

The Revolution in Military Affairs and Coalition Operations:  
Problem Areas and Solutions

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Thomas-Durell Young (Ph.D.)\*  
European Program Manager  
Center for Civil-Military Relations  
Naval Postgraduate School  
US - Monterey, CA 93943  
[tdyoung@nps.navy.mil](mailto:tdyoung@nps.navy.mil)  
Telephone: 001.831.656.2011/3171  
Facsimile: 001.831.656.3351

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Précis:

Command authorities are little known, but crucial, instruments in the conveyance of political authority to a designated military commander to conduct military operations. In the context of civil-military relations, command authorities act as the nexus between the political authority to carry out military operations and their actual execution. In a coalition/alliance, political sensitivities over the transfer of command authorities to a foreign military commander far exceed those in solely a national context. That said, future operations undertaken by the United States and its close allies and friends certainly will be multinational. Thus, all the more reason to understand weaknesses and shortcomings in current command authority definitions and the practices by which they are delegated.

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## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

Many commentators of the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) have argued that certain technological breakthroughs will have a major affect on the ability of commanders to achieve greater operational speed.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, high operational speed may be one of the major advantages that the RMA offers to field commanders in future. Global communications systems spurred by the explosion in micro-processing and digital technologies will provide commanders (perhaps already today and certainly in future) with the ability to reach heights of operational speed that far surpass the rates made attainable at any other time in history.<sup>2</sup> Given such new technological advances, RMA armed forces might be able to overwhelm in extremis (e.g., via minimum mass tactics) any force without the benefits of such technology.<sup>3</sup> Indeed the U.S. armed forces that put to wholesale flight Iraqi forces during Operation Desert Storm, either presage the wave of the future, or manifest the contemporary validity of such theses.<sup>4</sup> And indeed, some unabashed advocates of air power further argue that the use of modern air power and precision-guided weapons during the NATO war against Yugoslavia demonstrate that warfare has entered a new phase.<sup>5</sup> Not surprisingly, therefore, recent key U.S. planning documents have stressed the importance of the RMA and the need for the U.S. armed forces to be developed along lines that will enable them to exploit such technological advantages.<sup>6</sup>

But despite some the creative and original work that has been conducted on the impact that modern technological innovation will have on future warfare, there has been little analysis of how such technological and organizational innovations will affect the political oversight of the conduct of war. This lacuna in the literature has been particularly glaring in terms of the affect the RMA will have on coalition warfare. Whilst much interesting and useful analysis has been produced assessing asymmetrical capabilities and organizational structures and the potential fall out from such an eventuality (e.g., RMA forces "fight" lethally and safely from a distance and all

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

other allies do the "bleeding")<sup>7</sup>, there appears to be little accompanying analysis of exactly how coalition and alliance political oversight will be affected in light of greater operational speed available to field commanders. Surely, the political leadership of any coalition or alliance of democracies will want to exploit greater speed (resulting from technological advances or organizational innovation) to bring a war or demanding peace-enforcement operation to a quick and satisfactory conclusion. Given that Western democracies only rarely conduct war or peace-support operations unilaterally, the importance of the alliance/coalition aspects of this question takes on added importance.

Indeed, a brief assessment the political-military interactions that took place during OPERATIONAL ALLIED FORCE shows an existing "delta" between the technologically-inspired greater operational speed capabilities that were offered and used by NATO (i.e., the PGMs and air power capabilities of the U.S. armed forces), and the tortuously slow political-decision making mechanisms of the North Atlantic Council (NAC).<sup>8</sup> According to press reports, the Supreme Allied Commander Europe (now known as "Strategic Commander Europe") was unable to employ the full arsenal of RMA-like technological capabilities due to political opposition from NATO members, including the U.S. National Command Authorities.<sup>9</sup> In consequence, General Clarke was unable to unleash more sophisticated capabilities and thereby attain a greater degree of operational speed.<sup>10</sup> Indeed, if one takes seriously what some RMA advocates argue will be exponential increases in operational speed brought on the RMA, then it should be clear that some thought should be given at an early stage as to the political ramification of such new revolutionary capabilities.

That which appears to call for the greatest attention for analysis and study relates to the management, or better "unity of command" of alliances, as opposed to the political oversight of

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

purely unilateral campaigns. Underlying this assertion is the premise that a country has a well-established national command structure that is sufficiently sophisticated and robust to enable, for example, a compression in the levels of war whereby national constitutions, laws and policies are not violated. In such a case, greater operation speed than is currently the norm, can probably be accommodated by sophisticated and robust national command structures since theater and component commanders in the West are traditionally vested with sufficient command authorities to respond to opportunities without needing to request additional authorities. In any case, given the contemporary existence of modern digital communications, current and future commanders can rest assured that defense ministers and chiefs of defense will be "conveniently" available to discuss details aspects of the state of campaigns and what is required. The example of the rapid establishment by the Australian Department of Defence of "Strategic Command" in Canberra in 1999 that enabled the Australian government to command and direct peace-support operations in East Timor (vice using the already existing Australian Theatre Command in Sydney), demonstrate that real time political oversight of campaigns due to global digital communications is already a factor in many democracies.<sup>11</sup> This is not necessarily a disadvantage in that there is already the ability to engage in real time dialogue between commanders and senior political leadership that would enable the former to gain authority when needed to exploit opportunities on the battlefield.

Alas alliances, let alone coalitions (ad hoc by their very definition) present a more problematic case. Here, political oversight is effected either in a formal, standing council, e.g., the NAC, or through ad hoc political consultative fora. In either case, from the perspective of a coalition or allied commander, political oversight becomes the province of multinational discussions and decisions, whilst at the same time, recognizing the continued existence of

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

national authorities.<sup>12</sup> Therefore, the recent experience of what has been called the most successful and surely more institutionally-heavy alliance in history, NATO, demonstrates that decision making by the 19 is fraught with a pace that may not be optimally conducive to high-speed maneuver in a modern conflict. This should come to be no surprise given that governments are loath to give up the use of their forces to a foreign force commander without provision for close political oversight.<sup>13</sup> Whilst relatively straightforward and simple at the national level, in an alliance or coalition, political objectives and methods of attaining them are not always in alignment with the greater objective underlying the existence of a campaign. As demonstrated in ALLIED FORCE, 19 nations, each with their own chancelleries, parliaments, ministries of foreign affairs, ministries of defense and general/central joint staffs (Iceland being an exception in this case), not surprisingly had different views on how the campaign should be conducted, when it should be ended, and whether a ground war should be used.<sup>14</sup> Although guidance to allied commanders is explicitly found in campaign plans authorized by the NAC<sup>15</sup> and the use of force is governed by national and more generally alliance rules of engagement (ROE), the means by which political oversight over the use of forces is governed by nations is through the use of a number of obscure terms known as "command authorities".

This paper examines the problem that existing command practices will pose to the use of military force to a coalition/alliance using RMA technologies. Given the success of NATO as a military alliance and the growing worldwide use of many of its basic procedures in militaries throughout the world, recent experiences in NATO will be used to demonstrate the existence of problems in the current definitions and practices of the use of command authorities. The paper assumes without argument that the RMA, either through technological advances or organizational innovation, will give nations in future the ability to conduct operations at a speed

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

hitherto unimaginable.<sup>16</sup> The reason for accepting without question this perhaps contentious assumption is not a result of blind acceptance of what could be a "dodgy" thesis, i.e., that we are in the midst of signal transformation in the conduct of warfare. Rather, the author accepts this assumption of greater operational speed because the problem defined in this paper is both a contemporary challenge for alliances and coalitions and, if left unreformed, and it will only become a more debilitating impediment to success on the battlefield in an era of RMA forces.

### Problem definition: command authorities and their recent "use" in NATO

The delegation of command authorities to multinational land force commanders remains one of the least developed areas of Alliance force employment policy. Nations have been loath to give up command authorities over land forces to foreign commanders out of fear that, inter alia, they will be "fragmented", incompetently commanded, or confuse the loyalty of officers and soldiers.<sup>17</sup> Surely the greatest fear of any defense minister in signing the authorization for placing his nation's forces under a foreign commander is justifying later his decision should they be improperly employed—by a foreign commander no less. Yet, one should remember that "commanders" remain, to quote a recently retired CINCENT, "personally responsible for the conduct of operations within their command."<sup>18</sup> The "command authorities" granted to a multinational force commander, however, will govern the degree to which he can execute his missions.

Land operations present singular problems in multinational operations. Multinational force land commanders require greater command authority than those required by multinational aerial and naval commanders. The missions and inherent operational limitations of aircraft and ships are a function of their very design. Ships and aircraft can best be thought of as integral platforms of weapons and systems that can be delegated in their entirety to non-national

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

commanders to carry specific tasks.<sup>19</sup> Indeed, their technological capabilities essentially define and limit their range of tasks. For navies and air forces, few command authorities need to be transferred to a multinational force commander in order to employ these forces.<sup>20</sup> Land forces, by contrast, should best be thought of as constituting combined-arms teams that need to be organized to execute a specific mission. Thus, the cross-assignment of forces (i.e., task-organization), the need oftentimes to change missions rapidly to respond to a developing situation (favorable or to protect the force), and the legitimate need for a commander to establish logistics and training priorities are some of the more sensitive reasons why national leaders are reluctant to give up control of their forces to an allied commander.

In NATO, despite the obvious importance of command authorities, these definitions and governing procedures have not received of late the proper attention they deserve. There are four official levels of command authority:

1. Operational Command,
2. Operational Control,
3. Tactical Command, and
4. Tactical Control

Significantly, the definitions of these four authorities have not been revised since the early 1980s (see Table 1).<sup>21</sup> Moreover, an examination of the four definitions (see Table 1) produces the following observations:

1. They have been written in a nuanced and legalistic manner, thereby obviating against quick and clear understanding of what they do, and do not, allow. A review of the definitions in Table 1 will establish this fact.

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

2. They can be confusing (e.g., the important distinctions between “Operational Command” and “Operational Control” are not immediately obvious). When combined with other national definitions using the same nomenclature, confusion in understanding what is, and is not allowable, is almost inevitable (see Table 2).
3. Does a definitional silence regarding a specific “authority” within a specific command authority imply "approval"? Or, is approval of an authority only allowable when it is explicitly allowed in a definition? Interpretations vary.
4. Within NATO, the delegation of command authority by a senior commander to a subordinate is proscribed, except at the lowest level (i.e., TACOM). Therefore, a NATO commander possessing OPCOM or OPCON cannot delegate the same authority to a subordinate commander without approval from higher authorities—political and/or military.
5. The authorities themselves do not cover important peacetime responsibilities appropriate for multinational formations, e.g., training objectives (i.e., tasks, conditions and standards), and logistics requirements and priorities. Indeed, during peacetime, with the exception of the I German-Netherlands Corps, multinational commanders of formations declared to NATO do not have any “command authority”, per se. Rather, what they “wield” is “Coordination Authority” which, as implied, is not a “command authority.”<sup>22</sup>
6. Arguably, current definitions were envisaged for a three-tiered command structure, within a static strategic environment, as opposed to the fluid international security system of today (see below).
7. Due to NATO’s broad definitions of command authorities, nations employ the practice of employing "caveats", thereby creating such “useful” terms as “OPCON+” or “OPCOM-“.

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

8. Command authorities, unto themselves therefore, do not reveal the true level of multinational integration. Rather, documents establishing and implementing specific bi-/multi-national formations must be assessed to ascertain the peacetime authorities of the multinational force commander over subordinate units.<sup>23</sup>

Closely related to the issue of command authorities is the question of when do forces “transfer” (transfer of authority—TOA—or “chop”) from national command structures for operational matters to a multinational land force commander? This is an important matter. The timing of a decision about when a national force is “chopped” to a multinational force commander will have a major affect upon when important issues such as training objectives and standards, logistics requirements and priorities, etc., can be “directed,” as opposed to “coordinated.” Greater clarity in NATO doctrine and procedures is needed to establish when forces should transfer to a multinational force commander, i.e., prior to, or immediately upon, arrival in the theatre of operations. Frictions between multinational force commanders and nations can be expected until such time that important issues like training and logistics priorities are addressed.

NATO found itself ill prepared following the Cold War when using these definitions and their implementing procedures in exercises and on operations. The NATO Central Region Chiefs of Army Staff (CR-CAST) in the early 1990s became acutely aware of command authority problems for multinational force commanders, particularly during exercises. In May 1994, at the Central Region Chiefs of Army Staff Talks 1/94, General M. J. Wilmink, RNLA, Commander LANDCENT, related a recent exercise experience. He directed a subordinate force to reallocate forces to another national force to react to the battlefield situation. The time required for the subordinate commander to gain approval from his national authorities nearly

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

cost Commander LANDCENT the battle. Experiences of Commander ACE Rapid Reaction Corps (ARRC) similarly highlighted limitations of his authority to direct and task organize his forces to maintain control of his operational situation. Simply put, the two commanders did not possess the necessary command authorities to direct and organize subordinate national forces to accomplish their missions and react to changing circumstances.<sup>24</sup> This experience in exercises presaged Commander ARRC's difficulties during the force deployment to Bosnia-Herzegovina as part of IFOR in 1995/96.<sup>25</sup>

As a result, the CR-CAST organized a special working group to ascertain a methodology ascertaining which command authorities a multinational force commander required. The resulting methodology based its key assumptions upon the need for any determination of command authority to be based upon the assigned mission given to the multinational command and an examination of the ensuing mission-essential tasks (stated and implied) therein. The conclusions reached by the working group included five critical findings:

- 1) An assessment of Article 5 and non-Article 5 missions (and mission-essential tasks), the Alliance's new force structure, and the Alliance's New Strategic Concept [1991] indicates that a multinational force commander has a clear requirement for OPCON for five of the six non-Article 5 missions, and OPCOM for peace enforcement and Article 5 missions.
- 2) While there are no legal or constitutional proscriptions in any of the Central Region countries to prevent granting OPCOM to a multinational force commander, political sensitivities may preclude such a decision.
- 3) The use of the standing integrated command structure in non-Article 5 missions may well encourage participating states to grant OPCOM to a multinational force commander. In employing the standing integrated command structure, every nation has the ability to influence decisions at the NAC/DPC [North Atlantic Council/Defence Planning Committee]. Using the command structure, therefore, should provide added reassurance to countries in granting OPCOM to a multinational force commander.
- 4) National rules of engagement (ROE) must be harmonized and made compatible with those of multinational force commanders, prior to transfer of authority (TOA).

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

- 5) Significant differences in doctrine and terminology exist in NATO and leading allied forces regarding peace support operations. Such differences could inhibit the successful execution of a NATO non-Article 5 operation.<sup>26</sup>

Employing the CR-CAST methodology resulted in the following recommendations to guide the selection of command authorities for a multinational corps commander:

- 1) Article 5 collective defense: operational command (OPCOM)
- 2) Non-Article 5 peace-support operations:
  - (a) Peace enforcement: OPCOM
  - (b) Conflict prevention: operational control (OPCON)
  - (c) Peacemaking: OPCON
  - (d) Peacekeeping: OPCON
  - (e) Humanitarian aid: OPCON
  - (f) Peace building: OPCON

The requirement for a higher command authority (OPCOM) in collective defense and peace enforcement was based on the need for the commander to carry out combat operations (the most difficult and demanding) and for the commander to be capable of being able to react quickly to protect the force. Under current NATO procedures, OPCOM cannot be delegated by a Strategic Commander (he can only delegate OPCON), without prior political approval by the contributing nation.<sup>27</sup>

The subsequent deployment by NATO of forces to the Bosnia-Herzegovina (Peace Implementation Force--IFOR and the NATO Stabilization Force--SFOR) and Kosovo (NATO Force in Kosovo--KFOR) demonstrated severe weaknesses in the use of NATO command authority definitions and the practice in which they have been employed.<sup>28</sup> It should come as no surprise that in the aftermath of OPERATION ALLIED FORCE General Nauman stated:

...I think one has to make sure that a NATO Commander is given the maximum unity of command and the right to really see it through. Nations, I think, have to think through—I should put as cautiously as I can—they should prepare to think through to which degree they are really willing to transfer authority to NATO. At the moment the formulas which we have definitely allow for improvements under difficult considerations, as we had.<sup>29</sup>

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

In light of these recent operational experiences in NATO, three major problems with command definitions and procedures are apparent: 1) multinationality, 2) new missions, and 3) command authorities at variance with levels of command.

1. Deeper multinationality. During the Cold War, multinationality of land forces was almost exclusively effected at the national corps level; the exception being Corps LANDJUT (now renamed, Multinational Corps Northeast and located in Stettin, Poland). Since then, in an effort to protect force structure and maintain expertise at higher levels of command, there now exists multinational land formations declared to the Alliance down to the level of multinational corps and even divisions. And, as demonstrated in Table 3, there is no NATO policy, let alone a common approach, to establishing command authority requirements at specific levels of command. Moreover, there has been no concerted effort amongst all nations to ascertain if existing definitions match the mission requirements of multinational force commanders. To be sure, issues related to administrative matters, or as referred to in NATO as "Full Command" (i.e., the power to "enforce") are, and will always remain, within the purview of a sovereign state. Yet, no one would seriously challenge a national corps or division commander's professional responsibility to meet the training and readiness standards established by his higher authorities. Current command arrangements or practices in NATO hinder the achievement of these goals.
2. New missions. The mission spectrum for many forces declared to NATO has increased dramatically since the end of the Cold War. Indeed, one can make the case that Reaction Forces for undertaking non-Article 5, peace support operations, are now the dominant mission of most forces declared to the Alliance, as opposed to meeting less immediate

collective self-defense missions by using Main Defence forces.<sup>30</sup> These new missions have two important characteristics. First, they almost exclusively tend to be executed within a multinational formation. Second, whilst the missions and mission-essential tasks are not as demanding as collect-self defense missions, they are still demanding in the context of civil-military relations. Whereas in the event of “failure” in a peace-support operation, there is little, if any, fall-out for national vital interests, the implications for domestic politics can be considerable. Thus, nations have found the ambiguity afforded by nuanced command authority definitions advantageous since it allows for appearance of “multinationality”, without actually giving up authority to allow the commander to carryout the tasks he has been assigned.<sup>31</sup>

3. Blurring of command levels. Probably one of the least recognized problems in the Alliance has been caused by the reorganization of the integrated command structure,<sup>32</sup> without accompanying review and reform of command authorities. The reform of the integrated command structure and the introduction, but as yet full acceptance of, the Combined Joint Task Force concept,<sup>33</sup> have not resulted in a review of the number of command authorities and their definition in order to ascertain if they are supportive of these new structures. In other words, one would think that there would not be more command levels than authorities, otherwise the question could be raised: “what is the value-added of all of these levels of command they exceed the number of extant authorities?”

In the U.S. system of command authorities as established by Title 10, U.S. Code, Armed Forces, and implemented by Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF),<sup>34</sup> for example,

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

there are three distinct levels of command that are supported by three different levels of command authority:

Combatant Commanders-in-Chief possess:	combatant command
Component Commanders possess:	operational control
Service Commanders possess:	tactical control

During the Cold War, NATO developed command authorities that fit neatly into a similar construct:

Supreme Allied Commanders possessed:	OPCOM
Major Subordinate Commanders possessed:	OPCON (+/-)
Sub-Ordinate Commanders possessed:	TACON (+/-)
National corps commanders possessed:	National (“Full”) command

Since the end of the Cold War, the integrated military command structure of NATO has been reorganized, largely guided by political considerations.<sup>35</sup> As a result, the Alliance currently finds itself in a situation in which levels of command and span of control over subordinated units, do not match command authorities:

Strategic Commanders possess:	OPCOM
Regional Commanders possess:	OPCOM/OPCON (+/-)?
JSRC*/Component Commanders possess:	OPCOM/OPCON(+/-)?
Multinational commanders possess:	OPCON/TACON?
National commanders possess:	National “Full” command

\* Joint Sub-Regional Commander (formerly Principal Sub-ordinate Commander)

As the CR-CAST working group on command authorities determined in 1994/5, command authorities for a multinational force commander ought to be determined in a bottom-up fashion where the mission of the commander should be the starting point for determining which authorities are appropriate. Using this methodology one finds that for many missions, if a multinational force commander at the fourth level of command possesses OPCOM or OPCON, what military value can possibly accrue to him needing to

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

“report” through numerous “superior” commander, who possess the same authorities, to a Strategic Commander, and eventually, to the North Atlantic Council?

### Political realities and procedural options

Thus, the case would appear strong that command in NATO at present is far from having been reformed to bring it into line with the operating realities of the emerging strategic environment. That NATO, touted by many, as being history’s most successful alliance, has been unable to address this important problem to date, obviously presages similar challenges to coalitions and future alliances. To be sure, one would be imprudent to assume that nations are willing to “give up” their forces to a foreign commander for their operational employment without mechanisms and procedures to ensure that national interests are not infringed upon, nor the forces misemployed. And, indeed, recent experience in peace-support operations in Europe and the International Force in East Timor (INTERFET) demonstrate that national political leadership have been quick to seize the advantages provided by modern digital communications that now allows them to oversee and even direct tactical operations during operations.

Two issues require analysis if the problem of alliance command can be solved. First, political decision-making is unlikely to change significantly in future. Naturally, technology can provide modern political leaders with elaborate and sophisticated decision-support technologies. Decisions, however, will remain a human endeavor and responsibility. Second, assuming the digital communications continue to evolve and improve, it would appear to be safe to assume that the fidelity in communications between the operational/tactical commander and national political leaders will become more refined and instantaneous. If the ability of commanders to improve operational speed of maneuver continues, future tensions loom large in that critical and delicate area of civil-military relations: the transformation of guidance issued by political leaders

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

into military directives by senior military officials. Take this envisaged situation and overlay the complications that come with an alliance/coalition (with differing national command lines and procedures) and the immediacy of finding potential solutions takes on even greater contemporary importance.

To summarize the different requirements of political and military leadership the following generations can be gleaned:

- 1) What politicians need:
  - (a) Clear control (and accountability) over the authorities they grant to a coalition commander.
  - (b) The ability quickly to change authorities to reflect:
    - (i) Altered political commitment
    - (ii) New political direction
    - (iii) Take advantage of favorable operational situations
- 2) What military officials and commanders desire:
  - (a) Clear guidance of how they can employ coalition/allied forces.
  - (b) The ability quickly to request changes in authorities based upon established clear procedures that have been developed, tested and validated in simulations and exercises, vice having to rely upon ambiguous definitions to meet favorable operational opportunities or defend the force.
  - (c) The ability to realize advantages of great operational speed resulting from the RMA.

The basis determining command authorities should follow the key recommendation of the CR-CAST working group study, that is, basing command authority requirements upon the given mission. Should command authorities in a particular operation fall short of those needed, this should be the result of a clear political decision, as opposed to the result of the application of an ambiguous and/or nuanced interpretation of flawed procedures. Moreover, given the recent ample evidence that presages difficulty in effecting successfully future multinational land

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

operations, any reform of the current system of definitions and procedures should err on the side of addressing singular requirements of land forces. In this respect, the necessity of multinational land commanders to be able to (re)assign missions and task-organize subordinate formations needs to be addressed. Admittedly, these are politically sensitive issues given that they affect the very constitution and employment of armies. However, without acknowledging the peculiar nature of multinational land forces, any reform effort is likely to be less than optimal.

Apropos the actual reform of “command authorities” important consideration should be given to the proposition that “terms”, e.g., “operational control,” etc., have proven themselves less than useful in conveying quickly the intent of superior authorities. For example, in the current U.S. defense lexicon there are four quite distinct definitions of operational control (OPCON):

- (a) UNAAF definition, as derived from Title 10, U.S. Code, Armed Forces.<sup>36</sup>
- (b) NATO<sup>37</sup>
- (c) PDD-25 that established the Clinton administrations policy toward U.S. participation in peace-support operations. The definition of operational control employed in the document is more similar to the UNAAF definition of TACON, than that of OPCON.<sup>38</sup>
- (d) U.S. Korean Combined Command.

The United States is not alone in operating in definitional confusion and ambiguity concerning command authorities. On a number of occasions, the current writer has been informed by French defense and military officials that “commandement operationelle” (OPCOM) in French military usage is (essentially) defined as Full or National Command, as opposed to its use in NATO where in it is subordinate to Full or National Command.

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

Indeed, one can question the utility of the use of terms for such a widely varied and complicated issue as command. In other words, one could ponder whether the introduction of (yet) another definition of “OPCON” will do more harm than improve matters. In fact, the simple use of terms such as “command” in a command authority could be counter-productive. After all, operational command implies, to the uninitiated, authorities that all but constitute sovereign responsibilities, and even sounds all too similar to Full Command. The point being made here is that “language” as manifested in the form of a small number of nuanced formal definitions, is not the best means of conveying precise political guidance to military authorities. In other words, given the nature of multinational operations, particularly those involving land forces, the authorities as contained in current definitions are not only not useful, but dangerously so. The fact that nations resort to adding ad hoc caveats when granting authorities manifests their unwieldy nature.

A solution to the issue of terms and definitions is to approach command authorities in the same manner as nations address the employment of force, i.e., rules of engagement (ROE). To be sure, ROE and command authorities are not the same. One addresses the employment of force and what can and cannot be targeted, whilst the other addresses how forces are employed. However, they do share an important similarity in that they are the vehicles to translate political guidance into military force. The advantage of approaching the delegation of command authorities in the same manner as ROE is that ROE are structured in such a way that there is no doubt in anyone’s mind whether an action is allowable or not. For example, during the second phase of the CR-CAST working group mentioned above, the group was directed to develop land ROE suitable for a NATO multinational force commander. (It is noteworthy that this was the

first effort to develop ROE specifically for a NATO multinational force commander at the army corps level.) The following text is taken from that document:

**10.24. USE OF LETHAL FORCE AGAINST FORCES DESIGNATED HOSTILE FORCES OR THOSE COMMITTING HOSTILE ACTS AND EVIDENCING HOSTILE INTENT:**

Purpose. To authorize the use of lethal force against forces designated hostile, those which commit a hostile act or which evidence hostile intent.

Lethal force is not authorized.

Designated [ ] forces are not declared hostile but are to be engaged when committing hostile acts or evidencing hostile intent against NATO forces:

- a. Use [ ] force(s) only.
- b. Use all necessary means available.

Designated [ ] forces are not declared hostile but are to be engaged when committing hostile acts or evidencing hostile intent against non-NATO forces within [(distance)] of NATO forces.

Designated [ ] factions are not declared hostile but use of lethal force to separate or control factions is authorized under the following conditions:

- a. Use [ ] force(s) only.
- b. Use all necessary means available.

Designated [ ] forces are declared hostile.

- a. Use [ ] force only.
- b. Use all necessary means available.<sup>39</sup>

This section illustrates the point that both a commander and senior political leadership can be in no doubt as to what is intended and what can be done. Applying this simple methodology to command authorities, the following list could be developed.

Command authorities:

- a. Assignment of missions [is] [is not] authorized.

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

- b. Reassignment of missions [is] [is not] authorized.
- c. Task-organization of subordinated forces [is] [is not] authorized.
- d. Task-organization of subordinated forces is authorized of subordinated units [one], [two], [three] echelons below the highest level of national command.
- e. Delegation of invested command authorities [are] [are not] authorized.
- f. Delegation of invested command authorities are authorized [one], [two], [three] echelons below first subordinated commander.
- g. Assignment of logistics priorities [is] [is not] authorized.

Such a method and system of discerning and representing the specific authorities allocated to a multinational force commander would have advantages for both politicians (who crave ambiguity) and the military (who seek certitude). To use the criteria cited above, such a system would give politicians:

- 1) Certainly of clear control of their armed forces.
- 2) An improved ability to change specific authorities in the event of an altered (positive or negative) political commitment and/or direction of policy.

The multinational force commander and national component commanders likely would benefit from such a system in that they would have:

- 1) Clear guidance of how they can employ subordinated coalition/allied forces.
- 2) The ability to request quickly changes in authorities to take advantage of operational opportunities/defend the force, based upon established clear procedures that had been developed, tested and validated in simulations and exercises, vice having to rely upon ambiguous definitions (viz., “OPCON-“) to meet operational requirements.
- 3) The ability to realize advantages of great operational speed resulting from the RMA.

An important caveat needs to be stressed concerning this proposed concept reforming the structure, organization and procedures for delegating and changing command authorities. This is, as yet, only a concept. While it is the result of a number of years of observing the command of coalition operations, contemplation and extensive discussions with past and present

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

multinational force commanders, it has yet to be formally developed, evaluated, and importantly, validated. Apropos the last point, one would expect that extensive politico-military seminars, command-post exercises, computer-assisted simulations, and perhaps even and a small part of planned field-exercises, should be conducted before proposing such a radical reform of command authorities to national authorities. Some resistance on the part of the maritime and air services in allied countries might also be expected given that they do not suffer the same debilitations in operations when operating in coalitions as do armies. And, to be sure, one would expect that such reforms certainly would need to be seen as supporting, if not ameliorating, joint (in addition to combined) operations if it is to be successful. Clearly, therefore, much preparation, both substantive and bureaucratic, is required if this problem is to be overcome.

A final point needs to be mentioned. The ABCA Armies Standardization Program has been in existence for over 50 years and includes the armies of America, Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand. Historically, it has provided a forum for the five armies to discuss areas of mutual interest and to work to effect interoperability. Presently, one of this program's principal areas of emphasis has been to improve combined coalition operations. For example, the program recently published a very useful coalition operations<sup>40</sup> and logistics planning guides.<sup>41</sup> At the 11th Washington Standardization Officers/Standing Chairmen's Meeting, 4<sup>th</sup> November 1999, the current author raised these issues in the form a briefing. The thesis of the briefing was that NATO had been, to date, incapable of coming to terms with the issue of developing appropriate command authorities for multinational force commanders. In consequence, the ABCA Armies were challenged to take the lead in developing a new methodology, similar to the one suggested above. The ABCA Armies has accepted this

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

challenge and are currently working on developing such a new approach and format for command authorities.

### Conclusion

The jury is out, and is likely to remain so for some time, on the issue of whether the world, and the United States in particular, is in the midst of a revolution in military affairs. What is clear is that if nothing else, global and instantaneous communications are likely to continue to improve, thereby compressing, levels of command. If greater operational speed is realized as well through the introduction of new technologies than one can foresee serious civil-military challenges in the years ahead. These challenges will be most acutely felt in alliances and coalitions. In these cases, the added complexity of supra-national political oversight will complicate the direction and conduct of multinational operations, particularly those employing land forces. The Western world and particularly the Anglo-Saxon democracies rarely fight wars or carryout peace-support operations unilaterally. Therefore, it is incumbent that initiatives to reform of existing command authorities begin with a strong degree of urgency.

There is, as yet, no firm policy or apparent formal understanding amongst the Western Alliance of which authorities a multinational force commander requires. Even the superb ABCA Armies Coalition Operations Handbook fails to address this issue effectively. The work observes that nations normally will assign OPCON to a multinational force commander.<sup>42</sup> What is left unsaid is “which” OPCON is “normally” assigned, let alone what happens, or should happen, when this is insufficient. That the ABCA armies, who enjoy a long history of enjoying a high degree of interoperability, fail to have an effective policy for recommending appropriate command authorities required by a multinational force commander, demonstrates the need for greater attention to this issue.

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

Indeed, given the failure of NATO as a whole to address this problem to date, it would appear that the ABCA Armies have an important role to play in leading the way to find a solution to this problem. Whether the development of an ROE-type command authorities format is the most appropriate or effective means of enabling a better means of transmitting national level policy guidance into military guidance remains to be seen. By this, an intensive program of development, assessment and validation is required before recommendations for change should be proposed. However, whatever transpires either in the ABCA Armies program or NATO, let there be little doubt that without reform, the Western Alliance runs the risk of military reversals and shedding bloody needlessly in a future coalition operation using existing command authorities and procedures. Heretofore, peace-support operations commanded by NATO in the Balkans Australia in East Timor have yet to be seriously tested with intense violence over a long period of time by a determined opponent. It is a brave individual who will predict that this good string of luck will continue.

Table 1.  
Definition of NATO/ABCA Command Authorities

Operational Command:

The authority granted to a commander to assign missions or tasks to subordinate commanders, to deploy units, to reassign forces, and to retain or delegate operational and/or tactical control as may be deemed necessary. It does not of itself include responsibility for administration or logistics. May also be used to denote the forces assigned to a commander. 01/08/74

Operational Control:

The authority delegated to a commander to direct forces assigned so that the commander may accomplish specific missions or tasks which are usually limited by function, time, or location; to deploy units concerned, and to retain or assign tactical control to those units. It does not include authority to assign separate employment of components of the units concerned. Neither does it, of itself, include administrative or logistic control. 01/06/84

Tactical Command:

The authority delegated to a commander to assign tasks to forces under his command for the accomplishment of the mission assigned by higher authority. 01/09/74

Tactical Control:

The detailed and, usually, local direction and control of movements or maneuvers necessary to accomplish missions or tasks assigned. 01/11/80

Coordinating Authority (N.B: Not a command authority):

The authority granted to a commander or individual assigned responsibility for coordinating specific functions or activities involving forces of two or more countries or commands, or two or more services or two or more forces of the same service. He has the authority to require consultation between the agencies involved or their representatives, but does not have the authority to compel agreement. In case of disagreement between the agencies involved, he should attempt to obtain essential agreement by discussion. In the event he is unable to obtain essential agreement he shall refer the matter to the appropriate authority. 01/07/85

Integrated Directing and Control Authority (Employed only by CG 1 GE/NE Corps):

This authority provides the Commander with powers that are identical or similar to those vested in a commander of a national corps or with powers that are altogether new. Sovereign national rights (in the narrowest sense) are excepted. The CG has the right to give instructions to all subordinate military and civilian personnel and may issue directives to the bi-national and national elements of the Corps and set priorities.

Source: MC 57/3, Overall Organisation of the Integrated NATO Forces; and, AAP-6(U), NATO Glossary of Terms and Definitions (English and French), January 1995; 1 (GE/NL Corps), Sankt Augustin: CPM Communications Presse Marketing GmbH, 1999, pp. 8-9.

RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

Table 2.  
Comparison of NATO and U.S. Command Authority Definitions  
Most control<----->Least control

AUTHORITY	OPCOM	OPCON	TACOM	TACON
<b>GRANTED TO A COMMANDER</b>	NATO			
<b>REASSIGN OPCOM (i.e., RETURN IT)</b>	NATO			
<b>RETAIN OPCOM</b>	NATO	U.S.		
<b>DELEGATE OPCON</b>	NATO	NATO w/aprvl/U.S.		
<b>DELEGATE TO A COMMANDER SUPERIOR TO TACOM</b>		NATO	NATO	
<b>ASSIGN TACOM</b>		NATO		
<b>RETAIN TACON</b>	NATO	NATO /U.S.		NATO/ U.S.
<b>DELEGATE TACON</b>	NATO	NATO		
<b>ASSIGN MISSION</b>	NATO			
<b>ASSIGN TASKS</b>	NATO	U.S.	NATO	
<b>DIRECT FORCES (GIVE ORDERS)</b>		NATO /U.S.		
<b>REASSIGN FORCES</b>	NATO			
<b>DEPLOY FORCES</b>	NATO	NATO		NATO/ U.S.
<b>LOCAL DIRECTION &amp; CONTROL OF MOVEMENTS &amp; MANEUVER</b>		U.S.		NATO /U.S.
<b>EMPLOY UNIT COMPONENTS SEPARATELY</b>		NATO-NO U.S.-YES		
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE COMMAND</b>	NATO- NO			
<b>DAY-TO-DAY DIRECTION</b>	NATO- NO	NATO /U.S.		NATO/ U.S.
<b>ADMINISTRATIVE CONTROL</b>		NATO-NO		
<b>LOGISTICS SUPPORT/COMMAND</b>	NATO- NO			
<b>LOGISTICS CONTROL</b>		NATO-NO		

N.B.: "full command", or the authority to enforce. (NATO only: no NATO commander has full command over forces assigned to him because nations assign only OPCOM or OPCON.

Key:

1. "NATO" - specifically permitted in a NATO publication
2. "NATO-No" - specifically prohibited in a NATO publication
3. "U.S." - authorized in u.s. doctrine
4. Blank - not mentioned in any NATO publication

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

Table 3.  
Command Authorities of NATO and European  
Bi-/Multi-national Formations

<u>Bi-/multinational corps declared to NATO:</u>	
1. Corps LANDJUT/"Multinational Corps Northeast"	OPCON/OPCOM* (in wartime)
2. I German/Netherlands Corps+	OPCON (in peacetime)# OPCOM (when employed)
3. V U.S./German Corps	OPCON (in wartime)
4. II German/U.S. Corps	OPCON (in wartime)
5. ACE Rapid Reaction Corps (a) National Divisions (b) Multinational Division (Central)+	OPCON (in wartime) OPCOM>^
<u>Bi-/multinational divisions declared to the ARRC:</u>	
6. 1 <sup>st</sup> United Kingdom Armoured Division (a) Danish International Mechanized Brigade (b) 4 <sup>th</sup> Czech <u>Brigáda rychlého Nasazení</u> (4th Rapid Reaction Brigade)	OPCON (in wartime) Coordinating Authority (in peacetime) OPCON <sup>Σ</sup>
7. 3 <sup>rd</sup> United Kingdom Division Italian <u>Ariete</u> Mechanized Brigade	OPCON (in wartime) Coordinating Authority (in peacetime)
8. 3 <sup>rd</sup> Italian Division Portuguese Independent Airborne Brigade	OPCON (in wartime) Coordinating Authority (in peacetime)
9. 7 <sup>th</sup> German Panzer Division 10 <sup>th</sup> Polish <u>Brygada Kawalerii Panczernej</u> (10th Armoured Cavalry Brigade)	OPCON <sup>Σ</sup>
10. 1 <sup>st</sup> US Armoured Division 25 <sup>th</sup> Hungarian <u>Klapka György Gépesített Lövész dandá</u> (25 <sup>th</sup> Mechanized Infantry Brigade)	OPCON <sup>Σ</sup>

## RMA and Coalition Operations: Problem Areas and Solutions

### European formations:

- |   |                       |
|---|-----------------------|
| 11. European Corps (EUROCORPS)+                 | OPCOM (when deployed) |
| 12. European Rapid Operational Force (EUROFOR)+ | OPCON (when deployed) |

\* By agreement, Commander Corps LANDJUT has OPCON of forces under his command. However, in exercises, it has been the tradition for 30 years for Commander Corps LANDJUT to exercise OPCOM.

+ "Force Answerable to the Western European Union (FAWEU)."

# The Corps Commander also now has "Integrated Directing and Control Authority." This authority provides the Commander with powers that are identical or similar to those vested in a commander of a national corps or with powers that are altogether new. Note that sovereign rights (in the narrowest sense) are excepted. That said, the Corps Commander has the right to give instructions to all subordinate military and civilian personnel and may issue directives to the binational and national elements of the Corps and set priorities.

> Multinational Division (Central) headquarters is OPCOM to Commander ARRC in peacetime.

^ Assigned brigades are under OPCON to Commander ARRC in peacetime.

Σ The command authorities for these formations have yet to be fully confirmed via the NATO force generation process.

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Notes

<sup>1</sup> For one who envisages such exponential increases in operational speed see, for example, Robert H. Scales, Jr, “Cycles of War: Speed of Maneuver will be the Essential Ingredient of an Information-Age Army,” Armed Forces Journal International, Volume 134, July 1997, p. 38.

<sup>2</sup> For example see, Arthur K Cebrowski and John J. Garstka, “Network-Centric Warfare: Its Origins and Future,” USNI Proceedings, January 1998, 29-35.

<sup>3</sup> See Peter Dunn, 'Time X Technology X Tactics= RMA', Australian Defence Force Journal, No. 116, January-February, 1996.

<sup>4</sup> This was apparently the conclusion of some important military thinkers in Russia. See Mary C. Fitzgerald, “The Impact of the MTR on Russian Military Affairs,” Volumes 1 and 2, Washington, DC: Hudson Institute, 1993; and, idem, “Russia’s New Military Doctrine,” RUSI Journal, October 1997, pp. 40-48.

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, John A. Tirpak, "Lessons learned and re-learned," Air Force Magazine, August 1999, p. 23. For a more balanced examination of the capabilities and limitation of air power as seen in ALLIED FORCE see Earl J. Tilford, “Operation Allied Force and the Role of Air Power,” Parameters, Volume 29, Winter 1999-2000, pp. 24-28.

<sup>6</sup> The origins of RMA force development planning principles, so to speak, were first established in Joint Vision 2010 and reiterated in Joint Vision 2020. See Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Vision 2010, Washington, DC, 1996; Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Joint Vision 2020, Washington, DC, 2000. These assumptions or principles are accepted in an official defense-planning document (QDR) that now establishes “Defense Policy”, as well as in an official review/critique of said review. William S. Cohen, Report of the Quadrennial Defense Review, Washington, DC: Department of Defense, May 1997; and, National Defense Panel, Transforming Defense: National Security in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, Arlington, VA; December 1997.

<sup>7</sup> See Steven Metz, “The Effects of Technological Asymmetry on Coalition Operations,” in Problems and Solutions in Future Coalition Operations, ed. by Thomas Marshall, et al., Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1997, pp. 55-60.

<sup>8</sup> For a journalist account of the political discussions and debates that took place amongst the NATO allies during ALLIED FORCE see the series of articles by Dana Priest in The Washington Post, 19, 20, 21 September 1999.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Note that the then Chairman of the North Atlantic Military Committee, General Klaus Naumann, stated in testimony before U.S. Congress and the British House of Commons that in his view the political authorities of NATO countries did not “embark on micromanagement of military operations.” Statement of General (ret) Klaus Naumann, GE AR, former Chairman, NATO Military Committee, before the Senate Armed Services Committee “Hearing on Kosovo After-Action Review”, Washington, DC, 3 November 1999. This is reiterated in his British testimony. See House of Commons, Select Committee on Defence, Minutes of Evidence, Session 1999-2000, 7 June 2000, Answer to Question 1016.

<sup>11</sup> Discussions with officials from Headquarters Australian Theatre.

<sup>12</sup> It is noteworthy that General Klaus Nauman in his testimony both to the committees of the U.S. Senate and the House of Commons stated that what was needed in NATO was an improvement in unity of command in the case of parallel command structures, i.e., the NATO

integrated command structure and the U.S. European Command, both commanded by a U.S. four-star general officer.

<sup>13</sup> A recent, and little known example of such national jealousy of sovereignty was the “dressing down” given to General Wesley Clark, then U.S. CINCEUR and NATO Strategic Commander Europe for having allowed U.S. forces in Kosovo to deploy outside of their region of responsibility to assist allied forces in a search for weapons in Mitrovica. I choose to call this a “dressing down” since the communication between Clark and the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, normally classified, was “released” by a DoD spokesman. See The Washington Post, 1 March 2000.

<sup>14</sup> The Italian government’s public questioning of the continuation of the air war early in the conflict and Greek opposition to participating in ALLIED FORCE being two good cases in point.

<sup>15</sup> General Klaus Naumann makes this point quite clear in his testimony before the Defence Committee. See Minutes of Evidence, Answer to Question 990 in particular.

<sup>16</sup> The present author tends to agree with the conclusions of O’Hanlon that many of the premises and conclusions of RMA advocates are overstated. See Michael O’Hanlon, Technological Change and the Future of Warfare, Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution, 2000

<sup>17</sup> An excellent example of a strong suspicious attitude toward allowing national troops to answer to allied commanders is the case of France. Apparently, General De Gaulle opposed the participation of the French military in NATO’s integrated command structure on the grounds that he did not want French officers to have any sense of divided loyalty. See Michael Harrison, The Reluctant Ally: France and the Atlantic Security, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1981, pp. 118-134.

<sup>18</sup> See "Foreword by General Helge Hansen, Outgoing Commander-in-Chief Allied Forces Central Europe," Command in NATO after the Cold War: Alliance, National, and Multinational Considerations, ed. by Thomas-Durell Young, Carlisle Barracks, PA: Strategic Studies Institute, 1997, p. ix.

<sup>19</sup> See Roger H. Palin, “Multinational Military Forces: Problems and Prospects,” Adelphi Paper No. 294, London: The International Institute for Strategic Studies, April 1995, pp. 52-54.

<sup>20</sup> See Robert S. Jordan, Alliance Strategy and Navies, New York: St Martin’s Press, 1990, pp. 25-28.

<sup>21</sup> MC 57/3, “Overall Organization of the Integrated NATO Forces”, NATO CONFIDENTIAL.

<sup>22</sup> Refer to the definition of Coordination Authority in Table 1.

<sup>23</sup> For greater analysis of the problem of the command authorities required by a multinational force commander, see Multinational Force Command Authorities Handbook: Proceedings of the Central Region-Chiefs of Army Staff (CR-CAST) Working Group on Command Authorities Required for a Multinational Force Commander, Carlisle Barracks, PA: U.S. Army War College, 1 September 1995; and, Jon Whitford and Thomas-Durell Young, "Multinational Command Authorities: the Need for Change in NATO," Defense Analysis, Vol. 13, No. 1, 1997, pp. 35-57.

<sup>24</sup> "Responsibilities and Authorities for Multinational Corps Commanders: A Way Ahead," Enclosure 1 to COMLANDCENT letter CR-CAST Background Information dated 27 April 1994, NATO RESTRICTED; and, "Initial Thoughts on the Command Status of Forces," Enclosure 2 to COMLANDCENT letter CR-CAST Background Information dated 27 April 1994, NATO RESTRICTED.

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<sup>25</sup> "COMARRC theoretically enjoys OPCON over all three multinational divisions (MNDs) and Corps Troops. In reality, national interference prevents COMARRC from exercising this authority as formally defined. Thus the Divisions were resourced with five, two and four manoeuvre brigades, when their AOs covered 13,000, 20,000 and 16,000 square kilometres respectively." Michael Walker, "ARRC into Action," NATO's Sixteen Nations, Vol. 41, No. 2, 1996, p. 44.

<sup>26</sup> Multinational Force Command Authorities Handbook, points 3.1. ff.

<sup>27</sup> For greater discussion of command authorities see Whitford and Young, "Command Authorities and Multinationality in NATO", pp. 55-64.

<sup>28</sup> For excellent documentation of how existing practices in NATO hampered, for example, Commander ARRC carrying out his assigned mission in IFOR in Bosnia, see "Command and Control, IFOR Operations", Final Analysis Report, Volume II, Northwood, Joint Analysis Team for IFOR Operations, March 26, 1997, NATO CONFIDENTIAL.

<sup>29</sup> General Klaus Naumann, Minutes of Testimony, Answer to Question 1029.

<sup>30</sup> This issue relates directly with the ongoing Force Structure Review in NATO. For greater details concerning this review see my essay "Multinational Land Forces and the NATO Force Structure Review" RUSI Journal, Vol. 145, No. 4, August 2000, pp. 45-52.

<sup>31</sup> See Walker, "ARRC into Action.

<sup>32</sup> Concerning the reorganization of the integrated command structure see my essay "NATO's Double Expansion and the Challenge of Reforming NATO's Military Structures", Europe in Change: Two Tiers or Two Speeds?, ed. by James Sperling, Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999, pp. 103-120.

<sup>33</sup> See Mario da Silva (Chief of Staff of the CJTF Planning Staff), "Implementing the Combined Joint Task Force concept," NATO Review, Vol. 46, No. 4, Winter 1998, pp. 16-19.

<sup>34</sup> Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF), Joint Pub 0-2, 24 February 1995, pp. III-3 through III-10.

<sup>35</sup> It is noteworthy that General Klaus Naumann has argued that the integrated command structure is not flexible and responsive enough for current missions. This is an important comment given that he was the driving force behind completing the Long-Term Study that resulted in the "reform" of the command structure. To his credit, however, without his strong commitment to see through the Long-Term Study, it is unlikely that it would have been finished and implemented. See Nauman's testimony before the Senate Armed Service Committee; and, "NATO's Double Expansion and the Challenge of Reforming NATO's Military Structures", *passim*.

<sup>36</sup> This is the same definition that appears in the Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms, Joint Pub 1-02, 24 February 1995, as amended through 14 June 2000.

<sup>37</sup> MC 57/3, Overall Organization of the Integrated NATO Forces.

<sup>38</sup> Presidential Decision Directive (PPD) 25, "The Clinton Administration's Policy on Reforming Multinational Peace Operations, 4 May 1994, p. 10.

<sup>39</sup> See Multinational Force Command Authorities Handbook, pp. 80-81.

<sup>40</sup> Coalitions Operations Handbook, Washington, DC: Primary Standardization Office, ABCA Armies, 11 May 1999.

<sup>41</sup> Coalition Logistics Planning Guide, Quadripartite Standardization Agreement 2020, Edition 1, 19 January 2000.

<sup>42</sup> Coalitions Operations Handbook, para 1-13, page 1-4.