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Competing for Global Influence: How Best to Assess Potential Strategic Partners

Brian G. Forester

ABSTRACT: To compete effectively for global influence, US Army and defense planners should focus on economic globalization in addition to security interests when assessing potential foreign military partners. The results of a quantitative analysis of US-led exercise participants between 1990 and 2016 demonstrate the variety of interests, including economic, that underlie a partner's decision to train or not with US forces. Since the US Army bills itself as the "partner of choice," this piece will interest military and policy practitioners involved in strategically assessing potential international military partners.

Keywords: economic interests, globalization, strategic competition, multinational exercises, bilateral exercises

Strategic competition with China is about global influence. A crucial component of that influence depends on the United States' ability to attract and maintain a robust network of allies and partners. The *2022 National Defense Strategy's* central tenets of integrated deterrence and campaigning emphasize the criticality of global partners.¹ Likewise, the US Army recognizes the importance of military partnerships and strives to be a "partner of choice" in the global narrative competition, which involves reputation-building efforts.² Yet, the US military has arguably given limited consideration to partners' interests in the recent past, undermining security force assistance missions in places like Iraq and Afghanistan. In the competition for global influence, the US military cannot afford to overlook partner interests; otherwise, prospective partners could choose to align more closely with China instead.

The Army employs multinational exercises as a primary tool to attract new partners and strengthen existing partnerships in support of strategic competition. Current scholarship highlights post-Cold War security and political change as the key driver of multinational military exercise activity. Major powers began using multinational exercises with the goal

1. Lloyd J. Austin III, *2022 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense [DoD], 2022), <https://media.defense.gov/2022/Oct/27/2003103845/-1/-1/1/2022-NATIONAL-DEFENSE-STRATEGY-NPR-MDR.PDF>.

2. James C. McConville, *The Army in Military Competition*, Chief of Staff Paper no. 2 (Arlington, VA: Headquarters, Department of the Army, 2021), 8–9, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/AD1143196.pdf>.

of favorably shaping the security environment.³ Moreover, the abrupt end to the Cold War rivalry between politically opposed superpowers incentivized smaller countries to hedge by forming military ties with multiple stronger countries while also gaining experience in multilateral military and peacekeeping operations.⁴ Multinational military exercises served such purposes. Current research neglects to consider another systemic change that accelerated after the Cold War: economic globalization, or the extent of non-domestic participation in an economy, which represents openness or exposure to the global economy.⁵

To compete effectively for influence, US Army and defense planners should consider economic globalization when developing strategic assessments of potential foreign military partners. Empirical evidence demonstrates that countries are more likely to participate in US-led military exercises as their exposure to the global economy increases. While US military doctrine identifies broadly defined economic considerations as relevant to the strategic assessment underpinning US military exercises, planners are left to sift through a dizzying array of sectoral, domestic, regional, or international economic variables.⁶ The findings presented here suggest a narrower focus on economic globalization would best predict US-led exercise participation. Economically globalized countries are more likely to participate in exercises led by the United States, regardless of security and political variables, such as alliance ties and regime type. Quantitative results show that economic globalization is as powerful as shared democracy in predicting US-led military exercise participation.

The Changing Face of US Military Exercise Partners

If combined military exercises represent some degree of interest alignment, then we might expect most US military exercise partners to be formal allies. Alliance portfolios, after all, often indicate shared interests between states.⁷ The perception of an unreliable alliance can invite

3. Kyle J. Wolfley, *Military Statecraft and the Rise of Shaping in World Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2021), 5–9.

4. Jordan Bernhardt, “The Causes and Consequences of Joint Military Exercises” (PhD diss., Stanford University, 2020), 34–77, <https://stacks.stanford.edu/file/druid:kb768wv0832/BernhardtJordanDissertation-augmented.pdf>.

5. Claudius Gräbner et al., “Understanding Economic Openness: A Review of Existing Measures,” *Review of World Economics* 157, no. 1 (February 2021): 87–120, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10290-020-00391-1>.

6. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), *Joint Planning*, Joint Publication 5-0 (Washington, DC: JCS, 2020), II-9, IV-9, https://irp.fas.org/doddir/dod/jp5_0.pdf.

7. Douglas Gibler and Toby J. Rider, “Prior Commitments: Compatible Interests versus Capabilities in Alliance Behavior,” *International Interactions* 30, no. 4 (2004): 325, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03050620490883985>.

aggression, thus, allies can signal capabilities and resolve through exercises.⁸ Combined training activities also improve the interoperability of allied military forces, enhancing their collective defense capabilities and thereby contributing to deterrence. This pattern was evident during the Cold War as the United States and its NATO allies regularly held large-scale maneuvers.⁹ These NATO exercises increased in scope and frequency following Russia's 2014 aggression toward Ukraine and have accelerated since Russia's 2022 invasion.¹⁰ Bilateral US alliances with states such as South Korea also generate military exercises.¹¹ Some US alliances produce exercise activity.

We might also expect most US exercise partners to be democracies, given that democracies form alliances with each other more often than with other regime types.¹² Nonetheless, shared democracy may be independently associated with US-led exercise participation. Democracies are generally more cooperative, less belligerent, and more likely to fight in multilateral coalitions than autocracies, which suggests they would have greater interest in combined military training with the United States than with nondemocratic nations.¹³

Yet, figure 1 suggests a less robust relationship between alliances, shared democracy, and US-led exercise participation than conventional wisdom and existing scholarship might expect. The plot reflects the percentage of countries exercising with the United States from 1990–2016 and yields two interesting trends. First, the share of US-led exercise participants that are treaty allies has dropped dramatically from roughly 75 percent in 1990 to 30 percent in 2016. The vast majority of US-led exercise participants are not allies, not because the United States has lost allies, but because the number of non-allied countries with which the United States conducts exercises has increased substantially over this period. Second, the share of US exercise partners considered autocracies steadily increased from nearly

8. Alastair Smith, "Alliance Formation and War," *International Studies Quarterly* 39, no. 4 (December 1995): 419, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2600800>.

9. Robert D. Blackwill and Jeffrey W. Legro, "Constraining Ground Force Exercises of NATO and the Warsaw Pact," *International Security* 14, no. 3 (Winter 1989–90): 72–73, <https://doi.org/10.2307/2538932>.

10. Ralph Clem, "Military Exercises as Geopolitical Messaging in the NATO-Russia Dynamic: Reassurance, Deterrence, and (In)Stability," *Texas National Security Review* 2, no. 1 (November 2018): 134–38, <http://dx.doi.org/10.26153/tsw/865>.

11. Jordan Bernhardt and Lauren Sukin, "Joint Military Exercises and Crisis Dynamics on the Korean Peninsula," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 65, no. 5 (May 2021): 855–88, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002720972180>.

12. Randolph M. Siverson, and Juliann Emmons, "Birds of a Feather: Democratic Political Systems and Alliance Choices in the Twentieth Century," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 35, no. 2 (June 1991): 285–306, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/174148>.

13. David A. Lake, "Powerful Pacifists: Democratic States and War," *American Political Science Review* 86, no. 1 (March 1992): 24–37, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1964013>; and Benjamin A. T. Graham, Erik Gartzke, and Christopher J. Fariss, "The Bar Fight Theory of International Conflict: Regime Type, Coalition Size, and Victory," *Political Science Research and Methods* 5, no. 4 (October 2017): 613–39, <https://doi.org/10.1017/psrm.2015.52>.

25 percent in 1990 to over 40 percent in 2016. Notably, since 2006, more US exercise partners have been autocracies than allies.

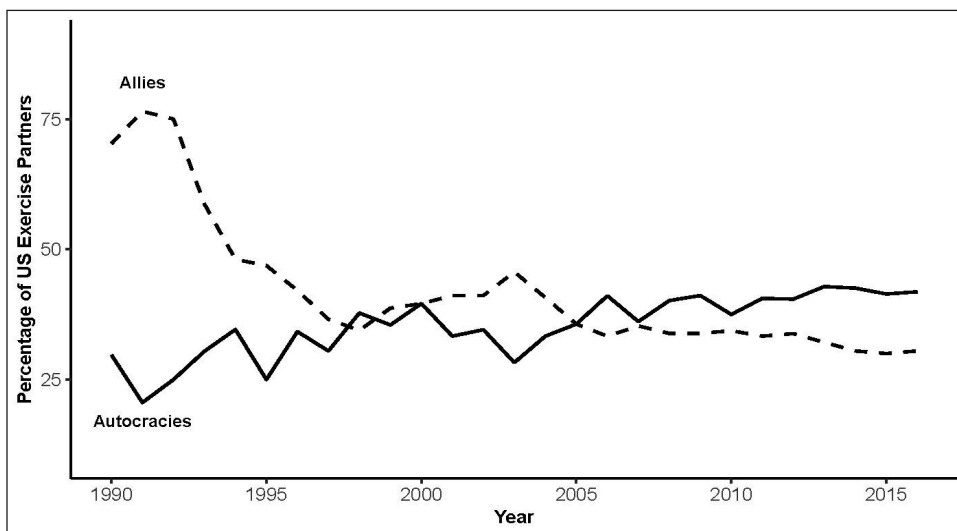


Figure 1. Percentage of US exercise partners between 1990–2016 shown as allies and autocracies
 Source: Jordan Bernhardt, “Joint Military Exercises Dataset,” Harvard Dataverse (website), V1, November 24, 2021, <https://doi.org/10.7910/DVN/HXQFHU>; Brett Leeds et al., “Alliance Treaty Obligations and Provisions, 1815–1944,” *International Interactions* 28, no. 3 (2002): 237–60; and Michael Coppedge et al., “V-Dem Country-Year Dataset v12,” Varieties of Democracy Project (website), 2022, <https://www.v-dem.net/data/the-v-dem-dataset/country-year-v-dem-core/>.

The puzzling trends in figure 1 suggest alliances and shared democracy alone are insufficient explanations of US-led military exercise participation. Fewer US exercise partners are treaty allies, indicating other incentives shape the choices of potential partners. Similarly, autocratic countries increasingly participate in exercises with US military forces, which is perplexing, given the conventional view of such countries as more belligerent and less cooperative. Security and political variables emphasized in existing scholarship on multinational military exercises are thus necessary but insufficient to understand participation in US-led military exercises. Instead, an empirical analysis of economic globalization and US-led military exercise participants is necessary to illustrate globalization’s relevance to Army and defense planners engaged in strategically assessing potential military partners.

Economic Globalization and Military Exercises

Scholars and practitioners generally accept that a nation’s economic interests influence its foreign policy behavior. The relationship between economic activity and war has received greater attention since the publication of the 1933

edition of Norman Angell's *The Great Illusion*.¹⁴ Angell's thesis—that economic integration makes waging war too costly for states—spawned a generation of scholastic debate and analysis of the mechanisms by which economic interests shape the conflict behavior of states. A general consensus emerged that, because of the significant economic disruptions wrought by war, economic development and trade decrease a state's interest in aggression or conquest, though this relationship may be conditional on the underlying structure of that state's economy.¹⁵ The extent of a state's exposure to the global economy is thus a key indicator of the interests shaping its foreign policy behavior. If globalized countries are, on average, less conflict-prone than countries with closed economies, then globalization may also influence countries' cooperative behavior.

The logic connecting exposure to the global economy and participation in US-led exercises rests on an assertion that economic globalization closely links a state's security with the stability of the external environment. War, natural disasters, humanitarian crises, and pandemics can have particularly grave economic repercussions for a highly globalized state. Aware of their vulnerabilities, such countries tend to intertwine their foreign policy with economic policy as a preventative measure. In short, foreign policy for highly globalized economies is economic policy.

Participation in US-led military exercises can promote the stability essential to globalized countries' economic security. Deterrence through military exercises incentivizes globalized countries to participate and provides a venue for smaller countries to advance their military capability more cheaply than they could through unilateral training. Lower costs are especially beneficial for highly globalized countries given their interest in developing the expensive power projection capabilities necessary to secure their access to sea, air, and land trading routes.¹⁶ Finally, some US-led exercises involve collective training on humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The susceptibility of globalized economies to crisis-driven disruptions—especially in natural disaster-prone regions like the Indo-Pacific—incentivizes the development of a response capability in conjunction with the United States.

14. See Norman Angell, *The Great Illusion: A Study of the Relation of Military Power in Nations to Their Economic and Social Advantage*, 2nd ed. (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1933).

15. Richard N. Rosecrance, *Rise of the Trading State: Commerce and Conquest in the Modern World* (New York: Basic Books, 1986); and Jonathan N. Markowitz et al., "Productive Pacifists: The Rise of Production-Oriented States and Decline of Profit-Motivated Conquest," *International Studies Quarterly* 64, no. 3 (September 2020): 558–72, <https://doi.org/10.1093/isq/sqaa045>.

16. Jonathan Markowitz, Christopher Fariss, and R. Blake McMahon, "Producing Goods and Projecting Power: How What You Make Influences What You Take," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 63, no. 6 (2019): 1373–78, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002718789735>.

Economic globalization may have amplified importance on US-led exercise participation among politically illiberal governments not formally allied with the United States. Two features of globalized autocracies lead to this amplification. The first is that autocracies may participate in US-led exercises because forming alliance ties with the United States is not possible. Alliance ties represent the sort of public signal of support that the United States may not be willing to send to autocratic governments. Domestic political constraints prevent democratic major powers such as the United States from forming alliance commitments with such governments.¹⁷ Indeed, most US treaty allies are democracies, with the notable exception of several South and Central American countries that are signatories to the Rio Treaty, which provides collective defense for an armed attack against an American state.¹⁸

The second reason the relationship between economic globalization and US-led exercise participation may be amplified among autocracies is that globalized autocracies seek to reduce the perceived risk of foreign investment. Democracies attract more foreign direct investment than non-democracies because investors perceive the former as a safer financial bet.¹⁹ The inherent disadvantage in attracting foreign direct investment due to their political institutions suggests globalized autocracies may pursue alternative means to promote security and signal stability to would-be investors. Participation in US-led exercises may contribute to such an interest by publicly signaling alignment with the United States, the world's leading democracy.

Economic interests, and exposure to the global economy in particular, interact with security and political interests to help clarify the trends depicted in figure 1. Increasingly globalized autocracies are more likely to participate in US-led exercises since formal alliance ties with the United States are unavailable. This expectation implies that exercise participation is conditional on the interaction of a state's regime type and its exposure to the global economy. Economic globalization has a stronger impact on autocratic rather than democratic regime types, even if the latter are, on average, more likely to participate in US-led exercises. If participation

17. Roseanne W. McManus and Keren Yarhi-Milo, "The Logic of 'Offstage' Signaling: Domestic Politics, Regime Type, and Major Power-Protégé Relations," *International Organization* 71, no. 4 (Fall 2017): 707–10.

18. Inter-American Treaty of Reciprocal Assistance and Final Act of the Inter-American Conference for the Maintenance of Continental Peace and Security, American Republics, Sept. 2, 1947, 324 UNTC 21, 77, <https://treaties.un.org/doc/Publication/UNTS/Volume%2021/volume-21-I-324-English.pdf>.

19. Nathan M. Jensen, "Democratic Governance and Multinational Corporations: Political Regimes and Inflows of Foreign Direct Investment," *International Organization* 57, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 587–616, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3594838>.

in US-led exercises is conditional on the interaction of economic globalization and regime type, then systematic analyses of observed data should furnish corroborating evidence. Specifically, it should be evident that the relationship between economic globalization and US-led exercise participation is amplified among autocracies.

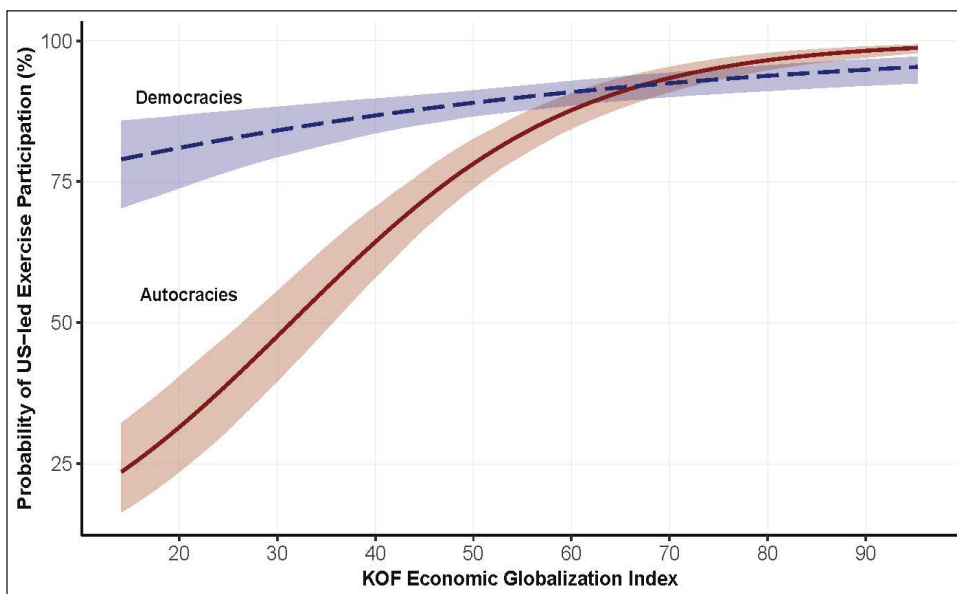


Figure 2. Predicted probability of participating in US-led military exercises as a function of economic globalization. The dark lines represent point estimates; shaded areas represent 95 percent confidence bands.

Source: Savina Gygli et al., “The KOF Globalisation Index – Revisited,” *Review of International Organizations* 14, no. 3 (September 2019): 543–74, <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11558-019-09344-2>.

Illustrating the relationship between globalization and US-led exercises, figure 2 depicts the predicted probability of participating in a US-led exercise as a function of economic globalization. The predicted probabilities are generated from a statistical model fit to observed US military exercise participation data for 165 countries between 1990–2016. Fit represents the computational process by which parameters are algorithmically adjusted to reflect the observed relationship between exercise participation and the predictor of interest, economic globalization. The model is fit using logistic regression, which uses a maximum likelihood estimation to compute the predicted probability of exercise participation given a set of explanatory variables.²⁰ The inclusion of polynomial time count variables accounts for serial

20. Michael D. Ward and John S. Ahlquist, *Maximum Likelihood for Social Science: Strategies for Analysis* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 50–54.

autocorrelation.²¹ The exercise data come from a new dataset of multinational military exercises.²² The economic globalization index is a widely used indicator of economic openness capturing a country's trade and financial flows. The index is constructed on a 100-point scale, with higher values reflecting greater exposure to the global economy.²³ The model also includes a variety of country-level control variables such as alliance ties, wealth, military power, and ongoing rivalries.

The model includes an interaction term between the economic globalization index and a binary indicator of democracy, which enables the disaggregation of the resulting predicted probabilities by regime type. As the figure indicates, democracies are, on average, more likely to participate in US-led exercises than autocracies. At lower levels of economic globalization, democracies exhibit a much higher probability of participating in US-led exercises than autocracies. The probability that autocratic nations will participate in US-led exercises jumps by approximately 50 percent between globalization levels of 0 and 55 and then becomes virtually indistinguishable from the probability of democratic participation above 55. Above 80, the model predicts autocracies are actually more likely to participate in US-led exercises, though this result should be interpreted with caution given the closeness of the shaded confidence bands. The most appropriate interpretation is that globalized autocracies are at least as likely to conduct exercises with the United States as democracies.

The results in figure 2 confirm the expectation of an amplified relationship between economic globalization and autocratic regime type. Although autocracies are, on average, less likely to train with the United States, the results above suggest that economic globalization mediates the negative relationship between autocracy and exercise participation. At higher levels of economic globalization, democracies and autocracies are roughly equivalent in their probability of US-led exercise participation. This relationship is not deterministic but probabilistic. Drawing a causal link between economic globalization and exercise participation is premature given the evidence presented. Nevertheless, a probabilistic relationship may be useful for analysis of potential defense partners in the strategic competition for global influence.

21. David B. Carter and Curtis S. Signorino, "Back to the Future: Modeling Time Dependence in Binary Data," *Political Analysis* 18, no. 3 (Summer 2010): 271–92, <https://doi.org/10.1093/pan/mpq013>.

22. Bernhardt, "Joint Military Exercises Dataset."

23. Axel Dreher, "Does Globalization Affect Growth? Evidence from a New Index of Globalization," *Applied Economics* 38, no. 10 (2006): 1091–1110, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00036840500392078>.

Singapore: An Illustrative Example

Singapore illustrates the relationship between economic globalization and participation in US-led exercises. Singapore is highly globalized, with trade accounting for more than three times its annual GDP.²⁴ As a highly globalized minor power, Singapore centers its foreign policy on economics. Singapore “securitizes” supply chains, market access, finance credit, and techno-industrial access to ensure its continued survival.²⁵ Additionally, Singapore is politically illiberal and characterized as “partly free” by Freedom House, a research institute devoted to the study of political freedom globally, thus making it an appropriate illustration of the amplified relationship between economic globalization and US-led exercise participation among autocracies.²⁶ Finally, Singapore annually participates in US-led exercises, including the Army’s oldest bilateral training opportunity, Exercise Tiger Balm.²⁷

Statements by Singapore’s leaders reflect a recognition that participation in US-led exercises is a pathway to promote the stability so essential to its economic security. During a 2022 visit to the United States, Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong linked the US military presence with a stable regional and international environment. He noted, “we share the belief that the US military presence in the Asia-Pacific is critical to the region’s continued peace, stability, and prosperity.”²⁸ In these remarks, the prime minister implicitly recognizes US-led military exercises as a stabilizing force in the region that contributes to economic well-being.

Singapore’s defense policy recognizes that participation in US-led exercises develops military capability important for regional stability and economic security. Joint training with the United States is a vital component of Singapore’s military capability development, recognizing that such training speeds the assimilation of technology into military

24. Michael Intal Magcamit, “Trading in Paranoia: Exploring Singapore’s Security-Trade Linkages in the Twenty-First Century,” *Asian Journal of Political Science* 23, no. 2 (2015): 187, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02185377.2014.999248>.

25. Christopher M. Dent, “Singapore’s Foreign Economic Policy: The Pursuit of Economic Security,” *Contemporary Southeast Asia* 23, no. 1 (April 2001): 5–8, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/25798525>.

26. Freedom House, “Singapore,” accessed August 31, 2023, <https://freedomhouse.org/country/singapore/>.

27. Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, “Fact Sheet: U.S. Security Cooperation with Singapore,” Department of State (website), April 12, 2023, <https://www.state.gov/u-s-security-cooperation-with-singapore/>.

28. Lloyd J. Austin III, “Transcript: Secretary of Defense Lloyd J. Austin III Remarks at a Meeting Welcoming Singapore’s Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong to the Pentagon,” DoD (website), March 28, 2022, <https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/2980686/secretary-of-defense-lloyd-j-austin-iii-remarks-at-a-meeting-welcoming-singapor/>.

organizations.²⁹ The Singapore Armed Forces also seek to develop military capabilities for unconventional threats to peace and stability. In 2005, for instance, Singapore signed a defense cooperation agreement with the United States “expanding the scope of current cooperation in areas such as counter-terrorism, counterproliferation, joint military exercises and training” and “developing military expertise and defence capabilities to deal with the wider range of non-conventional threats facing armed forces today.”³⁰ Singapore thus illustrates how economic globalization generates security interests that can be fulfilled through participation in US-led military exercises.

In sum, the Singapore case combined with the quantitative results of this study point to the potency of economic globalization in the foreign policy behavior of potential US exercise partners. If the US military is to compete effectively for influence, it must have greater awareness of the economic interests of its potential defense partners.

Implications for Defense Planning

The quantitative data and case study presented here have important implications for US Army and defense planners engaged in the strategic assessment of potential defense partners. Broadly, the preceding discussion emphasizes the need to consider the interests underlying a partner’s choice to exercise with US forces, which is vital in the competition for influence and especially salient in regions such as South Asia, the Middle East, and Africa, where many countries “prefer a less-than-clear alignment with the United States or China.”³¹ Effective engagement with such countries requires flexible approaches that recognize the variety of preferences—including economic—underpinning their foreign policy behavior. Historically, the US military has given partners’ interests limited consideration, either assuming those interests are in alignment or will eventually converge with ours. This flawed assumption has significantly undermined security force assistance missions, most notably in Iraq and Afghanistan. Unlike in those missions, though, the United States is now competing with China for global influence, meaning the partners could more

29. John Battilega et al., “Singapore,” in *Transformations in Global Defense Markets and Industries: Implications for the Future of Warfare*, Intelligence Resource Program, Federation of American Scientists (website), June 2001, 4ff, <https://irp.fas.org/nic/battilega/index.htm>.

30. Ministry of Defence, “News Release: Factsheet – The Strategic Framework Agreement,” National Archives of Singapore (website), July 12, 2005, 2, https://www.nas.gov.sg/archivesonline/data/pdfdoc/MINDEF_20050712001/MINDEF_20050712003.pdf.

31. Madiha Afzal, Bruce Riedel, and Natan Sachs, *The United States, China, and the ‘New Non-Aligned’ Countries*, Global China Project Policy Brief (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, February 2023), https://www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/FP_20230213_china_regional_strategy.pdf.

closely align with China instead. Winning this competition will require US defense planners to think carefully about the underlying interests of potential partners and to search for creative ways to align our interests where possible.

The economic globalization index used in the analysis above is a publicly available and widely used measure of economic openness that US Army and defense planners could use as an indicator. Planners engaged in the strategic assessment of a potential military partner would benefit from a narrow focus on the global exposure of that country's economy to predict the likelihood of prospective partners' participation in US-led military exercises. Additionally, the amplified relationship between economic globalization and US-led exercise participation among autocracies suggests opportunities may exist with the military instrument of power that may not exist with the diplomatic instrument. Military exercises may be a foreign policy tool particularly well-suited for engagement with globalized autocracies if formal alliance ties are unfeasible. Strategically capitalizing in this way, however, requires close interagency coordination between defense planners and State Department officials, deconstruction of bureaucratic silos, and enhanced interagency cooperation.

For the Army, senior leaders must recognize that the interests important to a potential defense partner may undermine the Army's organizational interest. Exercise readiness objectives may have to be sacrificed for the sake of the partner's interests. Highly globalized partners, for instance, may desire to focus training on maritime activities or disaster response capabilities instead of large-scale ground combat operations. Army leaders will need to tailor expectations and clearly communicate to participating units the larger strategic objectives associated with an exercise. Training on unit mission essential tasks may not be desired by the partner nor feasible with available resources. Unnatural as it may be, organizational interests must be kept in check if the Army is to do its part in the whole-of-government approach to strategic competition effectively. Otherwise, potential partners may increasingly turn toward China for defense cooperation.

Conclusion

Competing for strategic influence requires that the Army and defense planners consider how economic globalization shapes the preferences of potential defense partners. The analysis presented here confirms that economic globalization is an important predictor of participation in US-led

military exercises. Army and defense planners conducting strategic assessment should focus on economic globalization as a relevant indicator of a potential partner's likelihood of exercise participation. Moreover, the analysis shows how economic globalization interacts with political regime type to condition a prospective partner's choice to participate in unexpected ways. Globalized autocracies are among the most likely participants in US-led exercises—as likely to cooperate militarily with the United States as democracies.

The current era of strategic competition with China implies that the United States is no longer the *de facto* military partner. American military forces must become the more attractive option to prospective partners by considering their needs and wants, including their level of global economic engagement. If the Army is to be the true “partner of choice,” then it must understand the interests underlying the choice of a partner. Failing to do so will undermine US strategic competition for global influence.

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