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COALITION WARFARE  
CAN THE GULF WAR BE THE BODILY OF FUTURE?

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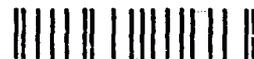
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COALITION WARFARE  
CAN THE GULF WAR-91 BE THE MODEL FOR FUTURE?

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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## ABSTRACT

AUTHOR: H. Mashhud Choudhry

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Coalition warfare has been a common phenomenon in the history of human conflict. Nations join coalitions to safeguard as well as further their own interests. Although coalition adds to the fighting capabilities of the participants, it does not always ensure success. Coalition building requires political, diplomatic as well as military initiatives. Coalitions have to overcome tensions which appear as the participants' interests tend to diverge. The Gulf War-91 was the most recent example of a successful coalition war. Many factors - political, military as well as economic - contributed to its success. The coalition, led by the U.S., acted according to the U.N. resolutions to liberate Kuwait from Iraqi occupation. In many ways this was a unique coalition which could be formed and sustained only because of the positive contributions of all the related factors. This paper argues that such a situation would not prevail in any future crisis. It is therefore concluded that the Gulf War-91 may not be useful as a model for a future coalition.

## INTRODUCTION

"Within an alliance there is always a horse and a rider", said Bismarck to emphasize the advantages of fighting together against a common enemy.<sup>1</sup> Coalition warfare, the term used to denote such a form of waging war, has been a common phenomenon since the early days of human conflict. In the past, belligerent nations have formed alliances, coalitions, blocs or joined in pacts to safeguard as well as further their own interests. It was always perceived by the participants that a whole range of benefits could be derived from such cooperation.

Coalition warfare, despite being recognized as generally beneficial to the involved parties, has not always been the way of waging war. The intricate art of forming coalitions did not lend itself to a set pattern and predicting the future shape of coalitions has always been difficult. As the process of building and sustaining a coalition involved delicate political and diplomatic manoeuvre, it required positive inter-action both at national and personal levels. In the business of coalition warfare, the emissaries and diplomats played as important a role as the generals on the battle fields. It was always a finely orchestrated game where the participants, remaining within the bounds of a mutually agreed relationship, vied for maximizing their own political, economic, and military interests. This invariably caused tensions which the coalitions had to overcome

in order to succeed.

As the most recent example of successful coalition warfare, the Gulf War-91 would provide us with the opportunity to reflect on the mode of forming and sustaining a coalition. This should, in turn, help in determining if this campaign could serve as a model for coalition warfare in the foreseeable future. It is widely believed that regional conflicts such as the Gulf War-91 may replace the Cold War as threat to world peace and the forming of coalitions by nations to face such threats would thus remain a probability. At the same time changing political and military climates would make it very difficult to replicate any past coalition formation and ensure the success of the same.

The purpose of this paper is to study coalition warfare in the backdrop of the Gulf War-91 and to postulate whether the same could be used as a model for the future. For the purpose of this paper the term coalition warfare will be used in a wider connotation to include the concepts of alliance, coalition, pact, bloc or entente which are considered interchangeable by some experts on the subject.<sup>1</sup>

#### HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE OF COALITION WARFARE

It is evident that the relative advantages of coalition warfare were known to nations even in the earliest days of organized warfighting. Recorded history of human conflicts indicate that the warlords of the past were fully aware of the positive effects of alignments and pacts in pursuit of their

political as well as military goals. However, coalitions by themselves did not always guarantee success. The final outcome depended on the extent of additional capability generated by such coalitions as compared to that of the enemy. It may be worthwhile to take a look at a few examples from history to see how coalition warfare was conceived and practiced in the past.

The first instance of coalition warfare in the recorded history could be the battle of Thymbra in the 500 B.C. where the Greeks and the Egyptians joined together to fight the Persian ruler Cyrus.<sup>3</sup> In this confrontation which took place in the Asia minor, Ahmose, the Egyptian king sent a large contingent of heavy infantry to join Crossus, the ruler of Lydia. However, the coalition lost this battle but the Persians made separate peace with the Egyptians because of their being a future potential threat. Despite the negative outcome of the battle for the coalition, it may be noted that the Egyptians and the Greeks, having perceived a common threat in the Persians, did join their forces to face the enemy. Another aspect of coalition warfare would also suggest itself in this case. The Egyptians, by virtue of being a party to the conflict could obtain a separate deal from the Persians in spite of the total defeat of their ally. This aspect of deriving possible individual benefits irrespective of the fate of the coalition would feature in many of the future coalitions.

The Crusades (1096 - 1192) would also serve as examples of coalitions, though religion, rather than politico-military

considerations, was the major binding factor for them.<sup>4</sup> During the second and third Crusades, warriors of Germany and France were joined by forces from England to liberate and preserve the Holy Land of Jerusalem from Muslim control. The encounters between the Crusaders and the Muslim forces of Saladin were inconclusive. However, a closer look into the Christian coalition would reveal that the inherent lack of mutual trust and cooperation among the partners sapped their fighting capabilities. This highlights the inner tensions of a coalition which, if not effectively contained, would invariably cause it to falter.

With the advent of modern warfare around 1600 A.D. tactics and organization of armies changed due to the introduction of improved muskets and extensive use of gunpowder.<sup>5</sup> Standing armies came into existence and their enhanced capabilities of waging war led to lengthy campaigns where opposing forces formed coalitions to fight their enemies. The Machiavellian proposition that warfare would take the form of armed diplomacy seemed to be coming true as kings and rulers devoted much attention to the diplomatic manoeuvre necessary to form and maintain military alliances.<sup>6</sup> The Thirty Years War (1618 - 1648) would involve the Austrian and Spanish Hapsburg in a multidimensional conflict with the coalition of the German protestant princes, Denmark, Sweden, and catholic France where the opponents tried to achieve their aims which were as much geo-political and military as was the professed religious one.<sup>7</sup>

The War of Grand Alliance (1688 - 1697) saw a coalition formed by England, the United Provinces and the Austrian Hapsburg to stop France under Louis XIV to secure hegemony over the continent.<sup>8</sup> Spain, Sweden, Savoy, the Holy Roman Empire and the German princes also joined in the coalition to oppose France. Despite having a well organized army and a powerful navy, Louis could not cope with the sustained might of the coalition and ultimately ended the war through peace settlements.<sup>9</sup> Another coalition followed the Grand Alliance during the War of Spanish Succession. In the Blenheim campaign (1704) remarkable coordination and cooperation was achieved within the British forces under Marlborough and the Austrian army under Eugene<sup>10</sup> who defeated the French and her allies highlighting the necessity of fine-tuning the coalition war efforts to achieve success.

The process of successfully executing coalition wars was however stemmed when Napoleon took over France and organized its army to fight the coalitions formed by the continental powers against him. In addition to the military genius of Napoleon which did not permit the coalition armies to dominate the battle fields, other complex factors contributed to the failure of the coalition. Major among these were the sweeping social and political changes brought about by the French Revolution and the positive effects of the industrial revolution which permitted the state to raise and maintain large armies.<sup>11</sup> During the famous campaigns of Marengo, Ulm, Austerlitz, and Jena (1800 - 1806) Napoleon baffled the coalition armies with his superior

generalship and the positive aspects of coalition warfare were nullified by the brilliant strategic and tactical innovations introduced by him. But at last, Napoleon did succumb to the might of the coalition when the British and the Prussians put their act together to defeat him at Waterloo on June 18, 1815.<sup>12</sup>

The concept of coalition warfare found its due place in the era of total war when the nations involved in the First World War joined in opposing alliances as the war approached. Whether the War was inevitable or the European powers "stumbled into it" as hinted by the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George,<sup>13</sup> the effects of being a party to a most destructive coalition became apparent to each of the adversaries as the toll mounted on the battle fronts. Of the opposing coalitions, the Austro-German alliance was at best an uneasy accord, at least from the Austrian point of view. As the cost of war continued to rise, tensions surfaced among the coalitions partners. The tentative move by Austria for a separate peace with Britain and France - though undertaken in an amateurish manner<sup>14</sup> - had little chance of success in the face of German counter moves to nullify the same. On the other hand the Triple Entente of France, Russia and Great Britain being fully aware of the necessity to fight the Central Powers with combined efforts, sustained the coalition even when the stress of continuing the war became evident. The U.S. despite being a confessed spectator at the early stages of the War due to ancestral urges,<sup>15</sup> ultimately joined the Entente with her eagerly awaited support which helped to bring the conflict to an end.

Opportunity for coalition warfare to re-establish its validity came quickly again as the nations braced themselves for another world war within twenty years. They joined together to fight their common enemies despite having differing perceptions as to the exact nature of the threat. Yet the coalition provided the answer to their concern for safeguarding their own interests. The Axis powers did not exemplify coalition warfare to its full extent, at least in the case of Japan vis-a-vis its other two members, Germany and Italy. But the Allies played the coalition game to their full advantage to win the war.<sup>16</sup> The allied powers - especially the major actors - the U.S.A, the U.S.S.R, and Great Britain formed and maintained the strongest ever coalition to cause total destruction of the Axis powers. Like many coalitions of the past, this coalition also required deliberate political and diplomatic manoeuvre which were closely tied with the military and economic matters. The transformation of the relationship from co-belligerency to the most effective partnership was a long and arduous process. The deal struck in Quebec had to be reinforced through the agreements in Moscow, Cairo, Tehran, and Yalta. Though termed as the "Grand Alliance" by Churchill, tension among powers so ideologically diverse as the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R. were inevitable.<sup>17</sup> But the compulsion to achieve the common objective of defeating Germany and Japan was strong enough to sustain the alliance at least till the war was won. Not surprisingly, the tensions re-surfaced immediately after the war and the world that emerged at the end of the Second

World War quickly found itself divided into opposing camps. For the next forty years the Cold War would dominate the relationship among the nations of the world where alliances and alignments would again feature prominently.

The concept of coalition warfare took a new form with the establishment of the United Nations (U.N.). Though it was not inconceivable to form coalition and wage war outside the purview of the newly organized world body, yet it seemed more logical that if the world community or at least the majority members wanted to join together to face any threat to world peace, the U.N. could play a role in the effort. The first such occasion for a U.N. coalition force to get into action came with the invasion of South Korea by the North Korean forces in June 1950. On 27 June 1950, the U.N. Security Council, helped by the absence of the Soviet delegate, passed the resolution calling upon its members to "furnish such assistance to the Republic of Korea as may be necessary to repel the armed attack and to restore the international peace and security in the region." Thus the U.N. succeeded in making its members - albeit a few interested ones - commit their men and material to fight in the name of the world community.<sup>18</sup> The participation by sixteen member states of the U.N. under U.S. command in Korea set the precedence for dealing with such a situation in the future. However, there was no doubt that such military cooperation could come about only when a political climate existed which would induce the major players of the U.N. to come to an agreement for forming such a coalition.

Given the Cold War scenario and the working mechanism of the U.N. it was easy to foresee that this would indeed be rare if not impossible. The recurrence of regional conflicts over the past years where the U.N. could not intervene with force would confirm the fact that the major powers would be willing to commit themselves in any U.N. sponsored military operations only if their national interests were perceived to be threatened. At the same time they would also block any such initiative being taken by others if it could result in possible harm to their own or their client states' interests. No doubt the specter of a nuclear war caused by the escalation of such confrontations also make them cautious in this regard.

The above historical perspective should serve the back drop against which we could discuss the basic yet intricate factors involved in the art of coalition making. It may be noted that though the instances of coalition warfighting mentioned here mostly related to Europe, there are ample evidence to suggest that through the ages, the concept of coalition warfare was also evolved and successfully practiced in other parts of the world. Europe, however led the world in the evolution of modern warfare as the great powers, both old and new, continuously involved themselves in confrontations which were not only elaborately planned and executed but also comparatively well documented. Having established that forming of coalitions was a major feature of these confrontations, we may now deal with the objective aspects of coalition warfare i.e. why coalitions are formed and

how they function.

#### WHY COALITIONS ARE FORMED AND HOW THEY WORK

Kautilya, the Indian statesman-philosopher wrote some twenty three centuries ago, " a state located between two powerful states should seek collaboration and protection from the stronger of the two."<sup>19</sup> Though this may seem to be too obvious a strategy, yet it shows that the very concept of alignments among states dates back much before the dictums of Machiavelli were being recognized as tools of statecraft. Forming alliances and coalitions seemed to be a natural course of action for states who sought to strengthen themselves against their adversaries. Here it would be relevant to analyze as to how a state perceived its interests to be protected as well as furthered by its participation in a coalition. Political scientists have tried to explain this through the theories of " balance of power" and the "coalition theory" which indicate that the participation or otherwise by a state in a coalition would depend on the predetermined benefits to be derived from such commitments.<sup>20</sup> Yet the history of past alliances and coalitions would not lead to any universally valid laws or large scale hypothesis in this regard.<sup>21</sup>

The reasons which would induce a state to join a coalition could range from the very basic fact of " perception of external threat which cannot be met by ones own resources"<sup>22</sup> to the less compulsive interest of obtaining any possible gains, political or military, that may result from a favorable end of the conflict.

While a small and militarily less powerful state would actively seek to join a coalition if felt threatened by another state, a relatively stronger state may also encourage other states to join it in order to present a more formidable front to its enemy. Another reason for states forming alliances and coalitions could be the desire to maintain the status quo in the politico-military power balance. If a state perceives that her national interest - even other than the basic one of maintaining her physical entity - would be adversely affected by any move initiated by another state, then forming a coalition with others whose interests may also have been similarly affected would be a predictable course of action. Forming such a relationship would be a logical first step with the possible commitment of fighting together in any future contingency.

Having discussed the more obvious reasons which lead to coalition making it would be worthwhile to look into a few other propositions relating to the formation and workings of coalitions. One such proposition is "coalitions will increase in size only to the minimum point of subjective certainty of winning".<sup>23</sup> In this case it is assumed that the participants of a coalition would be motivated by the primary goal of winning. Though this is true in most cases yet there have been instances where the participants have acted as a consequence of politico-military compulsions without having any means to foresee the final outcome. Another proposition maintains that "despite popular assumptions, the existence of an alliance does not

indicate substantive common interests between the members except in so far as the immediate adversary is concerned."<sup>24</sup> The validity of this could be ascertained from the coalition relationship among the big three major powers which existed during the Second World War.

Coalitions also tend to suffer from tensions which are usually caused by the continuous evaluation of self interests by its members. This is more evident during the process of war as " military operations seldom pose burdens of similar magnitude upon all allies, thereby fostering recriminations among partners."<sup>25</sup> This was in evidence during the Second World War in the form of Soviet insistence on her allies for opening the second front to relieve the German pressure on her. In coalition warfare it is also perceived that " failure to clarify the scope and conditions of commitment will impede the cohesion of the alliance and its chances for evolving effective strategy."<sup>26</sup> This could cause the coalition partners to shift responsibilities and try to minimize their own risks which would in turn add to the tension in the coalition. It is also commonly believed that tensions would grow in direct proportion to the duration of the coalition and constant efforts have to be made to keep the front intact. In such cases the major players would be more active as their interests would dominate the coalition.

Here we may also address the effect of coalition making on those who are not inclined to be a party to it. Historically, the formation of alliances or coalitions by some have compelled

others to re-evaluate their politico-military interests which could lead them to seek alliances with those who seem to have gone through the same experience. There is much justification in the assumption that for a very long time the European powers have been continuously vulnerable to such reactive process which aggravated the chances of conflicts. The only factor which may have restrained the post Second World War alliances from sliding to a conflict situation was the no-win proposition of a nuclear war. It may also be relevant to look back to the early days of the Cold War era when some of the newly emerging nations tried to keep themselves away from the super power rivalries through the concept of non-alliance. Their sense of uneasiness at the process of alliance making by the major powers was given expression by the then Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru who said, " any pact (referring to the CENTO and SEATO treaties) whatever you may call it, is an aggressive thing .... they immediately start doing something which threatens the other parties.... anyhow the atmosphere is vitiated."<sup>27</sup> However, it is interesting to note that even India, a pioneer of the Non-Aligned Movement, found it worthwhile to enter into a "Friendship Treaty" with the Soviet Union prior to embarking on a confrontation with Pakistan in 1971. This again emphasized the inherent positive aspects of coalition making which would always be valued in the world of realpolitik. This will also explain the urge to maintain NATO as a stabilizing factor by all the interested parties in Europe even after the end of the Cold War.

### COALITION IN THE GULF WAR-91

Having discussed the historical perspective and the mode of forming and functioning of coalitions we may now analyze the coalition making process of the Gulf War-91. To do so, it would be necessary to recollect the role and actions of the major players involved directly or indirectly with it. Instead of putting across the facts merely as a set of events it would be more relevant to emphasize the implications of the moves made by them.

The crisis originating from the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait on August 2, 1990 seemed well designed to test the viability of the U.N. as the world peacekeeper. Here was a situation which could demand the U.N. to fulfill its very basic obligation as mentioned in its charter wherein the first Purpose states " To maintain international peace and security and to that end : to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace..."<sup>28</sup> Though previous experiences, with the exception of the Korean War, have always found the U.N. to be hamstrung by the divergent interests of the major powers, yet this time the changes brought about by the end of the Cold War led to a more deliberate and positive course of action by the U.N. Despite being vulnerable to the charges of being manipulated by the interested powers, especially the U.S.A, it can still be asserted that the U.N. served the purpose of symbolizing the world opinion against the Iraqi action. No doubt, differences

persisted among its members as regards the nature and timing of the measures to be taken against Iraq. Even then the U.N. remained in the forefront of the coalition efforts. The U.N. role was played well both in terms of collective actions as well as individual efforts by the members to deal with the situation. The U.N. moves were well orchestrated which reflected the deliberate and fruitful behind-the-scene activities of the major actors. Though the motives of such actions are open to criticism, yet given the prevailing situation of the real world, they were neither unexpected nor unwelcome to the majority of the world community. On many occasions reluctant members of the Security Council were coaxed into supporting the resolutions presented at the behest of U.S.A. and her supporters who led the U.N. in its opposition to Iraq. Nevertheless, such actions did strengthen the coalition that was being formed and made ready for the show-down which was to follow soon. This was indeed a rare experience for the U.N. to deal positively with a major crisis.

It is obvious that without the role played by the U.S.A. the world could not have seen such an ending to the Gulf crisis. Whether perceived as a historical and moral obligation or because of pure economic and geo-political compulsions, the U.S.A. took the lead in forming the coalition both at the political and military levels. The U.S. policy in the Gulf was well defined and reflected her strategic, economic and political interests in the region.<sup>29</sup> These were related to the major issues of oil supply and security of the friendly states, both of which were affected

by the Iraqi occupation of Kuwait. Iraq's probable nuclear capability also added to the U.S. concern. These interests being vital, it was not difficult to foresee that the U.S. response to the crisis would involve both political and military elements of her power. This was hinted at even during the Iran-Iraq war when President Reagan had said, "we share the concern of our friends in the Gulf region... we would regard any such expansion of the war as a major threat to our interest."<sup>30</sup> To the U.S.A, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait posed such a threat and caused her to set in motion the political and military chain of events which would lead to the formation of the coalition to defeat Iraq within a short time.

The political aspect of coalition building as initiated by the U.S.A. involved getting as many countries as possible take a clear stand against Iraq and join the coalition. She succeeded in keeping the U.N. directly involved at every stage of the process and moved methodically in pursuance of her objective of forming as broad a consensus as possible to deal with Iraq. Her concern for "oil, aggression and nukes"<sup>31</sup> was translated into a well co-ordinated campaign involving a host of other nations.

The military coalition brought together the U.S.A. and two of her western allies, Great Britain and France, who were also joined by a group of Islamic countries with Saudi Arabia leading their cause. The military coalition served the purpose of avoiding the confrontation being termed as either an American display of force against a third world country or as a Muslim

versus non-Muslim war. As President Bush claimed " we're talking about some 28 countries that have committed their forces of one kind or another to this extraordinary historic effort."<sup>32</sup> All through the process the U.S.A. played the central role and succeeded not only to bring a former "terrorist state" like Syria into the fold but also helped in removing the tension within the coalition caused by the unpredictability of an Israeli reaction to an Iraqi threat.

The Bush administration chalked out a game plan which ultimately proved to be both precise and purposeful. On the diplomatic front the U.S. continued to play the major role without exposing herself as the sole arbiter while on the military front she continued to lead the coalition in assembling the forces necessary to defeat Iraq on the battle field." I have greatly admired President Bush's skill and fortitude in building the coalition" said Henry Kissinger to emphasize the U.S. role.<sup>33</sup> At the domestic front the Bush administration successfully neutralized the "no-blood-for-oil" lobby and obtained the Congressional approval for the use of force in the Gulf in accordance with U.N. Resolution 678.<sup>34</sup> By mid January 1991 the U.S. was all set to force the issue and lead the coalition to achieve its goal of ejecting Iraq from Kuwait.

Being the other super power of the time the then U.S.S.R. still maintained enough leverage to upset the coalition building process either by not going along with the U.N. moves or by involving herself in support of her old protege Iraq. But the

policy of reconciliation was already too firmly in place to allow the Soviets to revert back to the Cold War situation. With the signs of her eventual demise already becoming apparent, the U.S.S.R. deliberately chose not to create any hindrance in the coalition building efforts of the U.S.A. This was evident as early as August 3, 1990, when at the conclusion of a meeting between the U.S. secretary of state James Baker and the Soviet foreign minister Eduard Shevardnadze at Moscow, both issued a joint statement calling for the unconditional withdrawal of Iraqi troops from Kuwait.<sup>35</sup> The Soviet position was reaffirmed by President Gorbachev during the U.S. - U.S.S.R. summit in Helsinki on September 9, 1990.<sup>36</sup> It is now evident that one of the major miscalculations of Iraq was her failure to foresee this lack of minimum support from her former mentor. The U.S.S.R. however, tried to intervene diplomatically at the last stage of the crisis through a peace proposal which did not find acceptance from either Iraq or the coalition. During the crisis President Gorbachev came under mounting pressure from the communist hardliners to distance the U.S.S.R. from the U.S. led coalition effort to oust Iraq from Kuwait.<sup>37</sup> But the Gorbachev leadership, while warning against escalation of the conflict and calling for an end to the hostilities, continued to cooperate with the U.N. and U.S. moves.

The Soviet policy of non-interference can be considered as a very significant factor in the Gulf War-91. As may be recalled, since the beginning of the Cold War, the U.S.S.R. has opposed the

commitment of U.S. forces in any part of the world. She has been employing her diplomatic prerogative as well as the threat of physical involvement to protect her geo-political interests as a super power. But the Gulf crisis found the Soviet Union in a diametrically changed situation, both internally and internationally, where her compulsions to cooperate with the U.S. were too strong to allow her any other option.

Participation by U.K, France and other western nations was primarily the result of U.S. persuasion though both U.K. and France insisted on projecting their own political and economic interests as the rationale for their joining the coalition. Of all the western nations, the U.K. contributed most in terms of both diplomatic and military co-operation which indicated her traditional bond of alliance with the U.S. She also prodded other NATO allies to be more forthcoming in their support to the coalition efforts. Mrs. Margaret Thatcher, the British prime minister, was against the cautious indecision of her European allies and chided them by saying, "it is unfortunate that at this critical time, Europe has not fully measured up to expectations".<sup>38</sup> Italy joined the coalition with air support while Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal and Spain provided limited support in enforcing the naval blockade against Iraq. Unencumbered by the absence of any possible Soviet involvement, these nations had to take only the domestic factor into consideration while supporting the coalition. Though the European Community tried to initiate

its own diplomatic move to encourage a negotiated settlement, yet ultimately it only did what was expected, i.e. endorse and cooperate with the coalition war efforts under U.S. leadership.

Being the focus of attention from the very beginning, Saudi Arabia became the most critical partner of the coalition. She not only led the front line states but also played the role of symbolizing the Islamic opposition to Iraq. Being the host nation, she served as the perfect staging area for the coalition forces and contributed greatly to the war effort by her diplomatic economic assistance. Despite being criticized in some quarters for permitting the "sacred land" to be utilized by the "non-believers" in their desire to defeat Iraq, Saudi Arabia remained steadfast in her support to the coalition cause. This was not only due to her own vulnerability to any probable Iraqi move but also because of her keenness to play the role of the leading Islamic and Arab nation in the crisis. Through her actions she reinforced her claim to be the major player in the region and the defeat of Iraq, a potential claimant to the position, served her strategic goal to a great extent.

Participation by Egypt, Syria, Turkey, and the Gulf States in the coalition can be attributed to the proposition, "common perceptions of threat are probably the most frequent source of alliance strategy."<sup>39</sup> Though Egypt and Turkey could be expected to support the U.S. initiative because of their closer ties to her, yet it was definitely the Arab-world political compulsions which led to the very visible Egyptian, Syrian and Turkish

support of the coalition. Inclusion of Syria in the coalition exemplified the diplomatic moves that usually form part of the coalition making process. Economic benefits in terms of cash and debt relief also figured prominently in the deal.<sup>40</sup> Egypt not only expected to be compensated economically but also sought to stage a strong come-back in the regional power game. Syria got aboard to further her own political and military interests and Turkey played her hand deftly to retain her role as a player in the region.

Bangladesh, Morocco, Niger, Pakistan, and Senegal joined the coalition with the limited objective of supporting Saudi Arabia against the probable Iraqi threat. It may, however, be assumed that each of them had their own reasons for joining the coalition which ranged from past military affiliation as in the case of Pakistan to the politico-religious concern of others to respond to the Saudi request for cooperation. Most of these nations faced very strong domestic opposition for sending troops to Saudi Arabia which was considered as participation in a fratricide at the best and serving the western interest at the worst. However, despite the limited military contribution, participation by these nations strengthened the locus standi of the coalition.

It is necessary to mention the influence that Iran and Israel constantly exerted on the coalition by the unpredictability of their actions during the crisis. All the coalition partners were apprehensive of the consequences if Iran shifted her stance of neutrality and either decided to tilt

towards Iraq or made any military move on her own. It would have destabilized the military equation and caused major problems to the coalition. But Iran's steady adherence to neutrality spared the coalition from any such tension while she maintained her position as a potent political and military power in the region.

As regards Israel, the dilemma was whether to be guided by the head or the heart as Iraq threatened to involve her in the conflict. The tension generated within the coalition, especially among the Islamic states, by the possible retaliation from Israel against Iraq was too palpable to be ignored. It was evident that Iraq would achieve one of her major goals of driving a wedge in the coalition if Israel could be drawn into the conflict.

Obviously this was not lost on Israel who refrained from striking back at Iraq and lived through the anguish caused by such a decision. Dividends for this prudence was manifold. She obtained recognition of acting responsibly despite being baited and she was provided with both military and economic aid packages by the U.S.A.

A new dimension was added to coalition warfare by the monetary support which was provided by many nations as their contributions to the war chest. Initiated by the U.S.A. who was incurring the largest expenditure, the move resulted in pledges by the resourceful nations who had direct interest either in the form of security concern or depended on the gulf oil for their economies. Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, U.A.E, Japan, Germany and Korea were the major contributors who were joined by many others in

this regard.<sup>41</sup>

Having discussed the coalition building process in the Gulf War-91 and the role of the major participants in it we may now enumerate the factors which contributed directly and indirectly towards its success. This would help in relating the experiences of this war to any future coalitions.

a. The major change in the international relationships between the super powers caused by the end of the Cold War was the primary factor in the forming of the coalition. The U.N. resolutions which provided the necessary impetus to the coalition war effort could only be passed because of the cooperation among the major powers, especially between the U.S. and U.S.S.R.

b. Involvement of the U.N. from the very beginning of the crisis helped the coalition to a very great extent. Without the consistent U.N. policy towards the crisis including its authorization to use force against Iraq the confrontation would have been prolonged with more emphasis on indirect measures i.e. the economic sanctions.

c. Involvement of the U.S. in the Gulf was directly related to her strategic interests in the region. These were considered vital which compelled her to deal with the situation in an effective manner. The U.S. took the leading role in forming the coalition because of the complex political situation in the region. The experience of the Vietnam War as reflected in the Weinberger doctrine would have restrained her from getting involved in a major conflict if the situations were not conducive

for a quick victory. No doubt, forming of the coalition helped immensely in this regard.

d. The success of the diplomatic moves by the U.S. and other participants was possible because of the common interests which the coalition could serve. Major deals, both political and economic, were struck in the process of forming as well as sustaining the coalition.

e. Participation by the western nations were directly related to the perceived interests which they shared with the U.S.A. It was primarily a matter of cooperating with the U.S. in a joint enterprise where the benefits clearly outweighed the risks.

f. The host nation support provided by Saudi Arabia was unprecedented in coalition history. The advantages of having Saudi Arabia as the staging area would be considered as a major battle winning factor in the Gulf War-91.

g. Saudi Arabia also provided the religious and moral leadership of the Islamic states in the coalition. The steadfast resolve of Saudi Arabia to undo Iraq's occupation of Kuwait helped maintain the coalition strength. Without the support of Saudi Arabia the coalition could not have been formed or sustained the way it was done.

h. It was also evident that the interests of the parties involved in the coalition, though different in nature and extent, coincided during this war which was not seen in any past conflicts of the region. Each of the participants - big or

small - had his own perception of the benefits which could be derived from joining the coalition.

i. The direct role played by leaders like President Bush in inducing others to join the coalition contributed much to its success. Diplomatic initiatives taken by the U.S. and other governments in isolating Iraq also paid good dividends. The skillful handling of the diplomatic and political aspects of coalition making by persons like the U.S. Secretary of State James Baker ensured desired outcome at all stages of the crisis.

j. Personal rapport and good working relationship built among the senior commanders of the coalition forces, especially between General Schwarzkopf, commander-in-chief, U.S. Central Command and Lt. General Khalid Bin Sultan, commander of the Joint Forces of the Islamic States, contributed to the smooth conduct of the military operations. Major problems of command and control as well as other operational matters were resolved through the willing cooperation of the commanders of the coalition forces.

k. Looking from another perspective, it is easy to appreciate that Iraq herself acted as a force multiplier for the coalition. She ignored the consequence of her occupation of Kuwait on Arab unity or Islamic solidarity and found herself mostly isolated. Her claim of fighting for the cause of Islam against the western powers and the efforts to involve Israel in the war failed to elicit support from any quarter.

The factors which affected the formation and the functioning of the Gulf War coalition could be grouped into two broad

categories. The first of these could be termed the generic factors which included the national interests of the participants in joining the coalition. These were the clearly enumerated U.S. strategic and economic interests in the region, the economic and political concerns of the western nations, the threats perceived by the leading Arab states of the region from a strong and aggressive Iraq, and the willingness of many other Islamic states to show solidarity with Saudi Arabia. Above all the commonly perceived moral obligation to oppose the blatant use of force by a strong and arrogant state against a small neighbor was a genuine reason to support the coalition.

There were other factors which can be termed "situational" which equally contributed to the forming and sustaining of the coalition. The major change in the international scene where the U.S.S.R. did not counter the U.S. moves which left Iraq to her own fate and the willingness of other major players in the U.N. to support the coalition war efforts had their positive impacts. The public support received by the Bush administration for its policy in the Gulf also made it possible for the U.S. to pursue her strategic goals without hindrance. The host nation support provided by Saudi Arabia and the economic burden sharing by the rich nations made the task of waging war much easier. Israel's policy of restraint against Iraqi missile attacks and Iran's adherence to neutrality removed what could have been significant tensions in the coalition. Lastly, the perception of the participants as regards the positive outcome of the war

contributed to their willingness to remain committed to the cause of the coalition.

#### GULF WAR-91 AND FUTURE COALITIONS

Experts have tried to formulate theories which would indicate the possible form of coalition making in the future. As pointed out by Zinnes and Gamson in their study, coalition behavior is said to occur in a "coalition situation". Specific conditions and considerations along with resulting distribution of pay offs define a coalition situation.<sup>42</sup> It has also been suggested that the effects of war alignment cooperation decline overtime.<sup>43</sup> Future coalitions would therefore reflect the prevailing situations which will dictate the participation of the potential members. The nature of future coalitions could however, be examined in the context of two major scenario; coalition under U.N. flag and coalition as a function of alliance.

Coalition Under U.N. Flag. With the experience of the Gulf War-91, it is expected that the U.N. could play a prominent role in future coalition making. But this will entirely depend on the willingness of the major U.N. players i.e. the permanent members of the Security Council to co-operate with each other and allow a agreed course of action to emerge. This could take the shape of any one or more of these members striking suitable deals with the others and mould the U.N. policy in a particular fashion. The U.N. has already come under some harsh criticism for being

vulnerable to such manipulation. As one political commentator from India observed, "after the Gulf War experience the credibility of the U.N. as the true conscience of the world community has to be restored." <sup>44</sup> Notwithstanding such criticism, the U.N. will continue to have a role in formulating the process in which the world community would deal with a future war situation. If any major power decides to take the lead in dealing with such a crisis under U.N. sponsorship, then the Gulf War-91 could serve as a basic model, both for the diplomatic and military initiatives. It would be difficult to predict anything definitely about the possible shape of things beyond this.

Even if the U.N. serves as the catalyst in any future coalition making process, it would not be possible to foresee the outcome of the conflict. The battle winning factors which combined together to ensure the decisive victory against Iraq in the Gulf War-91 could hardly be obtained in the future. In case of a regional crisis the interests of the major powers may not coincide with the regional powers which would make any coalition, if at all formed, less effective. In the absence of the pervasive feeling of mistrust among the regional states as found in the Middle East, it would be difficult to get willing allies like Saudi Arabia and Egypt who would so effectively serve the coalition cause.

Some of the factors which would influence the future coalition war effort under U.N. flag are:

- a. A consensus among the major powers in the U.N. regarding

the necessity of forming a coalition.

b. Support for such a move by the majority of the U.N. members.

c. Willingness of one or more of these major powers to lead the coalition effort. This would involve political and diplomatic clout as well as the employment of large and technologically advanced military resources.

d. Convergence of the interests of the major powers as well as the regional states.

e. A well shared optimism among the members about the ultimate success of the coalition.

f. A moral sense of fighting a Just War.

Coalition Through Alliance. It would also be possible to form coalition through existing alliances without involving the U.N. in the process. Taking NATO as a model we may relate this proposition to it. Over the last four decades NATO has served as the medium of collective security for the western allies against the probable communist block aggression. It has provided ample scope to the western powers to identify threats, pool resources and prepare contingency plans to face such threats. Mutual trust and sound working relationships have been developed among its members over the years.

Despite the disappearance of the threat from the former Warsaw Pact countries, the bond of alliance in NATO is expected to continue. This would imply that the NATO charter would remain effective and in case of a new threat which may affect any one of

the members, all the members would be under obligation to form a coalition to fight the enemy. With the Cold War coming to an end, NATO is in the process of " evolving a more flexible defence with forces available to deter aggression in time of peace, contain any developing crises and provide, if necessary a robust defence."<sup>45</sup> Thus it seems quite plausible that a force comprising elements from members nations would be kept prepared and made available for any contingency which demanded a collective response. But in all probability such a force could be employed only if the threat is covered by the scope of NATO. To deal with a regional crisis where the interests of only a few of its members may be affected, some European nations are contemplating the formation of a Rapid Reaction Force composed of multinational elements which could be used outside NATO perview. Though the final shape of such a move is not yet clear, it enhances the probability of forming a coalition during such a crisis.

To deal with the specific question of whether the Gulf War-91 could serve as a model for future coalition wars - be it under U.N. sponsorship or through an alliance, it would be necessary to discuss the politico- diplomatic, military as well as economic aspects of the proposition.

The international political situation during the Gulf crisis was indeed a very rare one. The perceived inability of the U.S.S.R. to influence the situation in a different manner to that of the U.S. and her allies made the political scene very unique.

This allowed the coalition great freedom of action against Iraq. The perception of a common interest among the Arab nations to oppose Iraq was also relevant to this crisis only. The political and diplomatic leverages enjoyed by the U.S. and Saudi Arabia over many of the other nations were also possible because of the very distinct nature of the situation.

Despite the Iraqi army being projected as one of the largest and better equipped in the world, there was hardly any doubt in any quarter that the coalition, led by the U.S. would invariably enjoy qualitative superiority which would make a major difference in a modern conventional war. The availability of a fully developed staging area and the huge logistic support capability of the coalition more than offset the difficulties of its operating on exterior lines of communication. The Iraqi war fighting capability was systematically destroyed by a most successful air campaign and the final blow was delivered through a well planned and skillfully executed ground offensive. But a closer look at the success would reveal that many of the battle winning factors were situation specific which may not be present in any future war. No doubt, the doctrine of employing overwhelming force would continue to have its advantages but the conditions which make its application possible may not be attainable at all times.

The economic burden sharing had a major impact on the coalition campaign. Of the estimated cost of \$ 61 billion to the U.S, \$ 54 billion has been pledged by the allies.<sup>16</sup> This was a

unique aspect of the Gulf War-91 and the possibility of such a arrangement being repeated, especially in the absence of the oil rich partners, is very remote. Any future coalition not assured of such cooperation has to take the economic burden of waging war into consideration which would invariably affect its will to engage in a moderen war.

### CONCLUSIONS

Coalition warfare has been considered an effective method of waging war in the past and the same will be true in the future. The advantages of joining forces to fight a common enemy are many and these will be appreciated by the belligerent nations. But mere forming a coalition does not always ensure success. The combined military capability of the coalition partners has to outweigh the enemy's war fighting capability to win the war. Political and military compulsions as well as economic and other interests act as driving forces for nations to form coalitions.

Keeping coalitions intact involves eliminating or sustaining the tensions which usually threaten them. These are caused when members perceive their interests to be adversely affected by the new and changing situations. Much diplomatic manoeuvre goes in to dealing with such tensions and many deals are cut among the members to let the coalition survive.

As the most recent example, the Gulf War-91 highlighted many aspects of coalition warfare. The coalition formed under U.N. sponsorship and led by the U.S.A. defeated the Iraqi forces and

liberated Kuwait. The process of building the coalition involved political, diplomatic and military initiatives on the part of the major players. Economic burden sharing by the rich nations of the coalitions as well as other affluent nations with direct interest in the positive outcome of the conflict also featured prominently in the process.

There are many aspects of the Gulf War which, if emulated, could serve the purpose of any future coalition. The cooperation among the participants and the urge to attain the common objective helped overcome many difficulties in carrying out the campaign. Many lessons relating to political, diplomatic as well as military aspects of coalition warfare were brought out in this war.

The generic factors of coalition building i.e. convergence of interests of the participants and successful removal of the tensions afflicting the coalition could be present in any future coalition effort. But the situation specific factors such as the major changes in the relationship of the super powers, the political cross-currents within the regional states and the host nation support provided by Saudi Arabia indicate that a coalition like the one formed and sustained during the Gulf War-91 could hardly be repeated in the future. The geo-political, military and economic factors involved in this effort made it such a unique experience that in its totality it could hardly serve as a model for the future.

END NOTES

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<sup>3</sup>R. Ernest Dupuy & Trevor N. Dupuy, The Encyclopedia of Military History (Harper and Row, New York, 1986), 19.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 312.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., 522.

<sup>6</sup>Lynn Montross, War Through the Ages (Harper and Row, New York, 1960), 201.

<sup>7</sup>Paul Kennedy, The Rise Fall of the Great Powers (Random House, New York, 1987), 36.

<sup>8</sup>Dupoy and Dupoy, 546.

<sup>9</sup>George C. Kohn, Dictionary of Wars (Facts on Files Publications, New York, 1986), 186.

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<sup>12</sup>Kohn, 203.

<sup>13</sup>Dwight E. Lee, The Outbreak of the First World War (D.C. Heath and Company, Lexington, Massachusetts, 1970), 99.

<sup>14</sup>Neilson and Prete, 27-28.

<sup>15</sup>Dupoy and Dupoy, 929.

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<sup>17</sup>Robert Beitzul, The Uneasy Alliance (Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1972), 366

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<sup>19</sup>Holsti, Hopmann, Sullivan, 1.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>21</sup>Neilson and Prete, 3.

<sup>22</sup>Holsti, Hopmann, Sullivan, 254.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 7.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 254.

<sup>25</sup>Ernst B. Haas and Allen S. Whiting Dynamics of International Relations (McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc. New York, 1956), 164.

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<sup>40</sup>Counting On New Friends. (U.S. News and World Report - December 10, 1990.), 28.

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