

## **Creating an Enlisted Development Strategy for Countries in the USINDOPACOM Area of Responsibility**

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**Author Note:** Cadets Cook, Kurth, Patterson, and West are seniors at the United States Military Academy (USMA) at West Point and are a part of a year-long capstone supervised by Major Samuel Herbert. The client for this project is the United States Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) Headquarters. The group is thankful for USINDOPACOM's support and assistance throughout this extensive project, especially for advisors Lieutenant Colonel Natalie Casey, Warrant Officer Diver Lance Graham, and Warrant Officer Guy Lipsham.

**Abstract:** In October 2020, the Senior Enlisted Leader of United States Indo-Pacific Command, Command Sergeant Major (CSM) Shane W. Shorter published the *Partner Nation Enlisted Leader Development Strategy*, outlining his goal to strengthen the Noncommissioned Officer (NCO) Corps across USINDOPACOM to keep reliable security partners and improve stability in these countries' militaries. NCOs must offer utility in engagements, operations, exercises, security operations, and the posture of their country. An iterative process to strengthen NCO development in countries will result in quality NCOs who can contribute to their country's operational framework and aid commanders in decision making. This capstone will analyze the most impactful values to NCO development and will provide insight regarding the status of a country's enlisted development program through a quantitative model and tier ranking system. The end state of this project produces detailed analysis regarding what select USINDOPACOM countries can improve within their enlisted development programs.

**Keywords:** USINDOPACOM, Enlisted Development, Noncommissioned Officer, Value-Based Systems Engineering

### **1. Introduction**

The United States Indo-Pacific Command (USINDOPACOM) area of responsibility (AoR) extends from the west coast of the U.S. to the western Indian border, and from Antarctica to the North Pole. USINDOPACOM is "committed to enhancing stability in the Asia-Pacific region by promoting security cooperation, encouraging peaceful development, responding to contingencies, deterring aggression, and, when necessary, fighting to win." (U.S. Indo-Pacific Command, 2020).

#### **1.1 Background**

The Non-Commissioned Officer corps within the U.S. military is considered the backbone of the organization, where the empowerment of subordinate leaders with greater technical expertise and experience is essential for mission success. To emphasize the intent, preparation, implementation, and outcomes for the USINDOPACOM enterprise, there is a need to focus on the NCO programs throughout this region. NCOs are a force multiplier by leading the junior enlisted and offering their skillsets as subject matter experts. The development of NCOs in these countries will strengthen the trust between them and their officer counterparts, leading to stronger formations in the joint operational theater. Unlike the United States military, foreign militaries often underutilize their NCOs and senior enlisted personnel. Officers in any position can leverage a well-developed NCO corps' knowledge and experience to make better-suited decisions and plans regarding their subordinates. Additionally, the NCO corps plays a pivotal role in the training, discipline, and direct leadership of USINDOPACOM defense personnel.<sup>1</sup> This will allow officers to devote time towards planning and organizational level tasks as their NCOs focus their energy on developing junior enlisted individuals. In October 2020, USINDOPACOM released the *Partner Nation Enlisted Leader Development Strategy*, which serves as the guiding document to strengthen the NCO corps within this region.

<sup>1</sup>"Defense personnel" encompasses all members of defense forces within the United States Department of Defense and USINDOPACOM partner countries, active or reserve. Defense personnel include but are not limited to Airmen, Marines, Soldiers, and Guardians.

It is implemented through three lines of effort: partnership, integration, and influence. The predominant purpose of this strategy is to ensure the United States is “accepted as a reliable security partner by respective partners, establish a multi-national NCO collaboration platform, and enhance the capacity and capability of enlisted leaders throughout the theater” (Shorter, 2020). Efforts to establish an NCO development program throughout the region include a deliberate, iterative process which focuses on identifying, improving, and refining essential elements of an NCO and corresponding developmental programs.

## 1.2 Methodology

To model and analyze the complexity of this project, the Systems Decision Process (SDP) was utilized. The SDP is a four-phase process that uses systems thinking to identify, define, and solve complex multi-faceted problems. The four phases; problem definition, solution design, decision making, and solution implementation, include tasks to help meet project requirements and outcomes. The SDP relies heavily on outside stakeholder input, which is used throughout all phases to develop a solution to the given problem. The SDP is an iterative process as steps can be repeated and refined to find the best fit solution for the stakeholder. During this project, key environmental factors considered were security, political, and cultural effects given the ever-changing relationships and political factors to be dealt with in the international realm. The SDP is shown in Figure 1 below.

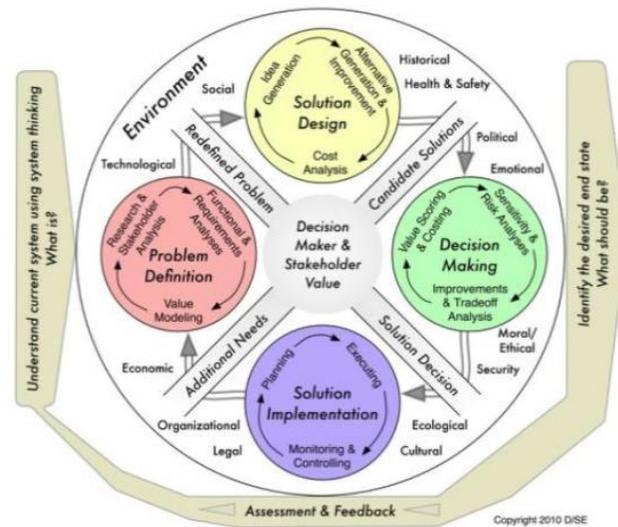


Figure 1. Systems Decision Process (Parnell, Driscoll, & Henderson, 2011)

## 2. Problem Definition

Each team member conducted individual research resulting in literature reviews to gain a broader understanding of NCO development and the structure of militaries within the USINDOPACOM AoR. Topics of the literature reviews encompassed USINDOPACOM’s four focus areas, NCO retention rates, enlisted development programs within partner countries, as well as researching the NCO development programs in the U.S. This in-depth analysis allowed each group member to become well versed and knowledgeable about specific areas regarding different USINDOPACOM resources. Interviews were conducted with Senior Enlisted Leaders (SEL) from the U.S., for an external perspective, and with Foreign Area Officers (FAO), for an internal viewpoint, from five countries of interest regarding their NCO development. Initial research for this endeavor focused on five specific countries within USINDOPACOM’s AoR, delineated in its entirety with blue shading in Figure 2, based on stakeholder needs. USINDOPACOM’s effort to improve NCO development throughout the AoR is expected to last five years and will be applied to any of the countries upon its conclusion. This specific analysis of five initial countries is specific to year one of the project.



Figure 2. USINDOPACOM Area of Responsibility (made with mapchart.net)

Due to the sensitivity of the assessment, the five countries of interest will be referred to as Countries A through E. The problem statement for this project is to develop a strategy to evaluate and model the variables that impact the development of NCOs within the USINDOPACOM AoR the most. Using the information from FAO interviews and additional research, the team established 20 value measures defining the aspects involved in NCO development across any military. Value measures assess how well an objective is met (Parnell et al., 2011). In this model, our value measures represent doctrine, organization, training, material, leadership, and education (DOTmLPP) within military units (Shorter, 2020). The value measures for this project evaluate the effectiveness of the USINDOPACOM countries' current NCO development system, including the level of professionalism, advanced training, career progression, and developing military doctrine. These four facets serve as the functions supporting the fundamental objective of this project.

The “Define Scope of Duty” function is comprised of four value measures with the purpose of outlining the entry requirements and duties which contribute to a more effective NCO development program. The four value measures are English proficiency, entry requirements score, publications score, and NCO counseling frequency. Defining the scope of duty is important to NCO development as NCOs should know what is expected of them during their time in service. Additionally, English proficiency facilitates ease of communication with influential actors in the AoR such as Australia and New Zealand. The “Develop Professionalism” function is represented by four value measures: professionalism publications score, enlisted development professional military education (PME) score, NCO evaluation report frequency, and PME schoolhouse score. This function gauges the factors impacting the development of an NCO’s professional ethic and education. Elements of a professional organization such as shared purpose, expertise, and evaluations are captured in the associated value measures. An NCO development program that enhances professionalism will benefit a defense force by producing confident and educated NCOs. These NCOs are expected to be experts in their field and communicate with officers effectively (Killingsworth, 2020). The “Provide Career Progression” function is comprised of four value measures: a career progression publication score, mentorship quality score, assignment preference consideration score, and assignment rotation rate score. The purpose of this function is to assess the degree to which enlisted personnel have foresight and freedom over their careers. Ideally, career progression would be a legitimate framework to guide an NCO, offering clear goals and gateways to succeed in their field. It would also provide NCOs with a degree of freedom over their assignments and avenues to reward high-achieving personnel with excellent ratings. A career progression function arms an NCO with the knowledge to work ahead or at a pace to achieve their desired career progress rate. The “Advanced Training” function evaluates the effectiveness of military training and additional opportunities for NCOs to develop. This includes advanced schooling opportunities as well as the ability to experience other branches given an appropriate talent match. The five value measures supporting this function include training framework publication score, access to advanced training, access to inter-service exchanges, after-action reviews, and facilities suitable for training. Advanced training plays a role in bettering an organization overall, but it is critical in personal development which can be leveraged at any point in an NCO’s career (Morrison, 2020). Personal experience gained through advanced training will shape how individuals view and solve problems while interacting with others.

A value hierarchy was created to organize the value measures under their designated function. The value hierarchy organizes the functions, objectives, and value measures from top to bottom. An example from the value hierarchy is seen in Figure 3. Figure 3 represents the advanced training capabilities of a country. The value measures are listed with their unit of measurement, with “Likert scales” being those measured using a constructed rating system, where more is better (MIB).

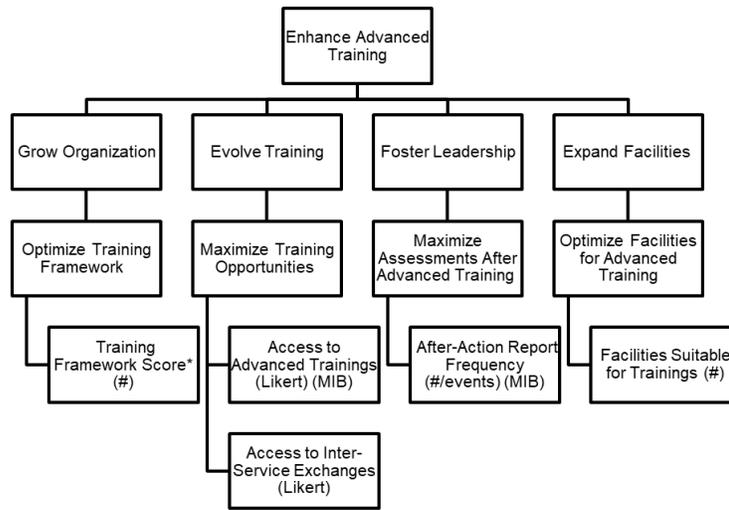


Figure 3. Enhance Advanced Training Function of Value Hierarchy

## 2.1 Value Modeling

After analyzing the DOTmLPF and creating value measures, these measures were ranked by importance and assigned weights using a Pairwise Comparison Matrix. The Pairwise Comparison Matrix directly compares the measures to each other to determine how they rank. Table 1 lists the respective value measures in order, as confirmed by the client, with 1 being the most influential (therefore having the highest weight) and 20 being the least influential to NCO development. To incorporate the ranking in the value model, each measure was assigned a weight produced using Equation 1 (Alfares & Duffuaa, 2004). The value score for each value measure will be multiplied by the weight to calculate its weighted score. The sum of the weighted scores of each value measure is the country’s overall NCO Development Score.

$$w_{r,n} = 100 - \left( 3.19514 + \frac{37.75756}{n} \right) (r - 1), 1 \leq r \leq n, \text{ where } r \text{ is the rank, and } n \text{ is the total number of measures (1)}$$

Table 1. Value Measure Rankings

1. Enlisted Development Professional Military Education Score	0.0967	11. Entry Requirement Score	0.0475
2. Career Progression Publications Score	0.0918	12. Professional Development Publications Score	0.0426
3. Talent Mapping Score	0.0869	13. Facilities Suitable for Training	0.0377
4. Leadership Framework Score	0.0819	14. After-Action Report Frequency	0.0328
5. Training Framework Score	0.0770	15. NCO Counseling Frequency	0.0279
6. Duty Scope Publications Score	0.0721	16. Access to Interservice Exchange	0.0230
7. Access to Advanced Training	0.0672	17. Assignment Rotation Rate	0.0181
8. English Proficiency Score	0.0623	18. Professional Military Education Schoolhouse Score	0.0131
9. NCO Evaluation Report Frequency	0.0574	19. Assignment Preference Consideration	0.0082
10. Mentorship Quality	0.0525	20. Special Forces Opportunity	0.0033

After weighing these value measures, the data found from stakeholder interviews and research was used to quantify the values. Certain value measures had very little data and comparing these value measures to other countries would skew results. To account for this lack of data, the Likert scales analyzed the values with an objective rating scale from 1-5. For example, for publication scores, if a country scored a 1, that country had no publications, but if they scored a 5, they had

complete, published, and refined documents. Scores 2-4 meant they had some unspecific and/or unpublished documents. These ratings were developed after interviewing FAOs and incorporating their perspective.

### 3. Solution Design

The solution design phase of the SDP is where the problem statement is redefined, idea and alternative generation occur, and solutions are created. After researching and modeling these countries, they were compared with one another under the same weighted value scale of 0 – 100, presented in Figure 4.

To analyze the bar chart, trade space analysis is used to distinguish which value measures impact a country’s overall score the greatest. For example, countries A, D, and E have well-developed Enlisted Development PME while countries B and C have well-developed Talent Mapping. All countries are compared to a notional ideal country which exhibits scores totaling 100. Due to resource constraints, publications could not be collected or analyzed for the countries of interest. Therefore, each publication's score is near zero. Recognizing the publications score is an important aspect of NCO development, these value measures will be included in our model. However, the countries of interest will exhibit a trend of near-zero scores due to the lack of publication analysis.

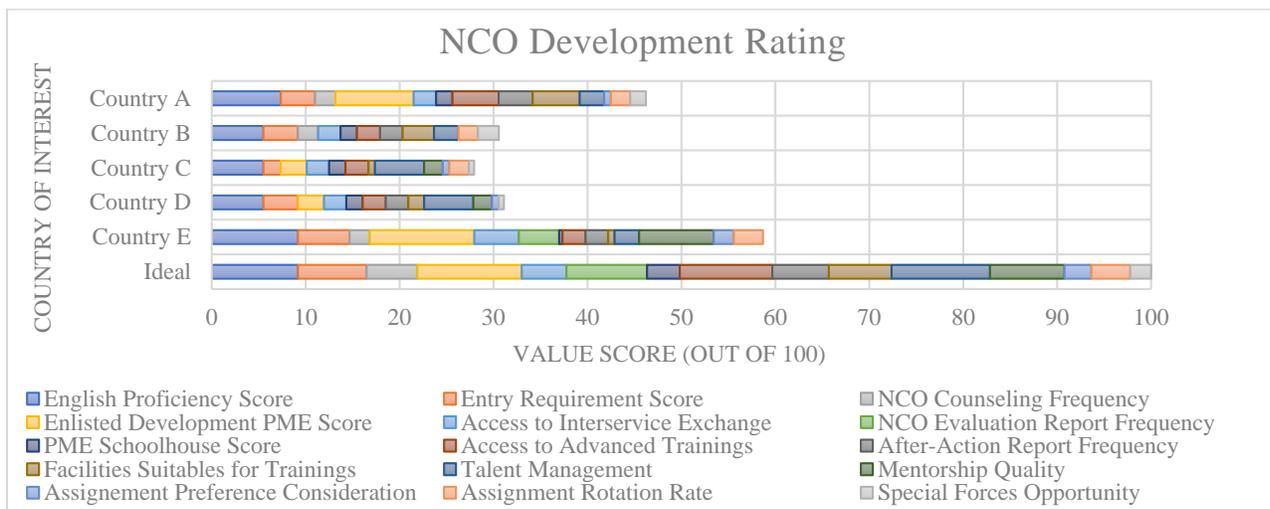


Figure 4. NCO Development Ratings

### 4. Decision Making

After analyzing the value measures and the overall value scores for each country, a tier system was created to rank the countries, shown in Figure 5. The range of NCO Development Ratings is divided into three equally sized tiers to categorize the assessed countries based on their NCO Enlisted Development score. This tiering method will be used until more countries are assessed and a better idea of the subgroups of country scores are realized. Tier 1 countries include those who have scored over 65.99 on the value measure scale, tier 2 countries scored within the 33.00 - 65.99 range, and tier 3 countries scored within 0-32.99 on the value measure scale. The breakpoints were created to capture low, medium, and high ranges of scores to represent the status of a given country’s NCO development.

Tier 1 countries exhibit strong efforts to develop NCOs through various programs, providing numerous opportunities and quality infrastructure to optimize their talents. Tier 1 countries develop NCOs through professional military education and allow NCOs to choose their career pathway according to their wants and desires. Tier 2 countries make a conservative effort in offering necessary opportunities and resources to further develop the natural talents of their NCOs. These countries may be limited by financial, political, or social constraints prohibiting them from improving their NCO Development programs. Tier 3 countries exhibit low efforts in developing NCOs and fail to provide proper training, education, and resources to develop NCOs within their defense force. This tiering system will be useful in the future, highlighting which countries need improvement in their NCO Development programs. Given the unique and wide-ranging existing capabilities across the AoR, the tier system can help focus efforts on gradual versus unrealistic improvements.

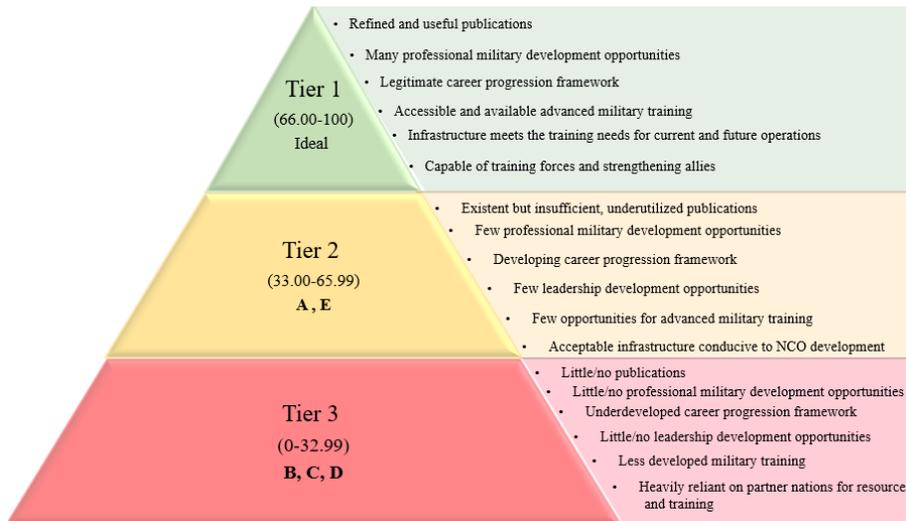


Figure 5. Tiering System

## 5. Conclusion

Many factors play a role in the development of NCOs. SELs and FAOs have identified these factors which are represented through the DOTmLRF lens in the value functions of this project. The model and tier ranking system are the iterative processes to strengthen NCO development by helping SELs see an unbiased representation of a country’s status. The importance of NCO development coincides with a country’s ability to work and train within USINDOPACOM. The model will reveal which aspects of a country’s NCO corps are developed or undeveloped, allowing USINDOPACOM to direct resources and effort most appropriately. NCO development must improve as USINDOPACOM partner countries' continual progress will help all nations within the AoR, in line with CSM Shorter’s guidance. As the project moves forward, the next iteration of analysis can turn this insight into implementable strategies and proceed with tangible improvements to NCO development programs throughout the region.

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