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# COMMAND STRUCTURE FOR COALITION OPERATIONS:

# A TEMPLATE FOR FUTURE FORCE COMMANDERS

By Colonel Sylvain R. Lescoutre

***ABSTRACT***

*An ad hoc coalition legitimized by the world community and represented by a number of culturally disparate nations, will often be the preferred way of waging major war as well as conducting peacekeeping operations. However, this type of coalition operation is a complex affair due to the cultural differences each nation brings, and due to the potentially contentious issue of command within a coalition. The commander must choose a command structure that will maximize his potential to command, and provide for unity of effort throughout the multinational coalition. Although the current doctrine recognizes three types of coalition command structures—lead nation command, parallel command, and integrated command structure, it does not offer any guidance to a potential force commander as to which command structure arrangements may be preferable in any given coalition operation. Therefore, this paper contends that in the development of a command structure for an ad hoc coalition operation, some unique characteristics must be considered by the force commander.*

*Four coalition operations—the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and the International Force in East Timor—were selected to first, describe the command structure selected, and second, analyse the circumstances that led to that selection.*

*The analysis identified three characteristics which should be considered by future force commanders in the selection of a command structure. First, the political dimension in which the commander must be cognizant of the political spectrum that influences the dynamic in a coalition and must thoroughly understand the political objectives that must be achieved. Once he understands the political dimension, the operational commander will be in a better position to determine his optimum command structure. Second, if an ad hoc coalition must rapidly intervene into a conflict, a strong lead nation command structure is recommended. This lead nation should be regionally base, and maintain its existing integrated headquarters. And third, if there is a vast diversity of cultures involved in the coalition, a parallel command structure should be selected. This parallel command structure must be accompanied by a strong spirit of cooperation and mutual support between the multinational theater commanders.*

*Recommendations for further research is provided at the end of the paper.*

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*Ce ne sont pas les troupes qui vous manquent, c'est la manière de les réunir et d'agir avec vigueur.*

*Napoléon (1769-1821)*

## PART 1 – INTRODUCTION

Coalition Warfare is not an invention of the twentieth century. Since the beginning of time, groups have banded together as a method of defense against threats to a nation's survival, or in order to defeat an opponent that was superior either in skills or in number. From the Crusades to the Thirty Years Wars, from the Napoleonic Wars to the great alliances of World War I and II, and from the Korean conflict to the war against terrorist in Afghanistan, like-minded nations have had the urge to associate with each other in order to reach a common objective. But once these nations get together, how do they fuse and integrate their effort in order to provide a functional and effective fighting force?

History has shown that nations will unite with other nations to reach a common objective, with each having its own perception on how to reach that objective. This perception will be influenced by the nation's political requirements, national traditions, religion, and cultural sensitivity. The commander that is made responsible to fuse and integrate these disparate coalition member nations into one homogenous fighting

force must consider these external forces when he builds his organization. Hence, this paper suggests that in the development of a command structure for an ad hoc coalition operation, some unique characteristics must be considered by the force commander.

This paper will first establish the boundaries of the research between coalition and alliance operations. Then, recognizing that one of the most contentious aspects of coalition operations is the command and control issue, the three types of coalition command structure documented in the current doctrine-lead, parallel and integrated- will be described.

To suggest that unique characteristics may actually exist when developing a command structure for coalition operations, military history must first be examined. Thus, four relevant coalition operations-the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and the International Force in East Timor- that took place at various intervals during the past 50 years, were selected for this historical examination. A brief outline of the selected coalition operations is given, a description of the command structure selected is provided, and the circumstances that led to that selection is analysed. This analysis suggests that, in the development of the command structure for an ad-hoc coalition operation, the force commander must consider the political dimension, the rapidity of intervention required, and the cultural diversity of the nations involved. Concluding remarks will follow.

## PART 2 – THE BACKGROUND

### *Coalition Operations*

From a military standpoint, a coalition is defined as an ad hoc agreement between two or more sovereign nations for a common action[1]. A coalition is often formed in response to an emergency or crisis, and the common action is aimed at objectives that can be reached in a finite period. The coalition is formed to succeed militarily on the battlefield or as a deterrent force. Once the objectives are met, the coalition is, in most cases, disbanded.

One additional and very important reason for forming a coalition, especially since the end of the Second World War, is that it legitimizes the use of force in the eyes of the world community. The combination of several and often disparate nations into a coalition, will provide legitimacy to the use of force which otherwise would be frowned upon, if not condemned, by the world community. This legitimacy is thought to be further enhanced when, a world-recognized body such as the United Nations or NATO, supports the political and military objectives. Ryan calls it the "coalition of the willing" and contends that such coalitions will now represent the normal way of waging major war as well as conducting peacekeeping.[2] However, Ryan also suggests, following the UN sponsored operation in East Timor, that efforts to legitimize an operation by attracting a large number of nations, must be carefully balanced against the military requirements for a successful mission.[3] An excellent example of a coalition operation is

[1] Canada. *Canadian Forces Operations*. Ottawa: Department of National Defence, 2000. p GL-E-2.
[2] Ryan, Alan. *From Desert Storm to East Timor: Australia, the Asia-Pacific and the 'New Age' Coalition Operations.* Australia: Land Warfare Studies Center, 2000. p 14 and 17.
[3] Ryan, Alan. "The Strong lead-Nation Model in an Ad-Hoc Coalition of the Willing: Operation Stabilise in East-Timor. *International Peacekeeping*, Vol 9 No 1, Spring 2002, pp 33-44.

the Persian Gulf War which took place in 1990/91. The War gained its legitimacy not only through a coalition of over 35 nations led by the United States and Saudi Arabia, but also through the legitimacy of United Nations resolutions which condemned the Iraqi's invasion in Kuwait and supported the military retaliation. The coalition had the common objective of ousting Iraq's occupation Army from Kuwait. Once this goal was achieved, the coalition disbanded.

In contrast, an alliance is the result of formal agreements between two or more sovereign nations for broad, long-term objectives.[4] In effect, alliances are coalitions that have formalized their common goals into a long-term partnership. NATO and NORAD are excellent examples of long-standing alliances that were created to provide a common goal: collective defence. As Ryan explains, these partnerships have a tendency "…to develop a high level of military collaboration and interoperability through common doctrine, training and equipment."[5] Due to their ability to integrate quickly and adopt a common organizational structure, alliances are often a source of coalition forces. Switzer[6] provides a good summary of alliance organizations that have or can provide forces to coalitions operations.

However, quite often the expediency (Korea), the location (East Timor), or the political situation (Haiti), do not permit the formation of a coalition based on traditional or regional alliances. In these instances a coalition is formed on an ad hoc basis, between two or more countries that, as Riscassi describes, "…bring their separate orientations and proclivities to the practice of warfare."[7] Thus, the formation of an ad

[4]Canada. *Canadian Forces Operations*… p GL-E-1.
[5] Ryan, Allan. *From Desert Storm*... p 17.
[6] Switzer, G.D. *Control and Alliance Operations in the Twenty First Century; A continuing need for the NATO Alliance*. Toronto: Canadian Forces College, AMSC Paper, 2001. pp 17-25.
[7] Ricassi, Gen Robert W. "Principles for Coalition Warfare." *Joint Forces Quarterly*, No 1 (Summer 1993). p 59

hoc coalition can become a much more complex affair than a coalition formed from an existing alliance. Pudas describes this complexity in planning for coalition operations as "psychological and sociological problems created by differences in culture, customs, religions, and standards of living."[8] Bowman identifies "ten points of friction" that have historically affected coalition operations.[9] There are determination of common goal(s), logistics, capabilities, training, equipment, doctrines, intelligence, language, leadership, and cultural differences. The last two of these points of frictions warrant further considerations.

Bowman argues that as each member of a coalition has its own culture that is different than any other nation, there will be differences in terms of religion, class and gender customs, cultural tolerance, work ethics, standards of living and national traditions, which must be considered during the building and sustainment of coalition operations. The second of Bowman's point of friction is coalition leadership. He describes it as taking many forms such as unity of command, control of the force, command structure and rules of engagement.[10] Rice claims that command and control is "the most contentious aspect of coalition operations."[11] He further suggests that participants in coalition operations always want to know who is in charge, and what authority he has over the force. The command structure will determine who is in charge, and the command authority will determine the authority the commander will have over the force.[12] Ryan emphasizes that "the question of command [structure] on a

[8] Pudas, Terry J. "Coalition Warfare: preparing the US Commander for the Future." *Essays on Strategy*. Vol XI. Washington: Department of Defence. 1994. p 120.
[9] Bowman, Steve. "Historical and Cultural Influences on Coalition Operations." *Problems and Solutions in Future Coalition Operations*. Marshall, Kaiser, and Kessmeire, eds. Carlisle: USAWC Strategic Studies Institute, 1997. pp 2-12.
[10] Ibid, p 8.
[11] Rice, Anthony J. "Command and Control: The Essence of Coalition Warfare." *Parameters*, Spring 1997. p 1.
[12] In NATO approved usage, there are four levels of command authorities: Operational Command (OPCOM), Operational Control (OPCON), Tactical Command (TACOM), and Tactical Control (TACON).

multinational operation is the first and most thorny issue taken up by coalition partners."[13] The command structure in coalition operations will now be addressed in more detail.

### *Command Structure for Coalition Operations*

Pigeau and McCann assert that the commander "is a military's primary mechanism for harnessing command potential, [and] for formalizing its structure by situating it within a chain of command."[14] The commander must, therefore, choose a command structure which will maximize his or her potential to command. This structure must not only facilitate the decision making process and the flow of information vertically and horizontally, but it must also as Maurer describes, "provide for unity of effort, centralized direction, decentralized execution, common doctrine, and inter-operability."[15] Since coalition operations are always formed on an ad hoc basis, the establishment of a command structure that will meet all these attributes will be, at best challenging, and, at worst, impossible. Bowman[16] notes that the best a coalition commander can hope for is unity of effort within his organization. This fact has also been recognized by the US Department of Defense in its doctrine which states that unity of effort in a coalition operation will be achieved through the cooperation and coordination of member nations.[17] Due to this limitation, Bowman further states that "at

[13] Ryan, Allan. *From Desert Storm*...p 34.
[14] Pigeau, Ross, and Carol McCann. "Re-Conceptualizing Command and Control." *Canadian Military Journal*, Vol 3, No 1 (Spring 2002), p 57.
[15] Maurer, Martha. *Coalition Command and Control: Key Considerations*. Washington, DC: National Defence University, 1994, p 18.
[16] Bowman, Steve. "Historical and Cultural…" p 8.
[17] United States. *Doctrine for Joint Operations*. Joint Publication 3-0. Washington: Department of Defence, 10 September 2001, Chap VI. Also unity of command, unity of purpose, and unity of effort is addressed in detail in Barabé, JGJC. *Coalitions and the Peace Support Operations Continuum : Reading the Peace-field – An Unbalancing Experience*. AMSC Paper, Toronto : Canadian Forces College, 1999.

least a clear chain of command is an absolute necessity."[18] This clear chain of command will be determined by an optimum command structure that will best fit the nature of the countries involved in the coalition.

The current doctrine recognizes three types of coalition command structures. First, the lead nation command structure is present when one of the nations in a coalition has the acknowledged lead role. This role normally includes the position of Multinational Force Commander, and the domination of the command and control element in the headquarters. The lead nation has, in most instances, the largest force in the operation. All the other nation's elements in the coalition are subordinate to that lead nation with some specific conditions over the use and control of their forces. Depending on the size and duration of the operation, the force commander will integrate within his headquarters, a number of coalition member representatives commensurate to each nation's contribution. Whenever the contributing nations are asked to provide specialty or unique capabilities which are not available anywhere else in the coalition, this integration becomes very valuable to the coalition's planning staff. The integration of the headquarters staff also provides a certain level of satisfaction to the smaller coalition members who feel that they contribute to the leadership of the mission. However, the greater the contribution a nation makes to the coalition operation, the greater the participation that nation will be allowed to make in the decision making process. The UN sponsored operations in Korea[19] and in East Timor[20] are two excellent examples of lead nation command structure in coalition operations.

[18] Bowman, Steve. "Historical and Cultural…" p 8.
[19] 22 nations coalition led by the United States from 1950-53.
[20] Called INTERFET, 20 nation coalition led by Australia from Sep 1999 to Feb 2000.

The second type is the parallel command structure in which two or more multinational headquarters exist with their respective subordinated coalition forces, but no single Force Commander is designated. The member nations retain control of their own forces, and command responsibilities are shared. The parallel multinational headquarters achieve unity of effort through the formation of a Coalition Coordination, Communications, and Integration Center ($C^3IC$). The functions of the center are, as the title states, to coordinate the various activities between the multinational headquarters, to communicate and disseminate the various orders and transmissions (including translation from one language to another), act as the focal point for force sustainment, host nation support and movement control, and integrate the coalition forces in terms of doctrine, training and strategies. Staff elements from each coalition member are represented in the $C^3IC$. A recent example of parallel command structure is the coalition operations in the Gulf War, Operation Desert Shield/Storm in which Western coalition forces came under the control of a US force commander, and the Arab coalition forces came under the control of a Saudi force commander. Some recent literature also refers to the command structure in the Gulf War as combination[21] (lead and parallel), or hybrid.[22] However, irrespective of the terminology, a parallel command structure will be explicitly devoid of an overall force commander and a lead nation.

A third type of command structure, which is not widely recognized in the doctrine, is the integrated coalition command structure. This type of structure is present when all participating coalition members participate equally in the operation and are well

[21] United States. *Joint Doctrine for Multinational Operations*. Joint publication 3-16. Washington: Department of Defence, 5 April 2000, p II-11.
[22] Ryan, Allan. *From Desert Storm*…p 35.

represented in the command headquarters to assist the force commander in making his decisions. The force commander is usually selected amongst the contributing nations. Good examples of such command structures can be seen in many UN sponsored operations such as UNPROFOR in the former Republic of Yugoslavia (FRY) and UNAMIR in Rwanda. But as Durrell-Young mentions,[23] there are some disadvantages with this type of command structure, including level of experience, staff training, and integration. For these reasons, he further suggests that an integrated command structure for high intensity operations may be inappropriate. This might partially explain some breakdown in the command structure that occurred during the Chapter 7 United Nations operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II).

Although the US doctrine manuals and military literature describe in detail the above mentioned command structure arrangements, none could be found that offers guidance as to which may be preferable under particular conditions. Durell-Young suggests that command structures will be highly dependent upon decisions made at the national and international political level and, since each coalition is unique, he further contends that he does not see the need to provide a framework for the selection of command structures.[24] Interestingly enough, the US army doctrine suggests that parallel command structure is the simplest to establish and often the organization of choice,[25] whereas the US joint doctrine recommends that, because of the absence of a force commander, the use of parallel command structure should be avoided.[26] An examination of past and relevant coalition operations will now attempt to determine characteristics

[23] Durell-Young, Thomas. "Command in Coalition Operations." *Problems and Solutions in Future Coalition Operations*. Edited by Thomas J. Marshall, Phillip Kaiser, and Jon Kessmeire. Carlisle: USAWC Strategic Studies Institute, 1997. p 38.
[24] Ibid, p 37.
[25] United States. *The Army in Multinational Operations*. FM 100-8. Washington: Department of the Army. November 1997, p2-2.
[26] United States. *Joint Doctrine for Multinational*… p II-10.

that will assist in the development of command structure for coalition operations.

## PART 3 – SELECTED COALITION OPERATIONS

### *The Korean War*

On June 25, 1950, North Korea launched a cross border invasion of South Korea in a blitzkrieg style campaign. More than 135,000 men formed part of the invasion force across the 38th parallel,[27] and by the 28 June, the capital Seoul had fallen to the North Koreans. The invasion of South Korea was proceeding rapidly, and the United States was of the opinion that some form of rapid intervention had to be committed to preclude the communist regime's take over of the entire Korean peninsula.

The US was faced with a difficult choice. In taking unilateral action to deter a perceived Soviet aggression, they would face the anger of many nations (including European nations). However, not taking any action could severely impair American efforts to maintain prestige in Asia.[28] The US chose to seek the cooperation of other United Nations members and enter into a coalition operation. The US then submitted a resolution to the United Nations asking for an immediate cessation of hostilities, a restoration of the 38th parallel boundary, and calling for "all members to render every assistance to the United Nations in the execution of this resolution."[29]

On July 7, 1950, the UN passed the resolution and asked the US to lead the coalition operation and to establish the United Nations Command (UNC). One day

[27] Summers, Harry G. *Korean War Almanac*, New York: Facts on File, 1990, p 17.
[28] Schnabel, James F. "Policy and Direction: the First Year." *United States Army in the Korean War*, Washington: US Army, 1972, pp 67-8
[29] Ibid, pp 66-7.

later, General Douglas MacArthur was designated the Commander in Chief (CICUNC). This was just one additional "hat" for MacArthur as he was also appointed as the Supreme Commander for Allied Power (SCAP) acting as the representative for the 13 Nations Far Eastern Commission directing the occupation of Japan. He was also the Commander in Chief Far East, in command of all US military forces in the Western pacific.

One important development occurred a week after the resolution was passed; the President of the Republic of Korea recognized the lead role of the United States, by placing all its military forces under MacArthur's command. This lead role by the US was further confirmed when other UN members' military forces were being offered to and accepted by the US, not the UN.[30]

The US Joint Chiefs of Staff were very cautious, especially at the beginning of the UNC, emphasizing that military effectiveness, not political necessity, be the main consideration in accepting forces for Korea. Thus, all offers for combat troops were weighed against needs in the field and the probable effectiveness of the forces offered.[31] As a consequence, although 21 other nations provided a small military contingent, the Korean War was really fought under the domination of the US and with a preponderance of US forces. The American forces comprised over 50 percent of the ground forces, 85 percent of the air and 95 percent of the naval forces.[32] This dominance in the field, was also reflected in the UNC headquarters; the UNC was, for all practical

[30] Ibid, p 115.
[31] Ibid, pp 116-7.
[32] Yaeger, Jeffrey W. "Coalition Warfare: Surrendering Sovereignty." *Military Review*, November 1992, p 58.

purposes, the US military Far East Command, with the addition of a British Deputy Chief of Staff in 1952.

In the meantime, the quick approval of the UN resolution enabled a rapid intervention by US Army elements in South Korea. These initial elements were able to reinforce the existing Republic of Korea (ROK) army elements in conducting classic delaying actions pending the arrival of the main reinforcements from the US and other coalition nations' forces, and averted a complete takeover of South Korea by the North Koreans.

From this brief review of the literature, it appears that the lead nation command structure was well suited for this coalition operation. At this point, two facts can be characterized. First, due to the speed in which the operation had to be mounted, a command structure was selected to take advantage of an organization that not only existed for this type of conflict, but was also located in the vicinity of the conflict. Even though most of the "other" nations took a substantial amount of time to join the coalition, the US command structure already in place enabled the quick intervention of the coalition troops in South Korea. Second, General MacArthur and the US Joint Chiefs of Staff were not governed by political necessity in accepting offers for combat troops from any nations; rather, military effectiveness was the driving criteria. This can be attributed to the sheer domination of the US contribution to the operation. As a result, MacArthur was in an excellent position to impose his will and accept or reject any coalition nation contributions. On the other end, the political necessity was provided by the UN Security resolution which legitimized the coalition operation in the eyes of the world. As Danzik

observes, "[t]he presence of coalition partners added much to the military effort in Korea. They gave the war an international legitimacy it may have otherwise lacked."[33]

In summary, necessity for speed in mounting this operation was the driving factor for selecting a strong lead nation (US), which was also structured to operate in the region. Due to the sheer dominance of the lead nation contribution, political necessity was not a factor in selecting other nations' military contribution, but was a factor in legitimizing the coalition operation through a UN security resolution. One interesting footnote is that even though an armistice was signed in 1953, the UNC HQ, which moved from Tokyo to Seoul, Korea in 1957, is still active to this date. Although the HQ is predominantly manned with US and Korean forces, liaison detachments from the majority of the coalition nations are still represented. One could conclude that the coalition objectives have still not been met.

***The Vietnam War***

In contrast with the Korean War, the Vietnam War cannot be characterized as a "neat" coalition operation. One would actually have difficulties identifying the period during which the war in Vietnam became a coalition operation. There was no UN resolution passed to legitimize the conflict, there was no commander designated to command a structured coalition force and, by extension, very few United Nations members offered combat troops to this conflict.[34] Nevertheless, this analysis will concentrate on the last ten years of the conflict, until 1975, when the South Vietnamese

[33] Danzik, Wayne. "Coalition Forces in the Korean War." *Naval War College Review*, No 47 (Autumn), 1994, pp 25-39.
[34] Although only four countries provided combat troops -Australia, New Zealand, Thailand, and the Republic of Korea- the Republic of Philippines provided a civic action group, and 34 other nations contributed food, medicine, technical advisers, equipment, educational facilities, training and economic aid.

government fell to the communist regime of North Vietnam.

Despite the involvement of several nations during the conflict, there was no unified command. Instead, a three-tier parallel command structure was adopted between the US (who essentially led the Australian, New Zealand, and Thailand Forces), the South Vietnamese, and the South Koreans. The US coalition was commanded by the Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) whose commander was responsible for all US military activities in Vietnam except the air war over Vietnam, and the war at sea beyond Vietnam's coastal waters.[35] The South Vietnamese Army (ARVN) fought under their own command structure, albeit assisted by Field Advisory Elements from the US Army. Although Gen Westmoreland, the Commander of MACV, initially considered unifying all military troops into one command structure, he later supported a parallel command arrangement for the following reasons:[36]

- the South Vietnamese were sensitive to placing troops under the US, having just recently achieved independence, and being very jealous of their sovereignty;
- the South Vietnamese were wary of providing any indications to the North Vietnamese and Viet Cong that they were puppets of the United States;
- Gen Westmoreland was concerned with the connotation of French type colonialism because he wanted to establish in the minds of South Vietnamese leaders that they were running their country; and
- Gen Westmoreland wanted to avoid the problems of dealing with an international staff integrated with his own US staff.

[35] Summers, Harry, G. *Vietnam War Almanac*. New-York: Facts of Life, 1985, pp 235-6.
[36] Westmoreland, General William C. *A Soldier Reports*. New York: Doubleday & Company, 1976, pp 133-4.

Therefore, Gen Westmoreland espoused a parallel command structure with the South Vietnamese, based on a principle of cooperation and mutual support. Even though the South Vietnamese knew that Gen Westmoreland had the leverage to influence their decisions,[37] the General contends that they were able to develop their own command structure in a culturally acceptable command arrangement.[38] Essentially, Gen Westmoreland wanted the South Vietnamese leaders to believe that they were running their country, and that the Americans were in Vietnam to help them, not do their jobs for them. Still, Palmer argues that this type of command structure did not generate the coalition's best combined efforts.[39] He suggests that there were instances when the US should have assumed operational control in situations that required close coordination between both military forces, such as the defense of the Demilitarized Military Zone. In this regard, Palmer may have referred to the requirement for a coordination center, to coordinate the activities between the two multinational headquarters. Although, Gen Westmoreland sanctioned the formation of a Combined Intelligence Center to coordinate the intelligence input from the South Vietnamese (civilians and military),[40] no other level of coordination took place between the two command structures to heighten the coalition unity of effort.

A similar situation existed with the South Korean coalition force (ROK). The ROK initially joined the Vietnam conflict under the command of the United States.

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[37]Ibid, p 241. As mentioned previously, American advisers were assigned at virtually every level in the South Vietnamese military forces, from the Battalion level to the Ministry of Defense. As part of the Military Assistance Program, Gen Westmoreland administered a fund which financially supported the South Vietnamese units. If a unit would not respond to his request for improvements, he would withhold support until changes would occur. Gen Westmoreland used this leverage to encourage sound tactical plans on the battlefield.

[38] Ibid, p 134.

[39] Palmer, General Bruce. *25 Year War: America's Military Role in Vietnam*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1984, p 52.

[40] Westmoreland, General William C. *A Soldier*…p 254.

However, once in Vietnam, the Korean Commander wanted the same co-equal status that the South Vietnamese had with the US contingent.[41] Wanting to maintain his good relationship with the President of South Korea and the South-Korean people, Gen Westmoreland was more than willing to contribute to this posture of co-equality and acquiesce to their request for more autonomy.[42] This decision recognized the desire of the ROK government who was very sensitive about keeping casualties down and, satisfied the MACV commander who was not willing to integrate the Korean officers within his US headquarters staff.[43] Thus, a third multinational parallel headquarters was formed.

A combination of political necessity, cultural tolerances, and national traditions, influenced the formation of a parallel command structure during the Vietnam conflict. However, the absence of a coordination center between the multinational headquarters, may have inhibited the coalition's unity of effort and contributed to the defeat of the South Vietnamese Government to the communist regime of North Vietnam.

***The Gulf War***

The conflict in the Gulf started with the cross border invasion of Kuwait by the Iraqis on 2 August 1990. By the end of that day the occupation was almost complete, and by the following day, the Iraqi Republican Guard (IRG) were within 5 Km of the Saudi border. Fearing an imminent invasion of their country, and following discussions with Secretary of Defense Dick Cheney and CENTCOM Commander

[41] Palmer, General Bruce. *25 Year War: America's*...p 50.
[42] Westmoreland, General William C. *A Soldier*...p 256-7.
[43] Ibid, p 258.

General Norman Schwarzkopf, Saudi Arabia requested the help of the United States to deter further Iraqi aggression.[44] Following receipt of this invitation, the US commenced a series of consultations with many other nations in order to secure a number of United Nations resolutions that would legitimize the use of force against Saddam Hussein and Iraq. On 29 November 1990, the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 678 which demanded Iraq's unconditional withdrawal from Kuwait by 15 January 1991, and authorized UN members to use all necessary means to bring about Iraqi withdrawal after that date.

This was a very significant coalition. It was not only the largest, but as George Bush said in his State of the Union address, "for the first time since World War II, the international community is united."[45] It was not only united in its efforts to oust Iraq from Kuwait, it was also, some suggests, one of the most successful coalition of modern times.[46] Perhaps one of the contributing factors that helped secure victory against Iraq during the Gulf War was the formation and preservation of the coalition and its command structure.

The Arabian Gulf region is one of those locations which involve a broad range of cultures, religions, and deep-rooted traditions. For these reasons, the United States had to utilize its full political and military spectrum of influence in order to build a coalition that would unite its efforts against Iraq. In the political spectrum, the invasion of Kuwait presented a significant threat to US national interests in that the US economy is directly affected by the price of oil.[47] Thus, the United States took the lead and

[44] Summers, Colonel Harry G. *On Strategy II: A critical Analysis of the Gulf War*. New York: Dell Publishing, 1992, p 235.
[45] Bush, George. "Text of the State of the Union Address." *The Washington Post*, 30 January 1991 , p A14.
[46] Powell, Keith. *An historical examination of International Coalitions*. Carlisle Barracks: US Army War College, April 1998, p 7.
[47] Dunigan and Bay, *From Shield To Storm*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1992, p 436. Through Kuwait, Saddam Hussein then controlled 30% of the Mid-East oil reserves or 20% of the World reserves, which would cause high oil prices for many

convinced the world community to build a coalition and recruit as many nations as possible to form a united front. Through the military spectrum, the US built a coalition based on the involvement of 32 nations during the military effort, and sustained the coalition based on a command structure that would treat the Arab world and the non-Arab world on an equal basis. This was done through the formation of a parallel command structure.

The formation of the parallel command structure during the Gulf War can be attributed to General Schwarzkopf, the US Commander, and General Khaled Bin Sultan, the Saudi Commander. Both recognized at the outset of Desert Shield that American troops could not serve under an Arab force, and that Arab forces could not serve under an American commander.[48] Further, based on Saudi and Arab opinion and in the interest of Arab membership in the coalition, Saudi Arabia demanded that the Americans not be seen as an occupying force.[49] Therefore, no supreme commander was selected. Instead, the unity of effort was achieved through the cooperation and mutual support of two multinational headquarters, the US (Western) and Arab (Islam) coalition headquarters.

The Western coalition headquarters was dominated by the United States, but with a significant contribution from the UK and France, plus smaller contributions from ten other western nations. Despite the fact that General Schwarzkopf was recognized as the Theater Force Commander for the Western headquarters, the French,[50]

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years to come. Should Iraq decide to continue its expansion to Saudi Arabia, Saddam could conceivably control 56% of the World oil reserves.

[48] Kahled Bin Sultan. *Desert Warrior*. New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1995, p 193. See also Schwarzkopf, General Norman. *It doesn't take a hero*. New York: Linda Grey Bantam Books. 1992. p 313.

[49] Ibid, p 216.

[50] The French military force was the only nation under tactical control (TACON) of the theater commander. All other nations military forces were placed under Operational Control (OPCON) of Gen Schwarzkopf.

and to a certain extent the UK Government, insisted on maintaining significant control over the utilization of their military forces. Despite some command and control issues, the western coalition was very successful in harnessing its military might against Iraq.

In the Arab coalition headquarters, the recognition of Saudi Arabia as one of the two theater commanders is considered perhaps to be the most important decision in helping to cement the coalition against Saddam Hussein. As the host nation, Saudi Arabia was able to command its own theater of operation through its multinational headquarters; this situation gave Saudi Arabia what Choudhry called, "the religious and moral leadership of the Islamic states in the coalition."[51] The recognition of an Islamic commander facilitated the recruitment of a large number of Islamic nations that had a wide diversity of Arab politics, families, customs, attitudes, language, religion, history, and way of life.[52] Indeed, some of these countries such as Egypt, Syria, Morocco, Pakistan, and Bangladesh, were barely on speaking terms with each other, let alone with the United States. This recognition, and thus the recruitment of these Islamic nations, would not have been possible under a lead nation (US) command structure. There was no doubt in Gen Khaled's mind that the United States had to make the ultimate command decisions,[53] but the parallel command structure assured Saudi Arabia the retention of its sovereignty as well as its religion, culture and traditions,[54] and enabled the coalition to exercise a united front by focusing its effort on liberating Kuwait from Iraq.

Whereas unity of effort was present within each of the two multinational headquarters, unity of effort within the coalition was assured through the formation of the

[51] Choudhry, Brig Mashud. *Coalition Warfare: Can the Gulf War be the Model for the Future*. Study Paper. Carlisle Barracks: US Army War College, 1992, p 24.
[52] Kahled Bin Sultan. *Desert Warrior*…p 208.
[53]Ibid, p 193.
[54] Ibid, p 197.

Coalition Coordination, Communications, and Integration Center. The $C^3IC$ was a 24-hour center that exercised no command authority, but was the conduit for all coordination between the Western and Arab/Islamic forces, and served as the link between the two command structures. Its tasks included, amongst others, the coordination of boundary changes and movement of the Fire Support Coordination Line (FSCL), the focal point for the exchange of intelligence information between the Saudi and US Forces, and it also provided daily briefings and updates on the Iraqi and Allied situations to senior officers from all coalition countries. As reported by the US Department of Defense after the Gulf War,[55] the $C^3IC$ proved critical to the success of Operation Desert Storm. Without usurping the power of the two multinational headquarters, the $C^3IC$ provided the linkage that contributed to the success of the coalition. That same linkage between parallel command structures was missing during the Vietnam War, which as explained earlier in this paper, might have contributed to the defeat of South Vietnam.

Thus, the wide cultural diversity of the coalition's members, dictated the formation of a parallel command structure during the Gulf War. Even though some member nations of the coalition had been at war against each other under previous and different circumstances, the personal rapport and good working relationship which developed between the two theater commanders of the coalition force, Gen Schwarzkopf and Gen Khaled Bin Sultan, were instrumental in resolving any cultural issu

center—the C$^3$IC—which facilitated the combined planning process and improved the day-to-day integration of coalition operations.

***International Force in East Timor (INTERFET)***

Following the independence referendum of East Timor on 30 August 1999, a rash of looting, shooting, arson and other destruction sponsored by Militias from West Timor took place on this small island in the Pacific. Due to a lack of intervention by the Indonesian Government, and following the outrage of the world community upon seeing the scale and ferocity of the violence, the United Nations Security Council authorized the creation of an International Force in East Timor (INTERFET), a Chapter 7 intervention, with the mission of restoring peace in the territory, and to facilitate humanitarian assistance operations.[56] Time was of the essence and an immediate intervention was required. Located only 500 km south of East Timor, Australia was asked by the United Nations to lead the coalition under the leadership of Major General Peter Cosgrove.

Due to the relative complexity[57] of the peace enforcement operation and the rapidity of intervention required, the UN was seeking a strong nation in the region that could immediately command a multinational operation. As Ryan reports,[58] Australia proved to be the only country in the immediate region that was capable of building a coalition with strong regional representation. Called Op Stabilize, MGen Cosgrove and

[56] UN Security Council Resolution 1264 (1999), 15 September 1999, Article 3.
[57] The complexity was created by the initial reluctance of Indonesia to accept a multinational intervention, Indonesia's inability to stop militias from infiltrating East Timor from West Timor, and by the reticence of other ASEAN's members to be seen to support Indonesian disengagement from East Timor. Therefore, a Chapter 7 intervention was required before a true peacekeeping force could deploy.
[58] Ryan, Alan. "The Strong lead-Nation Model…p 25.

his integrated staff deployed to Dili (capital of East Timor) on 20 September 1999, only five days after the UN security resolutions. Since the challenge of the coalition was the speed in which the multinational force had to deploy into theater, MGen Cosgrove established a strong lead nation command structure, reflected by the large contribution of the Australian force; Australia contributed over 50% of the troops to the coalition. Furthermore, the rapidity of intervention did not allow for the integration of other nation's contribution to the headquarters staff due to the lack of inter-operability: it was simply impossible to achieve in such short notice. Therefore, the INTERFET headquarters retained a strong Australian flavour, and made extensive use of liaison officers.[59] The decision to adopt a strong lead nation command structure with a force headquarters that was predominantly Australian, contributed to the speed and effectiveness of the international response in East Timor. The Minister of Defense for Singapore, Mr Tong Tan Keng Yam describes this success as follows:

> *The prompt response by Australia in organizing and leading the INTERFET force really was a great triumph. And I think that you have to recognize that none of that would have happened in such a short time without Australia taking the lead.*[60]

The quick success achieved in Op Stabilize was such that by the end of the year, the security conditions in East Timor had stabilized. On 23 February 2000, INTERFET turned over its operations to a Chapter 6 intervention mission, the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET).[61] INTERFET then disbanded.

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[59] Ibid, p 34.
[60] Karnoil, Robert. "Interview: Dr Tony Tan Keng Yam." *Jane's Defence Weekly*. Vol 35 No 26, 27 June 2001, p 32.
[61] Ballard, John R. "Mastering Coalition Command in Modern Peace Operations: Operation Stabilize in East Timor." *Small Wars and Insurgencies*, Vol 13 No 1 (Spring 2002), p 93.

More than twenty countries participated in the operation. Each of these countries brought along their own cultural diversity which had an impact on the *modus operandi* of Op Stabilise.[62] But since Australia had by far the largest contingent of the coalition, that most of the coalition members were regionally based, and that the Theater Commander made every attempt to meet the needs and concerns of the troop contributing nations,[63] the cultural diversity of the coalition members did not impact negatively to the success of the mission. Ryan best describes the success of this coalition:

> *The speed with which INTERFET was deployed and the rapidity with which it was able to establish conditions of security in east Timor make this operation an excellent model for future ad hoc, complex, multinational deployments. In large part, the success of the operation was due to the troop-contributing nations' acceptance of the imperfections inherent in such a disparate force…The need for a robust command an control architecture was realized in the strong lead nation model that INTERFET adopted. Short notice deployments of "coalition of the willing" in the future will benefit from a consideration of the clear, simple, and unified command structure that characterized Operation Stabilize in East Timor.*[64]

Thus, the speed in which the ad hoc coalition had to intervene in East Timor was the driving factor for the selection of a strong lead nation (Australia). The Australian Defence Forces was already structured to operate in the region, and had a strong headquarters from which it could lead the multinational coalition operation. Although the operation included a wide diversity of cultures, these did not impact adversely on the command structure selected by the theater force commander.

[62] Ryan, Alan. "The Strong lead-Nation Model…p 24.
[63] Ibid, p 29.
[64] Ibid, p 23.

## PART 4 – SELECTION OF A COMMAND STRUCTURE

### *Characteristics*

As Liddell Hart once said: " The study of history offers us that opportunity. It is universal experience, infinitely longer, wider and more varied than any individual experience." The study of past conflicts serve as learning instruments from which valuable lessons may be learned by analyzing what went right, and what went wrong. The aim is to benefit from these "lessons learned" with the expectation that mistakes will not be repeated, while successful practices will be incorporated into future conflicts. Notwithstanding the fact that a small number of coalition operations were selected for the analysis, this study highlights some of the previous successful practices, or characteristics, that should be considered by future force commanders in the selection of an optimum command structure for an ad hoc coalition. The following three characteristics will be examined in more detail:

- Political dimension;
- Rapidity of intervention; and
- Cultural diversity.

### *Political Dimension*

Pudas observes that "the political leadership by the coalition parties is a significant factor that often restricts a commander's ability to achieve military unity of effort."[65] Since unity of effort is the best a coalition commander can hope for within his

[65] Pudas, Terry, J. "Coalition Warfare: Preparing the US Commander…p 116.

ad hoc organization, the political dimension becomes an important characteristic of coalition operations. As an operational commander, the force commander is the link between the tactical and the strategic levels of war. Lieutenant Colonel Newell suggests: "Only by understanding the highest and lowest perspectives in the three-tiered hierarchy of war can the middle perspective be understood [and practiced successfully]."[66]

In most instances, the commander already has a very good knowledge and understanding of the tactical level of war. However, he must also understand the strategy that guides his operations. Pudas further contends that there are two dominant factors in coalitions: decisions are reached by consensus and, military decisions are generally governed by political necessity.[67] As was observed in various forms in each of the coalition operations analysed, the commander must be cognizant of the political spectrum that influences the dynamic in a coalition and must thoroughly understand the political objectives that must be achieved. Once he understands the political dimension, the operational commander will be in a better position to determine the optimum command structure to direct his military resources and achieve the military strategic objectives. Bowman clearly illustrates it best for future force commanders:

> *Coalition politics override coalition military logic—a factor future coalition leaders must clearly understand. Coalition leadership must be persuasive, not coercive, and sensitive to national needs. Future coalitions will require new Eisenhowers, Schwarzkopfs, or Khalids. National forces, especially in potential lead nations, must consider how to develop such leadership traits in future military leaders.*[68]

[66] Newell, LTC Clayton R. "What is Operational Art?". *Military Review*, LXX (September 1990), p 7.
[67] Pudas, Terry, J. "Coalition Warfare: Preparing the US Commander…p 114.
[68] Bowman, Steve. "Historical and Cultural Influences…p 8.

Thus, the political dimension is an important characteristic of coalition operations, and will have to be considered by the force commander in the development of his command structure.

***Rapidity of Intervention***

Another characteristic that surfaced during the analysis of command structures is the speed or rapidity of intervention required for certain coalition operations. At the outset of the Korean conflict, military elements had to intervene rapidly to prevent the North Koreans from occupying the entire South Korean peninsula. Mandated by the UN, the United States selected a lead nation command structure for the coalition operation. As a result of this command structure selection, the coalition was able to intervene quickly to deter the North Korean aggression. A similar circumstance was present in East Timor, where a quick intervention was required to stop the rash of violence. The regionally based Australian Defence Forces led a strong lead nation command structure and, legitimized by a UN Security Council Resolution, directed a Chapter 7 coalition operation in East Timor. Thence, the success achieved by both coalition operations would clearly indicate that should there be a need for an ad hoc coalition to rapidly intervene in a conflict, a strong lead nation command structure is recommended. The effectiveness of the intervention will be augmented if the lead nation has a regional base, and maintains its existing integrated headquarters.

A parallel can be made with "objective expired" coalition operations that are formed based on an existing alliance organization. These types of coalition operations (KFOR for example) are able to intervene rapidly into a theater of operation

because, as mentioned earlier in this paper, the nations involved have developed a high level of military collaboration and interoperability through common doctrine, training, and equipment. They have a common organizational structure, and can integrate quickly. However, this level of integration is present for ad hoc coalitions only if a lead nation command structure is selected and, the lead nation retains its headquarters. As Ryan suggests, for short notice operations there is a need for a clear, simple, and unified command structure.[69] It is therefore suggested that for coalition operations, formed on an ad hoc basis, and which must intervene rapidly, the clarity, simplicity, and unified command structure can only be provided by a strong lead nation command structure that has a regionally based integrated headquarters.

***Cultural Diversity***

The last characteristic that came to light during the analysis of command structures is the vast diversity of cultures that are brought to each coalition operation.

Each country has its own culture. During the Vietnam conflict, a parallel command structure was put in place to recognize the differences in national traditions amongst the three main participants. The South Koreans were concerned about the potential casualties on the battlefield, and the South Vietnamese were sensitive to the issues of anti-colonialism and independence with respect to the United States. During the Gulf war, the vast array of cultural differences in the coalition was reflected not only in the national traditions (including sovereignty), but also in the religions (Islam versus non-Islam), class (officers versus soldiers) and gender distinctions (men versus women), discipline and cultural tolerances (Arab versus non-Arab countries, and alcohol), and

[69] Ryan, Alan. "The Strong lead-Nation Model…p 33.

standards of living (western versus middle-east). In both cases, the force commanders recognized the diversity of the cultures involved in the coalition, and judiciously selected a parallel command structure for their respective multinational operations.

A parallel command structure must be accompanied by a strong spirit of cooperation and mutual support between the multinational theater commanders, and by the formation of a coordination center-the $C^3IC$-to facilitate the combined planning process and the day-to-day integration of coalition operations.

Finally, commanders must realize that the nations who join a coalition will not necessarily always share common interests or, that the coalition will be devoid of tension. Choudhry reports that during WWII, there was a great amount of tension between two of the three coalition partners—the US and the Soviet Union. But within the coalition, there was a "compulsion to achieve the common objective of defeating Germany and Japan."[70] Therefore, the commanders were able to sustain the coalition until the end of the war. An analogy can be made with the Gulf War in which the coalition was built around two multinational headquarters, with countries that, under different circumstances, would be at war against each other. However, in this instance, their difference in cultures and interests were not as strong as their common desire to oust the Iraqi's army from Kuwait. This common desire could only have been achieved through the use of a parallel command structure.

Thus, the cultural diversity is an important characteristic of coalition operations, and will have to be considered by the force commander in the development of

[70] Choudhry, Brig Mashud. *Coalition Warfare: Can the Gulf War*…p 7

the command structure.

## PART 5 – CONCLUSION

An ad hoc coalition legitimized by the world community and represented by a number of culturally disparate nations, will often be the preferred way of waging major war as well as conducting peacekeeping operations. However, this type of coalition operation is a complex affair due to the cultural differences each nation brings, and due to the potentially contentious issue of command within a coalition. The commander must choose a command structure that will maximize his potential to command, and provide for unity of effort throughout the multinational coalition. The current doctrine recognizes three types of coalition command structures—lead nation command, parallel command, and integrated command structure. However, the doctrine does not offer any guidance to a potential force commander as to which command structure arrangements may be preferable in any given coalition operation. Therefore, this paper suggests that in the development of a command structure for an ad hoc coalition operation, some unique characteristics must be considered by the force commander.

Four coalition operations—the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, and the International Force in East Timor—were selected to first, describe the command structure selected, and second, analyse the circumstances that led to that selection.

The analysis identified three characteristics which should be considered by future force commanders in the selection of a command structure. They are as follows:

- Political Dimension: the commander must be cognizant of the political spectrum that influences the dynamic in a coalition and must thoroughly understand the political objectives that must be achieved. Once he understands the political dimension, the operational commander will be in a better position to determine his optimum command structure;
- Rapidity of intervention: if an ad hoc coalition must rapidly intervene into a conflict, a strong lead nation command structure is recommended. This lead nation should be regionally base, and maintain its existing integrated headquarters; and
- Cultural diversity: if there is a vast diversity of cultures involved in the coalition, a parallel command structure should be selected. This parallel command structure must be accompanied by a strong spirit of cooperation and mutual support between the multinational theater commanders, and by the formation of a coordination center-the $C^3IC$-to facilitate the integration of the multinational headquarters.

One important point to note is that for the two coalition operations that selected a parallel command structure, the rapidity of intervention was not a factor. It could be inferred that parallel command structures are not conducive to rapidity of

intervention, or that should there be a requirement to intervene rapidly, a strong lead nation command structure should take precedence over a parallel command structure. Unfortunately, the restricted scope and magnitude of this study, does not permit to draw such an inference. Therefore, it is recommended that further research be conducted to validate these findings, and determine other potentially suitable characteristics.

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