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## COALITION TARGETING A NECESSARY EVIL FOR FUTURE WARFARE

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***Exercise Solo Flight***

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Maj Joseph Woods

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## COALITION TARGETING A NECESSARY EVIL FOR FUTURE WARFARE

Even with increases in technology for the purpose of information sharing and both kinetic and non-kinetic operations, war continues to grow more complex in the human domain. Using the last several years as an indicator, this complexity certainly does not limit itself to what was once thought of as simple force on force conventional warfare. For example, in any future symmetric conflict, there will be a large emphasis on joint and combined operations incorporating formations of a multinational variety<sup>1</sup> while the expanding role of asymmetric warfare may include a range of “regular forces and irregular forces, terrorist organizations, drug cartels, religious sects, which are using unconventional methods of fighting to defend group of national interests, on domestic soil or anywhere in the world.”<sup>2</sup> This certainly highlights the changes in conflict type but does not fully capture how that conflict may manifest itself across the globe. Realizing that populations are rapidly migrating towards cities and, in fact, many of those cities are even more rapidly expanding into megacities, political and military leaders must come to the realization that conflict will occur as it always has – where the people are.<sup>3</sup> Leaders of any potential warring faction must then consider the inability to project a “single urban future and, as a result, there can be no specific security solution and still less any single urban military posture.”<sup>4</sup> Understanding how to fight a constantly evolving enemy in a highly fluid and dense population is a challenge in itself. But, undertaking this task in a multinational role may prove

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<sup>1</sup> Florinel Damian and Florin Cotet. “Targeting An Integrated Process in Effects Based Operations Concept.” “Carol I” National Defence University, 2012: 237.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 237.

<sup>3</sup> Christopher Bowers. “Future Megacity Operations: Lessons from Sadr City.” *Military Review* 95, no. 3 (May/June 2015): 9.

<sup>4</sup> Michael Evans. “Future War in Cities: Urbanization’s Challenge to Strategic Studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.” *International Review of the Red Cross* 98, no. 901 (2016): 39.

even more difficult. It would be difficult to argue that future wars will be fought by singular entities as it has been noted that “fighting alongside a partner is more appealing than fighting alone.”<sup>5</sup> This willingness to fight in coalitions, partnerships, or alliances is due to the ability to broaden the scope of the war while potentially engendering political good will from the international community but, in an increasingly complex operating environment, it is necessary to examine if group efforts have become overly cumbersome in their ability to deliver effects on the battlefield. Most simply put, the “skillful use of force can rapidly and indirectly manipulate an adversary by applying pressure at the right place and time.”<sup>6</sup> This paper examines the concept of applying pressure through targeting in coalition efforts and argues that, although necessary, coalitions overcomplicate the targeting process and will continue to compound the difficulties faced in combat when viewed through a military and legal lens. To do this, an examination of some basic definitions, a review of current practices, and a prediction of future challenges will help depict the necessary evils of coalitions in future warfare.

Prior to conducting any discussion on why challenges will continue to grow in future coalition operations, it is necessary to establish a simplified understanding of targeting and acknowledge some of the stakeholders within the targeting process. In its most basic form and broadest definition, targeting “weighs the benefits and the cost of attacking various targets in order to determine which targets, if attacked, are most likely to contribute to achieving the desired end state.”<sup>7</sup> While a fairly rudimentary definition, this gives a very broad and overarching structure to work within as it encompasses all of the possible ways to influence the enemy on any type of battlefield and does not restrict the imagination to simply kinetic strikes.

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<sup>5</sup> Brett Benson, Patrick Bentley, and James Lee Ray. “Ally Provocateur: Why Allies do not always behave.” *Journal of Peace Research* 50, no. 1 (2012): 48.

<sup>6</sup> Aaron Frank. “Get Real: Transformation and Targeting.” *Defence Studies* 4, no. 1 (2004): 70.

<sup>7</sup> Damian and Cotet. *Targeting: An Integrated Process...*, 242.

This process iteratively links “intelligence collection and analysis, estimates, and political objectives, and directs the application of new military capabilities against future adversaries”<sup>8</sup> while reflecting the way “political and military leaders see the world and assign values to people, objects, and ideas.”<sup>9</sup> The reflection of how leaders view the world is especially valuable to understand at the onset of any discussion involving targeting in coalitions. These individuals, thrust into positions of enormous responsibility are all shaped and conditioned by their own nation’s warfighting mentality and bring to bear this “rich mix of influences, perceptions, and images based upon a nation’s historical experience, economic strength, and contemporary priorities which persuade or direct engagement in military operations.”<sup>10</sup> It is with this in mind that “personnel tasked to perform target development must identify and analyze key target systems relevant to the Joint Force Commander’s (JFC) changing objectives and guidance.”<sup>11</sup> Before even exploring the legal issues surrounding targeting, it becomes possible to project the difficulties faced in current coalitions based on culture alone and to extrapolate those that will surface in the future.

Layered into the multinational flavor of coalition operations and the interpersonal or intergovernmental relationships required for effective targeting processes are several frameworks that advise heads of state, commanders, and staffs. The Hague Conventions, Geneva Conventions, Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC), and International Humanitarian Law (IHL) all represent, in varying degrees, “the international community’s attempt to regulate, through international legal arrangements, the behavior of combatants during interstate war.”<sup>12</sup> The

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<sup>8</sup> Frank. *Get Real: Transformation and Targeting...*, 65.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

<sup>10</sup> Stuart Peach. “The Doctrine of Targeting for Effect.” *RUSI Journal* 145, no. 6. (2000): 69.

<sup>11</sup> Damian and Cotet. *Targeting: An Integrated Process...*, 240-241.

<sup>12</sup> Alyssa Prorok and Benjamin Appel. “Compliance with International Humanitarian Law: Democratic Third Parties and Civilian targeting in Interstate War.” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 58, no. 4 (2014): 715-716.

verbiage of these regulatory documents contains a broad spectrum of risk acceptance, aversion to collateral damage, and the prevailing need to mitigate the causing of civilian casualties. For instance, Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch will simply never accept civilian casualties or collateral damage despite the best efforts of military planners.<sup>13</sup> Counter to this stance, the Additional Protocol 1 of the Geneva Conventions delineates concepts of distinction between combatants and non-combatants, military necessity in targeting objects, and proportionality of military responses to threats while only expressly forbidding the intentional targeting of civilians on the battlefield.<sup>14</sup> This provides a slightly looser construct from which to operate for planners but, based on phrasing, leaves significant ambiguity in a modern context. In addition to this spectrum, planners must also be cognizant of the type of environment in which they conduct operations and make decisions or provide recommendations based on whether it is an international armed conflict (IAC), non-international armed conflict (NIAC), or no conflict at all, such as peacekeeping operations.<sup>15</sup> Finally, and perhaps most importantly for the purpose of this paper, troop contributing nations (TCNs) to coalitions are equally bound by the policies of their governing bodies and their interpretations of international law. The true power of a coalition or alliance exists in the combining of resources and absolutely depends on the military capability possessed by each member<sup>16</sup> but an inability for policymakers to devote their energy towards national interests while simultaneously struggling to identify military versus civilian conflicts and between domestic and international conflicts<sup>17</sup> creates a very murky environment

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<sup>13</sup> Frederic Borch. "Targeting After Kosovo: Has the Law Changed for Strike Planners?" *Naval War College Review* 56, no. 2 (2003): 75.

<sup>14</sup> Catherine Wallis. "Legitimate Targets of Attack: Considerations When Targeting in a Coalition" *Army Lawyer* 379 (2004): 45.

<sup>15</sup> Jerrod Fussnecker. "The Effects of International Human Rights Law on the Legal Interoperability of Multinational Military Operations." *The Army Lawyer* (May, 2014): 7.

<sup>16</sup> Muhidin Dzambic. "NATO's New Strategic Concept: Non-Traditional Threats and Bridging Military Capability Gaps." *Connections: The Quarterly Journal* 10, no. 3 (2011): 23.

<sup>17</sup> Damian and Cotet. *Targeting: An Integrated Process...*, 238.

for the entrance of military power. This murky environment requires the JFC to be especially attuned to the abilities of subordinate formations as each TCN provides forces to operate under various national caveats. These caveats frequently stem from coalition or alliance misalignment on the “legal classification of the military operation and the applicability of international human rights law to the military operation”<sup>18</sup> and this has the potential to leave forces vulnerable to miscommunication, inaction, and danger based on differing rules of engagement.<sup>19</sup>

Under the current construct of the aforementioned legal and cultural aspects of targeting, it is then possible to look at the approach required incorporating all of the previously mentioned variables. It is difficult to determine the ultimate end state for any coalition without the context of the associated problem, but from a targeting perspective, it is clear that “the success of operations is becoming an art of combining the decisive effects.”<sup>20</sup> That is to say that, when done properly, a coalition is operating efficiently if their efforts are properly aligned and result in positively impacting their mission. The most commonly understood and visible representation of this impact is through the application of precision kinetic targeting whether from the air, land, or sea. According to the LOAC, all “persons, places, or things may be targeted if they are military objectives”<sup>21</sup> but, regardless of classification, simply being determined a military objective still protects that object, place, or person from being targeted by any imaginable method and still requires the employment of lawful weapons against a target of military necessity.<sup>22</sup> This brings about one of the most divisive aspects of current coalition targeting. Throughout the process leading to execution, both kinetic or non-kinetically, participants will apply their own available

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<sup>18</sup> Fussnecker. *The Effects of International Human Rights Law...*, 7.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>20</sup> Damian and Cotet. *Targeting: An Integrated Process...*, 236-237.

<sup>21</sup> Borch. *Targeting After Kosovo...*, 66.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 66.

intelligence to the target and eventually come to a determination of legitimacy.<sup>23</sup> Determining legitimacy will eventually bring about a multitude of responses and potentially impacts approval. In a coalition, the agreements between members are far less formal or codified than that of an alliance. This permits dissenting members from being held legally responsible for the conduct of operations that may not align with their political or military objectives although they may still suffer at the hands of public perception. One of the more difficult aspects to navigate within this process is the need for unity of effort because, if available intelligence from one member is deemed illegitimate for targeting by the owner's guidelines but another coalition member desires to conduct operations against that target, it is feasible to believe that organizational strain will occur and the likelihood of a successfully prosecuted target decreases.

In addition to the need for coalitions to be aligned in their undertaking of any given targeting process, it is equally important for them to come to a common understanding of risk acceptance or mitigation. Warfare, in its most commonly accepted current form, has gone on long enough with so many of the same participants that many practices and procedures have become accepted and normalized. This is crucial as “common standards and methods of estimating potential damages provide mitigation techniques and assistance to commanders who must establish the proportionality between military necessity and collateral damage.”<sup>24</sup> Essentially, the more often partners operate in and around each other during training or war, the more familiar things begin to appear. Familiarity goes quite a long way when combatting adversaries that have the potential to take many shapes. It is almost a prerequisite for highly modernized, technologically advanced, and well equipped formations to know and understand

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<sup>23</sup> Wallis. *Legitimate Targets of Attack...*, 53.

<sup>24</sup> Bogdan-Alexandru Constantin. “The Targeting Process in Planning and Conducting Military Operations” *International Scientific Conference “Strategies XXI”* 2 (2017): 296.

each other prior to combining maneuver operations with precision strikes.<sup>25</sup> But, for as much as this familiarity currently exists, it still presents significant difficulties when actually conducting targeting. As previously mentioned, each stakeholder in a coalition may have differing opinions of what a legitimate target might be. Moreover, “few, if any, nations have published a detailed unclassified analysis of precisely what objects they consider to be military objectives, and under what circumstances.”<sup>26</sup> An inability to appropriately, or at least simplistically, define what is considered a military objective makes the avoidance of collateral damage by targeting planners and executors exponentially more difficult. The very nature of coalitions, while undeniably remarkable in their ability to generate positive outcomes on a global scale, prohibits this clear delineation because each coalition member comes with their national interests in mind and associated command authority to obey. Any answer will have variance as each decision maker has their own background and values that, when combined with their peers, make close calls regarding target approval nearly impossible to make wreaking havoc on a coalition’s ability to conduct operations in a timely manner.<sup>27</sup> When taken out of the context of a coalition, each commander may be willing to strike without the governing eye of their parent organization but, as much as technology benefits the end user on the battlefield, it has the potential to cripple leadership. Most simply put, technology has “created pressure to be good by removing a possible excuse for being bad.”<sup>28</sup> The oversight that is presently available in a modernized battlefield eliminates the time lag previously enjoyed by combat leaders and their decisions are immediately available to their political masters. This perceived lack of autonomy has shifted risk tolerance to the point that “avoiding collateral damage has become more central to the target selection and

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<sup>25</sup> Damian and Cotet. *Targeting: An Integrated Process...*, 236.

<sup>26</sup> Wallis. *Legitimate Targets of Attack...*, 46.

<sup>27</sup> Wallis. *Legitimate Targets of Attack...*, 50.

<sup>28</sup> Maja Zehfuss. “Targeting: Precision and the Production of Ethics.” *European Journal of International Relations* 17, no. 3 (2010): 547.

review process”<sup>29</sup> because “once precision is possible, it becomes politically imperative.”<sup>30</sup> The political imperative to not create unnecessary damage to the civilian population, infrastructure, or even disproportionately strike an enemy paralyzes decision makers but understandably impacts them all differently based on their origin and training.

Fully acknowledging that, in the current context, it can be difficult enough to simply get coalition alignment on the qualifications of a legitimate target, these relational challenges do not address the technological difficulties associated with delivering effects on a target. The available spectrum of interpretations of legitimacy makes it highly unlikely that a coalition will agree on all targets.<sup>31</sup> But, what should also be discussed is what happens when a target is approved. As technology in both weapons delivery and target identification have improved, the willingness of commanders to engage more complicated target environments increased as well. This faith placed in precision certainly implies an increased engagement strategy, both kinetically and non-kinetically, in areas of the world previously inaccessible to coalition leaders.<sup>32</sup> The difference between precision munitions used in Operation DESERT STORM and those used a few years later in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) air campaign in Kosovo provides an excellent mental visualization of this increase over a short period of time. Precision guided munitions (PGMs) used against targets consisted of approximately 90% of munitions delivered in Kosovo as compared to less than 10% in DESERT STORM.<sup>33</sup> These numbers are not only a drastic increase in precision targeting but also only take into account the air-to-ground delivered munitions. To a less astute observer, this may indicate that Western militaries have become more efficient at destroying their intended target. While not entirely incorrect, the “improvements in

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, 546.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 547.

<sup>31</sup> Wallis. *Legitimate Targets of Attack...*, 54.

<sup>32</sup> Zehfuss. *Targeting: Precision and the Production of Ethics...*, 553.

<sup>33</sup> Borch. *Targeting After Kosovo...*, 65.

technology – both in navigation and in weapon delivery – have made it increasingly possible to destroy particular, militarily relevant targets with increasing precision.”<sup>34</sup> However, one must also take into account that with such increases in technological capability, “collateral damage and unintended casualties occur also as a result of weapon system malfunction, human error, and the fog of war.”<sup>35</sup> This, more simply put, states that just because the capacity exists to attack more complex targets, the long-term benefit may not be as worthwhile. The complexities inherent to coalitions significantly increase the likelihood of the aforementioned weapon system malfunctions, human errors, and confusion because there is a constant blending of technology, targeting processes, and communications platforms on the battlefield. The conflicts of the past two decades have done a remarkable job of fostering the leveling of technology but this parity only goes as far as willing members allow. As stated previously, coalitions are far less binding than alliances permitting members to come and go more freely and to participate when the coalition is aligned with their own interests. This freedom also fails to place a minimum standard on military contributions meaning that there will be a broad range of targeting suites and methodologies present based on member involvement. Based on these potential issues, coordination early and often in coalitions must continue to occur to avoid any negative impact on mission outcomes.<sup>36</sup>

Having addressed several issues facing coalitions, it is equally important to look towards the future as conflicts will bring about many of the same challenges. Those difficulties are unlikely to disappear. That said, this segment focuses on three areas in which complexity may increase more than in others. Returning to the initial premise, coalitions are absolutely necessary in the current and future political climate but, the power and capability of permanent versus

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<sup>34</sup> Zehfuss. *Targeting: Precision and the Production of Ethics...*, 546.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 548.

<sup>36</sup> Wallis. *Legitimate Targets of Attack...*, 56.

temporary groups provide better opportunities for continuity and long-term campaigning.<sup>37</sup>

Along the same line as the temporary nature of coalitions comes the variance seen in headquarters formation. Although a broad assertion, members of a coalition at the tactical level will find ways to integrate capabilities and accomplish their assigned mission due to a decreased perception of overhead pressure and the immediacy of task completion in a combat scenario. In contrast, at the operational and strategic level, JFCs do not have the luxury of staffing “the groups with the right personnel with the right skills and experience.”<sup>38</sup> The informal nature of coalitions fails to provide commanders with the opportunity to train and prepare their formation for combat and forces them to rely on quality contributions from various members. Each member will understandably lobby for critical positions within the headquarters as the function of a staff is to inform the decision maker, nest staff processes, and to increase the effectiveness of subordinate units.<sup>39</sup> Critical positions garner political capital and the ability to filter information through different lenses bearing in mind that “each troop contributing nation is subject to that nation’s domestic law, treaty obligations, and policy stances.”<sup>40</sup> As much as this advises the decisions and recommendations made by staffers, it equally inhibits the decision making capability of the JFC. The need to navigate utilization of contributed forces, varying Rules of Engagement (ROE), and operating procedures<sup>41</sup> has the potential to severely “impede mission accomplishment by denying the multinational force commander the power needed to coalesce troops from various nations into a synchronized force, operating under uniform standards to accomplish a unified mission.”<sup>42</sup> Coalitions of the future will undoubtedly be among the most

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<sup>37</sup> Robert Caslen, Thomas Guthrie, and Gregory Boylan. “The Operations Targeting and Effects Synchronization Process in Northern Iraq.” *Military Review* 90, no. 3 (2010): 36.

<sup>38</sup> Caslen, Guthrie, and Boylan. *The Operations Targeting and Effects Synchronization Process...*, 32.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 29-30.

<sup>40</sup> Fussnecker. *The Effects of International Human Rights Law...*, 9.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 9.

technologically capable forces to engage in combat but the structural, legal, and cultural issues have the potential to be debilitating.

Another projected area of difficulty facing future coalitions is the process of sharing information. There are enough challenges facing current coalitions with this to think that it will become simplified. In the same way that target acquisition and weapon delivery platforms are increasing in technological capability, intelligence gathering is as well. Intelligence collection, analysis, and dissemination factor heavily into an effective cyclical targeting process. However, members of a coalition, due to the inherently informal nature, may not be considered equals in the realm of information security. This is a multi-layered problem for JFCs. Commanders must be able to vouch for the quality of intelligence consumed and produced by their headquarters but are limited on several fronts – by technical collection methods and by barriers emplaced by the classification, or over-classification, of documents.<sup>43</sup> For as much as the debate surrounding the legitimacy of a nominated target has been discussed and the differing opinions held by various stakeholders weigh heavily on decision makers, intelligence within a coalition can be equally divisive. The secretive nature of intelligence collection, analysis, dissemination, and assessments can be polarizing because of the existing “communications systems, military cultures, languages, national defense policies, and legal obligations.”<sup>44</sup> These existing boundaries are made even more concrete because of the most recent nature of warfare. The political unpalatability of having an overwhelming physical presence in direct contact with an enemy makes targeting more difficult as, if the coalition “does not have troops on the ground to distinguish civilians from fighters directly participating in hostilities or to confirm or refute intelligence collected for

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<sup>43</sup> Nathalie Durhin. “Protecting Civilians in Urban Areas: A Military Perspective on the Application of International Humanitarian Law.” *International Review of the Red Cross* 98, no. 1 (2016): 190.

<sup>44</sup> Fussnecker. *The Effects of International Human Rights Law...*, 10.

that purpose,<sup>45</sup> a targeting board will become even more conflicted. The polarization of the targeting process has the very real possibility of eating away at the credibility of the coalition. It is necessary to realize that “the application of any concept demands the certain knowledge and expertise of those charged with its implementation.”<sup>46</sup> But, when the expertise and knowledge of involved individuals cannot be shared amongst partners, the requisite tightly knit nature of a coalition may begin to unravel. Referring back to the differences in military cultures, legal obligations, and national defense policies, each member’s representative on a targeting board must keep in mind what frameworks they should operate under. This adds multiple layers of depth to the process as, just for brief comparison, certain international organizations place a premium on ensuring that attacking forces abide by their “‘responsibility under international humanitarian law to take *all possible precautions* to avoid harming civilians.’” The Law of Armed Conflict, however, places no such requirement on combatants.<sup>47</sup> This careful approach to following the respective rules laid out by the governing bodies of warfare makes precision in targeting a priority for all involved. Having discussed the nature of PGMs already and the preponderance of their use in modern conflict, the distinction between the successful striking of a target and the creation of unintended additional damage must be made.<sup>48</sup> The inability to properly identify, develop, acquire, and ultimately terminate a target without considering the surroundings calls into question the procedures used and may eventually lead to faults in intelligence and information sharing by coalition leaders.

The notion of unintended additional damage is a necessary discussion amongst coalition members based on the probability of future wars occurring in dense urban areas (DUAs).

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<sup>45</sup> Durhin. *Protecting Civilians in Urban Areas...*, 182.

<sup>46</sup> Damian and Cotet. *Targeting: An Integrated Process...*, 243.

<sup>47</sup> Borch. *Targeting After Kosovo...*, 75.

<sup>48</sup> Zehfuss. *Targeting: Precision and the Production of Ethics...*, 552.

Military planners are woefully underprepared for any potential conflict in DUAs as there has been little concrete effort made on the development of doctrine incorporating “ideas from the planning, development, and administration of cities.”<sup>49</sup> This lack of preparedness will be exacerbated by the inclusion of coalition members as indicators have shown that the determination of a valid military target is challenging even when faced with a moderately recognizable enemy in a fairly sparsely populated environment. When targeting in a DUA, the very nature of the environment “makes it complicated for armed forces to apply the principle of distinction in respect of objects.”<sup>50</sup> Moreover, as urban environments continue to expand, the likelihood that infrastructure used for the purpose of either the military or the targets’ industrial complex will be consumed by growth increases. This may be an intentional side effect of blurring the attacking force’s ability to apply the principal of distinction or an unintended byproduct of urbanization resulting in the intermingling of military and civilian infrastructure.<sup>51</sup> The envelopment of potentially valid military objectives by the civilian populace will create enormous challenges for coalition leaders and will undoubtedly be made more difficult based on the nature of future warfare. Cities will factor heavily into hybrid warfare as, by their “very nature as diverse, dense, and well-connected systems, they are the preferred environments from which to draw out conflicts and ‘protract their duration and costs.’”<sup>52</sup> The implication here for a coalition’s targeting staff is that the principal of distinction must become a primary consideration before even considering or estimating collateral damage. Hybrid warfare encompasses more than the traditional conventional battlefield in that an attacker faces both uniformed and non-uniformed fighters. The initiative, in many cases, is ceded to the non-uniformed fighters as they

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<sup>49</sup> Antonio Sampaio. “Before and After Urban Warfare: Conflict Prevention and Transitions in Cities.” *International Review of the Red Cross* 98, no. 901 (2016): 77.

<sup>50</sup> Durhin. *Protecting Civilians in Urban Areas...*, 178.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 179.

<sup>52</sup> Sampaio. *Before and After Urban Warfare...*, 76.

have significantly more freedom of maneuver around the battlefield when compared to their more overt, conventional counterparts. Additionally, these unconventional participants will seek to circumvent the socially acceptable norms by using urban terrain to their advantage. The urban terrain then becomes a significant obstacle because the coalition must, “gather as much information as possible on what use is being made of the facilities and try to determine, as accurately as possible, how this use is shared between the enemy forces and the civilian population.”<sup>53</sup> Coalition leaders will have to strike a delicate balance amongst all stakeholders when determining the legitimacy of a target based on an evaluation of military necessity, distinguishing between civilian or military usage, and the tolerance level for any collateral damage. Another layer faced by these future leaders will be their ability to put military forces physically in harm’s way. The varying political climate within a coalition may be inherently adverse to sense of potential physical harm to contributed forces limiting intelligence collection and inhibiting target identification.<sup>54</sup> The difficulties posed by urbanization and future conflict in DUAs will require a force capable of conducting a broad spectrum of functions in a very condensed environment to counter a potentially invisible enemy all while ensuring buy-in from each coalition partner.<sup>55</sup>

Acknowledging that this paper exploited the projected difficulties of coalition targeting, an interesting area of future research would be the exploration of how to initiate, staff, and employ a coalition that has a higher perceived sense of unity of effort and unity of command. One of the most glaring critiques of what has not been done to date is to continue to make improvements on the legal interoperability between members as that translates to effectiveness

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<sup>53</sup> Durhin. *Protecting Civilians in Urban Areas...*, 179.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 188.

<sup>55</sup> Joel Lawton, Matthew Santaspirt, and Michael Crites. “Army Operations in Megacities and Dense Urban Areas: A Mad Scientist Perspective.” *Military Intelligence Professional Bulletin* 42, no. 3 (2016): 11.

on the battlefield.<sup>56</sup> This is very difficult to envision in the future as the incorporation of information operations continues to grow in importance. The ability for an enemy to create a divide within a coalition is perhaps easier now than ever before due to the interrelatedness of all necessary aspects of coalition operations. The informality, while enjoyed by the smaller contributing members as it allows them to feel as though they are doing their part, will most likely become more of a hindrance as “it is important to note that the effect of a given action may set off other changes or one event may trigger or cause subsequent outcomes”<sup>57</sup> within the group. The experiences gained from the past two decades of warfare certainly indicate that it is improbable that a single entity will engage in conflict against an enemy without support, whether financial or physical, from others. Realizing this, leaders around the globe continue to make concerted efforts to find ways to increase partnership opportunities for a multitude of reasons. Realizing that “targeting is a rational, integrated process that involves identifying, and then choosing the targets to be attacked using a range of capabilities,”<sup>58</sup> leaders seek to increase familiarity through combined exercises. This, without a doubt, enhances the ability of potential future coalition members as all parties depart from the exercise feeling more confident in their ability to integrate into a multinational formation. However, as previously discussed, this only solves the problem at the tactical level. Soldiers, sailors, and aviators will find ways to accomplish their mission when paired with a partner from another formation. At the operational and strategic levels, there must be a greater understanding of how to synchronize efforts from a legal standpoint to ensure the maximum possible output is achieved by a coalition. Some of the necessary foundations for a more holistic approach to coalition synchronization are the use of “clear and precise language and terminology, harmonious doctrine, with a suite of strategies and

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<sup>56</sup> Fussnecker. *The Effects of International Human Rights Law...*, 20.

<sup>57</sup> Damian and Cotet. *Targeting: An Integrated Process...*, 240.

<sup>58</sup> Durhin. *Protecting Civilians in Urban Areas...*, 186.

weapons which permit flexibility across a broad range of options.”<sup>59</sup> Realizing the flexibility and comfort of being in a coalition as opposed to an alliance experienced by TCNs, the biggest challenge, and one most likely to be the hardest to develop, is the notion of how one might bring senior leaders from such a broad spectrum of beliefs to come to any sense of alignment when forming a coalition.

Although it may appear obvious, the application of various legal conventions and international treaties are very much unlike “using a calculator to solve a mathematical equation. On the contrary, because of the many subjective variables involved in military operations, the law necessarily requires that those responsible apply and balance many factors both tangible and intangible.”<sup>60</sup> This is remarkably applicable to coalition military operations as in many cases, the subjective variables coming from within the coalition create more complexity and confusion than unforeseen enemy actions or counteractions. The intent of this paper was not to disparage the use of coalitions as they will most likely only grow in importance in the coming years. It was important to acknowledge that, at the most fundamental level, “national exceptions limit a multinational commander’s ability to utilize all of the troops within the command for certain offensive engagements.”<sup>61</sup> But, as with all functions within a coalition, it is “the function of targeting to achieve efficiently those objectives within the parameters set at the operational level, directed limitations, the rules of engagement, or rules for the use of force, the law of war, and other guidance given by the commander.”<sup>62</sup> In the most idealistic sense, each of the coalition members’ “differing legal obligations could be resolved so that each of the nations could adhere to the same rules of engagement and standard operating procedures without issuing caveats, thus

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<sup>59</sup> Peach. *The Doctrine of Targeting for Effect...*, 72.

<sup>60</sup> Borch. *Targeting After Kosovo...*, 75.

<sup>61</sup> Fussnecker. *The Effects of International Human Rights Law...*, 18.

<sup>62</sup> Damian and Cotet. *Targeting: An Integrated Process...*, 242.

achieving legal interoperability.”<sup>63</sup> Seeing this as highly unlikely, the idea of this paper was to highlight several of the projected significant difficulties faced by continuing to employ coalitions in combat environments. Without a very clear understanding of the military objective or designated point of resolution, it becomes difficult amongst coalitions to effectively target enemy forces or capabilities while simultaneously keeping all participants comfortable with the fact that, at the end of operations, the “destruction of a designated target is, after all, a success in military terms.”<sup>64</sup> But, defining terms such as destruction, designated target, success, and military terms only appear to be getting more difficult within coalitions. Under this premise, it becomes possible to pose the argument that war should be waged only by individual entities or under the construct of an alliance where terms have a more concrete foundation and there is perhaps a greater sense of reciprocity when it comes to executing targets on behalf of the JFC. However, even with that argument in mind, it certainly appears that coalition warfare will be the choice of senior political and military leaders in the coming years.

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<sup>63</sup> Fussnecker. *The Effects of International Human Rights Law...*, 10.

<sup>64</sup> Zehfuss. *Targeting: Precision and the Production of Ethics...*, 543.

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