

# In This Issue

The readers of this issue of *JFQ* will find a diverse range of contributions, from a critique of the Bottom-Up Review to the lessons of the Vietnam War. But one particular topic that emerges from among the articles, namely, coalition warfare, deserves special mention. In the current transitional era—between the end of the Cold War and an uncertain new world order—the United States faces the prospect of forging and leading ad hoc multinational coalitions to quell regional unrest abroad and to meet a myriad of other challenges to national security.

Today many people who think or write about coalitions are of two minds about their utility. One view is that coalitions are strategic force multipliers, indispensable vehicles for bolstering both political and military power. As the support for the Gulf War evidenced, multinational coalitions afford international legitimacy while providing enormous resources in human and material terms. The other view of coalitions is that they seldom equal the sum of their parts (or, more precisely, their partners). Systemic impediments prevent coalitions from achieving their potential. Napoleon once remarked that “If I must make war, I prefer it to be against a coalition” and Churchill mused that “The history of all coalitions is a tale of the reciprocal complaints of allies.” Such skepticism on the subject of coalition warfare is deeply rooted in Western history and the profession of arms.

Perhaps there is another way to view coalitions that refrains from both undue optimism and excessive skepticism, but instead is grounded in an understanding of national limitations. “There is no state so powerful,” said the renowned Swiss jurist Hugo Grotius, “that it may not some time need the help of others outside itself. . . .” This has been true

of all major conflicts waged in this century, including the Cold War; it also promises to be axiomatic in the dawn of the next century.

The contributions in *JFQ Forum* focus on the implications for joint and combined warfare of standing up coalitions. From this series of articles a number of pressing concerns come to the fore, among them that:

- ▼ clearly defined national objectives may be more difficult to reach today, but they are particularly vital for coalitions to avoid *interest* and *mission* creep (as illustrated by policy on Somalia)

- ▼ efforts must be made to improve U.S. participation in U.N. operations by centralizing DOD support, raising the level of defense advice given to the U.S. Mission to the United Nations, and harmonizing U.S. doctrine with the traditional tenets of U.N. operations

- ▼ joint task forces will form the nuclei of international coalitions because the United States alone possesses the wherewithal to conduct large-scale, unified actions

- ▼ future coalition commanders must learn to achieve unity of purpose and effort, maximize interoperability, and minimize the risks to American members of coalitions.

Above all, one idea clearly flows from the articles in *JFQ Forum*: whether or not coalitions are effective largely depends on the strength and capacity of their leaders. As Eliot Cohen has observed, “only the greatest efforts by statesmen . . . [can] secure unity and celerity in a coalition of states.”

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