



# NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

## THESIS

**THE PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGIC COMBINED JOINT  
SPECIAL OPERATIONS**

by

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June 2009

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**THE PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGIC COMBINED JOINT SPECIAL  
OPERATIONS**

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Submitted in partial fulfillment of the  
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## **ABSTRACT**

Throughout the history of warfare, different countries have used special operations in their effort to achieve key strategic objectives. The objectives of these special operations ranged from hostage rescue to foreign government overthrow. Nonetheless, all of these objectives were of strategic importance for the high-level decision makers who conceived and ordered the missions. Thus, because of their high potential payoff, these particular special operations aimed at achieving strategic objectives could be defined as Strategic Special Operations. As a consequence of the international terrorism threat within the context of globalization, there is an increased likelihood for Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations to be used in the future as an efficient method for solving potential international crises.

This thesis proposes the following principles as the key factors for the success of Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations: a balance between common and national interests, intelligence sharing, interoperability, and a division of responsibilities. Each principle is analyzed with the intention of highlighting the possible issues that may appear during the design, preparation, and execution of Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations. Last, but not least, a model of implementing these principles is proposed as a useful tool for political and military decision makers.

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## **LIST OF ACRONYMS**

|            |  |
|------------|--|
| CJSOTF     | Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force |
| SCJSPECOPS | Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations  |

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# I. INTRODUCTION

## A. BACKGROUND

Throughout the history of warfare, different countries have used special operations in their effort to achieve key strategic objectives. These special operations have largely relied on surprise, speed, and maneuver in order to defeat an often numerically superior enemy.

The objectives of these special operations ranged from hostage rescue to foreign government overthrow, but all of these objectives were of strategic importance for the high-level decision makers who conceived and ordered the missions. Thus, because of their high potential payoff, these particular special operations ordered to achieve strategic objectives could be defined as *Strategic Special Operations*.

Some of these risky missions, carried out by highly trained commandos or by specially trained ad-hoc task forces composed of elements of regular forces, succeeded while others failed.

After the Cold War, the international environment became very complex, with many — and sometimes unpredictable — variables. These changes were true for the civil society as well as for the military system, and as a result, they became increasingly interconnected. The new threat of international terrorism appeared and affected the entire international security environment.

NATO continues its expansion as part of the effort in efficiently responding to new global threats, and close cooperation in military operations is required among the allied countries in order to preserve the peace, or to effectively solve the security issues. Close cooperation is also required between civil and military decision makers.

The international interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan are two good examples of the necessity and reality of military cooperation in solving strategic security issues using combined military joint operations.

Therefore, in the future, the use of Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations is plausible and may become an efficient method for solving potential international crises.

## **B. SCOPE AND PURPOSE**

The scope of this thesis is to analyze the process of planning, preparation, and execution of Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations and to explore the peculiarities of this process in order to identify the key factors leading to success of these operations.

An analysis of the process of planning, preparation, and execution of Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations (SCJSPECOPS), with the intention of emphasizing the principles to be followed in order to achieve success, can offer a valuable advantage for military and political decision makers.

This analysis may help the military and political decision makers by improving their ability to achieve strategic objectives using this efficient tool.

## **C. THESIS STATEMENT**

Vandenbroucke (1993) identified the following five issues as the reasons for Strategic Special Operations failure:

- Inadequate intelligence
- Poor coordination
- Provision of faulty information to the national leadership
- Wishful thinking
- Inappropriate intervention in mission execution (pp. 152-169).

On the other hand, in *Spec Ops: Case Studies in Special Operations Warfare: Theory and Practice*, McRaven (1996) argues that the six principles for successful special operations are:

- Simplicity
- Security
- Repetition
- Surprise
- Speed
- Purpose.

While these principles are applicable to Strategic Special Operations in general, due to the peculiarities inherent in Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations, additional principles are likely need.

Therefore, it is reasonable to hypothesize that these principles are:

- Intelligence sharing
- Balance between common and national interest
- Interoperability
- Division of responsibilities.

#### **D. CONCEPTS AND DEFINITIONS**

To identify the principles of Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations, it is first necessary to limit the scope of this thesis.

For this purpose, according to JP 1-02, Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations is defined as:

Specific special operation or special operations prosecuted in support of a theater campaign or other operations executed by a task force composed of special operations units from one or more foreign countries and more than one US Military Department. The combined joint special operations task force may have conventional nonspecial operations units assigned or attached to support the conduct of specific missions. (DoD, 2008, p. 101)

Moreover, this thesis will take into consideration the fact that those Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations possess the following two important features (Vandedbrouke, 1993, p. 4):

- they are aimed at fulfilling the major objectives of foreign policy, rather than tactical objectives;
- they are closely monitored during the preparation and execution by the highest civilian and military authorities;

Finally, we will accept that the traditional classification of Special Operations as commando type operations and unconventional type operations is valid for Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations as well (Lamb, 1995, p. 4).

## **E. SUMMARY OF CHAPTERS**

Chapter I provides an introduction to Special Operations in the current international security environment. In addition, this chapter presents the purpose and scope of this thesis, and the proposed hypothesis. Finally, this chapter addresses the basic concepts of Special Operations and the need to establish the criteria for Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations' success.

Chapters II, III, IV, and V discuss the principles on which the design, preparation, and the execution of Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations must rest in order to achieve a success rate as high as possible. These chapters provide a set of useful tools to military and political decision makers faced with the need to use this type of operation for the achievement of strategic objectives.

Chapter VI provides an analysis of the possibilities of implementing these principles during the design, preparation, and execution of Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations in the contemporary security environment.

## II. BALANCE BETWEEN NATIONAL AND COMMON INTEREST

*Men are moved by two levers only: fear and self interest  
A man will fight harder for his interests than for his rights.”*

***Napoleon Bonaparte***

Where commonality of interest exists, nations will enter political, economic, and military partnerships. These partnerships can occur in both regional and worldwide patterns as nations seek opportunities to promote their mutual national interests or seek mutual security against real or perceived threats. (ABCA, 2008, p. ix)

### A. COMMON INTEREST IN TRANSNATIONAL ALLIANCES

James Chace (2002) observed that, “Political leaders have only two basic tools at their disposal when enforcing the national interest—diplomacy and force. But diplomatic negotiation implies compromise” (p. 3). Moreover, *Clausewitz’s* well-known description of *war* as a “continuation of policy by other means” supports Chace’s observation (Howard & Paret, 2007, p. 28). Therefore, the only way to achieve the national interest when no compromise is possible is the application of power, as depicted in Figure 1.

As Heaney and Rojas (2007) noted, “While the length of a coalition’s life may vary by design, it may also fluctuate with the vicissitudes of politics, including ideological disputes, altered political opportunity structures, dwindling resources, and personality conflicts” (p. 1). While these factors influence the life of a coalition, they also have a major influence over the formation of a coalition. The political factor, as an expression of national interest, has a major role in shaping and maintaining a coalition.

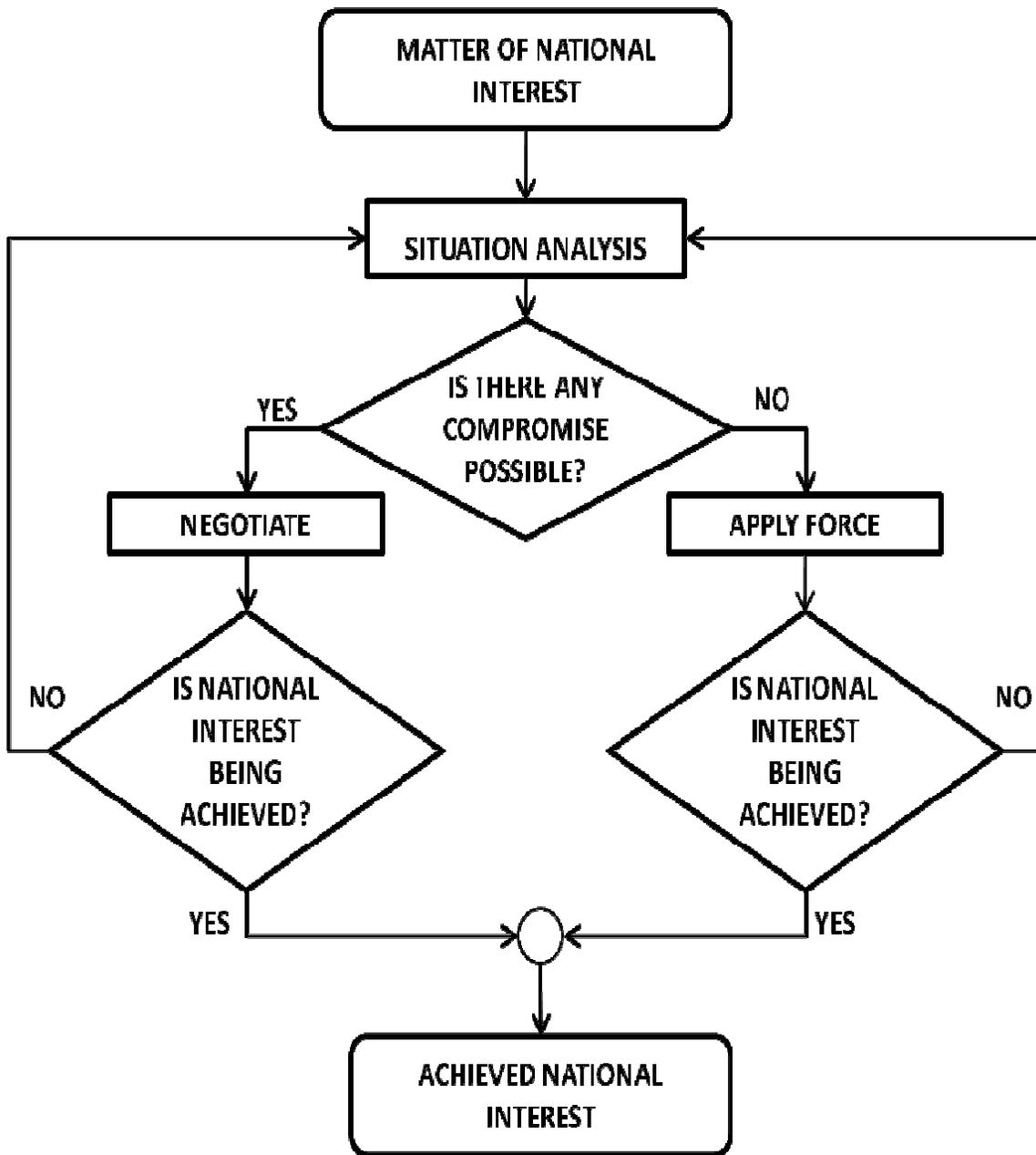


Figure 1. A Decision Cycle for Achieving National Interest

Joe Bandy and Jakie Smith (2004) realized the importance of common interest in the birth of a coalition. They observed that, “Many coalitions begin as a way to support only temporary and clearly delimited forms of transnational cooperation” (p. 3). Moreover, exploring the matter of coalition formation and existence, Sidney Tarrow (2005), identified two main causes of the formation and maintenance of a transnational coalition, shown in Figure 2, as:

- the common interest;
- the partners’ commitment to pursue together the achievement of a common objective (pp. 165-166).

Beyond ethical considerations in international politics, the legitimacy of the national interest of a state is relative. What one state considers justified and legitimate, other players in the international arena may consider illegitimate and unjust. Situations differ from case to case, but any country will always try to benefit from any opportunity to achieve its national objectives.

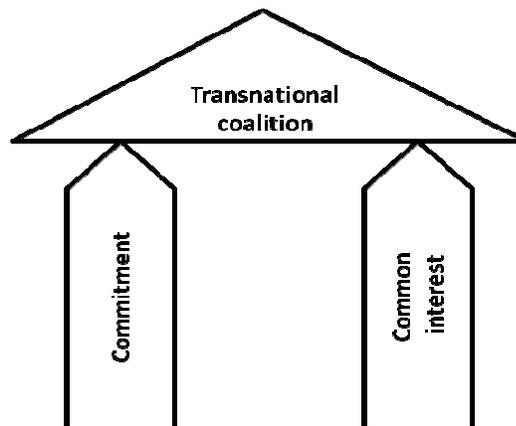


Figure 2. The Two Main Pillars of Transnational Coalitions

When the national interests of two or more states are convergent, building a political-military alliance may be an efficient way to pursue that interest. Using this formula, the involved states share not only the benefits of their actions but the potential risks as well.

## **B. COMMON INTEREST IN STRATEGIC COMBINED JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS**

Based on the preceding paragraph, the common interest is the main element that generates and maintains transnational coalitions. When the fulfilling of the common interest of a coalition requires the execution of strategic special operations, by extension we can say that the common interest generates strategic special operations as well. Therefore, strategic special operations may become valuable tools for two or more states that decide to form a coalition in order to pursue the achievement of common strategic interests in a fragile international situation.

As Heaney and Rojas (2007) observed:

Coalitions vary in temporal stability. They may be ad hoc and short-lived — sometimes formed exclusively for the purpose of staging a single event — or they may be highly institutionalized and enduring — formed with the intention of addressing a wide range of issues over a long period of time. (p. 1)

The speed, surgical accuracy, secrecy, and reduced costs are the characteristics that embody Commando type — strategic special operations for the quick resolution of potential crises from their earliest stages.

In addition, special operations are viable options for dealing with protracted conflicts when, due to various reasons, conventional operations cannot be carried out, or when they did not achieve the expected results. Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations may be utilized as force multipliers in support of conventional operations as well.

JP 3-05 viewed special operations as:

... operations conducted in hostile, denied, or politically sensitive environments to achieve military, diplomatic, informational, and/or economic objectives employing military capabilities for which there is no broad conventional force requirement. These operations often require covert, clandestine, or low-visibility capabilities. (DoD, 2003, I-1)

Because of these characteristics, Strategic Combined Special Operations can be used to solve a wide range of delicate international situations. This makes them very attractive for achieving the state's national interests, and a transnational coalition's common interests.

The multinational task force designated to execute Combined Joint Special Operations in order to fulfill transnational common interests is named Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF).

Therefore, a Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force is primarily the result of a military and political transnational cooperation between states that have decided to achieve common strategic interests by carrying out special operations.

### **C. NATIONAL INTEREST VERSUS COALITION COMMON INTEREST**

As previously stated, the participation in the construction of a Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force has a clear goal: to achieve a common interest by carrying out special operations. However, from case to case, this aspect has several different particularities.

A transnational coalition is usually initiated by the state that has the highest national interest in resolving the problem concerned. For this reason, the proportion of the national interest of a state within the common interest of the coalition may be unequal and nuanced.

Narlikar (2003) considered three main theories of coalition building:

- Theories highlighting an interest-based method of coalition-building;
- Theories emphasizing processes and institutions;
- Constructivist theories: ideational (based on common beliefs and ideas) and identity-based method of coalition formation (pp. 17-33).

For the purpose of this thesis, considering Narlikar's (2003) analysis on

the “interest-based method of coalition-building,” three main different situations whereby a state may participate in forming a political-military coalition may be distinguished:

- A direct relationship between the common interest of the coalition and the national interest of a state;
- A complementary relationship between the common interest of the coalition and the national interest of a state;
- An indirect relationship between the common interest of the coalition and the national interest of a state (pp. 17-24).

**1. Direct Relationship between the Common Interest of the Coalition and the National Interest of a State**

The first situation occurs when the national interests of a state are similar to the common interest of the coalition. This is an ideal and purely theoretical situation, but it is a good criterion for measuring the cohesion of a transnational coalition. When the similarity of the national interests of coalition partners is high and reflected in the common interest of the coalition, the coalition is much stronger (Weitsman, 2008, pp. 7-8).

**2. Complementary Relationship between the Common Interest of the Coalition and the National Interest of a State**

The second situation occurs when the national interest of a state is not entirely reflected in the common interest of the coalition. In this case, the national interest of a particular state is not necessarily similar to the common interest of the coalition. However, the end state of a coalition’s actions may prove advantageous to a particular member state by creating favorable conditions for further actions in pursuing its national interests (Weitsman, 2008, p. 5).

### 3. Indirect Relationship between the Common Interest of the Coalition and the National Interest of a State

The third situation arises when some countries join a transnational coalition due mainly to reasons related to the advantages that membership in such a coalition may offer. The interest for participating in coalition operations may be motivated by a degree of international or regional prestige and influence that can be gained (Weitsman, 2008, p. 5).

The above relationships between national interest and coalition common interest are depicted below in Figure 3.

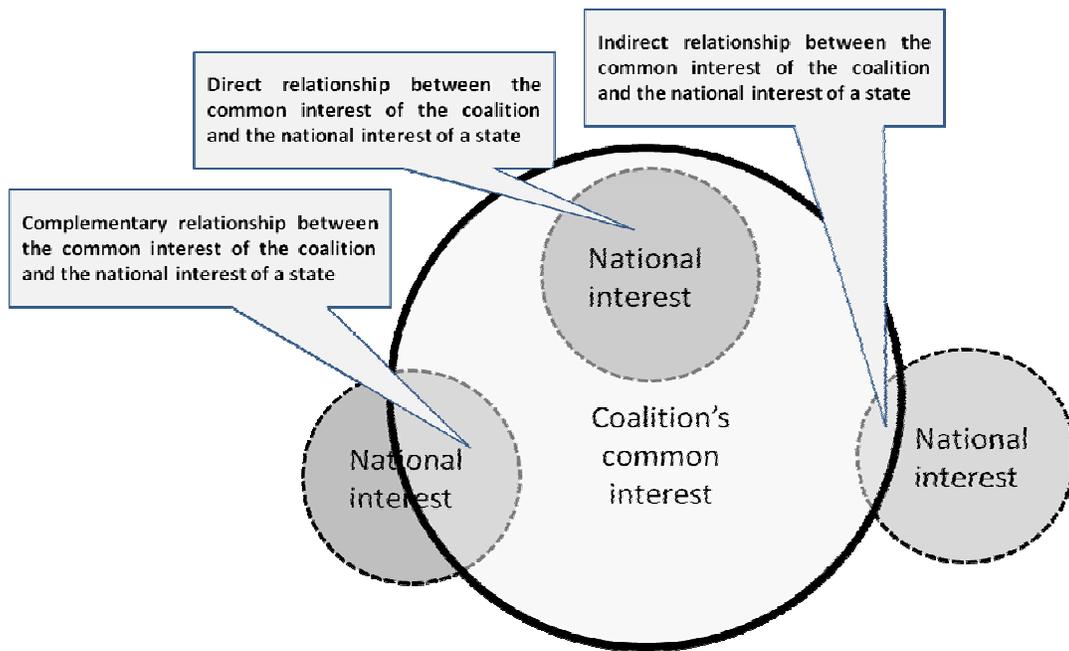


Figure 3. The Relationships between National Interest and Coalition Common Interest

#### D. CONCLUSIONS

The decision to participate in a transnational coalition in general, and to conduct Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations in particular, is mainly a

political-military decision. Considering the benefits and risks that such a decision involves, political and military leaders should perform a detailed analysis of the situation. Answering the following questions can aid in making such decisions easier:

- Is there a common interest, which requires the creation of a political-military coalition, in order to carry out special operations for solving a case?
- How do coalition partners perceive the state's national interest?
- How does the international arena perceive the state's national interest?
- What are the risks and benefits of such an enterprise in terms of the state's national interest? Are the risks acceptable?
- Do coalition partners agree to share both the benefits and risks related to coalition's actions?

The main advantage in conducting Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations is that the states involved in such operations may share the benefits, costs, and risks of such an enterprise. However, for each state, the national interest, rather the common interest, is the main reason to be a member of the coalition. Accordingly, the balance between the national interest of a state and the common interest of a state coalition is the main element that dictates the best method in pursuing national interest.

Therefore, the choice between unilateral Strategic Special Operation and Strategic Combined Joint Special Operation — in solving a matter of a state's national interest — should be based on a comprehensive comparative analysis between the national interest of that state and common interest of a potential coalition.

### III. INTELLIGENCE SHARING AND DISSEMINATION

If you know the enemy and know yourself, you need not fear the result of a hundred battles. If you know yourself but not the enemy, for every victory gained you will also suffer a defeat. If you know neither the enemy nor yourself, you will succumb in every battle.

**Sun Tzu**

The vast majority of military strategists agree with the importance of intelligence as a decisive factor during the planning and execution of successful military operations.

As shown below in Figure 4, the intelligence process consists of five phases: Planning and Direction, Collection, Processing and Exploitation, Analysis and Production, and Dissemination and integration (DoD, 2007, p. I-7).



Figure 4. The Intelligence Process (From DoD, 2007, p. I-7)

All these stages are of equal importance in the effort to provide intelligence in support of military operations. However, most analyses concerning the modernization of procedures and technologies required to improve the intelligence process mainly focus on the collection phase of the intelligence cycle. Perhaps the most disadvantaged phase of the intelligence process, in terms of methodological progress, is the intelligence dissemination phase.

The purpose of this section is to stress the importance of the intelligence dissemination phase of the intelligence process and to identify the difficulties encountered in this phase during the planning and execution of Combined Joint Special Operations.

#### **A. THE IMPORTANCE OF INTELLIGENCE SHARING AND DISSEMINATION**

No matter how well planned and targeted the intelligence collection effort is, it becomes inefficient if the means and methods of collecting information are inadequate, insufficient or obsolete. No matter how much qualitative information is collected, it loses much of its value if it is not properly processed. No matter how well processed the collected information is, it can become a double-edged sword either if it is not properly analyzed, or if the analysis is not transformed into finite and qualitative intelligence products. More importantly, even if all four of the phases above have been successfully carried out, the whole intelligence process will be for naught if the final products of the intelligence process do not reach the final users. To fail during the dissemination phase of the intelligence process means, in fact, to miss the purpose of the entire intelligence cycle (DeConde, 2002, pp. 225-226).

The risk of failure during the intelligence dissemination phase may be emphasized by one psychological element in the intelligence analyst's way of thinking. Once the pressure during the information collection and analysis has passed, and the intelligence products are completed, the intelligence analysts

may have a tendency to partially lose their focus, which may affect the intelligence dissemination phase (Maltz & Kohli, 1995).

Moreover, the information/intelligence sharing among various elements of a Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force — which is actually a more difficult case of intelligence dissemination — affects the intelligence process starting with the collection phase.

Vanotten (2005,) observed that, “anytime people from different cultures come into contact with one another, there is the potential for tension and misunderstanding” (p. 32). He suggested that a psychological premise might slow down the information/intelligence sharing process. Such a premise may arise because of differences between the intelligence cultures of the CJSOTF members. Moreover, it may arise because, at times, some CJSOTF members might consider themselves superior to the other members.

The processes of intelligence dissemination and intelligence sharing, which are quite similar from the methodological point of view, are extremely important, interoperable elements of a military coalition (Neagoe, 2009, p. 25; Hura, 2000, p. 53). Therefore, intelligence dissemination must be treated with the same attention as any other phase of the intelligence process

## **B. INTELLIGENCE IN COMBINED JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS**

Perhaps the most complex environment in which information/intelligence is disseminated and shared is the combined joint environment.

The globalization of threats requires the globalization of efforts to eliminate these threats. Combined Joint Special Operations represent one of the ways in which militaries respond to these threats.

Combined Joint Special Operations are characterized by a few elements that differentiate them from traditional military operations. In essence, the

Combined Joint Special Operations involve the joint action of two or more special services, belonging to two or more states, in order to eliminate a threat to the security of those states (DoD, 2008, p. 108).

In terms of intelligence, the following features characterize the Combined Joint Special Operations environment:

- Different intelligence cultures, from country to country;
- Different intelligence cultures, from service to service;
- Differences between special operations forces' intelligence requirements and conventional forces' intelligence requirements;
- Different systems, technologies, methods and regulations used by the CJSOTF members during the intelligence process;
- Differing individual country security issues.

### **C. ISSUES IN INTELLIGENCE SHARING AND DISSEMINATION DURING COMBINED JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS**

Traditionally, Special Operations may be classified into two main categories: commando type and unconventional type (Lamb, 1995, p. 4). Combined Joint Special Operations are not an exception to this general classification.

#### **1. Commando Type — Combined Joint Special Operations**

Commando type operations are characterized by high physical risk for the performers in the field, high political risk for the planners, short execution time and high strategic stakes for the operations. In terms of intelligence dissemination and sharing during the Combined Joint Special Operations, there are a number of issues that may reduce the efficiency of the intelligence cycle.

These problems may arise even from the beginning of the planning process due to the high strategic stakes of these operations, which sometimes involve highly sensitive intelligence held by one or more of the states engaged in operations. In this respect, the suspicions and hesitations of some countries to

share intelligence — sometimes because of the higher price for which the intelligence has been obtained, or the desire to protect the country's sources — have become the main elements that slow down the process of intelligence dissemination and sharing during the Combined Joint Special Operations. Moreover, because the available time to prepare the commando type - Combined Joint Special Operations is limited, it is difficult to build an efficient intelligence architecture that is able to facilitate the intelligence sharing and dissemination (Walsh, 2007, pp. 151-181).

Another limitation in terms of intelligence sharing and dissemination is sometimes represented by the high degree of the information's sensitivity. Sometimes this situation limits the access to certain information for the particular members of the CJSOTF.

An example of how information sensitivity affects the intelligence sharing process exists when special operation forces are involved in the execution of a mission with conventional forces, or when NATO states are involved in the execution of a mission with non-NATO states. In the latter case, NATO members may have access to some sensitive information but, due to the information's degree of confidentiality, the members cannot disclose this information to non-NATO states.

## **2. Unconventional Type — Combined Joint Special Operations**

Since the commando type - Combined Joint Special Operations are usually short operations, unconventional type - Combined Joint Special Operations are long duration operations. Because of their protracted character, the volume of information is typically very large in unconventional type - Combined Joint Special Operations.

In their study focused on the general dissemination of market intelligence, professors Maltz and Kohli (1995) discovered that the receiver's perception of the quality of the intelligence might be diminished by a very large amount of

information. Moreover, they found that “if new information is transmitted at a rate that goes above the receiver's capability to process it, the receiver might perceive the information to be uncertain, incomplete, or contradictory” (Maltz & Kohli, 1995, pp. 49-50).

There is no reason to assume that in the case of military intelligence the situation would be different. This circumstance calls for the creation of an intelligence infrastructure with a complex and flexible architecture capable of dealing with a huge volume of information.

Although a technical infrastructure is essential to facilitate the intelligence sharing and dissemination process, paradoxically this infrastructure may sometimes alter the process (Office of the Director of National Intelligence, 2008, pp. 3-4). This situation may arise due to the following reasons:

- the need for an accommodation period for the new staff to learn operating rules and characteristics of the technological infrastructure and the intelligence architecture;
- the existence of an enormous intelligence database not managed well enough through efficient software;
- the lack of technical and operational knowledge necessary to work with the intelligence for some Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force's staff personnel.

#### **D. CONCLUSIONS**

In combined joint operations, each allied nation has, more or less, a different set of regulations regarding intelligence sharing and dissemination. This situation affects the Combined Joint Special Operations and requires that a method to coordinate and harmonize these regulations be found.

Recently, referring to coalition operations in Afghanistan, Maj. Gen. Gratien Maire (2008), the French embassy's defense attaché in Washington, highlighted the necessity to find a solution for this issue. Military officials must

“find the way either to adapt the regulations or to find a way to make sure that because of a regulation, we would not be in a situation where some commander in the field will not be able to provide some intelligence for the troops that could perhaps save lives,” he stated.

The issues in sharing and disseminating intelligence within Combined Joint Special Operations cannot be solved by a universal formula. The intelligence sharing and dissemination process’ optimization can be achieved on a case-by-case basis by using different methods.

However, a few general conclusions can be highlighted in order to guide this optimization process by focusing the efforts on the following areas:

- the creation of an intelligence architecture capable of providing effective and well-defined channels through which to achieve the intelligence sharing and dissemination;
- the implementation of simple and efficient standard reporting procedures;
- the creation of a proficient Combined Joint Intelligence Team capable of managing the intelligence flux during the short or protracted combined joint special operations;
- the use of simple and efficient software for intelligence management in order to facilitate the categorization and dissemination of intelligence;
- the establishment of a clear policy regarding the sharing and dissemination of classified information (Hura, 2000, p. 52).

Moreover, Lowenthal (2006) identified the following questions that must be taken into consideration during the intelligence dissemination phase of intelligence cycle:

- Among the large mass of material being collected and analyzed each day, what is important enough to report?
- To which policy makers should it be reported — the most senior or lower-ranking ones? To many, or just a few?

- How quickly should it be reported? Is it urgent enough to require immediate delivery, or can it wait for one of the reports that senior policy makers receive the next morning?
- How much detail should be reported to the various intelligence consumers? How long should the report be?
- What is the best vehicle for reporting it-one of the items in the product line, a memo, a briefing (pp. 63-64)?

Those questions are applicable for the intelligence dissemination phase of the Combined Joint Special Operation Task Force's intelligence cycle as well.

## IV. INTEROPERABILITY

It is not enough to be joint, when conducting future operations. We must find the most effective methods for integrating and improving interoperability with allied and coalition partners. Although our Armed Forces will maintain decisive unilateral strength, we expect to work in concert with allied and coalition forces in nearly all of our future operations, and increasingly, our procedures, programs, and planning must recognize this reality.

### *Joint Vision 2010 (JV 2010)*

Interoperability seems to be a relatively simple concept to explain and implement. In general terms, interoperability:

is a measure of the degree to which various organizations or individuals are able to operate together to achieve a common goal. From this top-level perspective, interoperability is a good thing, with overtones of standardization, integration, cooperation, and even synergy. (Hura et al., 2000, p. 7)

The specific types and degrees of interoperability are in most cases defined, implemented, and measured in terms of the concrete situations within which they are addressed. This is mainly because the needs of interoperability are fewer and more easily identifiable for a specific situation than for a general one. Moreover, many of the interoperability needs not identified during the planning phase of the operation emerge and become clearer during the execution phase of the operation (Hura et al., 2000, p. 7).

As a Rand Corporation study on interoperability stated, in political-military situations, such as Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations:

Interoperability often comes at a price. These costs may be difficult to define and estimate insofar as they consist of military expenditures to enhance interoperability as well as the economic and political costs incurred. The issue, of course, is what sorts of inter-operability are worth what sorts of costs. (Hura et al., 2000, p. 7)

Therefore, often the first step towards operating “in synergy in the execution of assigned tasks” (DoD, 2008, p. 227) consists in conducting a comparative analysis between the benefits and the costs of the interoperability needs for a given situation.

#### **A. THE IMPORTANCE OF INTEROPERABILITY**

Conducting strategic military operations implies various levels of military command and multiple dimensions of the political spectrum. In this context, from the perspective of Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations, the analysis of the interoperability issue is better to made using the broadest available definition:

The ability of systems, units, or forces to provide services to and accept services from other systems, units, or forces, and to use the services so exchanged to enable them to operate effectively together. (DoD, 2004, p. GL-19)

Analyzing the above definition, we can conclude that interoperability is important for military operations due to its triple role of catalyst, communicator, and decrypter. Thus, it can be asserted that interoperability:

- becomes the binder that enables different forces and units to work together;
- creates the channels through which these forces and units offer and accept each other's services;
- ensures the fact that all the implied forces and units are capable of using and understanding the exchanged services and information.

The importance of interoperability mainly consists in supporting national security and national military strategies. Moreover, interoperability may reduce the costs of participating in a coalition and may offer a base for future coalition operations (Hura, 2000, p. 15).

## **B. INTEROPERABILITY IN STRATEGIC COMBINED JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS**

Referring to command, control, communications, and computer systems support of SOF, JP 3-05 (DoD, 2003, p. IV-5) states the following:

Command, control, communications, and computer (C4) support to SOF must be global, secure, and jointly interoperable.

SOF C4 support consists of multiple and varied groups of systems, procedures, personnel, and equipment that operate in diverse manners and at different echelons, from the national to the tactical levels.

SOF missions are normally controlled at the lowest operational level that can accomplish the needed coordination, although political considerations may require control at the national level.

SOF C4 systems must be interoperable at the appropriate security level with the C4 systems deployed by US conventional forces, joint commands, allied units and US commercial networks to facilitate the seamless transport of critical information and common services.

These statements confirm the strategic and politico-military distinctiveness of Combined Joint Special Operations. Moreover, the efforts to achieve interoperability may be guided by transforming the above statements into the following question:

- Who is required to achieve interoperability?
- For what capabilities and services is interoperability required?
- What type of interoperability is needed and at what level is interoperability required (Hura, 2000, pp. xi-xii)?

In the following paragraphs, this thesis seeks to answer these questions on which the achievement of interoperability depends.

## **1. Who is Required to Achieve Interoperability?**

Given the multinational and political-military nature of the Strategic Combined Joint Operations, the first area in which interoperability must be achieved is the political sphere. Furthermore, the existence of political interoperability is the main factor that determines the feasibility of Strategic Combined Joint Operations as effective tools to solve difficult international challenges. In this respect, Annette Heuser (2004) argued, “. . . political interoperability must be based on the definition of common challenges, instruments, and objectives.”

For a coalition, the *common challenges* are threats to the security and common interests of two or more states, and the *common objective* is represented by the agreement between involved countries on the desired end state in solving the inflamed situation. In terms of *common instruments*, this concept refers to the common vision of the involved states on ways to eliminate the threats and on the tools that those states agree to utilize in solving such difficult international circumstances (Heuser, 2004).

One efficient tool that a coalition may use is represented by the Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations. In this light, the concept of political interoperability proposed by Heuser (2004) may lead us to the following conclusion: in order to design, plan, and execute successful Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations, interoperability must be achieved among countries' governments, departments of defense, military services, and military branches.

## **2. For What Capabilities and Services is Interoperability Required?**

The number of elements between which interoperability is required during the Combined Joint Special Operations depends on CJSOTF's structure and its relations with other governmental or non-governmental agencies.

JP 3-05 defines the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force as:

A task force composed of special operations units from one or more foreign countries and more than one US Military Department formed to carry out a specific special operation or prosecute special operations in support of a theater campaign or other operations. The combined joint special operations task force may have conventional nonspecial operations units assigned or attached to support the conduct of specific missions. (DoD, 2003, p. GL-6)

According to the above definition, two main models for a Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force may be identified:

- Different SOF services from different countries;
- Different SOF services and Conventional Force branches from different countries.

However, in performing their missions, sometime CJSOTF elements may need the support of other governmental agencies, such as intelligence agencies. Best and Feickert (2006) illustrate this situation as follow: "In practice, military personnel may be temporarily assigned to the CIA and CIA personnel may temporarily serve directly under a military commander" (p. 2).

All the above lead to the conclusion that for Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations, interoperability must be achieved between the elements of special forces, conventional forces, and governmental agencies.

### **3. What Types and at What Levels is Interoperability Required?**

Bares (2000) believes that the interoperability mechanism should have the following characteristics:

- Openness ability: the quality of a system, previously connected with others, to share a common understanding with them relative to some matters of a coalition.
- Inter-cooperability ability: the capability of a system to share its knowledge (and know-how) with its neighboring systems in an optimal way, according to the comprehension it can get of the evolving situation.

- Ability to conduct actions: the competence of a system to do the required job in the coalition and, consequently, to completely interoperate and furthermore inter-cooperate on all actions assigned to it (p. 4-2).

Applying Hura's model to Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations, we can conclude that the interoperability requirements according to levels of war are as follows:

- Openness ability — at the strategic level;
- Inter-cooperability ability — at the operational level;
- Ability to conduct actions — at the tactical level (Hura, 2000, pp. 7-15).

### **C. ISSUES OF INTEROPERABILITY DURING THE STRATEGIC COMBINED JOINT SPECIAL OPERATIONS**

Tolk (2003) proposed a model to analyze coalition interoperability using two main criteria: organizational interoperability and technical interoperability (pp. 17-18). In this model, technical interoperability is defined as “the ability to make use of functionality offered by other components to increase the functionality offered by the own system,” while organizational interoperability refers to “harmonization and coordination of operations” (Tolk, 2003, pp. 2, 17).

Modifying this model in accordance with the features of Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations, the resulting structure is shown in Figure 5.

First, organizational interoperability consists in acquiring harmonization at three distinct levels:

- Political level by harmonizing political objectives;
- Strategic level by harmonizing strategy/doctrines;
- Operational level by harmonizing operations (Tolk, 2003, pp. 17-18).

Second, technical interoperability consists of ensuring the functionality of a coalition as a stand-alone system by accomplishing compatibility between the systems' elements in three distinct domains:

- Physical domain;
- Protocol domain;
- Operational domain (Tolk, 2003, pp. 17-18).

Finally, the success in acquiring organizational and technical interoperability reflects the capacity of the coalition elements to interact based on aligned procedures.

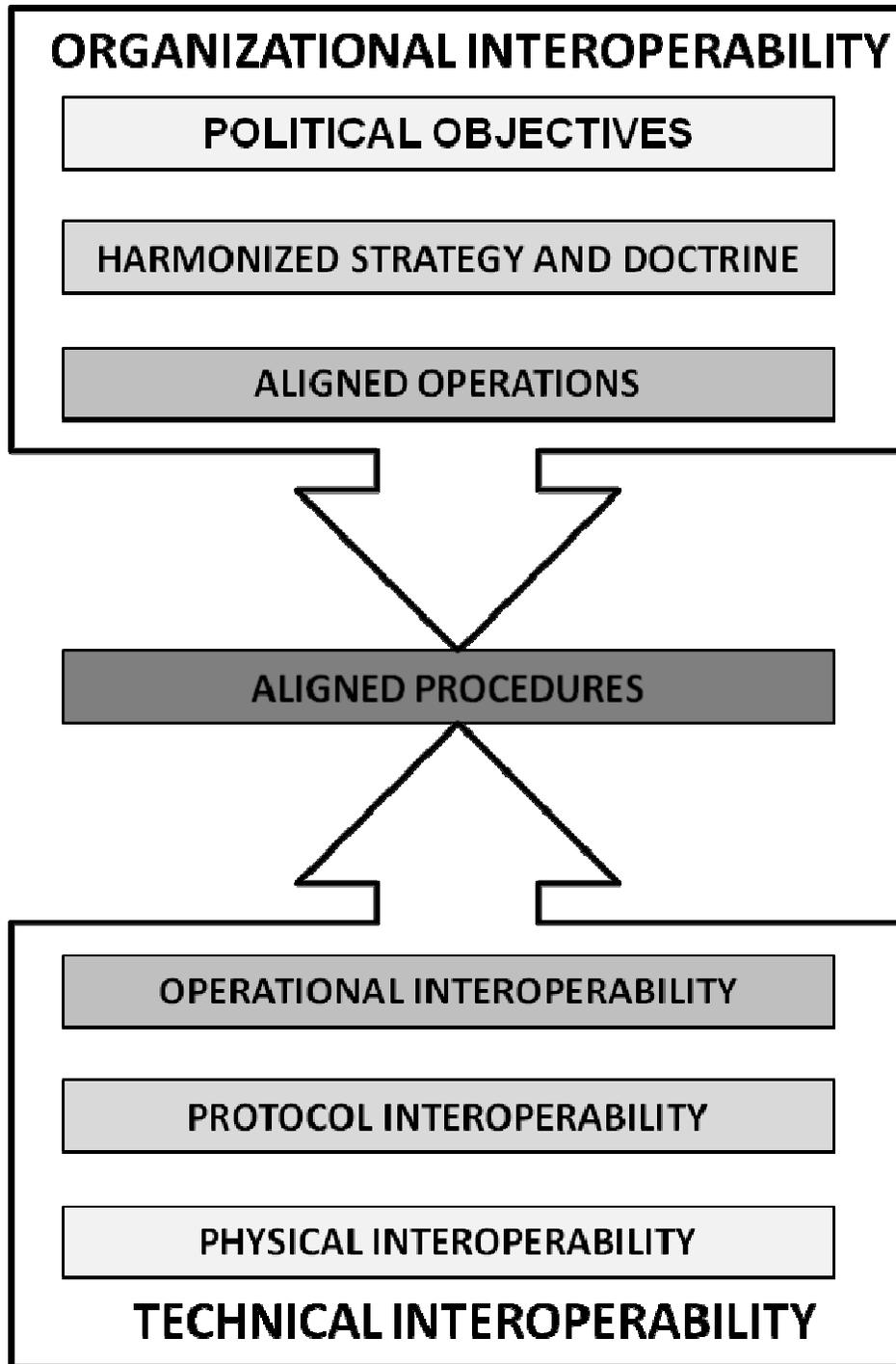


Figure 5. Levels of Interoperability in Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations (After Tolk, 2003, p. 17)

The main utility of this model is that it offers a practical tool to analyze the degree of necessary interoperability and identify the issues that may arise in pursuing interoperability for Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations, as described below.

## **1. Organizational Interoperability**

### **a. Political Objectives**

In order to carry out Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations, a Combined Joint Special Operation Task force is required. Due to its combined-joint nature, this type of task force is essentially the product of a political-military coalition. Specifically, in order to generate a Combined Joint Special Operation Task Force, we first need a political-military coalition.

Gamson (1961) stated that for a “full-fledged coalition situation” the first condition is that “there is a decision to be made and there are more than two social units attempting to maximize their share of the payoffs” (p. 374). This idea confirms the importance of a common political objective in generating a Combined Joint Task Force by a political-military coalition.

Although a political-military coalition is able to generate a Combined Joint Task Force, due to some possible political issues, the same coalition may be unable to generate a Combined Joint Special Operation Task Force. These political incompatibilities may be of an internal or international nature (Hermann and Hagan, 1998, pp. 132-134).

An example of an internal political issue is the U.S.-Belgian Operation “Dragon Rouge.” After much hesitation, the U.S. government authorized the operation but did not authorize the participation of American troops in ground operations because of unacceptable domestic political costs (Odom, 1988, p. 25). On the other hand, an example of an international political issue is the situation in which a coalition member state is not a signatory of the same international conventions as the other members. During Operation “Iraqi

Freedom” Australia was unable to fuel some specific U.S. aircrafts because of the Ottawa Treaty (Kelly, 2005, p. 165). Such situations affect participation in potential coalition special operations and may affect performance as well.

These two cases of internal and international political issues show the complex role that politics play in shaping political-military coalitions. Even if the national interest requires the formation of a Combined Joint Special Operation Task Force and the execution of special operations, the particularities of internal and external policy dictate participation for all states involved in building such a military structure.

***b. Harmonized Strategy and Doctrine***

If political interoperability is achieved, the partner states may decide to create a Combined Joint Special Operation Task Force as a tool for fulfilling their political goals by executing strategic special operations. The next problem that must be solved is the harmonization of the involved countries’ military strategy/doctrine. The issue here may be that the military doctrine of one or more partner states does not allow the carrying out certain types of special operations. That may create difficulties in establishing a common military strategy for resolving the problem.

Dr. James Tritten (1994) identified the “current policy, available resources, current strategy and campaigns, current doctrine, threats, history and lessons learned, strategic culture, fielded and/or emerging technology, geography and demographics, and types of government,” as the major influences on military doctrine (p. 6). Because of these influences on a state’s military doctrines, acquiring interoperability in this area may be a difficult task and require a careful approach.

***c. Aligned Operations***

Once the creation of a Combined Joint Special Operation Task Force is justified by identifying shared political goals and by harmonizing

partners' doctrines and strategies, the next step in achieving interoperability is to synchronize the military decision making processes and the command and control process at the tactical and operational levels.

At this stage, three distinct areas must be considered: CJSOTF's command and control structure, CJSOTF's military decision making process, and CJSOTF's relationship with national command and control authorities.

At the command and control level, the quantity and functional representation of every nation in the command and control element must be determined based on CJSOTF's missions and structure (Hura, 2000, pp. 41-43; Taillon, 2008).

The conceptual differences specific to each partner nation may affect the CJSOTF's military decision making process (Hura, 2000, p. 43; Taillon, 2008). These differences may generate delays, duplications, or omissions while conceiving, planning, and preparing operations by the Combined Joint Special Operation Task Force.

Finally, the third domain relates to the degree of independence that each national authority offers to its representative element within the Combined Joint Special Operation Task Force (Hura, 2000, p. 44; Taillon, 2008). Undesirable effects such as delays, hesitations, or blockages may occur in a CJSOTF's military decision process if operational independence is not clearly regulated and specified by each national authority.

## **2. Technical Interoperability**

### ***a. Physical Interoperability***

The aim of physical interoperability is to harmonize between the technical systems that will be used by CJSOTF and to achieve an acceptable common level of military training for all units.

Concerning CJSOTF's technical systems, the main issue is related to communications and weapons systems. The different technical characteristics of communications systems and different encryption/decryption technologies are two very serious challenges in acquiring the physical interoperability in the communications domain (Neagoe, 2009, p. 25). Moreover, a similarly difficult situation may arise if CJSOTF units use different types of weapon systems (Neagoe, 2009, p. 50; Hura, 2000, pp. 19-20). Such a case will complicate supply procedures in acquiring ammunition and spare parts, will increase the maintenance needs, and may affect the implementation of common standing operating procedures.

Regarding military training, the various training levels of CJSOTF units or different tactics, techniques and procedures used can influence the achievement of interoperability because the harmonization of these issues requires some additional time which is sometimes unavailable (Hura, 2000, p. 19).

***b. Protocol Interoperability***

Protocol interoperability is the second layer within the effort to achieve technical interoperability and involves three main aspects: language, communications, and reports and messages (GAO, 2007, p. 27; Hura, 2000, p. 48).

The linguistic aspect of protocol interoperability is critical to the human dimensions of the mission. Without a common operational language, a mission may fail (Neagoe, 2009, p. 24). Using interpreters for a short period of time may represent a compromise formula, but costs to the speed and efficiency in military operations may be significant.

Regarding communication, Peacock (2005), an expert of the Voiceboard Corporation, defines radio interoperability as:

The ability of any commercial, public-safety or military radio user to initiate and receive calls at any time without the assistance of an

operator. Radio Interoperability allows calls to be made to any other radio, packet-switched IP network, or circuit-switched telephone network connected user, or a combination of these, when the connection is properly authorized by system rules. (p. 1)

Accordingly, the communications protocol interoperability (system rules), represents the capacity to exploit the radio through the use of identical frequency, channels, and secrecy keys (capacity that had been built in the phase of physical interoperability) in order to achieve a functioning radio network (Hura, 2000, p. 48). Without achieving this objective, a radio network is ineffective.

Concerning reports and messages, FM 6-99.2 states, “[protocol interoperability] allows a common, authoritative understanding of reporting and communicating to exist among all [CJSOTF] elements” (DoD, 2007, p. vi). This means that the use of a standard format for reports and messages in CJSOTF communications is required in order to increase the clarity and speed of information flow.

### ***c. Operational Interoperability***

Once the physical and protocol interoperabilities are achieved, the aim of the operational interoperability phase is to ensure that all CJSOTF elements are able to cooperate, act together, and assist each other during military operations (Hura, 2000, pp. 12-13). These objectives can be achieved through the execution of common training and are influenced by the time available for mission preparation.

## **3. Aligned Procedures**

The alignment of CJSOTF procedures is a consequence of achieved organizational and technical interoperability. The common standing operating procedures and the rules of engagement are the two pillars of a coalition’s aligned procedures.

The main issue that may arise in this area is that sometimes the rules of engagement are not completely suitable for conducting actions at the tactical level. This situation appears since the rules of engagement are initially formulated based on political, strategic, and operational considerations. This discrepancy between the tactical realities and the rules of engagement may have adverse effects at the tactical level by limiting freedom of action and exposing military personnel to high risks (Reilly, 1996, p. v).

The second possible issue that may arise is the incompatibility or irrelevance of SOPs at the tactical level (Neagoe, 2009, p. 48). This situation generally occurs in the early stages of coalition operations because these standing operating procedures are established based on the previous military experiences of partners. However, at the tactical level a new reality often proves to be different from the initial assumptions (Bremer & McConnell, 2006, pp. 30-32).

Aligning CJSOTF procedures represents the ultimate goal of the entire interoperability process. That is the real outcome of achieving all performance goals during the process of accomplishing technical and organizational interoperability.

## **D. CONCLUSIONS**

Tolk's (2003) modified model for achieving coalition interoperability may contribute to identifying clear-cut questions to be answered on each layer of interoperability. The precise type of questions depends on the real situation in which a CJSOTF is going to operate. However, a general interoperability "check list" may already be assembled by taking into account the following questions.

### **1. Organizational Interoperability**

Political Objectives:

- Is there an issue whose resolution requires the assembling of a CJSOTF?

- Do the partners share the same political values?
- Are the partners ethical backgrounds aligned?
- Are the partners aware of the political objectives of the coalition?
- Can establishing a CJSOTF and launching special operations solve the problem?
- What internal and international political cost does this course of action involve? Is this cost acceptable in comparison to the benefits?
- Are the coalition partners aware of the risks involved by the establishment of a CJSOTF and its underlying operations? Do coalition partners agree to share both the benefits and risks that this course of action may imply?
- Are there any international treaties signed by the coalition's members that may restrict their participation in some of the CJSOTF's operations?
- Is there a common political vision on how to achieve the coalition's objectives by conducting strategic combined joint special operations (Tolk, 2003, p. 19)?

#### Harmonized Strategy/Doctrines:

- Are the partners cultural and social backgrounds aligned?
- Do the national doctrine and strategy of the coalition partners allow the establishment of CJSTOF and the execution of special operations?
- Do coalition partners share a common vision regarding the strategy for using a CJSOTF in pursuing proposed goals (Tolk, 2003, p. 19)?

#### Aligned Operations:

- What structure of command and control is necessary to coordinate CJSOTF operations?

- What quantitative and functional representation should each member of the coalition have within the CJSOTF's structure of command and control?
- Do coalition partners share a common vision regarding how the CJSOTF operations must be shaped in order to pursue proposed military goals?
- Do national authorities offer acceptable freedom of action to their national elements in order to conduct operations within the CJSOTF's mandate?
- Are the military leaders and decision makers aware of their coalition partners' decision making processes peculiarities (Tolk, 2003, p. 19)?

## **2. Technical interoperability**

### Physical Interoperability:

- What units, services, systems, etc., are needed to accomplish the mission?
- What specific capabilities are necessary for the operation?
- Do the technical systems of CJSOTF's elements have similar technical and tactical characteristics?
- Do the CJSOTF elements enjoy a similar level of training?
- Is it possible to achieve full supply and maintenance support for all the technical systems of the CJSOTF's elements?
- Is it possible to integrate all necessary radio means into a communication infrastructure at the tactical level (Tolk, 2003, p. 18)?

### Protocol Interoperability:

- Is there a common operational language established within the CJSOTF?

- Is it necessary to use interpreters? Where are they necessary? When are they necessary? Are they available? How can they be used without affecting the confidentiality of operations?
- Are the common secrecy keys, radio frequencies, and channels for the CJSOTF's elements established?
- Is the communication infrastructure functional and flexible?
- Is there a commonly established and accepted standard format for reports and messages within the CJSOTF (Tolk, 2003, p. 18)?

Operational Interoperability:

- Are the tactical elements capable of operating together?
- Are the operational elements capable of exploiting the communication infrastructure (Hura, 2007, pp. 24-25)?
- Who is best qualified to identify the operational needs and to determine how they are to be achieved?

### **3. Aligned Procedures**

The following questions will help in directing the final stage of achieving interoperability:

- Are the rules of engagement (ROE) aligned within the tactical levels of the operations?
- What common standing and standard operation procedures (SOP's) are necessary for mission accomplishment?
- Are the tactics available in the form of SOP?
- Are the SOPs compatible?
- How will these SOPs be disseminated and by whom?
- Are the operational elements able to operate together in accordance with mission's SOPs and within the ROE framework?
- How will the determination of whether interoperability is achieved be assessed , and by whom?
- What is the role of the different involved units during the operation, regarding the other units' roles (Tolk, 2003, p. 19)?

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## V. DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

JP 3-05 (2003) defines Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force (CJSOTF) as:

A task force composed of special operations units from one or more foreign countries and more than one U.S. Military Department formed to carry out a specific special operation or prosecute special operations in support of a theater campaign or other operations. The combined joint special operations task force may have conventional nonspecial operations units assigned or attached to support the conduct of specific missions.

That is, in order to create such a military structure, a political agreement between two or more states must exist. Moreover, in accordance with FM 3-05, special operations' objectives "are as much political, economic, and informational as they are military in nature" (DoD, 2006, pp. 1-6). This highlights the fact that the political decision makers are not only involved in the creation of this type of political-military coalition, but in the supervision of the coalition's operations as well. Furthermore, the joint aspect of a CJSOTF involves cooperation among different types of special operations units, or between special operation units and conventional units. Finally, in terms of economy of force, special operations forces are "an essential economy of force when military objectives are subordinate to political, economic, and informational objectives" (DoD, 2006, pp. 1-6). All these characteristics qualify special operations as the proper method to achieve highly political outcomes at lower material and human costs.

An appropriate division of responsibilities at the political-military and military levels is essential for a political-military coalition, when Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations are used for fulfilling coalition common objectives. Roman and Tarr observed,

Political leaders, civilian bureaucrats, and national security professionals each lay claim to certain functional prerogatives by virtue of their specific offices. However, national security policy formulation is a shared domain that links the top political leaders

and their national security professionals. Political leaders, military professionals, and national security professionals need each other in order to make policies, fulfill responsibilities, and to accomplish goals. (Feaver and Kohn, 2001, p. 418)

Dale (2008), noted that “National security professionals are those personnel in positions responsible for developing strategies, creating plans to implement, and executing common missions in direct support of U.S. national security objectives” (p.10). Every politician, soldier, or security professional has his area of expertise. A pragmatic cooperation in political-military matters must be based on sharing and analyzing professional opinions. In addition, a pragmatic cooperation will recommend who is the most qualified to perform a certain task within coalition operations (Sloan, 2005, pp. 237-238).

#### **A. DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES AT THE POLITICAL-MILITARY LEVEL**

Samuel Huntington (1957) noted, “War is always subordinate to the external political ends which determine the extent and nature of the violence to be employed” (p. 57). Moreover, Roman and Tarr considered that “civilian and military professionals are drawn into policymaking arena by appointees who need all the help they can get” (Feaver & Kohn, 2001, p. 404). Furthermore, referring to the “civil-military interface,” AJP-3 states that, “Joint forces will usually conduct joint operations in cooperation with governmental and non-governmental agencies” (NATO, 2007, pp. 1-3).

The purpose of Strategic Combined Special Operations is to discreetly deal with sensitive matters while backing up national interest. If this type of matter arises, civilian and military professionals, under the supervision of political leaders, are the first to decide upon the necessity of employing Strategic Combined Special Operations and assessing the chance of success in solving the problem by launching them (Johnson & Metz, 1995, pp. 2-3).

When focusing on Strategic Combined Special Operations at the military-political level, three main categories of decision makers are identifiable: political

leaders, high-ranking national security professionals, and high-ranking military professionals (Johnson & Metz, 1995, pp. 8-13). The challenge here is to identify what kind of expertise is needed in order to help the decision making process in the field of Strategic Combined Special Operations.

First, we need to be aware of the “social myth” of professional expertise. Usually, at this political-military level, high-ranking professionals are mostly involved. That does not mean the professional expertise is directly proportional to professional rank. This situation appears because, in time, the high-ranking professionals lose a part of their special abilities in their field of expertise as a consequence of their high position in which they mostly deal with administrative matters instead of training, practicing, and maintaining their professional skills (Feaver & Kohn, 2001, p. 405). Therefore, the way political leaders need the expertise of high-ranking professionals, the latter need the support and expertise of national security professionals and military field experts as well.

As far as the Strategic Combined Special Operations is concerned, at the military-political level the decision should involve two separate steps. The first step involves a detailed evaluation of a given situation and whether a special operation is the best available course of action (Dalton, 2008, pp. 61-62). Once the use of special operations forces is identified as the best suitable course of action for solving the problem, the second step is the creation of an interface between military-political decision makers and operational forces (Goodpaster, 1996).

- 1. Evaluating the Situation and Identifying the Best Available Course of Action**

For this step, the “decision making table” at the national political-military level is represented below in Figure 6.

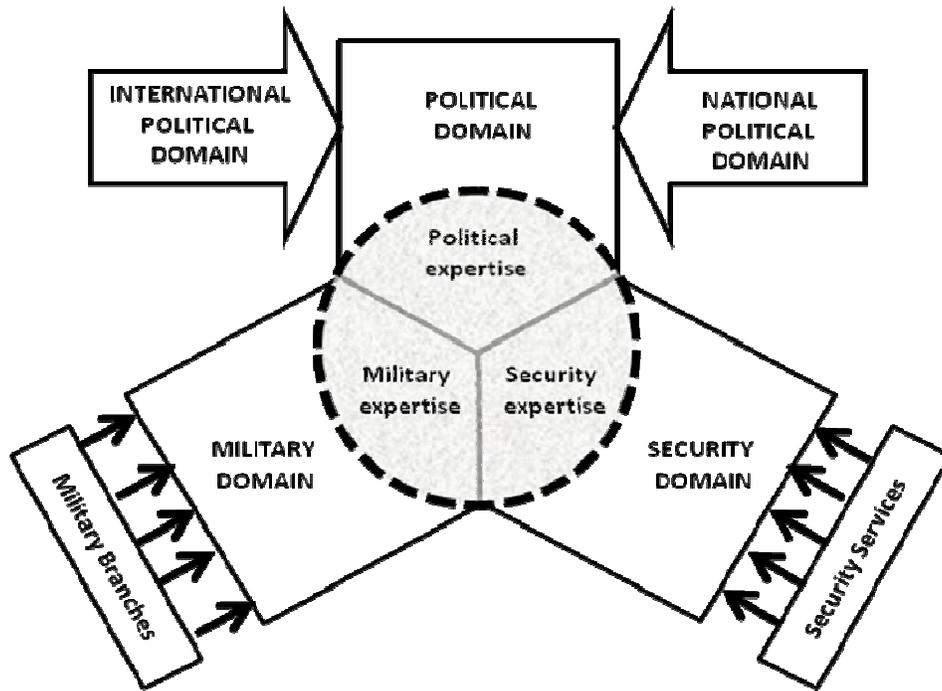


Figure 6. The National Decision Making Table at the Military-political Level

Using Douglas and Metz's (1995) analysis on the military-political level, the following responsibilities for the political leaders, national security professionals, and the military professionals may be identified.

**a. Political Leaders' Responsibilities**

- Evaluate how the matter under discussion affects national interest at the national and international level;
- Evaluate the internal and international risks of taking or not taking any action to solve the problem;

- Evaluate the possibilities of an international coalition to solve the problem through combined special operations versus unilateral special operations;
- Initiate the process of identifying the best available course of action to solve the problem;
- Take responsibility for the finally agreed upon course of action;
- Initiate the procedures for establishing an international coalition.

**b. *High-ranking Military Professionals' Responsibilities***

- Analyze the military capabilities of the potential adversary/target;
- Estimate the probability of success in engaging the adversary/target by different available methods;
- Estimate the collateral damages of military actions;
- Estimate the possibilities, advantages and disadvantages of a combined military operation versus a unilateral military operation;
- Recommend a military course of action for solving the problem;
- Initiate the procedures for setting a combined military operation.

**c. *High-ranking National Security Professionals' Responsibilities***

- Analyze the possibility of engaging the adversary/target by specific means and methods and the likelihood of success;
- Analyze the risks involved by using such methods;
- Analyze the possibility of supporting the military course of action recommended by the military professionals;

- Estimate the possibilities, advantages and disadvantages of cooperation with other foreign security services.

**d. *Common Responsibilities for all Political Leaders, High-ranking National Security Professionals, and the High-ranking Military Professionals***

- Analyze all proposed courses of action from their perspective;
- Participate in selecting the most advantageous course of action;
- Support the selected course of action by offering the necessary resources, personnel and expertise from their field of responsibility (pp. 4-14).

**2. *Creating a Combined Military-political Interface between the National Military-political Decision Makers and CJSOTF***

AJP-3 states, “Military activity at the strategic and operational level will clearly be influenced, and ultimately directed by political considerations” (NATO, 2007, pp. 1-3).

If the use of special operation forces (by launching a Strategic Combined Joint Special Operation) is considered the most advantageous course of action, the next step is to establish an interface between the combined operational task force (CJSOTF) and the decision makers at the military-political level.

Similar to the national level, this interface should be composed of three categories of decision makers: political leaders, national security professionals, and military professionals (Neagoe, 2009, p. 33). At the national military-political level, a balance between their political skills, administrative skills, and specific professional skills should characterize the decision makers. Nonetheless, at the combined military-political interface, highly qualified professionals who understand the nature of the relationship between the military and political actions are needed. Moreover, besides their political affairs experience, the

politicians involved at this level should also have strong knowledge of military affairs (Deist, Boog, Maier, and Rahn, 2001, pp. 106-109).

In analyzing *Dragon Operations: Hostage Rescues in the Congo* (Odom, 1988, pp. 25-28; 42-43; 45-59; 61-81) and *Dragon Rouge: The Rescue of Hostages in the Congo* (Wagoner, 1980, pp. 130-136; 137-140; 143-148), a few conclusions about how national security professionals and military professionals should divide their responsibilities within the structure can be drawn as described in the following paragraphs.

**a. *Politicians' Responsibilities***

- Deal with the political aspects of setting up a Combined Joint Special Operations Force;
- Negotiate the quantitative and functional participation within the Combined Joint Special Operations Forces according to national caveats;
- Ensure that the operations' end state supports political aims;
- Cooperate to establish the rules of engagement to protect military personnel in accordance with international treaties and national caveats;
- Keep national political authorities informed of the status of operations.

**b. *Security Professionals' Responsibilities***

- Cooperate in establishing a common strategy of supporting the military course of action recommended by the military professionals;
- Facilitate the cooperation between their services and the CJSOTF's elements;
- Provide intelligence acquired by the CJSOTF elements' services regarding the situation in the area of operations.

**c. *Military Professionals' Responsibilities***

- Advise the politicians on negotiating the quantitative and functional participation within the Combined Joint Special Operations Forces in accordance with national military caveats;
- Deal with the military aspects of setting up a Combined Joint Special Operations Force;
- Cooperate in establishing a common strategy for engaging the target in order to support political aims;
- Advise politicians on establishing the rules of engagement.

**d. *Common Responsibilities for all Political Leaders, National Security Professionals, and Military Professionals***

- Cooperate in establishing a common strategy for engaging the target/enemy in order to fulfill the common political purpose;
- Support the common strategy by engaging the necessary resources personnel and expertise from their field of responsibility (pp. 32-44.).

**B. DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES AT THE MILITARY (CJSOTF) LEVEL**

ABCA (2001) states that:

The coalition force commander will have to look at which nations can offer special capabilities. These capabilities—airlift, special operations, intelligence collection, communications, security, and logistics—can offset other countries' shortfalls and enhance overall operational competence. (pp. 1-14)

This statement is an important one for the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force's commander as well. He must be aware that the division of responsibilities at the CJSOTF level may be influenced by two factors: national

caveats and military proficiency. Depending on these two factors, the CJSOTF commander must clearly establish what type of task each CJSOTF element is capable of performing and shape each element's mission.

## **C. CONCLUSIONS**

By analyzing the Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations not only as a military operation but also as a complex political-military operation, we can distinguish three levels of responsibilities: the national political-military level, the combined joint political-military level, and the combined joint military level. These levels are shown in Figure 7.

### **1. The National Political-military Level**

The decision of whether or not to participate in a coalition is made by each state at the national level. This political decision is taken after the military and national security professionals, under the supervision of high-ranking political leaders, carry out a detailed analysis of the situation. At this level, the situation analysis consists of an evaluation of the state's available methods to solve the problem and of an assessment of the compatibility degree between the national interest and a coalition's common interest. If the final decision favors participation in coalition operations and execution of combined special operations, the interested states can begin negotiations. The main purpose of negotiations is to conceive the coalition's common strategic objectives and form a combined political-military element aimed at turning those objectives into reality.

### **2. The Combined Joint Political-military Level**

At this level, political-military teams or political and military representatives from each coalition member state work together. Their common goal is to design the structure of CJSOTF and to build up the diplomatic channels and legal

framework necessary for its materialization. Moreover, at this level the strategy of employing CJSOTF in order to accomplish the coalition's common objectives is conceived.

### **3. The Combined Joint Military Level**

This area should be exclusively reserved for military and national security professionals. At this level, the necessary decisions to achieve CJSOTF military objectives are taken in accordance with the strategy established by the high-level political-military decision makers. At the combined joint military level, the responsibilities for fulfilling the CJSOTF objectives are divided among its constituent elements. As long as the decisions taken at the CJSOTF level are in accordance with the rules of engagement, any alteration of those decisions based on political criteria can be counterproductive.

As far as the Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations is concerned, there must be a division of responsibilities between those three layers and between the components of each layer as well. In this way, undesirable interferences will be avoided, and thus all the politicians, military professionals and security professionals involved will be given the opportunity to effectively use their skills and expertise in fulfilling the desired common goals.

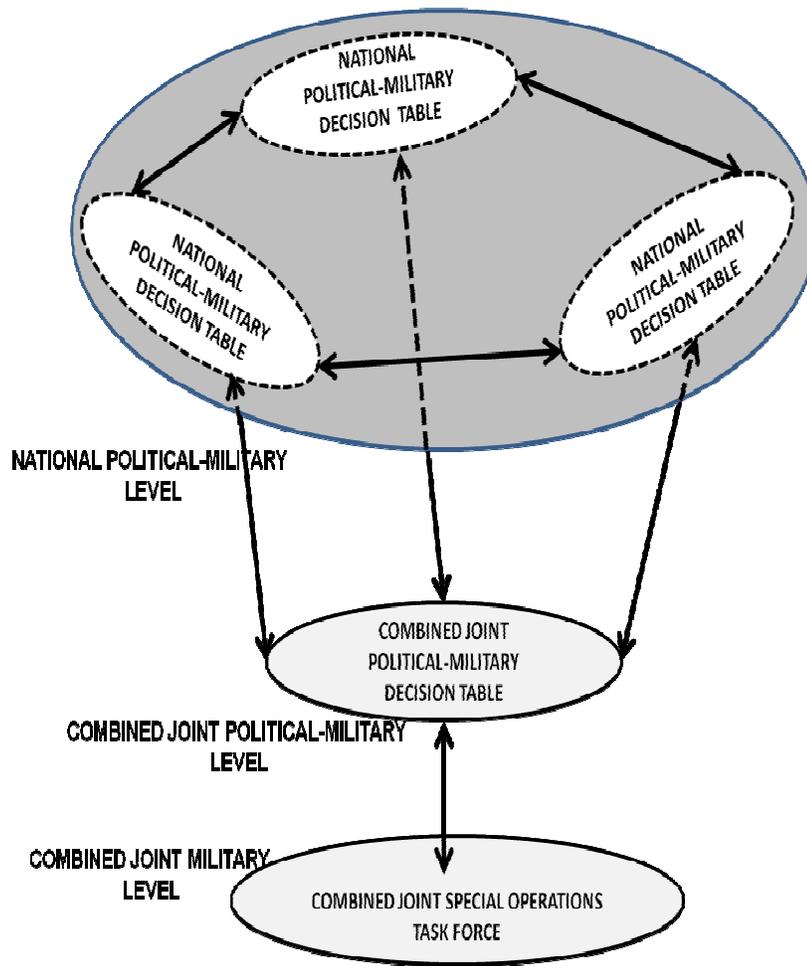


Figure 7. The Levels of the Division's Responsibilities

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## **VI. CONCLUSIONS**

This thesis proposes a political-military approach to the domain of Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations. It argues that, beside McRaven's widely accepted six principles of special operations, four additional principles — balance between common and national interest, intelligence sharing, interoperability, and division of responsibilities — are necessary for the successful execution of Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations.

### **A. BALANCE BETWEEN COMMON AND NATIONAL INTEREST**

The first principle, balance between common and national interest, is important because SCJSPECOPS are transnational military operations pursuing the fulfillment of a common goal. This common goal is composed, in variable percentages, of the partners' national goals. Moreover, the members of a coalition decide to use SCJSPECOPS after all political possibilities of achieving national objectives are ruled out and when using conventional forces is neither necessary nor recommended.

The two pillars of a transnational coalition are common interest and the partners' commitment to pursue together the achievement of a common interest. The balance between the coalition's common interest and member states' national interest influences the strength of the partnership.

There are three types of relations between the common interest of the coalition and the national interest of a state: direct, complementary, and indirect relationships. A coalition's cohesion is much stronger when there is a direct relation between the common interest of the coalition and the national interest of a state, and less strong when this relation is indirect. This is shown graphically below in Figure 8.

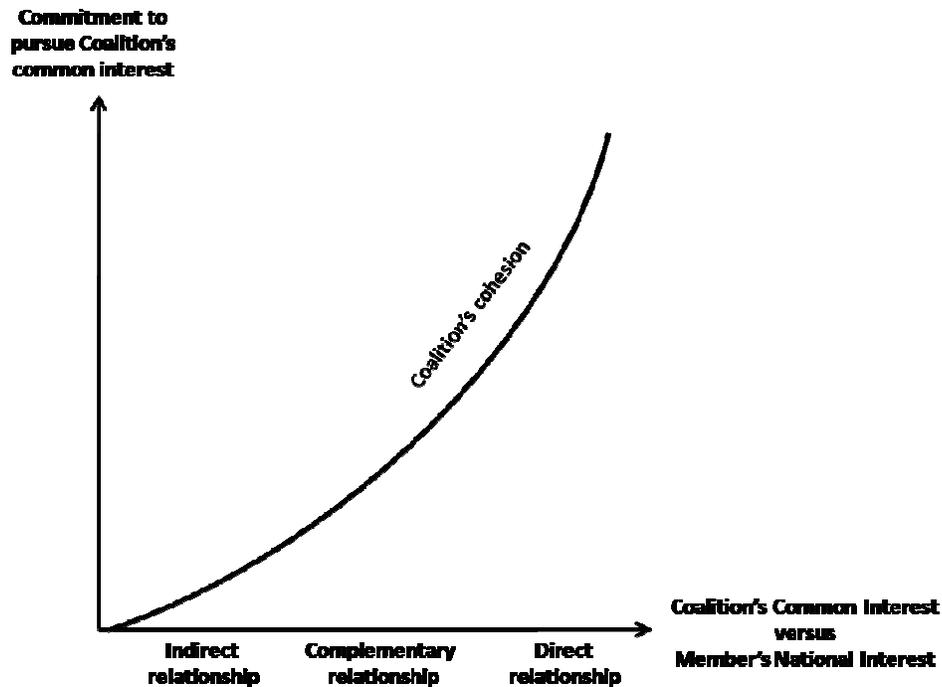


Figure 8. The Strength of Transnational Coalitions

Since military operations are expressions of political will, the degree of a coalition's cohesion will influence the cohesion, as well as the commitments of the SOF elements involved in the execution of SCJSPECOPS.

## B. INTELLIGENCE SHARING

Intelligence is a decisive factor in planning and executing successful military operations. Military operations are supported through an intelligence process consisting of five phases: planning and direction, collection, processing, analysis and production, and dissemination and integration. Even if the first four phases of the intelligence process are successfully carried out, the whole effort is useless if the final products of the intelligence process do not reach the end users.

Since the Combined Joint Special Operations require the joint action of two or more special services, military branches or governmental agencies

belonging to two or more states, the intelligence dissemination phase involves intelligence sharing between those elements as well.

First, intelligence must be shared at the international level between the concerned states, and at the national level between the military and governmental agencies of each state. This will help high-level decision makers to assess the situation and to decide if a unilateral or a combined action is required to solve the problem.

Second, if it is agreed upon by SCJSPECOPS, intelligence must be shared between the national planning teams (or individual planners). This will allow them to efficiently tailor and task the combined joint task force in order to fulfill the common objectives.

Third, after assembling the combined joint task force, intelligence must be shared between the CJSOTF elements. This will increase their proficient task performance and mutual support.

### **C. INTEROPERABILITY**

Interoperability is important for military operations due to its triple role of catalyst, communicator, and decrypter. Due to the political-military particularities of SCJSPECOPS, interoperability must be achieved among countries' governments, departments of defense, military services, and military branches and between the elements of special forces, conventional forces, and governmental agencies as well.

Procedures alignment represents the final aim of acquiring interoperability within SCJSPECOPS. This goal is achieved by two convergent approaches. The first approach consists of acquiring organizational interoperability by harmonizing political objectives, as well as strategy and doctrine in order to align coalition operations. The second approach resides in obtaining technical interoperability by acquiring physical and protocol interoperability as the necessary prerequisite for operational interoperability.

Procedures alignment ensures that CJSOTOF elements will efficiently work together. This alignment creates the channels through which CJSOTOF elements offer and accept each other's services. Moreover, it makes them capable of using and understanding the exchanged services and information.

#### **D. DIVISION OF RESPONSIBILITIES**

Special operations represent an efficient method to achieve highly political outcomes at lower material and human costs. When Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations are used for fulfilling coalition common objectives, an appropriate division of responsibilities at the political-military and military levels is essential. Decisions concerning SCJSPECOPS are based on three main levels: national political-military level, combined joint political-military level, and combined joint military level.

At the national and combined joint political-military levels, we can distinguish three main categories of decision makers: political leaders, national security professionals, and military professionals. These three categories of decision makers have two main purposes. The first is to evaluate the situation in order to identify if the use of Strategic Combined Joint Special Operations represents the best suitable course of action in solving the problem. The second is the creation of an interface between political-military decision makers and operational forces. Successful fulfillment of these two important goals requires each of the three categories of decision makers to perform specific tasks.

At the combined joint military level, division of responsibilities refers mainly to how the missions and tasks are assigned within CJSOTOF, and how they are influenced by two factors: national caveats and military proficiency. Depending on these two factors, the CJSOTF commander must clearly establish what type of task each CJSOTF element is capable of performing, as well as shape the mission of each element.

## **E. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Understanding the principles of SCJSPECOPS is the first step in the successful execution of these operations. However, the goal of this thesis is not met unless a model for the practical application of these principles is proposed.

Discussing division of responsibilities in the area of SCJSPECOPS, this thesis identified three levels of decision making: national political-military level, combined joint political-military level, and combined joint military level. Furthermore, for each of these levels, a model displaying the integration of SCJSPECOPS' principles in the decision making process is proposed.

### **1. Applying the Principles of SCJSPECOPS at the National Political-military Level**

At the national political-military level, the ultimate goal of the decision making process is to identify the available methods of protection or enforcement of the national interest. For a proper understanding of the situation, political leaders, military professionals, and national security specialists must honestly share the information they have on the concerned matter. In this way, they are able to decide if the problem may be solved by political methods or by the use of force. Moreover, if the decision is made to use force, these leaders are further able to examine all the aspects involved by utilizing unilateral or combined special operations to solve the problem.

If an analysis of the situation shows that a SCJSPECOP is the recommended method, the final decision should be made after a two-stage comparative analysis. First, the relationship between national interest and the interest of the coalition must be scrutinized. Furthermore, it is necessary to analyze the degree of operational interoperability between the potential coalition partners. If the comparative analysis favors the use of SCJSPECOPS, then a national team can be assembled for further planning at the combined joint political-military level. The integration of the SCJSPECOPS' principles in the decision making process at national political-military level is shown in Figure 9.

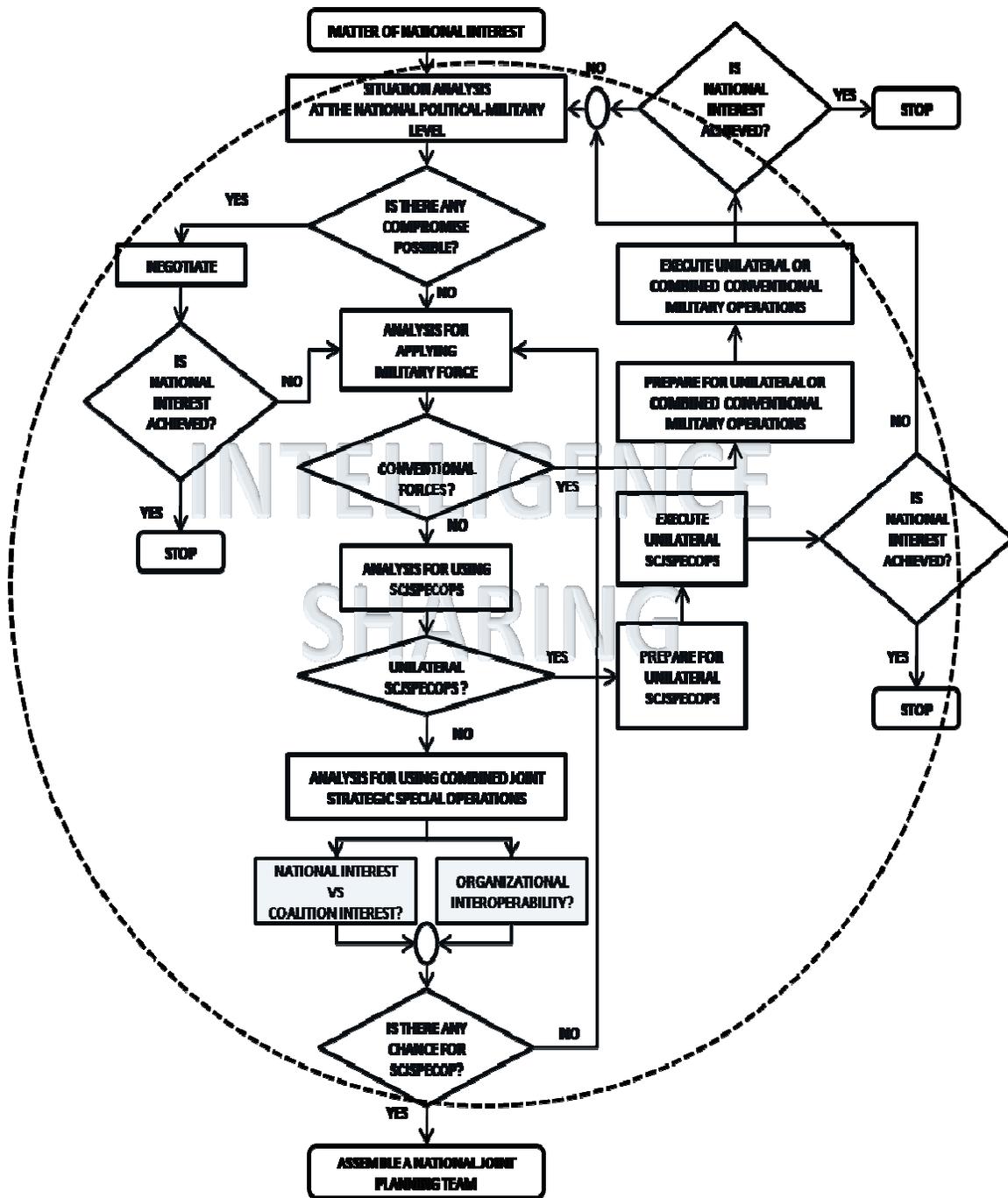


Figure 9. Decision Making Flowchart at the National Political-military Level

## **2. Applying the Principles of SCJSPECOPS at the Combined Joint Political-military Level**

At the combined joint political-military level — where the national political-military teams work together — the final objective is to design the structure of the CJSOTF and to conceive the strategy of employing the CJSOTF in order to accomplish the coalition's common objectives. Through a permanent exchange of information, national teams can work together to establish the battle order, the chain of command, the mission, and rules of engagement for CJSOTF. If the teams manage to reach an agreement on the aforementioned elements, then operational alignment, and doctrines and strategy harmonization, which are the prerequisites for an effective CJSOTF operation, are achieved. The decision-making flowchart for establishing a CJSOTF at the combined joint political-military level is shown in Figure 10.

## **3. Applying the Principles of SCJSPECOPS at the Combined Joint Military Level**

The combined joint military level must be exclusively reserved for the military. Once high-level political-military decision makers establish the CJSOTF's working framework, as well as its employment strategy, the military field experts apply this strategy at the tactical level by resorting to military means.

First, at the CJSOTF level, military commanders must assess if it is possible to execute CJSOTF missions without jeopardizing them as a result of the limitations imposed by the ROE and national caveats. If any issues arise in this area, the decision makers at the combined joint political-military level must be informed in order to mitigate any ensuing problems. Second, military commanders must create the conditions for achieving technical interoperability between CJSOTF elements in order to align CJSOTF procedures. This process is shown in Figure 11.

In order to increase a mission's likelihood of success, military commanders must carefully assign the tasks within the CJSOTF. Even if

CJSOTF procedures are already aligned, not all the CJSOTF elements have the same proficiency in performing all missions. The efficiency with which a unit can undertake a task is influenced by mission requirements and unit and individual limitations, by national caveats, and by the military training and equipment. The nomination of a CJSOTF's element for a mission's execution should be done in accordance with the decision making process shown in Figure 12.

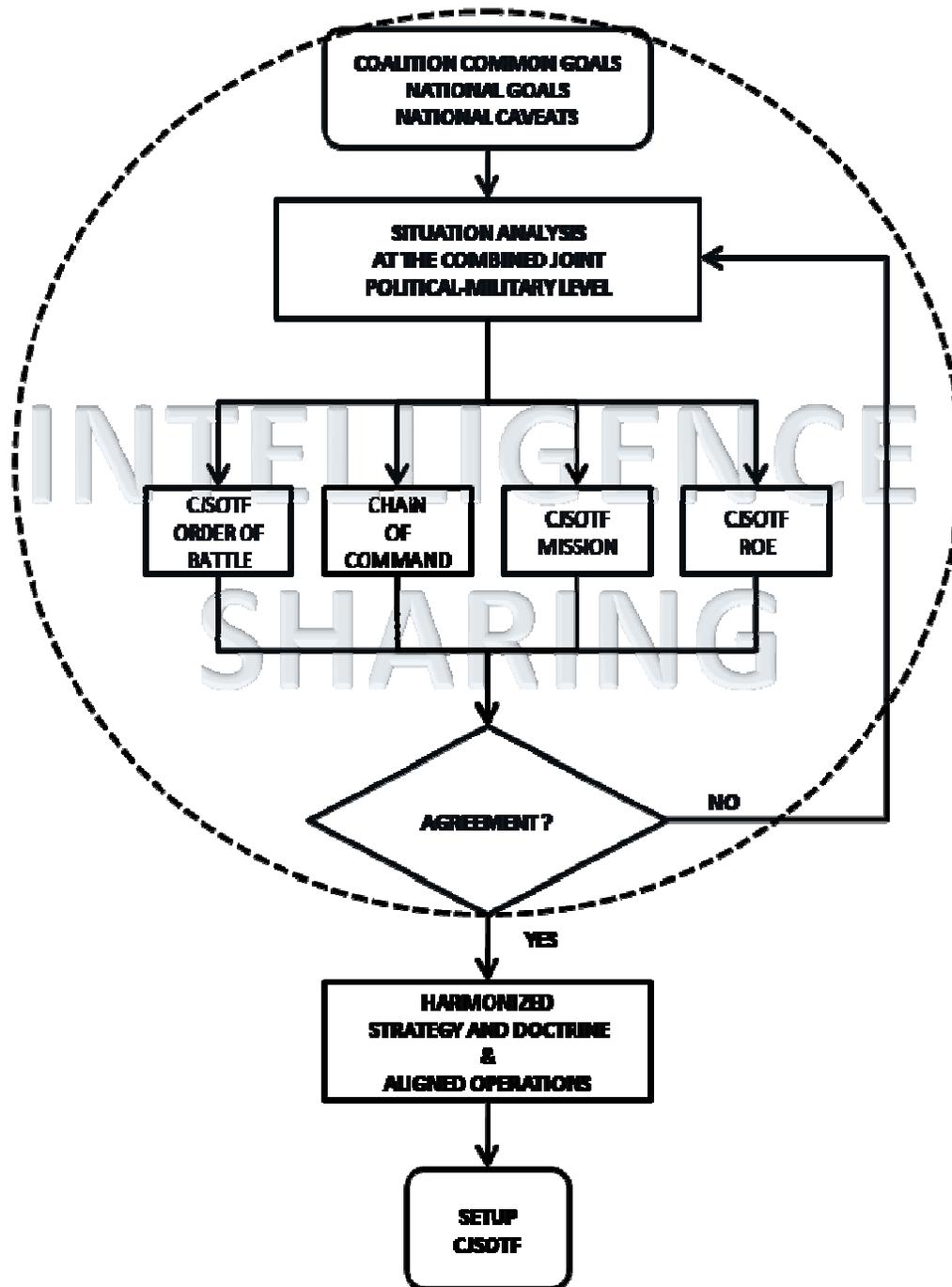


Figure 10. CJSOTF's Establishment Flowchart at Combined Joint Political-military Level

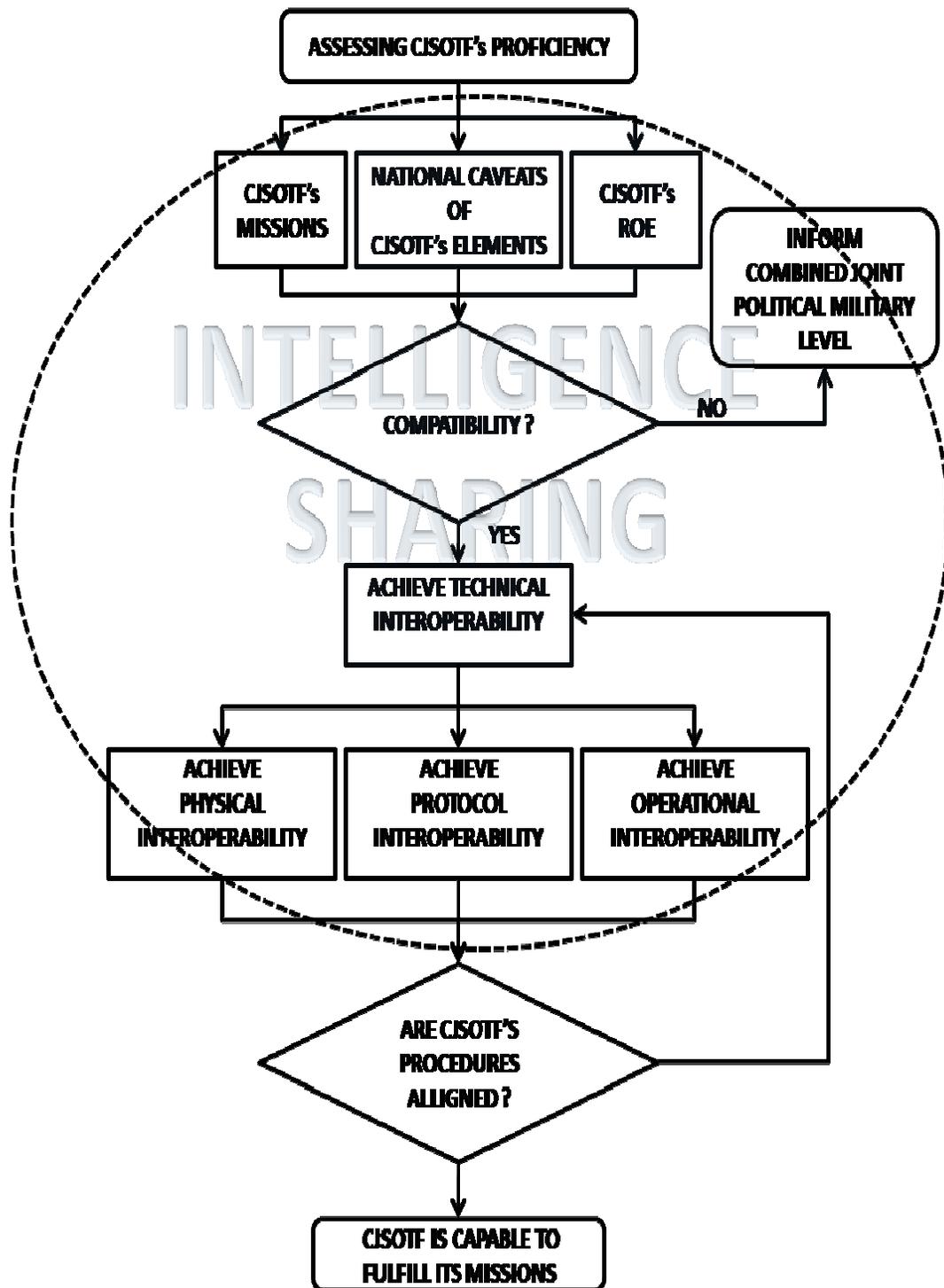


Figure 11. Assessing CJSOTF's Proficiency Flowchart

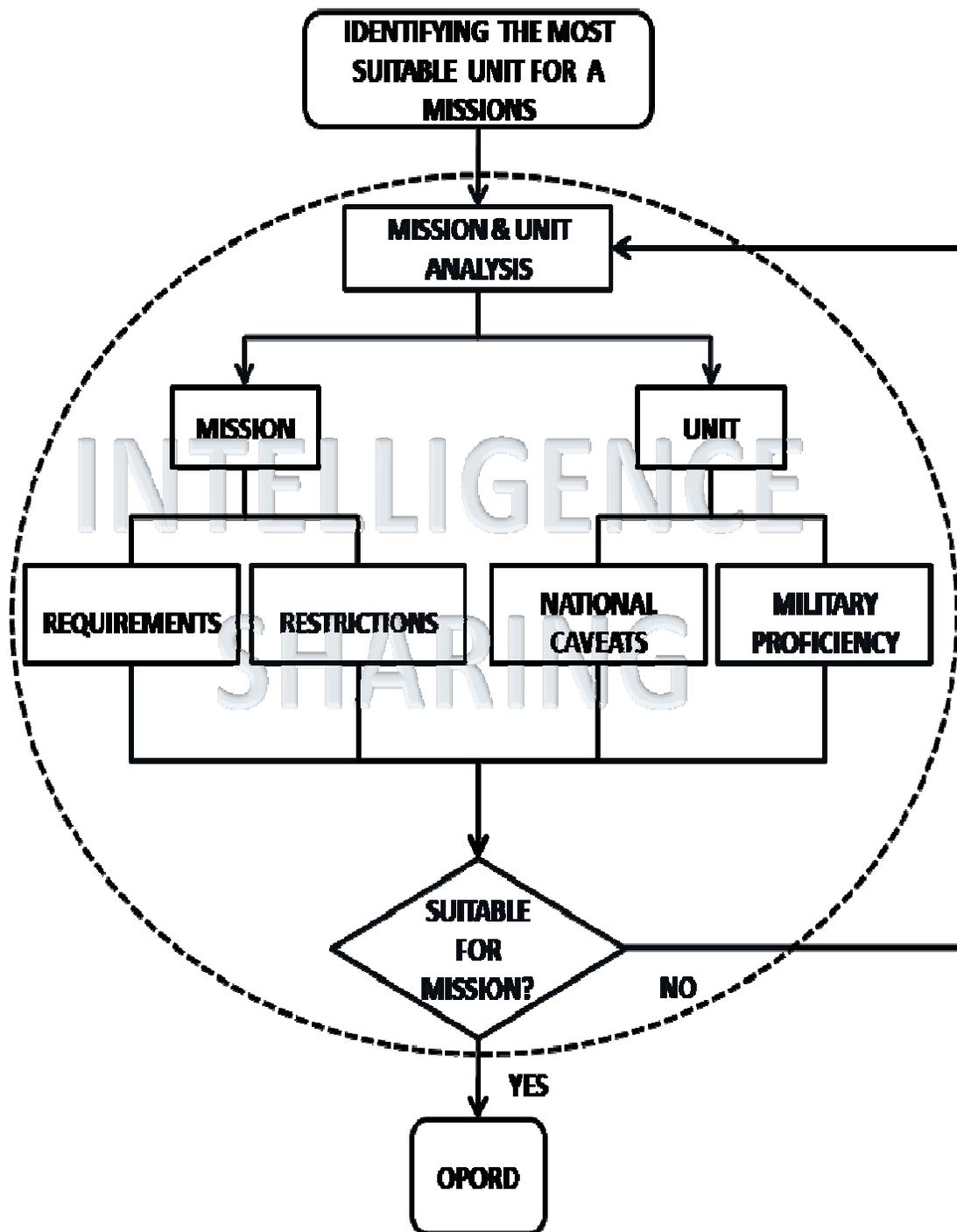


Figure 12. Mission Assignment Flowchart at CJSOTF Level

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