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CANADIAN FORCES COLLEGE / COLLÈGE DES FORCES CANADIENNES
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CULTURE: THE KEY TO COALITION OPERATIONS

By /par ...

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TOPIC

Coalition Warfare: To review the nature and complexities of coalition and/or alliance operations, and their impact on the conduct of war at the operational level.

ABSTRACT

Despite progress made in interoperability, coalition successes in the future face the potential of being limited by systemic differences amongst potential partners in their cultural approach to operations.

The aim of this paper is to argue that Canada's future Task Force and Coalition Commanders must be cognizant of, and have the necessary skill sets to properly address the question of culture and diversity and how it effects unity of effort and command in coalition operations.

It is anticipated that Canada will continue to contribute to coalition and alliance operations in the future.

The aim of this paper is to examine the conflicts and frictions that will be faced by Canadian Commanders in future coalition/Alliance operations. This will be looked at from a Canadian context, as to where we fit, and to the unique concerns that must be considered with regards to potential partners that we may be involved with, either commanding, or commanded by. The main focus will be the interoperability that must exist to allow all coalition partners to properly execute their missions and will deal with the gaps that now exists and could likely grow in the near and middle future. This paper will contend that there are concepts and issues between various potential partners that will, if not recognized and understood, cause the very nature of operational coalition groupings to be put into question. It will look particularly at question of culture and how this subject draws out the various other "soft" or social frictions such as language, ethics and social beliefs. The "hard" frictions - technology, rules of war, doctrine, and logistics will be mentioned as well but not dealt with in any extent except where they relate with the main subject of the paper.

The paper will concentrate on the role of countries like Canada, and the pressures that our future operational and task force commanders will face in potentially commanding or working within these types of forces, including the future education and skills that will be required to assume these roles.

As a way of conclusion, this paper will offer suggestions to educate and prepare the next generation of officers in the skills to deal with the question of cultural and national frictions and suggest tools for achieving the unity of command required in the modern coalition framework.

“A coalition is, by definition, an *ad hoc* arrangement between two or more states for common action. It actions take place outside the bounds of established alliances, usually for single occasions, or longer cooperation in a narrow sector of common interest”¹.

“...Often, the commander coalition force is “commander” in title only; the commander.... will accomplish the mission through coordination, communications and consensus, or leadership rather than by traditional command concepts. Political sensitivities must be acknowledged and often the commander and subordinates must operate as “diplomats” rather than as “warriors.” Such is the nature of coalition operations”²

INTRODUCTION

Despite progress made in interoperability, coalition successes in the future risk being limited by systemic differences amongst potential partners in their cultural approach to operations.

The aim of this paper is to argue that Canada’s future Task Force and Coalition Commanders must be cognizant of, and have the necessary skill sets to properly address the question of culture and diversity and how it affects unity of effort and command in coalition operations.

This paper will deal with the concerns of culture and how it plays an increasingly important role for Canadian Task Force and Coalition Commanders in the conduct of coalition operations at the operational level. Mention will be made of the other factors, but it is the contention of this paper that culture drives many of the “soft” factors that contribute to success or failure in coalition partnerships.

¹ Smith, Michael. Doctrine and Training: The Foundation of Effective Coalition Operations. Problems and Solutions in Future Coalition Operations. Thomas J. Marshall, Phillip Kaiser, and Jon Kessmeire, eds. Carlisle: USAWC Strategic Studies Institute, 1997

THE NATURE OF COALITIONS

The concept of coalitions has permeated warfare since nearly the beginning of recorded history. Coalitions are transitory, emerging in response to specific threats and dissolving once coalition goals have been met. Politically fragile in nature, they develop out of necessity, sometimes uniting nations without a history of harmonious relations.³ From as early as 1100 B.C. like-minded armies have grouped together to achieve a common goal.⁴ In varying degrees this concept has continued through the ages until the present day. Early Twentieth Century models tended to be among armies of roughly the same size with much of their doctrines at least similar in nature⁵. Truly, these coalitions of the first and second World wars were cumbersome and did not always flow smoothly especially in the concept of unity of command.⁶ The end of the Second World War did nothing to curb the momentum of coalitions, rather the idea intensified to new heights. The United States became the new major power of the late twentieth Century and the dynamic of a lead nation concept was introduced into the idea of coalitions. The Korean War saw sixteen nations participating under the auspices of the United Nations along with the United States and South Korea in combat. At the height of the conflict one of the American corps (I Corps) had three American and two South Korean (ROK) divisions, a ROK marine battalion, a British, and a British Commonwealth brigade, a Turkish brigade, and battalions from Belgium, Greece, Thailand, and the Philippines. Although from many countries with differing equipment and training levels along with language barriers, this coalition was an example of successful political cooperation.⁷

² ABCA Coalition Operations Handbook 11 May 1999

³ Robert Scales Jr, Trust not Technology sustains Coalitions, Parameters Winter 1998

⁴ W.A Silkett, Alliance and Coalition Warfare, PARAMETERS, p 1-2

⁵ The combining of the Axis Power coalition in WWII - Germany, Italy, and Japan on one side and the Allied Forces on the other - is an example of relatively equal forces opposing each other

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid. p. 3

Since the experience of the Korean War, there have been other examples of cooperation and coalitions that have been brought together to achieve a common goal, the most successful to date being the Gulf War.

Joint and combined operations at the operational level have emerged as a focal point for Canada's military. This fact is recognized in the Canadian Forces document "Shaping the Future of the Canadian Forces: A Strategy for 2020" which states that "our armed forces must be interoperable with our main defence partners in the UN, NATO and coalition operations."⁸ Historically the main focus has been our participation in formal alliances such as NATO, but recent events such as Operation APPOLLO in Afghanistan are drawing Canadian forces into more loosely defined conflicts that do not generally fit into the parameters of alliance war fighting. Canada's participation in The Gulf War and the war on Terrorism are but a few examples of the likely future type of operations that we can expect.

The fact that Canada has committed forces to coalitions raises concerns that need to be addressed. The fact that these organizations are generally of a temporary nature dictates that potential partners will come and go depending on the crisis. This is not just limited to the beginning and end of a particular operation as it is not unheard of individual countries pulling out during the actual operational timeframe.⁹ Also, each new coalition operation may bring different nations into the partnership. When these nations commit they come with a host of unique cultural perspectives or "tools" that can add to the coalition and, at the same time, create friction points that could potentially weigh heavily on the success of the mission. Countries that participate in formed alliance operations will have a defined set of operating procedures that are at least

⁸ DND 1999 p. 3

⁹ Canada's participation in the land battle in Afghanistan is an example of this. 3PPCLI participated in Operation Appollo for 6 months then were redeployed to Canada with no replacement Canadian battle group rotated into theatre.

understood by all other member forces. There is also the time and effort taken to train together and familiarize each member with the capabilities and resources inherent in the others. This is not the case in coalition operations. By its definition a coalition works within a different dynamic. In each new coalition arrangement, national interests create frictions that could potentially lead to problems in achieving a sense of unity to achieve success in a common goal. Differences in doctrine, rules of engagement, language, culture, logistics and technology all lend themselves to discussion.

DISCUSSION

History is replete with examples of coalition efforts. The one over riding observation to these formations was the fact that different forces came together to achieve a common goal. As mentioned earlier, the “tools” that each force brought with them caused the commanders to rethink the way business was conducted. Commanders were now faced with the challenge of molding a force that was different from of their own national heritage. In other words, the various cultures came into play and affected the way armies did business.

Of the potential friction points that come into play at the operational level there are those that the author considers to be “hard” and those that are considered “soft.” These descriptions are not meant to reduce the value of one over the other; rather the words are used to delineate those that are of an military nature, i.e. equipment, logistics, and doctrine, and technology against those that speak to the mental and sociological nature i.e. culture, traditions and language – that is to say the human element.

What is a hard consideration? It would seem to be that those considerations in coalition operations that can are easily defined best fit into this category. There are those things that all

armies have in common (at least in terminology) that, to a lesser or greater extents are understandable to all the partners.

Logistics, leadership, equipment, technology, and doctrine are all forces that play a concrete part in the successful outcome of an operation. Logistics for example can be problematic when put into the context a coalition. Logistic support of multinational forces has traditionally been a national responsibility.¹⁰ In short term conflicts this can be an advantage, but as coalitions build it becomes more problematic as different forces bring different resource capabilities. While most countries will not give up their national obligation to supporting their forces, there are some nations that do not have the capability to sustain forces.¹¹ Therefore an effort must be established to deal with these disparities. The establishment of a truly multinational logistical system would offer a solution to these types of problems. An example of how this could work was instituted by the United Nations in establishing the Multi National Force and Observer Force in the Sinai.¹² The creation of a multi nation logistic organization took the pressure off smaller countries and contingents to support themselves, and as a result have allowed their active and continued participation.

Doctrine could be looked at in a similar fashion. Doctrine is the set of fundamental principles, through which a national force guides its actions and is a product of the experience and history of the individual army. Coalition commanders must endeavor to understand deviations in doctrinal practices when planning the makeup of forces, and where necessary adjust to the degree possible. It may mean assigning special roles or combining forces that have similar doctrines.

¹⁰ Roger H. Palin, Multinational Military Forces: Problems and Prospects, Adelphi paper 294 p. 42.

¹¹ Ibid p. 45

¹² Robert B. Houghton & Frank G. Trinkka, Multinational Peacekeeping in The Middle East, Center for the Study of Foreign Affairs Foreign Service Institute U. S Department of State Publication, November 1984

Leadership in a coalition can be an issue. The national interests, and national pride of those forces involved in an operation all lead themselves to potential conflicts and leaders must be aware of them when planning and executing missions. Although not perfect alliances deal with these issues by established command and control structures that take into account the differences in national procedures. These structures have personnel from each of the alliance members integral to the command and planning process (either on a full time basis or during training and deployment exercises) in both operational and logistical billets. This integration, along with addressing potential problems early on, creates a sense of trust amongst the participants. In short term coalitions efforts commanders will not have the same luxury, as time will be a factor. In coalition forces leadership must be based on trust, persuasion, and sensitivity to national needs.¹³ Examples of different ways of establishing a command structure are plentiful in history and should be looked at when deciding the best way to proceed and these will be discussed later in this paper. These are then examples of what one could consider “hard” issues that must be addressed in coalition operations.

What is more ethereal is the role that the intangible ingredients play in future operations. Culture is the one thing that no amount of pre-training can replace and it is this intangible that must be recognized and addressed by commanders at all levels.

¹³ Steve Bowman, Historical and Cultural Influences on Coalition Operations. Problems and Solutions in Future Coalition Operations. Thomas J. Marshall, Phillip Kaiser, and Jon Kessmeire, eds. Carlisle: USAWC Strategic Studies Institute, 1997.

CULTURE

Culture is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary as the “the arts, customs, and institutions of a nation, people or group.”¹⁴ Further, Bowman states that each culture is different to a lesser or greater extent from any other nation. He identifies differences as such religion, class, tolerance, work ethic, standard of living, and tradition as being key factors.¹⁵

Culture is an elusive concept. It is the “uniqueness” that each country’s forces bring to a coalition force. It is not something that can be qualified nor indeed in some cases identified ahead of time. How one understands the world around him is based on his upbringing and experiences, and this understanding is reflected on how he reacts to situations that arise. John Jandora provides an example of this when he states:

“Several generations of officers in Western Armies have accepted the imperative of offensive shock: the function of infantry is to close with the enemy by fire and maneuver and destroy him by close combat. In contrast that dictum has been inconceivable among officers in Middle Eastern armies, for whom the function of infantry is to seize and hold key terrain until the enemy concedes the contest of arms or until changing combat ratios favor an attack or counterattack.”¹⁶

In some ways a coalition is no different than a large multinational company.

These global companies, with representation within different countries, all work together towards a common goal. In their paper Why Don’t They Fight Each Other, Cultural Diversity and Operational Unity in Multinational Forces, Elron, Shamir, and Ben-Ari bring forward the assumption that “multinational forces (will) share some of the same organizational problems faced by multinational corporations ...operating across national

¹⁴ Oxford English Dictionary, Ninth Edition, 2001

¹⁵ Bowman p 19

¹⁶ John W Jandora, War and Culture: A Neglected Relation, ARMED FORCES & SOCIETY, Vol. 25, No.4, Summer 1999, p 541-556

borders.”¹⁷ At the same time they do recognize that there will be truly “military” aspects that will make them different from both commercial and civilian organizations.¹⁸

To further amplify this, culture can be described as the way in which definable groups of people (armies) interact with their social and physical environment. One could characterize culture through a cross- cultural classification scheme of work related values (the way armies interact with other armies) based on four dimensions. These four dimensions and comparison are described below.

1. **‘Power distance’** – relates to the amount of respect and deference between those in superior and subordinate positions.
2. **‘Uncertainty avoidance’** – which relates to planning and the creation of stability as a means for dealing with uncertainty
3. **‘Individualism – collectivism’** – which relates to whether one’s identity is defined by personal goals and achievements or by the character of the collective group to which one belongs
4. **‘Masculinity – femininity’** – a dimension that Hofstede argued refers to the relative emphasis on achievement or on interpersonal harmony.¹⁹

¹⁷ Why Don’t They Fight Each Other? Cultural Diversity and Operational Unity in Multinational Forces, Elron, Shamir, Ben-Ari, *Armed Forces & Society*, Vol 26, No. 1, Fall 1999 p. 73-98

¹⁸ *Ibid.* p. 74

¹⁹ Stewart, Keith G, Bonner, Michael C, Verral, Neil G., Cultural Factors In Future Multinational Military Operations <ftp://ftp.rta.nato.int/pub/fulltext/rto>

Cultural Diversity in UN Protection Force in Former Yugoslavia (UNPROFOR): Participating Countries and Their Scores on Hofstede's Cultural Value Dimensions (H—HIGH, M—MEDIUM, L—LOW)

| Country | Power Distance | Uncertainty Avoidance | Individualism | Masculinity |
|---------------|----------------|-----------------------|---------------|-------------|
| Argentina | M | H | M | M |
| Australia | L | L | H | M |
| Bangladesh | | | | |
| Belgium | M | H | H | M |
| Brazil | M | M | L | M |
| Bulgaria | | | | |
| Canada | L | L | H | M |
| Columbia | M | M | L | M |
| Czech Repub | | | | |
| Denmark | L | L | H | L |
| Egypt | | | | |
| Estonia | | | | |
| Finland | L | M | M | L |
| France | M | M | H | M |
| Germany | L | M | M | M |
| Ghana | | | | |
| India | H | L | M | M |
| Indonesia | H | L | M | M |
| Ireland | L | L | M | H |
| Jordan | | | | |
| Kenya | | | | |
| Lithuania | | | | |
| Luxembourg | | | | |
| Malaysia | H | L | L | M |
| Nepal | | | | |
| Netherlands | L | L | H | L |
| New Zealand | L | L | H | M |
| Nigeria | | | | |
| Norway | L | L | M | L |
| Pakistan | M | M | L | M |
| Poland | | | | |
| Portugal | H | L | L | M |
| Russian Fed. | | | | |
| Senegal | | | | |
| Slovak Repub. | | | | |
| Spain | M | H | M | M |
| Sweden | L | L | M | L |
| Switzerland | L | M | M | H |
| Tunisia | | | | |
| Turkey | M | H | L | M |
| Ukraine | | | | |
| UK | L | L | H | H |
| USA | L | L | H | M |
| Venezuela | H | M | L | H |

This study involved a rather large operation with included troops from 44 nations involved in the UN Protection Force in Former Yugoslavia UNPROFOR, but focused on the 26 nations that were compatible with Hofstede's study. The classifications of High, Medium, and Low were assigned to describe the value that the authors gave to the countries cultural profiles. The findings showed the immense differences in national diversity.²¹

This description goes on to show examples of how this classification system can describe the differences in national cultures. "Australia and New Zealand are ranked very high on individualism but low on power distance ... In contrast, in cultures that Hofstede has defined as being 'collectivist', such as are found in Indonesia and the Philippines, the opposite is true with very low individualism rankings and high power distance"²² It should be noted that these classifications do not mean that one culture is better than the other, rather recognizes differences that can be the basis for coming to an understanding of the dynamics involved.

How then does this equate to a military context? As a coalition is a mixture of different nationalities, the interface between persons from nations that fall into the characteristics described above can certainly come into play. The relationship in a combined headquarters between a superior officer and subordinate officer, each from a country that falls a different classification can bring forward differences into order acceptance or understanding. This will impact on the unity of effort, as there could be an underlying friction.

CULTURE AND LANGUAGE

Commonality of language is an important command and control consideration, especially in coalition structures. Potential partners in future coalitions will not necessarily speak the same language and the passage of information and orders could become a serious hindrance to success.

²⁰ Elron et al p. 79

²¹ Ibid p. 78

Recognizing this, more and more armies are taking the time to educate their officer corps in different languages. The United Nations and NATO, for example, have generally adopted French and English as the working languages for interoperability.²³ That is not to say that the working language will always be the same. Countries will have to continue to ensure that the education of personnel is in place to have the necessary language skills needed to interact with other forces. What is of concern, even for those that have learned the working language is that communication is more than the passage of words. The phrasing of an order, or a particular statement made can mean different things to different people. As the Multi Force and Observer Force Chief of Staff Sinai stated:

“ One of the challenges that I and the staff face is the same challenge that members face throughout this Force – the ability to communicate with people of eleven different nationalities. As I learned quickly ... what I say to an American may not always be interpreted the same as if I say it to a Canadian, an Australian, or a Fijian ... You can issue orders and edicts, and demand that things happen, but that doesn't get the job done in this multinational environment.”²⁴

This interpretation of actual words can be hindrance to unity of command. Understanding is far more than words being transferred from one person to another. The cultural background and the cultural classification mentioned earlier will play into the equation as well. There is the possibility that a person, using a second learned language, will miss the “unspoken” meaning in a statement. An inflection or facial expression that would be understood by two persons of the same background may be missed by someone, who struggling with a second language and in an military environment where it is not correct to question a superior's direction, could misinterpret the direction and by doing so, not follow the direction as given.

²² Stewart et al. p. 16-2

²³ Palin p. 41

²⁴ Elron et al p.81

Apart from the every day language being used by a coalition, there is that unique language used by militaries around the world. The use of specific terminology describing military actions is not necessarily the same for all armies. It is a point that can cause confusion.

This does not only reflect in operations between countries, but can be seen in the same force. A Canadian Forces Officer, Colonel G. Switzer provides an example of this when he describes the word “secure” and its different connotations within the Canadian Forces.

“For a sailor, a building is secure when it is locked. A soldier will secure a building with an armed guard. The airman might consider a building secured through its purchase.”²⁵

A clear set of definitions that describe the actions that will take place must be established so that each member force has a complete understanding of what is to be accomplished and how that is to be done. An example of this is the development of NATO STANAGS, which incorporate the lexicons from the alliance forces, and “translates” them into a common technical language that is readily understood. Also terms that are not consistent across the alliance are readily identified. As we have seen, coalitions are not set up the same way and headquarters are not necessarily as practiced as the NATO model. If time does not allow for the establishment of a predetermined set of definitions, other ways must be found if unity of effort and command are to be established. In past coalitions this problem has been alleviated somewhat by the training and employment of liaison officers at the operational and tactical level. These groups of personnel that are conversant with the national language and culture of the force involved can iron out many of the problems that exist in understanding of the various definitions. These “directed telescopes”²⁶ or teams of well trained liaison officers allow the commander to get feed back on a regular basis on the comprehension and compliance of subordinate or parallel forces in his

²⁵ Cdr. G. D. Switzer, Coalition and Alliance Operations in the Twenty first Century, CFC AMSC 4, 355.005 A5 2001 no. 12 c.02 CFC

theatre. This concept was used in the Gulf war when General Schwarzkopf selected a group of liaison teams that established communications between his headquarters and the major coalition partners. This team reported back to the Coalition Coordination and Communications Center, which provided information and clarified orders to coalition members.²⁷

CULTURE and RULES OF ENGAGEMENT

The Rules of Engagement (ROE) “are a means of providing guidance and instructions to commanders and personnel with the framework of political and military objectives. They define the degree and manner in which force may be applied and are designed to ensure that the application of force is carefully controlled.”²⁸ In other words ROE is the definition of the level of force permitted, the type of weapons that may be carried, and the circumstances in which participants in the operation may react other than in self-defence within the operational and tactical situation.²⁹ At first blush this would seem to be a natural and systematic tool for the commander of the coalition. This is not, however, as simple as it appears. Even within a one-country operation, the understanding of ROE can be a source for contention and observation. Commenting on ROE to be used in during the Falkland War, the commander of the British Task Forces stated;

“Meanwhile, I shall have to amplify the ROE so that all commanding officers can know what I am thinking, rather than apply their own interpretation, which might range from "ask them for lunch to 'Nuke' em for breakfast.”³⁰

²⁶ Scales p. 4-10

²⁷ Ibid. p. 5

²⁸ AJP-01 (B) Allied Joint Doctrine October 2001

²⁹ General (ret'd) John de Chastelain presented at AGARD AMP symposium on “Aeromedical Support issues in Contingency Operations – Rotterdam, the Netherlands, 29 September-01 October 1997, published in cp-599

³⁰ Admiral “Sandy” Woodward Commander of the Task Force (Falkland Islands, 1982)

Different countries will have different views on what must be imbedded in the rules. While the basis of ROE are grounded in international and national conventions and laws governing war and the use of force, national differences are regularly present and can be problematic.³¹ A standard for adopting ROE is to accept a general or over riding set of rules that are established by an agency like the UN or NATO. Under that umbrella, individual countries will, more often than not, add constraints for their own forces. These can be for purely political reasons or they can be for cultural reasons (or both). Fergusson points out that the core of any coalition or multinational operation is the national units of the countries involved and that while operational command may be multinational, tactical command is overwhelmingly national in character.³² National ROE will reflect the character and ethics of that country. In operations that are in support of objectives far removed, with little or no immediate effect on the country in question, the ROE will be less robust. The national culture will dictate the degree of aggressiveness of the forces involved. What is important to note is that very few of the individual ROE policies will be the same. It is left to the commander to understand and accommodate the differences. What is even of a more important issue for commanders and staffs of coalition forces is the fact that subordinate ROE issued by any given contingent must also provide clear guidance on any other forces weapons usage which would be prohibited by law or restricted in usage for that contingent and they must also be aware that utilization of another nation's capability that is prohibited by the another national command's ROE may place the Coalition command at risk of prosecution by that nation.³³

³¹ James Fergusson, A Mile Wide and an Inch Deep: Multilateralism and the Command and Control of Multinational Forces in Peace Operations, Centre for International and Security Studies York University June 1998

³² Ibid p. 22

³³ ABCA Coalition Operations Handbook 11 May 1999 p. 2-4

Rules of Engagement, as discussed, are the guidelines that govern a commander's ability to take offensive action. In a coalition operation, the cultural mindset of individual partners will dictate the robustness of their policies. Norman Friedman's discussion of the differences between the Western powers and the Soviet Union provides an example of these different mindsets. His comparison, while situated within the context of the Cold War, gives an insight to the different ways cultures and nations perceive conflict. It is his contention that Western powers use ROE as "the means of avoiding the sort of military action that would cause a war."³⁴ The Soviets, on the other hand, "do not clearly distinguish between military and non military types of conflict. They may choose to reply to what they perceive as nonmilitary pressure in a decidedly military way."³⁵ This is but one example of how cultures will form the very nucleus of how they approach the process of establishing rules that dictate the use of force. Palin observes that:

"For some countries ROE are integral to crisis management, the objective being to avoid taking any action the might escalate the situation, and the firing of a weapon, even in self defence, is very much an action of last resort. For others, conflict is a less complex affair and the threshold for aggressive reaction is much lower. Russian and US troops on the one hand, and Canadians and Irish troops on the other, faced with an identical situation and governed by identical ROE, would in all probability react in very different ways."³⁶

He goes on to say that this is a result of military culture and training rather than being trigger happy or nervous.³⁷

It should be noted that many of these examples are taken from peace keeping and peace enforcement operations and mindsets. What is clear is that in general war, the ROE would be a

³⁴ Norman Friedman, NATO's Maritime Strategy: Issues and Developments, Special Report 1987, Institute for Foreign Policy Analysis. Inc., Pergamon Brassey's, 1987

³⁵ Ibid p.25

³⁶ Palin p.34

lot less complicated. What must be of the utmost importance to the coalition commander and indeed all leaders is the fact that the soldier, sailor, or airman on the ground, with the weapon, faced with the situation, must have the knowledge and confidence to properly employ his ROE. This means that the rules must be clear, simple and understandable to all personnel.

CULTURE AND ETHICS

There are many definitions for the word “ethics”. James Toner in True Faith and Allegiance provides one such definition, “ethics is about trying to separate right from wrong, honor from shame, virtue from vice. It is the studied search for wisdom and an inquiry into what we ought to do. It also entails the obligation of acting wisely and resolutely upon the judgments we make. Ethics derives from custom, from rules, from goals and from circumstance.”³⁸

Central to all coalition operations is the question of ethics in a theatre. In layman’s terms it is how the armies conduct themselves in a hostile environment. Each country has a system of laws that reflect the national culture. It is how these laws and culture are interpreted in practice that interests us in this discussion. A force has an obligation to account itself in an ethical manner. There are examples of ethical misfeasance that are well known to the reader and indeed to the nation as a whole. The action of a handful Canadian soldiers in Somalia is still painfully clear in the national memory. For any number of reasons the ethical and responsible conduct of individuals (in some cases), and the organization (in other cases) were brought into question and as a result the entire Canadian Forces and the nation faced an inquiry. Ethically this event went against the concepts and culture that are inherent in Canadian society and, because of the laws of the land, the responsible individuals and to a lesser degree the Canadian Forces answered for

³⁷ Ibid p.34

³⁸ James Toner “True Faith and Allegiance The Burden of Military Ethics” University Press of Kentucky 1995 p.21

their actions in a Canadian Military court of law. Culturally, the nation was traumatized. Both ethically and culturally we had a sense of failure and disappointment.

But what of other countries that participate in coalition actions? Are they better or worse? Using the example of Somalia, it is noted that the Canadians were not alone. Americans had been accused of killing Somalia citizens and soldiers in several operations against one of the clan chiefs. The Belgian contingent, in accusations leveled by the organization African Rights, were accused of being responsible for the torture and the cold-blooded deaths of twenty-six Somalis.³⁹ The outrage caused by this accusation triggered a Belgium government Board of Inquiry (BOI) to be formed (much like the reaction of Canada). The BOI in the end rejected the accusations against the soldiers stating, “although there had been ‘a few cases of unacceptable behavior,’ that force had been used only where necessary, and then applied ‘gradually and proportionally.’ The report went further and stated that while the board could not exclude the possibility that there were cases of unacceptable behavior unknown to it, never the less felt there could only be a very limited number.”⁴⁰ Fifteen soldiers were tried for acts of sadism in 1995 but none were convicted. Later photographs showing soldiers holding a Somali over a fire revived the affair.⁴¹ These examples show that the culture and predisposition of soldiers will sometimes run amok. What is important to note is the reaction of the countries involved. In all cases, the governments applied the laws of the land to investigate the crimes and come to conclusions. One could argue that the actual outcomes in some of the examples leave much to be desired, but what it does show is that the countries supplying coalition forces accepted the responsibility of

³⁹ Jocelyn Coulon, Soldiers of Diplomacy: The United Nations, Peacekeeping, and the New World Order, Translated by Phyllis Aronoff and Howard Scott University of Toronto Press 1998

⁴⁰ Ibid p. 99

⁴¹ Ibid p. 99

investigating and punishing guilty soldiers. In this regard the Canadian *punishment*⁴² is considered to be a precedent.⁴³

We must then, return to the original definition of ethics. In revisiting the idea of good vs. evil, right vs. wrong one must realize that, regardless of the country's response, the command leadership must maintain the ethical high ground. These incidents don't just happen without the knowledge of others in the group. The culture of a country would not allow the deeds to go unpunished, and that same culture should not allow leaders to abdicate responsibility. Not all cultures see the same thing the same way. For example some forces will think nothing of trading in the black market or sexual harassment, firstly because that is the way things are done at home, and secondly because that is in the national culture. Commanders must be aware of these friction points and be prepared to deal immediately with occurrences.

CULTURE: THE NATIONAL MINDSET OF COALITION PARTNERS

Soldiers are used to hardships, it is the nature of their job. Having said this, it is also true that they like to bring a little bit of "home" with them when they deploy. It has always been this way and it is suggested it always will be. In bringing "home" to the far corner of the world, the cultural nuances of the country are part of the package. The food the soldier eats, the type of clothing and weapons one uses are all part of the makeup a contingent. It would be unheard of, as an example, for the American Army to go anywhere without the comfort of the Post Exchange somewhere near by. The same could be said of a Canadian that did not have the opportunity to watch or listen to the Grey Cup or the Stanley Cup or have a Canadian beer, no matter they are.

⁴² Italics are the authors

⁴³ Coulon p. 100

The logistics that are involved in deploying these forces try as best as is possible, to accommodate cultural ties to the homeland.

But what of a country that does not have the military capability to support troops on deployment? In some cases there are countries that, because of logistical limitations, must be supported by a lead nation. In and of itself, there is nothing wrong with the concept of a single nation supporting lesser-equipped forces. What is a contention, however, is the potential for problems to arise when this support alienates the receiving nation or offends the culture and traditions of the soldiers being supported. The resupply of new weapons to the Abyssinian forces during the Korea conflict is but one example. The Americans, with all the best intentions, issued the Abyssinians with new modern rifles. What the Americans did not know or understand was that the culture of the Abyssinians demanded that they return with the same weapons that they left with, to do otherwise indicated personal defeat.⁴⁴

How then does the commander counter this type of problem? The use of liaison officers, well versed in the cultures of the countries involved offers one possible solution. The American Military, recognizing the importance and need for these types of personnel have a system of Foreign Assistance Officers (FAO) who, based on language testing are posted to different countries. After initial selection and a two-year course, they live in these countries, where they interact with the national military leaders and become in effect, advisors. A calculated by product of this program is that, by living and operating in the country, they becomes totally immersed in the cultural world that makes up the profile of the people. This becomes a conduit back to the US in matters of what the country expects and the potential pitfalls that may be encountered. They become advisors on culture. This program is now an integral part of the US Forces and the

⁴⁴ Durell-Young, Thomas. Command in Coalition Operations." Problems and Solutions in Future Coalition Operations, Thomas J. Marshall, Phillip

advice given by these personnel is utilized in the planning and conduct of operations. Canada is developing this same capacity and young officers must be encouraged to participate.⁴⁵ As we build a human “data base” on the various cultures we can only become more in tune with these same potential problems.

The Canadian Forces also has what could be considered an untapped wealth of existing cultural knowledge— The Reserves. The Army Militia, for example, numbers in the range of fifteen thousand personnel in 133 units in 125 Canadian communities.⁴⁶ As this force is recruited from amongst the many ethnic communities within our towns and cities, they are a truly multicultural organization.⁴⁷ This cultural knowledge base must be identified and utilized as much as is possible. This is now being recognized as the Reserves re-role into new capabilities especially in the Civil Military Cooperation (CIMIC) role.⁴⁸ As the database grows, this resource would be of great benefit to the Forces in planning future coalition operations. The added benefit is the fact that these personnel are already trained in the skills necessary for military operations and there is little or no additional training costs in language and cultural awareness as they have grown up learning just these things. Properly utilized this will be of great assistance to the Canadian Forces and should be explored.

In contemplating the question of the mindset of coalition partners, perhaps the most intangible is that of national pride. Not all countries will be large enough to be a major player in future operational level conflicts. Due to equipment, doctrine, capabilities and numbers there are some forces that will play what could be considered subservient roles. Externally these numbers

Kaiser, and Jon Kessmeire, eds. Carlisle: USAWC Strategic Studies Institute, 1997

⁴⁵ Canadian Forces Administrative Order 9-61, Foreign Languages Instruction, Testing and Qualifications

⁴⁶ A Nation at Risk: The Decline of the Canadian Forces, Conference of Defence Associations Institute, 2002

⁴⁷ Ibid p. 27

may be small, but internally the national pride goes along with the troops to the area of operations and must be dealt with in a sensitive manner. This is all the more important if the partners are from the same geographical area as the conflict area. The Gulf War is an example of this. Among the coalition partners were forces from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Syria. The Arab sense of pride is well known and the Americans (the lead nation) recognized this fact. Early on in the building of the coalition the Secretary of State James Baker effected an agreement with King Fahid of Saudi Arabia that designed a command and control system that worked on a parallel operational command structure. It was agreed the General Schwarzkopf commanding the US Forces would work in tandem with Saudi Lieutenant General Khalid bin Sultan, who commanded all Arab and Muslim forces in theatre. All allied forces would be under these two headquarters.⁴⁹ The success of this partnership became evident from the beginning and, although there was no single leader, the mission was accomplished in both the land and air war. There was no doubt that there was a unity of effort and a unity of command.⁵⁰ Each element of the partnership had real roles within the campaign that allowed the capabilities to be utilized to the fullest and a sense of pride was established.

The principle of parallel command is but one tool that can be used to insure the success of a multi cultural coalition. As Canadian Forces continue to participate in these actions, the leaders must be aware of the mechanics of employing these concepts and wherever possible, look to the processes as potential.

⁴⁸LFRR Res advisor Sitrep 5
http://www.army.dnd.ca/Chief_Land_Staff/Land_Force_Reserve_Advisor/Land_Force_Reserve_Restructure/LFRRSitreps/SitRep5/Documents/concepts-eng.pdf

⁴⁹ Colonel Harry G. Summers JR, A Critical Analysis of the Gulf War, (New York:Dell Publishing, 1992)

CONCLUSION

Canada will continue to contribute forces to coalition efforts in the future. What is also obvious is the fact that we will participate with other military forces in these actions. Clearly, the potential frictions posed in the paper are factors that must be considered when forming these forces into a cohesive body with a common goal.

The question posed was do Canadians have the tools to assimilate into operations and are we prepared to develop new skills that will prepare our leaders with the skills to contribute to the collective success. In sum we do.

Many of the friction points are actually enhancing factors for this success. Firstly Canadian leaders are professionals. In this they are no different than those leaders of the other forces. When put into a multinational or multicultural force the paradox is that all forces share a military culture. This is separate from a purely national culture, a “Band of Brothers” if you will. This commonality can be the basis of success in operations. It has been identified that there are differences in the hard-core proficiencies like doctrine, command and control etc., but the very fact that each force has a form of these is a basis for likeness rather than difference. Trust

In readying future Canadian leaders for coalition operations this paper has identified the main tools that must be in the toolbox.

Education. The leaders must have the knowledge, firstly of their own place in the operational level of warfare and secondly the conflicts that arise in building a multicultural force. Foreign language and foreign cultural training should be a priority for selected personnel. Schools like the Pearson Peacekeeping School⁵¹ should be offered as well as other international

⁵⁰ Ibid p. 241

⁵¹ Elron et al p.88

schools and courses in order to establish this human database that can be drawn upon in the future. Cross-Cultural training and instruction should be given to all troops prior to deployment.

Liaison Officers. As discussed, the use of the Reserves as a source of expertise in this area should be considered, as there is a wealth of knowledge that sits largely untapped. This tool can be invaluable in overcoming perceived frictions.

Training. Multinational training opportunities must be explored as a method of understanding potential partnership issues. There must be agreements between countries to allow selected personnel to be assigned to different armies to understand the complexities between forces so that, when operations actually begin, there is a capability established between forces in that they have experience in working together.

The issues discussed in this paper are by no means an exhaustive list. What is hoped is that dialogue will develop to further explore the topic of culture interaction in coalition operations. Canada must be prepared to take the opportunities to develop the skills to actively take our place in future operations.

It is with knowledge that we will contribute to success in the operational and tactical level of coalition operations.

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