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How English Became the Global Language, by David Northrup

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done to encourage them to remain on active duty. Kane also outlines why the military's leadership training is so successful and admired by civilian industry.

Tim Kane's background as an Air Force veteran and successful entrepreneur with a PhD in economics gives him the perspective, skill, and insight to offer a comprehensive evaluation of the current system and a blueprint for the future.

Kane conducted an online survey of West Point graduates from six different classes at different stages of their careers. Overall, it was a balanced sample, with approximately 250 respondents, both military and civilian. Based on the results of a first survey, Kane conducted a follow-up to gain additional insight. The results highlight many reasons why young leaders leave the service, and Kane suggests what can be done to curb the exodus.

Kane proposes an alternative to the current All Volunteer Force (AVF)—what he calls the “Total Volunteer Force” (TVF). He posits that there is a “philosophical difference between the current system, which gives people freedom to choose only at the moment of volunteering [the AVF], and a system in which employees are free every day.” Kane's book is unique in that it offers possible alternatives to many of the Army's current personnel policies that young leaders despise. It is relatively easy to criticize bureaucratic policies without offering solutions, but Kane does offer solutions, which the Army has already begun to implement. For example, Kane proposes allowing officers a break in service to enter civilian industry, after which they can return to the military without prejudice—a policy that the Army recently embraced.

One of Kane's major criticisms of the military is that officer promotions, unlike their civilian counterparts, are based more on year seniority than on merit. “It is fair to say that selection to general is highly competitive, but the reality is that longevity is a bigger factor than merit in determining who makes that rank.” The result is that in an effort to make the officer assignment process as fair as possible the system has become outdated and less than optimal for officers and commanders alike. Kane's TVF proposes promotions based on merit and assignments and using a market mechanism—that is, an internal job market, in which officers apply for any open job.

As a retired Army colonel with almost thirty years of active-duty service, many of them as a personnel officer, I was skeptical when I started reading this book. It is difficult to criticize something when you have been a part of the problem. However, I found that Kane has skillfully proposed a series of recommendations that could make a difference. *Bleeding Talent* is a must-read for all on active duty today. Kane's writing style and method of presenting counterarguments make for thought-provoking proposals that merit consideration in today's Army.

THOMAS GIBBONS
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Northrup, David. *How English Became the Global Language*. New York: Palgrave, 2013. 220pp. \$24

In this slim volume David Northrup, a retired Boston College professor of history, gives a clear and concise account of the development of English into the twenty-first century's one truly global

language. First he traces how English became the predominant language in the British Isles, overcoming such rivals as Cornish, Welsh, and Gaelic. Then he looks at how English spread throughout the British colonies that eventually became the United States and Canada. Finally, Northrup analyzes the culminating phase of the globalization of English and its rise to its current status as the lingua franca of the modern world.

To account for this worldwide penetration Northrup points to a number of related developments, especially the way English has become the indispensable medium of international communication in science, business, and higher education. Northrup identifies the meteoric growth of the World Wide Web as the most important factor in spreading English to every corner of the globe.

To his credit, Northrup rejects the easy and fashionable narratives that view the globalization of English as a worldwide cultural disaster and the success of English as one more instance of the West's cultural imperialism. Northrup shows that the spread of English has not necessarily involved the death of other languages. By learning English, in fact, people around the world are generally becoming more bilingual and even trilingual; as Northrup correctly insists, the global diffusion of English is more a matter of "pull" than of "push." To be sure, some governments have mandated the learning of English. However, the "push" of governments has been less successful than the "pull" of people all around the world who simply want to learn the language to make their lives better. Northrup rejects the common view that people are passive with respect to language, that they just sit around waiting to have languages imposed

on them by fiat. Instead, Northrup sees people everywhere taking active roles in their own educations, eagerly embracing English in the hope that it will allow them to trade more freely with the international community, to keep up with the latest developments in science, technology, and popular culture, and to take advantage of the remarkable educational opportunities available in the English-speaking world.

Language is thus a prime example of what the Austrian economist Friedrich Hayek calls "spontaneous order." Spontaneous orders are the result of human action but not of human design. That means that many orderly phenomena in human life, such as the famous "invisible hand" of the market, result not from government central planning but from the seemingly chaotic interaction of widely dispersed people pursuing their individual self-interest yet in the process producing a larger public good.

Language is a human institution that no one plans in advance but that grows out of the active usage of millions of individuals. As Northrup shows, attempts by linguistic experts to create a global language "scientifically" have failed completely, most notably in the case of Esperanto. Despite all the efforts to promote it, even official recognition from UNESCO in 1954, Esperanto has basically languished in the realm of faculty lounges and parlor games. Contrary to the conspiracy theories of postcolonialist pundits, no central authority set out to make English the global language that it is today. Some accidents of colonial history were undoubtedly involved in the process, such as the fact that Britain ruled over the populous Indian subcontinent for several centuries. Yet if English had not appealed to millions

of individuals around the globe on its own, the language would never have achieved the preeminence it now enjoys.

Unfortunately, Northrup's book could have profited from better copyediting and proofreading. It has far too many errors of grammar and spelling (on the order of "Isaac Azimov" instead of "Isaac Asimov"). Ironically, in view of its subject, too much of the "research" is straight from the Internet. I did not expect to see so many citations to

Wikipedia in a scholarly publication.

These problems aside, *How English Became the Global Language* offers a good introduction to its subject for the general reader, who will come away from the book with a better grasp of what brought about the globalization of English and what it means for the world's future.

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