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COALITION WARFARE:  
PREPARING THE U.S. COMMANDER  
FOR THE FUTURE

by

TERRY J. PUDAS

CAPT USN

A paper submitted to the Faculty of the Naval War College in partial satisfaction of the requirements of the Department of Operations.

The contents of this paper reflect my own personal views and are not necessarily endorsed by the Naval War College or the Department of the Navy.

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ABSTRACT of  
Coalition Warfare: Preparing The U.S. Commander  
For The Future

The Desert Storm experience and the recent shift in emphasis toward regional threat scenarios have highlighted the necessity for an increased understanding of the complexities of coalition warfare. Operating in ad hoc coalitions with non-traditional allies may be the dominant future mode of employment for U.S. Forces. Ad hoc coalitions are first and foremost political organizations wherein the fragile relationships can significantly influence both the effectiveness and the desirability of coalition operations. There are both political and military advantages and disadvantages of coalitions which determine the desirability of conducting combined operations. The effectiveness of coalition operations depends on the ability of the commander to achieve unity of effort of military forces. Command relationships, interoperability, logistics support and the risk to U.S. Forces in combined operations are key planning considerations. Successful execution involves assigning coalition forces in a manner which is consistent with capabilities and political restrictions to achieve the common political objective. Historical evidence and the recent Desert Storm lessons confirm that the preparation for future coalition warfare should revolve around four fundamental considerations; unity of purpose, unity of effort, interoperability, and the risk to U.S. Forces in ad hoc coalitions.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Throughout history most wars have been fought between alliances or coalitions. The Peloponnesian war fought between the Delian League led by Athens and the coalition of city-states led by Sparta is one of the earliest examples of coalition warfare.<sup>1</sup> The recent Gulf War has reconfirmed that, as in the past, future regional wars will again be fought not only as a member of a coalition, but probably with non-traditional allies. The experience of Desert Storm and the global security uncertainties produced by the dissolution of the Soviet Union have high-lighted the need for major revisions in military strategic thinking. Collective security will remain a central issue of U.S. Security Strategy. In the President's National Security Strategy he stresses the increasing importance of collective security, especially in regards to alliances and coalitions.

" . . . we may find ourselves . . . acting in hybrid coalitions that include not only traditional allies, but nations with whom we do not have a mature history of diplomatic or military cooperation. . . ."

The National Military Strategy also recognizes the desirability of collective security arrangements and the utility of multi-national operations. It stresses the need for being prepared to fight as part of an ad hoc coalition, but also recognizes that the U.S. must retain the capability to act unilaterally if required.<sup>2</sup> The growing interdependence of

the world's economic system is creating an environment of common security interests among the U.S. and other nations. Threats to these vital interests will inevitably be dealt with in a combined fashion in conjunction with at least a portion of our traditional allies, as well as coalition forces from other regional sovereign nations. Collective security through standing alliances, as well as United Nation's sanctioned operations against forces threatening global and regional peace, are the future realities. Coalition war is likely to be the dominant mode of employment of our military forces in the future.

The U.S. experience stems from its participation as a coalition partner in all of the five major twentieth century conflicts that it has been involved in. <sup>3</sup> The U.S. involvement in World War I was in the form of a military alliance with England and France. In World War II the U.S. fought as an alliance partner in which it took the lead in commanding and executing combined operations. The U.S. also led the United Nation's International Forces in Korea; in Vietnam we conducted coalition operations in conjunction with the South Vietnamese and contingents from other nations. Desert Storm, however, was fought as a member of what has been termed an "ad hoc hybrid coalition." This type of arrangement with historical, as well as non-traditional allies, has been suggested as the new model upon which the U.S. should plan for future military operations.

Despite all of this wartime experience, not much effort has been devoted to preparing forces for the possibility of coalition war in future conflicts. There are volumes of material, including such documents as Allied Tactical Publications, which govern the conduct of operations in our standing alliance relationships. By comparison, there are few detailed resources which are available to prepare an operational commander for the more likely future scenarios involving ad hoc hybrid coalitions.

There appears to be consensus and historical evidence that wars at the higher end of the conflict spectrum, such as major regional conflicts and global wars, will be fought by alliances and coalitions. There has been, however, only limited discussion regarding the applicability/desirability of coalition warfare at the lower end of the conflict spectrum. The advantages and disadvantages vary across the spectrum and have implications from both a political and military perspective.

The focus of this paper is not intended to be an exhaustive regurgitation of the historical lessons learned, but rather a condensed look at coalition dynamics, concentrating on the ad hoc model. The examination of coalition complexities will provide an understanding of the advantages and disadvantages of coalition operations across the warfare spectrum from both the political and military perspective.

The ultimate product of this effort will be to provide

a framework to assist the operational commander in planning and executing future coalition operations. The conclusion will determine from the historical lessons learned, if there are substantive and enduring principles of coalition warfare for operational commanders based on the Desert Storm coalition as the future model.

## CHAPTER II

### COALITION AND ALLIANCE DYNAMICS

The reasons why nations enter into coalitions and alliances are extremely varied. These reasons determine both the relationship between the nations involved and the effectiveness of their formal arrangements. The predominant reasons why nations enter into alliances are mutual advantage and shared interests. Unity of purpose for the achievement of common mutual objectives is what binds them together. The broad objective generally represents an overlap of some of the national objectives of each member nation, rather than the sum total of all national objectives.<sup>4</sup> Each alliance is first and foremost a political coalition. A nation's contribution and membership is dependent on its own political agenda. The more the coalition's objectives differ from those of other member nations, the more likely a nation will be to withdraw its contribution and membership from the coalition.<sup>5</sup> "Even amongst the most like-minded nations coalitions have uncertain and fragile foundations."<sup>6</sup>

Collective security to defend against threats to a nation's survival has been the historical basis for the founding of military alliances. Each nation shares in an agreed upon strategy for pursuing security interests. These coalitions provide a unity of military effort to achieve common security interests and a burden sharing arrangement by which a nation can relieve some of the economic inefficiency caused by

duplication of military capabilities.

The ability of alliances and coalitions to function is also influenced by the historical perceptions of a nation. Following World War I there was widespread belief that collective security arrangements had actually contributed more to plunging the nations into war than in preserving the peace. This may explain the reluctance of many nations to commit themselves to collective security organizations and their selective contributions of military support in ad hoc relationships.

There are certain similarities which characterize most coalitions, however, each is unique in terms of its power relationships, ideologies and the beliefs of the people who create the coalitions and make them work. There are three broad categories of alliance organizations which constitute the formal arrangements nations have used to conduct coalition operations in recent history. The specific type and duration of these arrangements are determined by the member nation's common interests, either broad and long term or limited, specific objectives. The linking objectives and consensus process will vary in each coalition.

The United Nations is an example of a global organization and represents the most formal and enduring example of nations united for a common purpose. The overarching common objective of each member is the perpetuation of its national survival. Although the membership rarely reaches unanimous consensus, military action in support of a United Nations resolution for the purpose of peacekeeping or direct intervention normally

assumes a high degree of legitimacy. The disadvantage of these large and more diverse organizations is that it is more difficult to reach consensus for action and therefore, its effectiveness and the timeliness of its decisions can be degraded.

Organizations such as NATO, SEATO and OAS are generally more homogeneous and focused in terms of mutual interests and strategic objectives. Reaching a consensus for common objectives and strategies is simplified and more timely in these regionally oriented organizations. The enduring nature of a standing regional security alliance also provides significant advantages to the military forces of its members. Military commanders are provided the opportunity to organize and train their forces in combined operations. The result is that the problems which hamper ad hoc coalitions such as command and control, interoperability, logistics, and differing doctrines are overcome or minimized. Although these collective security alliances have been credited with promoting regional peace and providing a forum for conflict resolution, none have actually been put to the test as a war fighting organization.

The third and most typical type of alliance used for conducting military operations is the ad hoc coalition. All of the conflicts in which the U.S. has participated since World War II have been fought either unilaterally or as a member of an ad hoc coalition. None of the military actions have been conducted as the combined effort of a standing regional

security alliance in which the U.S. was a member. Even though the United Nations played a major role in two of the conflicts, North Korea and the Persian Gulf, the military forces which fought the wars operated as members of an ad hoc coalition. There have been numerous other military operations carried out by the U.S. as a member of an ad hoc organization in support of UN resolutions or sanctions. Even the U.S. "war on drugs" is being prosecuted as an ad hoc coalition. Other military actions have involved unique U.S. security interests requiring unilateral action, such as Grenada and Panama. Still other U.S. military operations which were conducted in the name of coercive diplomacy, such as the raid on Libya, were not politically suited for coalition operations. Historically, when the U.S. has conducted combined operations it has done so as a member of an ad hoc coalition.

As in all decisions pertaining to peace, war and alliances, Clausewitz reminds us of the primacy of politics and its influence on alliance and coalition dynamics when he writes, "Political unity is a matter of degree." The contributions of member nations which effect the ability of an organization to produce a unity of effort in armed conflict is directly related to a nation's political objectives. Coalitions are guided by considerations of political advantage in decision making.<sup>7</sup> The two factors which remain dominant in coalitions are that decisions are reached by consensus and military considerations are generally subordinate to diplomatic matters.

## CHAPTER III

### COALITION WARFARE: PROS AND CONS

Coalitions provide the framework within which nations combine military resources for unity of effort to attain their common political objectives. Although coalitions are most often thought of in positive terms, they are often a source of weakness, as well as strength. Coalitions are not the same as friendships and are entered into for reasons of political self-interest. A congressional report on the Anti-Iraq Coalition observed that "Any multi-state coalition is unwieldy and fragile. Areas of commonality binding members together are usually less than the policy differences which remain."

A commander must not only understand the dynamics which influence a coalition, but must also be aware of their political and military advantages and disadvantages. The desirability of coalition warfare is determined by comparing these advantages and disadvantages from both a military and political perspective.

Coalitions offer weaker nations a vehicle within which they can express their political views in combination with other coalition members and increase their influence on world events. A significant political advantage of conducting military operations as a member of a coalition, is that it contributes to the legitimacy of the military action. Unilateral operations, as in Grenada and Panama, often times require the U.S. to provide overwhelming evidence and extensive justification

to the world community for its action. In comparison, military operations in support of a United Nation's resolution is accepted as legitimate. Coalition military operations are also not normally viewed negatively, as in an intervention in another state's sovereignty.

Historically, political unity of purpose and military unity of effort among coalition partners have been strong so long as a bonafide threat existed to their shared vital interests. In World War I, and again in World War II, as the defeat of the common enemy became inevitable, individual coalition member's interests began to diverge in pursuit of more self-serving strategies. Individual national war aims and political objectives distracted from the combined military strategy, as each partner attempted to promote its own political agenda. The result was that the war termination phase of World War I has been blamed as a contributing factor to the start of the Second World War. Likewise, the diverse political objectives and ideologies of partners in the World War II Grand Alliance have been blamed for creating the post war political instability which produced the Cold War.

A disadvantage of coalition operations is the existence of unique political objectives which become "hidden agendas" and influence a nation's position on strategy and the effort and resources it will contribute to the coalition. This situation is very similar to that which existed in the recent Anti-Iraq Coalition, wherein unity of purpose did not necessarily

mean unity of effort. Nations contributed to the effort based on their own political interests. Contributions ranged from ground forces, naval assets and certain specialized equipment, to economic aid for the countries in the region.

The political leadership of the coalition partners is a significant factor which often restricts the commander's ability to achieve a military unity of effort. Coalition political leaders are often reluctant and sensitive about placing their military under the command of another coalition partner. The political considerations most often dictate command relationships and the result can be an ambiguous and uncertain chain of command. During Desert Storm each coalition member made individual political decisions as to what extent they would actively participate in implementing the UN Resolutions. Uncertainty, as to which nations would deploy combat forces and to what extent they would contribute to the Kuwait liberation effort, was disadvantageous to the overall Desert Storm operation.

The timeliness of decision making is another factor which influences the desirability of coalition operations. The process of achieving consensus on the alliance's political objectives and military strategies takes time. The conflicting political and economic objectives of each partner distract from the consensus required for effective military operations. Although this process is a political necessity, it can be a disadvantage to the military commander. The larger and

more diverse the coalition, the more ineffective this decision process becomes.

Membership in or leadership of a coalition may be disadvantageous to the U.S. and limit its ability to achieve its own political objectives. The U.S. may be capable of operating unilaterally and constitute the majority of the coalition forces, but political considerations may limit its freedom of action.<sup>10</sup> In order to achieve consensus, the U.S. may be required to make concessions in its war aims to politically appease other coalition partners and thus, be denied the military actions which would achieve its own political objectives. Ad hoc coalitions can also dictate the tempo of operations. In Desert Storm the changing political events and the prospect of Allied desertions influenced the urgency of planning and execution decisions. In this way coalitions may be both politically and militarily disadvantageous.

Historically, a coalition's primary advantage has stemmed from its ability to combine and coordinate military effort in order to achieve common political objectives. Coalitions are capable of generating significant amounts of combat power in a relatively short time. The ability to combine the unique and complimentary forces of different military organizations can provide a significant synergistic advantage for coalitions.

The measure of a coalition's success will normally be a function of its ability to achieve unity of effort among military forces of the contributing nations. Nearly all military

advantages and disadvantages of coalition warfare stem from this single concept. In military terms it is expressed as one of the principles of war, "unity of command." In many instances this may not be politically feasible, as was the case in both Vietnam and Desert Storm. In these conflicts nations agreed to aims and strategies for the unified employment of forces without agreeing to unity of command. In Vietnam there were parallel Vietnamese, Korean, American and Australian chains of command, but no overall combined commander. In Desert Storm unity of effort was achieved between Allied and Arab forces, not through a supreme commander, but through the cooperation and mutual support of the U.S. and Arab coalition commanders, General Schwarzkopf and General Khalid.

Other disadvantages of combined military operations in ad hoc coalitions are a result of national differences in language, culture, standards of living, military doctrine and military equipment. These differences normally equate to major interoperability problems. Interoperability difficulties, as a result of combining dissimilar forces, may actually degrade force capability as a whole. During the Tunisian Campaign of World War II, the mixing of allied units and the subsequent interoperability problems actually degraded the overall combat potential of theater forces.

Logistics coordination is another potential disadvantage of coalition operations. Logistics sustainment is the fundamental cornerstone upon which the success of a military

operation depends. Varying support requirements, ranging from unique ammunition to specific dietary preferences may significantly restrict the employment options of coalition forces. Ad hoc coalitions with non-traditional allies create a logistics problem all the more complex.

A commander must always be sensitive of the potential risk to his own forces in any combined operation. In coalitions there is the desire of each nation's forces to occupy an important and responsible position in relation to the other Allied Forces. <sup>13</sup> The burden sharing and risk associated with each coalition partner should be equitable. Since each nation's force is contributing only through the consensus of its political leadership, the uncertainties of relying on another nation's forces can be a disadvantage. For the U.S. who most often contributes the majority of the forces to a coalition, these uncertainties are of major concern.

The success of a coalition military commander depends not so much on his operational expertise or the combat power of his forces, but rather on his ability to promote cooperation and create an atmosphere of mutual respect. Personalities of senior commanders play a major role in the success or failure of coalition warfare.

If coalitions have the advantage of providing nations the means to pursue their common interests through coordinated military efforts, their political fragility can be not only a disadvantage, but a military vulnerability as well. Clausewitz

refers to a center of gravity as the hub of all power and movement on which everything depends. For coalitions it is the common objective which binds them together. <sup>14</sup> If a military advantage can be achieved by disrupting harmony and unity in an alliance, then the coalition itself becomes the allied center of gravity. It was this recognition of the importance of allied unity which influenced Roosevelt's decisions in World War II. He appeased Stalin and made strategic decisions in order to ensure that Russia did not desert the Alliance and make a separate peace with Germany, as in World War I. During the Gulf conflict, Saddam Hussein recognized that coalition unity was a center of gravity and attempted to disrupt it with Scud attacks against Israel. He attempted to force Israel into an active military role and thereby prompt the Arab states to abandon the coalition.

The desirability of coalition warfare in terms of advantages and disadvantages must be considered from both a military and political perspective. The political and military desirability also varies across the warfare spectrum.

The military advantages of coalition warfare normally exceed the disadvantages in a major global conflict such as World War II. When the survival of nations are at risk, the urgency to combine forces through coalitions and create combat power normally takes precedence over individual national interests. The political and military objectives translate into military power to defeat the common enemy. Thus the

necessity to create a superior combat force by combining military resources makes coalition warfare from the military perspective extremely desirable at the high end of the spectrum. In World War II the national political interests of individual coalition partners became secondary to the overall military objective.

At the lower end of the spectrum the political advantages of coalition warfare are the more important factor. When the U.S. acts as a member of a coalition vice unilaterally, it is more politically acceptable and contributes to the legitimacy of the operation. Militarily, ad hoc coalitions with non-traditional allies, more often than not, detract and complicate a limited military operation. The disadvantages resulting from complex command relationships and interoperability tend to make coalition warfare less desirable at the lower end of the spectrum.

## CHAPTER IV

### PLANNING FACTORS FOR COALITION WARFARE

Ad hoc coalitions are unique in that they are based on temporary agreements and are normally less formally structured than standing alliances. The psychological and sociological problems created by differences in customs, religions and standards of living require a unique mental approach to planning for coalition operations. <sup>15</sup> Historical experience with combined operations reveals that integrating multi-national forces is a complex task which requires a great deal of understanding and skill on the part of the commander. Through an understanding of the unique considerations for coalition warfare, the operational commander can more intelligently plan and anticipate issues and prevent their exacerbation through insensitivity and ignorance. <sup>16</sup> Creating this awareness among command and staff personnel is an essential element in the preparations for future coalition operations.

The mission of a coalition commander is to plan and direct the military combat power of member nations to accomplish the common objective. This planning should consider at a minimum, proposed command relationships, interoperability, logistical support and the risk to U.S. Forces in combined operations.

The most important element in preparing for combined operations is developing sound and effective coalition command relationships. Establishing these command relationships is

perhaps the most difficult task confronting the coalition commander. A recent congressional report on the Gulf War noted that command relationships "met with difficulties, were complex, but workable." <sup>17</sup> When unity of command is not achievable, then a unity of effort and an agreed upon strategy must be achieved through the coordination and the cooperative efforts of allied commanders. This latter situation will most likely be typical of the command relationships in the majority of future ad hoc hybrid coalitions. The operational commander can prepare himself for this eventuality by understanding the various factors which influence a coalition's ability to coordinate forces and achieve unity of effort. Unity of effort can not be achieved unless the commanders understand the political and military objectives of their allies and reach agreement on common interests and objectives. The dealings with allies must be accomplished with patience and respect. Commanders must establish and maintain trust among the coalition forces. Coordination and cooperation are the key ingredients to a successful coalition command. The personalities of allied military leaders and the problems associated with personal relationships can be one of the greatest challenges of coalition command. <sup>18</sup>

The most effective use of the coalition's combat strength is achieved when the planning for operations is accomplished by a combined staff which includes equitable representation from each coalition nation. This coordinated planning is

essential to ensuring unity of effort. In Desert Storm this was accomplished by creating a Coalition Coordination Communications and Integration Center (C3IC). Even though the planning must always be a coordinated effort, the overall planning responsibility for a specific operation should be vested in the commander responsible for its execution. The responsibility for planning and execution should not be separated.<sup>19</sup>

There are several general considerations which should guide the coalition planning efforts. A combined plan should reflect an appreciation of the unique capabilities of each national contingent in assignment of missions. Multi-national forces should be employed in a way which optimizes their specific strengths and avoids a duplication or degradation of their unique capabilities. Likewise, the plan must compensate for the comparative vulnerabilities of participating forces. Forces are normally most effective when employed under the military commander of their respective nations. Other considerations which affect the planning process and mission assignment of coalition forces are compatibility of combat doctrine, logistic sustainment capabilities and interoperability. One of the principles of war which has significant applicability in planning for coalition operations is that of "simplicity." It is essential that the plan be capable of being understood and executed by all combat forces in a coalition.

The second most important consideration in coalition

planning involves issues of interoperability. The military success of the coalition depends on the ability of the commander to harmonize the capabilities, doctrines and logistics among forces of varied cultures and languages. In ad hoc coalitions such as Desert Storm where nearly forty different nations contributed to the effort, this is a monumental task. There are, however, some general principles and planning considerations which can contribute to overcoming these interoperability problems. Unity of effort requires that forces be capable of coordinating such things as air defense, intelligence, electronic warfare and the timing of operations. Establishing a communications network and interoperable connectivity are key to effectively coordinating these multi-national warfare capabilities.

Liason officers have been one of the most effective and invaluable resources in assisting the coordination efforts of coalition forces. Colonel Hixson's study concludes that the Liason Officer is essential to the success of combined operations, but also notes that "little thought is usually given to this problem prior to the commencement of operations." His book devotes an entire section to the subject in which he describes the attributes required of Liason Officers and the considerations which should govern their conduct. The utility of Liason Officers was again confirmed during the Persian Gulf War. During Desert Storm nearly all coalition forces were accompanied by one or more Liason Officers from

the U.S. Special Operations Forces. The use of these language trained Liason Officers helped overcome interoperability problems and provided the communications links which were used to coordinate the efforts of the coalition forces.

In ad hoc hybrid coalitions, interoperability problems must normally be managed and not solved. A method of minimizing interoperability problems which has proven effective in nearly every historical experience, including Desert Storm, is that of providing separate geographical or specific functional areas of responsibility for each national force. This preserves their unique capabilities and prevents dilution of combat strength which occurs when attempting to combine units which are incompatible.

Intelligence and its dissemination can have a major impact on the success of coalition military action. The planning and preparations must provide for the timely dissemination of military intelligence for use by all partners in an operation.<sup>21</sup> The degree of dissemination will undoubtedly vary depending on the coalition's membership. In Desert Storm there was no preplanned system or mechanism to govern the release and dissemination of essential military intelligence to other than our traditional allies.

Logistics considerations are major factors which affect the very success of every military operation. The logistic support and the sustainment needs of multi-national forces vary significantly and are influenced by things ranging from

different tactical doctrines to specific dietary requirements. Historical experiences in coalitions, including those from Desert Storm, have all confirmed the desirability of logistical support remaining a national responsibility. The combined staff must, however, ensure the coordination of any host national support, as well as transportation networks and other major facilities such as ports and airfields.

Rules of Engagement (ROE) are another significant consideration in the planning of coalition operations. U.S. Forces are governed by ROE in peacetime and by the Law of Armed Conflict in war. Coordination must ensure that ROE is consistent among coalition members. In Desert Storm, coordination among coalition military commanders and liason teams ensured an effective degree of ROE consistency. In any coalition plan the U.S. commander must always consider the risk to U.S. Forces involved in combined operations. The assessment should concentrate on the dependability of other coalition forces, as well as their combat strengths and capabilities. Additionally, the vulnerability of the coalition's center of gravity must be determined. In many instances the common political objective which binds the members becomes the center of gravity for the coalition. In this case the plan must minimize the risk by including appropriate defensive measures. This exact situation existed during the Persian Gulf War. Exhaustive efforts were made to defend Israel against SCUD attacks. Had Israel retaliated, the

cohesiveness of the coalition and their willingness to contribute militarily might have been jeopardized. This potential breakup may have resulted in a considerable increase in risk to U.S. Forces.

The next coalition war and the exact membership of the alliance can not be predicted, however, there are steps which the U.S. military can undertake to prepare and enhance its capabilities for future coalition operations. Education on the subject of coalition warfare for Senior Officers is an essential prerequisite to future success. Increased studies emphasizing the planning considerations and execution decisions in ad hoc combined operations must also become a central element of Service College curriculums.

The preparation efforts should be focused on the recently publicized seven most probable planning scenarios for future conflicts.<sup>23</sup> It is essential in planning for these regional contingencies that all the ramifications of potential future coalition operations be considered. In each of these theaters the U.S. should attempt to increase multi-national training exercises with potential future coalition partners. Combined exercises, regardless of the size of the units involved, are productive in terms of creating a spirit of cooperation and creating an awareness of interoperability problems.<sup>24</sup> Increased language training for potential Liaison Officers can provide a significant advantage in future combined operations. The planning scenarios can be used to focus the language training

to specific regions and on the countries who are most likely to be our future coalition allies. Sales of U.S. military equipment to potential coalition partners and the training of foreign military forces is another means of enhancing interoperability in future ad hoc coalitions.

Ad hoc hybrid coalitions will continue to be unique both in terms of their membership and the obstacles encountered in attempting to achieve unity of effort. The planning considerations discussed in this chapter are intended to provide an awareness of the potential difficulties and a framework for thinking about future coalition operations. The success of a commander, either as a leader or member of an ad hoc coalition, will depend on his knowledge of and his ability to correctly apply these coalition warfare planning considerations.

## CHAPTER V

### EXECUTING COALITION WARFARE

Understanding the complexities of ad hoc coalitions and successfully executing coalition warfare requires a unique combination of both military and political prowess.

As Karl von Clausewitz said, "Everything in war is very simple, but the simplest thing is difficult." <sup>25</sup> His observation is even more relevant in the case of ad hoc hybrid coalitions.

The key element affecting the successful execution of coalition warfare is the commander's ability to achieve a unity of effort of his forces. In an ad hoc coalition, as seen in Desert Storm, this will normally be accomplished through cooperation, rather than through appointment of a supreme coalition commander. The prerequisite for unity of effort is unity of purpose which involves reaching consensus on military objectives and coalition strategy. The war fighting commander must ensure consensus prior to committing military forces to combined operations.

Both the planning and the execution phase should be accomplished as a coordinated effort. Combined staffs are the ideal means of ensuring that multi-national forces are being utilized in compliance with their national, political and military restrictions.

In actual execution the multi-dimensional battlefield requires special considerations when fighting a coalition war involving naval, land and air forces from a wide variety

of coalition partners. Many of the concepts discussed as planning considerations were actually applied in the execution of the Gulf War. A multi-national coordination center was established and through daily collaboration, coordination of effort was achieved. Coalition forces were assigned missions consistent with political restrictions on their use, mission requirements and force capabilities. <sup>26</sup> Militarily and politically it is important that the U.S. and its allies fight side-by-side against the common enemy. This is desirable from a national prestige perspective. In the Gulf it was important to ensure that each coalition member was provided the opportunity to contribute to the effort.

The assignment of forces and missions in ad hoc coalitions must reflect their unique capabilities and create organizations whose combat potential is not degraded by a lack of interoperability. The options which best satisfy these requirements <sup>27</sup> may be functionally or geographically oriented.

Specifically, the options which should be considered are as follows:

- 1). Assign national single service or joint forces to a specific area of responsibility.
- 2). Assign a national single service or joint force a specific function.
- 3). Assign a combined single service force to a specific area of responsibility.
- 4). Assign a combined joint force to a specific area of responsibility.

Each of these assignment options was utilized in Desert

Storm. Specific geographical areas of responsibility were assigned both to ground units and the naval units operating in the Gulf. Other units were assigned specific functions consistent with their capabilities, such as anti-mine warfare or air defense missions. The air war combined single service forces who were responsible for a specific functional area of the overall Desert Storm campaign. The Arab coalition functioned as a combined joint force with a specific geographical area of responsibility. Each of these options has utility in providing a mechanism for linking the means to the ends in a coalition war.

The responsibility for logistics support in ad hoc coalitions is best retained by the respective nation. Key transportation facilities and host nation support, such as POL and water, should be coordinated through the multi-national combined staff. The medical treatment of casualties and medevac policies are also best left as individual national responsibilities. The prisoner of war (POW) issue will undoubtedly always be a sensitive one, and as the U.S. normally contributes the most to a coalition in terms of military strength and political power, it will bear the responsibility for the welfare of enemy prisoners of war. No matter what arrangement is agreed to, the U.S. must retain sufficient oversight and control to ensure appropriate treatment of POWs and compliance with the international convention guidelines.

Another major consideration for a U.S. commander is the

risk to U.S. Forces. That does not imply inequitable burden sharing, but rather consideration of risks which could result from desertion of coalition partners or a failure to achieve unity of effort. As has been born out in history, the closer the coalition is to victory, the more the individual partners diverge from the common objectives to pursue their individual political aims. This phenomenon in the war termination phase of coalition warfare introduces an increased element of risk to U.S. Forces. U.S. commanders must be cognizant of this and execute in a manner that provides risk reducing alternatives or unilateral options to protect both U.S. interests and its military forces.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

Desert Storm provides an opportunity to examine the complexities of coalition warfare on a large scale. It was however, unique in character and caution must be exercised in extrapolating any lessons learned. The brevity of the war did not test the coalition arrangements, as a longer war might have.

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The most appropriate approach is to compare the historical evidence to the Desert Storm experience and view the lessons in the same context that Clausewitz viewed war, as an art not a science. The fundamental principles and concepts which Clausewitz described are resident in coalition warfare. Coalitions are political organizations and their sole purpose is to achieve the common political objectives of the member nations. The fog and friction of war, as well as the influences of the individual nation's paradoxical trinitities exacerbate the military complexities of coalition warfare.

From my examination of coalition warfare, I would propose that the operational commander be guided by the following four principles and considerations.

Unity of purpose is the political adhesive which binds a coalition. The operational commander must understand the ultimate political objective and create the "military condition in the theater which will achieve the strategic goal."

Secondly, he must ensure unity of effort to achieve military

success in any combined coalition operation. When unity of command is not achievable, then cooperation and coordination are the key ingredients to unity of effort. The use of coordinated planning staffs and assignment of Liaison Officers significantly enhance this effort.

Thirdly, interoperability problems in ad hoc coalitions are best managed through the use of the appropriate force assignment options discussed in Chapter Four and by individual nations retaining responsibility for logistical support.

Finally, the commander must always be prepared to minimize and prevent potential risk to U.S. Forces in combined operations which may be the result of changing political events, diverging national aims in the war termination phase, or a vulnerability to the coalition's center of gravity.

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