

**Land Warfare Studies Centre**

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**FROM DESERT STORM TO EAST TIMOR:  
AUSTRALIA, THE ASIA-PACIFIC AND 'NEW AGE'  
COALITION OPERATIONS**

**by**

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**January 2000**

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## ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ABCA	American–British–Canadian–Australian Armies (Agreement)
ADF	Australian Defence Force
ASEAN	Association of South-East Asian Nations
ARF	ASEAN Regional Forum
ADF	Australian Defence Force
CDR	closer defence relationship (between Australia and New Zealand)
CSBM	confidence and security-building measures
FPDA	Five Power Defence Arrangements (Malaysia, Singapore, Australia, New Zealand, United Kingdom)
IADS	Integrated Air Defence System (in Malaysia and Singapore)
IFOR	Implementation Force (in Bosnia)
INTERFET	International Force East Timor
KFOR	Kosovo Force
MRC	Major Regional Conflict
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NZDF	New Zealand Defence Force
OOTW	Operations Other Than War
RMA	Revolution in Military Affairs
SEATO	South-East Asian Treaty Organisation
SFOR	Stabilisation Force (in Bosnia)
SWPA	South-West Pacific Area
UN	United Nations
UNOSOM	United Nations Operations in Somalia
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Authority for East Timor
US	United States
USPACOM	United States Pacific Command
ZOPFAN	Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality

## ABSTRACT

In late 1999 Australia assumed leadership of a significant regional military coalition operation in East Timor with the support of the international community. In the aftermath of the Cold War, ‘one-off’ coalition operations to enforce peace and restore stability are the most common cause of overseas deployments by any military force. Whether for low-level military support operations or warfighting, it is extremely unlikely that any legitimate military operation overseas will be unilaterally mounted by any member of the international community. In the contemporary strategic environment, it is likely that Australia will only conduct combat operations overseas as part of a coalition force.

This monograph examines the implications of the changed global and regional security paradigm for Australia. It argues that, as coalitions are the norm, the Australian Defence Force must be configured to participate in coalition operations, and that regional engagement and operational planning must proceed on that assumption. Considering the lessons of recent coalition operations from the 1990–91 Gulf War to the East Timor deployment, it is suggested that countries are more willing than ever before to contribute to military operations for reasons other than the defence of their vital interests. The broader range of political motivations that cause countries to join coalitions are in direct conflict with the fundamental principles of military operations. Selection and maintenance of the aim, economy of effort, cooperation, flexibility, administration and the American principle of unity of command are all compromised, to varying extents, in multinational operational partnerships.

Coalition operations are a particular concern for land forces. Unlike those of platform-based forces, coalition land commanders require a higher level of command authority when conducting operations that involve multinational forces than do their counterparts in the navy or air force. Modular command principles are most easily applied to the deployment of platform-based weapon systems, but *ad hoc* coalition ground forces pose a

greater challenge. Despite the temptation to utilise only stand-off weapon systems in coalition operations, the experiences of the Gulf, Kosovo and East Timor have demonstrated the need for an appropriate, conventional ground-force capability.

There is no wishing coalitions away on the grounds of operational tidiness. The broad-based, multinational operation mounted at short notice to deal with matters of common international concern reflects a 'new age' of international political morality. At the political level and all levels of command, those that participate in coalition operations need to be aware of the characteristics of these operations and the constraints that are placed on their forces' freedom of action. In particular, countries in the diverse environment of the Asia-Pacific region need to foster relationships that will allow them to work together successfully.

An awareness of the strengths as well as the weaknesses of coalition operations needs to be made the basis of strategic planning. To do this successfully, countries that expect to make contributions to multinational forces need to design their forces accordingly, produce commanders with cross-cultural skills, participate in combined training programs and develop shared doctrine.

As an Asia-Pacific country with strong supra-regional relationships, Australia is in a unique position to help create coalition forces. The role that it has accepted in East Timor provides Australia with an excellent opportunity to enhance regional relationships and develop a positive security community in the region. However, the influence that coalition members exert is a function of their military capabilities. If Australia is to sustain the position of leadership that it has assumed, it must fully absorb the lessons of recent coalition operations and increase its level of military preparedness. Most importantly, Australia must further develop its ability to sustain land operations if it expects to shape the regional security environment.



## **FROM DESERT STORM TO EAST TIMOR: AUSTRALIA, THE ASIA-PACIFIC AND ‘NEW AGE’ COALITION OPERATIONS**

*Mutual understanding is the only bed-rock upon which alliances, whether diplomatic or matrimonial, can find enduring foundations. Flatteries, cajoleries, exaggerations, insincerities are the prelude to disillusionment, if not to divorce.*

Lieutenant General Sir Ian Hamilton<sup>1</sup>

### **Introduction**

The real ‘Revolution in Military Affairs’ that is currently in progress has little to do with technology. While advances in technology have changed the way that information-age states envision future conflict, the true revolution has occurred almost unnoticed. In less than a decade, the international community has witnessed a fundamental transformation in attitudes to the legitimate use of military power by states. The emergence of an innovative and novel international political structure has forced a re-evaluation of who may employ military force and for what ends. Also in flux is the question of what ways armed force may be employed by states. Military forces are expected to provide a wider range of capabilities, at less cost, than ever before. For advanced Western countries this, as well as the expectation that conflict be waged with minimal casualties, has meant that combat capability is no longer perceived as a blunt weapon but rather as a rapier. Accordingly, countries that wish to shape the international security environment need to retain broad-spectrum, leading-edge military forces capable of cooperating with other forces at short notice. The security of the emergent multilateral, international states’ system is reliant on general concepts of legitimacy that are

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<sup>1</sup> Lieutenant General Sir Ian Hamilton, K.C.B., *A Staff Officer’s Scrap-Book during the Russo-Japanese War*, Vol. II, Edward Arnold, London, 1907, p. vi.

increasingly preserved by coalition operations. In the absence of a mandatory international government—a utopian notion at present—the international system is defined by the extent to which states are prepared to cooperate.

The subject matter of this monograph is a work-in-progress. With Australia displaying an unprecedented level of regional leadership as the lead partner in the International Force East Timor (INTERFET), military coalition-building has moved to centre stage in Australia's relations with the other countries of the Asia-Pacific. At the time of writing, the military coalition includes regional forces from Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines, Singapore and New Zealand as well as contributions from the Republic of South Korea, Portugal, Britain, France, Italy, Norway, Canada, Sweden, Brazil, Argentina, Germany, Ireland and the United States (US). A few months ago it might have been easy to dismiss such a combination as pie-in-the-sky, but the dramatically changed international situation has demonstrated the fundamental importance of achieving preparedness for participation in coalition military operations. Contradicting the nay-sayers, this disparate combination was rapidly assembled to react to an issue of significant regional concern. Across the spectrum of military operations, one point is clear—unilateral military operations are the rare exception and the future of common security lies in the ability of countries to form coalitions.

The second half of 1999 saw a dramatic change in Australia's strategic environment and outlook. Notions that Australia's defence was best provided for by the 'air-sea' gap were shown to be hollow as Australia accepted the responsibility to raise and command the first UN-mandated peace enforcement operation outside Africa to be led by a country other than the US.<sup>2</sup> Although Australia faced widespread criticism for its assertiveness in carrying out the UN mandate, it proved to be the

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<sup>2</sup> John Sanderson, 'We should embrace leadership', *The Australian*, 2 December 1999, p. 13.

only country that was willing to commit adequate forces or assume the financial burden necessary to carry out the operation. Not only were Australia's interests best served by assuming the leadership of the multinational coalition, but Australia—almost alone in the region—initiated the effort to uphold minimum international humanitarian standards in East Timor. The fact that this earned Australia the obloquy of a number of governments with poor records in human rights does not detract from the importance of the INTERFET operation. If regional countries expect to enforce peace and security in the Asia-Pacific, there will need to be more—not fewer—coalition military operations.

Discussing the implications of the East Timor operation, the Chief of the Defence Force Admiral Chris Barrie pointed out that the next Defence White Paper will need to address the lack of doctrine for coalition operations. Admiral Barrie argued that there is:

A gap in our doctrinal thinking because on one hand our doctrine looked at defence of Australia requirements, on the other hand it looked at interoperability and participation in US-led coalitions . . . I think the gap that we need to address quite quickly is: 'What does it mean to be the leader of a small coalition operation such as we have in East Timor? What sort of responsibilities does that give us if that is to become an endorsed role for the ADF?'<sup>3</sup>

The necessity for the ADF to provide military-response options that include leading a regional coalition operation will have to be incorporated into the next generation of Australian strategic thinking.

This monograph originated from research into the purely operational aspects of coalition combat operations in the Asia-Pacific region. That work will be taken up in a separate study.

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<sup>3</sup> Interview, AM Program, ABC Radio National, 8 a.m., 14 December 1999.

However, it rapidly became clear that the political dimensions of coalition formation and sustainment dictate the manner by which the armed forces of different countries collaborate for common ends. As Clausewitz pointed out, ‘politics . . . is the womb in which war develops—where its outlines already exist in their hidden rudimentary form’.<sup>4</sup> This is particularly true of coalition operations across the full range of military functions—from humanitarian relief to warfighting. Coalition operations are the usual form of military activity: almost every major conflict of the 20th century and all peacekeeping missions have involved combined forces. Despite this, military forces tend to prepare for war as if they will be acting alone, and governments often neglect political, military and diplomatic preparation for coalition efforts until they become necessary. The failure to think multilaterally is partly a matter of convenience; it is easier to forecast future military contingencies from a unilateral perspective. However, to make this unilateral approach the basis for one’s strategic outlook is completely unrealistic. No country can develop strategy purely by considering threats; of even greater significance are its international responsibilities and shared common interests with other countries.

Australia’s immediate strategic environment remains the Asia-Pacific—a region that also properly includes the major Asian states of the Indian Ocean. This environment provides Australia with a particularly intricate set of state and non-state relationships that are not necessarily encountered elsewhere. Written from an Australian perspective, this work focuses on the complex range of problems confronting the states of the Asia-Pacific in those circumstances when they are called upon to deploy combined military forces to meet a common threat or redress a common problem. As Australia breaks away from a ‘Fortress Australia’ mentality of regional isolation, Australian policy-makers need to devote more serious consideration to the country’s future role in

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<sup>4</sup> Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. and trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1989, p. 149.

the region as well as the potential contribution that Asia-Pacific cooperation can make to global security.

In a multipolar international community, strategic and security planning needs to proceed from a consideration of the complex set of variables that bind states' vital interests together. Common security measures and military operational planning require an enhanced understanding of the potential and limitations of coalition activities. It is also necessary to transcend cultural prejudices to establish the grounds on which different forces can collaborate. In a culturally and politically diverse region such as the Asia-Pacific, Australia and New Zealand have often been perceived as anomalies. The opportunity represented by the transitional nature of regional and global political arrangements offers strategic planners an unprecedented chance to influence the regional security environment positively.

However, the creation of realistic security relationships will only proceed from a pragmatic, 'nuts and bolts' approach to regional cooperation. To create trust between states at the regional and global level, like-minded countries need to understand how their air, sea and land forces might cooperate as well as how jointly those forces can promote peace and stability. In a still uncertain world that requires countries such as Australia to continue to maintain preparedness for operations including warfighting, a clear appreciation of the nature of coalition operations is an essential element in defence planning.

### **Australia and the need for coalitions in a multipolar global community**

Although the US emerged from the Cold War as the only superpower, the great power ascendancy in the use of force that characterised bipolar bloc politics is gone. The international community is comprised of sovereign states of varying levels of political maturity, including 185 members of the United Nations. The global political community also includes a heterogeneous

collection of non-state actors such as multinational corporations, supra-state bodies and ethno-national groupings without statehood. Never before have there been so many players on the board of international politics—a board that is rapidly shrinking as globalisation draws human affairs closer together. In this environment, the unilateral use of force by states verges on the unthinkable. For the first time it is possible to think of a single world political system, comprised of individual states to be sure, but each constrained by the reality of their relations with each other and by ever-strengthening standards of normative behaviour.

The emergence of a new global security paradigm in the post-Cold War World is of particular significance to middle-level powers such as Australia. Where a superpower or a great power is able to exercise disproportionate influence because of its military power, lesser states need to act in combination with other states to exert some control over events. As the global community continues to expand to include more states, yet contracts in terms of their interconnectedness, attitudes to strategic geography need to change as well. Countries are finding that, not only are their vital interests and their international responsibilities restricted to their own regions, but their forces may have to be deployed to some distant theatre to participate in operations to provide for collective security or humanitarian intervention. Australia's commitments to Somalia, Rwanda and the various Gulf operations demonstrate the need for preparedness to conduct extra-regional expeditionary operations. However, as the significance of ideologically based bloc politics has waned, countries are more likely to have to work alongside regional partners to promote conditions of common security. As recent events in East Timor have shown, seemingly paradoxically, far from reaping a 'peace dividend' from the end of nuclear stalemate, countries such as Australia need to invest more in their military capabilities if they are to enhance their own security.

Perhaps the greatest change in the post–Cold War world order is the long-overdue abandonment of the principle of nonintervention in the internal affairs of sovereign states. The notion of indefeasible state sovereignty has long been used as a shield by regimes incapable of defending their actions in any other way. The removal of Cold War blinkers has resulted in the belated recognition of other, equally dangerous threats to global peace and stability.<sup>5</sup> The proliferation of rogue states, anarchic former states, illegitimate governments and supra-state terrorist organisations increasingly demands external intervention.

However, to be legitimate, intervention requires a broad-based, coherent and unified proportional response by a group of states—and the more heterogeneous the coalition, the more acceptable its actions will be. Without a central authority, international law relies on the observance of common norms and the willingness of states to enforce those normative rules of state behaviour. The enforcement of public international mores requires legitimate states to commit appropriate forces to coalition efforts and to ensure that the conduct of operations are proportionate to the threat, effective, and abide by standing rules of armed conflict. Although, as Michael Walzer points out, the motives of a coalition are not necessarily more morally ‘pure’ than that of a

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<sup>5</sup> The literature proposing a new approach to intervention and the concept of indefeasible state sovereignty is extensive; however, Operation Allied Force in Kosovo has added a new dimension to the debate—the question of ‘humanitarian war’. The classic consideration of the issue remains Michael Walzer’s *Just and Unjust Wars: A Moral Argument with Historical Illustrations*, 2nd edn, Basic Books, 1999, pp. 98–108, see also Michael J. Glennon, ‘The New Interventionism: The search for a Just International Law’, *Foreign Affairs*, vol. 78, no. 3, May/June 1999, pp. 2–7; Catherine Guicherd, ‘International Law and the War in Kosovo’, *Survival*, vol. 41, no. 2, Summer 1999, pp. 19–34; for a cautionary discussion of the issues see Frank Ching, ‘Sovereignty vs. Human Rights’, *Far Eastern Economic Review*, 22 July 1999, p. 33.

state acting unilaterally, a multilateral response is politically the most likely to gain the support of the international community.<sup>6</sup>

Accordingly, a state that wishes to deploy forces to defend some national interest, or even for disinterested humanitarian reasons, must enlist the active support of other countries. If undertaking operations outside its territory but within its region, at the very least the state requires the consent of its neighbours. The formation of the INTERFET coalition demonstrates that the commitment of military forces to a common cause has political implications that exceed purely operational requirements. As a fairly typical *ad hoc* peace enforcement operation, INTERFET was not ‘designed’ for its mission. Rather, to meet the requirements of the UN mandate, the commander Major General Cosgrove has had to employ the forces that the contributing countries provided. As will be demonstrated, in the ‘real world’ of coalition peace operations, political leaders and military commanders have to operate in a more complex political environment than could ever be the case while prosecuting unilateral military operations.

Australian critics of the ‘traditional security discourse’ argue that the orthodox preoccupation with military–strategic thinking neglects equally valid ‘non-traditional’ security concerns such as the environment, international crime, human rights and demographic issues.<sup>7</sup> These are legitimate concerns, although it is

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<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>7</sup> Graeme Cheeseman and Robert Bruce (eds), *Discourses of Danger and Dread Frontiers: Australian Defence and Security Thinking after the Cold War*, Allen & Unwin in Association with the Department of International Relations and the Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, Canberra, 1996; Michael McKinley, ‘Discovering the “Idiot Centre” of Ourselves: Footnotes to the Academic and Intellectual Culture of the Australian Security Policy Discourse’, *AntePodium* 4/96, [http://www.vuw.ac.nz/atp/articles/mckinley\\_9611.html](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/atp/articles/mckinley_9611.html) (Downloaded 15 June 1999); David Capie, ‘Regional Security in the Asia-Pacific:

very easy to sink into a morass of competing theories about the future of interstate relations without ever dealing with the practical problems of peace enforcement. Nonetheless, the greatest threats to global security and human rights are those that have emerged from a states' system under stress. The disintegration of states; the aspirations of ethnic, religious and tribal groups to self-determination; the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction; and fundamentally opposed attitudes to the use of violence suggest that the preservation of military capabilities remains in the best interests of most people and certainly all Australians. It is notable that, during the writing of this work (September–October 1999), the most vociferous hawks calling for unilateral military intervention in East Timor were precisely those people that, until recently, criticised the 'mainstream security discourse' and advocated the diminution of Australian conventional military capabilities.

Accordingly, while it is important to understand the environment in which state and non-state actors make decisions, ultimately states are not often influenced by academic notions of what might be; their concerns are more practical. It is therefore not possible to ignore the realist or state-centric perspective when considering problems of state behaviour. Nowhere is this clearer than when considering the problems that states have in forming efficient and effective military coalitions. Yet, it is equally impossible to ignore the fact that other varieties of non-state actors inhabit the international scene. The existence of supra-state levels of political organisation, multinational corporations, national and religious identities existing across state boundaries means that, in certain circumstances, realist understandings of state behaviour

need to be supplemented by an awareness of the complex interdependence of the international order.<sup>8</sup>

The pace of change in the Asia-Pacific region is outstripping the traditional constraints on multilateral cooperation. The rapidly organised commitment of forces to East Timor exposed a critical weakness in regional security arrangements and indicated that there are shared collective interests that call for the employment of military coalitions. If regional forces are to operate together in dangerous environments, they need to achieve a far higher level of interoperability than is currently the case. The examples of recent coalition operations in the Gulf, Somalia, Rwanda, Cambodia and the Balkans have demonstrated that combined armed-forces require a high level of preparation prior to deployment together. This means that armed forces should develop common doctrines and standardised communications, and command and control procedures. It also means that they need to develop common operational cultures, recognising that, while the capabilities and strength of different forces will vary, they do need to be coordinated in order to attain their mission.

### **The construction of multinational military coalitions**

The consequences of novel circumstances of strategic uncertainty require a new approach to strategic thinking. The deployment of a multinational military coalition to East Timor has prompted a reconsideration of the traditional verities of Australian foreign policy. Despite considerable media speculation, a coherent, new strategic policy will not be released until 2000. Australia's 1997 White Paper on Foreign and Trade Policy, *In the National Interest*, paid particular attention to the creation of issues-based coalitions hinging on sound bilateral relationships. Although *Australia's Strategic Policy*, released in tandem with the White Paper, reinforced the importance of an enhanced multilateral

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<sup>8</sup> Joseph S. Nye, *Understanding International Conflicts*, 2nd edn, Longman, New York, 1977, p. 170.

regional security architecture, it did little but mention the dialogue process initiated by the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF).<sup>9</sup> If Australia is to make an effective contribution to regional coalitions, foreign policy and defence planners need to work together to develop a clear-eyed appreciation of Australia's most likely partners; ensure adequate preparation and training for combined operations; and undertake a thorough re-evaluation of Australia's own force structure.

In a multilateral world no longer dominated by superpower stand-off, regions and subregions are likely to inherit increasing responsibility to provide for their own security and, on occasion, police their own. Although some countries in the Asia-Pacific region have sought to exempt themselves from the attention of the international legal and political community, recent operations in Cambodia, Bougainville and East Timor suggest that there will continue to be a need for combined military responses to regional crises. Undeniably, the complexity of the new regional and global distribution of power has resulted in a radically altered security paradigm. However, it would be a mistake to think that 'comprehensive' or holistic notions of regional order have entirely done away with the need to construct military coalitions to deal with threats to the peace.

Attempts to produce conditions of global security in the aftermath of the Cold War have thus far relied on *ad hoc* and short-lived coalitions created and commanded by the US as the only power capable of doing so. The US is not a lone player though; domestic pressure within the US supports an entirely reasonable expectation that they will not have to bear the brunt of every security operation going, particularly where US interests are only marginally involved. Coupled with this is the fact that the US still perceives its most vital interests to be bound up in Europe and the Middle East. Although it is highly unlikely that US and

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<sup>9</sup> Department of Defence, *Australia's Strategic Policy*, Canberra, 1997, pp. 25–6.

Australian interests would not coincide in a major regional conflict, Australia might well find itself involved in a lower-level regional coalition without US support. The reticence of the US administration to send peacekeepers to East Timor provides timely evidence of this situation. As Congressman Doug Bereuter, Chair of the House of Representatives Subcommittee on Asia and the Pacific pointed out: ‘The Administration is suffering substantial criticism from Republicans in Congress, and a degree of concern among Democrats as well, that we have engaged ourselves in too many places in the world’.<sup>10</sup>

The requirement that countries be able to participate in a range of military coalition operations with other countries at relatively short notice is a consequence of the post–Cold War distribution of power. Now that the international political scene is no longer riven by superpower confrontation, countries’ interests are beginning to coincide far more than ever before. These interests are predominantly economic, but also include common questions of security, the environment, population and international mores—including human rights and resource distribution. The dramatic readjustments of the last decade have not brought a utopian era of peace and prosperity; rather, the world has had to make significant adjustments as the post-1945 and post-colonial status quo has been swept away. As new states emerge, others fragment and borders continue to be readjusted, the international community must provide unified, effective and legitimate responses to resolve crises and assure future progress and stability. While non-military dialogues and multi-dimensional approaches to security remain the day-to-day business of relations between states, those same states need to have the capacity to work together if a military response is required. Now that superpower status is no longer at stake, regions are required to be more self-sufficient in providing for their security. Nowhere is

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<sup>10</sup> Lincoln Wright, ‘US goes cold on peace troops’, *The Canberra Times*, 30 August 1999, p. 1.

the need more pressing, or more problematic, than in the Asia-Pacific.

A distinct post-Cold War trend has been the growth of governments' expectations that armed forces should have greater flexibility and provide a more extensive range of military response options. Military forces everywhere are being expected to be capable of more than warfighting. Historically, coalitions have been formed to wage war. Now that global war is considered unlikely, states are more inclined to form *ad hoc* coalitions to deal with other more-immediate threats. These may involve fighting—as in peacemaking, counter-terrorist or anti-piracy missions—but are more likely to involve disaster relief, peace supervision or even infrastructure development tasks. This is not to say that coalitions will not fight wars in the future, but that armed forces need to maintain preparedness to engage in an ever wider range of activities in concert with other countries.

Coalitions are, by definition, temporary and relatively informal combinations of states sharing common interests and working together for broadly common ends. In a military environment, this involves combined operations—operations involving two or more parties.<sup>11</sup> With the exception of the Russo-Japanese War, the Iran-Iraq War and perhaps the Indo-Pakistan Wars, all major conflicts this century have been waged by coalitions—at least on one side. Unlike long-term, formal alliances their success is founded on the ability of their members to work together and preserve unity in achieving identifiable common objectives. Some members of a coalition might well have a history of cooperation, but most of the combinations of the last decade have seen disparate states forced to improvise the manner by which they work together. The practical aspects of implementing coalition operations are far more complex than the initial decision to undertake them. As Wayne Silkert argued in the journal of the

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<sup>11</sup> Joint Publication 3-16, *Joint Doctrine for Multinational Operations*, Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff, April 25, 1996, p. GL-4.

US Army War College, although practical necessity dictates most coalitions: 'Once established, a coalition normally requires coordination of effort to achieve common political, economic, and social objectives; agreed strategic plans to achieve military objectives; and of course, unity of command.'<sup>12</sup> Despite the positive examples of recent combined operations in the Gulf and the Balkans that have provided precedents for heterogeneous coalitions, collective action outside a firm alliance attracts risks that do not confront states acting unilaterally or bilaterally with traditional partners. With considerable justification, Silkert points out that 'in reality, coalitions mean friction, inefficiency, and the whole amounting to less than the sum of all the parts'.<sup>13</sup>

Coalitions represent the normal way of waging major war as well as conducting peacekeeping; however, the political dimension dominates and directs the military conduct of combined operations. The specific interests of countries have to be reconciled with those of their partners. As events unfold, countries may be forced to accept that their own interests are not best served by the coalition effort. Patrick Cronin has warned that, as far as the political interests of particular countries are concerned, coalitions will often reduce policy to the lowest common denominator:

This in turn can make murky the objectives at hand, and, from an operational perspective, it can sharply restrict the scope, pace and flexibility of operations. In short, the political and diplomatic imperatives of seeking coalition consensus and agreement often stand at odds with the military imperatives of achieving results through unrestrained violence or the threat of unrestrained violence.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Wayne Silkert, *Alliance and Coalition Warfare, Parameters*, vol. XXIII, no. 2, Summer 1993, p. 78.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 83.

<sup>14</sup> Patrick M. Cronin, 'Coalition Warfare Facts, Fads and Challenges', *Strategic Review*, Spring 1994, vol. XXII, no. 2, p. 69.

The novel nature of post–Cold War coalitions demands closer attention. We need to be cautious in abstracting lessons from recent experience. Both the coalition against Iraq and Operation Allied Force in Kosovo were notable for the use of advanced military technology; however, most contemporary multilateral coalitions are characterised by a broad disparity in the types of participating forces and variation in the standard of their equipment. Although modern warfighting operations receive most publicity for the precision-targeting capabilities of the most technologically based forces, the bulk of coalition forces continue to be drawn from armies with more conventional capabilities. For example, thirty-four countries contributed military forces to the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), and eleven of those countries contributed infantry battalions. These units were provided by Bangladesh, Bulgaria, France, Ghana, India, Indonesia (two battalions), Malaysia, the Netherlands, Pakistan, Tunisia and Uruguay.<sup>15</sup> Far from representing an RMA-type force, the coalition achieved its objectives and bestowed legitimacy on the process with a more disparate membership and range of capabilities than would have previously been considered possible. In contrast, the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II), a similar multinational coalition, suffered defeat despite (and arguably because of) the technological superiority and operational culture of its most powerful member, the US.

The military component of the United Nations Transitional Authority for East Timor (UNTAET) will require a continuing commitment of manpower—a resource at a premium in Western armed forces that place increased reliance on platform-based hardware. The conundrum facing all combined operations today is that, although modern military technology will enhance the

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<sup>15</sup> Trevor Findlay, *Cambodia: The Legacy and Lessons of UNTAC*, Stockholm International Peace Research Institute Research Report no. 9, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 27–8.

military capability of most forces, it has the capacity to inhibit the degree to which a multinational force can cooperate. Coalition forces need to pay close attention to the historical record of recent combined operations if they are to achieve the level of interoperability necessary to accomplish their military mission and their overarching political objectives.

Australia has one of the longest records of coalition membership in the Asia-Pacific. Although its relationship with the US has long been consolidated into a formal alliance, its wartime experiences have seen Australian forces serve as junior partners in the South-West Pacific during World War II, in Korea, in Vietnam and again in the Gulf. David Horner has pointed out the limitations that this placed on the national strategic decision-making process:

. . . if a small nation is to have any influence over allied strategy, then it has to have a coherent and clearly defined policy which takes account of both national and allied objectives. This policy must be pursued by both political and military leaders in close co-operation and with mutual confidence. The luxury of several competing national policies, promoted by different organs of the one government, can be enjoyed only by a great power. Ultimately the responsibility for achieving harmony and cohesion rests with the prime minister.<sup>16</sup>

Although they represent a specific form of politico-military relationship, it is not possible to consider coalitions in isolation without taking into account the other varieties of interstate combinations that constitute international security architecture. Coalitions are not necessarily an exclusive form of relationship. This is because membership of an alliance does not preclude membership of a coalition comprising some or all of the members

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<sup>16</sup> David Horner, *High Command: Australia's struggle for an independent war strategy 1939–45*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1982, p. 442.

of that alliance. The converse is true as well. It is perfectly possible that Australia could find itself conducting military operations as a significant part of a regional or subregional coalition with Oceanic or South-East Asian countries, but without its major alliance partner, the US. Alternatively, the Gulf War saw countries like Australia and New Zealand assume a minor role in a large, multinational coalition led by the US.

Coalitions are likely to be formed on the basis of three main types of politico-military relationship. They may be drawn out of traditional alliances; represent the response of a standing public international organisation; or be formed as a military response by a group of concerned countries. Formal alliances are usually set up by two or more countries to provide for collective defence. They tend to develop a high level of military collaboration and interoperability achieved through common doctrine, training and equipment. Such alliances have traditionally been restricted to collaborative action to protect vital national interests.

The second category comprises coalitions formed under the auspices of the United Nations or other major regional organisations to serve the interests of collective security. These coalitions subscribe to the belief that members of the particular community of states, be it regional or international, share common security interests where a threat to one is a threat to all.

The third category is the military coalition, formed to deal with a significant disturbance to international order. Formerly, the cause of conflict would most likely have resulted from an attack by one state on another. Now, however, with the international community accepting greater common liability for enforcing the peace in disrupted states, it is likely that it would involve intervention in the affairs of some country without necessarily having obtained consent. Such 'coalitions of the willing' may be formed at short notice and with minimal UN involvement, as the threat is often so immediate that the machinery of the UN cannot

respond in time. Somalia, Kosovo and the East Timor crises provide recent examples. Given the complexity of the contemporary international situation, it is quite possible that a coalition will involve states that display a combination of at least two and often three types.

Historically, coalitions were formed as circumstances permitted and were broken off at the convenience of the ruler or according to some perception of national interest. The sorry history of the successive unsuccessful coalitions against Napoleon is evidence of the traditional unreliability of coalitions. The European Concert system of the 19th century that emerged out of the ultimately successful military coalition against France resulted in European states taking the first faltering steps to defining some notion of common interest. The ideological conflicts of the 20th century have seen the emergence of the bloc coalition—military combinations founded on firm co-identity of interest and sustained by common political and military, not to say cultural, understanding. Paul Kennedy has argued that ‘many of the difficulties encountered by states in a wartime coalition were themselves consequent on the circumstances that existed and the decisions that were taken when particular alliances were formed before the conflict’.<sup>17</sup> The stable, culturally homogeneous alliance reached its apotheosis in the success of Allied coalition warfare in World War II, and was most obvious in the degree of integration achieved by the British, the Americans and the Dominions. However, the Western Alliance enjoyed conditions that are difficult to replicate in the more diverse Asia-Pacific. As Kennedy demonstrated, coalition success ‘depended to a considerable degree upon a proper command structure with a multi-national staff, an integrated and efficient supply system, and—incalculable

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<sup>17</sup> Paul Kennedy, ‘Military Coalitions and Coalition Warfare over the Past Century’, chap. 1 in Keith Neilson and Roy A. Prete, *Coalition Warfare*, Wilfred Laurier University Press, Waterloo, 1983, p. 3.

bonus—a common language that was used both in headquarters and along the front’.<sup>18</sup>

The advent of truly multilateral coalition operations as a part of the ‘core’ business of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) means that Australian planners are going to have to come to terms with the sort of uncertainty that plagued coalitions in the past. The key issue that needs to be addressed is that of interoperability—not merely at the tactical level, but in the coordination of political and theatre-specific aims. To a large extent, achieving this degree of readiness will require regional forces such as the ADF to anticipate the operational requirements that may be generated by their governments.<sup>19</sup> As will become clear, regional forces will need to upgrade their defence cooperation programs substantially in order to ensure that they can operate together as a matter of course.

### **Implications of ‘globalisation’ for coalition formation**

While globalisation continues apace, the fact is that the international system consists of a higher number of sovereign states at any time in history and more are being generated each year. Despite, and probably as a result of, the exponential growth of their system, states are, in the post–Cold War period, being forced to accept that they are members of a truly international community—the first global polity in history. This does not sit easily with the traditional post-colonial politics of a region that has sought to maintain a minimalist model of security architecture.

Globally a range of novel factors has diminished the *de facto* and even the *de jure* sovereignty of individual states. The Asian economic crisis made the interdependence of the region

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<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>19</sup> This is hardly novel in the Asia-Pacific; the South-East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO) required member states to observe SEATO standardisation agreements on weapons, equipment and procedures.

particularly evident. Sovereign states are increasingly bound together as a consequence of the combination of economic circumstances, legal constraints, permissive autolimitation of power, and competition with non-state actors. There is also a far greater acceptance of normative codes of behaviour, and far more inter- and supra-state organisation. In the past, a widespread acceptance of the concept of infeasible state sovereignty guaranteed even rogue states freedom of action within their borders. Breaking with the past, the recent war in Kosovo established a precedent of intervention in the internal affairs of a state by a coalition of other countries bound together by a moral imperative. Like children in a poorly supervised schoolyard, the new states' system might remain essentially anarchical, but it is a community nonetheless. Its standards are set and maintained by a group morality imposed by gangs dominated by the larger kids.

Between 1945 and 1989, most countries were spared too deep a consideration of the problem of choosing how to preserve their own security. The ideological confrontation of the Cold War polarised the international community. Even the members of the non-aligned movement found themselves drawn into bloc politics as the contending superpowers jostled for influence. In the aftermath of the Cold War, states are forming new alliances, constructing new international machinery, and are increasingly accepting the need for combined military action to attain acceptable levels of global peace and security. In a world no longer deeply divided by an ideological confrontation, relations between states and systems of states are more fluid, multilateral in nature, and complex. The contradictory dimensions of the economic, cultural and military dialogues between states mean that security issues often need to be resolved on a 'one-off' basis and at arms length from other dealings. In the Balkans, the Gulf, Somalia, Rwanda and Cambodia, coalitions were formed to deal with a specific crisis, represent particular interests and then disband.

This trend is global and driven by predominantly Western notions of state behaviour, but its consequences are felt most keenly at the regional level. While a relatively homogeneous cultural and political aggregate of Western states can cobble forces together to meet a particular need, they have the benefit of a history of alliance, an integrated economy and a shared basis of military cooperation. The problem that the Asia-Pacific region faces is that it has no basis for establishing a comprehensive, multilateral security system. For historical, political, cultural, ethnographic and economic reasons, the Asia-Pacific has been too heterogenous an environment to form a collective identity. Despite this, it would appear that events are forcing many countries in the region to consider how military cooperation might best serve their national interests.

### **Pursuing security cooperation in a protean security environment**

One of the problems involved in considering the issue of achieving effective cooperation between the countries of the Asia-Pacific is that commentators regularly underestimate the true extent of the region. Most security analysts focus on the 'hot spots' in the region; therefore North Asia, East Asia and South-East Asia attract most of the attention. This tendency does reflect the significance of the Asian rim in a demographic, economic and political sense, but neglects the fact that the strategic environment extends across in excess of one-third of the globe and contains the planet's greatest concentration of human population. The geography of the Asia-Pacific is well defined and includes:

all countries that abut the Pacific Basin which include Russia, a group of East Asian countries (Japan, China, the Koreas, Taiwan, Hong Kong), Southeast Asia, Australia, New Zealand, the United States, Canada, Mexico, Columbia, Ecuador, Peru, Chile and the Central American States as well as the numerous Pacific island

states such as Fiji, Papua New Guinea and the mini-states of Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.<sup>20</sup>

From a strategic viewpoint the US is more ambitious, assigning US Pacific Command (USPACOM) an area of responsibility ranging from the west coast of the US to the east coast of Africa, and from the Arctic to the Antarctic. However one defines Australia's strategic environment (and Australia generally has a traditional blind-spot to its western approaches), Australians need to recognise that, far from being isolated from the rest of the world (read Europe), they are situated at the hub of the world's most developing region. While it is useful to consider this large, diverse area as a geo-strategic environment, it is not possible to imagine that its countries constitute a coherent political community.

Barry Buzan and Gerald Segal paint a very pessimistic view of the security situation in the Asia-Pacific, pointing out that the end of the Cold War and the lifting of the 'superpower overlay' has resulted in the withdrawal of superpower engagement from East Asia. They point out that during the Cold War new states emerged in the region, but that their international relations were shaped by the prevailing situation. Now many of these states are newly industrial and commercial powers that have to contend with a regional security situation where the rules are no longer clear.<sup>21</sup> Perhaps reassuringly, there are contemporary and historical parallels with the type of protean community that has emerged in the Asia-Pacific. On the one hand, the reordering of the former states of the Soviet Union is a bleak example of a power vacuum in which security cooperation has broken down. Yet, taking a

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<sup>20</sup> R. F. Watters and T. G. McGee, *Asia-Pacific: New Geographies of the Pacific Rim*, Crawford House, Bathurst, 1997, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> B. Buzan and G. Segal, 'Rethinking East Asian Security', chap. 6, in *World Security: Challenges for a new Century*, eds M. Clare and I. Chandrani, 3rd edn, St Martin's Press, New York, 1998, pp. 99–100.

longer-term view, Western Europe has struggled from an inherently flawed balance of power system at the turn of the century, to achieve what appears to be the most secure interstate security system in history. The question Buzan and Segal ask is 'what kind of regional patterns will fill the power vacuum left by the superpowers' in the Asia-Pacific?<sup>22</sup>

Paul Evans also argues that the countries of East and South-East Asia constitute the focal point of the Asia-Pacific. Given the distinct political systems and historical experience of those two subregions, Evans moots that it may be that regional security is best served through subregional cooperation, though increasingly the peace of the region is indivisible.<sup>23</sup> Evans makes a convincing case that the future of regional security lies in creating:

new channels for action as well as shared attitudes and perspectives . . . If points of clarity and commonality are to be developed about a desirable and workable future security order, they will have to be created in a patient and open-ended manner rather than recovered from Asia's recent past or imported from afar.<sup>24</sup>

This perspective is refreshing as it recognises that insular attitudes that were a product of the post-colonial formation of new states might not be appropriate in the future. He identifies two major arguments for greater security cooperation: regional interdependence and geo-strategic uncertainty.<sup>25</sup> The problem of interdependence in a regional system raises a range of conventional and unconventional concerns such as the significant arms build-up of the early 1990s, the proliferation of weapons of

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 100.

<sup>23</sup> Paul M. Evans, 'The Prospects for Multilateral Security Cooperation in the Asia/Pacific Region', in Desmond Ball, *The Transformation of Security in the Asia/Pacific Region*, Frank Cass, London, 1996, p. 203.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 216.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 206–7.

mass destruction, divided countries, unresolved territorial disputes, migration flows, piracy, terrorism and environmental issues. The nature of the regional security debate has changed significantly since the mid-1990s, when Evans was concerned that a geo-strategic vacuum might result from US disengagement from the region. That worry has now been overtaken by the poor relations that have developed between the US and China, and the fact that China and the US are confronting each other on a range of economic and territorial issues.

Accordingly, it is not possible to treat the region as one in which a 'balance of power' exists without considering the role that the US and its close allies play. Perhaps the best definition of the balance of power remains that which Palmerston devised:

It means that it is in the interest of the community of nations that no one nation should acquire such a preponderance as to endanger the security of the rest; and it is for the advantage of all that the smaller powers should be respected in their independence and not swallowed up by their more powerful neighbours.<sup>26</sup>

Although there appears to be no immediate prospect of any one power waging aggressive war against its neighbours, there is equally no concert to prevent a major regional power from doing so. In East Asia, for instance, China is significantly more powerful than any of its neighbours, and no standing subregional defence arrangements provide those neighbours with any level of security. Even a minor but nuclear power such as North Korea represents a significant threat in its region, and the main check on that state remains the US commitment to the region. Clearly, the US continues to play an important role, with a counterpoise function in the Asia-Pacific.

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<sup>26</sup> *Hansard*, House of Commons (UK), 3rd series, clxxvi, 8 July 1864, col. 1280.

Australia's alliance with the US has remained its most significant defence relationship. Australia's Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper, *In the National Interest*, stated that Australia's alliance with the US is 'not only important to its national defence capability, [but] it deters potential enemies and reinforces US strategic engagement which is the linchpin of regional security'.<sup>27</sup> Despite the relative decline in the US presence, successive administrations accept that a significant military presence is essential to maintaining the stability of the Asia-Pacific. President Clinton has pledged that:

To deter aggression and secure our own interests, we will maintain approximately 100,000 U.S. military personnel in the region. Our commitment to maintaining an active military presence in the region and our treaty alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, Thailand and the Philippines serve as the foundation for America's continuing security role.<sup>28</sup>

The ability of the US to project power into the region effectively supplements the standing of its alliance partners and complements their own security arrangements. US military capability retains a powerful deterrence effect and ensures that no major conflict can take place without the prospect of US intervention. In anything less than a major regional conflict (MRC), it is to be expected that US participation in a coalition would be decisive in bringing about a relatively rapid resolution. An MRC that did not involve the US is difficult to imagine.

For countries such as Australia and New Zealand, the sheer scale of the strategic environment has the potential to thwart their efforts to influence the climate of regional security. The experience is not a novel one for either country as both

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<sup>27</sup> Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, *In the National Interest*, Canberra, 1997, p. 39.

<sup>28</sup> *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, The White House, Washington, October 1998, p. 41.

experienced an unequal wartime coalition during World War II. Despite the existence of the Pacific War Council, Australia was denied a prominent role in the direction of the Pacific War.<sup>29</sup> As a country without significant power projection capabilities, on current indications Australia remains unlikely to be a major player in a coalition established to fight an MRC. Consequently, unless Australia can establish itself as a linchpin in the emerging regional security architecture, it is unlikely that it would have much control over the direction of its own forces in a future MRC. One option that Australia does have is to ensure that it is seen as an integral building block in forming coalition forces for lower-level (and inherently more likely) contingencies.

The US reduction of its military commitment to the region in the aftermath of the Cold War, combined with its preoccupation with Europe and the Middle East, has led many commentators to suggest that Australia would be better off seeking to build a regional security community.<sup>30</sup> Some suggest that the development of a collective regional identity will reduce substantially the prospect of interstate military conflict.<sup>31</sup> While

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<sup>29</sup> D. Clayton James, 'American and Japanese Strategies in the Pacific War', in *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age*, ed. Peter Paret, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1986, p. 723.

<sup>30</sup> See the Honourable P. J. Keating, Opening Address to the Royal United Services Institute of Australia's National Seminar, 'Regional Security in the Asia-Pacific Area: Towards 2001', in *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia*, vol. 15, no. 1, November 1994, pp. 1–4; Desmond Ball and Pauline Kerr, *Presumptive Engagement: Australia's Asia-Pacific Security Policy in the 1990s*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1996, pp. 51–3; J. Mohan Malik, *Securing Australia: From Alliances to Agreements*, Working Paper no. 51, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, August 1998.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, Amitav Acharya, 'Collective identity and conflict management in Southeast Asia', chap. 6 in *Security Communities*,

this is probably true, no country can afford to rest its future security on the expectation of the goodwill of its neighbours. By contrast with the unabashed regionalists, Coral Bell suggests that the changing circumstances and potential combinations between other states in the Asia-Pacific may make firm alliance with the US 'look more, rather than less, necessary than it did in the Cold War decades'.<sup>32</sup>

The strategic culture in the Asia-Pacific is considerably different from that in the West. Unlike Europe, the Asia-Pacific has a short history of political organisation to resolve conflict and abrogate war. As Desmond Ball argued, 'Western predilections for creating organizations and formal structures, deciding modalities and delineating responsibilities are disdained. The Asian way stresses patience, informality, consensus and evolution.'<sup>33</sup> This is not to say that all is well in the region; two years after the Asian economic meltdown there are substantial economic disparities between neighbours. Nowhere is this more obvious than amongst the members of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), which now comprises all ten South-East Asian countries, including the troubled states of Burma, Laos and Cambodia.<sup>34</sup>

Quite apart from the instability created by change in Indonesia, elsewhere unresolved territorial and offshore claims between countries, ongoing ethnic tensions, human rights issues, economic

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Cambridge Studies in International Relations, no. 62, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1998.

<sup>32</sup> Coral Bell, *Australia's alliance options: prospect and retrospect in a world of change*, Australian National University, Canberra, 1991, p. 23.

<sup>33</sup> Desmond Ball (ed.), *The Transformation of Security in the Asia/Pacific Region*, Frank Cass, London, 1996, p. 10.

<sup>34</sup> Peter Alford, 'Unsettled days in tiger Zone: Can ASEAN carve out a new vision with old tools?', *The Australian*, Thursday, 22 July 1999, p. 11.

inequality, and the existence of politically active military forces do not indicate that we can count on the maintenance of the current status quo.

Not only does the region not share a monolithic security architecture, but historically it has not shared many of the presumptions on which international law and the notion of collective security are based. Nicola Baker and Leonard Sebastian argue that Asian countries in the immediate post-colonial era distrusted the Western modes of statecraft that had characterised their exploitation and in addition:

Formal multilateral security agreements and structures were not considered feasible or desirable by the founding member states of ASEAN for three other reasons: they lacked the defence capacity for any form of collective security, their relations were complicated by unresolved territorial disputes, and they had quite different threat perceptions. Regional defence capabilities have since improved significantly but few have reached the point where adequate forces could be committed to, and sustained in, any form of collective action beyond the occasional military exercise.<sup>35</sup>

Baker and Sebastian warn against attempting to establish overtly formal cooperative security structures in the region. They suggest that borrowing Western cooperative security frameworks may be used to pressure Asian states to upgrade their record on human rights and environmental issues. Of course, this interpretation risks placing modern Asian countries in a time warp and assuming that 'Asian values' will continue to favour social cohesion and development at the cost of democratisation, liberalisation and globalisation. The combination of the regional

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<sup>35</sup> Nicola Baker and Leonard C. Sebastian, 'The Problem with Parachuting: Strategic Studies and Security in the Asia/Pacific Region', in Ball, *The Transformation of Security in the Asia/Pacific Region*, p. 27.

economic crisis, cross-border environmental fall-out and a trend to greater ethnic autonomy within states have threatened the comfortable verities of the so-called Asian 'way of politics'.<sup>36</sup>

As this work proceeded to press, it appeared that the Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohamad had belatedly recognised the need for more formal security cooperation in Asia. Speaking on 2 December 1999, Dr Mahathir proposed 'a refined regional security structure' involving every nation in Asia, but clearly excluding Australia.<sup>37</sup> Still, it remains unclear what form this security pact would take. While lauding the benefits of regional defence cooperation, his greatest concern appeared to be to block non-Asian participation in regional peace operations. Similarly, he reiterated his opposition to any interference in another country's domestic or foreign affairs.<sup>38</sup> Given that any intervention—permissive or not—is likely to affect those involved, one might question the value of a security pact that promised from the start not to get involved.

The limitations of notions of untrammelled sovereignty have become particularly clear during the bushfire hazes that have

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<sup>36</sup> The 1999 round of ASEAN-sponsored talks that took place in Singapore in late July and early August provided a great deal of evidence that the mood of the region had begun to change. The economic crisis, the multi-state dispute over the Spratly Islands and the treatment of former Malaysian Deputy Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim were issues that surfaced at the meeting. Perhaps most notably, the Singaporean Prime Minister's welcome address included a call for an 'honest reappraisal' of the group's activities. See Ben Dolven, 'Sharper Image: ASEAN strives for credibility by tackling sensitive issues', *Far Eastern Economic Review*, August 5, 1999, pp. 17–8.

<sup>37</sup> 'Malaysia's PM proposes Asian Security Pact', 2 December 1999, Reuter's online at <http://infoseek.qo.com/Content?> (Accessed 6 December 1999; Ian Stewart, 'Backflip on Asia Security Alliance', *The Australian*, 3 December 1999, p. 9.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*

periodically blanketed South-East Asia since 1997. As one journalist pointed out, the pollution emanating from Kalimantan and Sumatra called into question the 'reverence for state sovereignty and territorial integrity and adherence to the rule of non-interference in domestic politics' that had characterised the ASEAN system.<sup>39</sup> Forces of globalisation are derogating from indefeasible state sovereignty, and states are finding that they may be called on to provide support to their neighbours. An extreme example of this was the deployment of the UNTAC to Cambodia in 1992–93 which saw military contingents from thirty-four countries inserted into a state that was no longer capable of providing for the security of its own internal administration.

Most recently, some members attending the 1999 ASEAN annual meeting in Singapore have sought to revamp the organisation. In the face of bitter resistance, Thailand's Foreign Minister Dr Surin Pitsuwan argued that ASEAN needed to 're-invent' itself. He pointed out that:

In this time of changing environments, we either have to reform ourselves to meet international standards or we can resist and be overwhelmed in the end, with no control over the pace and direction of change.<sup>40</sup>

Not altogether surprisingly, Malaysia's Foreign Minister Mr Syed Hamid Albar rejected a more interventionist approach in regional politics, arguing that the fundamental 'principles of non-interference in the affairs of one another, mutual respect and

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<sup>39</sup> Priscilla Hon, 'Political state of environment deters efforts to fight the haze', *The Singapore Straits Times*, 28 October 1997, at <http://www.geocities.com/RainForest/2701/haze299.html> (Downloaded 23 July 1997).

<sup>40</sup> Craig Skehan, 'ASEAN split over the no-fault rule among members', *The Age*, Saturday, 24 July 1999, at <http://www.theage.com.au/daily/99o724/news/news14.html> (Downloaded 26 July 1999).

equality' were best calculated to preserve regional stability.<sup>41</sup> Given that Malaysia had flatly refused to participate in discussions of the construction of a platform supporting a habitable structure in the Spratly Islands, it would appear that the definition of 'internal affairs' was meant broadly.

Most recently, Malaysian reluctance to get involved in the internal affairs of other states became an issue in the formation of INTERFET for deployment in East Timor. The sincerity of their adherence to the 'ASEAN way' was called into question by the rapid series of volte-faces concerning whether they would send troops or not. After promising troops initially, Malaysia withdrew the offer and then reinstated it. It was speculated that Australian involvement was an obstacle to Malaysian participation, but notably it was Thailand's Dr Pitsuwan who was credited with persuading Malaysia to remain in the force. Taken together with Thailand's substantial military contribution, as well as the less numerically impressive involvement of Singapore, Malaysia and the Philippines, it appears that even ASEAN countries are beginning to accept that sovereignty 'ain't what it used to be'.<sup>42</sup> Dr Mahathir now appears to have learnt the lesson that limited participation in a significant regional coalition results in marginalisation in the same arena. His comments that ASEAN might be more proactive in security cooperation reverses the traditional ASEAN rhetoric about noninterference in each other's affairs and indicates that this region is not immune to the forces of global change.

The East Timor crisis has demonstrated that specifically regional norms of interstate relations cannot be allowed to supplant the commonly accepted standards of state behaviour demanded by the international community. Pondering the lessons of Rwanda, Kosovo and East Timor in a special article for *The Economist*, the

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Peter Alford, 'Thais take up Asia's colours', *The Weekend Australian*, 18–19 September 1999, p. 11.

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan argued that sovereignty can no longer be used as a shield to protect those that commit 'gross and systematic violations of human rights'.<sup>43</sup> He suggested that conceptions of 'national interest' had to be amended to recognise that in a shrinking world 'the collective interest is the national interest'.<sup>44</sup> Although the legacy of post-colonial tensions, ethnic disharmony and authoritarian political regimes in the region is insufficient to found an inclusive, standing regional security organisation, the East Timor crisis has provided a precedent, however weak, for intervention by regional states. Dr Pitsuwan justified Thailand's participation in INTERFET with the comment: 'When the fire is burning in the neighbourhood, certainly we need to put our resources together to put out the fire.'<sup>45</sup>

In these circumstances, it may be that a form of *security community* as opposed to a *defence community* may emerge through necessity in the Asia-Pacific. A security community would at least provide some basis for the formation of 'coalitions of the willing' in emergencies such as that in East Timor. As Amitav Acharya points out:

A defence community implies an alliance relationship which is usually conceived and directed against a pre-recognized and commonly perceived external threat. Security communities, on the other hand, identify no such threat or have no function of organizing joint defence against them.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Kofi Annan, 'Two concepts of sovereignty', *The Economist*, 18 September 1999, pp. 49–50.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Paul Kelly, 'Howard's Crusade', *The Weekend Australian*, 2–3 October 1999, p. 22.

<sup>46</sup> Amitav Acharya, 'A Regional Security Community in South East Asia?' in Ball, *The Transformation of Security in the Asia/Pacific Region*, p. 180.

Acharya argues that a formal multilateral military alliance is unlikely to eventuate without a commonly perceived external threat. Other obstacles include ‘lack of interest in weapons standardization and . . . joint purchase of weapons, difference in defence doctrines, absence of interoperability (despite the range of bilateral exercises) among regional armed forces, and differing conceptions of defence self-reliance within the region’.<sup>47</sup> In the post–Cold War Asia-Pacific, a traditional security-architecture founded on a balance of power appears unnecessary. Moreover, it might even be construed as maintaining an unacceptable level of military preparedness, which could exacerbate tensions within the region. Accordingly, the trend chronicled by J. Mohan Malik towards a “regional defence” posture based on a web of cooperative security arrangements with neighbours and allies’ is most likely to facilitate coalition operations within the region.<sup>48</sup>

### **Political lessons of recent coalition operations**

Turning from the environmental security problems of the Asia-Pacific to the political and military lessons of multinational operations elsewhere emphasises the gap between political experience and military capability in different regional contexts. The Asia-Pacific presents problems that other, more politically mature regions do not. However, it may be that the sheer scale of the Asia-Pacific serves to magnify the fundamental issues. Perhaps the key lesson to be drawn from the experience of forming and maintaining broadly based, multi-partner military coalitions in the Gulf and the Balkans is that the political dimension of war will permeate every level of operational planning and execution. These coalitions were largely successful because they had pre-existing antecedents in the form of military alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). They also demonstrated the need to form military coalitions if the collective political will of any security community is to be

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<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 191.

<sup>48</sup> Mohan Malik, *Securing Australia: From Alliances to Agreements*, p. 9.

realised. In a heterogeneous global community, building and sustaining a coalition of countries with a range of interests and ideologies is the most significant way of bestowing legitimacy on a particular cause. However, as things currently stand in the Asia-Pacific, few states are capable of engaging in coalition activities at anything other than the most basic level. Learning from the international political, military and domestic levels of recent coalition efforts, it becomes obvious that the Asia-Pacific needs to evolve a security architecture that will enable rapid and effective responses to regional crises. The alternative is to accept that the region will suffer conditions of relative insecurity that are no longer tolerated in Europe, the Western Hemisphere and even in much of the Middle East.

Many of the lessons to be drawn from coalition operations elsewhere are negative ones. As a region, the Asia-Pacific is a very different environment from the Middle East or the Balkans. We need to be very careful of applying the lessons of the Persian Gulf War to any of the contingencies that might arise in our region. The coalition in the Gulf enjoyed overwhelming military and moral superiority, and was able to prepare for operations with relative impunity. On the other hand Iraq was isolated and inferior in every way. These conditions are unlikely to be repeated.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, recent operations in Kosovo benefited from being founded on the firm base of the NATO alliance as well as from being waged in close proximity to most of the major participating countries. Again, the Asia-Pacific is unlikely to provide the same conditions as it is even more difficult to secure agreement between countries in this region than elsewhere.

The question of command on a multinational operation is the first and most thorny issue taken up by coalition partners. Given its resources, the US can usually expect to dominate in any coalition of which it is a member. The usual options are *lead nation*

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<sup>49</sup> Mark T. Clark, 'The Trouble with Collective Security', *Orbis*, vol. 39, no. 2, p. 243.

*command*, where the main contributor of forces conducts the campaign, or *parallel command*, where command responsibilities are shared. However, in the Gulf War the coalition accepted a hybrid solution to maintain the cohesion of a fundamentally divided set of states. Not only were issues of sovereignty involved, but cultural and religious factors kept the allies apart. The coalition adopted the risky solution of splitting its forces into two blocs. The US commanded the Western countries, and Saudi Arabia the Arabs. Politically, this was somewhat dangerous, as a determined enemy could have been more successful in alienating the two blocs.

It is easy to forget now how innovative the coalition prosecution of operations *Desert Shield* and *Desert Storm* seemed at the time. Yet, it was a fairly clear-cut situation. Iraq was guilty of waging aggressive war against a neighbour and continued to threaten other countries within the region—most notably Saudi Arabia. Eighteen countries committed ground forces to the coalition, and many also contributed air and naval forces. Eleven countries provided naval forces without a ground commitment. A further fifteen countries provided non-military and financial support for the coalition.<sup>50</sup> In total, thirty-seven countries sent contingents to the Gulf. Short of a world war, this was the most broadly based coalition operation in history. Accordingly, the primary problem that faced the coalition leadership was how to weld this amorphous collection of contributions into a useful military response. While the political objectives of member states varied, the coalition benefited from a core set of values that were determined by the hardening response of the Security Council.

The fact that certain states were more enthusiastic about taking the war to Saddam Hussein than others did not undermine the legitimacy of this coalition, though in different circumstances it might well have. By establishing unprecedented consensus in the

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<sup>50</sup> Bruce W. Watson (ed.), *Military Lessons of the Gulf War*, Greenhill Books, London, 1993, Appendixes A–F.

Security Council, the US and Britain were given a relatively free hand to develop an offensive response. The Arab nations wished to limit their contribution to the liberation of Kuwait, whereas the Americans and the British were willing to attack Iraq to achieve their operational objectives. An obvious conclusion to be drawn from the Gulf War is that coalitions comprise core and non-core elements. According to this interpretation, in *Desert Storm* the core players included the US and Saudi Arabia politically, and the US and Britain militarily.

The planning of Operation *Desert Storm* was substantially complicated by the presence of military units from countries that did not share cultural values, much less NATO capabilities and doctrine. The environment in the Gulf was almost ideal for the utilisation of the coalition's technological superiority. Consequently, many of the coalition contingents appeared superfluous. However, the US in particular could not afford to ignore the moral and economic element of burden sharing represented by the participation of so many other countries. Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh have pointed out that the US was less keen on attracting token military contributions than on obtaining financial support for its own efforts.<sup>51</sup> While this may well have been the case then, the US has since developed a considerably more sophisticated strategy to deal with coalition operations involving US Central Command (USCENTCOM) in North-East Africa and South-West Asia. Now USCENTCOM emphasises a three-tier building-block approach to regional coalition creation. The first tier involves national self-defence; the second tier, regional collective defence; and only the third tier involves direct action by the US and other extra-regional states to deter aggression or defend their common interests.<sup>52</sup> The overt

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<sup>51</sup> Lawrence Freedman and Efraim Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, Faber and Faber, London 1993, p. 358.

<sup>52</sup> Anthony H. Cordesman, *USCENTCOM Mission and History*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 1998 at

nature of the graduated-response model is calculated to provide deterrence to aggression within the region. It seeks to build regional confidence that 'improves military-to-military relationships and interoperability and recognizes the connectivity between military capability and cooperation and political and economic interdependence'.<sup>53</sup> A clear lesson of the Gulf is that the US wishes to limit its own involvement as lead nation in coalition operations until such a stage as it becomes absolutely necessary.

The current extent of USCENTCOM responsibility does provide the Asia-Pacific with a precedent on the problems of maintaining a disparate coalition. During Operation *Desert Shield* the centre of gravity of the coalition was not a tactical one, but the cohesion of the coalition itself. Saddam Hussein sought to destabilise and destroy the coalition by launching Scud attacks at Israel and attempting to incite anti-Western feeling in Arab countries. During the war this was unsuccessful, in part because Israel realised that the greater guarantee of security would be a coalition victory and so held back from retaliation. Perhaps more significant was the extent to which the Arab states themselves recognised that Iraqi aggression destabilised their region. The fact that Saddam Hussein represented the greater threat created a receptive environment for coalition with the West.<sup>54</sup> Despite substantial domestic pressures as well as Iraqi agitation, the coalition was sustained by a shared appreciation of common vital interests. By comparison, the lack of enthusiasm on the part of the Arabs for Operation *Desert Fox* in 1998 reflected a general perception that their vital interests were not affected.

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<http://www.csis.org/mideast/reports/uscentcom3.html> (Downloaded 27 July 1999).

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>54</sup> Freedman and Karsh, *The Gulf Conflict*, pp. 339–41, 430; HRH General Khaled Bin Sultan, *Desert Warrior: A Personal View of the Gulf War by the Joint Forces Commander*, Harper Collins, London, 1995, pp. 186–90.

The offensive spirit of the coalition was largely derived from what came to be known as the ‘Anglo-Saxon club’. The special relationship forged between Prime Minister Thatcher and President Bush seems to have been the source of the mettle that provided the political will to commence a war that promised fighting and the danger of large numbers of casualties. However, that particular combination of leaders does not provide a simple explanation for the course of Western policy. Despite changes of government and very different leaders, Operation *Desert Fox* and Operation *Allied Force* in Kosovo were similarly driven by Anglo-American policy. This is not to ascribe a high level of bellicosity to the British and the Americans; quite the contrary, their desire to avoid casualties—the enemy’s as well as their own—indicates a wish to avoid the sort of general war that has characterised modern conflict. However, it does point out an essential truth about coalition operations: not only does a collective political will have to exist, but it requires positive leadership from an influential, if not hegemonic, state to translate it into action.

Working from the example of *Desert Storm*, Patrick Cronin has argued that the military and political aspects of a coalition need to be considered in isolation. ‘For combat operations, core nations ordinarily must exclude those who cannot conduct combined operations with similar equipment or doctrine.’<sup>55</sup> Cronin suggests that, for military if not political purposes, other forces are peripheral. The other members of a coalition include those that can contribute some capability to the military operation and whose contribution is not valuable in a military sense, but who enhance the legitimacy of the coalition. However, this is too pat a conclusion. Combat operations and peace enforcement tasks are not always conducted on a billiard-table playing field, as was the case in the Gulf. The level of commitment that advanced Western democracies are willing to make to operations is increasingly less

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<sup>55</sup> Cronin, ‘Coalition Warfare’, p. 70.

likely to include combat troops when casualties might have a domestic political cost. Separating the military and political aspects of a combined effort is to ignore the fundamental dictum that military operations are the continuation of political intercourse by other means. Coalition operations need to avoid the sort of hollow victory that technological coalitions seem destined to achieve. As the prominent Australian defence commentator Dr Alan Stephens pointed out of Operation *Allied Force* in Kosovo:

... there was a serious dysfunction between NATO's grand strategy, which was to stop the ethnic cleansing, and its military strategy, which was to degrade Serbian military power in Kosovo. While the military action was an unqualified success—by the end of June there were no Serbian regular forces left in Kosovo—the immediate political objective was not achieved.<sup>56</sup>

In other words, the operation was clearly a great success . . . but it is unfortunate that the patient died.

From the political point of view, then, it is inadvisable to marginalise incompatible forces. Operation *Allied Force* provides us with an excellent example of how domestic political imperatives among the lead nations in a coalition frustrated the achievement of the coalition's agreed strategic objectives. Furthermore, it demonstrated the impossibility of distinguishing between the political aims of a coalition and the steps taken to achieve it. *Allied Force* was a half-hearted coalition, with the partners providing a guarantee to their enemy that they would use only a small proportion of the forces at their disposal. By targeting Serbian infrastructure, they did make it politically impossible for Milošević to complete his policy of ethnically cleansing Kosovo, but the half-measures taken totally failed to

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<sup>56</sup> Alan Stephens, 'Operation Allied Force', *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter*, August/September 1999, p. 20.

degrade Serbian military power.<sup>57</sup> The domestic political constraint on the utilisation of ground forces from Western states also raises questions about the military utility of ground forces from other countries. If the West is unwilling to provide land forces, even when they are required to achieve mission objectives, it may be that ground forces will have to be drawn from those countries that are willing and capable to do so.

Coalition efforts since the Gulf War have highlighted the fact that, as states' 'vital interests' recede into the background, the responses required of coalition forces are likely to change and need to be more flexible. Anne Dixon argues that the trend in coalition warfare is away from an easily identified enemy. In the Gulf, the coalition forces had a reasonably clear-cut combat role. By contrast, she argued:

. . . post-Cold War peace-enforcers can't demonize one of the parties to an internal conflict. For starters, taking sides is now seen as a violation of the internal political process of

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<sup>57</sup> See Michael Evans, 'NATO smart bombs fooled by dummies', *The Australian*, 25 June 1999, p. 8 (reprinted from *The Times*); 'Messy War, Messy Peace', *The Economist*, 12 June 1999, pp. 13–14; Michael O'Connor, 'Kosovo and the Limits of Air Power', *Defender*, Winter 1999, pp. 4–7; Michael Evans, 'A Savage War of Humanity: Some Military Lessons of Kosovo', *Asia-Pacific Defence Reporter*, October/November 1999; Eugene Fox and Stanley Orman, 'Kosovo's Lesson in TMD', *Defense News*, 9 August 1999, p. 21; Simon Jenkins, 'Now for Kosovo's third War', *The Australian*, 28 June 1999, p. 13 (reprinted from *The Times*). Although all sources are coy about Serbian military casualties caused by NATO's 37 225 aerial sorties, Simon Jenkins claims that as few as 200–400 were killed. During the occupation of Kosovo, the physical evidence indicated that, of 300 Serbian tanks deployed in Kosovo, only 13 were damaged. Even NATO's post-action strike assessment claimed only 26 'catastrophic kills' out of 93 tanks hit. In either case the record was not impressive. See Jamie Walker, 'NATO denies it bombed in Balkans', *The Weekend Australian*, 18–19 September 1999, p. 18.

the conflict torn country which is to be restored with the resolution of the conflict. Furthermore, more inclusive post-Cold War coalitions are likely to have partners who differ in their sympathies for parties to a conflict.’<sup>58</sup>

In Kosovo the conduct of Operation *Allied Force* and the subsequent peacekeeping effort, Operation *Joint Guardian*, has pointed out the truth of Dixon’s observation. The peculiar position that Russia occupies in the peacekeeping force may well provide a precedent that future coalition operations may suffer from a lack of common purpose. Where coalition partners agree that ‘something should be done’, but are uncertain ‘what’, unity of effort may be difficult to achieve. One such example is provided by the initial confusion surrounding the formation of INTERFET, when the Malaysian Government found it impossible to determine the nature of its contribution. In extreme circumstances, the coalition effort may break down and face effective defeat, as occurred in Somalia in March 1994 when the US withdrew its contingent to UNOSOM II. Clearly, if states are to continue to work together in military operations for reasons other than the defence of their own vital interests, a clear understanding of mutual objectives, strategies and responses needs to be established prior to the deployment of troops.

### **Contemporary thinking about military coalition operations**

Command and control, interoperability between forces, diplomacy, common training and doctrine are all essential elements of coalition operations. The 1990–91 Gulf War provides an example of a successful large-scale military coalition and has become the touchstone for most recent writing on the subject. It is worth being critical of the supposed lessons of the conflict, and some consideration of the mechanics of coalition operations in the Gulf demonstrates the sheer scale of the

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<sup>58</sup> Anne M. Dixon, ‘The Whats and Whys of Coalitions’, *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Winter 1993–94, p. 27.

challenges that would be involved in constructing a coalition in the Asia-Pacific—with or without the participation of the US.

Ultimately, the war was won by a military coalition that had been forged by NATO to fight a major war in Europe. While NATO did not prosecute the War, ‘decades of cooperation, training, standardisation and shared research and development paid off in having the equipment, standard operating procedures and men to stand up to out of theatre conditions over a sustained period.’<sup>59</sup> Even the coalition’s Arab members had extensive experience of the NATO way of war, their senior officers having attended Western military colleges and having served on postings with Western forces. The US, Britain and France had continued to maintain a military presence within the region and were therefore not total strangers to the environment. Unlike the countries of the Asia-Pacific, the Gulf War coalition was reasonably well prepared to fight a major war. Although the coalition never achieved ‘unity of command’, it was able to achieve ‘unity of effort’. We must consider the extent to which this might be possible in the Asia-Pacific.

General Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the greatest coalition force in history, was justly critical of the historical record of coalition forces in warfare.<sup>60</sup> Yet Eisenhower is often held up as the model for coalition leadership—the soldier politician—diplomatic when needs be, but ruthless in his efforts to hold the coalition together. Reflecting on the Allied experience in Europe, R. M. Connaughton concluded:

The lesson must surely be that the military decisions of coalition commanders are based not so much upon sound

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<sup>59</sup> Lieutenant Commander Alan Hinge, ‘Alliances in the post Cold War era and their implications for the Pacific Basin’, *Journal of the Australian Naval Institute*, May 1992, vol. 18, no. 2, p. 54.

<sup>60</sup> General Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe*, Doubleday, New York, p. 4.

operational considerations but rather upon operational considerations which give rise to the least amount of friction among coalition partners.<sup>61</sup>

Fifty years on, coalition military commanders face greater problems as the forces under their command are likely to be more disparate than any ever before. Silkert points out that the ‘ambiguous environment a coalition leader must contend with stems from often huge differences in operational-level realities such as goals, training, capabilities, equipment, logistics, culture, doctrine, intelligence and language’.<sup>62</sup>

The Gulf experience emphasised the lesson that coalition operations involve trade-offs between optimal military efficiency and the interests of the states comprising the coalition. At this level, the relationship between the national commanders and their political masters is crucial. Before forces are deployed, commanders need to be fully aware of the role that their forces are to play. The history of coalition warfare is full of failed operations brought to grief by national intransigence or personal spite. These experiences are not new to Australian commanders, who have generally fought as junior members of a coalition dominated by great powers. Striking the right balance as a junior member of a coalition is perhaps one of the finest arts of diplomacy. Reflecting on the history of Australian relations with the US in World War II, David Horner concluded that:

in the case of a small nation there is a danger that it might lose control of its force if it operates as a component of a larger allied force. If a nation is seeking to gain political influence through the conduct of military operations or the action of its armed forces, achievement of this aim can be

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<sup>61</sup> R. M. Connaughton, *Swords and Ploughshares: Coalition operations, the nature of future conflict and the United Nations*, Strategic and Combat Studies Institute Occasional Paper no. 7, Camberley, 1993, p. 14.

<sup>62</sup> Silkert, ‘Alliance and Coalition Warfare’, p. 79.

enhanced if the forces are seen to have important and independent roles.<sup>63</sup>

It might be added that the governments that commit their forces to war should also consider how important those forces are in the greater scene. The French participation in the Gulf was almost hijacked by the Defence Minister Jean Pierre Chevènement, who pursued a line of policy counter to his own government. Confused policy and national jealousy ultimately sidelined the French contribution, which could have been much more decisive. By comparison, the British accepted the need to subordinate their forces to CENTCOM, but reserved the right to refer problems to their own commander, the Secretary of Defence and ultimately the Cabinet.<sup>64</sup>

Command of a military coalition requires two levels of command: the practical coordination and control of often-incompatible units and formations, and the leadership necessary to make the coalition work. This need has been recognised in an expanding literature about coalition operations, particularly in the US. Today it is virtually impossible to pick up a US military journal without finding at least one article on coalition command and control. The US military has taken the lessons of the Gulf very much to heart, and is beginning to include diplomatic skills in the selection criteria for higher command. Colonel Stephen Bowman, former Director of the US Army Military History Institute, has pointed out:

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

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<sup>63</sup> David Horner, *High Command: Australia's struggle for an independent war strategy 1939–45*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1982, p. 445.

<sup>64</sup> Watson, *Military Lessons of the Gulf War*, p. 26.

forces, especially in potential lead nations, must consider how to develop such leadership traits in future military leaders.<sup>65</sup>

From the mechanistic perspective, the coalition commanders have to balance the conflicting demands of control over the forces at their disposal and the understandable reticence of governments to alienate control over their own forces. While Deputy Commander of the British military mission, Kuwait, Colonel Anthony Rice argued that:

The most contentious aspect of coalition operations is command and control. This sensitivity reflects the participants' concern over who will command their forces and what authority that commander will have. The converse is equally significant to military and political leaders in each nation contributing forces to a coalition: the degree of day-to-day control national authorities will have over the employment of their own forces.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Colonel Stephen Bowman, 'Historical and cultural influences on coalition operations', chap. 1, in *Problems and Solutions in Future Coalition Operations*, eds Thomas J. Marshall, Phillip Kaiser and Jon Kessmeire, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, 1997, p. 8. Other relevant articles include Lieutenant Colonel Mark B. Yates, 'Coalition Warfare in Desert Storm' *Military Review*, October 1993, pp. 46–52; Lieutenant Colonel Marc Michaelis, 'The Importance of Communicating in Coalition Warfare', *Military Review*, November 1992, pp. 40–50; Colonel Jeffrey D. McCausland, 'Governments, Societies and Armed forces: What the Gulf War Portends', *Parameters*, Summer 1999, pp. 2–21; Major General Robert H. Scales, 'Trust, not Technology, Sustains Coalitions', *Parameters*, Winter 1998, pp. 4–10.

<sup>66</sup> Colonel Anthony J. Rice, 'Command and Control: The Essence of Coalition Warfare', *Parameters*, Spring 1997, p. 1 of 13, <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/Parameters/97spring/rice.htm> (Downloaded 15 June 1999).

In this respect Operations *Desert Shield* and *Desert Storm* provide some precedent for the type of coalition operations that might occur in the Asia-Pacific. Like the heterogeneous collection of forces that found themselves in the Gulf, this region contains a broad range of cultures, religions and political systems. The problem of diversity within the region will be considered in greater detail, but it is sufficient to observe that few states are willing to abdicate command of their own troops to a foreign commander except in extreme circumstances, such as when their vital interests are imperilled. A country such as the US is highly unlikely to accept any foreign control over its troops.

The forces assembled for the Gulf War were able to balance that particular problem by effectively ignoring it and developing a parallel command. As a result, the coalition had no supreme allied commander. General Schwarzkopf, the US Commander, Central Command, and HRH General Khaled Bin Sultan, the Saudi Commander, Joint Forces Command, conducted strategic planning through an informal but equal cooperative relationship.<sup>67</sup> Throughout the conflict Arab and Western forces were separated at the tactical level, their unique capabilities being assigned to specific missions. This was made necessary because of the political impossibility of having US troops serve under Arab command or Arab forces serve under US command.

The problem was cultural as much as military. For religious, political and social reasons, the relationship between the Arab forces and the US-led Western forces required a clear delineation of responsibility. Accordingly, Khaled commanded twenty-five of the thirty-seven contingents in Saudi Arabia and participated in the joint planning group for the liberation of Kuwait, but had 'nothing to do with CENTCOM's wider responsibilities within the region, or indeed with the responsibilities it assumed in

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<sup>67</sup> Silkert, 'Alliance and Coalition Warfare', p. 78.

Iraq'.<sup>68</sup> Khaled's perspective is a valuable one, as most of the historical record to date reflects British and American experience. Recognising the overwhelming military contribution made by the US to the coalition, the Saudis accepted that the US would make the final command decisions and that General Schwarzkopf had ultimate responsibility for the conduct of operations against Iraq. Prince Khaled was not only responsible for the command of regional forces, but was charged with assuring that Saudi Arabia as host nation retained its sovereignty and that the influx of foreigners did not impinge on the culture of the region.

This complex task was only made possible by the creation of a Coalition Coordination, Communication and Integration Centre (C<sup>3</sup>IC). This was not a command centre, but a very effective clearing-house designed to provide functional and effective unity of effort between all thirty-seven participating contingents. The C<sup>3</sup>IC was a true innovation in coalition warfare that is likely to constitute the basis for broad-based coalition efforts, at least in warfighting, for the appreciable future. The Centre translated command decisions taken by Schwarzkopf and Khalid into orders and other communications for transmission to both chains of command and effectively operated as a 'deconfliction' centre. It also operated as a means of advising and integrating forces with different doctrines, strategies and levels of experience of manoeuvre warfare. Most importantly, it worked to prevent misunderstandings at every level by providing common intelligence and a single professional 'language' for the conduct of operations. Not surprisingly, given the scale of the US commitment, that language was English, but more importantly the value system of the organisation emphasised 'trust, respect and genuine understanding'.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>68</sup> Khaled, *Desert Warrior*, p. 194. See chap. XIII for a general discussion of the Saudi perspective of parallel command.

<sup>69</sup> Michaelis, 'The Importance of Communicating in Coalition Warfare', pp. 40–50.

The C<sup>3</sup>IC worked well at the operational level, but did not address the problem of coordinating coalition efforts at a tactical level. Although many senior Arab leaders had considerable exposure to NATO operational procedures, they had dissimilar tactical doctrines. This was not as great an obstacle as it might have been. Schwarzkopf's and Khalid's forces generally had distinct areas of operations and different tasks; therefore the lack of common command and control (C<sup>2</sup>) systems was not critical, since neither the Americans nor the Saudis commanded the other's units. Instead, the coalition developed a process it called 'crosswalking', which involved establishing a commitment to the plan upfront and then ongoing consultation as the plan was implemented. As the chief of the US Army Coalition Warfare Division in CENTCOM recalled, this process gave 'a combined sense of ownership for the plan and provided the host with a vested stake for the plan's success.'<sup>70</sup>

The 'glue' that held the system together was the creation of liaison teams modelled on Field Marshal Montgomery's 'directed telescope' system in World War II. These teams conducted high-level and tactical liaison. Charged with ensuring that the commander's intent was communicated and carried out, they sampled reporting and provided General Schwarzkopf with immediate feedback on the situation. The Gulf War confirmed the importance of having liaison officers that were language-qualified and already had experience in the region where they would be operating.<sup>71</sup> This knowledge had been well established in decades of NATO exercises in Europe, but the new theatre of operations placed a premium on language skills, which were in relatively short supply. During the Gulf War and since, resources have been directed to ensuring that CENTCOM obtains 'the best

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<sup>70</sup> Lieutenant Colonel Mark B. Yates, 'Coalition Warfare in Desert Storm', *Military Review*, October 1993, vol. LXXIII, no. 10, p. 47.

<sup>71</sup> Captain Terry J. Pudas, USN, 'Preparing Future Coalition Commanders', *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Winter 1993–94, p. 42.

and the brightest of U.S. civilians and officers in order to ensure a unity of effort'.<sup>72</sup>

The requirement for appropriately trained personnel has been recognised in Australia. In a research report for the Australian Army, Ross Allen concluded that:

Achieving deeper and broader interoperability with a regional army requires the deployment of liaison officers, operating integrated headquarters and, in particular, having individual exchanges in units between the armies. To do this effectively, Australian personnel cannot rely on interpreters or the knowledge of English of their host officers . . . The investment in knowledge of regional languages is a long-term one. However, it has the potential to pay high dividends in terms of improved operational effectiveness and interoperability with key regional armies.<sup>73</sup>

The need for area experts has been confirmed in the Balkans. Major General Robert H. Scales Jr., Commandant of the US Army War College, has cited recent coalition experience to call for a training program capable of producing a cadre of 'sophisticated liaison personnel—officers, noncommissioned officers and civilians—in the active and reserve components'.<sup>74</sup> His proposal is that these experts would act as a force multiplier by being capable of acting as 'geostrategic scouts'.<sup>75</sup> Scales suggests that these personnel should possess more than just linguistic and cultural understanding of the region, but that they also have the ability to represent their commander on issues relating to the work of the coalition. This requires a broad

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<sup>72</sup> Cronin, 'Coalition Warfare', p. 70.

<sup>73</sup> Ross Allen, *The Army and Regional Engagement*, Research Report no. 1, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Duntroon, June 1998, pp. 18–19.

<sup>74</sup> Scales, 'Trust, not Technology, Sustains Coalitions', pp. 6–7.

<sup>75</sup> *Ibid.*

spectrum of skills, ranging from political facility through communications abilities to awareness of the operation of the international humanitarian support system.

Large states such as the US can generate liaison officers in other forces by being generous in the educational opportunities that they offer in service colleges, as well as providing opportunities for the members of foreign militaries to serve in cross-postings. It is equally important that smaller powers such as Australia ensure that they cultivate like-minded foreign officers and that their own service personnel gain experience in serving with the armed forces of other nations. Although concerns about future interoperability tend to focus on the problems associated with US technological forces, policy makers should consider the implications of a rapidly changing regional strategic environment. It is quite likely that Australian forces may find themselves operating with hitherto unlikely partners. In the same way that we now see German and Japanese forces deployed on military support operations, it is not unlikely that the Vietnamese or the Chinese might form part of a coalition with Australia.

Even among traditional allies with long experience of working together, the path of force integration is not smooth. During the Gulf War the British Commander General de la Billière indicated that the original decision to deploy the 7th Armoured Brigade with the Marines caused some problems, since the Marines had not trained as a NATO force. This was resolved by developing a high level of integration:

The British therefore put plenty of their people into American headquarters, including their intelligence staff, and took fire-support teams from the Americans into their headquarters, at all levels, so that if they needed an aircraft to put down bombs on a certain grid reference, it would be

an American in our own headquarters who got through to the pilot on his radio net.<sup>76</sup>

Similarly, de la Billière ‘infiltrated’ a British officer into General Schwarzkopf’s central planning team. He recounts that ‘the American planners were pathologically secretive about their plans’, acceptance being gained for the British officer only when he donned US uniform and dropped a level in rank to bring him into line with his American colleagues.<sup>77</sup>

The issue of parallel command is not simply a matter of operating together; it determines how and where coalition forces will be employed. Experience has shown that disparate forces face almost insurmountable problems in operating together as their communications, equipment, doctrine and capabilities are likely to inhibit rather than enhance operations. Captain Terry Pudas has argued that a failure to achieve interoperability cannot be allowed to threaten the cohesion of a coalition or the legitimacy that is achieved through common action. Where unity of command is not possible to achieve, as will generally be the case in heterogeneous *ad hoc* coalitions, it may be advisable to ‘allocate discrete geographical or territorial areas of responsibility to national forces’.<sup>78</sup> This decision is primarily a political one, but as both Connaughton and Horner suggested, it can be turned to the operational advantage of the coalition.

It is not worth having a political coalition that cannot fight, or an effective fighting force that does not work for the member states of the coalition. Therefore, the aim of coalition architectural-planning is to make the most of the forces at a coalition’s disposal, while retaining the political integrity of the group. It is possible to package coalition single-service forces or create a

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<sup>76</sup> General Sir Peter de la Billière, *Storm Command: A Personal account of the Gulf War*, Harper Collins, London, 1995, p. 95.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 89–92.

<sup>78</sup> Pudas, ‘Preparing Future Coalition Commanders’, p. 42.

combined force with a specifically delineated area of responsibility. The choice of force structure should be determined by the combination that is most likely to preserve the effectiveness and capabilities of combat forces. On the other hand, attempts to graft incompatible forces together may well lead to the dilution of capabilities across the entire force. It is also most likely to lead to fratricide in the conduct of combat operations. The Gulf War provided examples of different approaches to national force-integration. The air war saw combined single-service forces employed to achieve a specific functional objective. On the ground, the Arab forces were packaged as a distinct combined force with a distinct geographical area of responsibility. Although their employment was peripheral to the main offensive effort, the mere fact of their existence provided security to the overall force. The use of uncommitted ground forces freed up the manoeuvre elements of the US and British force to conduct the attack without having to worry about the security of their flanks and rear. Even forces—such as the Australian naval contribution—that did not engage the enemy were able to bring niche capabilities.

Similarly, different branches of the services face very different problems in preparing for coalition operations. Thomas Durrell-Young argues that land commanders require a greater level of command authority when conducting coalition operations than that required by their naval and air counterparts. Armies are complex organisations that are employed to perform a broad range of tasks, most of which are essential to the mission. Land commanders may be required to respond to operational contingencies by reconfiguring forces and assigning new missions to meet rapidly changing circumstances. Durrell-Young suggests that, by contrast, ‘Ships and aircraft . . . can be thought of as integral platforms of weapons and capabilities which can be

delegated in their entirety to non-national commanders to carry out specified tasks'.<sup>79</sup>

Navies are probably the easiest forces to integrate into coalition forces and consequently are most often given the opportunity to train with each other. The fact that NATO naval forces conduct exercises around the world has resulted in the adoption of similar doctrine and procedures by other navies. Modular command principles are also more easily applied at sea, where a relatively limited number of ships are involved and where responsibility for a particular capability can be assigned to a particular commander. Rice points out that the NATO concept of the composite warfare commander allows responsibilities such as anti-surface warfare or anti-aircraft warfare to be shared out within a naval task force without prejudice to the commander's overall control of the force.<sup>80</sup> Perhaps the best example of such an operation was the massive multinational task group deployed during the Gulf War. Similar combined operations have been subsequently deployed in the Adriatic to conduct operations against Serbia—initially to enforce the embargo over Bosnia and more recently to prosecute Operation *Allied Force* in Kosovo.

The NATO experience of training for an air war over Europe resulted in the development of an extremely effective targeting and deconfliction system that proved its worth in *Desert Storm* and produced the extraordinary accuracy of the recent air campaign in Serbia. During Operation *Desert Storm*, the Joint Force Air Component Commander (JFACC) used an air tasking order (ATO) to assign targets to specific aircraft and weapon systems regardless of their origin. In those circumstances, who

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<sup>79</sup> Thomas Durrell-Young, 'Command in Coalition Operations', chap. 1, in *Problems and Solutions in Future Coalition Operations*, eds Thomas J. Marshall, Phillip Kaiser and Jon Kessmeire, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, 1997, p. 33.

<sup>80</sup> Rice, 'Command and Control: The Essence of Coalition Warfare', p. 10.

owned the aircraft was of less significance than what the aircraft could do.<sup>81</sup>

The temptation in recent coalition operations has been to employ platform-based weapons rather than the much messier option of troops on the ground. In asymmetric conflicts the Western democracies see distinct domestic advantages as they are less likely to incur casualties and are easier to deploy, being mobile by their nature. By comparison, soldiers are more vulnerable to both conventional and unconventional weapons although they remain the only way of enforcing a total victory on an enemy. In addition, as Rice points out, the ‘ground component has invariably been the most difficult to integrate, because doctrinal and equipment differences affect the lowest echelons of command in all armies’.<sup>82</sup> However, the tempo of operations can make a significant difference in the level at which forces need to be integrated. Where a major conflict such as the Gulf War raises problems of sustaining resource-hungry, high-intensity operations that require a common logistic system capable of rapidly supplying the needs of the whole force, low-intensity operations such as peacekeeping may allow forces to be resupplied at a much lower level. Consequently, as in Cambodia and Somalia, countries can take direct responsibility for maintaining their own forces.

Air and naval units can more easily establish a symbiotic relationship with dissimilar forces. Navies can do this by matching capabilities to needs, and air forces achieve it by matching the characteristics of their aircraft to specific missions. As these functions are highly automated, or at least essentially platform-based, they do not involve the political dimension of human interaction in the same way that integrating ground forces

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<sup>81</sup> R. Alonso *et al.*, ‘The Air War’, chap. 5, in Watson, *Military Lessons of the Gulf War*, pp. 70–1.

<sup>82</sup> Rice, ‘Command and Control: The Essence of Coalition Warfare’, p. 10.

does. Ostensibly, platform-based units appear to be better suited to coalition operations, but it is a mistake to think that all coalition operations will lend themselves to stand-off weaponry. Low-level operations will always require a human presence, and any operation that requires troops to take and hold ground to achieve the mission's political objectives involves the need for ground forces.

To develop the same level of symbiosis between ground forces as is possible with platform-based services, armies need to train together and commanders need to train to meet the demands of *ad hoc* combined operations at every level of conflict. Captain Terry Pudas has emphasised that senior officers need to appreciate the effect that different coalition combinations will have on key planning factors, and accordingly officers at all levels need to conduct exercises to familiarise themselves with the variables that are inherent in multinational operations.<sup>83</sup>

Immediately after the Gulf War William H. Taft IV, US Permanent Representative on the North Atlantic Council, argued that, though NATO as an institution did not play a direct role in the Gulf, Europeans (including non-NATO members) needed to be able to operate as a coalition to defend specifically European interests. Anticipating that former Soviet Bloc countries would aspire to join the economic and security community of Western Europe, he enjoined NATO members not to forget the lessons of the Gulf: 'the great military utility of unity of command, interoperable equipment, common training, common communications and common operating procedures'.<sup>84</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Captain Terry J. Pudas, USN, 'Preparing Future Coalition Commanders', *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Winter 1993–94, p. 43.

<sup>84</sup> Speech given by Ambassador Taft in the Hague, 23 May 1991, at an international Conference on 'Parliamentary Democracy and International Security Policy', *NATO Review*, Web edition no. 3, June 1991, vol. 39, pp. 16–21 at

The problems that a substantially enlarged European security community encountered in Kosovo provide the countries of the Asia-Pacific with some precedent for future military cooperation.

Conceptual thought about military operations is guided by core doctrine—doctrine being the ‘fundamental principles by which military forces, or elements thereof, guide their actions in support of national objectives’.<sup>85</sup> Michael Smith has demonstrated that it is difficult for coalitions to reconcile those national objectives and achieve common principles of action without substantial prior thought, consultation and preparation. The ability of coalitions to operate effectively is a function of the degree of commitment they place on developing general doctrinal principles and on training. In a proposal with particular relevance for the Asia-Pacific, Smith suggested that:

To overcome the problems associated with the lack of common doctrine, regional organizations should develop regional doctrinal publications which identify doctrinal ‘considerations’ for commanders and planners. The term ‘considerations’ is used because it is unlikely that anything more detailed or prescriptive would be adopted and endorsed by all potential coalition members from a region.<sup>86</sup>

The possibility for achieving a shared understanding for coalition operations with regional partners is one of the most significant issues in developing a regional security community and is taken up later in this paper.

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<http://www.nato.int/docu/review/articles/9103-2.htm> (Downloaded 17 June 1999).

<sup>85</sup> *Australian Defence Force Publication-D 1: Doctrine*, Draft, chap. 1.

<sup>86</sup> Michael Smith, ‘Doctrine and training: The foundation of effective coalition operations’, chap. 4 in *Problems and Solutions in Future Coalition Operations*, eds Thomas J. Marshall, Phillip Kaiser and Jon Kessmeire, Strategic Studies Institute, Carlisle, 1997, p. 70.

## **Cultural and technological disparities in coalition military operations**

The commitment of ground forces to military operations is increasingly problematic for liberal–democratic Western states at a time when disparate cultural value systems are becoming increasingly evident in modern warfare. There are bound to be problems when Western states form coalitions with military forces that have different attitudes to human rights and fundamentally different notions about the value of individual human life. Having placed its trust in the technological solutions offered by the ‘Revolution in Military Affairs’, the US now has to deal with the problems of being the ‘biggest kid on the block’. Partly, these concerns are domestic and include an unwillingness to accept casualties; a reticence to inflict disproportionate damage on the enemy—particularly civilian personnel and infrastructure; and very great constraints on where they can fight. The US withdrawal from UNOSOM II in Somalia provides us with a graphic warning against vesting too much faith in technological security. The death of eighteen US soldiers in a confused and chaotic firefight in the alleys of Mogadishu led to the collapse of a powerful international coalition. A feudal warlord with none of the resources of the occupying force inflicted that defeat.

It is arguable that other Western states such as Australia share the US expectation that the character of modern war has insulated them from the realities of close-quarter conflict. However, the Asia-Pacific region contains a massive concentration of population, much of it in heavily urbanised centres. In a coalition involving the US, forces are likely to face similar problems as the ones that frustrated the UN operation in Somalia and prevented Operation Allied Force from degrading President Milošević’s power base. The reluctance of Western countries to conduct ground operations in built-up areas or against a more ruthless

enemy represents the Achilles heel of coalitions involving them.<sup>87</sup> It implies that Western-based coalitions will either have to employ less-discriminating coalition partners to represent them on complex terrain or develop a far higher level of proficiency in projecting land power outside familiar environments. The remaining alternative is to neglect preparations for combined operations in inconvenient environments and hope that the country's interests will never be affected. For a country such as Australia, this latter option would naturally involve adopting an isolationist policy that would abdicate its ability to shape the positive development of the region. As Michael Evans has observed: 'Because of the complex workings of Western liberal democracy, regional deterrence based on conventional forces will probably be a costly failure unless Western nations develop a greater willingness to exercise force preventively'.<sup>88</sup>

UN-based coalitions have faced particular problems due to the type of force composition deployed. Coalition operations seek to guarantee the legitimacy of their intervention by recruiting as wide a base of support as possible. Also, given the fact that states are increasingly unwilling to send their troops on potentially dangerous operations, the UN often has to accept whatever forces are made available. The UNTAC force in Cambodia provided an extreme example of the often-indiscriminate mode of UN force formation. During their posting some fifty-six members (including eight officers) of the Bulgarian battalion were sent home for disciplinary reasons. There were claims that 30 per cent of the battalion were former prisoners and that the unit had received only basic training. There were even reports that a dozen

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<sup>87</sup> See Anthony H. Cordesman, *US and USCENTCOM Strategy and Plans for Regional Warfare*, Center for Strategic and International Studies, April 1998 at <http://www.csis.org/mideast/reports/uscentcom1.html> (Downloaded 27 July 1999).

<sup>88</sup> Michael Evans, *Conventional Warfare in the Australian Strategic Context*, Land Warfare Studies Centre Working Paper no. 103, Duntroon, May 1999, p. 18.

soldiers threatened to kill General Sanderson, the military component commander, unless he increased their pay.<sup>89</sup> UNTAC represents a model for Australian participation in regional peacekeeping operations; it is perhaps significant that the greatest problems experienced by the multinational force were with contingents from outside the region.

Where coalitions are engaged on operations other than warfighting, the cohesion of the force becomes a factor in judging its effectiveness. Mirroring their isolation in Operations *Desert Shield* and *Desert Storm*, the French contingent to UNTAC administered Kompong Som, the province that they were assigned, independent of the overall operation. Other problems were caused by the disparity in pay and conditions between the national contingents within the military component. Whereas the Bulgarian conscripts were not paid at all, the Australian troops received a generous package of pay and allowances for the deployment.<sup>90</sup> Memories of the resentment expressed by relatively poorly paid British and Australian troops (compared with US servicemen) in World War II might suggest that this aspect of force morale should be considered in forming a coalition force.

Differing interpretations of the Rules of Engagement (ROE) have also led to considerable problems, particularly on recent military support operations. Communications, varying styles of operations between armies and differing degrees of training, not to mention different cultural biases about the local inhabitants, are likely to shape force reactions. An extreme example of this was the UN intervention in Somalia. The performance of the Canadian contingent was an extreme example of a force not being culturally prepared for the environment.<sup>91</sup> Anecdotal evidence suggests that

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<sup>89</sup> Findlay, *Cambodia: The Legacy and Lessons of UNTAC*, p. 139.

<sup>90</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 140–1.

<sup>91</sup> Canadian Airborne Regiment soldiers deployed with the UN Operation in Somalia were involved in the torture and murder of a

the Canadians were not alone: the Pakistani troops were considered brutal; the Malaysians were accused of firing indiscriminately; the Belgians had the reputation of ‘smacking the people and then feeding them’; while the Italians drew criticisms from the other UN forces for their softness to the Somalis!<sup>92</sup> The behaviour of the US ‘Task Force Ranger’ that operated independently of UN command owed more to a western movie than any objective standard of professionalism. Its defeat in the Mogadishu street battle of 3–4 October 1993 effectively nullified the UN’s previous achievements in Somalia.<sup>93</sup>

Although deployed at short notice and with little advance knowledge of the nature of conditions in Somalia, the Australian professional response stands in stark contrast to that of many other national contingents.<sup>94</sup> It may be, as Findlay suggests, that there needs to be a trade-off between multilateralism and the

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prisoner. Troops may also have been responsible for the killing of another Somali, who had been shot while attempting to enter the Canadian compound. Subsequent investigations uncovered an inappropriately belligerent and often overtly racist culture in the force. The scandal cost the careers of the Minister of National Defence, a Deputy Minister, three Chiefs of the Defence Staff, and resulted in the disbandment of the Airborne Regiment. See John English, *Lament for an Army: The Decline of Canadian Military Professionalism*, Irwin, Toronto 1998, chap. 1; Report of the Somalia Commission of Enquiry, <http://www.dnd.ca/somalia/vol1/v1c14e.htm>, Ministry of Public Works and Services, 1997 (Downloaded 7 June 1999).

<sup>92</sup> Margaret Cecchine Harrell and Robert Howe, ‘Military Issues in Multinational Operations’, chap. 17, in *New challenges for defense planning: rethinking how much is enough*, ed. Paul K. Davis, RAND Corporation, Santa Monica, 1994, pp. 555–6.

<sup>93</sup> For a consideration of how operational behaviour can thoroughly frustrate coalition objectives, see Mark Bowden, *Black Hawk Down*, Bantam, London, 1999.

<sup>94</sup> Bob Breen, *A Little Bit of Hope: Australian Force—Somalia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 1998, pp. 347–9.

needs of the force. While the number of nations involved in an operation is sometimes seen as the gauge of legitimacy, in the future the execution of complicated operations might require that the forces of particular countries be assigned specific functions.

### **Some historical and environmental constraints on Australian contributions to regional coalitions**

Despite the fluidity of the contemporary redistribution of power in the region, Australia and its regional neighbours are still heavily influenced by historical, demographic and geographic factors that change but slowly. During World War II, Australian influence on allied strategy in the South-West Pacific Area (SWPA) was dependent on Australia's military credibility. That influence remained minimal throughout the war and saw Australia temporarily reduced to a satrapy of the US. In 1942 that was unavoidable, but over fifty years on, in a considerably more multi-polar region, Australia has the advantage of a long-established, independent foreign policy, good relations with most of its neighbours and a positive record as a good and reasonably sensitive coalition partner. This last point is important, particularly if Australia expects to play a leading role in coalitions in the future. As General Sanderson observed, 'the Force Commander becomes a factor in the domestic politics of many, if not all, of the contributing countries. What he says and what he does is often used as part of the political dialogue in the governing councils of those nations'.<sup>95</sup>

The link between the level of military contribution that a nation is capable of making to a coalition and the political weight it is able to exercise remains as strong as ever. Horner demonstrated that the lack of balance of both the Navy and the Air Force made it

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<sup>95</sup> Lieutenant General John Sanderson, 'The Role of the Military Component', chap. 2, in *Bringing Democracy to Cambodia: Peacekeeping and Elections*, eds Viberto Selochan and Carlyle A. Thayer, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1996, p. 46.

difficult for Australia to provide formed task-forces capable of playing an important and independent role in the SWPA campaign:

If a small country is to exact political value from its limited forces these must be concentrated as much as possible. The lack of balance in the Australian forces stemmed not merely from an inability to concentrate elements, but also from inadequate preparation before the war. It encompassed the fields of both logistics and major items of military equipment. These considerations aside, Australia's population and resources severely limited the size of forces which could be provided for operations. If a small country wishes to attain more strategic influence it must accept limits in other areas in order to maintain the necessary forces.<sup>96</sup>

These observations are as true now as they were for the 1940s, and they underline the need for Australia to be able to provide joint forces capable of ready deployment as part of a combined effort wherever they are needed—but most importantly in the Asia-Pacific. Michael Evans has demonstrated that the current strategic reality of Oceania and South-East Asia is of 'a new transoceanic era which reinforces the strategic logic of joint operations, force projection and expeditionary warfare'.<sup>97</sup> This actuality has been recognised in the Australian Army's latest doctrine, which emphasises the requirement for an all-service approach to the common battlespace as well as the need for 'interoperability with coalition partners, particularly the US, New Zealand, and regional neighbours'.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Horner, *High Command*, p. 443.

<sup>97</sup> Michael Evans, *The Role of the Australian Army in a Maritime Concept of Strategy*, Land Warfare Studies Centre Working Paper no. 101, Duntroon, September 1998, p. 47.

<sup>98</sup> *Land Warfare Doctrine 1: The Fundamentals of Land Warfare*, Doctrine Wing, Combined Arms Training and Development Centre, 1998, pp. 4-12 – 4-13.

While many pundits scoffed at the Army's appreciation of the new regional strategic context, the requirement to provide a conventional ground-force response in East Timor has only emphasised the problem of achieving preparedness without political and public support. Those critics of conventional defence thinking who argued that, by concentrating on military operations, the ADF was hopelessly mired in the past have not been vindicated by events. Instead, failure to maintain broad-spectrum capabilities and the ability to integrate with the coalition of the moment has been shown to be utterly irresponsible.

It remains impossible to consider coalition operations in the Asia-Pacific without considering the role that the US might play. The US retains a force of over 100 000 service personnel in USPACOM, whose stated mission is to 'promote peace, deter aggression, respond to crises and, if necessary, . . . fight and win to advance security and stability throughout the Asia-Pacific region'.<sup>99</sup> USPACOM is a Joint Command whose stated regional strategy is designed to accomplish three major goals:

- in peacetime, to make conflicts and crises less likely;
- in times of crisis, to resolve specific situations on terms that advance US interests; and
- in war, to win quickly and decisively, with minimum loss of life and resources.<sup>100</sup>

The two main planks of USPACOM's effort are engagement and preparedness. 'Engagement' refers to the security dialogue with nations in the region, intended to resolve security concerns before they erupt into crises or conflict. 'Preparedness' represents a combination of deterrence and capability to respond to threats to

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<sup>99</sup> *USPACOM at a Glance*, <http://www.pacom.mil/about/pacom.htm> (Downloaded 9 August 1999).

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*

regional security.<sup>101</sup> US engagement in the region is sustained by an intensive program of combined training activities. In 1998 alone, USPACOM participated in 1368 exercises and other engagement activities with foreign military forces. The nature of this commitment is obvious from a consideration of the major exercises, which were:

- *Cobra Gold*: a joint/combined exercise with Thailand, designed to improve US/Thai combat readiness and joint/combined interoperability;
- *Rim of the Pacific*: a biennial, large-scale, multinational power projection/sea control exercise. Participants include the US, Canada, Australia, Japan, South Korea, and Chile;
- *Tandem Thrust*: a joint/combined exercise with Australia, designed enhance the ability of US and Australian forces to respond to short-notice regional contingencies; and
- *Keen Sword/Keen Edge*: joint/bilateral training exercises (field training/simulation, respectively) to increase combat readiness and joint/bilateral interoperability of US Forces and the Japanese Self-Defence Forces for the defence of Japan.<sup>102</sup>

Despite a record of close engagement with the US, Australia and its other regional allies face the question of how interoperable they can afford to be with the US. At the 1998 Australia–United States Ministerial Consultations, Australia’s Foreign Minister Alexander Downer and the US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright emphasised that a high degree of interoperability between their armed forces was a hallmark of their alliance. In the wake of reported remarks by Secretary Albright that Australia might find itself marginalised in the coalition if it was unable to

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<sup>101</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*

keep pace with US technological capability, both ministers stressed their determination to continue to make technological interoperability a priority goal.<sup>103</sup> Citing the lessons from the recent coalition operations in the Gulf and the putative Revolution in Military Affairs, they agreed on a number of measures to ensure the close operational integration of Australian–US forces. These steps included focusing joint training and exercises on technological compatibility; broadening the exposure of the ADF to US theatre commands other than Pacific Command through personnel exchanges with Central Command and Atlantic Command; intensifying collaboration to explore the ramifications of technological change for military operations; and facilitating access to particular US technologies that are important to the effectiveness of the ADF and its capacity to contribute to coalition operations, notably in the submarine, airborne early warning and control, and combat aircraft fields.<sup>104</sup> It is worth noting that all of these proposals contemplated complementary capabilities rather than independent or supplementary capabilities that would enhance Australian standing in a coalition operation.

The announcement of closer ties did little to address the problem of resources. As David Horner has suggested, Australia, and many other countries in the same situation, cannot afford to spread itself too thin if it is to make a worthwhile contribution to a US-led coalition. The problem is not just confined to combined operations with the US. A country in Australia's position should be able to field self-contained, joint task-forces that are capable of integrating into any regional operation, regardless of the technological level of its allies. The preoccupation with platform-based systems has neglected the requirement for forces capable of mounting sustained land operations, which are likely to make

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<sup>103</sup> Australia–United States Ministerial Consultations, Joint Communiqué, Sydney, 31 July 1998, [www.dfat.gov.au/geo/americas/us/ausmin98/ausmin98\\_joint\\_communique.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/americas/us/ausmin98/ausmin98_joint_communique.html) (Downloaded 30 July 1999).

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*

greater demands than currently available manpower resources can satisfy. In a recent report urging the need for the Australian Army to seek closer contacts and engagement in regional activities, Ross Allen pointed out that:

One of the issues the Army will need to address in the coming years is just how interoperable it should be with regional armies. The answer to this will depend on judgments about how technically feasible and how politically and strategically desirable it is for the Army to invest in training, equipment and combined exercising in order to achieve given levels of interoperability.<sup>105</sup>

While interoperability with allies should remain an ideal objective, the requirement that the ADF be capable of contributing to *ad hoc* operations also demands flexibility and the ability to undertake particular tasks or responsibilities independently within the coalition framework. Whether operating together with the US or not, a capacity for self-reliance and doctrinal compatibility are most likely to enhance Australia's standing in the coalition. A force that only shares the cost of an operation will probably not be perceived as being as militarily effective as one that provides a niche capability or achieves independent success. Similarly, strategic influence is most likely to proceed from the preservation of autonomy in the command of national forces.

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<sup>105</sup> Ross Allen, *The Army and Regional Engagement*, Research Report no. 1, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Duntroon, June 1998, p. 17.

## **Australian strategic policy and regional engagement: Laying the groundwork for coalition building**

Current government guidance identifies regional coalition-building as a key plank in Australia's foreign and trade policy objectives over the next fifteen years. The 1997 Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper, *In the National Interest*, indicated that Australia's interests could only be built on the basis of a sound set of bilateral relationships, which involved 'working closely with countries that are not traditional partners but which share common interests on specific issues'.<sup>106</sup> This statement represented a considerable shift in Australian thinking from the historical fear of Asia and the 'Fortress Australia' mentality that characterised post-Vietnam strategic thought.

Former Labor Foreign Minister Gareth Evans argued that the greatest achievement of the Labor Government's Foreign policy to 1993 had been 'to give real substance to the concept of engagement with Asia, to get this basic shift of focus away from the historical connections to geographical connections and to realise that this reality is where the future is'.<sup>107</sup> It might be argued that this blanket dismissal of the traditional alliances that had grown out of a firm community of historically shared concerns was precipitate. However, the reality was that the Labor Government kept a foot in both camps, promoting defence self-reliance while remaining conscious of the benefits of a US strategic presence in the region.<sup>108</sup> As former Labor Defence Minister Kim Beazley argued at the time of the Gulf War:

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<sup>106</sup> *In the National Interest*, p. 50.

<sup>107</sup> James Cotton and John Ravenhill (eds), *Seeking Asian Engagement: Australia in World Affairs 1991–95*, Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1997, p. 1.

<sup>108</sup> Gareth Evans and Bruce Grant, *Australia's Foreign Relations: In the World of the 1990s*, Melbourne University Press, Carlton, 1992, p. 99.

Prudent nations advance their self-reliant capability, firstly, by establishing it and secondly, by having friendships. Alliances are not irrelevant to a strategy of self-reliance. They are not irrelevant to ourselves; they are not irrelevant to the Saudis; and they were not irrelevant to the Kuwaitis. Alliances are important and they are worthwhile keeping intact.<sup>109</sup>

Labor's policy was to create a community of interest founded on proximity, not ideology, and to build regional security institutions that would mirror the Council for Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE). Evans mooted the idea of a Conference for Security Co-operation in Asia (CSCA) at the ASEAN post-ministerial conference in 1990. The idea was rebuffed by the US Secretary of State James Baker, and did not initially attract support from the members of ASEAN. However, the ASEAN Regional Forum, meeting first in Bangkok in July 1994, has provided some form of nascent, inclusive, common security-architecture in the region.

Some pundits assumed that the end of the Cold War rendered the security relationship with the US—and indeed any reliance on military forces—redundant.<sup>110</sup> Personal observations suggest that a few years on, these are often the same people arguing that 'we should do something' in regional hot-spots such as East Timor. Australian foreign policy took a new turn when Gareth Evans started to advocate a holistic strategy of 'cooperative security' based on 'consultation rather than confrontation; reassurance rather than deterrence; transparency rather than secrecy; and interdependence rather than unilateralism'.<sup>111</sup> In this strategy, Australia was committed to steering a course more independent of

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>110</sup> See Gary Smith and StJohn Kettle (eds), *Threats Without Enemies: Rethinking Australia's Security*, Pluto Press, Leichardt, 1992.

<sup>111</sup> Desmond Ball and Pauline Kerr, *Presumptive Engagement: Australia's Asia-Pacific Security Policy in the 1990s*, Allen & Unwin, St Leonards, 1996, p. 76.

the US and founded on gaining acceptance in the region—no small ask given the distrust expressed by some regional figures, most notably Prime Minister Mahathir of Malaysia.

Building coalitions across a spectrum of economic, social, cultural and political activities lay at the heart of Labor policy. Evans argued that if it were to acquire influence in the region, Australia had to play the role of constructive middle power:

The characteristic method of middle power diplomacy is coalition building with ‘like-minded’ countries. It usually involves ‘niche diplomacy’, which means concentrating resources in specific areas best able to generate returns worth having, rather than trying to cover the whole field. By definition, middle powers are not powerful enough in most circumstances to impose their will, but they may be persuasive enough to have like-minded others see their point of view, and to act accordingly.<sup>112</sup>

Other more cautionary voices such as Desmond Ball argued that ‘the rhetoric of comprehensive security is stronger than the reality.’<sup>113</sup> There has always been a recognition that security encompasses wider issues such as social, economic and political factors. However, the importance of the military in the national life of most regional countries seems to indicate that it would be naive to construct a security architecture that did not recognise the contribution that military power can make to national credibility. It is perhaps the duty of foreign affairs departments to adopt a more positive approach to current events, while defence specialists are lumbered with a more conservative, long-term brief. Though the dialectical approach to policy formulation is

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<sup>112</sup> Gareth Evans, ‘Australia’s role in the New World Order’, speech to the *Nihon Keizai Shimbun/Australian Financial Review*, Japan–Australia Asia Symposium, Tokyo, 4 November 1993.

<sup>113</sup> Quoted in *Australia and ASEAN: Managing Change*, Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, March 1998, p. 199.

imperfect, it is important that we do not confuse valuable notions of comprehensive security with the practical problems of collaborating with others to impose our will on unsatisfactory circumstances—whether within the region or outside it.

There was another agenda urging policy makers to downgrade the level of the military contribution to national and regional security. Some academic commentators suggested that elements of the defence establishment and associated industries retained a vested interest in maintaining military capabilities that were no longer really required.<sup>114</sup> Scholarly condemnation of hard-headed ‘realist’ attitudes to security provision and management ignored the fact that post–Cold War uncertainty made states more, rather than less, responsible for their own security. In Australia, the need to be able to maintain credible military forces was enhanced by the move to greater regional engagement. In the military sphere alone, the ADF remains responsible for the maintenance of a range of cooperative relationships with other states in the region. These include the Five Power Defence Arrangements (FPDA) and other bilateral relationships; cooperation in training and education; and combined exercises and training activities; not to say anything of maintaining core capabilities. The extension of the defence function to support confidence and security-building measures (CSBMs) has made greater rather than lesser demands on a limited budget.

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<sup>114</sup> See Graeme Cheeseman and Robert Bruce (eds), *Discourses of Danger and Dread Frontiers: Australian Defence and Security Thinking After the Cold War*, Allen & Unwin in association with the Department of International Relations and the Peace Research Centre, Australian National University, St Leonards, 1996; David Capie, ‘Regional Security in the Asia-Pacific: A critical theoretical perspective’, *Antepodium*, 4/95, at [http://www.vuw.ac.nz/atp/articles/capie\\_9507.html](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/atp/articles/capie_9507.html) (Downloaded 15 June 1999); Cotton and Ravenhill, *Seeking Asian Engagement*, p. 5.

One advantage of a bipolar global distribution of power for middle and lesser powers is that they can expect that their defence budgets supplement those of their great and powerful friends and vice versa. Once the stalemate of the Cold War was over, multilateral engagement re-emerged as the norm, and defence budgets worldwide have been stretched to provide the much broader range of military response options now required of them.<sup>115</sup>

By contrast with Labor government efforts, the current Government has retained a commitment to developing the involvement of the US in the region by expanding links at the bilateral, regional and multilateral levels. The 1997 White Paper indicated that 'Australian policy objectives will be directed at ensuring a continuing constructive US engagement with the region, reflected in productive relations between the US and its key regional partners, as well as in an active US role in regional institutions such as APEC and the ARF'.<sup>116</sup> At the same time, the Government sought to consolidate and enhance the strategic dialogue with other regional countries, most notably Indonesia. However, the fate of this particular bilateral relationship has demonstrated the perils of investing too much faith in any one arrangement. Australia's support for a peacekeeping force and assumption of the leadership of INTERFET led to the Indonesian Government unilaterally repudiating the bilateral Agreement on Maintaining Security concluded between the Keating and Suharto governments in December 1995.<sup>117</sup> The good relations that had been the supposed triumph of the policy of cooperative security

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<sup>115</sup> Cotton and Ravenhill, *Seeking Asian Engagement*, pp. 5–6; Inspector-General Division, *Defence Cooperation*, Department of Defence, Canberra, 1995.

<sup>116</sup> *In the National Interest*, p. 58.

<sup>117</sup> *Agreement between the Government of Australia and the Government of the Republic of Indonesia on Maintaining Security*, Jakarta, 18 December 1995, entry into force: 15 July 1996, Australian Treaty Series 1996, no. 13.

evaporated as a consequence of the support provided by the Indonesian Army to the local militia's murderous assaults on the bulk of the East Timorese population that supported independence. The chimera of reliance on warm, fuzzy notions of engagement failed along with any pretensions about the legitimacy of Indonesia's presence in East Timor. In the final cut, the restoration of security and stability required a peace enforcement mission built on coalition ground forces.

In a very real sense the exception—Australia's damaged relations with Jakarta—proves the rule. No one really expects that defence cooperation and regional engagement measures provide security of themselves; however, they do constitute an additional level of understanding that serves to enhance understanding and represent the basis for future collaboration. The short-sighted approach is to rue the waste of money invested in common training and defence linkages. In the long term, however, Australia will need to mend bridges with Indonesia—a task that will be made considerably easier by the relationships that already exist with junior and middle-level officers of the TNI. Those relationships are more effectively established on the basis of an appreciation of shared strengths rather than the selective blindness that has long characterised regional politics. The reality remains that, short of outright war, Australia, Indonesia and other regional countries are bound to work together in the long run to preserve stability.

### **The dynamics of regional engagement in a 'weak' international community**

Attempts by non-Asian statesmen to promote coalition building in the region have had to confront the reality that there is little history of close interstate cooperation in the region. Many states are still locked into territorial disputes that have their origins in the way that the colonial powers drew their maps as well as in demographic shifts and changes in political allegiances. Asia as a whole constitutes a 'weak' international society, in contrast to Europe or indeed the West in general. Buzan and Segal point out

that: 'Where weak states exist, leadership and ideologies are unstable, domestic turbulence spreads beyond borders, insecurity is endemic, and no state can rely on consistent patterns of attitude and alignment.'<sup>118</sup> As Hinge argued, 'pragmatic balancing and bandwagoning' remain the more usual bases for coalitions in the Asia-Pacific.<sup>119</sup> Without the record of multilateral political, economic and security cooperation that the Western political community has developed, the region has to overcome problems of understanding to enable states to work together. Paul Evans suggested that:

In its Asia/Pacific context, co-operation rather than co-ordination has been the most frequent form of multilateral interaction. There has been a distinct allergy to the creation of formal organizational structures with elaborate secretariats.<sup>120</sup>

The indications remain that coalitions rather than firm alliances will continue as the normal mode of interstate cooperation in the region. Accordingly, countries that wish to work together need to establish common understandings about the way that they will form coalitions.

Recent moves within ASEAN to develop the level of organisational dialogue offer some hope for the region, but Buzan and Segal suggest that the region is partly a prisoner of its history: 'In the face of ethnic divisions, boundary disputes, politicized armed forces, and deeply institutionalized corruption, most of the countries of Southeast Asia face serious problems in establishing stronger states, even though they are no longer suffering from the

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<sup>118</sup> Buzan and Segal, 'Rethinking East Asian Security', p. 108.

<sup>119</sup> Hinge, 'Alliances in the post Cold War era and their implications for the Pacific Basin', p. 57.

<sup>120</sup> Paul M. Evans, 'The Prospects for Multilateral Security Co-operation in the Asia/Pacific Region', in Desmond Ball, *The Transformation of Security in the Asia/Pacific Region*, Frank Cass, London, 1996, p. 203.

intense competing foreign interventions of the Cold War.’<sup>121</sup> Bearing in mind that this is a pessimistic assessment, Buzan and Segal suggest that states outside East Asia have an important role to play in securing cooperation:

Economic multilateralism quickly runs into opposition by states who are reluctant to surrender sovereignty. Multilateralism in the security sphere encounters worries about Chinese power and intentions. Should the United States fail to stay and help sustain a balance of power, or fail to help build a regional dialogue on security, and should East Asians fail to take up the challenge of multilateralism, the region may become the most important zone of conflict in the twenty-first century.<sup>122</sup>

A key element of the US *National Security Strategy for a New Century* is ‘to strengthen and adapt the security relationships we have with key nations around the world and create new relationships and structures when necessary’.<sup>123</sup> It recognises that the ASEAN Regional Forum’s (ARF) consultations are still in the confidence-building stage and therefore promotes US bilateral treaty alliances with Japan, South Korea, Australia, Thailand and the Philippines as the foundation of its continuing security role in the Asia-Pacific region.<sup>124</sup> The US military commitment of 100 000 military personnel in the region suggests that it remains of continuing significance to regional security. However, the question remains whether Asian states will be willing to accept US intervention in their affairs. In the East Timor crisis, the understandable reticence displayed by the US and the comparatively high level of leadership displayed by the Australian Government demonstrate that in many circumstances the security broker may not necessarily be a great power.

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<sup>121</sup> Buzan and Segal, ‘Rethinking East Asian Security’, p. 108.

<sup>122</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 111.

<sup>123</sup> *A National Security Strategy for a New Century*, The White House, Washington, October 1998, p. 2.

<sup>124</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 42.

As if to prove the point that the region requires more proactive security initiatives from states other than the US, at the US Strategic Studies Institute's first Annual Conference on Pacific Security Today in November 1998 the participants agreed that:

issue-specific coalitions of the willing are likely to be the rule for the foreseeable future, and that the US military will take unilateral action in Asia only by exception. Thus, the major challenge associated with US military involvement in a crisis in Asia is planning and executing cooperation and coalition operations in the region . . . conference participants deemed that there is currently insufficient dialogue between coalition partners about planning and executing a response to a major crisis.<sup>125</sup>

Nature may abhor a vacuum, but traditionally smaller powers distrust Great Power intentions. The development of the ASEAN Regional Forum since 1994 has been an attempt to create a non-aligned regional security dialogue that might later form the basis for conflict resolution. However, progress is slowed by the fact that the smaller countries trust neither the US nor China, the two greatest powers in the region. Buzan and Segal have demonstrated that the fact that small powers have attempted to take the lead in 'trying to create East Asian security institutions simply underlines the fact that neither great power in the region is acceptable as a leader. And since the great powers are the problem, the minor powers and the ARF can do little.'<sup>126</sup> In this situation, countries such as Australia and New Zealand, being relatively uncommitted, can play an important role in creating the preconditions for cooperation. This can be done by establishing institutional links that extend beyond the rhetoric of comprehensive security and set about making it easier for

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<sup>125</sup> Strategic Studies Institute Conference Report, *Pacific Security Today: Overcoming the Hurdles*, US Army War College, March 24, 1999, pp. 8–9.

<sup>126</sup> Buzan and Segal, 'Rethinking East Asian Security', p. 107.

coalitions to be formed in time of crisis. This sort of ‘enlightened self-interest’ lies at the heart of Australia’s current strategic policy and has been vindicated by the role Australia has played in East Timor.<sup>127</sup> Ultimately, it is hoped that playing the role of ‘good neighbour’ will lead to more permanent supra-state organisation in the region.

### **Precedents for a regional security community**

The 1990s have seen a spectacular rate of change in regional security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific. Until INTERFET, most notable was the case of Cambodia, where the UNTAC operation became the largest UN operation to take place in Asia.<sup>128</sup> The idea of an intervention in Cambodia involving some 16 000 troops marked a necessary departure from the principles of nonintervention that have ruled South-East Asian regional politics in the past.<sup>129</sup> Since then, the (albeit grudging) participation of some ASEAN countries in INTERFET has confirmed the regional acceptance of the validity of intervention for humanitarian purposes. For this acceptance, the leadership provided by Thailand must be accorded the credit.

To a large extent the notion of a distinct ‘Asian’ way of interstate relations based on mutual respect, sovereign autonomy and noninterference was a product of the ASEAN organisational philosophy. ASEAN was founded in 1967 with a key objective of building a Zone of Peace, Freedom and Neutrality (ZOPFAN). Its members were newly independent and jealous of their rights. In this environment, neutrality reflected a lack of will and

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<sup>127</sup> Department of Defence, *Australia’s Strategic Policy*, Canberra, 1997, pp. 25–6.

<sup>128</sup> Evans, ‘The Prospects for Multilateral Security Co-operation in the Asia/Pacific Region’, p. 204.

<sup>129</sup> Lieutenant General John Sanderson, ‘The Role of the Military Component’, in *Bringing Democracy to Cambodia*, eds Viberto Selochan and Carlyle A. Thayer, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1996, p. 47.

experience in international affairs as much as a desire to promote peace. In the thirty-odd years of ASEAN's history, its contribution to regional security has been passive rather than positive. The recent expansion of the association to include the disrupted states of Burma and Cambodia holds little hope of improving that prospect.

ASEAN remains the most significant regional forum, although the creation of a standing military security system appears incompatible with its aims. However, there are other prospects indicating a move to closer security cooperation within the region. These include the ASEAN Regional Forum, the growth of defence cooperation programs, and continued small-scale alliances such as the FPDA. While none of these represents a firm base for multilateral coalition operations, they do provide us with some indications as to how future coalition forces might best be raised and managed. It may well be that the experience of forming the INTERFET coalition will reinvigorate and accelerate the pace of multilateral security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific.

The first step to the creation of a multilateral security vehicle in the region has been the establishment of the ARF, which provides for security dialogue between ASEAN and its dialogue partners. It is now comprised of twenty-two countries.<sup>130</sup> The ARF is a significant consultative forum, but remains a long way from providing a basis for coalition operations. Perhaps most significantly it has confirmed the ongoing need for the US to maintain a balancing role in the region. Most observers accept the findings of the Australian 1997 Foreign Policy White Paper, which found that it represents an important step towards the creation of a sense of strategic community in a region where there is little history of inclusive multilateral approaches to security or

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<sup>130</sup> These countries are Australia, Brunei, Burma, Canada, China, the European Union, India, Indonesia, Japan, Laos, Malaysia, Mongolia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the Philippines, Russia, Singapore, South Korea, Thailand, the USA, and Vietnam.

defence.<sup>131</sup> As Australia's Foreign Minister Alexander Downer has argued, 'the ARF was never conceived as the sole answer to managing security in the Asia Pacific . . . the ARF is about adding a new regional layer to security relationships that will work together with management at the bilateral level.'<sup>132</sup>

More pessimistically, Cotton and Ravenhill point out that the grounding for regional cooperation is much thinner in the Asia-Pacific than in Europe. Regional institutions have had a much shorter life than those political, economic and military organisations that have proliferated in Europe since 1945. Additionally, they lack the historical antecedents that bind the European community of states together. Cotton and Ravenhill argue that ARF, though a good beginning, 'lacks institutional substance' and is subject to circumstances within the region. They conclude that 'Australia's reorientation towards Asia is a product . . . of a brief and as yet inconclusive historical moment.'<sup>133</sup> In a similar vein, Michael Leifer suggests that, as a minimalist common security system, the ARF is not equipped to deal with 'the problem of power in the new strategic environment which has emerged in the Asia-Pacific. It cannot provide any measure of common security and it is uncertain whether such a broad based body will ever be able to develop any substantial

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<sup>131</sup> *In the National Interest*, p. 38. See also David Dickens, *Lessening the Desire for War: The Asean Regional Forum and Making of Asia Pacific Security*, Centre for Strategic Studies Working Paper 11/98, Wellington, 1998; Major Dana R. Dillon, 'Contemporary Security Challenges in Southeast Asia', *Parameters*, Spring 1997, pp. 119–33; Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade, *Australia and ASEAN: Managing Change*, The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, March 1998, pp. 195–7.

<sup>132</sup> The Hon. Alexander Downer, MP, *Asia Pacific Security: Practical Cooperation In An Asian Context*, Address to the International Institute for Strategic Studies, London, 19 September 1996, [http://www.dfat.gov.au/pmb/speeches/fasp/IISS\\_ASI.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/pmb/speeches/fasp/IISS_ASI.html) (Downloaded 26 July 1999).

<sup>133</sup> Cotton and Ravenhill, *Seeking Asian Engagement*, p. 16.

combined effort'.<sup>134</sup> He questions the extent to which a model of regional security, which has worked up to a point within a limited constituency by conspicuously avoiding the problem of power, can be made effective on a much wider basis in a post-Cold War Asia-Pacific.<sup>135</sup>

However, the ARF has taken significant steps to promote cooperation in peacekeeping training, with the aim of strengthening the capacity of ARF member states to assist the UN in discharging its mandate in the area. One example of this was a 'train the trainers' workshop, co-sponsored by Australia and Malaysia and held in Kuala Lumpur in March 1997. The program involved seventy-six participants representing eighteen ARF members and the UN, and focused on achieving agreement for training military observers, police monitors and military contingents.<sup>136</sup> A long-term commitment to East Timor is likely to increase significantly the demand for this kind of training.

The development of a security architecture for the region requires what Satoshi Morimoto termed 'operational coordination within the bounds of existing frameworks'.<sup>137</sup> As far as the ARF is

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<sup>134</sup> Michael Leifer, 'The Extension of ASEAN's Model of Regional Security', chap. 4, in *Nation Region and Context: Studies in Peace and War in Honour of Professor T.B. Millar*, ed. Coral Bell, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence no. 112, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1995, p. 89. See also J.N. Mak and B.A. Hamzah, 'The External Maritime Dimension of ASEAN Security', in *The Transformation of Security in the Asia/Pacific Region*, ed. Ball, pp. 123–46.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>136</sup> 'The ASEAN Regional Forum and Peacekeeping Training', International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres (IAPTC), at <http://www.cdnpeacekeeping.ns.ca/asean.htm> (Downloaded 27 July 1999).

<sup>137</sup> Satoshi Morimoto, 'A Security Framework for the Asia-Pacific Region', in *The Transformation of Security in the Asia/Pacific Region*, ed. Ball, p. 219.

concerned, Morimoto suggests that it needs to concentrate on activities that will support a more comprehensive organisation. While there remain such varied levels of perception among members of the region, states need to build collaborative machinery from the ground up. Most observers have concentrated on the important function of developing mutual economic relations, but the same might be said to apply to those military operations that—like INTERFET—have to be mounted at short notice. Although in the foreseeable future the ARF is likely to remain a forum for discussion, combined educational programs and training in areas such as peacekeeping provide some basis for future coalition operations.

At a bilateral level, some preparation for combined operations is the product of combined training and educational opportunities amongst the forces of the region. In Australia the development of military relationships in the Asia-Pacific is the responsibility of the Department of Defence's Defence Co-operation Program (DCP). It might be expected that this would form the basis for the preparation of coalitions in time of need, but the strategic objectives of DCP do not expressly include the objective of coalition building. The DCP is one of four sub-programs of the Strategy and Intelligence Program, and concentrates on generic relationships rather than specific operational requirements. The sub-program is intended 'to contribute to Australia's defence and security interests in the Asia-Pacific region, especially South-East Asia and the South Pacific, through cooperative defence activities with selected countries'.<sup>138</sup> The DCP consists of five components: South-East Asia, Papua New Guinea, South Pacific, Other Regional Activities and Facilities for training within Australia. The objective for South-East Asia illustrates the reasoning behind the DCP, which is to promote:

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<sup>138</sup> Inspector-General Division, *Defence Cooperation*, Department of Defence, Canberra, 1995, p. 1-2, para. 107.

Australia's security policy of regional partnership by enhancing Australia's security partnership with South-East Asian States, fostering shared strategic perceptions and objectives and supporting Australia's position as a natural regional participant.<sup>139</sup>

Despite an apparent acceptance of approaches to regional security that recognise shared security concerns, the 1995 evaluation of the DCP found that 'few countries would offer full exposure to military capabilities in joint and combined training and exercise activities'. Rather, combined activities create 'a level of transparency of capabilities and, therefore, provide another avenue for reducing suspicion and building trust between regional countries'.<sup>140</sup>

Undoubtedly, defence cooperation is an ordinary part of the military's role in shaping the regional strategic environment. However, there is some concern that the costs of supporting regional engagement may impact upon the ADF, resulting in the degradation of contemporary and medium-term capabilities. Desmond Ball suggested that, with a substantial shift to defence cooperation within the region, Australia might be getting less 'bang for its buck' through its subsidy of other armed forces.<sup>141</sup> He qualified this statement by recognising that, as far as our closest ally was concerned, there was no doubt that combined exercises, cooperation and exchanges with the US remained the most significant aspect of Australia's engagement strategy.

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<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*, para. 108a.

<sup>140</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 4-10, para. 450.

<sup>141</sup> Desmond Ball, 'Australia's Strategy for Security Engagement in Asia', chap. 1, in *Nation, Region and Context: Studies in Peace and War in Honour of Professor T.B. Millar*, ed. Coral Bell, Canberra Papers on Strategy and Defence no. 112, Strategic and Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1995, p. 15. See also Alan Thompson, *Australia's Strategic Defence Policy: A drift towards Neo-Forward Defence*, Working Paper no. 29, Australian Defence Studies Centre, ADFA, Canberra, 1994.

Pauline Kerr and Andrew Mack have also criticised the blind acceptance of confidence-building measures without sufficient consideration of the policy objectives:

It is now almost axiomatic in the Australian security community, official as well as academic, that confidence building measures, limited transparency and increased defense cooperation are security enhancing. We agree, yet there have been no arguments made, nor research undertaken, to demonstrate *how* CSBMs and defense cooperation are supposed to build confidence and enhance security. This is not a trivial issue since some military planners believe that some CSBMs can *undermine security*.<sup>142</sup>

As it stands, regional defence cooperation with states other than ones with already compatible forces is not a sufficient basis for forming effective coalitions, although it might serve to lessen concerns about the capabilities of one's neighbours. However, should a more structured regional community emerge in the future, Australia is well placed to benefit from its investment in forming positive relationships with other armed forces. The spotlight that has been placed on Australian defence cooperation with Indonesia might have the additional benefit of focusing attention, at a much higher level, on the objectives of defence cooperation. Ultimately, the aim of defence cooperation should be to concentrate on practical programs that facilitate coalition operations.

The challenge posed by deploying a coalition force to East Timor at short notice highlights the need for greater preparation for

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<sup>142</sup> Pauline Kerr and Andrew Mack, 'The Future of Asia-Pacific Security Studies in Australia', in *Studying Asia Pacific Security: The Future of Research Training and Dialogue Activities*, ed. Paul M. Evans, University of Toronto–York University, Joint Centre for Asia Pacific Studies, Toronto, 1994, p. 51. Emphasis in original.

future operations of this type. While peacekeeping operations do not pose the degree of difficulty associated with forming an effective warfighting coalition within the region, experience of lower-level operations appears to indicate that regional states face major obstacles in constructing combined forces. The 1994 inquiry entitled *Australia's Participation in Peacekeeping* by the Parliamentary Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade was critical of the degree of preparation for regional forces to be deployed on peacekeeping and peace-making operations. It noted presciently that the present *ad hoc* arrangements were not as effective as a concerted effort might be and suggested that a regional contingent would be best suited to peacekeeping operations within the Asia-Pacific.<sup>143</sup>

The committee was worried that the current way of constituting peacekeeping forces did not necessarily result in a force structure with compatible procedures and equipment. Additionally, and more seriously, they expressed the concern that 'ADF troops may be required to operate with forces or troops from other countries which are ill-equipped, ill-trained and ill-disciplined, and that this may place Australian troops at a disadvantage and perhaps in danger'.<sup>144</sup> Not surprisingly, the committee's report concluded that these problems would be largely addressed by ensuring that peacekeeping forces had trained for operations prior to deployment. As peacekeeping operations often arise at short notice, forces need to train together in advance of an operational requirement for a range of possible contingencies and different levels of operations.

Given that peacekeeping or peace-making operations are the most likely operational deployments for regional forces in the near future, laying the groundwork for coalition operations should be

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<sup>143</sup> Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia's Participation in Peacekeeping*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, December 1994, chap. 10.

<sup>144</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 125.

accorded a higher priority. While fuzzy notions of regional engagement founded on CSBMs currently occupy centre stage in defence cooperation, actual collaboration to promote regional stability and security might prove a better investment of time and resources. The Joint Standing Committee believed that countries needed to formulate a clear mandate and force structure before fielding troops and, to facilitate that, a range of contingency plans could be developed among regional nations. The problem with coalitions is that they are *ad hoc* by their nature. In most cases preparation needs to be concluded before the need for deployment arises, as a crisis will call for a rapid response. The lack of regional commitment to ongoing combined training for low-level operations does not bode well for short-notice coalition operations.

The only formal, albeit subregional, standing multilateral security pact involving Australia and New Zealand with other regional powers is the FPDA. These arrangements are a multilateral defence alliance consisting of Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia, Singapore and Britain. Dating from 1971, it requires the five nations to consult one another in the event of external aggression against Malaysia or Singapore. The FPDA is a hangover from the post-colonial redistribution of power in the region, and its future seems increasingly uncertain, particularly given Prime Minister Mahathir's overt hostility to Australia and increasing inability to get along with his neighbours. Malaysia's decision to pull out of the FPDA exercise program in August 1998 dealt a significant blow to the viability of the arrangement and led to the cancellation of the exercises. Interestingly, the reason given for the withdrawal was an ongoing dispute with Singapore over the location of a customs clearance point between the two countries. Clearly, the ASEAN philosophy of accommodation and mutual respect does not preclude petulant acts of pique when it suits some countries to engage in such acts.<sup>145</sup> Despite the ongoing

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<sup>145</sup> Craig Skehan, 'Regional defence alliance in jeopardy', *The Age*, 29 August 1998,

friction within the region, Australia maintains excellent military relations with other countries in South-East Asia—particularly Singapore, Indonesia and Thailand, as well as an ongoing fraternal relationship with New Zealand. Taken together with Australia's close alliance with the US, the ADF remains the force most likely to provide the institutional bonding for coalition activities in the region.

The FPDA is most significant for providing us with a long record of military engagement and cooperation with countries in the region. As Australia seeks enhanced defence relationships with other ASEAN countries, the FPDA will serve as a precedent in a number of areas. These include command and control arrangements, communications, and combat force interoperability. The most active (and only permanent) component of the FPDA has been the Integrated Air Defence System (IADS), command of which has always gone to a senior Royal Australian Air Force officer with a Malaysian and Singaporean as deputies. The twinning of Malaysians and Singaporeans occurs at every level through the IADS command structure. Neither country has been willing to turn over command of an important element of its early-warning defence to its near neighbour. The role played by the Australian commander is essentially a political one, and illustrates one role that Australians can play in helping to construct regional coalitions—as a relatively independent party it can play the part of honest broker.

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<http://www.theage.com.au/daily/980829/news/news18.html>  
(Downloaded 30 July 1998); Patrick Walters, 'A Strategy for Revolution: Defence goes on to the front foot', chap. 19, in *Future Tense: Australia beyond election 1998*, ed. Murray Waldren, Allen & Unwin, 1999, p. 249.

<sup>146</sup> Graeme Dobell, 'Asian Reaction to the White Paper', chap. 26, in *Security for the 21st Century: Australia's 1994 Defence White Paper*, eds Jenelle Bonnor and Gary Brown, Australian Defence Studies Centre, Canberra, 1995, p. 221.

Since 1981 the FPDA has also featured annual naval and land exercises. The naval exercises, codenamed Exercise *Starfish*, were very successful and covered surface, sub-surface and maritime air warfare, with the aim of developing 'common maritime warfare techniques which help enhance the interoperability and cooperation between the FPDA partners'.<sup>147</sup> These platform-based exercises have achieved an advanced level of interoperability over the years, incrementally developing in complexity. The land exercise, codenamed Exercise *Suman Warrior*, concentrates on a Command Post Exercise (CPX) that is designed to practice command and staff procedures on combined operations at the brigade to unit level. Despite being a very valuable exercise, its scope is limited. Participants are drawn from only a few units, and units do not acquire any field experience. Although those that attend the exercise do benefit, there is little evidence that the lessons of the experience are disseminated widely within the participating armies. As low-level operations are likely to involve a higher level of army participation than naval or air combined operations, the priorities of the FPDA exercise program do not seem to match the apparent need.

In its current form, the FPDA is somewhat anachronistic, particularly considering the continuing inclusion of Britain in what is really a regional arrangement. Given the generally low-threat environment in the region, constructive engagement would probably best be served by inviting other South-East Asian countries to participate. The broad-based regional participation in the UN force in East Timor provides an excellent opportunity to develop a more general security agreement. In 1994, the Singaporean Minister of Defence Dr Lee Boon Yang suggested that the members of FPDA could:

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<sup>147</sup> Guy Toremans, 'The Five Power Defence Arrangement (FPDA): A Defence Treaty in South East Asia', *Navy International*, vol. 99, no. 9/10, September/October 1994, p. 262.

look into developing more realistic scenarios for FPDA exercises and members could consider deploying additional and more sophisticated assets to such exercises. Raising the level of sophistication and complexity of FPDA exercises would further strengthen cooperation within the FPDA and add to the interoperability of our forces.<sup>148</sup>

The experience of mounting the INTERFET deployment will provide a 'real world' precedent for enhanced cooperation and interoperability between regional forces.

In its present form the FPDA seems to have a limited future. The failure of the 1998 exercise series as a result of a border post dispute between Singapore and Malaysia underlines the fact that a formal alliance program requires the ongoing participation of all parties. While the scale of exercises remains limited and subject to cancellation at short notice, regional forces, particularly armies, will derive only a limited benefit from them. However, if the FPDA can be used as the model for enhanced and expanded defence cooperation, the sort of combined training that it has initiated might add an extra dimension to regional coalition preparedness.

By comparison the extra-regional American–British–Canadian–Australian Armies Program (ABCA) provides an excellent example of inter-army cooperation. Founded in 1947 to preserve the high level of interoperability achieved by US, British and Canadian armies during the war, Australia joined in 1963 and New Zealand gained associate membership in 1965. Though not an alliance, ABCA cooperation is based on the experience of member countries participating together in a number of coalitions

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<sup>148</sup> Dr Lee Boon Yang, Minister for Defence and Minister for Labour, Opening Address at the Second FPDA Defence Ministers' Conference, Singapore, 20 September 1994, *Asia Defence Journal*, no. 10, October 1994, p. 21.

this century. Although the program does not establish common doctrine or even weapons standardisation between armies, it does promote operational interoperability at a number of levels and accepts the primacy of US Army operational-level doctrine on combined operations.<sup>149</sup> Clearly ABCA has benefited from possessing a commonality of cultural identity as well as interests. As Hinge pointed out:

The ABCA partners have not been joined together merely by pieces of paper. The key to successful international cooperation has been tangible, free and active collaboration in war and peace, borne of a general convergence of interest and ideological solidarity. Essential unity of purpose stemming from political, cultural and ideological similarity has drawn the ABCA members together to freely and increasingly associate with each other in the interests of their own welfare.<sup>150</sup>

The ABCA relationship provides its members with awareness of a broad spectrum of military operational capabilities. Australia and New Zealand in particular benefited from access to doctrine and tactics developed by NATO Forces, while all countries benefit from exposure to different levels of warfare in varied environments.<sup>151</sup> A by-product of the relationship has also been to negate New Zealand's defence isolation, which was an outcome of its antinuclear policies.

While the historical and cultural links between the ABCA countries have explained the durability of the relationship to date, the style of the program might equally be adapted to the countries

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<sup>149</sup> *ABCA Coalition Operations Handbook*, Primary Standardization Office, Arlington, May 1999, p. i.

<sup>150</sup> Hinge, 'Alliances in the post Cold War era and their implications for the Pacific Basin', p. 64.

<sup>151</sup> Thomas Durell-Young, 'Whither Future U.S. Alliance Strategy? The ABCA Clue', *Armed Forces & Society*, vol. 17, no. 2, Winter 1991, p. 286.

in the Asia-Pacific region. ABCA entails no level of political commitment in the way that a formal alliance would, but does provide the basis for *ad hoc* combined operations. It also provides a broad-based repository of institutional knowledge about coalition building and sustainment. The recently released *ABCA Coalition Operations Handbook* provides a ‘one-stop shop’ guide to coalition planning. A similar document and inclusive relationship would go a long way to building regional confidence as to the ability of states to work together to resolve crises and conflict.

Even without ABCA, defence cooperation between Australia and New Zealand has been close since the 1944 Canberra Treaty. The high level of interoperability that existed between the two armed forces was particularly emphasised by the deployment in Vietnam of integrated ANZAC Battalions—a lower level of integration than would usually be considered between any other national force undertaking medium-level operations. The creation of the Closer Defence Relationship (CDR) between Australia and New Zealand in 1991 was intended to confirm that interoperability. CDR has:

led to initiatives on staff exchanges and facilitated the smoother harmonisation of the Australian operational deployment force and the New Zealand ready reaction force for combined operations; to the provision of helicopter support from the ADF to the NZDF; and to arrangements for air-to-air refuelling between the two air forces. Trans-Tasman military interaction and exchange in operational, training and logistics matters were already extensive by the 1990s; CDR encouraged and facilitated the development of regular policy co-ordination between the two defence establishments.’<sup>152</sup>

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<sup>152</sup> Ramesh Thakur, ‘Australia and New Zealand: Unequal Partners on the Periphery’, chap.16, in Cotton and Ravenhill, *Seeking Asian Engagement*, p. 278.

However, CDR has not met all expectations of it. Issues of sovereign autonomy and distinct domestic and international objectives have ensured that even such similar countries as Australia and New Zealand have not established an automatic synergy in combined operations.<sup>153</sup> Rather than resulting in complementary armed forces that are capable of working together to achieve common ends, it appears that New Zealand forces will augment deployments but not provide integrated capabilities. The commitment of New Zealand's new Labour Government to restructuring that country's defence force along niche peacekeeping lines will place renewed strain on the defence relationship with Australia. Regardless of the political motivations for New Zealand's reliance on peacekeeping for its security, failure to engage with the other countries of the region can only diminish New Zealand's strategic influence and significance.<sup>154</sup> Additionally, while the US–New Zealand split remains an issue, New Zealand is kept out of major regional combined exercises such as the Kangaroo series. While New Zealand cannot participate in a normal defence relationship with the most significant Western Pacific power, its ability to operate in a coalition at anything other than low-level operations remains open to question.

Although New Zealand's participation is unlikely to make or break a coalition, it is arguable that its cooperation with Australia substantially enhances the possibility of establishing a security community in the region. The prominent New Zealand defence analyst Dr Jim Rolfe has pointed out that, in the non-specific security environment of the future, it is possible to draw 'false dichotomies' between firm alliances and independence. Putting

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<sup>153</sup> Colin James, 'Mates Yes, Bedmates No', *New Zealand Defence Quarterly*, Winter 1998, pp. 2–5; Stewart Woodman, 'Not Always Close Mates', *New Zealand Defence Quarterly*, Autumn 1994, pp. 13–16.

<sup>154</sup> Christopher Dore, 'New Zealand defence to keep the peace', *The Australian*, 6 December 1999, p. 2.

the domestic political disputes that have bedevilled New Zealand's international relations aside, Rolfe suggested that :

It is sensible to use military relationships for our own ends. We can, through Alliances and other military relationships, begin to transform one aspect of international society. This is to refocus alliances away from the need to threaten other states to the desire to establish security communities which will develop norms and standards of inter-state conduct. If we do this there is little doubt that military relationships generally and alliances in particular will continue to have considerable future utility.<sup>155</sup>

Despite the failure to achieve an integrated force, there remain substantial reserves of goodwill between Australia and New Zealand. However, in the current political environment this fellow feeling is in danger of dissipating. In times of regional crisis, such as in East Timor, New Zealand has shown itself willing to make a commitment to the full extent of its capabilities. The two countries' respective defence forces need to recognise such a commitment clearly by planning to develop a standing combined force capable of dealing with situations of common concern. To a large degree, this is already recognised in *Australia's Strategic Policy*;<sup>156</sup> the next step is to combine training programs and develop an expectation that the two countries will develop a coordinated and common response to any major regional contingency.

## Conclusion

Participation in contemporary coalition operations is not just about who gets to stand on the hill at the end of the day waving

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<sup>155</sup> Dr Jim Rolfe, *New Zealand's Security: Alliances and Other Military Relationships*, Centre for Strategic Studies Working Paper 10/97, Victoria University of Wellington, 1997 at [http://www.vuw.ac.nz/css/docs/working\\_papers/wp19971000nzse00.html](http://www.vuw.ac.nz/css/docs/working_papers/wp19971000nzse00.html) (Downloaded 1 September 1999, p. 21 of 21).

<sup>156</sup> *Australia's Strategic Policy*, pp. 19–20.

the flag. To borrow the language of the consulting world, coalition participants want a 'win-win' outcome that will preferably include the object of the operation. While the Saddam Husseins, Mohammed Aideeds and President Miloševics will inevitably depart the scene, we require a future productive relationship with the Iraqi, Somali and Serbian people, just as the Germans, the Italians and the Japanese are now integral elements of the modern world order. For Australia, this will be doubly the case with Indonesia in the wake of the resolution of the East Timor crisis.

Of course, the considerations that influence Australian participation in regional coalitions are not novel. However, until the situation arose in East Timor, the extraordinary level of political and public apathy about Australia's defence relationships and capabilities led to completely unrealistic expectations in some circles as to what Australia could achieve alone. The expectation that the region faced a halcyon future of assured peace and stability is reminiscent of the mentality that dominated the inter-war period and left Australia similarly unprepared for a rapidly deteriorating regional security environment. Reflecting on the lessons of that period, David Horner concluded that:

The nature of the problems faced by Australian political and military leaders in making strategic decisions within a coalition framework during the Second World War have continued to beset Australian defence planners. These problems include an imbalance in strength between Australia and her major allies, a lack of public and political interest in defence issues in Australia, competing claims of social and military security in allocating resources, the difficulty of providing balance in a small military force, and the ever-present considerations of geography.<sup>157</sup>

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<sup>157</sup> Horner, *High Command*, p. 446.

Apart from the fact that Australia has had to assume the mantle and responsibilities of coalition leadership, nothing seems to have changed at all.

The situation in East Timor has resulted in a much-heightened awareness of the need for a positive regional security architecture that incorporates Australia as a key player. The crisis overtook the 1997 Foreign and Trade Policy White Paper, which had dramatically altered the conditions of Australian engagement with the region by arguing that:

The Government's strategy for advancing Australia's security interests is based on a hardheaded assessment of the security of the Asia Pacific region. Its key components are maintaining a strong national defence capability, the alliance relationship with the United States, expanding Australia's bilateral, regional and multi-lateral security links, and strengthening Asia Pacific-wide regional security institutions, of which the ASEAN Regional Forum (ARF) is the most significant.<sup>158</sup>

In fact Australia has had to assume the mantle of operational leadership in a regional crisis far faster and to a greater extent than could have been forecast a mere two years ago.

The rapid pace of change has resulted in a dearth of guidance on the operational implications of Australia taking centre stage as a key player in promoting regional peace and security. Consequently, policy planners need to pay particular attention to the recent historical record if they are to be prepared for the responsibilities associated with coalition leadership. The potential for a long-term commitment to maintaining a peacekeeping force in East Timor, as well as the need to provide options to the Government for other contingencies, requires a thorough re-examination of Australia's current force structure.

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<sup>158</sup> *In the National Interest*, p. vi.

Active participation in coalition operations calls for a reassessment of the ADF's doctrinal compatibility with other countries; future training; defence cooperation programs; and operational coordination, communication and integration arrangements. It is no longer sensible to expect that coalitions can be thrown together at short notice and with little preparation.

The primary lesson of recent coalition operations is that, for a middle power to exert influence in a combined force, it must be capable of providing hard-hitting, mobile, joint task-forces capable of both stand-alone operations and of integrating into any regional operation, regardless of the technical capacity of its allies. In an MRC the US will inevitably be involved as lead partner. If Australia is to enhance its position in such a partnership, it has to be prepared to provide both independent and supplementary military capabilities. In a lower-level regional operation, where Australia might expect to play a prominent part or exert leadership, the ADF needs to be able to deploy self-contained forces off-shore at short notice, and to do so with a reasonable expectation that the prior training of these forces equips them to work together with other regional forces. This is particularly important if there is no guarantee that the forces the ADF will encounter are entirely friendly or sympathetic to its mission.

The problem of assuring that Australian forces can cooperate with others at short notice is largely a function of training—both collective and individual. Interoperability can be enhanced by more training with other forces though, apart from any other considerations, the fact is that forces deployed under the UN mandate in East Timor are going to acquire 'on-the-job' training in interoperability. Most importantly, the ADF needs to foster common understanding between commanders and staffs from potential coalition countries. As Ross Allen argued:

There is no particular reason for the Army to aim to achieve bilateral interoperability with regional armies to a level comparable with our interoperability with our allies, NZ and the United States; nor would it be militarily or politically feasible to do so. We should, however, seek to develop an effective degree of interoperability with selected regional countries, including at the higher command and control levels of interoperability. This would allow the Army to conduct operations up to, say, brigade level in a regional country in a coalition with that country, or in a coalition with that country and other countries.<sup>159</sup>

Cultural issues will continue to inhibit combined operations in the Asia-Pacific. Bowman supports Allen's reservations about the degree of understanding that can be achieved at all levels of a coalition. He argues that combat units need to be integrated at a higher level as the level of conflict becomes more intense. Interoperability and technological issues are best addressed at the brigade and higher level. As Bowman points out:

Lower-level integration exacerbates differences in capabilities, communications and culture. Focus can be placed on critical areas to improve interoperability: communications, intelligence, computers, munitions and fuels. Developing protocols and common procedures will help resolve differences among the various national forces and may eventually lead to common doctrine for coalition peace support operations.<sup>160</sup>

The development of common doctrinal 'considerations' and effective liaison utilising qualified officers and civilians (to whom Major General Scales refers as 'geo-strategic scouts') are a relatively cheap way of promoting the level of operational understanding needed for complex coalition deployments.

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<sup>159</sup> Allen, *The Army and Regional Engagement*, p. 17.

<sup>160</sup> Bowman, 'Historical and cultural influences on coalition operations', p. 18.

The continuing trend to offshore multilateral operations means that the ADF has to identify and foster liaison officers within its ranks. Again, the combined effort in East Timor is likely to provide additional demand for this type of transnational expertise.

Australia's role in East Timor will be particularly critical. The East Timor crisis did provide the ASEAN countries with the opportunity to respond collectively to a regional security crisis. At least initially, Thailand and Malaysia promoted an 'Asian-led' peace enforcement force; however, ASEAN showed itself to be anything but united. Reflecting on the problems of constructing a coalition in the region, the Deputy Thai Foreign Minister Sukhumbhand Paribatra pointed out that, although ASEAN had faced problems in coordinating its response to the East Timor situation:

We have always said that we don't want other countries, especially superpowers, to interfere in the region . . . The time has come to show that we can solve the region's problems ourselves, with the co-operation of countries outside the region. To start with, we have to show our readiness to step forward as a united group.<sup>161</sup>

Australia, being in the region, though not exactly of it, is well placed to act as a go-between in constructing combined security operations. Its efforts to date have laid the groundwork; it is now possible to turn adversity to good use by demonstrating unity of effort in East Timor. Even though the Indonesian Army is out in the cold in the current operation, it remains to be seen whether the defence cooperation effort has been wasted. In the aftermath of the East Timor situation, relationships will be more rapidly mended if Indonesia sees the benefits of regional cooperation. The precedent of a successful regional coalition might go a long way to restore good relations. Dr Surin Pitsuwan of Thailand

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<sup>161</sup> Peter Alford, 'Feeble Response makes mockery of ASEAN claim to solidarity', *The Australian*, 16 September 1999, p. 7.

admitted that Australia could play a special role when he conceded: 'It is apparent that Australia is the best prepared, the most willing and has the closest troops'. That combination of capability and the will to act gives Australia a significance in the region out of proportion to its actual size and power.

The example of recent combined operations has demonstrated that it is most difficult to achieve a symbiotic relationship between ground forces. Despite this, low and medium-level operations require a substantial commitment of troops on the ground. Although a more remote contingency, an MRC would undoubtedly require extensive participation by land forces. Given Australia's limited pool of available human resources for military operations, any deployment overseas will be reliant on engaging with and utilising the support of allies. Fundamental doctrinal compatibility and the sort of understanding that an ABCA-style relationship fosters is a sound basis for a military partnership.

The first lesson to emerge from the INTERFET deployment is that, for Australia to claim lead nation status, it needs to develop the capacity to sustain land operations over a protracted period. This entails a thorough reconsideration of the personnel available to the ADF, particularly the Army. It seems clear that the current human resources available would be inadequate to support a long-term commitment. As argued in an earlier paper, no country is capable of sustaining long-term operations unless it makes effective use of its reserve forces.<sup>162</sup> Despite a thirty-year record of official studies into the Australian Reserves, implementation of the studies' recommendations is still pending. Without introducing conscription, the flexibility to undertake coalition operations across the spectrum of potential contingencies is reliant on the ability to access reserves of personnel.

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<sup>162</sup> Alan Ryan, *The Way Ahead? Alternative Approaches to Integrating the Reserves in 'Total Force' Planning*, Working Paper no. 105, Land Warfare Studies Centre, Duntroon, July 1999.

The continuing proliferation of crises needing intervention to restore internal order requires coalition forces to upgrade their civil affairs (CA) capabilities. The importance of the CA function in low-intensity conflict suggests that it is a function that is best exercised by the lead nation. If Australia expects to maintain its position as regional ‘peace broker’, it needs to enhance this capacity. Major Michael Kelly’s experience of Australian involvement in military-support operations overseas has led him to make a cogent case for the inclusion of a CA unit in any task force sent on peace operations.<sup>163</sup>

The speed of the INTERFET deployment and its humanitarian dimension militated against the early expression of explicit national and coalition objectives. Media speculation about the so-called ‘Howard Doctrine’ did little to ‘sell’ the operation in the region. Despite the journalistic licence employed in interpreting Prime Minister Howard’s comments by Fred Brenchley of *The Bulletin*, the underlying idea that Australia can play a lead role in establishing a positive regional security architecture is a sound one.<sup>164</sup> Rather than found regional security on ‘special relationships’ based on false assumptions, it is necessary to create shared appreciations of national and collective interest. The experience of all recent coalition operations has been that the more complex the combination of countries, the more essential this level of understanding is. Ideally this understanding can be achieved before any contingency arises. Whether common understanding can be achieved via an ABCA-style coalition framework or whether it needs to be thrashed out by participating parties early in a crisis, a clear understanding of the mission, the rules of engagement and the coalition exit strategy is required. These issues will be dealt with in a forthcoming paper.

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<sup>163</sup> Major Michael J. Kelly, *Peace Operations: Tackling the Military, Legal and Policy Challenges*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, 1997, paras 1150–56.

<sup>164</sup> Fred Brenchley, ‘The Howard Doctrine’, *The Bulletin*, 28 September 1999, pp. 22–4.

Cultural and political parochialism continue to frustrate international operations. While governments have primary responsibility for the formation of coalitions, they take their lead from the climate of informed opinion. Together with the other security issues addressed by the 'Track Two' deliberations of the Council for Security Cooperation in the Asia-Pacific (CSCAP), the problems of military cooperation might be accorded a higher priority. The precedent of the regionally based INTERFET coalition provides an excellent opportunity for area specialists and academics to workshop the implications of emergent multilateralism in the region. Apart from anything else, the open forum discussion of the issues might serve to dispel any misunderstandings that might arise from the role that non-ASEAN countries have played in forming the coalition.

Australia's influence in the region depends on its ability to participate in broad-spectrum coalition operations and to sustain that commitment. Ultimately this requires Australia to maintain credible ground-forces capable of being readily deployed in the littoral environment of the Asia-Pacific. However, despite the knee-jerk reactions exhibited in some quarters, Australia is not capable of being, and should not think of itself as, the regional policeman. On day three of the INTERFET operation, Paul Kelly, international editor of *The Australian* newspaper, pointed out:

The East Timor commitment arose because Australia repudiated the role of a unilateral policeman which would have meant war with Indonesia. Australia's military role in East Timor is part of a UN coalition. The key to our future military involvement in the region lies in partnerships, alliances and UN deployments, not solo initiatives.<sup>165</sup>

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<sup>165</sup> Paul Kelly, 'Partnerships the cornerstone of defence', *The Australian*, 22 September 1999, p. 17.

Accordingly, our future defence planning needs to proceed on the understanding that Australian forces will never be deployed overseas alone.

The final lesson of coalition operations is that, unlike formal alliances, they are *ad hoc*; accordingly flexibility, cultural understanding and communication need to be demonstrated by all parties. Increasingly, such operations will be characterised by previously unthinkable combinations of states. But in case we think that we have discovered the phenomenon of the heterogeneous coalition of disparate forces sharing common interests, we would do well to remember the work of the first military historian, Thucydides. Reporting the early stages of the Peloponnesian War, he recorded the approach of the delegates from Corcyra to the Athenians—two peoples with no history of alliance or friendship:

We have come to ask you for help, but cannot claim that this help is due to us because of any great services we have done to you in the past or on the basis of any existing alliance. We must therefore convince you first that by giving us this help you will be acting in your own interests, or certainly not against your own interests; and then we must show that our gratitude can be depended on.<sup>166</sup>

In twenty-four centuries, these fundamental principles remain unchanged and provide the sense of legitimacy that will continue to sustain our evolving system of international security.

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<sup>166</sup> Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, trans. Rex Warner, Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1972, Book One: 32, p. 54.

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