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## A Sub-Sahara African Army's Perspectives of Security Force Assistance Training Effectiveness

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# Walden University

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Abstract

A Sub-Sahara African Army's Perspectives of Security Force Assistance Training  
Effectiveness

by

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Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

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## Abstract

Past research and government reports document that Security Force Assistance (SFA) provided by the United States to partner nations often failed to achieve the desired impact of developing the capacity and capability of the partner to defeat an insurgency and maintain security. A lack of research and available data inhibit the identification of reasons SFA programs fail. In this qualitative phenomenological study, the perspectives of recipients of training were explored to understand the factors that impact the development of capability and capacity as a result of SFA training. The agency theory was applied as the theoretical framework in the study to examine possible conflicting objectives between the United States and the partner nation. The research questions addressed the training effectiveness by exploring the perspectives of Sub-Saharan African soldiers that received training and senior leaders of their army that was engaged in counterinsurgency operations. Data from interviews with 17 soldiers that received training and 5 senior leaders were coded and compared to developed major themes. The results showed evidence of limited capability development but no capacity development as a result of SFA training. The primary reason for the lack of development was that the training provided skills the recipient army was not able to incorporate in its operations or sustain. The results of this study indicated issues that practitioners could address to improve SFA programs and achieve the desired impact. Creating more effective SFA programs will help develop partner nation security forces that can maintain security for their civilian populations in which human development can thrive and eliminate safe havens for terrorist organizations that threaten the United States and its allies.

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## Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

### **Introduction**

#### **Description of the Topic**

The topic of my study was the effectiveness of U.S. training conducted as part of Security Force Assistance (SFA) programs for foreign partner nation armies. Developing the capabilities and capacities of allied partner nation security forces is a long-standing key component of the U.S. Security Strategy, and the U.S. Government expends a significant amount of funds and resources towards those efforts (The White House, 2013). The elements of SFA programs consists of organizing, training, equipping, rebuilding or building, and advising assistance for partner nation security forces to develop the capabilities and capacities of those forces (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017). A program can consist of all the elements or any combination required to address shortfalls in capability or capacity. In this study, I concentrated solely on the training component of SFA.

The topic of SFA garnered increased attention in the past few decades because of changes to the global security environment, including increases in intrastate conflict and terrorism. Developing countries are often the recipients of SFA because of their relatively underdeveloped security forces and higher risks for intrastate conflicts (Matisek, 2018). The United States prioritizes SFA efforts for developing countries that experience intrastate conflicts that create instability and opportunities for terrorist organization safe havens (Mattis, 2018; The White House, 2013). The primary objective of SFA programs is to develop partner nation security forces so they can maintain security within their

nations and prevent terrorists from establishing safe havens from which they can strike the United States or allied nations (Mattis, 2018; The White House; 2013, U.S. Army, 2009).

Since the end of World War II, the world experienced a shift from primarily interstate to intrastate conflict. At the conclusion of World War II, there were 10 ongoing intrastate conflicts in contrast to the 46 in 2017 (Pettersson & Eck, 2018). Since the end of the Cold War in 1991, the proportion of intrastate conflict continued to increase compared to interstate conflict. From 1991 through 2017, there were 9 years in which there were no interstate conflicts, while the number of intrastate conflicts never fell below 33 (Pettersson & Eck, 2018). Increased occurrences of ethnic conflict, increased occurrences and lethality of terror tactics, and the expansion of regional conflicts across national borders in the past 30 years aggravated and contributed to the increase in intrastate conflicts and created threats to regional and global security (Gat, 2012; Pettersson & Eck, 2018). In addition to contributing to international insecurity, the expansion of intrastate conflicts created areas of instability that disrupted economies, hindered human development, and created environments of human suffering (Gates, Hegre, Nygard, & Strand, 2012).

The 9/11 attacks on the United States highlighted the importance of assistance for foreign security forces to maintain internal security and deny safe havens for terrorists. The current National Security Policy recognized instability and weak governance in foreign countries as a threat to the security of the United States and allied nations (The White House, 2017). The National Defense Strategy, which was a derivative of the

National Security Policy, further recognized that securing U.S. interests partially depended on the military capabilities and capacities of foreign allies and partners (Mattis, 2018).

The importance of foreign partner nation military capabilities and capacities was not a new component of U.S. security strategies that began with the current National Security Strategy. A significant element of the Obama Administration's security strategy as articulated in Presidential Directive 23 was to train and equip foreign security forces so that they could defeat domestic threats and create peace and stability within their nations (The White House, 2013). The current National Military Strategy is the document that directs how the Military Services are to achieve the objectives of the National Defense Strategy (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2015b). A key component of the strategy outlined in the National Military Strategy is to defeat violent extremist organizations by conducting "training in support of local partners that provide the majority of forces necessary to restore and secure their homelands" (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2015b, p. 5). The strategy to reduce conflict and create secure environments relies heavily on the development of foreign security forces to manage their internal conflicts.

The United States adopted the strategy of depending on foreign security forces to maintain security and assisting those forces with SFA despite a general recognition within academia and the government that previous efforts to develop foreign security forces often failed to achieve the desired outcomes (Biddle, McDonald, & Baker, 2018). Failed efforts by the United States to improve foreign security forces were particularly serious when those forces engaged in counterinsurgency operations (Biddle et al., 2018).

Past efforts to assist foreign nations to respond to insurgencies focused on training and equipping foreign armies to defeat insurgents militarily (Corum, 2017; Kapstein, 2017). The list of failures since the end of World War II is long and includes the recent inability of the U.S.-trained Iraqi Army to resist insurgent forces without external support in 2014 (Biddle et al., 2018; Hammes, 2016; Kapstein, 2017).

The United States undertook the strategy of relying upon the development of foreign security forces to defeat insurgencies and create secure environments while recognizing the failure of similar past efforts but without fully understanding why many past efforts failed (U.S. Department of Defense [DOD] Inspector General, 2017; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2018). Because the government does not fully identify the causes of past failures, it may unknowingly repeat the same actions that produced failure in the past during the ongoing and future SFA programs. The ongoing programs to develop partner nation security force capability and capacity to defeat insurgents may be a waste of resources that will not create security or defeat insurgents. In addition to potentially wasting resources, the efforts by the United States to develop partner nation security forces could create false understandings of those forces' capabilities that result in overestimating their ability to provide for their national security.

The failure of partner nations security forces to win against insurgents and create secure environments caused civilian populations and nations to suffer. Armed conflict within nations caused human suffering due to violence and the accompanying limitations on economic development and human services, such as education, health care, food security, and a sense of wellbeing (Gates et al., 2012). The policy of the United States to

develop partner nation security forces to establish and maintain secure environments should not waste resources on doomed programs that do not enhance the security of the United States and its allies but should contribute to creating stable and secure environments in which human development can thrive.

### **Preview of this Chapter**

In this chapter, I explain the background of the problem as a government policy that has not been fully researched and may repeat the actions of past failed policies. I further describe how my research addressed the problem by exploring the training provided by the United States to an army in a Sub-Saharan African developing nation confronted with an ongoing insurgency. In my description of the problem, I provide evidence from multiple sources to show how the problem is current, relevant, and that there is a broad consensus of its existence.

### **Background**

#### **Summary of Research Literature Related to the Scope of the Study Topic**

Previous literature on the topic of U.S. SFA to foreign governments were mostly studies intended to identify lessons and causes of success or failure. The measurement of success differed between studies as either defeating an enemy or achieving specific goals of an SFA program. Some relevant studies about combating insurgencies used statistical analysis to identify how much of a factor the United States' assistance was in influencing the outcomes of conflicts.

Historically, U.S. support to nations conducting counterinsurgencies usually resulted in the U.S. partners losing militarily despite the support. Past research found that

assistance to foreign security forces by the United States often failed to create secure environments because the United States and the partner's political objectives were dissimilar ((Biddle et al., 2018; Matissek, 2018). Failing to develop foreign security forces was not a unique problem to the United States. Researchers on international reform efforts for security forces of developing nations found similar problems of different objectives hindering development (Abrahamsen, 2016; Ansorg, 2017; Baaz & Stern, 2017; Detzner, 2017; Donais, 2018; Jowell, 2018; Kammel, 2018; Robinson, 2018; Schroeder & Chappuis, 2014; Westerman, 2017). Many researchers explaining the phenomenon of partners failing despite security force development assistance used the agency theory and assigned the role of principal to the nation providing assistance and relegated the role of agent to the assisted nation (Biddle et al., 2018; Coletta, 2013; Rittinger, 2017; Schroeder & Chappuis, 2014). The researchers that used the agency theory to explain how SFA or other forms of security force development assistance blamed the failures on the assisted nation's unwillingness to assume the assisting nation's objectives or the assisting nation's failure to account for local dynamics of the assisted nation.

The U.S failure to account for the partner nation's goals and objectives may be an indicator that the United States also failed to account for other environmental factors that impacted SFA programs. In studies about successful SFA programs, researchers found that success required managers and planners to adapt programs to the local environment including its culture (Berrios, 2017; Neads, 2019; Varisco, 2014). Researchers on successful SFA programs also found that the programs required commitments that were

longer than initially planned and often lasted over a decade to achieve desired objectives (Berrios, 2017; Varisco, 2014). Failing to plan or modifying plans to account for local dynamics of an SFA program can result in an allocation of too few resources to properly build the capabilities and capacities required to defeat an insurgency and maintain security (Detzner, 2017).

Studies on the contemporary efforts by the United States to improve the Iraqi Army and Afghan National Army to combat insurgencies mainly attempted to explain why those efforts did not fully succeed by examining variables involving the United States or the recipients of assistance. In some of the literature, variables that impacted the recipient armies' ability to absorb the capabilities and capacities the United States attempted to transfer were examined. The literature described how a deficit of education and motivation of partner soldiers (Olden, 2014), differing cultural values of partner leaders to the U.S. military's ethical norms (Felicetti, 2006), and the attrition of partner nation soldiers (Ates, 2014) negatively impacted the development of skills to employ military capabilities as intended by the SFA programs. Researchers that examined variables found that lack of resources (Chandra, 2008; Hammes, 2016) and inadequate preparation (Chandra, 2018; Corum, 2017; Davis, 2014; Hammes, 2016; O'Connor Roan, Cushner, & Metcalf, 2009) hindered the United States' execution of SFA programs. The research of SFA programs in Iraq and Afghanistan indicated that the training of armies from developing nations required considerably more resources and preparation than planned plus a more thoughtful selection of the skills to train along with significant modifications of existing instructional material used by the U.S. Army.

### **The Gap in Knowledge in the Discipline**

There is a consensus among the studies on SFA provided by the United States to partner nation security forces that the programs often failed to achieve their objectives. Some researchers defined success as the development of capability and capacity, while others defined success as contributing to a military victory. The researchers explained past failures as either the partner nation's failure to adopt U.S. objectives and values, the United States' failure to allocate enough resources and prepare properly, or the partner nation's lack of ability to absorb the capability and capacity the United States tried to develop. The lack of consensus about the cause of SFA past program failures is representative of the uniqueness of each program's environment and variables to include unique human and organizational interactions between the United States and the partner nations.

Despite the diversity of views and research subjects regarding SFA and similar programs, there is little research from the viewpoint of the recipient nations. Almost all of the previous research used statistical data or data from the viewpoint of the providers of SFA. Research on U.S. SFA lacks any data or analysis about the partner nation's perceptions of the effectiveness of SFA programs to develop capability and capacity that assists them to provide security and defeat insurgents.

### **Why the Study is Needed**

The findings of this study contribute to filling the gap in research on U.S. assistance to partner nation security forces by providing perspectives on SFA training programs from the viewpoint of the recipient nation's soldiers and senior leaders. The

recipient's perspectives provide insights into the effectiveness of SFA to develop capabilities and capacities or if the partner nation and its army had objectives that did not allow for military development as the United States intended. The recipient's perspectives also reveal other elements of the environment in which the training of foreign armies occurs and provide further insights on how to improve SFA. Practitioners, planners, and decision makers of the U.S. SFA programs, especially the training of foreign armies, may use these insights to change policy or procedures to improve the development of capabilities and capacities for the achievement of mutual security objectives between the United States and the partner nations.

The training the United States provides to foreign armies can help create security for the foreign nation's citizens and assist with managing their domestic conflicts. Improving the training the United States provides can contribute to managing conflicts, which is a prerequisite for creating secure environments that foster all forms of human development (Adefisoye & Bamidele, 2018; Ani, 2016). The lack of secure environments is a reason many developing nations are not able to achieve the development objectives of the Millennium Development Goals established by the United Nations (Ani, 2016; Gates et al., 2012). The results of my study adds to the body of knowledge on the training of foreign armies by the United States with the hope that the knowledge will contribute to making the training more effective at developing the capabilities and capacities of partner nation security forces to create secure environments.

## **Problem Statement**

### **The Problem Statement**

The problem is that SFA provided by the United States to partner nation security forces often fails to achieve the desired impact of developing the capacity and capability of the partner nation to defeat an insurgency and maintain security. Numerous defeats of U.S. allies by insurgents provides strong evidence of this problem. The inability of the Iraqi and Afghanistan security forces to establish security despite the assistance provided by the United States provides recent evidence of this problem.

### **Consensus That the Problem is Current, Relevant, and Significant**

The problem with SFA effectiveness decreases its potential to contribute to a reduction of human suffering. The inability of governments to manage intrastate conflicts has resulted in human suffering and the stagnation of human development. The number of people killed or displaced by intrastate conflicts was indicative of the magnitude of human suffering caused by the conflicts. From 2013 to 2017, 70,000 to 100,000 people died in intrastate conflicts each year (Pettersson & Eck, 2018), and the number of displaced persons due to conflicts in the world during the same period averaged almost 62 million per year (United Nations [UN] High Commissioner for Refugees, 2018). As the number and duration of intrastate conflicts increased since World War II, so did the negative impacts on the affected populations. O'Brien (2017) stated that "more than 20 million people across four countries face starvation and famine" and claimed "we are facing the largest humanitarian crisis since the creation of the United Nations" during a report to the UN Security Council on the humanitarian crises caused by intrastate

conflicts in Yemen, South Sudan, Somalia, and Nigeria (p. 5). At the time of O'Brien's statement, the United States had SFA programs in Nigeria and Somalia and concluded an unsuccessful program in South Sudan. If the U.S. efforts to assist foreign nations could become more effective at maintaining internal security, then partner nations could potentially reduce much of the ongoing human suffering.

There is a significant amount of quantitative evidence that many U.S. SFA programs were not effective at contributing to the outcome of conflicts (Biddle et al., 2018; Kapstein, 2017; Mezzell, 2019; Paul, Clarke, Grill, & Dunigan, 2013; Watts et al., 2018). Analysis of multiple data sets on conflict shows that support from the United States did not improve the odds of defeating an insurgency (Mezzell, 2019; Paul et al., 2013; Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2018). U.S. efforts to assist foreign nations defeat insurgencies does not fare well when compared to global averages. In multiple studies, researchers used different data sets to determine that wars, including insurgencies, since World War II lasted an average of about 10 years (Connable & Libicki, 2010; Lyall, 2010). A comparison of U.S. expenditures on Foreign Security Assistance (Security Assistance Monitor, 2018) with the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (2018) revealed that recent and ongoing counterinsurgencies supported by the United States last longer than typical insurgencies. Since 2009, the top 15 recipient countries of U.S. assistance received almost 80% of all the assistance (Security Assistance Monitor, 2018). Of the 15 top recipients of U.S. assistance that had insurgencies ongoing during the same 10-year period, only 12.5% of the insurgencies concluded as compared to a global average of 48% (Security Assistance Monitor, 2018; Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2018). Data

from the Security Assistance Monitor (2018) and the Uppsala Conflict Data Program (2018) further revealed that counterinsurgencies not supported by the United States not only ended quicker but had a higher rate of success. Since 2009, only 1 of 8 counterinsurgencies receiving significant United States' assistance achieved military victory, as compared to 21% of governments without significant support from the United States (Uppsala Conflict Data Program, 2018).

The poor performance of United States allies against insurgencies is not a new phenomenon. In a study of counterinsurgencies from 1947 to 2009, researchers concluded that the majority of governments that received significant U.S. support lost against the insurgents (Paul et al., 2013). Qualitative research on U.S. support to allies conducting counterinsurgencies showed that the allies usually lost and that the conflicts lasted longer than those without significant U.S. involvement (Grespin, 2013; Paul et al., 2013; Watts et al., 2018).

Undoubtedly, there is a selection bias when measuring counterinsurgencies supported by the United States with those that did not receive the same support. The United States provided greater assistance to partner nations facing the greatest threat and had the most likelihood of losing. Jones (2017) observed that international “interventions on behalf of a government only occur in the most challenging cases, making the baseline probability of government victory much lower when such interventions occur” (p. 53). However, if the degree to which supported nations fail to win counterinsurgencies continues at the same rate, the U.S. strategy that depends on partner nations maintaining security is in threat of failure due to partner nation defeats. Improvements to SFA

programs' ability to successfully develop the capability and capacity of partner nation security forces could shorten the duration of insurgencies while improving the success rate of partner nations conducting counterinsurgencies.

Academic, professional, think tank, and government reports on SFA subjects document a consensus in many forums that there is a problem with U.S. SFA programs. The U.S. DOD and Government Accountability Office published reports in 2017 and 2018 that were critical of assistance provided by the United States to foreign militaries. The U.S. DOD Inspector General (2017) reported that "the DoD did not develop the metrics and processes necessary to effectively evaluate performance and assess the individual and collective impacts of Section 1206 projects" (p. 51). Section 1206 projects are components of SFA programs that "build the capacity of foreign military forces to conduct counterterrorism or stability (or both) operations" (U.S. DOD Inspector General, 2017, p. 4). The U.S. DOD Inspector General report included evidence of some success building foreign nation's military capacity but concluded that the DOD did not collect the necessary data to know the extent of success.

A U.S. Government Accountability Office (2018) report on the DOD's train and equip projects reported that DOD only verified that 8 of the 262 train and equip projects from 2006 to 2015 improved the foreign militaries capabilities and that 13 had not measurably improved. The remaining 92% of projects either were not assessed or the assessments did not have enough detail to determine if any capability improved. U.S. Government reports reflect a general understanding within the U.S. Government that past training of foreign armies was not as successful as desired and that a lack of data exists to

determine the full extent of the shortfall (U.S. DOD Inspector General, 2017; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2018).

As described previously, numerous academic studies concluded that past SFA programs provided by the United States did not always develop foreign security forces that were able to defeat insurgents or maintain internal security. Authors of professional and think tank articles were generally critical of past efforts by the United States to train foreign armies. In a report published by the U.S. Army War College, Walsh (2015) chronicled the multiple army programs intended to advise and train the Iraqi Army and concluded that most of these programs failed to develop the capability for the Iraqi Army to defend Iraq because the programs were “ad hoc, disjointed, inefficient, and lacking proper attention and resources” (p. 8).

Recent studies on the U.S. SFA by the respected and relatively centrist think tanks of RAND and Center for Strategic and International Studies determined that the programs did not achieve their objectives. A Center for Strategic and International Studies report concluded that

despite billions of dollars’ worth of grant-based security assistance to its allies and partners - with another \$3.4 billion approved for FY 2019 - the United States has yet to see the proportionate returns from its investment in foreign countries’ security capabilities. (Shah & Dalton, 2018, para. 6)

In a RAND study on security sector assistance (SSA) in Africa, Watts et al. (2018) stated that despite a shortage of data “most SSA in most countries in the Post–Cold War era appears to have had little net impact” (p. xv) and “that U.S. efforts are often inefficient

and wasteful” (p. xvi). The lack of data collected by the United States on the impact of its SFA programs hindered research on the topic, but the information available indicated that the training provided by the United States did not meet expectations and in some cases had no impact.

Reports about the difficulties developing the capacities and capabilities of the Iraqi Army and Afghan National Army were not just created by academia, think tanks, and government investigations but also by the news media, especially after dramatic setbacks to both armies in 2014 and 2015 despite over a decade of U.S. assistance. The defeats incurred on the Iraqi Army by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIS) after receiving more than \$20 billion in military aid from the United States particularly garnered attention by the press. In *The Washington Post* Morris (2016) reported that “senior commanders were incensed when it [the Iraqi Army] collapsed on the battlefield less than three years after the U.S. withdrawal in 2011” (para. 10). In an article titled, “Iraqi Army Still Ineffective Despite U.S. Training,” Parker and Landay (2016) reported that the general that led U.S. efforts to train the Iraqi Army from 2013 to 2015 stated, “the Iraqi military’s capacity hasn’t improved that much” (para. 6). The media coverage of the battlefield defeat of the Iraqi Army by ISIS helped increase awareness and consensus about the United States’ deficiencies in developing the capabilities and capacities of foreign security forces.

The ramifications of the Iraqi Army’s failure to defeat ISIS without external support were horrific and global. As ISIS gained control of territory, it also gained the resources and safe haven to expand its terror. The fighting in Iraq killed at least 85,000

civilians and displaced over 2.5 million in 4 years (UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, 2018). ISIS was blamed for most of the casualties and many human rights violations, including torture, extrajudicial killings, and slavery (Human Rights Watch, 2018; UN Assistance Mission for Iraq, 2018; U.S. Department of State, 2018). ISIS's success allowed them to motivate and resource like-minded individuals and groups outside of Syria and Iraq to commit terrorist attacks on their behalf. From June 2014 to February 2018, ISIS-inspired individuals and groups conducted 143 attacks that killed at least 2,043 people in 29 countries (Lister et al., 2018). The reports of the Iraqi Army's failure together with media coverage of ISIS's human rights abuses and international-inspired terrorist attacks showed the significance of the inadequate preparation of Iraqi security forces and increased the consensus that U.S. SFA must improve.

### **Relationship to Previous Research Findings**

I developed the problem statement of this study to build upon the previous research by framing the problem with SFA in an open-ended fashion that did not judge any of the previous researchers' explanations. In general, the government reports provided evidence that the problem existed, academic research attempted to describe and explain the problem, and think tank articles described the challenges of developing capabilities and capacities of foreign security forces and promoted solutions. The literature indicated several reasons for the failure of foreign security forces to successfully use military capabilities that the U.S. SFA programs intended to provide. A small amount of the literature addressed successful SFA programs or positive attributes

of programs, but the theme of the body of literature related to the topic was that SFA was not successful at making the United States or its allies secure.

Some of the literature addressed how effectively partner nation security forces acquired new military skills, while some examined how well partner nations employed new military skills. My research problem statement was open to any explanation as to the causes of SFA program failures to achieve the objectives of the United States. Although there was a consensus within the literature that the problem existed, there was not a consensus of why U.S. assistance to foreign security forces often failed to achieve its objectives.

The questions that some of the researchers tried to answer in the literature concerning whether SFA programs succeeded at transferring skills to partner nation security forces or how successfully the partner employed those skills were questions about capability and capacity. The inability to acquire the skills that SFA programs intended to develop was a deficiency of capability. In the context of U.S. SFA, the term “capability refers to the PN’s [partner nation’s] ability to execute a given task” (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017, p. I-2). The U.S. military measures capability by using the following elements: doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2015a). A deficit in any element can diminish a capability.

An example of a personnel deficit that inhibited capability development was the large number of desertions and casualties sustained by the Afghan National Army. Ates (2014) found that from 2003 to 2011, the training of Afghan soldiers could not keep pace

with the attrition of trained soldiers and caused the Afghan National Army to employ untrained soldiers in counterinsurgency operations. The literature provided several examples of capability development failures due to shortcomings in a single element of capability. However, the U.S. Government reports stated that there was a lack of data to measure the development of foreign security forces capabilities, which made it impossible to holistically and accurately define what caused foreign security forces not to develop capabilities as a result of SFA programs (U.S. DOD Inspector General, 2017; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2018).

The lack of willingness or ability to maintain proficiency or to employ the new military skills and capabilities that SFA programs provided to foreign security forces was a matter of capacity. The U.S. military defined capacity as “the PN’s ability to self-sustain and self-replicate a given capability” (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017, p. I-2). In my study, I used the U.S. military’s definition of capacity liberally to include both deliberate or unintentional failure of the partner nation to replicate and sustain capabilities. An example of deliberately not using military capabilities as intended by the United States includes misusing capabilities to conduct acts that violate human rights. Omelicheva, Carter, and Campbell (2017) found the relationship between SFA training and the recipients adherence to the principles of human rights was not uniform and concluded that the determining factors in transferring values of human rights during SFA training were “the number of students trained and the duration and nature of their training” (p. 143).

Other researchers have documented human rights atrocities by foreign security forces that received SFA training and described failures to transfer the U.S. military ethos, which included respect for human rights, the rule of law, and civilian authority (Burchard & Burgess, 2018, Ladwig, 2016; Regilme, 2018). Following several events in which the Malian Army was defeated by insurgents in 2013 and responded with arbitrary killings, the commander of U.S. forces in Africa acknowledged that prior training by the United States had failed and stated that “we didn’t spend probably the requisite time focusing on values, ethics, and a military ethos” (British Broadcasting Corporation, 2013). Differing values and lack of training were two factors that caused the inability of some partner nations to replicate or sustain military capabilities (Burchard & Burgess, 2018, Ladwig, 2016; Omelicheva et al., 2017; Regilme, 2018). Anticipating capacity deficiencies and planning for countermeasures within any SFA program potentially could correct deficiencies of capacity.

Many of the recent studies on SFA and related programs were focused on the willingness of foreign governments or their security forces to employ capacities gained through the U.S. SFA or international security assistance programs. Some researchers concluded that different objectives between the United States and the partner nation explained why capabilities were employed differently than the United States desired (Biddle et al., 2018; Coletta, 2013; Regilme, 2018; Rittinger, 2017; Schroeder & Chappuis, 2014). The researchers that described how partner nations used newly acquired military capabilities in ways different than the United States intended explained the behavior was rational, whether it was intentional or intuitive, to achieve the partner

nation's objectives (Biddle et al., 2018; Coletta, 2013; Regilme, 2018; Rittinger, 2017; Schroeder & Chappuis, 2014).

SFA programs usually occurred for security forces that had some preexisting capabilities and capacities. The Joint publication (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017) and the U.S. Army manual (U.S. Army, 2009) on SFA operations provided instructions on planning SFA and both had extensive guidance on assessing partner nation requirements to ensure the programs filled gaps in either capability or capacity. The failure of planners to assess the partner nation's capability and capacity gaps could explain some failed SFA programs.

The literature generally described different problems with SFA and attempted to explain the problems. In developing the problem statement for this study, I accepted each explanation and built upon the previous research by exploring causes to the problems with SFA. I did not presume that any explanation of the problem was more worthy than any of the causes previous researchers described.

### **A Meaningful Gap in the Current Research Literature**

Much of the literature documented the failure of many SFA programs to achieve U.S. objectives and military success by the partner nation. The professional community that plans and conducts SFA knew that programs often did not achieve the desired development of capabilities and capacities within foreign security forces. The Assistant Secretary of Defense for Security Cooperation assessed that "investments to develop partner military capabilities have achieved mixed results" and stated that "the security cooperation community is rife with anecdotes about U.S.-provided helicopters rusting

away in hangars after only a few years of use or of armored Humvees sitting on blocks in perpetual disrepair” (Ross, 2016, p. 26). Government studies reported that a lack of data existed to fully know the degree and causes of SFA failures U.S. DOD Inspector General, 2017; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2018.

Previous researchers did not describe how well SFA transferred skills to the individual soldiers and units that received training. The perspectives of recipients of training as part of SFA programs was a significant gap in the research literature. In this study, I attempted to fill this gap by exploring the perspectives of recipients of U.S. training provided to a Sub-Saharan African army. I concentrated on the training aspect of capability development, but the perspectives of the recipients of the training provide information about the partner nation’s capacity to develop, employ, and sustain new military capabilities. The perspectives also provide insights into the effectiveness of the United States-provided training to transfer skills. The results of this study contribute to a better understanding of the environment in which SFA occurs so that decision-makers can formulate policies to more effectively train foreign armies.

### **Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of my study was to explore and understand the perspectives of recipients of training as part of U.S. SFA programs from a Sub-Saharan African army that was engaged in counterinsurgency operations. The research paradigm for my study was constructivism “which views knowledge as socially constructed and may change depending on the circumstances” (Golafshani, 2003, p. 603). The topic of SFA has many factors impacting its effects and several perspectives. Every SFA program is unique with

variations of participants, capability and capacity development objectives, the recipient partner nation, and a multitude of other environmental factors. People construct SFA programs that involve human interactions that require examination of environments and perspectives to understand the factors that impact the success of the programs.

In this study, I explored the perspectives of the recipients of training from a U.S. SFA training program to expand knowledge about what makes such programs succeed or fail. The success of SFA programs traditionally was measured by researchers as the recipient partner nation's ability to achieve the goals and objectives of the United States (Livingston, 2011; U.S. Army, 2009; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2018). In this study, I only examined the training component of SFA programs to explore how the recipients perceived the utility and effectiveness of the training to develop capability and capacity that could benefit their ongoing counterinsurgency operation. I concentrated on the phenomenon of training provided to an army conducting a counterinsurgency because that is the phenomenon that appears to have the least amount of success developing capabilities and capacities to establish security.

### **Research Questions**

RQ1: What are the perspectives of Sub-Saharan African soldiers on training received from the United States?

RQ2: What are the perspectives of leaders of a Sub-Saharan African army on training their soldiers received from the United States?

## Theoretical Foundation

The theoretical basis for my study was agency theory. Within the literature on agency theory, there is disagreement about who developed the foundational research. According to Eisenhardt (1989), Ross's (1973) study on the principal's problem of minimizing risk when working with an agent and Jensen and Meckling's (1976) study about how to manage agents are both the foundation of the agency theory. The concepts of the agency theory were developed in both studies to explain how business relationships can fail between a principal that uses an agent to execute an activity (Eisenhardt, 1989). Although the founding researchers developed the agency theory to explain business management phenomena, the theory is widely applicable and used by many disciplines to include international relations. Researchers have often used the agency theory to explain why bilateral or multilateral arrangements failed in business or international relations (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Agency theory explains how relationships created for action were sometimes dysfunctional and doomed due to the different objectives of the participants (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Ross, 1973). Eisenhardt (1989) described the agency theory as "directed at the ubiquitous agency relationship, in which one party (the principal) delegates work to another (the agent), who performs that work" (p. 58). The theory contends that differing goals or levels of aversion to risk sometimes cause the agent to act in ways that were not in the best interest of the principal (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Ross, 1973). In Chapter 2, I explain the agency theory in more detail as well as how it relates to the topic of my study.

Some previous researchers on the failure of SFA programs have explained the failure using the agency theory, assigning the role of principal to the United States (Biddle et al., 2018; Hammes, 2016; Kapstein, 2017; Ladwig III, 2016; Regilme, 2018). In this study, I tested the application of the agency theory by examining the perceptions of the recipients of SFA training about their nation's objectives for the training and the recipient army's actions to employ and institutionalize capabilities the training intended to develop. The research questions were developed for this study aimed to discover if the partner nation had objectives that differed from the United States' objectives for the SFA programs.

### **Nature of the Study**

In this qualitative study, I used the phenomenological design to explore the experiences of SFA training recipients and create an in-depth understanding of their perspectives. The experiences of the SFA training recipients varied based on several factors including time, place, instructors, and training subjects but all experiences were within the phenomenon of SFA training programs. Phenomenological research that analyzes multiple perspectives is useful to understand the meaning of complex and potentially contested meanings of events and processes (Larkin, Shaw, & Flowers, 2018).

In this study, I used a purposeful sampling technique, which is a technique of focusing on information-rich cases that provide details related to research questions (see Patton, 2014). Because I intended to inform decision-makers with the results of this study, I also employed utilization-focused sampling, which uses enough cases related to a problem to provide a thorough understanding of key factors that may help with future

policy decisions (see Patton, 2014). Numerous factors can influence the perspectives of the recipients of training provided by the United States to include the type of training. The U.S. Army classification of training types includes individual soldier training or unit collective training (U.S. Army, 2019). A major form of delivering individual training is leader education conducted at military educational institutions (U.S. Army, 2019). The research strategy employed in this study allowed for research methods that could examine the impact of variations of training duration, task complexity, size of the training audience, and type of training.

The phenomenon of my research was training programs conducted by the United States as part of SFA to a Sub-Saharan African army conducting counterinsurgency operations. To gain the benefits of multiple perspectives, my data collection consisted of interviews with the soldiers that participated in the training and senior leaders of the Sub-Saharan African army that received the training. I analyzed the data to identify patterns from their observations to reveal the essence and major themes of the participants' perceptions. The sampling for the research comprised three, information-rich cases that possessed significant differences to provide a thorough understanding of key variables that influenced the effectiveness of SFA training programs.

### **Definitions**

This study requires the reader to have an understanding of terms that define elements and programs that support and assist recipient governments in the area of security. Several of the researchers cited in this study used different terms to describe programs that were similar to each other and intended to develop the security capabilities

of another government. All of the terms and programs that involve the development of foreign or recipient security forces are relevant to this study because the programs involve similar environmental factors and face similar challenges.

*Foreign assistance:* The U.S. Government's term for all programs that intend to build stability for a foreign nation or region (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017).

*Foreign internal defense:* Programs with the objective of developing foreign security forces' ability to maintain domestic security (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017, p. II-7). In this study, I used the term SFA for any program by the U.S. military intended to develop capacity or capability of foreign security forces to include equipping, training, advising, and the provision of services.

*Security assistance:* A subcomponent of *Foreign Assistance programs*, which includes the transfer of defense-related articles, training, and services provided by the U.S. Government (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017).

*Security force assistance (SFA):* The main topic of this study, which consists of the activities that are Security Assistance programs administered by the U.S. DOD "to support the development of the capacity and capabilities of FSF [Foreign Security Forces] and their supporting institutions" (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017, p. II-7).

*Security sector assistance (SSA):* A term not commonly used within U.S. military documents (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017) but that is used in some of the research and government documents referenced in my study. The U.S. Government documents that included this term used it to refer to SFA programs plus the development

of relationships with partner nations or support provided to international organizations (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017). Some of the literature used the term to describe SFA activities (McInnis & Lucas, 2015; The White House, 2017; Watts et al., 2018).

*Security sector reform*: Activities and programs intended to help a nation develop its ability to provide “safety, security, and justice from ministerial level down to tactical units” (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017, p. I-6). This was a more commonly used term internationally. The literature contained more research on security sector reform than on the topic of SFA. Because of similarities with SFA, I included the research on security sector reform in this study.

### **Assumptions**

An important assumption related to the problem of this study was that the U.S. Government is taking steps to improve how it conducts SFA without understanding past problems or the environmental factors that may determine success. The fact that there is insufficient data available to determine the impact of SFA programs supports this assumption (U.S. DOD Inspector General, 2017; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2018). As a result of the recent military failures of the Iraqi Army and the Afghan National Army despite past SFA, the U.S. Government initiated actions to improve SFA efforts. The U.S. Army (2018) created regionally aligned units dedicated to SFA missions with the intent that those units will develop improve practitioner knowledge of regional environments and instructional skills relevant to training security forces within their assigned regions (Feickert, 2018).

Other policy changes to improve SFA efforts were included in the legislation that authorized SFA programs. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 expanded the authority of the U.S. DOD to conduct SFA programs intended to develop partner nation military capacity and required the DOD to collect data and report on the partner nation's ability to absorb and sustain the capabilities SFA programs intended to transfer. The U.S. Government's initiatives were reasonable actions to address known shortcomings of SFA, including inadequate instructor proficiency and the lack of data on the impact of programs; however, without a full understanding of why past programs failed, the implementation of the initiatives may not address the root causes of SFA problems.

Another assumption that helped shape my research design was that recipients of SFA might be reluctant to acknowledge or be unaware of different objectives with the United States for the SFA programs. Given the intercultural environment in which SFA programs were planned and executed, it is possible that miscommunications occurred in which planners and participants did not realize the different objectives. It is also reasonable to assume that the recipients of SFA may be reticent to acknowledge different objectives and risk losing future support. One of the objectives of SFA programs is to engage partner nations to gain cooperation, but in this study, I assumed that capability and capacity development were the primary objective of SFA programs, especially for a partner nation that needed assistance to defeat an insurgency.

In this study, I also assumed that successful execution of SFA programs benefits the receiving nation's population and promotes human development. This assumption

depends on the partner nation government's employment of new military capabilities in a fashion that benefits its citizens. U.S. policies to ensure SFA programs benefits the citizens of a foreign country are established by several laws, including the annual National Defense Authorization Acts that authorize the programs (National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017, 2016). The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 (2016) stated that all SFA programs "include elements that promote the following: (A) Observance of and respect for the law of armed conflict, human rights and fundamental freedoms, and the rule of law. (B) Respect for civilian control of the military" (p. 2502). The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 also prohibited the training of suspected human rights violators (p. 2499). The Arms Export Control Act (2018) limited the sale of military equipment or technology to ensure any sales advanced the objectives of SFA programs, promoted respect for human rights, and enforced the nonproliferation of weapons. My assumption that SFA programs benefit the partner nation citizens is important given the evidence of past instances of partner nation security forces misusing the military capabilities developed by SFA programs (see Burchard & Burgess, 2018).

## **Scope and Delimitations**

### **Specific Aspects of the Research Problem**

The focus of my research problem was on SFA provided to partner nations combatting an insurgency. Although there was evidence in related literature that SFA did not achieve its desired goals in general, the problem was most severe and impactful when SFA programs supported a partner nation conducting a counterinsurgency. SFA programs

included all or any of the following components: organizing, training, equipping, rebuilding or building, and advising assistance (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017). In this study, I examined the training component of SFA programs. Practice is required to acquire new skills and training is a process of conducting practice (Salas & Cannon-Bowers, 2001). One objective of SFA programs was to develop capabilities, which required developing new skills; therefore, training was a critical component for most SFA programs to achieve their objective of developing capabilities. I explored the perceptions of members of an army that received training from the United States because of the criticality of training to capability development.

### **Boundaries of the Study**

The population for my study resided in the army that received training from the United States. The population had the potential to provide insights into the recipient army's goals for the training and address the questions of its capacity to turn the training into a new or improved military capability. This study did not include the perceptions of the U.S. citizens that provided the training because they did not likely possess an in-depth knowledge of the partner nation's motives, goals, capacities, and subsequent use of the skills developed during SFA programs. The inability of the DOD to create baseline assessments of partner nation security forces was an indicator that the trainers and those that coordinated the training lacked a clear understanding of the situation before beginning the training (U.S. DOD Inspector General, 2017; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2018).

In this study, I aimed to explore if different objectives between the United States and the recipient partner nation were the root cause of failures to develop military capacities and capabilities during SFA training programs or if other factors caused any failures. The interviews with recipients of the United States-provided training disclosed the level of perceived skills transfer as a result of the training. The concepts of education and cross-cultural communications provide descriptions and explanations of possible barriers to the skills transfer; however, the primary theory that guided the design of this study was the agency theory because I intended to build on the previous research that most commonly used the concepts of the agency theory as an explanation of why past SFA and similar programs failed.

### **Potential Transferability**

Developing capabilities and capacities in developing nations is a topic of many disciplines. The results of this study may not be universally transferable but are relevant to many disciplines involving capability and capacity development. The uniqueness of each SFA program's environment, culture, and abilities of the recipients and providers of training limit the degree of the transferability of the findings of this study. The results of this study have the most transferability with other SFA programs with Sub-Saharan African armies engaged in a counterinsurgency because of the similarities of environment, culture, participants, and program objectives. However, the study results have some level of transferability with all development programs that include participants from different nations or cultures.

## **Limitations**

### **Limitations of the Study Related to Design Weaknesses**

The design of this study was intentionally limited in terms of time and scope to gain an in-depth understanding of a select phenomenon. In this study, I investigated programs within a single country to gain a deep understanding of factors impacting the phenomenon. The data collection consisted of individual interviews to gain multiple perspectives for comparison and synthesis. Limiting the research to individual interviews within a single country limits the potential dependability and transferability because all individual experiences are unique and all countries operate within unique environments, cultures, and capacities.

Because the phenomenon of this study consisted of training programs that the partner nation agreed to participate in, it was reasonable to assume that the partner nation desired continued SFA training and the recipients of the training may have not wanted to divulge any issues that may jeopardize future programs. The recipients of the training may also have not known the reasons their government and army agreed to the training or the objectives of the training. Through the interview design, I attempted to discover the partner nation's objectives, but the research participants may not have known or wanted to divulge any objectives that were contrary to the United States' objectives. The participants' potential lack of knowledge or possible desire not to disclose their true perceptions could limit the reliability of the participants' observations and the trustworthiness of the findings.

### **Biases That Could Influence Study Outcomes**

In addition to potentially not wanting to disclose national objectives or say anything that could jeopardize future SFA programs with the United States, the research participants may also have been reticent to disclose any shortcomings of their army. If the participants disclosed information that showed that their army could not replicate or sustain the new capabilities developed as a result of SFA, they could fear retaliation from their government or superiors. To alleviate the fears of the participants, I informed them that their identity or the identity of their nation would not be disclosed in this study. To gain their confidence and willingness to disclose their true observations, the participants were also informed that the intent of the research was to improve the U.S. SFA programs in general and would not become evidence for any specific program between the United States and their nation.

There could be a potential bias from me as the researcher. My cultural background and experiences differ significantly from the recipients of SFA training programs. I come from a developed Western country and lack the experiential viewpoint of Sub-Saharan Africa. My previous experiences of living and working in Sub-Saharan Africa provide me with some perspective of the challenges and limitations of my knowledge and viewpoint that could have biased this study. To further address my potential biases, I conducted reflexivity, triangulation, and peer reviews that I describe in more detail in Chapter 3.

**Reasonable Measures to Address Limitations**

To improve the dependability and transferability of my research, it consisted of multiple cases of SFA training programs that I selected based on their variation of key variables. Looking at multiple cases allowed for the identification of themes instead of single events. Ensuring the multiple cases varied in key variables increased the transferability of the identified themes across similar phenomena with similar key variables. I also increased the dependability and transferability of this study and its results by including perspectives of the phenomenon from multiple perspectives that were synthesized to further identify major themes. The combined impact of developing major themes based on multiple cases with variations of key variables and from the perspectives of multiple viewpoints improves the dependability and transferability of this study.

**Significance**

The findings of this study contribute to the body of knowledge about training foreign security forces by the United States. Exploring the perceptions of recipients of training from a Sub-Saharan African army helped to identify if differing objectives of the partner nation and the United States existed and inhibited the development of military capability and capacity. The perceptions of recipients of training also helped identify if other factors inhibited the success of SFA training programs.

With this study, I intended to help fill the gap in knowledge about the effectiveness of training foreign security forces to develop military capacities and capabilities to defeat an insurgent and maintain domestic security. The U.S. Congress and the U.S. Army recently undertook policy and program changes to improve the

effectiveness of SFA programs without fully understanding the cause of the problems (Feickert, 2018; National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017, 2016). The results of this study could provide information to assist with making better-informed policy changes to SFA program structure and policy.

Assuming the United States uses SFA to help governments that have the best interest of their citizens as a primary consideration, the findings of this study could contribute to more successful SFA programs that help build secure environments in which human development can occur. In addition to potentially helping the citizens of partner nations, effective SFA can help the United States achieve its National Security Policy while reducing the waste of government resources on programs that do not contribute to improved security. The conclusions of my study do not provide a holistic and completely transferable answer to why SFA does not develop capability and capacity or contribute to victory over insurgents. However, the findings of this study help to start answering why SFA did not work as well as intended and provide a better understanding of how to improve future SFA programs.

### **Summary**

Past researchers have concluded that assistance by the United States to partner nations engaged in a counterinsurgency did not result in victory at a reasonable rate (Biddle et al., 2018; Matisek, 2018). Other researchers described the failure of SFA to achieve its objectives in recent and current programs (Ates, 2014; Chandra, 2008; Corum, 2007; Davis, 2014; Felicetti, 2006; Hammes, 2016; Morris, 2016; O'Connor et al., 2009; Olden, 2014; Parker & Landay, 2016; Robinson, 2018; Watts et al., 2018). Previous U.S.

Government reports identified that data did not exist to properly identify the root causes of past failures of SFA programs (U.S. DOD Inspector General, 2017; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2018). In additional studies, researchers described many key variables that contributed to past SFA or similar programs failures (Abrahamsen, 2016; Ates, 2014; Bruneau, 2015; Chandra, 2008; Corum, 2007; Davis, 2014; Detzner, 2017; Donais, 2018; Felicetti, 2006; Grespin, 2013; Hammes, 2016; Jowell, 2018; Kammel, 2018; Kapstein, 2017; Ladwig III, 2016; Livingston, 2011; McInnis & Lucas, 2015; Mezzell, 2019; Morris, 2016; O'Connor et al., 2009; Olden, 2014; Parker & Landay, 2016; Paul et al., 2013; Regilme, 2018; Robinson, 2018; Ross, 2016; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2013; Walsh, 2015; Watts et al., 2018; Westerman, 2017).

In Chapter 1, I provided the background to the U.S. SFA and provided evidence showing that it did not achieve desired outcomes. I also provided information about the current situation and why SFA is important to U.S. National Security Policy, partner nation governments, and their citizens. The information I provided included research that concluded there is a lack of data to determine the effectiveness of SFA and the causes of any failures. Chapter 1 included an introduction to the application of the agency theory to explain past failures of SFA programs to achieve a military victory over insurgents by an assisted partner nation. I also explained the method I used to explore the motivation of partner nations from the perspective of soldiers and leaders of a Sub-Saharan African army engaged in a counterinsurgency to determine how well the agency theory may explain the impacts of training conducted as part of SFA programs. Through this study, I intended to explore the reasons SFA programs do or do not develop military capabilities and

capacities. In Chapter 2, I expand on the brief introduction of agency theory and explain how it applies to SFA as well as provide a review of the extant literature related to the topic of this study.

## Chapter 2: Literature Review

### **Introduction**

#### **Restated Problem and Purpose**

The problem under study was that SFA programs provided by the United States to partner nation security forces often failed to achieve the desired impact of developing the capacity and capability of the partner nation to maintain security and defeat an insurgency. The failure of partner nations to defeat insurgents within their nations can provide terrorist organizations the opportunity to establish safe havens from which they can threaten the United States and other allied nations. A partner nation's inability to defeat an insurgency also limits its ability to establish security and stability for its citizens.

The purpose of my study was to explore and understand the perspectives of recipients of training as part of the U.S. SFA programs from a Sub-Saharan African army that is engaged in counterinsurgency operations. Despite a widespread understanding that SFA has a mixed record with numerous failed efforts, there is a lack of available data, research, and evidence-based understanding of why SFA fails to achieve its goals. Exploring the perceptions of recipients of SFA from a Sub-Sahara African army expands the knowledge about what makes such programs succeed or fail.

#### **Synopsis of the Current Literature That Establishes Relevance**

There were two topics within the literature related to SFA that established the relevance of the problem. The first topic was the evidence that showed that SFA often failed to meet its objectives. The evidence on the subject of past SFA failures were

primarily historical reviews in which the outcomes of insurgencies against U.S. partner nations were analyzed. A few academic studies, reinforced by U.S. Government studies, international nongovernment organization reports, and news media reports provide evidence that SFA did not meet its objectives for the ongoing efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan (Ates, 2014; Chandra, 2008; Davis, 2014; Felicetti, 2006; Hammes, 2016; Morris, 2016; O'Connor et al., 2009; Olden, 2014; Parker & Landay, 2016; Robinson, 2018; Watts et al., 2018). The importance of SFA as a vital component of the U.S. National Security Policy was another topic that illustrated the relevance of the problem. U.S. Government documents recognized and academic research validated the importance of SFA to the U.S. security policy, counter-terrorism operations, and human development. The problem with SFA was relevant because of the potential ability of SFA programs to improve current and future security for the United States, partner nations, and the international community.

### **Preview of this Chapter**

In this chapter, I describe the literature reviewed for and used in my study. The literature review is organized by major concepts of this study, including the topic of SFA, related phenomenon, and the chosen methodology. I also describe the literature search strategy and the theoretical foundation for this study. My description of the theoretical foundation includes my rationale for selecting agency theory as well as a review of the literature on the related theories and concepts of cross-cultural communications, education, and counterinsurgencies. I conclude this chapter by describing how this study fills a gap in knowledge and improves the understanding of SFA program effectiveness.

## **Literature Search Strategy**

### **Accessed Library Databases and Search Engines**

I started my search of existing literature with a specific topic and expanded to more generalized and related subjects because of the lack of previous research on the initial topic. The initial topic of research was the training of foreign armies by the United States, which was expanded to SFA and related assistance activities. The Walden University Library and its Public Policy & Administration search engine were the primary sources for obtaining literature for this study. The Public Policy & Administration search engine simultaneously used the Taylor & Francis Online, EBSCOhost, and SAGE Journals search engines while accessing Political Science Complete & Business Source Complete Combined Search, Public Administration Abstracts, SAGE Journals, SocINDEX with Full Text, and Taylor and Francis Online databases. Google Scholar and Google Search were also of assistance, especially to find related U.S. Government documents and studies.

### **Key Search Terms and Combinations of Search Terms**

*Security Force Assistance* and its related terms were the primary search terms I used to locate evidence for this study. Because the primary search term did not produce a significant amount of research, search terms of similar and related activities were used to expand my literature review, including *security cooperation, foreign internal defense, Foreign Assistance, Security Assistance, defense institution building, security sector reform, train and equip, military advising, security sector assistance, capacity development, and capability development*. Because I focused on the execution of SFA by

the United States in this study, the search term of the *United States* was combined with all the previous terms to find studies on the U.S. experience in each of the SFA-related terms.

Because of my focus on the training component of SFA to a Sub-Saharan African army engaged in counterinsurgency, the search terms of *training, education, Africa, insurgency, counterinsurgency, and intrastate conflict* were combined with the SFA-related search terms to find research directly related to this focus. Search terms related to the theoretical foundation and possible variables impacting the topic were searched independently, then combined with all the previous search terms to find studies that provided information relevant to my topic and theoretical foundation. The theoretical foundation and key variables search terms were: *agency theory, principal-agent theory, agent-principal, cross-cultural communications, intercultural communications, didactic triangle, skill transfer, and knowledge transfer*. Finally, to find recent literature to assist with the design of my research, I used the following search terms separately and in combination with the term *qualitative research: phenomenological design, trustworthiness, dependability, transferability, generalizability, reliability, and validity*.

### **The Iterative Search Process**

I did not narrow my literature search to particular databases but continuously used all the databases accessed by the Walden University Public Policy & Administration search engine. The lack of current research on the topic of SFA required me to expand my literature search to relevant topics. As I expanded my search to include similar cross-cultural training and intragroup cooperation activities, all the databases searched by the

Walden University Public Policy & Administration search engine were relevant to my research.

### **Cases Where There is Little Current Research**

Some of the current literature stated that a lack of data existed on SFA (i.e., Luminati, 2011; Mujkic, Asencio, & Byrne, 2019; Omelicheva et al., 2017; Ross, 2016), which partially explained the lack of previous research. To overcome the lack of academic research on the topic, I expanded my literature search to U.S. Government reports and sponsored studies on the topic. The U.S. Government reports, conducted by agencies such as the U.S. Government Accountability Agency, and sponsored studies, conducted by research institutions such as the RAND Corporation or the Army War College, were found using either the Walden University Public Policy & Administration, Google Scholar, or Google search engines.

## **Theoretical Foundation**

### **The Agency Theory**

The theoretical basis for my study was the agency theory, which is sometimes called principal-agency, principal-agent theory, or the principal-agent dilemma. There is not a universally acknowledged originator of agency theory (Eisenhardt, 1989). Seminal works on the subject include Eisenhardt (1985), Jensen and Meckling (1976), and Ross (1973). Ross described the phenomenon that agency theory explains as occurring when “an agency relationship has arisen between two (or more) parties when one, designated as the agent, acts for, on behalf of, or as representative for the other, designated the principal” (p. 134). Jensen and Meckling expanded the literature on agency theory by

developing a “theory which explains how the conflicting objectives of the individual participants are brought into equilibrium” within the phenomenon described by Ross (p. 307).

Researchers originally developed the agency theory to explain business management phenomena, but it is widely used to explain interactions in other disciplines (Eisenhardt, 1989). Ross (1973) claimed that “examples of agency are universal” (p. 134). Researchers have used the agency theory to explain public policy and public administration phenomena from local to international levels. Connolly (2017) and de Oliveira and Filho (2016) explained the relationship between elected municipal officials and appointed city administrators with the agency theory. Ozymy and Jarrel (2016) proposed that the agency theory explains the actions of federal regulatory agencies toward those they regulate. The behavior of international organizations, such as the European Union (Sobol, 2016) and international nongovernment organizations (Abbott, Genschel, Snidel, & Zangl, 2016), have also been explained by researchers using the agency theory. Lane (2013) proposed that the agency theory explains the relationship between government and the governed at all levels of “policy implementation and public policy-making” (p. 463). According to the agency theory, differing goals and levels of acceptable risk by the principal and agent can cause failed partnerships and the failure to achieve desired public policy objectives (Eisenhardt, 1989).

The agency theory proposes that agents act within their self-perceived best interest (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Ross, 1973). Other key proposals of agency theory are that agents are generally more risk-averse because they are usually

less diversified than principals and that agents have greater information than principals about the program of interest because they are closer to the program than principals (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Ross, 1973). Principals typically have multiple agents executing several programs (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Ross, 1973). If a program fails, it may be catastrophic to the agent but less of an issue for the principal because the principal has other programs (Eisenhardt, 1989; Jensen & Meckling, 1976; Ross, 1973). Much of the original literature on agency theory described ways for the principal to ensure the agent executed the program as desired by the principal with incentives for the agent, contract specifications, or risk sharing techniques (Eisenhardt, 1989).

#### **Analysis of How the Theory has been Applied Previously in Similar Ways**

Some studies of international relations to include several of the studies used for my research, applied the agency theory to explain phenomenon of international relations. In international relations, the relationship of principal and agent occurs when one country acting as an agent agrees to do something for another country acting as principal. The principal needs to provide something in exchange for the action but is not able to fully control the agent. The principal and agent relationship between countries often occurs during development programs to include military development. During development programs, the principal country acts as a sponsor or donor that provides resources for the agent country as the recipient or benefactor to execute a program.

Previous literature used the theory to explain why recipients of aid sometimes did not act to achieve program objectives even when the programs were developmental for

the professed purpose of benefiting the recipient, or agent (de Mesquita & Smith, 2012; Downes & O'Rourke, 2016; McKoy & Miller, 2012). The agent country and the actors within the agent country have the ability to divert the resources for other purposes and hinder the achievement of the principle's objectives. Brown (2009) researched the relationship of Western development aid donors with African recipients and concluded that commitments of liberal reforms as a conditionality of receiving the aid only had a chance of marginal success if the environment of the African nation supported the reforms. Domestic factors had more of an impact on the success of reforms attached to aid than rhetoric between the donor and recipient (Brown, 2009). Brown's research supported the concepts of the agency theory and further highlighted that an aid recipient or SFA partner nation's actions represented their true goals better than any rhetoric communicated to the donor.

Recent studies by Jowell (2018), Needs (2019), and Robinson (2018) that research three different cases of military assistance programs found that the diversion or misuse of resources for neopatrimonialism motives challenged the program sponsor's objectives. Jowell researched the Western funded International Peace Support Training Centre in Kenya and found that assignments as instructor or student were parceled out by leaders as rewards. Needs researched the British assistance to the Army of Sierra Leone which is widely considered a success but found that neopatrimonialism uses of assignments hindered the sustainment of capabilities the Army of Sierra Leone developed. In research about why the U.S. Army's reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan failed, Robinson found that "powerful figures and groups" used jobs and assignments to

disperse patronage and employ followers which was their custom of neopatrimonialism (p. 258). Although Jowell, Needs, and Robinson did not use the term agency theory or any of its related terms, the examples of neopatrimonialism provided in their research illustrate how an agents objectives can divert resources away from obtaining the objectives of the principle.

SFA is an activity within international relations, and agency theory is especially applicable to the relationship between the United States and the partner nations that receive SFA. Biddle et al. (2018), Hammes (2016), Regilme (2018), Rittinger (2017), and Ladwig (2016) used the agency theory to explain why partner nations often failed to achieve military success despite the assistance of the United States. These recent studies proposed that partner nations did not use military capabilities that U.S. assistance provided in a fashion that would win wars. The partner nations were either motivated to divert the new military capabilities or lacked the capacity to properly use the capability as envisioned by the United States. All the authors referenced in my research that applied agency theory to explain why partner nations lost wars despite U.S. assistance proposed that the United States failed to understand the partner nation government's environment and motives (Biddle et al., 2018; Hammes, 2016; Ladwig, 2016; Regilme, 2018; Rittinger, 2017).

### **The Rationale for Choosing Agency Theory**

The previous studies on SFA (cited above) that used the agency theory to explain past failures applied the test of success against the outcomes of armed conflicts. Winning or losing a war is the ultimate measure of success for SFA. However, this metric does not

provide information about why or to what degree past SFA programs failed to achieve their program objectives. My research intended to explore the effectiveness of SFA programs to develop a military capability and capacity in a manner that helped defeat an insurgency. Therefore, my study did not use winning a counterinsurgency as the measurement of success, but the degree to which the partner nation army gained new skills and capabilities plus its ability to replicate and sustain the new skills and capabilities. The principal and agent relationship existed between the United States and the partner nation during the planning and conduct of SFA programs. Therefore, since the phenomenon that agency theory attempts to explain exists for my study, I applied the concepts of agency theory to understand their applicability to explain the outcomes of SFA programs.

### **Agency Theory Relationship to the Present Study and the Research Questions**

The research questions of my study intended to gain the perspectives of soldiers from a Sub-Sahara African army that received training from the United States as part of SFA programs and the perspectives of that army's leaders. The interviews with the soldiers and leaders of the partner nation army provided information about the employment and institutionalization of the new military capabilities that SFA programs intended to develop. The degree of employment and institutionalization of the new military capabilities provided insights into the partner nation's objectives for participating in the SFA program. The exploratory nature of the interviews provided additional opportunities for insights into the partner nation's motives and identified differences with the U.S. objectives. Employment and institutionalization of new military capabilities

were a measure of an SFA program's success for my study. The research questions intended to provide an understanding of the partner nation's objectives by examining its actions as opposed to its rhetoric or assumptions by the United States. The agency theory can explain why conflicting, or like-minded objectives between the United States and a partner nation about an SFA program resulted in failure or success respectively.

My study used the posture statements of the U.S. Africa Command to define the objectives of the United States. The U.S. Africa Command is responsible for SFA programs within Africa. From 2016 to 2019, the Commanders of the U.S. Africa Command announced in their annual posture statements that building partner nation capacity to create domestic stability was a key objective for their commands (U.S. Africa Command, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019). In the 2016 posture statement, General Rodriguez stated that "our approach employs security force assistance and exercises as decisive efforts to build partner capacity" (U.S. Africa Command, 2016, p. 2). Therefore, for my study the United States' objective for the SFA training programs was the development of capacity for the subject of the training program.

### **Literature Review Related to Key Variables and Concepts**

#### **Studies Related to the Constructs, Methodology, and Methods**

My study's construct and methodology relied heavily on Patton's *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods* (4th ed.; 2014). Patton's descriptions of qualitative research, research purposes, research questions, and data collection methods are the foundation of my study's methodology and methods. Most importantly, Patton provided the logic and procedures to ensure the problem was relevant, the research questions

addressed the problem, and the research design provided data to answer the research questions. Ravitch and Carl (2016) provided insights about the importance of rigor throughout the design using the terms validity and trustworthiness. To achieve rigor, I looked for multiple opportunities within the design of my research to triangulate the findings. Many qualitative researchers associated the term credibility with quantitative research and instead used the term trustworthiness to communicate “the ways that researchers can affirm that their findings are faithful to participants’ experiences” (Ravitch & Carl, 2016, p. 186). Other qualitative researchers (Golafshani, 2003; Noble & Smith, 2015) rejected the notion of not using terms rooted in quantitative research and their work provided helpful information to ensure the credibility and validity of my research. Golafshani (2003), and Noble and Smith (2015) influenced the main feature I adopted in my research design to increase the credibility and validity of my research which is the inclusion of multiple perspectives of multiple phenomenological cases related to the topic. Larkin, Shaw, and Flowers (2018) provided additional information about how to compare multiple group perspectives in phenomenological research that provide the advantages of comparative analysis and synthesis.

### **Previous Research Approaches to the Problem**

Several recent studies on SFA and the broader subject of military assistance to foreign nations were studies that reviewed success based on the outcomes of armed conflict. Jones’s (2017) qualitative analysis of the key variables of timing and level of intervention in civil wars found that military assistance efforts to the government side generally did not alter the length or outcome except when the sponsor provided the

assistance at the beginning of the civil war. In a review of United States involvement in wars since the Vietnam War, Biddle et al. (2018) concluded that “SFA has a checkered record in recent experience” based upon the number of conflicts that United States partner nations lost (p. 92). SFA should improve the ability of security forces to maintain domestic stability and prevent the initiation of internal armed conflicts. However, Watts et al.’s (2018) research on security sector assistance found that “partner states are more likely to experience a civil war in the years following the provision of SSA [security sector assistance], and this risk increases further as greater levels of aid are provided” (p. 65). Research on SFA based upon the outcomes or prevention of armed conflicts was a common approach of previous research.

Other recent studies analyzed the success of SFA based on whether it developed military capability and capacity. Shah and Dalton (2018) assessed that “the United States has yet to see the proportionate returns from its investment in foreign countries’ security capabilities” despite the expenditure of tens of billions of dollars to SFA (para. 6). Matissek’s (2018) research found that most U.S. Military Assistance programs during the Cold War achieved their objectives but due to the failure of recent SFA programs to develop capacity and not just capabilities, the “Cold War assistance model to weak states in a post-9/11 world have encountered abject failure” (p. 269). In research on the El Salvador civil war of 1979–92, Ladwig (2016) concluded that U.S. SFA developed military capabilities, but those capabilities did not help to win the war until the United States focused on also developing the capacity to employ the new capabilities effectively. In research on U.S. assistance to Columbia, Regilme (2018) also found that when SFA

programs failed to include capacity development, any shortfall in the partner nations capacity nullified the benefits of developed capabilities. Partner nations that did not respect human rights often misused the capabilities developed by SFA programs. Several researchers assessed the effectiveness of SFA programs based on their success to develop the capacity to respect human rights when security forces employed the capabilities that SFA programs developed. The literature illustrated how failure to address capacity shortfalls while developing military capabilities contributed to SFA program failures to develop security forces that provided security and defeated insurgents.

Most of the recent literature related to SFA consisted of descriptions and analysis of issues developing military capability and capacity in Afghanistan and Iraq since the United States led invasions of those countries in 2001 and 2003. Some of the literature attributed the problems with SFA in Afghanistan and Iraq to variables dealing with the partner nation's lack of capacity to employ military capabilities or inability to absorb the capabilities. Ates (2014) researched attrition in the Afghan National Army and found that training programs did not keep up with attrition and that losses due to casualties and desertion impeded "efforts to create a sustainable and effective army" (p. 169). Felicetti (2006) identified that early in the efforts to develop the Iraqi security forces, SFA efforts failed to develop capacity which contributed to the inability of the Iraqi security forces to assume responsibility for their internal security. Almost 10 years after Felicetti's insightful warning about lack of capacity development to enable the proper employment of security capabilities, Bruneau's (2015) research on civilian control of the military in Afghanistan and Iraq found a lack of institutional capacity that created a misalignment

between the civilian leadership security strategy and the employment of capabilities by military leaders. Olden (2014) attributed the inability to absorb the English language based training and technical manuals as a significant factor in Iraq's inability to sustain military capabilities following the United States' military departure in 2011 and observed that "Iraq lacks a skilled English-proficient workforce required to sustain and operate advanced aircraft and other sophisticated military hardware" (p. 29). Examining factors that involved the partner nation was a common approach of research about the effectiveness of SFA in Iraq and Afghanistan, but more common was the examination of U.S. preparation and execution.

Most of the literature on U.S. SFA in Iraq and Afghanistan assessed the efforts as unsatisfactory to meet program or strategic objectives. An early analysis of the counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan and Iraq by Corum (2007) concluded that the U.S. Army was unprepared and lacked the ability to train the security forces of Afghanistan and Iraq. Chandra's (2008) study on early counterinsurgency operations in Afghanistan had similar findings as Corum but additionally found that the United States and its North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) allies resorted to short term solutions to provide security and train the Afghanistan National Army that had long term negative impacts. Chandra assessed that providing security had the priority of resources over training and as a result the Afghan National Army was poorly trained and did not possess the capabilities to fully assume responsibility of their nation's security. Hammes's (2016) authoritative study on SFA in Afghanistan and Iraq assessed that "for some years, the effort was ad hoc, under-resourced, and complicated by internal bureaucratic struggles in

Washington” (p. 52). Davis’s (2014) study on the NATO campaign in Afghanistan concluded that the allies efforts to develop the Afghanistan security forces suffered from a lack of resources and failed to prioritize capacity development because of a foundational failure to understand “the country, its culture, politics, and the key societal differences; and recognition of the paramount importance of local ownership, [and] leadership” (p. 145). The literature that approached the problem with SFA programs by researching the U.S. planning and execution in Iraq and Afghanistan added to the body of lessons learned on how to effectively develop the capability and capacity of a partner nation's security forces.

Much of the literature on SFA programs noted that there was a lack of available data and research on the topic. As a result of their literature review of topics related to SFA, such as military intervention or foreign assistance, Biddle et al. (2018) concluded that “for all its importance, both to scholars and to policy makers, the actual military effectiveness of SFA [SFA] has thus been surprisingly little studied” (p. 93). Luminati (2011) claimed that the U.S. Government did not maintain detailed data on its training and equipping of foreign militaries nor did it have procedures to assess program effectiveness. Omelicheva et al. (2017) studied the impacts of attending a military education school in the United States on foreign soldiers and found a lack of data about the results and no system to assess the impact of the programs. U.S. Government reports and studies validated the conclusion by academic literature that there was a lack of data on SFA to assess its impact. A U.S. DOD Inspector General (2017) report found that the DOD agencies responsible for managing SFA did not collect measurable data to make

objective assessments about the effectiveness of individual programs. The U.S. Government Accountability Office (2018) reported that until 2016, the vast majority of the train and equip projects as a component of SFA programs lacked any effort to assess effectiveness. The same U.S. Government Accountability Office report stated that in 2016 and 2017 improvements were made by the DOD but that “less than three-quarters included complete sustainment plans” which included plans to collect data about program impacts (p. 13). The lack of data on SFA programs may explain why previous studies on the topic primarily based their research on the outcomes of armed conflicts or the partner nation security forces’ ability to maintain security.

Because of the lack of data and research on SFA, my literature review included studies on any form of training provided by a sponsor nation to a partner nation’s security forces. The British Security Sector Reform program in Sierra Leone during and after the civil war in the 1990s was widely considered one of the most successful security force development programs (Neads, 2019; Varisco, 2014). Varisco (2014) concluded that the keys to the success of the British Security Sector Reform program in Sierra Leone were the British militaries’ extensive research on security sector reform lessons learned and the development of local knowledge which they applied to develop legitimate security forces capable of maintaining internal security. As a result of research about the Security Sector Reform program in Sierra Leone, Neads, (2019) concluded that the British developed some capability and capacity that positively impacted operations by adapting and limiting their efforts at improving what the Sierra Leone Army already did instead of attempting a wholesale change of the army’s way of operating.

Contrary to the British example in Sierra Leone, several researchers found that Western assumptions and bias toward recipient nations of security sector reform were a significant cause of unsuccessful programs. Westerman (2017) identified that security sector reform programs generally applied Western perceptions of liberal democratic institutions and failed to explore local alternatives that recipient nations would more readily accept. Robinson (2018) researched the U.S. effort to reconstruct the Afghan National Army and concluded that more effort was necessary to create “local ownership of the army’s nature, rather than a total remake of the nature of the army” in the image of a liberal democratic army (p. 262). From their literature reviews of security sector reform, Abrahamsen (2016) and Donais (2018) found that the literature was centered on the concept of the recipient’s government as central to security and ignored non state actors that were sometimes more capable than the governments of developing countries. Studies on security sector reform were similar to the studies on SFA in that they approached the research based on outcomes defined by the donor nations and found similar problems that many of the studies explained using concepts of the agency theory.

Current literature that provided holistic assessments of the U.S. SFA programs described the cause of failures to issues that emanated from principal and agent relationship or the United States’ failure to assess and understand the environment. The researchers that used an overarching theory to explain why U.S. assistance often did not translate into victory for the partner nation utilized agency theory (Biddle et al., 2018; Ladwig, 2016; Rittinger, 2017). Some of the studies that proposed causes for SFA success or failure did not specifically mention agency theory by name but used

descriptions of problems with the principal and agent relationship to explain their conclusions. Ansorg (2017) and Detzner (2017) both concluded that security sector reform in Africa often failed because Western sponsors tried to impose their will upon African nations. Recipient nations often did not respond to external pressure to reform because they prioritized local needs over the sponsor's objectives (Ansorg, 2017; Detzner, 2017). Schroeder and Chappuis (2014) also found that local demands trumped sponsor expectation in their global survey of security sector reform. Research by Sullivan, Tessman, and Li (2011) found an inverse relationship between the level of U.S. aid and cooperation by partner nations and attributed this outcome to different objectives of the United States and the partner nations. In a study on the outcomes of counterinsurgencies, Regilme (2018) claimed that a government's ability to reform was a major factor impacting the outcomes of counterinsurgencies and that those governments that did not reform did so primarily because their main objective was the protection of the elite. Hammes's (2016) research about U.S. assistance to Afghanistan and Iraq also found that near term self-preservation and gain motivated the partner governments more than establishing peace and security. Many researchers explained why SFA and similar programs failed using the agency theory by name or framed the problem with the agency theory's concepts without referring to the theory by name.

Past research on SFA and similar programs assessed and attempted to describe program effectiveness by comparing the outcomes against the provider's objectives. In my literature review, I only found one study that approached the problem from the viewpoint of the recipients of assistance (Baaz & Stern, 2017). Past research approaches

were also limited to outcomes because of the lack of program-specific data that could provide evidence about the effectiveness of SFA to transfer skills needed to develop capabilities and capacity. Research on capability and capacity development did not analyze what programs accomplished but assessed what components of programs were missing to develop capability and capacity. SFA is a cross-cultural endeavor with numerous human actions that create multiple viewpoints. The perceptions of the recipients of assistance have the potential to provide insights into the effectiveness of SFA to achieve the partner nation's objectives and the level of program success at transferring skills. A weakness of the previous literature was the lack of research from the partner nation's viewpoint that could add an important viewpoint about the effectiveness of SFA programs.

### **The Rationale for Selection of the Variables and Concepts**

My research examined the key variables related to training as part of an SFA program. Training was the topic of my research because it is a critical element of many SFA programs and because examining training provided insights about the factors that cause programs to fail. Therefore, my research accounted for the key variables identified by previous literature that impacted SFA training programs. The literature that researched SFA found that failures occurred because the United States failed to understand the environment and did not plan accordingly (Bruneau, 2015; Chandra, 2008; Corum, 2007; Davis, 2014; Felicetti, 2006; Hammes, 2016; Matissek, 2018; O'Connor et al., 2009; Olden, 2014; Robinson, 2018; Walsh, 2015). From the literature, the potential key variables of the environment that the United States failed to understand were different

partner nation objectives, gaps in the partner nation's capacity, or challenges of the partner nation's ability to absorb the skills and capabilities. The failure to understand the environment led to the shortcomings of planning found in the literature. According to the literature, SFA plans often did not address existing gaps of skills or knowledge or procedures necessary to develop capability and capacity (Bruneau, 2015; Chandra, 2008; Corum, 2007; Felicetti, 2006; Hammes, 2016; Matissek, 2018; O'Connor et al., 2009; Olden, 2014; Walsh, 2015). Other fundamental planning errors the literature uncovered included failures to allocate enough time and trainers for SFA programs (Chandra, 2008; Davis, 2014; Hammes, 2016). The major preparation shortfalls identified by the literature related to the identification of training subjects, and the training of instructors (Bruneau, 2015; Chandra, 2008; Corum, 2007; Felicetti, 2006; O'Connor et al., 2009; Olden, 2014). Subject matter and instructors of training constitute two elements of the educational concept of the didactic triangle. The third element of the didactic triangle is the students or for military training the trainees. My research used the three components of the didactic triangle as key variables that impact the effectiveness of SFA training to transfer skills. The observations of the trainees and leaders from a Sub-Saharan African army about the instructors, subject matter, and the trainees provided insights about how well the SFA programs transferred skills.

Training is just one of the elements of capability, and my research accounted for the variables associated with the other seven elements that impacted the development of capabilities. The other elements are doctrine, organization, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2015a).

Training soldiers on a skill that their army does not have a doctrine to use, or an organization to implement, or leaders that do not know how to employ will not build capacity. Materiel shortages of equipment or supplies can nullify successful training intended to develop capabilities. Shortages or misalignment of personnel can hinder capability development because skills will also be short or not assigned to the right organizations or equipment. Policies must support capabilities such as personnel policies that ensure soldiers with the proper skills are assigned to the correct positions to use those skills. Some capabilities require particular facilities such as buildings to perform a staff activity or store equipment. Shortcomings with any of the elements may prohibit the partner nation's ability to absorb new capabilities that SFA programs intend to develop.

Issues with the capacity of the partner nation to replicate or sustain a capability was a major subject of past literature (Bruneau, 2015; Felicetti, 2006; Matissek, 2018). My study addressed the variable of replication by examining the partner nations employment of the skills and capabilities that SFA programs developed. I considered the variable of sustainment in my research by examining how the partner nation army institutionalized new skills and capabilities into their military education system.

I analyzed the results of my research to assess the impact of the principal and agent relationship between the United States and the partner nation as a potential root cause of the problem. Some of the literature attributed SFA problems to different objectives between the United States and the partner nation (Biddle et al., 2018; Hammes, 2016; Kapstein, 2017; Ladwig III, 2016; Regilme, 2018; Rittinger, 2017). To address the variable of different objectives my research collected data and analyzed the participant

perceptions of their unit, army and nation's motivation and objectives for participating in SFA programs. My research examined if issues with the principal and agent relationship can explain the problem with SFA or if other factors provide an explanation.

### **Review and Synthesis of Studies Related to the Key Concepts and Phenomena**

**The phenomenon of SFA.** The literature I reviewed contained information about SFA training programs and research on similar phenomenon such as security sector reform. Historically, the U.S. and Western military assistance often did not achieve their strategic objectives (Abrahamsen, 2016; Ates, 2014; Biddle et al., 2018; Bruneau, 2015; Chandra, 2008; Corum, 2007; Davis, 2014; Detzner, 2017; Donais, 2018; Felicetti, 2006; Grespin, 2013; Hammes, 2016; Jowell, 2018; Kammel, 2018; Kapstein, 2017; Ladwig III, 2016; Livingston, 2011; Luminati, 2011; Matissek, 2018; McInnis & Lucas, 2015; O'Connor et al., 2009; Olden, 2014; Omelicheva et al., 2017; Regilme, 2018; Robinson, 2018; Ross, 2016; Westerman, 2017). U.S. SFA programs often did not achieve the program objectives in terms of developing military capability and capacity (Chandra, 2008; Corum, 2007; Davis, 2014; Grespin, 2013; Hammes, 2016; Ladwig III, 2016; Matissek, 2018; Omelicheva et al., 2017; Regilme, 2018). The literature also identified that SFA provided by the United States often failed to prevent the defeat of a partner nation to an insurgency (Biddle et al., 2018). By every form of measurement used to assess SFA programs, the researchers concluded that the programs usually failed to achieve positive results.

Events in Iraq and Afghanistan illustrated the importance of SFA and the ramifications of failed SFA programs. SFA programs in Afghanistan and Iraq started

shortly after the United States led invasions in 2001 and 2003 respectively. Both efforts are ongoing. Therefore the research about these phenomena is not complete. There is general agreement within the literature that the results of SFA programs in Afghanistan and Iraq were sub-optimal or unsatisfactory to date (Ates, 2014; Bruneau, 2015; Chandra, 2008; Corum, 2007; Davis, 2014; Felicetti, 2006; Grespin, 2013; Hammes, 2016; Kapstein, 2017; Olden, 2014; Robinson, 2018). Some of the research assessed the SFA programs as failures because Iraq and Afghanistan security forces were unable to successfully assume their nation's security missions after large scale assistance by the United States (Chandra, 2008; Corum, 2007; Davis, 2014; Hammes, 2016). However, there is disagreement about the cause. Some studies researched the issues with developing capability while others addressed capacity. Many researchers attributed the failures in Iraq and Afghanistan to the principal and agent relationship between the United States and the partner nations which had different objectives than the United States (Biddle et al., 2018; Coletta, 2013; Hammes, 2016; Kapstein, 2017). Other researchers found factors not related to the principal and agent issues that included problems with the lack of capacity of the partner nation to either absorb the new capabilities or apply them in an appropriate manner (Ates, 2014; Bruneau, 2015; Felicetti, 2006; Olden, 2014).

A third focus of the research on SFA programs in Afghanistan and Iraq was the United States' initial preparation and resourcing to conduct the SFA programs. The research concluded that the United States' preparation and resourcing were inadequate and was the major cause of both partner nation's security forces slow development

(Chandra, 2008; Corum, 2007; Davis, 2014; Hammes, 2016). However, the problem with SFA to Afghanistan and Iraq persisted for almost two decades and efforts to overcome initial shortcomings also did not succeed. There was agreement within the literature that SFA programs in Afghanistan and Iraq had problems but disagreement about the root causes of those problems.

**The concept of capacity.** Factors impacting capacity development were key variables of my research and were a major topic of the literature I reviewed. The multitude of military skills that SFA programs intended to transfer to the trainees were designed to develop military capability and capacity for a partner nation's Army. The definition of capacity is worth repeating to put into the context of the literature. *Joint Publication 3-20: Security Cooperation* (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017) defined capacity as the partner nation's ability to replicate and sustain a military capability without external assistance. Replication is the ability to execute the capabilities that the SFA program developed and to do so especially during combat. Sustain is the ability to maintain the same or similar level of capability that SFA programs developed to include maintaining the proficiency of soldier, unit, and leader skills that the SFA training developed.

According to the literature, failures to recognize and address partner nation government capacity shortfalls were major causes for past SFA and international military assistance program failures (Abrahamsen, 2016; Ansorg, 2017; Baaz & Stern, 2017; Detzner, 2017; Donais, 2018; Schroeder & Chappuis, 2014; Varisco, 2014; Westerman, 2017). The research identified numerous instances of training conducted to develop

capability without consideration or effort to also develop the capacity required to replicate and sustain the capability by the partner nation (Ates, 2014, Chandra, 2008, Felicetti, 2006; Ross, 2016). Developing capacity could be as simple as creating a recruitment program or as complicated as reforming government and military institutions. Kapstein (2017) researched four cases of U.S. assistance to counterinsurgencies during the Cold War and concluded that the successful assistance “emphasized a mix of political and economic reform along with technical assistance to local militaries” (p. 157). The reforms Kapstein referred to intended to win popular support by developing the capacity to use military capabilities in a manner perceived as legitimate by a partner nation’s citizens to foster support against an insurgency and for the government. Developing a professional military ethos that respects human rights, democratic principles, and the protection of civilians was a capacity shortfall often not addressed by SFA programs (Kapstein, 2017; Ladwig III, 2016; Omelicheva et al., 2017; Regilme, 2018). Atkinson (2014) found a correlation between increased attendance at U.S. military schools by foreign officers and increased democratization of their countries. Research by Mujkic et al. (2019) on the perspectives of U.S. democracy by foreign officers at military schools in the United States found that the foreign officers had an increased knowledge of U.S. democracy. However, the claims of Atkinson and Mujkic et al. that attendance at U.S. military schools caused an increase in democracy or the potential for increased democracy were not supported by a causal relationship or evidence.

To create reform that establishes institutional legitimacy, or develop a military ethos where it did not previously exist requires a significant amount of long term and

persistent effort. In a study about U.S. security assistance in Africa, Grespin (2013) proposed that the United States has a reputation as a "fair weather friend" (p. 1) and its programs often failed due to a lack of persistent engagement. According to the literature, too many programs developed military capability but left it to the partner nation government to apply the new capability in any fashion the partner nation desired.

To explore how partner nations replicate capabilities, I examined how a Sub-Saharan African army employed the capabilities in counterinsurgency operations. I also explored how they sustained capabilities by examining how the Sub-Saharan African army institutionalized the relevant skills by including them in the curriculum of their military schools. According to Lis (2014), military organizations institutionalize knowledge through the socialization, externalization, combination and internalization (SECI) processes. For military organizations, socialization and externalization are the informal and formal processes of deciding on how to accomplish a task. The combination process of the SECI model is the codifying of knowledge but more specifically for military organizations knowledge combination produces "military doctrines, manuals and other publications which standardize the way of conducting operations and doing business by military organizations" (Lis, p. 69). Military organizations institutionalize knowledge through training and military education. For my study, I analyzed institutionalization based on how the partner nation army incorporated the military skills gained through SFA programs by teaching the skills in their schools. The data I collected about the variables of employment and institutionalization of newly acquired military skills intended to shed light on whether the partner nation army created knowledge as defined

by Lis and capacity as defined by *Joint Publication 3-20: Security Cooperation* (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017).

**The phenomenon and concepts of counterinsurgency.** My study concentrated on SFA programs to a partner nation engaged in counterinsurgency operations. Counterinsurgency is a component of my research because of the recurring failures of SFA programs to prevent the defeat of partner nations and the important ramifications to the partner nation and U.S. Security Policy when partner nations cannot defeat insurgents and establish security. Therefore, my literature review included studies on variables that contributed to the outcomes of counterinsurgency operations. Every insurgency is different, but my study attempted to account for the key variables that impact the outcomes of counterinsurgencies. According to U.S. military doctrine, counterinsurgency is “the blend of comprehensive civilian and military efforts designed to simultaneously defeat and contain insurgency and address its root causes” (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2018, p. III-1). Lyall (2010) stated that a common assumption about counterinsurgencies was that autocratic governments succeeded more than democracies which could account for why the U.S. SFA was ineffective at preventing the defeat of partner nations. However, Lyall’s research found that autocratic and democratic regimes succeeded at the same rate. Lyall and Wilson III (2009) found a correlation between government losses to insurgents and increased levels of mechanization of security forces which means that developing countries were not at a disadvantage when conducting counterinsurgencies due to a lack of modern military armored equipment. Merz’s (2012) research on the persistency of conflicts found that the key variables that caused conflicts

to persist were government weakness and the quality and legitimacy of its institutions. Kapstein (2017) concluded that a government's willingness and ability to reform its institutions to gain legitimacy and popular support were key determinates in winning against an insurgency. Merz and Kapstein's studies highlighted the importance of capacity development that ensured partner nations employed military capabilities in a fashion perceived as legitimate.

**The concepts of cross-cultural communications.** Barriers to communications during cross-cultural exchanges had the potential to impact every part of SFA program planning, coordinating, and executing. Agency theory assumes that different objectives between the principal and agent grow from differing motivations based on self-interests. My research was open to the possibility that principals and agents may not know they have different objectives because of miscommunications. Concepts of intercultural communication can explain how individuals from different cultures may believe they are working together towards a common goal when in actuality they do not understand each other's objectives. Galbreath (2019) asserted that organizational cultural differences and barriers to communications increased between military professionals during SFA programs as a result of the expanding technology gap between the technically advanced United States military and the militaries of developing countries. Theories and concepts on intercultural communications recognize that communication is a reflection of culture and that differences in communication norms create potential barriers to intercultural communications that can cause misunderstandings (Jandt, 2017). Barna (as cited by Jandt, 2017) identified barriers to communication that can occur due to culture consisting

of factors involving different worldviews and accentuated by a lack of intercultural awareness. According to Taras, Roney, and Steel (2009), there were at least 121 instruments for measuring culture of which Hofstede's Culture Survey Module was the most influential. Hofstede's instrument included six factors to measure cultural differences (Hofstede & Minkov, 2013). The results of Hofstede's most recent survey showed a difference between the cultures of the United States and East/West Africa with significant differences between two of the factors of culture (Hofstede, 2015). Hofstede and Minkov's instrument scale was 100, and in the data set the United States and East/West Africa had a difference of greater than 30 for acceptance of power distribution in society and perceptions about the level of individualism or collectivism in their societies. O'Connor (2010) described how a lack of cultural awareness contributed to training failures and fatal interactions between United States trainers and their trainees. Taras, Steel, and Kirkman (2016) found that culture and worldviews do not match national borders, but there are significant cultural differences between Americans and recipients of SFA that typically are from developing countries. Miscommunications that stemmed from cross-cultural communication barriers possibly impacted the effectiveness of SFA programs especially the planning of program objectives and the transfer of skills during training.

**The didactic triangle concepts.** As explained previously, training is a major component of my research topic, and my research used the didactic triangle to analyze the effectiveness of training conducted as part of SFA programs. Riquarts and Hopmann (1995) developed the didactic triangle as an educational concept that consists of the

elements of the teacher, student, and subject matter. The didactic triangle provides a model that explains how teachers and students impact the achievement of objectives created by curriculum designers (Friesen, 2018). The didactic triangle concept is applicable to analyzing SFA training programs because the authorities that selected the training subjects and program objectives did not participate in the training. Militaries generally used the didactic form of education to conduct training with a knowledgeable trainer that attempted to transfer knowledge to trainees. The authorities that selected the military tasks for training during SFA programs had to rely on a curriculum or similar document that translated their intent and objectives through the trainers to the trainees. Shortcomings with any of the elements of the didactic triangle possibly impacted the successful transfer of skills during SFA training programs. Much of the literature assessed the instructional ability of SFA trainers as lacking cultural awareness, especially at the beginning of SFA efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan (Ates, 2014; Corum, 2007; Felicetti, 2006; Hammes, 2016; Livingston, 2011; O'Connor, 2010; O'Connor et al., 2009; Olden, 2014; Westerman, 2017; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2013). Trainers were sometimes not prepared or equipped for their responsibilities because of a lack of preparation, inappropriate training material, or shortages of resources (Corum, 2007; Hammes, 2016; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2013). Hammes (2016) and Olden (2014) addressed literacy and education shortcomings among the recipients of SFA training that impacted the trainee's ability to absorb the training material. As mentioned previously, the failure of SFA training to address gaps in capacity was the most researched SFA training variable in the literature. My research explored the degree

to which any shortcomings of the didactic triangle impacted the effectiveness of SFA training programs for a Sub-Sahara African army.

### **Review and Synthesis of Studies Related to the Research Questions**

My literature search found few researchers that conducted original data collection. The researchers relied on existing data sources and literature reviews, supplemented with first-hand experiences or expert statements. Baaz and Sern's (2017) research on the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo was the only study that utilized original data collection. Since there was a lack of data about SFA programs and almost no assessment of their training effectiveness, there was a shortage of information in the literature about the success of individual SFA training programs to transfer military skills.

Much of the literature acknowledged that variables dealing with the partner nation were critical to the success of SFA or other forms of military assistance. However, only Baaz and Sern's (2017) research included the perspective of recipients of military assistance. The literature identified problems of language, cultural differences, different objectives, and capacity shortcomings from data and the U.S. perspective from existing literature or government reports. My research was not an attempt to satisfy a complete constructivist perspective but intended to add to the creation of the overall construction of knowledge about SFA by adding a new perspective. Constructivist should welcome adding the perspectives of recipients of training to the discussion on SFA because constructivists "offer perspective and encourage dialogue among perspectives rather than aiming at singular truths and linear predictions" (Patton, 2014, p. 684). The relatively

large gap in information about the results of SFA programs because of the lack of existing data meant that the perspectives of the training recipients had the potential to be diverse and some were different than I anticipated. The potential for developing unforeseen responses and data justified the use of exploratory interviews.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

In this summary and conclusion, I provide the main themes of the literature. I also include what is known and what we don't know on the topic. I conclude by showing how my study fills a gap in the literature.

### **Major Themes in the Literature**

The literature on military and security force assistance to allied countries was teeming with examples of failed efforts. Efforts by the United States were not immune to failure. Most military and security force assistance by the international community and the United States failed by every form of measurement used in the literature. The literature revealed that military and security force assistance usually did not help win wars or develop capabilities and capacities as intended. Military assistance also did not guarantee increased cooperation from the recipient nations. Another theme from the literature was that recipients of assistance and aid were motivated by, and responded to local more than external factors. SFA and similar programs that failed to achieve their objectives usually did not account for factors of the local environment. As a result of failing to account for the local environments, the failed programs did not recognize and address recipient objectives, gaps in recipient capability and capacity, or allocate the necessary resources and time required to meet program objectives.

The literature described how the U.S. SFA programs often did not achieve their objective of developing partner nation security forces capable of creating and maintaining security for their nations. SFA program failures were particularly impactful when partner nations were engaged in counterinsurgency operations because the conflicts usually lasted longer and the partner nation often lost the war resulting in human suffering and threats to the United States and international security. The recent events in Afghanistan and Iraq were examples of SFA programs that did not fully achieve their objectives and the failures contributed to persistent human suffering and threats to international security. Examples of successful counterinsurgencies included local governments that addressed the root causes of the conflicts. Addressing the root causes often meant the government and security forces had to develop capacities and reform to gain legitimacy and popular support. The development of capacities and reform processes often took longer than planned, and SFA programs had to be persistent to impact significant changes in the security forces. Successful SFA training programs relied on factors related to the trainers, trainees, training subject matter, and their interactions. The interaction between U.S. officials and trainers with the recipient officials and trainees required overcoming barriers to communication that occurred due to cross-cultural communication challenges. The literature provided descriptions and examples of many variables that challenged the effectiveness of SFA programs.

### **What is Unknown**

What is not known is the level to which past SFA programs succeeded at transferring skills, and developing capabilities and capacities that individual programs

intended to develop. The degree that factors involving the trainers, trainees, and the training subject matter impacted failures to develop skills and capabilities is also not known. Past research on SFA training lacked the perspectives of the recipients of the programs. The literature on SFA programs included some evidence that the programs transferred to the recipients the ideals of respect for human rights and democratic principles. However, the research on the transfer of ideals embodied in a military ethos was not uniform, and there was some disagreement about the impact of SFA programs success at promoting human rights and democratic principles.

The literature identified numerous variables that impacted the outcomes of counterinsurgency operations, and the effectiveness of SFA and similar programs. The dynamics of every insurgency, each SFA program, and the bilateral relationship between the United States and each partner nation are unique resulting in too many variables to measure. The literature lacked perspectives from partner nations but identified several key variables that impacted SFA program's ability to develop capability and capacity. There was a lack of information and research in the literature about if and how SFA training contributed to the failure of SFA and similar programs to achieve program or strategic objectives. The lack of information comes from a shortage of data and perspectives of the recipients of SFA training.

### **This Study Fills a Gap**

My study examined SFA training using the observations of recipients of the training in a qualitative phenomenological study consisting of multiple cases from different viewpoints. My research method and design developed perspectives that will

enrich the understanding and add to the knowledge about the phenomenon of SFA training programs. It also helped fill a gap in knowledge about the effectiveness of SFA training programs to transfer skills that contribute to the development of capability and capacity from the viewpoint of the recipients of training. The number of variables that impacted the success of SFA were too numerous and defied a singular truth or model that can explain the outcomes. The perceptions of the recipients helped provide information about how well the training succeeded in transferring skills and if the partner nation army had the capacity or motivation to translate those skills into capabilities and capacities. In the next chapter, I describe my research method and provide detailed information about how my research design collected data to answer the research questions while ensuring trustworthiness and maximizing transferability.

## Chapter 3: Research Method

### **Introduction**

The purpose of my study was to explore and understand the perspectives of recipients of training as part of a U.S. SFA programs from a Sub-Sahara African army that was engaged in counterinsurgency operations. Training was a critical initial component of any U.S. military interactions with foreign security forces such as SFA programs that intended to develop partner nation military capability and capacity to establish and maintain security (U.S. DOD, 2010). Previously, I explained how security for a partner nation was important for the United States' national security, international security, and the citizens of the partner nation.

In this chapter, I explain how the methodology of my research facilitated the achievement of the objective of this study. My explanation includes the rationale for conducting phenomenological research and addresses my role as the researcher and any issues of bias due to my relationship with the participants. I discuss the participant selection and recruitment process and describe the sampling strategy that dictated the participant selection criteria. The data collection and data analysis processes are also explained. In the final sections in this chapter, I address how I planned to manage potential ethical problems and trustworthiness issues.

### **Research Design and Rationale**

#### **Restated Research Questions**

RQ1: What are the perspectives of Sub-Sahara African soldiers on training received from the United States?

RQ2: What are the perspectives of leaders of a Sub-Saharan African army on training their soldiers received from the United States?

### **Central Concepts and Phenomena**

I based my study of the phenomena of SFA programs on four major concepts that were researched and described in the literature. The first was that international military assistance programs often failed and U.S. SFA programs often did not achieve their desired objectives in terms of developing military capabilities and capacities. The second concept was that issues of the principal and agent relationship between the United States and the partner nation possibly contributed to different objectives that caused the failure for some SFA programs. Another potential cause of program failure was the inability of the partner nation to absorb the new skills because of issues with the trainer, the trainees, or the training subject matter. The final concept consisted of potential problems with the partner nation's lack of ability to replicate and sustain new capabilities. The first concept was problem under study, and the other three concepts were the potential causes of the problem.

In this study, I intended to explore and describe the impact of the partner nation's objectives, ability to absorb the new skills, and/or ability to replicate and sustain the new capabilities that an SFA program intended to develop. SFA can consist of one or a combination of equipping, training, and advising activities. I focused on training in this study because it was the one activity that involved the concepts of partner nation objectives, ability to absorb new skills, and the ability to replicate and sustain military capabilities. Military assistance to partner nations usually consisted of several SFA

programs that trained either individuals, units, or leaders (U.S. Army, 2009). My study included three unique phenomena consisting of three SFA programs with different participants, objectives, and training formats.

### **The Research Tradition**

This study of SFA programs was grounded in the tradition of the qualitative phenomenological approach to research that uses human experiences to examine a phenomenon. When a program is the phenomenon of study, Patton (2014) stated that “phenomenology aims to capture the essence of program participants’ experiences” (p. 116). Essence is a description that makes meaning of the participant’s experiences (Patton, 2014). Patton stated that “the various phenomenological approaches share in common is a focus on exploring how human beings make sense of experience and transform experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (p. 115).

### **The Rationale for the Chosen Tradition**

SFA training programs consist of human experiences. Fully understanding the problem with SFA programs required a qualitative study that could explore the human dimensions in detail. Phenomenological research proposes that researchers can synthesize individual observations and establish common themes or essences (Patton, 2014). In this study, I planned to reveal the overall essence of the recipients’ experiences with SFA training to answer the research questions. Phenomenological research was the most appropriate design for this study because it could provide rich details about human experiences during a phenomenon that can provide themes that reveal larger insights

(Patton, 2014). In this study, the phenomenological approach provided the essence of the participants' experiences related to the SFA training and revealed insights about the partner nation's objectives, ability to absorb the new skills, and efforts to replicate and sustain the capabilities that an SFA program intended to develop.

### **Role of the Researcher**

#### **Role as Observer**

My role as the researcher was as an observer, but I have been a participant of similar phenomena in the past as well. During the data collection for this study, I was an observer while conducting the interviews of the participants. I participated in military training during a 22-year U.S. Army career. I also experienced SFA and similar programs as a participant during 10 years of contract work for the U.S. Government.

My experiences provided me with a perspective from the viewpoint of a trainer and trainee of military training and education. All but 3 years of my Army career involved a relationship with military education or training either as a trainer or trainee. I also gained an understanding of U.S. Army principles and doctrine of education and training that trainers try to use during SFA training.

Since retiring from the Army, I had 2 years of experience coordinating the training programs between the United States and NATO partner nations and 8 years of experience as a trainer and facilitator to six Sub-Saharan African armies. Most of my African experience was with Department of State-funded programs that were not SFA. The Department of State programs were military assistance programs that trained peacekeepers for UN missions and included similar dynamics and issues as SFA training

programs. For the last 2 years, I was the coordinator and facilitator of a Defense Institution Building program in Africa that did not include training but was a program within SFA. During my experiences with partner nations, I had the opportunity to discuss the development of military capabilities and capacity with partner nation and U.S. Government officials as well as the trainers and trainees of military assistance provided by the United States. My experience working with partner nations coordinating or conducting training provide me with some knowledge about the development of military capabilities and capacities for partner nations of the United States.

### **Researcher Personal and Professional Relationships with Participants**

During my time working in Africa, I was fortunate to develop many professional and personal relationships that have lasted for years. I have several relationships with members of the Sub-Sahara African army from which participants were drawn for this study. My past relationships, as either a trainer or program facilitator, with members of that Army had the potential to create a power relationship that could have impacted the trustworthiness of the data collection. Additionally, as a person associated with the United States, the potential existed for participants to perceive a power relationship because they may think that I represent the United States, which, as a donor and sponsor of many development programs, has a power relationship with the Sub-Sahara African nation.

### **Management of Researcher Biases and Potential Power Relationships Perceptions**

Awareness of the potential perceptions of power relationships was the first step in managing any problems, but there were several other actions I took to mitigate any

potential issues. First, I ensured that none of the participants in this study had a current working relationship with me. Although I had no official capacity to influence the participant's well-being, they may have perceived otherwise. It was critical that I informed the participants of my position as a researcher and that their participation would remain confidential.

My past experiences and Western outlook influenced and developed some my perceptions about why SFA programs often did not work as planned. Awareness of my biases combined with my desire to understand the participants' viewpoints were my most important assets in overcoming potential bias in this study. Patton (2014) stated that "understanding comes from trying to put oneself in the other person's shoes, from trying to discern how others think, act, and feel" (p. 55). To understand the perceptions of the participants required that I recognize my biases and try to overcome them.

### **Addressing Potential Ethical Issues**

This study was susceptible to potential ethical issues due to the vulnerability of the participants and my current work that is part of an SFA program. The participants were mostly active duty Army soldiers, and their superiors could punish them if the superiors perceived the soldiers' participation and input to this study as damaging to their army or the superiors. Keeping the country and the subject of training events unidentified and the identity of the participants confidential protected and will continue to protect the participants from retribution. Later in this chapter, I address the procedures I used to protect the participants in more detail.

My work involves an SFA program but does not include training and is a nontraditional form of SFA that is not comparable to the training programs involved in this study. Additionally, my employer is a nonprofit research organization that does not incentivize me to report its activities positively or to conduct business development. My current work with an SFA program did not create any ethical issues for this study.

## **Methodology**

### **Participant Selection Logic**

**The population and the sampling strategy.** This study on SFA training had potential issues of trustworthiness and transferability because the phenomenon involved hundreds of cases with innumerable variables, hundreds of thousands of participants, and many stakeholders with different views. To increase the trustworthiness and transferability of the findings, I examined multiple cases from multiple population viewpoints using a maximum variation of participants. The population of this study was soldiers from the Sub-Saharan African army that received training. The population included the subpopulations of the trainees and the leaders to obtain multiple viewpoints.

**The criteria of participant selection and verification of participants meeting the criteria.** Larkin et al. (2018) referred to the sampling of multiple population perspectives as “multiperspectival design” that provides researchers with different viewpoints of the same phenomenon and the opportunity to expand and validate themes. According to Larkin et al. multiperspectival research “extends the potential reach and impact of experiential research” (p. 2). My sampling was multiperspectival in nature by having populations of soldiers from a Sub-Saharan African army that had different

viewpoints on training provided by the United States as part of an SFA program. The first population was the soldiers that received training, referred to as trainees in my study. The second population was the leaders of that Army. Sampling multiple cases using a multiperspectival design reduces concerns about trustworthiness and representativeness of my phenomenal research.

The sampling strategy for the population of trainees was the maximum variation sampling strategy. According to Patton (2014), the advantage of the maximum variation sampling strategy is that “any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experiences and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon” (p. 283). My sampling of trainees achieved maximum attempted to achieve variation by sampling trainees from multiple cases with different ranks as much as possible. The unit training case population consisted of a large variation of rank. The rank variation for the unit training case included sampling from the officers and enlisted soldiers. Variation of rank for trainees that participated in the individual training case consisted of sergeants and officers. The final case of leader education varied the rank of participants from junior officers with the ranks of captain and major to the more senior officers with the ranks of lieutenant colonel and colonel. The sampling included participants of different ranks as much as possible to represent the diversity of the population.

I selected the population of trainees using representative random sampling as much as possible. The benefits of representative random sampling are that it increases the confidence that the sample represents the larger population and helps control for selection

bias (Patton, 2014, p. 264). As previously explained, I subdivided each case population by rank which provided a greater representation of each case's total population. For each case and rank population, I selected the participants randomly from the eligible population. The verification that the trainee participants met the selection criteria occurred by verifying the Army training records at the Army Headquarters. Each trainee from the three types of training had unique observations about the effectiveness of the training to transfer skills to them. Most of the trainees also had observations about how the skills were employed and institutionalized by their army or if any capacity shortfalls prevented their newly acquired skills from developing into a military capability. Most of the trainees had observations about their army's motivation to participate in the SFA program and the partner nation's objectives. However, the leaders of the army had a better viewpoint about their army's capacity and motivation, and their nation's objectives for participating in the SFA programs.

I purposefully selected the participants from the population of leaders of the Sub-Saharan African army using the key knowledgeable sampling strategy. Patton (2014) described the key knowledgeable strategy as sampling individuals that can "provide valuable expertise on and insights into the root of problems" (p. 284). The leaders that participated in my research served in positions that could influence the employment or institutionalization of the new skills developed during the SFA training. Army leaders that can employ units with the intent to use their available capabilities consist of high ranking commanders or operations officers. High ranking staff officers with training and doctrine responsibilities or school commandants have the ability to institutionalize newly

acquired capabilities. The high ranking Sub-Saharan African army leaders were well known within their army, and the verification of their identity and position occurred through second party sources and internet sources. The selected army leaders had observations about the SFA training cases, their army's ability to replicate and sustain new capabilities, and their army and nation's objectives for the SFA programs.

**The number of cases.** According to Patton (2014) sampling multiple cases of a phenomenon creates an understanding of the phenomenon that can produce “generalizable findings that can be used to inform changes in practices, programs, and policies” (p. 295). Stakes (as cited in Patton, 2014) prescribed three main criteria for selecting the cases of multiple case studies as relevance to the main phenomenon, diversity of the cases, and providing “good opportunities to learn about complexity and contexts” (p. 295). My sampling was from three types of SFA training that comprise the three cases. Three cases allowed for researching SFA training programs that included each of the three types of training that were the main variables of SFA training and inherently had differences in other significant variables. The U.S. Army classifies training types as individual skills training or unit collective training with leader education as a major component of individual skills training.

The first case was training programs for units consisting of several hundred soldiers with the training objective of developing both individual soldier and collective unit skills. The second case was training programs for 20 to 50 soldiers from different units to develop technical individual skills. The final case was the Individual Military Education Training program which trained individuals at military technical and leader

development schools in the United States. My research on the Individual Military Education Training program only examined the observations of individuals that attended the leader courses that included training on leadership and staff functions from the tactical to the strategic levels of military operations. I selected SFA training programs that occurred over a year ago but not more than 4 years past. The time criteria for the selection of SFA training cases ensured that the Sub-Saharan African army had enough time to employ and institutionalize the skills and capabilities the training developed, but not too much time that the participant observations became hazy and less reliable. The three cases had variations of subject matter, training audience size, duration of training, ranks of the trainees, and training venue (see Table 1).

Table 1

*Variables of SFA Cases*

Variables	Case 1: unit training	Case 2: individual training	Case 3: leader education
Subject matter	Individual and unit skills	Technical individual skills	Leader skills
Size of training audience	200	20	1
Duration of training	7 months	2 weeks	5-10 months
Ranks of trainees	Private to colonel	Sergeant to colonel	Captain to colonel
Training venue	Austere field conditions	Partner nation classroom	U.S. classroom

*Note.* Case 3: Individual Military Education Training (IMET) program participants attended training as individuals to courses with approximately 100 to 1000 students.

**The number of participants.** I intended my research to describe the essence and major themes of three types of SFA training programs using a maximum variation of participant observations from multiple viewpoints. My research had eight population groups to achieve maximum variation. A relatively small number of participants from each population can establish the essence and major themes of phenomenological cases (Patton, 2014). The previously described participant selection criteria described the members of each population group. The first case of unit training had two population groups consisting of officers and enlisted soldiers. The second case of individual training also had two population groups comprised of officers and enlisted soldiers. The third case of leader education had two groups consisting of junior officers and senior officers. The final two population groups consisted of army leaders that can employ capabilities and army leaders that can institutionalize capabilities. My goal was for each of the eight population groups to have three participants for a total of 24 participants. Analysis of participant observations developed themes from each population group that I synthesized with the entire population to describe the essence and major themes.

**The procedures to identify, contact, and recruit participants.** The Sub-Saharan African army's chief of training identified the participants based upon the SFA training programs I selected for the cases and the participant criteria. A trusted interlocuter contacted and recruited the potential participants in person or by phone and provided consent forms for each participant to sign. I conducted the final selection and recruitment of the participants among the eligible populations.

**The relationship between saturation and sample size.** The goal of my study was not to reach saturation among all populations but to identify themes that could be compared with other populations to create major themes of the phenomenon. Based on demographics and experiences, the participants of this study consisted of eight populations. Three participants from each of the eight populations was likely to be sufficient to reveal the major themes and validate them through triangulation between the populations, cases, and viewpoints.

### **Instrumentation**

**The data collection instrument and source.** I collected data for my research using semistructured interviews with open-ended questions. I was the source of the data collection instrument which consisted of different sets of questions for the trainees and the Sub-Saharan African army leaders. According to Rubin and Rubin (2012), a semistructured interview is a method to collect rich detailed data that can reveal themes by focusing on a specific topic with a limited number of questions prepared in advance and a plan to ask follow-up questions to gain further details. Open-ended questions increased the detail of data collection by inviting the participants to “respond any way he or she chooses, elaborating upon answers, disagreeing with the question, or raising new issues” (Rubin & Rubin, 2012, p. 31).

I discounted the option of conducting group interviews that can also obtain rich details about participant observations because of the requirement to maintain confidentiality and increased risks to reliability. According to Krueger and Casey, (as cited in Patton, 2014, p. 475), focus group interviews should occur in "permissive,

nonthreatening environment" settings. Group interviews with military personnel had the potential for the senior ranking member to intimidate other participants due to rank and to dominate the group participation. Group interviews limit the ability to maintain confidentiality as some participants may know each other and report the contents of the interviews to senior military authorities.

**The basis for instrument development.** My interview questions invited the participants to provide their observations about the three types of SFA training and the training's effectiveness at developing capability and capacity. Each question addressed a key variable of the SFA training program effectiveness or the root causes of any issues. I derived the key variables of SFA training program effectiveness from the three measures of SFA training program success (see Appendix A). The first measurement of success of SFA training programs was the transfer of skills to the trainees. The key variables of transferring skills came from the didactic triangle model and consisted of the teacher, student, and subject matter. Capability development was the second measurement of success. The key variables of capability development came from the United States military definition of capability and were doctrine, organization, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2015a). The final measurement of success was capacity development. The key variables of capacity development were from the U.S. military definition of capacity and consisted of replication and sustainment of new capabilities by the partner nation (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2017). The last interview questions invited observations about the root causes of any problems with the effectiveness of the SFA training programs. One

question about the root causes of problems asked about the motivation and objectives of the partner nation for participating in the SFA programs that were meant to provide insights into any principal agent relationship issues. The other question about the root causes inquired about any other problems that inhibited the partner nation's ability to absorb the new skills and capability, or ability to replicate and sustain the new capabilities.

Because my data collection was from two viewpoints, I created two interview protocols. The two interview protocols with the questions are at Appendices B and C. The two interview protocols of my study were for the two main populations that have a different viewpoint as trainees and army leaders. The questions of the two protocols had the same aim of gathering observations about the key variables of SFA training cases, but the wording of the questions was modified to address the different viewpoints.

**Establishment of the content validity.** I worked to ensure the validity of the content of the data collected through triangulation. By comparing the individual observations with other participants and viewpoints along with my personal experiences comprised a robust triangulation process. Finding singular observations that contradicted other participant's observations and my experiences helped to identify invalid content.

**The sufficiency of the data collection instrument to answer the research questions.** The interview protocols helped ensure that I conducted the interviews in a consistent manner that did not bias the data collection and that the data answered the research questions. The design of the interview questions ensured that each question directly related to a key variables of the topic. Therefore, the interview questions invited

the participants to share their perceptions of the phenomenon which helped answer the research questions.

### **Procedures for Recruitment, Participation, and Data Collection**

An interlocutor in the country of study conducted the initial recruitment of the participants but I did the final selection and ensured the participants understood their participation in my research was optional. I collected the data by conducting each of the interviews and strived to maintain consistency of interview procedures. The interviews occurred in neutral locations such as my hotel room to help ensure confidentiality. I recorded the interviews to ensure accuracy during analysis. I anticipated each interview would last less than an hour. According to Patton (2012), qualitative data collection and analysis is an iterative process and could cause possible adjustments to my question protocols that required me to engage the participants more than once to gain clarification or their observations on unforeseen subjects. I planned to collect data during two trips to the Sub-Sahara African country and anticipated asking the participants to continue their participation until the conclusion of the second trip to allow for follow-up interviews if required. I also planned to offer a debrief to the participants during my second trip.

### **Data Analysis Plan**

I recorded the data from the interviews in my notes and created verbatim transcripts from the recorded interviews. I planned to manually label and categorize the elements of the data by inductive, open coding which entailed labeling concepts within the data into manageable segments. Inductive and open coding is the process of categorizing the data without trying to fit the codes into any theories or concepts and

without constraining the possible codes in any fashion (Ravitch & Carl, 2016). My coding approach was open to the ideas, concepts, and terms the participants used to ensure I captured their perceptions without interference from any preconceived concepts of mine or of the related literature. I reviewed the codes for similarity to identify patterns of participant responses from which I further identified themes. Patton (2012) described patterns as a description of similar responses and themes as a categorical interpretation of the meaning of similar responses. My plan to deal with any codes that were outliers and did not fit into any pattern with other codes was to follow up with the participants for clarification, but my research intended to analyze themes and not individual observations. Therefore, any data that did not become part of a pattern and theme did not impact the analysis.

### **Issues of Trustworthiness**

As with any qualitative research, my research had potential issues of trustworthiness due to credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Based on my past experiences with members of the Sub-Saharan African army of this study, my major concern was the credibility of participant responses. During my previous interactions with members of the Sub-Saharan African army, they often had a tendency to portray their army in positive manner and minimize any shortcomings.

### **Strategies to Establish Credibility**

My research had the potential for credibility issues because of my relationship to the topic and the possibility that participants felt undue pressure to respond in a fashion that was positive towards their army and superiors. My years of working with Sub-Saharan

African armies was both an asset and a potential liability to establish the credibility of my research. My previous work with Sub-Saharan African armies helped me identify participant responses of dubious accuracy but possibly created a bias. Researcher reflexivity was a key strategy to overcome possible personal bias. Patton (2012) explained that “reflexivity calls for self-reflection, indeed, critical self-reflection and self-knowledge, and a willingness to consider how who one is affects what one is able to observe, hear, and understand in the field as an observer and analyst” (p. 381). A technique advocated by Noble and Smith (2015), and which I planned to follow, is for researchers to review their notes and decisions with peers during different stages of data collection and analysis. I have several colleagues that are peers from Western and African cultures that were available to review my research from both cultural perspectives. I also planned to use triangulation to ensure the credibility of my research. According to Creswell and Miller (as cited in Ravitch & Carl, 2016), triangulations are processes that seek “convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study” (p. 195). My research design of collecting data on three types of SFA training programs from multiple viewpoints provided the opportunity to triangulate data between cases and among individual participants and participant populations. In addition to checking the convergence of data sources, Mathison (as cited by Golafshani, 2003) proposed that “triangulation has risen an important methodological issue in naturalistic and qualitative approaches to evaluation [in order to] control bias and establishing valid propositions” (p. 603). The previously mentioned peer reviews of my

research constituted another form of triangulation that checked for any biases and improved the credibility of my research.

### **Strategies to Establish Transferability**

Because my research was on specific phenomena and the unique experiences of the participants, it had the potential of suffering from issues of transferability. My study does not intend to be universally transferable but to increase knowledge about the effectiveness of SFA training for a Sub-Sahara African army engaged in counterinsurgency operations. The level of transferability of my research depends on the context of its application. The results of my research have more transferability when applied to other phenomenon with similar characteristics. To maximize the transferability of my research the study included thick descriptions and the research design included variations of participant selection and cases as previously described. Thick descriptions provide enough detail so that readers understand the context and can determine the transferability of the research to other phenomena (Patton, 2014). Selecting the participants to gain variations of ranks and viewpoints, plus selecting three types of training based on variations of key variables increases the transferability of my research by increasing the potential for similarities to other phenomena.

### **Strategies to Establish Dependability**

The threats to dependability of my study include the potential that my research design did not address the research questions and that I strayed from consistent data collection. I intended to maintain the dependability of my study by designing the research to answer the research questions and obtaining data in a consistent fashion following my

data collection plan. My strategies to ensure the consistency of my data collection included following the interview protocols and triangulation. Comparing the observations of the participants within population groups and between population groups could identify significantly different observations that might disclose instances of inconsistent data collection.

### **Strategies to Establish Confirmability**

Confirmability “is the concept that the data can be confirmed by someone other than the researcher” (Toma as cited in Ravitch & Carl, 2014, p. 207) and relies upon researchers to acknowledge biases and take actions to account for any biases in their research. My background from a Western culture with experience as an instructor and program facilitator with Sub-Sahara African armies, along with my role as a researcher posed potential threats to confirmability. My collection of data had to be consistent and accurately reflect the participant’s observations for other researchers to confirm the data. Reflexivity, triangulation, consistent data collection, and peer reviews as previously described were my strategies to mitigate or identify potential biases to ensure the confirmability of my research.

### **Ethical Procedures**

My research had two main potential ethical issues. The first potential issue was that I work with the Sub-Sahara African army that is the subject of my research. However, the context of the research was different than my past and current work, and the participants were not individuals that I worked with at the time of the research. The second potential issue was that the participants of my research were vulnerable to

potential retribution from superiors if their interview responses were perceived negatively by their military or civilian leaders.

The IRB approval number for this dissertation is 07-03-19-0726032. The appropriate authority from the Sub-Saharan African army of this study provided a permission letter authorizing the voluntary participation in this study by members of its organization. Each participant reviewed and signed a consent agreement.

### **Treatment of Cooperating Organizations and Human Participants**

By not disclosing the name of the country and maintaining the confidentiality of the participants will help minimize potential harm to both. I took actions to ensure confidentiality during recruitment, data collection, and publication of the research. The Sub-Saharan African army chief of training identified the population of eligible participants based on the cases, participant selection criteria, and available training records. A trusted interlocutor in the country conducted the initial contact with the eligible participants to gain consent. However, I selected the actual participants from the group of eligible participants that consented to participate without informing others about their identity. The data collection occurred in discreet and private locations that the participants accepted and found comfortable. Participants had the opportunity to withdraw from the research at any time.

### **Treatment of Data**

I am treating the data as confidential to maintain the secrecy of the participants' identities. The only identifying information on the data is in a code that is only known by myself. After transcribing the recorded interviews, I secured the interview recordings in a

safe and will destroy them at the completion of the dissertation process. I am maintaining the transcripts and interview notes on a backup stand-alone hard drive at my residence. Peer reviews did not include the identity of the participants and I destroyed any papers used in those reviews. I will also destroy the electronic versions of the data 5 years after the completion of the research.

### **Summary**

In this chapter, I described my study's research design, my role as the researcher, my research methodology, potential issues of trustworthiness, and procedures I took and will take to address potential ethical issues. The concepts of qualitative phenomenological research guided the design of my research because of the nature of my topic. The topic of my research, the effectiveness of SFA training programs, is dynamic and impacted by a multitude of human interactions. The design of my research intended to provide a rich and detailed account of human interactions that best answer the research questions. My role was as an observer collecting data about the participants' observations. I intentionally designed my research to maximize opportunities for triangulation. My research design included data collection of participant observations about multiple cases of the phenomenon from multiple viewpoints and with variations in populations. The interview protocol design invited participant observations that answered the research questions. The questions in my interview protocols addressed the key variables of SFA training program effectiveness but were open-ended to allow for the participants to add unanticipated observations. I concluded this chapter with a description of my plan to maintain the confidentiality of the participants and mask identifying

information, such as the name the country and the training subjects, to prevent any harm as a result of their participation and cooperation with my research. In the next chapter, I describe the results of my research and provide the data collected and analysis of the data.

## Chapter 4: Results

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the perspectives of recipients of training as part of U.S. SFA programs from a Sub-Saharan African army that is engaged in counterinsurgency operations. In this study, I explored the perspectives of the recipients of training from a U.S. SFA training program to expand knowledge about what makes such programs succeed or fail. I focused solely on the training component of SFA programs to explore how the recipients perceived the utility and effectiveness of the training to develop capability and capacity that could benefit their ongoing counterinsurgency operation.

I developed the following research questions to address the purpose by asking for the perspectives of trainees and their leaders:

RQ1: What are the perspectives of Sub-Saharan African soldiers on training received from the United States?

RQ2: What are the perspectives of leaders of a Sub-Saharan African army on training their soldiers received from the United States?

In this chapter, I describe the execution of my research to include the settings of the interviews, the demographics of the participants, and details about the data collection. The data collection details include the number and characteristics of the participants; how the data were collected; and the location, frequency, and duration of interviews. I present the data analysis process, including the inductive reasoning that moved the analysis from codes to themes as well as the codes, categories, and themes that emerged from the

analysis. I also describe the evidence of trustworthiness of my research addressing the elements of credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In the final section of this chapter, I provide the results of my research and how well the collected data helped to answer the research questions.

### **Settings**

The interviews took place during July and August of 2019. All but one interview took place in the African country of this study; one participant was interviewed in the United States. During the period of the interviews, there were not any national significant events that might have influenced the participants. Although there may have been events that impacted individual participants, the period in which the interviews took place was a relatively quiet news period that lacked major political or military events that might have impacted the participants and influenced their perceptions or the information they provided.

### **Demographics**

This study included 20 participants and all of them were male. The participants represented a diverse group of soldiers with varied assignments at the time of the interviews. All the participants were active duty soldiers except for one that was retired. Of the 19 active soldiers, four were assigned to schools as students or instructors, eight were staff officers in various headquarters, and seven were assigned to operational units. Eleven of the participants were assigned to the national capital during the interviews, while nine were assigned outside of the capital.

The participants also had a variety of specialties representing almost all the major elements of their army. Eleven of the participants had backgrounds in combat arms consisting of either infantry, armor, or artillery. Ten participants had backgrounds in support specialties, including maintenance, intelligence, supply, medical, public relations, and communications.

The makeup of ranks between the participants was diverse but weighted more towards senior officers. Most of the participants that received training from the United States were promoted since the training and were at least one rank higher during the interviews compared to their rank during the training. At the time of the interviews, eight of the participants were general officers. Nine field grade officers participated in the interviews, consisting of colonels, lieutenant colonels, and majors. One captain and one noncommissioned officer also participated in the study. Overall, the population was varied and represented various elements of their army's locations, positions, specialties, and ranks. I address the underrepresentation of junior ranks later in my description of the data collection process.

### **Data Collection**

The population of this study comprised soldiers that received training from the United States as well as their leaders from a Sub-Saharan African country that could employ or institutionalize the skills the training intended to provide. The population of trainees included three groups that participated in either individual skills training, unit collective training, or leader education. Two of the leaders also participated in training and were able to provide their perspective as a trainee and as a leader. Therefore,

although my research had 20 participants, I was able to gain 22 perspectives of the researched phenomena with 17 viewpoints as trainees and five viewpoints from the perspective of army leaders.

Table 2 displays the number of participants and perspectives by population and type of SFA training for the trainees. The table also displays the distribution by rank of perspectives at the time of training for the trainees and at the time of the interview for the army leaders. The first row displays the number of participants by population group. The second through fourth rows display the number of perspectives by rank and population groups.

Within this perspectives grouping, the first row displays the one enlisted soldier that participated in unit training. The second row displays the number of officers and the third row displays the number of generals by population group. The final row displays the total number of perspectives gathered in my research by population group.

Table 2

*Participants and Perspectives for Each Population and Type of SFA Training*

Participant and perspectives groups	Trainees			Leaders	Total
	Unit training	Individual training	Leader education	Army leaders	
Participants	4	4	7	5	20
Perspectives					
Enlisted soldiers	1	0	0	0	1
Officers	3	5	8	0	16
General officers	0	0	0	5	5
Total	4	5	8	5	22

Four participants of the trainee population participated in unit training. This was less than my initial plan to interview six participants of unit training and include three enlisted soldiers. This was due to the army chief of training not identifying enough individuals that participated in unit training and no enlisted soldiers. The few unit training participants identified were able to refer additional potential participants, but only a limited number of enlisted soldiers. Of those referred, only one was available for an interview; therefore, the participants of unit training included three officers and one enlisted soldier.

Four participants of the trainee population participated in individual skills training, and one of the army leaders was able to add his perspective from his experience as a trainee during an individual skills training program. The army chief of training did not have a complete database of individuals that received training from the United States and was unable to identify any enlisted soldiers that participated in individual skill training. Therefore, all five research participants of individual skills training were officers.

The trainee population included seven participants that were trainees in leader education courses. One of the leaders also added his perspective of a leader education course based on his experiences as a trainee. At the time of their participation in leader education courses in the United States, four were junior officers of the rank of either captain or major. Three of the leader education training participants were senior officers during their training at the rank of colonel. The army leader that added his perspective as a trainee of U.S. leader education was a colonel at the time of training.

The army leader population consisted of five participants. The members of the army leader population were all general officers with multiple past or current assignments with the opportunity to employ or institutionalize the capabilities that the SFA programs intended to develop. Three of the army leader participants had experiences in both employing and institutionalizing capabilities. One army leader was in a position to employ capabilities, and one was in a position to institutionalize capabilities. Because of the multiple experiences of the army leader research participants, I was able to collect data from four perspectives on employing capabilities and four perspectives on institutionalizing capabilities.

The interviews occurred in private, secluded locations in which the participants expressed they were comfortable conducting the interview. Twelve of the interviews with trainees occurred in my hotel room and three occurred in vacant conference rooms. Interviews with three of the army leaders occurred in their offices and two were in my hotel room.

Because of the participants' clear communications and relative uniform perspectives that achieved the objective of identifying themes for this study, follow-up interviews were not required to clarify information or perspectives. The singular exception to the relative uniformity of perspectives was one participant that contradicted all the other participants on most topics. The lone individual with divergent perspectives of his peers also provided factually incorrect information when asked verifiable information about the army included in this study. I assessed the one individual as insincere and did not use his interview as part of my study.

The interviews averaged 36 minutes and 13 seconds. The trainee interviews and leader interviews lasted about the same amount of time. The trainees averaged 36 minutes and 28 seconds and the leader interviews lasted an average of 35 minutes and 28 seconds.

All the interviews were recorded using a handheld audio recorder. I transcribed the audio recordings into Microsoft Word documents for analysis. I completed transcribing each recording within 2 weeks of the interview. I primarily used the transcripts during my analysis but referred to the recordings occasionally to ensure the accuracy of the participant's interview responses.

My data collection was executed as planned. The Sub-Sahara Army chief of training designated a staff officer to act as the interlocutor to conduct initial contact and recruitment of participants. The initial list of potential participants provided by a staff officer from the army's Training Division was insufficient and only had one trainee from past unit training provided by the United States and lacked any enlisted soldiers that received individual skills training.

After I requested the training division staff officer contact the one participant of unit training, he was able to find more relevant potential participants. Contacting the Training Division staff officer to obtain more potential participants was not a modification to my recruitment plan but did result in all the unit training participants experiencing the same training event. My research plan was to interview unit training participants from multiple SFA training programs. Only collecting data from participants of a single unit training program was a shortcoming that I address later in this chapter and in chapter 5 within my description of this studies limitations. I attempted to partially

overcome the shortcoming of only interviewing participants from one unit training program by inquiring of all participants about their perspective of other units that received United States provided training.

The Training Division staff officer was not able to identify enlisted soldiers that attended individual skills training provided by the United States. Only obtaining the perspectives of officers that participated in individual skills training was a shortcoming of my research. In Chapter 5, I describe the ramifications of this research shortcoming.

Sufficient quantity of potential candidates were contacted and volunteered to participate from each population and group with the exceptions of enlisted participants. Due to location and military duties I was not able to achieve the objective of interviewing six participants from all the major groups consisting of army leaders, participants of unit training, participants of individual skills training, and participants of leader education training. Of the 20 participants, I gathered data about perspectives from four participants of unit training, five army leaders, five participants of individual skills training, and eight participants of leader education training as illustrated previously in Table 2.

### **Data Analysis**

My initial coding was open to any ideas related to any of the three variables related to transfer of skills, the seven variables related to capability development, the two variables for capacity development, and the participant's perspectives of their army's motivation or suggestions about how to improve the U.S. prosecution of SFA programs. Table 3 displays the complete list of variables organized by the four major topics of

variables. The column headings list the major topics. Below each column heading are the related variables.

Table 3

*List of SFA Training Key Variables*

Transfer of skills	Capability development	Capacity development	Motivation for participating
Instructor	Doctrine	Sustainment	
Trainee	Organization	Replication	
Subject	Materiel		
	Leadership		
	Personnel		
	Facilities		
	Policy		

Being open to any perspective, my initial coding included any thought the participants expressed on the topics in their words. The secondary coding of my analysis was to group similar ideas into codes. My final step of developing codes was to categorize the codes based on their relevance to each of the variables. The categories for each variable that were common within groups or populations, and between groups and populations were the themes that I identified from my research.

The initial coding resulted in 408 observations from the 20 participants. Thirty-three of the observations were not relevant to the study and I did not use them in my analysis. An additional 19 of the observations expressed by the participants were unique thoughts without similar responses from other participants and were not analyzed after

initial coding. I analyzed the remaining 356 observations of the participants to group similar observations and identify codes.

The 356 initial observations had many similarities and I was able to group them into 33 codes. Some of the observations within codes were contrary to each other. The major expression of divergent views was between the participants that experienced unit training and those that experienced either individual skills or leader education training. The participants expressed their perspective on their unique experiences during different types of training conducted under different environments and the divergent codes reflect their unique experiences. However, within each group there was a general uniformity of responses that I was able to identify themes within groups and many of the themes were shared across the different groups and the total population.

Tables 4 to 7 depict the identified codes by each of the four major groups. The initial column on the far left describes the codes. The succeeding columns are the individual participant's perspective summarized as a positive or negative. Blank spaces indicate that the individual did not provide a perspective on the topic or had a unique perspective that was not replicated by others. Codes that a group did not provide any observations are not included in that group's table.

Table 4

*Codes From Unit Training Participants*

Codes	1	2	3	4
Good/excellent instructors	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accents or acronyms were initial barrier to learning	Yes	Yes		Yes
Instructors lived with us and learned to adopt the lessons	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
My army prepared me for the training	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Were you able to learn the skills	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Basic skills had significant utility and most impact	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The skills had utility	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
We used the skills in operations	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
We have the same or adopted U.S. skills	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The skills had significant impact on counterinsurgency	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
We have the same or adopted the U.S. doctrine	No	No	No	No
We have organizations to adopt the skills	No	No	No	No
We have the materiel to adopt the skills	No	No	No	No
Our leaders know how to employ the skills	No			No
Our leaders want to employ the skills		No		No
We have sufficient manpower to adopt the skills		No	No	No
We have the trained manpower to adopt the skills	No	No		No
We have the facilities to adopt the skills	No	No		No
Our policies support the adoption of the skills			No	
We know and follow our policies			No	
We took actions to replicate the skills	Little	No	No	No
We took actions to sustain the skills	No	No	No	No
We participated in training for good relations with the U.S.		Yes		
We participated in training to gain skills	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The U.S. should follow up with the training it provides	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The U.S. should better understand our army's needs				Yes
The U.S. should provide equipment with training		Yes	Yes	

Table 5

*Codes From Individual Skills Participants*

Codes	1	2	3	4	5
Good/excellent instructors	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accents or acronyms were initial barrier to learning		Yes	Yes		Yes
Our army prepared me for the training	No	No	No	No	No
Trainee selected not for capability development		Yes		Yes	
Were you able to learn the skills	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
The skills had utility	No	No	No	Little	Little
We used the skills in operations	No	No	No	No	Little
We have the same or adopted united states skills	No	Little		No	No
The skills had significant impact on counterinsurgency	No	No	No	No	Little
Main benefit was other than capability development	Yes	Yes			
We have the same or adopted the U.S. doctrine		No	No		No
We want to adopt U.S. doctrine		No	No		Yes
We have organizations to adopt the skills			No	No	No
We have the materiel to adopt the skills				No	No
Our leaders know how to employ the skills				No	No
Our leaders want to employ the skills				No	No
We have sufficient manpower to adopt the skills				No	No
We have the trained manpower to adopt the skills		No		No	
Our system posts manpower to correct positions			No		No
We have the facilities to adopt the skills		Yes		Yes	
We know and follow our policies				No	No
We took actions to replicate the skills	No	No	No	No	No
We took actions to sustain the skills	No	No	No	No	No
We participated in training for good relations with the U.S.		Yes		Yes	Yes
We participated in training to gain skills	Yes				
The U.S. should follow up with the training it provides		Yes		Yes	
The U.S. should better understand our army's needs	Yes	Yes		Yes	

Table 6

*Codes From Leader Education Participants*

Codes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Good/excellent instructors	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Accents or acronyms were initial barrier to learning		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes		Yes
Our army prepared me for the training	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
Trainee selected not for capability development	Yes			Yes		Yes		
Were you able to learn the skills	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Basic skills had significant utility and most impact				Yes				
The skills had utility	No	Yes	No	Little	Little	No	No	No
We used the skills in operations	No	Little	No	No	No	No	No	No
We have the same or adopted U.S. skills	No	No	No	No	No	No	No	No
The skills had significant impact on counterinsurgency	No	Little	No	No	No	No	No	No
Main benefit was other than capability development	Yes						Yes	
We have the same or adopted the US doctrine	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No
We want to adopt U.S. doctrine			No	No			Yes	No
We have organizations to adopt the skills		No						
We have the materiel to adopt the skills		No						
Our leaders know how to employ the skills	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes			No
Our leaders want to employ the skills					No		No	
We have sufficient manpower to adopt the skills	Yes	No	No					No
We have the trained manpower to adopt the skills		No			No			
We have the facilities to adopt the skills		Yes				Yes		Yes
We know and follow our policies				No				No
We took actions to replicate the skills	No	Little	No	No	No		No	No
We took actions to sustain the skills	No	No	No	No	No		No	No
We participated in training for good relations with the U.S.					Yes		Yes	Yes
We participated in training to gain skills								Yes
We participated in training to compare systems	Yes			Yes		Yes		
The U.S. should follow up with the training it provides					Yes			
The U.S. should better understand our army's needs		Yes			Yes		Yes	
The U.S. should provide equipment with training			Yes					

Table 7

*Codes From Army Leader Participants*

Codes	1	2	3	4	5
We have the same or adopted U.S. skills	No				No
Unit training fit our army better than individual training	Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes
The skills had significant impact on counterinsurgency	No	Little	Little	Little	Little
We have the same or adopted the U.S. doctrine	No		No		No
We want to adopt U.S. doctrine			No		Yes
We have organizations to adopt the skills					No
We have the materiel to adopt the skills			No	No	No
Our leaders know how to employ the skills	No				No
Our leaders want to employ the skills				No	No
We have sufficient manpower to adopt the skills			No		No
We have the trained manpower to adopt the skills			No		No
Our system posts manpower to correct positions					No
We have the facilities to adopt the skills			Yes		Yes
Our policies support the adoption of the skills			No		
We know and follow our policies	No				No
We took actions to replicate the skills	No		No	No	No
We took actions to sustain the skills	No		No	No	No
We participated in training for good relations with the U.S.		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
We participated in training to gain skills	Yes		Yes		
We participated in training to compare systems	Yes				
The U.S. should follow up with the training it provides	Yes			Yes	Yes
The U.S. should better understand our army's needs	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
The U.S. should provide equipment with training		Yes			Yes

Some of the participants observations did not align with the intended purpose of the interview question that was asked. However, all the observations I used for analysis aligned with a code that related to one of the anticipated variables or the final question about how the United States could perform SFA better. The first three variables related to the success of transferring skills were about the effectiveness of the instructors, ability of the students, and the appropriateness of the subject matter of the training. The second group of variables related to capability development inquired if the army had the elements of military capability to turn the skills gained through the training into capability. The elements of military capability consists of doctrine, organizations, materiel, proficient leaders, sufficient amount of trained personnel, facilities, and policies. The third group of variables were the army's efforts to replicate and sustain the capability improved or created by the training. The final variable was the nation, army, or leader's motivation for participating in the United States provided training. The final interview question of how could the United States perform SFA better garnered enough similar responses that I assigned a category to those responses and participant observations.

All the participants expressed their perspectives based on their vantage point and different experiences. Given the diversity of SFA training programs that the research participants experienced and the different viewpoints as trainees and leaders, it was understandable that there were discrepant responses. As I described previously, one of the participants provided responses that were almost all contrary to his peers and I eliminated his data from my analysis. There were several cases of individual perspectives on a topic

contradicting the rest of the responses from that group and one instance of multiple group members with contrary perspectives. The contrary perspectives remained part of my analysis to provide weight to the group's cumulative perspective and to develop the overall essence of the population's experience. I describe these discrepant cases in further detail in the results section of this chapter.

### **Evidence of Trustworthiness**

#### **Credibility**

To ensure the credibility of my research I used researcher reflexivity, peer checks, and triangulation as planned. Following the interviews, I listened to the recordings multiple times and reflected on my understanding of what the participants said to try and identify any misinterpretation that might have occurred due to my bias or perspectives from my background. Even during the interviews, I paused after the participants responses to reflect on my understanding and often asked for clarification or rephrased the question to get a second response for comparison.

Checking my notes with peers also helped to confirm the credibility of the data. I reviewed major elements of my notes with three peers with experience working development projects in Africa. Two of the peers had Western backgrounds and one had a Sub-Saharan Africa background. The review with peers confirmed my interpretation of responses and the credibility of the data collected.

Triangulation was the most useful action I took to improve credibility. The collection of data from multiple viewpoints provided for several opportunities to conduct triangulation. The convergence of perspectives between the leaders and trainees, and the

three groups of trainees provided significant evidence of the credibility of the data collected.

### **Transferability**

My plan to maximize transferability through thick descriptions and variations of participant selection and cases was adjusted from my original intent. I never intended my study to be universally transferable and the adjustments do not change the fact that every SFA training program consists of different human interactions and environmental factors that require analysis to determine the level and appropriateness of transferability of my research to other SFA phenomena. The participants did not possess the degree of variation as planned with a shortage of enlisted soldier participation and not obtaining six participants from the unit training, individual skills and army leader groups. My inability to interview unit training participants from multiple unit training programs limits the transferability of my study. However, the data collected were sufficient to establish themes from multiple perspectives on multiple cases.

Because the army's country and the training subjects are masked in my study, the description of the participant's perspectives are not as rich as possible. Especially the omission of training topics reduces the ability to determine the transferability of the study. However, themes did emerge within each group so that readers can assess the transferability among similar populations that represent the type of training which was unit training, individual skills and leader education.

**Dependability**

To ensure consistency of data collection to address threats to dependability, I followed my plan without modification. During the interviews, I referred to the interview protocols prior to asking each question. Following the interviews I compared responses to ensure I was consistent in data collection.

**Confirmability**

I executed my plan to ensure other researchers can confirm the data and maintain confirmability. As stated previously I conducted research reflexivity, triangulation, consistent data collection, and peer reviews which were my strategies to mitigate any threats to confirmability of my research. My inability to interview participants from multiple SFA unit training programs limits the confirmability of my research. Other SFA unit training programs did occur for the Sub-Sahara African army of my study but with significant different levels of resources. Similar programs occurred as the one experienced by the participants of unit training I interviewed except in a shorter amount of time and with fewer instructors. Another researcher that collects data from SFA unit training participants that had fewer resources may collect dissimilar data.

**Research Results**

I analyzed the data of my research within each group and population then compared between groups and populations to meet the objectives of my study. My research plan intended to gather information about different types of training by gathering data from three groups that experienced either unit training, individual skills training, or leader education. My research included a second population consisting of army leaders

which provided a population to compare the data from the trainee interviews and to gain a knowledgeable perspective on the army's motives and capacities.

I organized the results using the variables previously identified that were grouped into four major topics. The four major topics of variables were the transfer of skills, capability development, capacity development, and motivation for participating in the SFA training. By organizing in this fashion, my results provided a description of each group's perspective towards the success of multiple SFA training programs at transferring skills, capability development, capacity development, and the motivation for participation in the SFA training plus their suggestions for improving future SFA programs. The results of the group analysis also identified the participant's perspective of which variables inhibited the transferring skills, capability development, and capacity development.

After developing the themes for each participant group, I compared the results within each group. The three groups of trainees were based on the type of training they received and the subgroups were based on the participants ranks. The army leader group had two subgroups based on their relationship with employing or institutionalizing capabilities within their army. After comparing results within the groups, I compared the results between each group of trainees and with each trainee group and the army leaders. I also compared results between the total population of trainees with the army leaders, and finally analyzed all the data as a single group.

The group analysis and cumulative analysis of the trainees perspectives provided answers to RQ1. The analysis of the leaders group provided answers to RQ2. The

comparison of trainees and leaders perspectives highlighted similarities and differences that clarified the essence of each group's perspectives and the total population's perspectives.

### **Transfer of Skills**

I used the three components of the didactic triangle as the key variables to explore the effectiveness of SFA training to transfer skills. The didactic triangle consists of the teacher, student, and subject matter (Riquarts & Hopmann, 1995). The corresponding military terms that I used in this study are the instructor, trainee, and training subject.

The participant groups that received SFA training were able to express their perspectives on all the elements of transferring skills in terms of their experience. The two senior leaders that also participated in SFA training expressed their perspectives on the transfer of skills based on their trainee experiences. The group of army leaders when responding as leaders were only able to respond to inquiries about the appropriateness of training subject and not the effectiveness of the instructors or the ability of the trainees to acquire the skills.

The overall theme between the recipients of all forms of SFA training was that they believed the skills the SFA training programs intended to transfer did so successfully. The army leaders did not comment on the transfer of skills because they did not have firsthand knowledge except the two that commented in context of their individual experiences as trainees. All participants of U.S. SFA provided training believed they gained new skills.

**Effectiveness of SFA training program instructors to teach the skills.** All the participants that received training expressed that the U.S. instructors were effective. The expressions of satisfaction with the United States instructors were very effusive consisting of terms such as “wow,” “fantastic,” “class-a,” and “the world’s top experts.” Participants commented positively on the instructors’ knowledge, experience, organization, and training aids.

Some participants of training believed that cultural communication barriers initially inhibited learning. A majority of each of the trainee groups commented that acronyms or accents were difficult to understand at the beginning of the training. Three participants commented on acronyms and eight complained about accents. All believed these two barriers to communication were overcome within days or a week of beginning the training because the instructors adjusted by explaining acronyms better or the students became better at understanding the accents. The participants of unit training expressed the most concern because their training involved many junior enlisted soldiers that had previously never heard an accent from the United States or possessed limited English abilities.

Unit training participants believed that the U.S. instructors adapted their teaching styles and subjects to the needs of the trainees. This observation was unique to the unit training participants and was not surprising given the training environment. The unit training occurred in a remote and austere location in which the instructors lived with the trainees for a long duration. The unit training instructors had the opportunity to learn about the unit and army’s training shortcomings and could adjust the training to address

those challenges. The individual skills training was too short for the instructors to learn of the trainees requirements and make adjustments. Although the leader education training was at least as long as the unit training program, the courses were designed primarily for U.S. trainees and not significantly modified for foreign students.

**Effectiveness of SFA training program trainees to acquire skills.** The unit training participants expressed that they received extensive training by their army prior to the SFA training and that the noncommissioned officers that were part of the unit were specially selected by their army. The individual skills and leader education groups did not receive preparatory training from their army and several participants from those groups felt their leaders selected the students for reasons other than developing capacity. Three participants of the leader education training believed that student selection was based on neo-patrimonial reasons and constituted a reward because the SFA training would be enjoyable or career enhancing. Two participants of the individual skills training thought the student selection was based on the availability of the individual and minimizing the impact of losing that individual to their parent organization during the training period. Despite concerns about the appropriate selection of students, all the research participants that participated in SFA training thought the trainees were able to understand the training subjects after overcoming initial barriers to communications.

**The impact of training subjects on the transfer of skills.** All the research participants that received training from the United States believed that the training subjects were understandable and that they mastered the skills. However, the participants had major concerns about the training subjects applicability and utility. I address the

perceptions of training subject applicability and utility in my description of the results involving the variable doctrine.

Table 8 provides a summary of the participants' responses to inquiries about the effectiveness of SFA training to transfer skills. The far left column lists the major topics of inquiry which were the three elements of the didactic triangle and a summary question about the success of transferring skills. The subsequent columns provide the results as the number of positive responses from participants of the three groups that received training in the three different types of training. The column headings depict the type of training and in parenthesis are the total population for that type of training. The table depicts the uniform positive perception that SFA training successfully transferred skills.

Table 8

*SFA Training Transfer of Skills Effectiveness*

Elements of skills transfer	Unit training (4)	Individual training (5)	Leader education (8)
Instructors effective	4	5	8
Trainees effective	4	5	8
Training subjects understandable	4	5	8
Overall, did skills transfer	4	5	8

**Capability Development**

The variables I used to inquire about the development of a capability as a result of SFA training was the U.S. military's measurements of capability that consist of: doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2015a). I did not inquire about training as part of capability development because the topic was addressed during the inquiries about the

transfer of skills. However, the topic of training did come up in several interviews when discussing the sufficiency of manpower of the army to establish a capability.

All participants were able to comment on the subject of capability development. I was careful to clarify the leader responses as either referencing their experience as a trainee or their perspective as a leader looking at SFA programs as a whole and not just a specific program. The major theme of the participants' experiences was that capability development occurred as a result of unit training but it did not or only a little as a result of the individual skills or leader education.

A shortcoming of my research that I previously described was the availability for my research of unit training participants from only one SFA training program. The data I collected from the interviews was only in regards to that one unit training program. I inquired of all the participants about their perspective on other SFA unit training. None of the participants had a perspective about the other unit training because they did not participate and could not identify the units that received training. The lack of a perspective is significant, especially among the army leaders that had wider visibility of the army's activities. All the army leaders and almost all the trainee participants were able to identify by name the unit that received the training from which I collected data but all were unable to name other units that received similar training. The units that received similar training participated in programs with fewer resources and of shorter duration than the unit from which I collected data. The lack of a perspective about the units that received training with fewer resources and duration implies that the SFA unit training

with fewer resources and shorter duration had less of an impact at developing a capability that translated into combat effectiveness.

**Impact of the recipient army's doctrine and policy on the development of capability.** Doctrinal differences between the U.S. army and the Sub-Sahara African army was the major reason cited by participants from every group that hindered the development of capability. Each group had a majority that believed that their army did not adopt or modify their army's doctrine to use the skills gained as a result of the training. All participants of the unit training group stated that their unit adopted the U.S. doctrine but that they were unique and conducted their small unit operations different than the rest of their army. Three participants from the leader education group expressed that the training was too U.S. centric and two of the army leaders thought that most of the SFA training was too U.S. centric. Fifteen of the 20 research participants believed that doctrinal differences kept their army from developing capabilities as a result of the SFA training. Four of the participants did not provide a response about the doctrinal differences and one disagreed with the majority and believed that doctrinal differences did not inhibit the development of capabilities.

The unit training participants believed the training subjects were very useful and used the skills with success during counterinsurgency operations. They all believed their army should adopt the way of fighting and doctrine they were taught during SFA unit training. All the unit training participants also observed that their unit's unique way of operating caused issues when new soldiers joined the unit that did not have the SFA training which caused the unit's capability to degrade. The unit training participants

particularly appreciated two elements of marksmanship training that involved basic rifle marksmanship and night firing. One participant expressed his confidence in shooting by stating that after the training if he could see the enemy then he could kill him. Another participant expressed his confidence in the entire unit's ability to shoot at night by stating that other units were afraid of the enemy at night, but he welcomed them knowing that the unit would kill them.

The individual skills group and leader education group participants mostly thought the training subjects were not helpful for developing a capability or conducting a counterinsurgency and few used any of the skills because they did not fit how their army operated. Only one of the leader education participants thought the skills gained from the SFA training had application for his army. The other leader education participants and the individual skills participants felt that the way their army operated was too different from skills provided by their training. None of the participants that received individual skills or leader education training used the skills they were taught very much. Two participants stated that they used the skills "not much" and the remaining 11 stated they did not use them at all. The majority of participants of individual skills and leader education training believed they gained information and experience that made them better officers although they could not specify a skill that improved them as officers. Three of the 5 army leaders also had the opinion that United States-provided training usually did not apply to their army because of the way they operate and due to their lack of resources. One of the leaders expressed his dissatisfaction with SFA programs applicability to their army's

needs by stating in frustration that the United States needs to stop cramming things down their army's throat that don't help.

Several of the participants had the perspective that their army does not desire to adopt U.S. doctrine. Two individual skills and three leader education participants stated that they were told by peers or seniors to not talk about their experiences during the SFA training and to concentrate on doing their tasks as they had always been done. Some of the participants believed that their army had no equivalent doctrine to compare what they learned during the SFA training. Two individual skills and one army leader participant stated that their army does not conduct or have the ability to conduct the tasks the SFA programs trained; therefore, the training subject was irrelevant to their army

**Impact of the recipient army's organizations on the development of capability.** Nine of the 20 research participants perceived that their army did not have the organizations to implement the skills they gained during SFA training. All of the unit training and a majority of the individual skills participants expressed the perspective that the lack of organizations or form of organizing inhibited their army's ability to perform the tasks the SFA training provided. One participant from the leader education group and one of the army leaders believed organizations hindered capability development. The divergent views of the trainee groups could be a result of the subject matter of their training. Some of the training subjects required specific organizations to perform the tasks but most of the leader education tasks were more generalized and intended to be skills that could apply among different organizations.

**Impact of the recipient army's available materiel on the development of capability.** Some of the research participants believed that their army lacked required materiel to perform the skills SFA programs trained. All of the unit training and a majority of the army leader participants believed that shortages of equipment hindered the development of capabilities as a result of SFA training. Two individual skills and one leader education participant expressed similar perspectives. The subject matter of the training was likely a major determinant of the group differences. The unit training skills required significant equipment to perform the tasks trained on, while the individual skills and leader education skills were less equipment dependent.

**Impact of the recipient army's leaders on the development of capability.** A majority of research participants had the perspective that an issue with their leadership hindered the development of capacity as a result of SFA training. Ten of the trainee population expressed concerns with their leadership and three of the army leaders agreed. All of the groups had a majority express concern with leaders except the individual skills group. Most of the individual skills group participants did not express a perception or opinion about their leader's ability to employ the skills they gained from SFA training.

Nine of the 13 research participants that believed leaders hindered capability development, to include two army leaders, believed their leaders lacked the knowledge to appreciate and employ the newly acquired skills. Eight participants to include two army leaders thought that leaders were too distracted to employ the skills developed by SFA training. The distractions cited were self-interest and political reasons that were not described in detail. One of the army leaders was referring to civilian leaders, while one

was referring to his peers, and the third leader's concerns were about both military and civilian leaders.

**Impact of the recipient army's personnel availability and personnel system on the development of capability.** Most of the participants thought their army had a problem with personnel that inhibited the development of capability. Half the participants perceived that their army had personnel shortages. Several of the participants expressed other concerns about the personnel system.

Ten of the research participants thought their army lacked sufficient manpower to employ the skills they trained on during SFA programs. The majority of participants from the unit training and leader education perceived that their army had shortages of manpower that hindered capability development. Two participants from the individual skills group and two from the army leaders group also thought manpower shortages impacted capability development negatively.

A number of research participants believed that their army's soldiers did not have enough training to employ the skills. Although training was not a topic when I inquired about capability development, it came up in several interviews when discussing personnel. A majority of the unit training group and two participants from each of the other groups thought that other than those that received SFA training their army's soldiers could not perform the skills which kept those skills from becoming capabilities within their army.

A small number of the research participants thought their army's personnel system did not assign individual commensurate with their skills which inhibited the

development of capabilities. Three research participants to include two from the individual skills training and one army leader used the term “ad hoc” to describe their assignment system.

**Impact of the recipient army’s facilities on the development of capability.**

Participants from the unit training believed their army lacked the facilities to develop the skills they gained through SFA training, but the remainder of research participants thought otherwise. The unit training participant’s concern about facilities was regarding the facilities required to train on the subject matters they trained on during SFA unit training. The training subjects for the unit training required large ranges, training areas, and numerous training aids. In contrast, most of the training topics for the individual training and leader education did not require significant facilities. None of the participants expressed any concern with their army’s facilities to perform the skills in operations.

**Impact of the recipient army’s policies on the development of capability.**

Only one army leader and one unit training research participant thought their army’s existing policies inhibited the development of military capabilities the SFA training supported. A number of participants expressed the failure of their army to know and follow their policies made the policies irrelevant to capability development. One unit training participant and two participants from each of the other groups believed their army lacked or did not follow their policies. Four participants, including two leaders, used the term “ad hoc” to describe their army’s policies.

Table 9 is a summary of the research participant responses regarding capability development. The far left column lists the variables that are the elements of capability excluding training which was addressed in the previous section on the transfer of skills. The subsequent columns provide the participant responses organized by the major groups of trainees by training type and the army leaders with the maximum number of possible responses in parenthesis. The data in each column depicts the number of affirmative responses meaning that the participant responded that the corresponding variable did hinder capability development.

Table 9

*Elements That Hindered Capability Development*

Elements of capability	Unit training (4)	Individual training (5)	Leader education (8)	Army leaders (5)
Doctrine	4	3	7	3
Organization	4	3	1	1
Materiel	4	2	1	3
Leaders	3	2	5	3
Personnel	4	4	4	2
Facilities	3	0	0	0
Policy	1	2	2	3

Table 10 displays the research participant responses regarding their army's capability development as a result of the SFA training. The first column lists the possible responses. The subsequent columns provide the corresponding participant responses organized by the major groups of trainees by training type and the army leaders with the maximum number of possible responses in parenthesis.

Table 10

*Capability Development as a Result of SFA Training*

Response	Unit training (4)	Individual training (5)	Leader education (8)	Army leaders (5)
Yes	4	0	0	0
Little	0	1	1	3
No	0	4	7	2

**Capacity Development**

The research participants almost universally believed that their army did not develop any capacity as a result of the SFA programs. All but two participants perceived that their army was not able to replicate or sustain the skills or capabilities developed. None of the participants believed their army developed capacity as a result of SFA training. Only one trainee of leader education and one army leader did not provide an opinion based on their experiences.

The research finding that the SFA programs did not develop capacity to such a universal degree is the most impactful finding of my study. Practitioners, planners, and policy makers of SFA programs should all take note of this shortcoming and take actions to ensure capacity development is part of every SFA program and evaluated for success. Without capacity development the SFA programs only develop temporary capabilities at best and require the United States to repeat the same programs to sustain a capability in a foreign military.

**Efforts and effectiveness of the recipient army to replicate the capabilities obtained as a result of SFA training.** According to almost all the participants, their

army was not able to replicate the capabilities that developed as a result of the SFA training. Sixteen research participants thought that their army did not make an effort to replicate the capabilities the SFA training attempted to develop. Two participants believed their army made a little effort and two did not express an opinion. Notably, none of the participants thought their army made a strong effort to replicate the capabilities. All four unit training participants responded that their unit replicated the tasks but as replacements came to the unit without training the capability of the unit degraded. The unit training participants also thought that other units in their army did not have the same skills and that their army did not replicate the capabilities for the army. The reasons the trainee participants provided for the lack of replication were primarily that the skill was not adopted by their army or a lack of resources.

The four army leaders that stated their army did not replicate the capabilities SFA training tried to provide also stated that lack of adoption and resources kept them from trying to replicate the skills. Three of the army leaders explained that their army did not adopt the new skills because they were too overwhelmed with current operations to develop new doctrine and training programs required to replicate the capabilities.

**Efforts and effectiveness of the recipient army to sustain the capabilities obtained as a result of SFA training.** Almost all the participants thought that their army did not conduct sustainment activities relevant to the capabilities the SFA training programs intended to develop. One army leader and one leader education participant did not have observations about their army's effort to sustain any capabilities developed from SFA training. Two participants from the individual skills group and three from the leader

education group plus one army leader believed that there was not an option for their army to conduct sustainment activities because the SFA training did not develop any capability. The remaining 13 participants which included all the unit training participants, and a majority of army leaders thought their army lacked the ability to sustain the tasks. The three army leaders cited the lack of resources. The four unit training participants thought resources, a lack of leadership, and the ad hoc nature of the training system kept their army from sustaining the capabilities their SFA training created.

Table 11 provides the summary of responses regarding capacity development as a result of SFA training. The far left column lists the two variables of capacity development. The subsequent columns show the responses by group as an affirmative for the variables in terms of hindering capacity development with the maximum number of possible responses in parenthesis. The table displays the uniform perspective of the participants that the SFA training did not develop capacity with the exception of two participants that did not provide a response.

Table 11

*Elements That Hindered Capacity Development*

Elements of capacity development	Unit training (4)	Individual training (5)	Leader education (8)	Army leaders (5)
Capability replication	4	5	7	4
Capability sustainment	4	5	7	4

**Motivation for Participation in SFA Training**

My inquiry about their nation's and army's motivation for participating in the SFA training programs surprised most of the participants and was not something many of

them had considered, but all except one participant was able to provide their perspective very quickly. Half of the research participants thought their army or government's primary reason for participating in the training was to maintain positive relations with the United States. A majority of the individual skills group and the army leaders, plus one unit training participant and three participants from the leader education group thought relations with the United States was the primary motivation for SFA participation. The primary reason cited for wanting to maintain relations with the United States was respect for U.S. military's capabilities and technology. The four army leaders thought that their nation and army could receive more assistance with their ongoing counterinsurgency from the United States if they had better relations. One of the leaders stated that the United States could end their insurgency problems if they wanted and cited how quickly the U.S. military defeated ISIS once the decision to intervene was made.

Less than half the participants believed their army participated in the training in order to gain skills. All the unit training participants and two army leaders, plus one participant from each of the individual skills and leader education groups thought that part of their army's motive for participating the SFA training was to gain skills and develop capabilities. Since the unit training participants did gain capabilities that they used as a unit, it was logical that they all perceived that capability development was a motive of their army.

Several of the participants believed their army's motive for participating in the training was to develop the ability to compare systems. Three of the leader education participants and one army leader thought the skills and United States' systems that the

leader education courses exposed to the trainees was of benefit and a reason their army participated in those courses. They thought the experience of being a trainee in the United States and instruction on U.S. military systems gave their army a comparative example from which they could access the efficiency of their army's systems.

### **Suggestions for Improving Future SFA Programs**

Most of the participants provided more than one suggestion to improve the effectiveness of SFA training programs. An exception was the leader education group that only had one participant suggest a single action that was similar to any of the other participant. The other six leader education participants either did not have a perspective or provided a suggestion that was not shared by any of the other 20 participants.

Over half the participants thought the United States should make greater efforts to understand their army's capability and capacity shortcomings to design SFA programs that could fill the existing gaps. A majority of the army leaders and individual skills participants believed that the United States needs to understand their army's situation and challenges better in order for SFA programs to have an impact. One participant from the unit training group and three from the leader education group had the same perspective for a total of eleven participants. One of the army leaders asked in exasperation why the United States trained their army on equipment they don't have and conducted programs that do not help them with their current insurgency.

Half the participants suggested that the United States should follow up the training to determine future improvements or necessary actions required to fully develop the desired capability and capacity. The majority of army leaders and all the unit training

participants along with two participants from both the individual skills training and the leader education groups thought that SFA training should be followed up by the United States to assess its effectiveness and provide additional training or resources if needed to achieve the objectives of SFA programs to develop capabilities and capacities.

Several of the participants thought the United States needs to include equipment as part of future SFA programs. Two participants from both the unit training and army leaders groups and one leader education participant believed that SFA training would be more effective if equipment was provided as part of the SFA training. The lack of comments on equipment from the individual skills training and the leader education participants most likely was a reflection of the training subjects for those SFA training programs which did not significantly involve equipment.

The differences in the SFA training programs subject matter, type of training and many other variables account for the discrepant responses between groups. The format of the single SFA unit training program was significantly different from the other types of training. The different training format and reliance on unique training facilities for the unit training explains why the unit training group had different perspectives about the impact of facilities on capability development and the utility of the program.

There were only three variables that had discrepant responses that were contrary to the majority of the perspectives within a group. The three intergroup discrepant variables were the impact of doctrine, leaders, and manpower on the development of capability. The intergroup discrepant responses that did match other participant's

responses remained part of my analysis to provide weight to the group's perspective and to develop the overall essence of the population's experience.

The intergroup discrepant cases all occurred within the leader education group. The population of leader education participants attended five different courses in the United States. The training subjects at each of the five courses were significantly different and the unique experiences of the participants accounts for the variations of perspectives.

One of the leader education participants thought the U.S. doctrine was similar to his army's doctrine and did not hinder capability development. The participant with the single discrepant response regarding doctrine may have an accurate perception of his experience for the unique skills he learned, but the overall perspective of that group was that doctrine did hinder capability development.

Three participants from the leader education group felt that their leaders had adequate knowledge about the skills they learned to employ them properly. Within the leader education group the perspectives were evenly split with three participants believing their leaders did not possess the knowledge to employ the skills they gained. The unique training subjects and skills the participants gained from their SFA leader education training experiences and could account for the discrepancy of responses about the variable of leaders hindering the development of capability. I used the data from the contrary perspectives to compare across groups and populations to determine how they impacted the overarching themes.

One leader education training participant disagreed with three participants from the same group about manpower's impact on capability. The one discrepant response was that sufficient manpower existed in their army to develop the capability the SFA training intended to develop. Again the singular discrepant perspective could be accurate given the subject matter of that participants training but the overall perspective of the leader education group matched the other group's perspectives that manpower shortages hindered SFA programs achieving the goal of capability development.

### **Summary**

I described my data collection and detailed results of my research organized by key variables. I further described my analysis of the data. To summarize the research results I described how the results answer the research questions.

The perspectives of Sub-Sahara African soldiers that participated in my research on training received from the United States were similar within groups that experienced similar training but different between the groups that experienced dissimilar training. All the groups that received SFA training felt they gained new skills as a result of the training but only the unit training participants thought the skills they gained had application and were useful during counterinsurgency operations. The unit training participants believed that their unit developed capabilities from the training but that their army was not able to replicate the capabilities among other units or sustain them within their unit. The other trainees perceived that the skills they trained did not develop any or very little capabilities and that the skills had little or no application on the ongoing counterinsurgency operations.

The perspectives of leaders of a Sub-Saharan African army on training their soldiers received from the United States was similar to the trainees. The army leaders agreed that the unit training provided capabilities for the unit trained and that the army was only able to marginally replicate and sustain the capability among other units. They agreed that the individual skills training and leader education training had little application to the way their army operates and did not translate to developing capability or capacity.

In the next chapter, I provide an interpretation of my research results to include the application of the agency theory to SFA programs. I also describe the limitations of my study along with recommendations for future research on SFA programs. I conclude the next chapter by describing my recommendations to improve the efficiency of SFA training programs and the implications to positive social change.

## Chapter 5: Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this study was to explore and understand the perspectives of recipients of training as part of U.S. SFA programs from a Sub-Saharan African army that was engaged in counterinsurgency operations. In this qualitative study, I used the phenomenological design to explore the experiences of SFA training recipients and create an in-depth understanding of their perspectives. I explored multiple perspectives of multiple types of SFA training to provide opportunities for confirmation through triangulation and improve the trustworthiness of this study. I used a purposeful sampling technique and employed utilization-focused sampling to ensure the data collected answered the research questions from multiple views. My data collection consisted of interviews with the soldiers that received training as part of three, information-rich SFA training programs that possessed significant differences and senior leaders of the Sub-Saharan African army that received the training. I conducted this study to increase information and knowledge about the effectiveness of SFA programs to achieve the United States' objectives of developing capability and capacity that can help partner nations defeat an insurgent and provide for domestic security.

As a result of my analysis of the research data, I established key findings involving the SFA training program objectives of the transfer of skills, capability development, and capacity development. Participants of SFA training gained new skills as a result of the training. The SFA program that conducted unit training successfully developed capabilities for that unit. Individual training and leader education SFA training

did not develop capability. A major and universal shortcoming of all the SFA training programs researched in this study was that none developed capacity for the Sub-Saharan African army. Table 12 displays the key findings by type of SFA training and the main variable topics of transfer of skills, capability development, and capacity development. The far-left column displays the three main variable topics that are the objectives of SFA training, and each subsequent column displays the success of achieving those objectives. ‘Yes’ indicates that the objective was met and ‘No’ indicates that the objective was not met.

Table 12

*Key Findings on Transfer of Skills, Capability Development, and Capacity Development*

SFA program objectives	Unit training	Individual training	Leader education
Transfer skills	Yes	Yes	Yes
Capability development	Yes	No	No
Capacity development	No	No	No

I also established key findings about the partner nation’s motivation for participating in the SFA programs and the partner nation’s perspectives on how to improve SFA programs. A primary motivation of the Sub-Saharan African army for participating in the SFA training was to develop positive relations with the United States. Members of the Sub-Saharan African army recommended that the United States should take actions to better understand their army’s requirements and challenges to fill capability and capacity gaps that will assist them to defeat an insurgency.

## Interpretation of the Findings

### Foreign Military Development

**Findings related to the transfer of skills.** In this study, I found that skills were successfully transferred as a result of SFA training programs for a Sub-Saharan African army. I explored if differences in culture manifested itself in barriers to communications or misunderstandings between instructors and trainees during SFA training. According to Jandt (2017), communication is a reflection of culture that has the potential to create barriers to intercultural communications. Accents and acronyms were an initial barrier to communications within SFA training programs that was overcome through efforts by both instructors and trainees. Acronyms are a common form of communications within the U.S. military and can be considered an organizational norm of communications. Depending on the degree and duration of the impact of the communications barrier, the effectiveness of the first few days or weeks of training was negatively impacted by barriers to communications stemming from cultural and organizational communication norms.

A major concern found in previous literature that addressed SFA training was the lack of cultural awareness of SFA trainers that limited their ability to transfer skills (Ates, 2014; Corum, 2007; Felicetti, 2006; Hammes, 2016; Livingston, 2011; O'Connor, 2010; O'Connor et al., 2009; Olden, 2014; U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2013; Westerman, 2017). I did not find any evidence that the lack of cultural awareness by SFA instructors inhibited their teaching effectiveness in this study. During my previous work on SFA training programs, I often observed communication barriers and an instructor's

lack of cultural awareness negatively impacting instruction and was somewhat surprised that the results of this study did not find culture as a major issue.

In this study, I did not find issues with the trainees or training subjects concerning the successful transfer of skills. This study did not confirm that the skills transferred but the recipients of the training felt confident that they gained both knowledge and skills from their SFA training experience. Issues did exist with the development of capability involving the trainees and subject matter that I describe in the next section of my study.

**Findings related to the development of capability.** In this study, I found that the participating Sub-Saharan African army did not develop capabilities that assisted in their ongoing counterinsurgency with the exception of the one unit training program. Many of the researchers from my literature review identified that U.S. SFA programs often did not achieve the program objectives in terms of developing military capability (Chandra, 2008; Corum, 2007; Davis, 2014; Grespin, 2013; Hammes, 2016; Ladwig III, 2016; Maisek, 2018; Omelicheva et al., 2017; Regilme, 2018). The findings of this study confirmed that of previous research, indicating that the participating Sub-Saharan African army developed limited capability as a result of SFA unit training but an insignificant amount from the other forms of training. The SFA unit training the participants in this study received was successful at developing capabilities for their unit, but the participants were not aware of other units that achieved such success. Despite my years of working with the participating Sub-Saharan African army, I was not aware of this particular unit's level of success in combat and was surprised by the positive reputation it had among all the research participants.

Biddle et al. (2018) concluded that SFA provided by the United States often failed to prevent the defeat of a partner nation to an insurgency. In the current study, I researched an army that is engaged in an ongoing counterinsurgency, so a final determination of SFA training on the result of the conflict cannot be determined. However, I found that SFA training had an insignificant impact on the Sub-Saharan African army's conduct of their counterinsurgency operations because most of the skills imparted during SFA training were not used with the exception of the unit training. An additional reason the SFA training did not have more of an impact on counterinsurgency operations was that the unit training only increased the one unit's capability that received the training and did not translate to capabilities for other units.

Failing to understand the environment and planning SFA programs within environmental constraints was a major reason many researchers gave for why SFA programs failed (Bruneau, 2015; Chandra, 2008; Corum, 2007; Davis, 2014; Felicetti, 2006; Hammes, 2016; Matisek, 2018; O'Connor et al., 2009; Olden, 2014; Robinson, 2018; Walsh, 2015). The results of this study confirmed those of previous studies, showing that the SFA programs did not take into account the existing elements of capability within the Sub-Saharan African army to design the SFA programs that developed capability with the exception of the single unit that conducted unit training. Existing doctrine, organizational structures, materiel shortages, leaders' knowledge, trained personnel availability, and policies inhibited the development of capabilities within the army. The participants recommendation for the United States to research the

environment more is a strong indicator that the participants perceived that SFA planning was inadequate.

According to much of the existing literature, SFA plans often did not address existing gaps of skills, knowledge, or procedures necessary to develop capability (Bruneau, 2015; Chandra, 2008; Corum, 2007; Felicetti, 2006; Hammes, 2016; Matissek, 2018; O'Connor et al., 2009; Olden, 2014; Walsh, 2015). The findings of this study confirmed that most SFA training did not fill a gap, indicating that the subjects of the SFA training were not used by the trainees or their army with the exception of the single unit I researched that conducted unit training. The army leaders that shared their wider-ranging perspective of SFA across the army and in counterinsurgency operations particularly thought that SFA training did not address their requirements.

Researchers have uncovered other fundamental planning errors in SFA programs, including the failure to allocate enough time and trainers for the programs (Chandra, 2008; Davis, 2014; Hammes, 2016). The data in this study did not provide conclusive findings supporting the concept that SFA programs failed to allocate enough time and trainers to achieve capability development but did provide strong evidence supporting the previous claims. All the research participants could name the unit that participated in extensive training with more resources, including more equipment than other unit training programs. The unit that received training of longer duration and more resources had a reputation of effectiveness in counterinsurgency operations that I interpreted as legendary within the army, whereas the units that participated in less extensive training were unknown to the research participants. The extent of unfamiliarity about the units that

received the reduced training was so extensive that the army's Training Division staff officer that assisted my research by identifying potential participants could not find records of the other unit training to identify the units or participants. My findings support the concept that without enough resources, SFA training was ineffective and that the United States often did not allocate enough resources.

According to much of the literature on the topic of SFA programs, the failure of the United States to plan also included failures to analyze the recipient's ability to sustain the skills and capability the programs intended to develop as well as inadequate preparation of instructors (Bruneau, 2015; Chandra, 2008; Corum, 2007; Felicetti, 2006; O'Connor et al., 2009; Olden, 2014). In this study, I found that the selection of training subjects and the preparation of the instructors was adequate to transfer skills. However, the results of this study confirmed that the army was not able to sustain the skills or the capabilities. Although the one unit that the unit training research participants were members of did develop capabilities, those capabilities started to degrade immediately after the training because the army was not able to sustain them.

**Findings related to the development of capacity.** In addition to issues with capability development, many of the researchers of U.S. SFA found that the programs often did not achieve the program objectives of developing military capacity or failed to include any component of the program that developed the partner nation's capacity to sustain a capability (Chandra, 2008; Corum, 2007; Davis, 2014; Grespin, 2013; Hammes, 2016; Ladwig III, 2016; Matissek, 2018; Omelicheva et al., 2017; Regilme, 2018). The results of this study confirmed that of previous research. This study found no evidence of

capacity development as a result of the SFA training programs provided to the Sub-Saharan African army.

Several of the authors that addressed past failures to develop capacity found that past SFA and international military assistance programs failed to recognize the shortfalls and, as a result, did not plan to address them (Abrahamsen, 2016; Ansorg, 2017; Baaz & Stern, 2017; Detzner, 2017; Schroeder & Chappuis, 2014; Varisco, 2014; Westerman, 2017). The findings of my study did not completely confirm that the planners of SFA training programs did not recognize the capacity issues. My study did not find any evidence that the SFA training programs for the Sub-Saharan African army took steps to address the existing capacity shortfalls.

Merz (2012) and Kapstein (2017) found that it was important for capacity development to include reforms that ensured partner nations employed military capabilities in a fashion perceived as legitimate. My research did not find conclusive evidence supporting the need for reforms to develop capacity but did find potential obstacles to any future attempt at reforms. One participant did address the need to make changes to their army in order to gain public support by stating that the army needed help bringing the army closer to the civilian population because the military and civilians were very detached. The main finding supporting the concept that SFA programs should include efforts at reform was that decisions made by the partner nation about their SFA programs and their army's fashion of doing business or operations were influenced by self-serving or domestic political reasons. The data supporting my finding that decisions were influenced by self-serving or political reasons were participant statements that were

mostly not specific but included statements about trainee selection based on patronage, creating physical legacies, and corruption. My research found that defeating the insurgents was a major motivation of the Sub-Saharan African army but that some decisions were influenced by self-serving or political considerations that could inhibit efforts at reforms intended to ensure the legitimacy of the army.

### **Agency Theory Application to SFA**

The findings of my study confirm previous research that attributed international military development efforts such as SFA programs with issues related to the agency theory. Some of the previous research found SFA problems developed from different objectives between the United States and the partner nation that can be explained by the agency theory (Biddle et al., 2018; Hammes, 2016; Kapstein, 2017; Ladwig III, 2016; Regilme, 2018; Rittinger, 2017). My research also found that the Sub-Saharan African army had some objectives for the SFA training programs that did not conform with the United States' objectives.

Self-serving or political considerations influenced local decisions about the development of capability and capacity by the Sub-Saharan African army. Additionally, my research found evidence that a major objective of the Sub-Saharan African army was to improve relations with the United States which did not translate into the development of capability and capacity. My research also found that the Sub-Saharan African army made little effort to replicate or sustain any capability that SFA programs developed. The overall evidence both in the words of the research participants and the lack of actions to

replicate or sustain capabilities developed by SFA programs, indicate that the principal-agent dilemma existed between the United States and the partner nation of my study.

All the researchers that explained why partner nations lost wars despite U.S. assistance using the agency theory proposed that the United States failed to understand the partner nation government's environment and motives (Biddle et al., 2018; Hammes, 2016; Ladwig, 2016; Regilme, 2018; Rittinger, 2017). My study found that local considerations and motives impacted the outcome of SFA training more than the U.S. objectives. My study also found that the United States likely did not understand the environment evidenced by selecting training topics the partner nation did not desire for its counterinsurgency operation and therefore was unable to replicate and sustain.

My research found a limited amount of evidence supporting the research of Jowell (2018), Needs (2019), and Robinson (2018) who found that neopatrimonialism hindered the obtainment of the sponsor achieving their objectives during military assistance programs. Three participants specifically stated that assignments as trainees or permanent positions in their army were based on patronage. Several participants also commented on the ad hoc nature of their army's policies and manpower systems which provides the opportunity for neopatrimonialism. Although the evidence was not strong, my research found that desires for neopatrimonialism opportunities was a potential agent objective that contradicted the United States' objectives for the SFA programs.

### **Limitations of the Study**

The trustworthiness of my study is limited due to the focused nature of my research. I limited my research to a single Sub-Saharan African army conducting an

insurgency. The relevance of my findings are dependent on the degree of similarities between the phenomena of my research to other SFA and development programs. The data I gathered all came from individuals and their perspectives. The potential dependability and transferability of my study is limited because all individual experiences are unique and all countries operate within unique environments, cultures, and capacities. The need to mask the country and training topics also limited the ability of readers to apply my findings because those key environmental variables are not discussed in my study.

I was concerned with the participants' sincerity during the interviews because they could have been motivated not to disclose anything that others or their leaders may perceive as negative towards their army. However, I perceived the participants as being very forthcoming and the data I collected as creditable with one exception. The participants I used to collect data all disclosed some information that was less than flattering about their army. The one individual I interviewed but did not use the data appeared insincere in his responses and contradicted other research participants by refusing to acknowledge any shortcomings of his army even when asked factual and verifiable questions.

Two unanticipated limitations affecting the confirmability of my study evolved during the conduct of my research. I intended to interview unit training participants from multiple SFA unit training programs but was only able to recruit participants from a single SFA unit training program. The single event that I was able to recruit participants may not be representative of other similar events. As I stated previously, the unit training

participants that I interviewed experienced SFA training that created capabilities and the unit's performance in combat was well known by all the research participants. Other units that received similar training but with fewer trainers, equipment and shorter duration, were unknown to the research participants. My research found that the single unit training program, from which I collected data, developed capabilities but the army was not able to replicate or sustain those capabilities. Therefore, the inability to collect data about more SFA unit training programs limited the trustworthiness of the findings regarding the effectiveness of SFA unit training to develop capabilities and capacities.

I was only able to interview one enlisted soldier as opposed to my intended six. My plan was to interview three enlisted soldiers that participated in unit training and three that participated in individual skills training. The limited data collection from a significant demographic of the relevant population to the phenomena of my research increased the threats to confirmability of my study. Another researcher that replicates my research but collects data from enlisted soldiers should find similar results but there could be some significant differences because of the enlisted soldier's unique viewpoint.

## **Recommendations**

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

My research found that the accents and use of acronyms by instructors created an initial barrier to communications. Although the barriers to communications were overcome by the instructors and trainees, the communications issues slowed the process of developing the group dynamics that facilitate learning during training. The initial issues with communication also call into question the utility of short courses that last one

or two weeks because a significant amount of the training could be ineffective as the students and instructors work to communicate effectively. The form of communication barriers and their impact were unique to the phenomena I researched and unique to different language and cultural communication norms of the country of my study. However, further research to identify the types, degree, and methods to quicken the process of overcoming communications barriers could assist with planning and executing effective SFA programs.

My finding that SFA unit training effectively developed capabilities suffered from trustworthiness because the finding was the result of evidence from a single SFA unit training program. Confirmation about my finding requires additional research about the effectiveness of SFA unit training to develop military capabilities. My findings also confirmed that the effectiveness of unit training was dependent upon the duration of training and amount of resources allocated to the training. To confirm my findings, I recommend further research about the duration, number of trainers, and equipment required to successfully create capability as a result of SFA training could benefit future programs.

All my findings are limited by only researching SFA training programs in one country. To increase the trustworthiness, especially the transferability, or disconfirm my findings requires similar research from other countries. In addition to researching training, I recommend further research on other forms of SFA programs which include organizing, equipping, rebuilding or building, and advising assistance.

### **Recommendations for Improving SFA Training Effectiveness**

In this section, I provide recommendations to improve SFA training intend to increase the effectiveness of developing capability and capacity of an army to defeat an insurgency. The recommendations include the observations of most of the research participants. These recommendations address the problem with U.S. provided SFA training and not about issues with the army that received the training.

**Understanding the partner's environment and army.** Policy makers and planners of future SFA policy and programs should take into account the principal-agent dilemma by planning for the potential of misunderstanding the partner's environment and divergent objectives. The United States should expend more effort to understanding the partner's environment and army to identify training subjects that result in sustainable capabilities that have utility for defeating an insurgency and maintaining security. Understanding the partner's environment and army could also help identify requirements for developing capacity. I agree with the participants recommendation to study and understand the partner and to follow up the training with assessments to better understand the challenges and requirements to developing capabilities and capacities. The National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 required new reporting on programs to develop partner nation capacity and the collection of data on the effectiveness of programs because of the consensus that past SFA programs failed to develop capacity. My research found the lack of capacity development continues to be a problem. Therefore, I recommend reporting requirements within the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 be expanded to conducting multiyear assessments

with the intent to identify shortfalls and develop programs to address the shortfalls to allow enough time to transpire to fully understand the partner's capacity to sustain a newly developed capability.

**Recognizing the limitations of SFA individual skills training and leader education.** Between the 20 research participants, I was able to gather data about five leader education courses conducted in the United States, four individual skills training programs conducted in the Sub-Saharan African country and the United States, and one unit training program conducted in the Sub-Saharan African country. SFA programs intend to achieve objectives other than the development of capability and capacity, such as building relationships, which means that programs that fail to build capacity and capacity should not be eliminated if they achieve other goals. My research found almost no evidence that individual skills and leaders education SFA training programs developed any capability or capacity. Planners and policy makers should recognize the limited ability of SFA individual skills training and leader education to build capability and capacity.

**Plan to resource SFA training appropriately.** The evidence of my research found that only the SFA unit training program which was longer, had more instructors, and provided more equipment than other similar SFA unit training programs developed any capability. A major difference between the individual skills and leader education with the successful unit training SFA program was that the instructors were able to live with the trainees and adopt the training to their situation. Because of the extensive amount of resources required for successful SFA training, the United States should

consider limiting its SFA efforts to developing capabilities that are most essential for its partners and prioritize the requisite amount of resources for success and development of partner nation capacity to replicate and sustain the capabilities.

**Address all elements of capability.** When planning capability development as part of SFA programs, planners should analyze the existing status of all the elements of capability to include doctrine, organization, training, materiel, leadership and education, personnel, facilities, and policy (Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2015a). To assess all the elements of a capability requires a significant investment in my first recommendation which is to understand the partner's environment and army. SFA programs must address gaps in any of the elements to positively develop capability.

The goal of my recommendations is to improve SFA training by ensuring the training subjects are appropriate and sustainable. The training subjects and skills that SFA training intends to transfer should be subjects and skills the trainees can utilize and the recipient army can adopt to effectively combat an insurgent and maintain security. Additionally, SFA training programs must allocate enough resources to ensure the development of both capability and capacity.

## **Implications**

### **Positive Social Change Implications**

My research findings identified issues with SFA training programs for a Sub-Saharan African army conducting a counterinsurgency. My recommendations and other actions taken to remedy these issues could benefit the trainees, their units, their army, and potentially their nation. Creating more effective SFA programs will also help the United

States achieve the goals of its National Security Policy which intend to improve security for the United States and the international community.

The trainees could benefit by receiving training on skills that they can employ to effectively execute a counterinsurgency. The appropriate skills gained through SFA training would improve the trainee's survivability in combat. Additionally, improving the skills of the soldiers will increase the effectiveness of their units to counter the efforts of insurgents to create instability.

The trainees' army and nation would also benefit by the development of military capabilities that defeat insurgents. The army would suffer fewer casualties and expend fewer resources on ineffective operations. The establishment or maintenance of security is a foundational requirement for environments in which human development can thrive (Adefisoye & Bamidele, 2018; Ani, 2016). The nation would gain from improved security in which the citizens and the government can concentrate their efforts and resources on human development programs such as education, the environment, and health.

By improving SFA programs the United States will be more likely to achieve its security goals that depend on strong and capable partners. The U.S. National Security Policy intends to establish secure environments that deny safe havens for terrorists and defeat insurgencies against U.S. partners. Establishing and maintaining secure environments has the effect of avoiding humanitarian crises caused by human conflict and denies terrorists the means to threaten international security (The White House, 2017).

### **Methodological and Theoretical Implications**

The method of researching SFA programs years after the programs occurred has implications for future research or assessments of SFA. Three of the participants that suggested that the United States should follow up SFA training to identify the success and take actions to correct shortcomings also stated that the follow ups should look similar to my research. The assessment of capability development as a result of SFA training could occur immediately following the training but assessing the military's capacity or the SFA program's capacity development requires persistent engagement to include observations made years after the conduct of SFA programs.

The failure to ensure SFA training programs included training topics that the recipient army could utilize and that would benefit counterinsurgency operations along with the divergent goals of the partner's army are major implications that require changes to future development of SFA programs. My study confirmed the existence and impact of the agency theory's principal-agent dilemma during the SFA training programs of my research. My study found that the participants believed their nation and army had objectives of higher priority than the development of capability and capacity which were the objectives of the United States for SFA programs. The existence of the principal-agent dilemma will continue to impact future SFA programs.

### **Conclusion**

As domestic conflict became the global norm for conflict (Pettersson & Eck, 2018), the demands on militaries of the developing world also increased. The inability of third world nations to manage domestic conflict created humanitarian crisis (O'Brien,

2017) and ungoverned spaces in which international terror organizations thrived (Gat, 2012; Pettersson & Eck, 2018; The White House, 2017). Human suffering and stagnation of human development occurred in the insecure environments effected by insurgencies. U.S. National Security Policy during multiple administrations (The White House, 2013, 2017) aimed to reduce the issues of insurgency and the development of international terror organizations by strengthening the security forces of partners to manage domestic conflict.

A problem with the U.S. strategy to create secure environments is that the United States' efforts to develop foreign militaries has not been very successful. Past efforts to assist partners conducting counterinsurgencies often did not result in victory (Biddle et al., 2018; Matissek, 2018). Research from past research on SFA found that recent efforts not only failed to achieve victory for the partner nation but did not develop capabilities and capacities as individual programs intended (Ates, 2014; Chandra, 2008; Corum, 2007; Davis, 2014; Felicetti, 2006; Hammes, 2016; Morris, 2016; O'Connor et al., 2009; Olden, 2014; Parker & Landay, 2016; Robinson, 2018; Watts et al., 2018).

My research of SFA training programs conducted during the past 5 years for a Sub-Sahara African army, found that the researched programs developed limited capabilities and no capacities that assisted the partner successfully execute their ongoing counterinsurgency. The single positive program that developed capabilities that were successfully used during counterinsurgency operations was a SFA unit training program. The research participants that were members of the successful unit claimed their unit defeated the insurgents whenever they came in contact as a result of the skills they gained

from the SFA training. All the army leaders validated this claim and perceived that the unit was superior in combat to similar units in their army. The evidence from my research indicated that this unit succeeded in developing capabilities possibly because of the duration of time and resources allocated to the training that were superior to other SFA unit training programs. The singular successful SFA unit training program with sufficient time, instructors, and equipment could act as a guide to improve future successful SFA programs.

My study found no SFA training programs that developed capacity and that the Sub-Saharan African army's capacity was insufficient to replicate or sustain any capabilities developed as a result of researched SFA training programs. The findings of my study confirmed that the directive in the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2017 for capacity development consideration and planning was needed to improve SFA programs. However, the extent of the problem of identifying capacity shortfalls and developing programs to address them will require significant effort from the planners of future SFA programs. The planning of SFA programs should include an improved understanding of the partner nation army's environment in which it operates to include all elements of capability and capacity.

The United States' efforts to improve instruction and report on capacity should enhance SFA programs and help address some of the causes of past SFA failures. However, these efforts do not address one of the root causes for SFA program failure to develop capabilities and capacities found in my study. The United States needs to overcome its past failure of not understanding the partner nations' environment to select

training subjects that develop critical capabilities and to modify the instruction to the partner's needs. By selecting appropriate training subjects that fill an existing gap in capability and modifying training, SFA programs to the doctrine and environment of the recipient nation's army will improve the effectiveness of SFA programs to develop partner capabilities and capacities to defeat an insurgency and maintain security.

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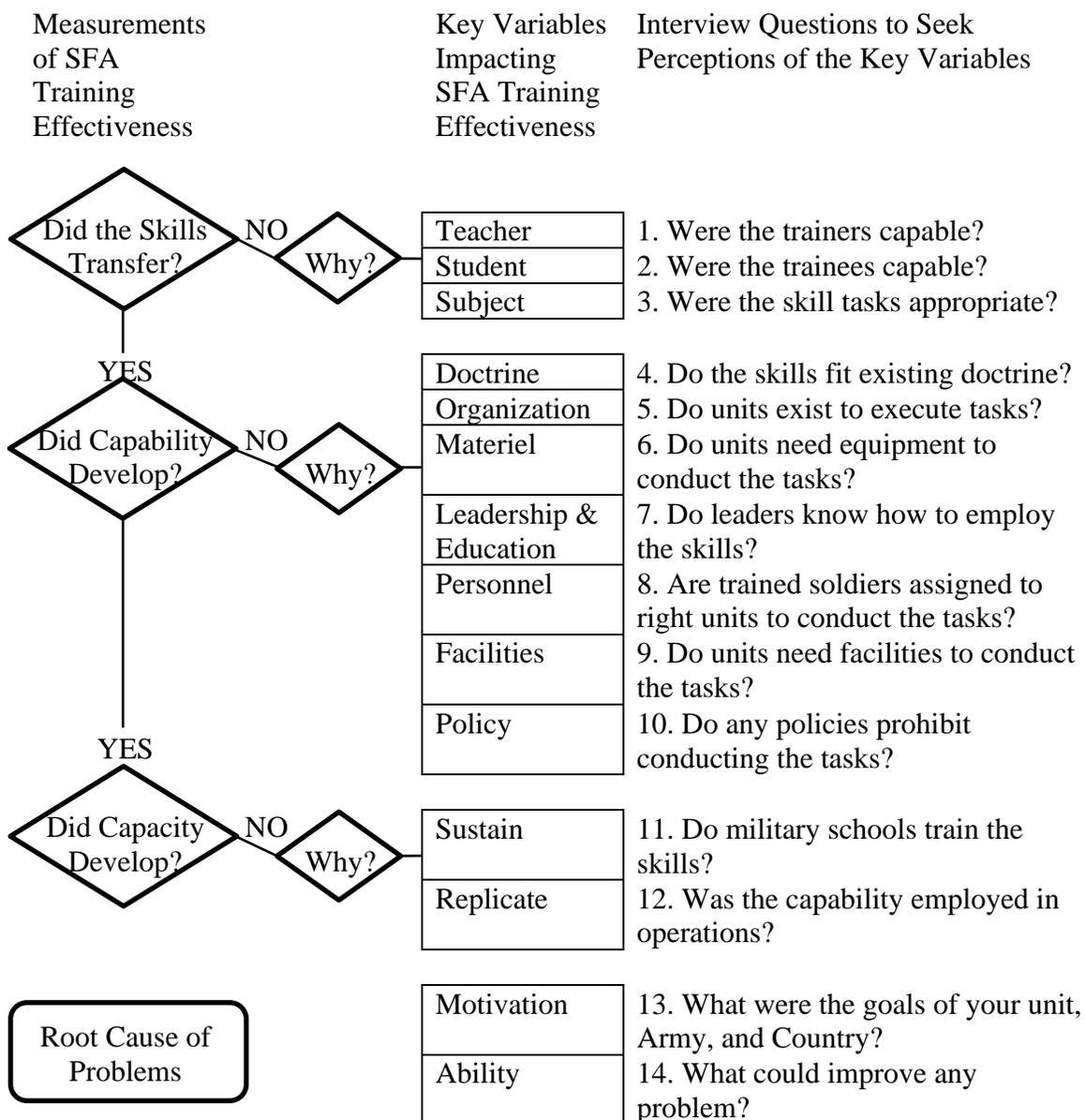
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Appendix A: Interview Question Development Logic Flowchart

This flowchart shows the development of my interview questions. The interview questions ask about the impact of the key variables derived from the measurements of success for SFA training programs and the potential root causes of any problems.



## Appendix B: Trainee Interview Protocol Questions

1. How well did the Americans teach? Did you understand them? Did they have any training aids and how did the aids help?
2. Were you able to understand the instructions? How did you get tested or qualified on any of the skills?
3. How familiar were you with the training subjects before the training and were the training subjects something you can use in your job?
4. Do the skills fit into how your army does business and operate?
5. What units exist to execute tasks you learned? Does your unit execute the skills you learned?
6. Do the units need equipment to conduct the tasks? What equipment?
7. Do your leaders know how to employ the skills? Did they attend the same training or any similar training?
8. Are you and your classmates assigned to units that conduct the tasks? How have you trained on the skills that you learned since the training?
9. Do units need any facilities to conduct the tasks?
10. Is there anything to include policies that keep you or your unit from using the skills?
11. Do any military schools train the skills? What schools and what are the courses?
12. Did you or your unit use your skills in operations? Have you heard of other units using the skills? How did you use the skills and were they helpful?

13. What do you think your unit wanted to get out of the training? Did your commander talk to you about any goals for the training? What do you think your Army and Country wanted to get out of the training?
14. What could improve upon any of the problems with the training and your army's use of the skills? What could have improved the training you experienced?

## Appendix C: Leader Interview Protocol Questions

1. Did you receive a report about the training or any information about how well the Americans instructed? How did the American instructors do?
2. How were the trainees selected for each program and did they receive any preparatory instruction? How well did the trainees do? Did they master the skills?
3. Are you familiar with the specific skills the training developed? Was the subject too simple or complicated for the trainees? Was the training subject matter for each program appropriate for your army?
4. How do the skills fit into how your army does business and operates?
5. Do units exist to execute tasks, and how do they use them?
6. Do the units need equipment to conduct the tasks, and what equipment do they need?
7. Do the unit leaders know how to employ the skills? Did they attend the same training or any similar training? What was the plan to help them employ the new skills?
8. Are the trainees assigned to units that conduct the tasks? What units are they assigned to and how do they maintain proficiency?
9. Did any of the programs cause your army to create new facilities? Are there any facilities needed to perform any of the skills from the programs?
10. Is there anything to include policies that keep your army from using the skills?
11. How have your army's schools incorporated the new skills?

12. How have the skills been used in operations? Were the skills helpful in operations?
13. What did you want to get out of the training? What do you think your Army and Country wanted to get out of the training?
14. What could improve upon any of the problems with the training and your army's use of the skills? What would you like to be different about United States provided training?