



The 2018 UNC-IDB SSFP Class with LTG Joseph Anderson, Deputy Chief of Staff, G-3/5/7, Headquarters, Department of the Army (front row, center)

“Can the Anti-Federalist concerns from 1792 be used to analyze our current executive branch, were the Anti-Federalist concerns valid, did the Constitution give the President too much power?”

This discussion question is a glimpse of the incisive topics deliberated at the Strategic Studies Fellows Program I recently participated in at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill. The graduate level course is a collaborative effort between the Department of the Army and a non-profit organization, the Institute for Defense and Business. The program was a twenty-eight-day in-residence course with military and non-military participants. It entailed in-class discussions, extensive reading material, online blog posts, and numerous team presentations. The course was intense, challenging, and rewarding.

Academically

We learned about U.S foreign policy decision-making in the 20th century and the subsequent consequences influencing the 21st century. We discussed the role and authorities of the National Security Council and the U.S President authorities in declaring war. We discussed US national interests in the global community, countries such as, Putin’s rise to power; China’s aggression towards the nine-dash line with the South China Sea and their Silk Road initiative. We also learned about Iran’s 1979 revolution and its historical theme towards nuclear proliferation as well as Venezuela’s cryptocurrency promotion within the OPEC community. In one of our last courses, professor, Dr. David Schanzer identified and recapped four themes in our current global environment listed below:

- 1) History and foreign encroachments impacts decision-making in a countries national policy strategy.
- 2) The U.S underestimates how strong ideology plays a role in governing. Pragmatic versus ideological, we do not know if our adversary will be one or the other.
- 3) The U.S should not assume adversary actions base their domestic policy making as a reaction to US/western actions.
- 4) Iran, Russia, China, and Syria all want the same thing- globalization and bipolarity.

One article, written by a former NSC senior member, Ernest J. Wilson provided a powerful insight into a new form of foreign policy strategy. Wilson believes in the use of “Smart Power” as a foreign policy strategy. Traditionally, hard and soft power are conducted as separate entities, Wilson proposed the theory that smart strategy incorporates hard and soft power in the initial planning stages. He defines it as the following:

[A] genuinely sophisticated smart power approach comes with the awareness that hard and soft power constitute not simply neutral “instruments” to be wielded neutrally by an enlightened, all-knowing, and independent philosopher king; they themselves constitute separate and distinctive institutions and institutional cultures that exert their own normative influences over their members, each with its own attitudes, incentives, and anticipated career paths...combining soft and hard power effectively means recognizing their interrelations as well as their distinctiveness.

The Smart Power learning lesson will influence my future planning efforts.

Personal

Another incredible part of the program was the people selected to participate. My classmates were extraordinary military and civilians; such as, Alexandra Teskey, an exemplary Army officer who I strongly believe will be a General one day –if she wanted to be. Jim Purvis taught me that patience and strategy go hand in hand; Jordan Simmers constantly vocalized his neutral opinion in both a rational and respectful manner; Alex Plotkin displayed the ability to use Smart power in tackling complex issues; and Casey Williams, taught me to tailor the messaging of my ideas and supportive arguments to align with my audience. Some classmates gave me swimming lessons, some took me out for a run, and some even taught me basic life skills – ironing! Every person I met was exceptional and it was an honor to be among SSFP Class of 2018.



Equally as impressive as my classmates were the professors. Dr. David Schanzer taught me to question my argument and to always be ready to support it with facts. Dr. Navin Bapat provided this guidance for future strategists; always know my adversary and the environment and always think two steps ahead. The course did not specifically teach me how to be a strategist; the strategist skills were by-products of the IDB environment. In the real world, I will be required to work with others that do not think like me. For example, some may place emphasis on military tactics versus diplomatic means to a resolution. No one-solution methodology exists for the complex foreign policy situations, idiosyncratic approaches are necessary. The IDB environment was an example of the macro level ideological differences I will face in the real world- when conducting strategy in future endeavors. Strategist training was not an objective of the course however it consequently placed me in situations that tested my interpersonal strategic caliber.

The days were long, the readings even longer, but the course academically and personally challenged me. This was one of the best courses I have ever taken, if ever presented with an opportunity to attend a mixed course with civilian and military classmates – don’t miss it. Especially if IDB Program Director, Ms. Zebrina Warner is running it!