Negative Brief: IMET Reform

By “Coach Vance” Trefethen

***Resolved: The United States federal government should substantially reform its foreign policy regarding international terrorism.***

Summary: AFF Plan reforms or abolishes the International Military Education & Training program. IMET pays for foreign military officers (from countries friendly to the US) to come to the US to get military training that they can take back and use in their home countries. It has been criticized because some of those military leaders go home to commit human rights abuses or stage coups and take over their government. That gives the US a bad name because we appear to be complicit in the bad things they’re doing. AFF will argue we need to abolish the program.

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Negative: IMET

TOPICALITY

1. No Commitment

The Problem: Affirmative offers no evidence the US has ever committed to give IMET training to any other country

It’s something we sometimes do, not something we have committed to. There’s no treaty or promise or guarantee that any country is entitled to IMET training. The Affirmative has made the mistake of confusing a policy for a commitment. IMET is a policy, something we do, not a commitment, something we promise or guarantee other nations we will do.

Turn: Lack of commitment is one of the things that weakens IMET (maybe causing some of the problems AFF is claiming?)

Major Thomas Dyrenforth, U.S. Army and Major Sean McMahon, U.S. Army 2020. [Strengthening U.S. Strategic Influence: How to Make IMET the Most Powerful Tool in the Security Cooperation Toolkit](https://www.rieas.gr/researchareas/military-intelligence/3216-strengthening-u-s-strategic-influence-how-to-make-imet-the-most-powerful-tool-in-the-security-cooperation-toolkit) 2 Feb 2020 <https://faoajournal.substack.com/p/strengthening-us-strategic-influence> (brackets added)

Another barrier to success is IMET funding. The Foreign Assistance Act does not direct DoS [Dept of State] to implement an IMET graduate management program, and DoS funding in its current state supports only student training. DSCA [Defense Security Cooperation Agency], the implementing agency, does have more flexibility in terms of adjusting policy to enable a graduate management program, but has yet to institute such a program. The problem with IMET funding is not necessarily the amount of funding, but rather who should fund such a program: DoS, DSCA, or individual schoolhouses? Current DoS and DSCA funding priorities call for maximizing the number of trainees, at the expense of developing a cadre of mid-to-senior-level graduates that can provide strategic benefit for years to come.

The Violation: Makes the resolution infinitely broad and abusive

If Affirmatives are allowed to change anything the military does, rather than simply commitments we have made, the resolution becomes infinitely broad and abusive.

The Solution: A Negative ballot

The best way to teach Affirmatives not to do this is by awarding Negative ballots every time they do. They’ll get the hint and learn to respect the resolution in the future.

MINOR REPAIR – Reform, not reduce

IMET should be reformed and then enlarged, not abolished

Joshua Kurlantzick 2016 (Senior Fellow for Southeast Asia, Council on Foreign Relations) Reforming the U.S. International Military Education and Training Program 8 June 2016 <https://www.cfr.org/report/reforming-us-international-military-education-and-training-program>

Although some U.S. policymakers now want to expand IMET to include officers from a broader range of developing nations, such as Myanmar, the program should be revamped before it is enlarged. The reforms should include more effectively screening IMET candidates, developing a system to follow the careers of IMET alumni, and institutionalizing coursework on professionalism, human rights, and democracy in IMET’s curriculum.

Multiple studies find IMET is doing great – it just needs some additional tracking and evaluations to improve effectiveness

Major Thomas Dyrenforth, U.S. Army and Major Sean McMahon, U.S. Army 2020. [Strengthening U.S. Strategic Influence: How to Make IMET the Most Powerful Tool in the Security Cooperation Toolkit](https://www.rieas.gr/researchareas/military-intelligence/3216-strengthening-u-s-strategic-influence-how-to-make-imet-the-most-powerful-tool-in-the-security-cooperation-toolkit) 2 Feb 2020 <https://faoajournal.substack.com/p/strengthening-us-strategic-influence>

Over the last two decades, numerous assessments have given the IMET program strong marks for its successes – professionalizing foreign officers, promoting human rights, and increasing interoperability with partners – but many of the same criticisms from the early 1990s still linger today. There remains no formal system to track IMET graduates, evaluate the program’s effectiveness, or leverage relationships to boost U.S. long-term strategic interests. IMET’s long-range return on investment remains uncertain as the U.S. has yet to address these shortcomings.

SIGNIFICANCE / HARMS

1. IMET reduces human rights violations in Status Quo

University of Kansas Study: Graduates of IMET protect civilian lives and reduce human rights abuses better than non-IMET personnel

University of Kansas News Service 2017. (press release put out by the Univ. of Kansas) “[U.S. INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRAINING PROGRAMS TIED TO FEWER CIVILIAN CASUALTIES](https://today.ku.edu/2017/05/03/us-international-military-training-programs-tied-fewer-civilian-casualties-study-finds)” 8 May 2017 <https://today.ku.edu/2017/05/03/us-international-military-training-programs-tied-fewer-civilian-casualties-study-finds> (brackets added)

The study examined every U.S. security assistance program funded and administered by the U.S. departments of State and Defense between 1995 and 2012 by the number of dollars allocated and the total number of trained foreign military. This included Foreign Military Sales, Foreign Military Financing, the Professional Military Training, Security Assistance Training Program and many others. The study also focused particularly on the International Military Education and Training, or IMET, program, which provides grant funding for a variety of education and training programs for foreign military personnel, including having foreign officers train on U.S. soil, such as at Fort Leavenworth. "IMET is a deliberate effort to expose foreign military and civilian personnel to democratic institutions and values and internationally recognized human rights, whereas this objective takes a back seat when it comes to foreign military finance or foreign military sales," the researchers said. For example, the U.S. Department of State allocated $3.3 billion in foreign arms sales that served 144,000 foreign military personnel over those years. It allocated $1 billion to train 101,000 foreign military students during that time through IMET. The researchers compared that spending and number of military students trained or served with the number of atrocities committed in countries that either received U.S. military aid to train their soldiers or used their own money to buy U.S. weapons and training. They defined atrocities as deliberate use of lethal force against noncombatant civilians by state actors who were engaged in a wider political or military conflict. This is a broader definition of a traditional human rights abuse. [Kansas University associate professor of political science, Mariya] Omelicheva said the findings indicate that U.S. security assistance programs that provide substantive education, training and exchanges of ideas are important in shaping the human rights practices in foreign countries. The positive nature of these exchanges tends to have a more lasting effect as foreign military officers and students return home and put these ideas into practice.

**[END QUOTE. And elsewhere in the article, they go on to reach the conclusion QUOTE:]**U.S. grant programs that provided training to international military and civilian personnel since 1995 are tied to fewer conflict-related civilian casualties in foreign countries that were recipients of the U.S. security aid.

2. Non-democratic countries need IMET the most

IMET shouldn’t be restricted to democratic countries: Training officers from non-democratic countries helps them make the transition to democracy

Edin Mujkic 2012. (PhD candidate at Auburn University) International Military Education and Training Program as a Tool of Smart Power <http://etd.auburn.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10415/3426/IMET-Dissertation-Final%20Version-Second%20ETD.pdf?sequence=2>

The events in the Middle East, especially Tunisia, Egypt, Libya and Syria proved that it is always better to support people then dictators (case of Egypt). This does not mean that part of the IMET should be only for countries with good human rights and democracy record. The only way for struggling democracies to succeed is to experience freedom. The IMET should serve as a tool for military officers, from countries that are transitioning to democracy, to experience democracy because at some point they will be policy makers that could shape their countries in some way.

Non-democratic countries are the ones who most need US training to prevent abuse. Example: Egypt

Edin Mujkic 2012. (PhD candidate at Auburn University) International Military Education and Training Program as a Tool of Smart Power <http://etd.auburn.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10415/3426/IMET-Dissertation-Final%20Version-Second%20ETD.pdf?sequence=2>

Most of the Arab regimes are violent, ruled with an iron fist. The institution that have monopoly on a violence in any country, whether democratic or not, a military, in Tunisia and Egypt in the end decided to abstain. It was actually recognized as the only force that could provide at least interim stabilization. In the news, however, we were able to hear several hints of why that was happening. When protestors gathered in Tahrir Square in Cairo, military did not open fire on them. Military was a key link that prevented more casualties, and once it showed that it would not shoot on its own people, it was clear that President Hosni Mubarak had very little time (clear to everyone but Hosni Mubarak). Simultaneously, behind the scenes, the United States diplomacy and military were working. Many Egyptian high-ranking officers finished Staff or War colleges, or some other military schools in the U.S. These personal connections and friendships between the U.S. military personnel and Egyptian personnel played one of the crucial roles.

DISADVANTAGES

1. More violence and abuses

Link: AFF reduces IMET (or else plan does nothing)

It abolishes the program or else establishes stricter criteria for participation, which means fewer foreign military members will participate.

Impact: Turn the harms. We should be increasing IMET, not cutting it, because it helps human rights

University of Kansas News Service 2017. (press release put out by the Univ. of Kansas) “[U.S. INTERNATIONAL MILITARY TRAINING PROGRAMS TIED TO FEWER CIVILIAN CASUALTIES](https://today.ku.edu/2017/05/03/us-international-military-training-programs-tied-fewer-civilian-casualties-study-finds)” 8 May 2017 <https://today.ku.edu/2017/05/03/us-international-military-training-programs-tied-fewer-civilian-casualties-study-finds>

The researchers said the [study](http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/polq.12575/epdf), published in Political Science Quarterly, is particularly timely given the Trump administration's focus on cutting the federal government’s international aid, including overtures about reductions in programs that provide U.S.-funded foreign military training while either keeping or increasing foreign military sales. "We precisely show that if the U.S. is truly interested in building a more peaceful world where the militaries of foreign states do not get involved in egregious human rights violations and abuses, then we need more of what the government apparently wants to eliminate," said Mariya Omelicheva, a KU associate professor of political science and the study's lead author.

2. Less likely to get democracy – by reducing our allies’ security

Historically, US allies more likely to move toward democracy when we assist them with security concerns, not just pressure and criticize

Prof. Colin Dueck 2011. (associate professor of public and international affairs at George Mason University ) “Conservative Foreign Policy & Reagan's Legacy” 22 March 2011 <https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2011/03/22/conservative_foreign_policy__reagans_legacy_part_1_109291.html>

Other U.S. allies in places like Chile and South Korea were pressed more aggressively on democracy and human rights issues during Reagan's second term. The final outcome by the time he left office in January 1989 was that numerous allied governments in East Asia and Latin America had moved in a democratic direction. Yet this was not simply the result of U.S. criticism and pressure. It was also very much the result of complicated internal factors, combined with positive American assistance and reassurance regarding core security concerns.

3. Less likely to get democracy – by reducing training of officers in non-democratic countries

**Military officers from non-democratic countries – like the AFF would screen out of IMET – take American values back with them when they finish training and help bring democracy to their home country.**

IMET training motivates the trainees from non-democratic countries to promote democracy when they get home

Edin Mujkic 2012. (PhD candidate at Auburn University) International Military Education and Training Program as a Tool of Smart Power <http://etd.auburn.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10415/3426/IMET-Dissertation-Final%20Version-Second%20ETD.pdf?sequence=2>

Carol Atkinson, on the other hand, argues that foreign military exchange programs, in this case IMET, played an important role in the democratization of the countries from which those officers are coming from. Atkinson pointed out that military student programs are unique in nature because military helps repressive regimes to stay in power. Also when you expose military officers from such countries to democratic values that theoretically could have an impact on their behavior and the way they conduct business.

Example: Mali. IMET-trained officers help bring down dictatorship in the ‘90s

Edin Mujkic 2012. (PhD candidate at Auburn University) International Military Education and Training Program as a Tool of Smart Power <http://etd.auburn.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10415/3426/IMET-Dissertation-Final%20Version-Second%20ETD.pdf?sequence=2> (ellipses in original)

So Cope brings up an example of a graduate of the IMET who had a pivotal role in bringing down a dictatorship and a recollection by one U.S. Foreign Officers who was on duty in Mali from 1990 until 1994: Those officers who benefited from IMET training tended to support the transition to democracy and civilian control of the military. In addition, many of them had a heightened sense of the professionalism… and how it related to human rights issues and support for democracy, even though there had not been in courses specifically designed to address these issues. (This was just before E-IMET was created.) Some of them spoke often about importance of their IMET experience both for professional development and for what they learned about how a professional military acts in democracy. Some of them emphasized that this came not only from the course, but also from contact with U.S. military and civilians, and from just living in the U.S. for a year.

4. Democracy backfires. Even if you do get democracy, be careful what you ask for…

**What happens when you advocate for democracy, refuse to help the existing pro-US government, and then you get a democracy that elects terrorists to power?**

Example: Egypt. “Muslim Brotherhood” won the election when democracy was established after the non-democratic government overthrown

Jamal Kashoggi 2018. (Saudi journalist and author; killed at the Saudi consulate in Turkey a couple years ago) WASHINGTON POST “The U.S. is wrong about the Muslim Brotherhood — and the Arab world is suffering for it” <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2018/08/28/the-u-s-is-wrong-about-the-muslim-brotherhood-and-the-arab-world-is-suffering-for-it/?utm_term=.ccab6dc6e784>

During the Obama presidency, the U.S. administration was wary of the Muslim Brotherhood, which had come to power in Egypt after the country’s first-ever free elections. Despite his declared support for democracy and change in the Arab world in the wake of the Arab Spring, then-President Barack Obama did not take a strong position and reject the coup against President-elect Mohamed Morsi.

Link: The democratic winner – the Muslim Brotherhood – was a radical violent Islamist group

Prof. Colin Dueck 2011. (associate professor of public and international affairs at George Mason University ) “Conservative Foreign Policy & Reagan's Legacy” 22 March 2011 <https://www.realclearpolitics.com/articles/2011/03/22/conservative_foreign_policy__reagans_legacy_part_1_109291.html>

 Revolutions create power vacuums that are often filled by relatively small groups of well-organized political radicals, militants and extremists. During the Cold War, the most important such groups internationally were Communists. Today the most important such groups are Islamist extremists. To be sure, today's radical Islamists do not control a global superpower, but they do command the sympathy and support of millions of Muslims, and constitute a kind of loose transnational insurgency with a demonstrated capacity for violence. In Egypt, the leading organization of radical Islamists is the Muslim Brotherhood.

Impact: Terrorism. Giving the Muslim Brotherhood power was a really bad idea, because they advocate terrorism and overthrowing the US

Center for Security Policy 2018. (Center for Security Policy was founded in July 1988 by 30 national security policy ; led by [Frank Gaffney](https://c4secpol.wpengine.com/about-us/frank-gaffney/), a former Reagan Defense Department official and Senate Armed Services Committee Chairman John Tower, they founded an non-partisan, educational public policy organization. ) Statement for the Record On the Muslim Brotherhood’s Global Threat For the U.S. House Subcommittee on National Security, 11 July 2018 <https://www.centerforsecuritypolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Statement-for-Record-MB-Hearing-71118-.pdf>

The MB’s strategic goal of creating a global Caliphate, which requires the overthrow of the US Constitution, is identical to that of ISIS and al Qaeda. The MB is perfectly prepared to engage in violence, tactically shifting between approving and not approving of its use, depending on place and circumstance**. [END QUOTE]** Historically, the MB has established and maintained the ability to wage terroristic violence, from its “Special Apparatus” terrorist cells in the 1930s to the present. Beginning in the 1980s, the MB established an Islamist Palestinian terrorist group, resulting in the formation of Hamas in 1987. President Clinton designated Hamas as a terrorist organization in 1995 under Executive Order 12947, which formed the basis for creation of the State Department’s Foreign Terrorist Organization (FTO) list. [**THEY GO ON TO SAY QUOTE:]** Following the ouster of the MB-led regime in Egypt, the MB again displayed its willingness to engage in violence, including the formation of two armed groups, both of which the US has designated as terrorist organizations. Earlier this year, the MB called for an “uprising” against the United States in response to the relocation of the American Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, threatening US interests worldwide.

5. Miscommunication in Combat

Link: AFF cuts IMET to at least some trainees from countries that are US allies

They have to or their plan doesn’t do anything.

Impact: Lives lost. IMET teaches English language communication, and lives can be lost in combat without it

Edin Mujkic 2012. (PhD candidate at Auburn University) International Military Education and Training Program as a Tool of Smart Power <http://etd.auburn.edu/xmlui/bitstream/handle/10415/3426/IMET-Dissertation-Final%20Version-Second%20ETD.pdf?sequence=2>

The problem of the English language that Cope and Cufar are pointing out is that we do not take into consideration the fact that many officers who are serving together with the U.S troops in Iraq and Afghanistan from various countries are not proficient in English or maybe not even speaking English at all. That could bring our troops and foreign troops in great danger if there are problems with communication, and definitely there are. However, foreign officers who have been part of the IMET program had to meet certain standards when it came to English proficiency, but also, they spent a certain amount of time living in the U.S and using the English language with people whose native language is English. That definitely helps once the U.S officer and, for example, a Slovenian officer meet in Afghanistan to discuss issues that could mean life and death.

6. Net benefits

State Department study finds IMET produces net benefits and should be kept: High return on investment

Major Thomas Dyrenforth, U.S. Army and Major Sean McMahon, U.S. Army 2020. [Strengthening U.S. Strategic Influence: How to Make IMET the Most Powerful Tool in the Security Cooperation Toolkit](https://www.rieas.gr/researchareas/military-intelligence/3216-strengthening-u-s-strategic-influence-how-to-make-imet-the-most-powerful-tool-in-the-security-cooperation-toolkit) 2 Feb 2020 <https://faoajournal.substack.com/p/strengthening-us-strategic-influence> (ellipses and brackets in original)

The first project (State Department and DISAM Study on the Effectiveness of International Military Education and Training Program: 2007-2009), which produced a joint report from DoS and DoD, drew from a representative sample of 2007-2009 IMET graduates across all U.S. military schools. It found that when measured against all IMET objectives, graduates showed “a strong increase in student understanding of the goals of international peace and security, utilization of defense resources, increased military capability, and improved understanding of internationally recognized human rights …achieving [IMET’s] Foreign Assistance Act mandated purpose.” Based on this, the report recommended that the IMET program should continue, providing in the authors’ judgment a particularly high return on investment.

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