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Resources Designed to Promote Professional Discourse

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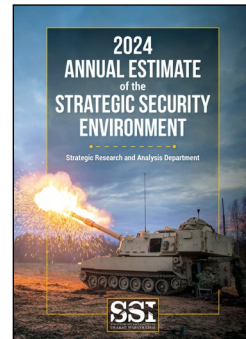
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The Army provides its servicemembers with Army regulation, doctrinal, and organizational publications to accomplish essential tasks—from training and leading units to conducting military operations. Professional discourse is no exception. The US Army War College and Army University Press recently published resources to help the force prioritize professional discourse. These documents provide a starting point for aspiring researchers and a reference guide for individuals and organizations. Combined, these new publications will help the force to take up Chief of Staff of the Army Randy A. George's charge to revitalize professional discourse in the Army.¹

Annual Estimate of the Strategic Security Environment

Inspiration is a prerequisite for professional discourse. Finding a research topic or a debate to support is the first step in joining the conversation. This task, however, can be challenging. I struggled to select a research topic while attending the Naval Postgraduate School for my professional military education. I floundered about the library, grabbing random military history books and wondering how I could add to the literature. Eventually, an instructor showed me the Army's Key Strategic Issues List (or KSIL), an organized compilation of strategic questions requiring research. While the list was overwhelming, it provided a starting point.²



The Strategic Studies Institute has modernized this product with a focus on usefulness for researchers, rebranding it in 2022 as the *Annual Estimate of the Strategic Security Environment*. This resource provides short narratives that fit into four themes: Regional Challenges and Opportunities, Domestic Challenges, Institutional Challenges, and Challenges to the US Strategic Advantage. The 2023 version set the foundation for this new construct, and the 2024 version builds on that analysis by examining “how the environment is trending and

highlights challenges likely to impact the Department of Defense significantly in the near future.”³

The organized list of questions that defined the KSIL still exists but has been updated. Now, the narrative is supplemented by more than 100 questions directly from senior Army leaders and organizations that familiarize researchers with pressing problems and offer insights into matters affecting defense organizations. Overall, the *Annual Estimate of the Strategic Security Environment* “is designed to guide the collective defense community to research and write about critical national security challenges.” In this context, the US Army War College has sparked interest in professional discourse. Inspiration, however, is only the first step.⁴

The *Military Review* “How-To” Guide

While having an idea can initiate the professional discourse process, there should be a clear path for developing it. Writing a paper or crafting a unit program can seem daunting. The Harding Project team spearheading the Army’s professional discourse revitalization efforts reached similar conclusions and announced in spring 2024 its partnership with Army University Press to publish a *Military Review* “how-to” special edition. After opening with the history of professional journals and commentary on why soldiers must write, the reference guide is divided into three categories that outline the publication process.⁵



The section for individuals provides guidance on tackling writing projects, including how to write articles and book reviews and transform professional military education papers into publishable documents. It also offers rewriting tips and a short discussion about the nuances of dissenting professionally.

The section dedicated to leaders developing unit-wide professional discourse programs shares personal experiences and presents tools and recommendations for authors. These articles cover methods for building online forums, creating unit writing programs, and employing speech tools (like debates and TED Talks) in the unit professional development programs.

In the last section, editors at the Modern War Institute and *From the Green Notebook* share tips for working with editors. Additionally, the last section emphasizes teamwork, outlining successful methods for coauthoring articles and highlighting the importance of building a professional network as a foundation for professional discourse.

This how-to guide will equip the force to enter the conversation. Individuals can leverage the publication to action their ideas, leaders across the force can learn from their peers, and those who succeed in publishing their work can help shape the force.

Conclusion

The Chief of Staff of the Army has made the revitalization of professional discourse one of the top priorities for the force. Consequently, soldiers and researchers interested in tackling the biggest challenges facing the Army should look to the service's educational institutions. The *Annual Estimate of the Strategic Security Environment* addresses the important issues confronting the service, and the special edition of *Military Review* provides the tools to begin the researching and writing process. Combined, these essential resources will operationalize professional discourse.

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Endnotes

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5. Zachary Griffiths and Leyton Summerlin, “The Harding Project: A Re-Introduction,” Harding Project (website), April 25, 2024, <https://www.hardingproject.com/p/welcome-to-the-harding-project>; and *Military Review* special edition (forthcoming). [Return to text.](#)