducted a corresponding SC analysis. Fourth, CNA synthesized the results of the above steps to generate findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

After revisiting and refining the 2024 W2F framework, CNA identified six factors that, when assessed alongside one another, reveal a military’s W2F in a particular scenario. These factors are:

1. Threat perceptions: Military leaders’ perceptions about the adversary or threat.
2. Stakes: Military leaders’ perceived costs of fighting relative to the cost of not fighting.
3. Cause: Military leaders’ perceptions about the justification of the conflict.
4. International support: Military leaders’ perceptions about the reliability and effectiveness of A&P support.
5. Military capabilities: Military leaders’ perceptions about their military’s capabilities and likely effectiveness in defense.

6. Institutional culture: Military leaders' beliefs in the legitimacy of the armed forces' mission and institutional practices.

CNA then conducted SC analysis of a specific context, which identified how planned and executed SC activities could shape A&P's military W2F. CNA developed tools to determine whether activities conducted under each Title 10 SC authority could influence each of the framework factors, as well as comparing these factors to several regional security scenarios. Through this analysis, SC planners and decision-makers could identify gaps and opportunities to re-design or implement activities that could influence an A&P military's W2F.

Findings and recommendations.

The study revealed that not all SC activities can shape W2F equally. Some factors, such as international support and military capabilities, are more easily shaped by SC, while there are fewer opportunities to use SC to influence factors like stakes or cause.

Should the DoW choose to incorporate W2F into SC planning in the future, CNA's recommendations included:

1. DoW should conduct military W2F assessments for priority A&Ps.
2. For A&Ps undergoing national defense strategic pivots, SC planners should update W2F assessments more frequently to identify whether the change is uniformly accepted across military leadership and defense structures.
3. Combatant Command J5 SC planners should use institutional capacity building activities to support the development of A&P national military strategies.

Examples of CNA-Proposed Additional Areas for Future Research.

1. CNA's SC-to-W2F framework was scoped to Title 10 SC authorities, but many Title 22, Title 50, and non-SC Title 10 authorities would likely have similar influences on W2F factors. Further research could explore how activities conducted under these other authorities could influence A&P militaries' W2F and whether they operate through similar mechanisms.
2. CNA's model, along with most W2F literature, is focused on conventional threats. Future research could explore how non-kinetic threats fit into the theorized relationships between SC activities, W2F factors, and A&P military W2F.