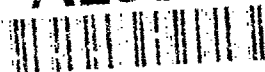


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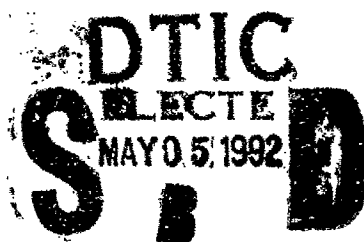


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# STUDY PROJECT

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COALITION DYNAMICS



BY

Lieutenant Colonel Raymond D. Barrett, Jr.  
United States Army

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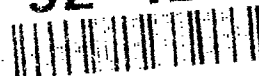
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usually cause them to be larger than necessary. Influence, rather than authority, is the dynamic aspect of power enabling a coalition to weather crises and adapt to its external environment. Because influence shifts as circumstances change, instability is an inherent coalition characteristic. This instability can be attenuated by proper communication of interests, decision making regimes and reward distribution systems. Rewards, tangible and intangible, are the ends members seek in pursuit of their interests and are distributed predominately as a function of each member's resource contribution. Knowing the interests pursued and rewards sought by each member can avoid the mismatch of both, thus, the seeds of future animosity and conflict. Of the several methods of decision making available to coalitions, some degree of unanimity binds members together. All partners need to have a voice and accept ownership in the decisions made. Failure to achieve this risks non-compliance at the least and defection in the extreme.

**USAWC MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM PAPER**

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**COALITION DYNAMICS**

**AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT**

**by**

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# ABSTRACT

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All political-military coalitions endure internal centrifugal and centripetal forces that simultaneously act to bind and dissolve them, thus affecting their behavior. This paper examines the major internal forces of coalition dynamics under four broad categories: interests, power and influence, rewards, and decision making. Interests are the heart of coalitions for it is the pursuit of interests that provides the catalyst of coalition formation. Individual member interests will never be identical either in kind or intensity, but a common purpose can and must be identified. Although the coalition's stated goals can be couched in relatively vague terms, each member's interests cannot. Shared ideology, culture and institutional systems aid in coalition formation, but are not strong enough forces to predict formation, nor guarantee duration and success. Regardless of member composition, previous cooperative effort engenders future cooperative arrangements. Power within a coalition is never absolute. Although coalitions tend to be as small as possible to maximize each member's power and expected reward, uncertainty and complexity will usually cause them to be larger than necessary. Influence, rather than authority, is the dynamic aspect of power enabling a coalition to weather crises and adapt to its external environment. Because influence shifts as circumstances change, instability is an inherent coalition characteristic. This instability can be attenuated by proper communication of interests, decision making regimes and reward distribution systems. Rewards, tangible and intangible, are the ends members seek in pursuit of their interests and are distributed predominately as a function of each member's resource contribution. Knowing the interests pursued and rewards sought by each member can avoid the mismatch of both, thus, the seeds of future animosity and conflict. Of the several methods of decision making available to coalitions, some degree of unanimity binds members together. All partners need to have a voice and accept ownership in the decisions made. Failure to achieve this risks non-compliance at the least and defection in the extreme.



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## INTRODUCTION

"Coalitions have ubiquitously occurred in the past as well as the present; and so long as power over others, policies, and economic wealth are scarce commodities and resources are divided among many actors, coalitions will be an aspect of politics in the future."<sup>1</sup>

E.W. Kelley, "Theory and Study of Coalition Behavior"

Throughout history man has found occasion to align himself with others to achieve some purpose he could not otherwise attain alone. Whether it was to gather food, create shelter, obtain wealth or protect himself from vanquish at the hands of enemies, he has frequently found that the aid and assistance of others was required to achieve his purpose. But the aligning of oneself with another is never as simple as going it alone. Deciding who to align with, forming the arrangement, identifying its purpose in consonance with the desires of those involved, and maintaining the relationship over time are very difficult tasks just between two individuals. The process increases in complexity when two groups are involved, and among multiple nation-states it is an order of magnitude that is almost unfathomable.

This paper is about that unfathomable complexity. It is about coalitions. More specifically, about the dynamic forces that operate within coalitions. It attempts to identify and discuss those major forces that draw and bind parties together.

and those that work to disintegrate coalesced parties. Humans, and the organizations they create, frequently seek to cooperate and coordinate their efforts in a manner that will achieve some otherwise unobtainable goal. Yet the very forces of nature work against them doing so. Newton's second law of thermodynamics states the entropy -- or degree of disorder -- within a system will always increase unless order is purposely injected into it as a counteracting force.<sup>2</sup> Intuitively we understand this occurs. We recognize that in any coalition there are both centripetal and centrifugal forces constantly at work to bind and tear apart that coalition. The purpose of this paper is to identify and examine the most significant of these dynamic forces within the context of coalitions between nation-states. How these forces affect the formation, maintenance and success of coalitions is implicit in this examination.

The term coalition itself is confusing, with as many definitions as there are scholars and authors concerned with its nature and unique forces. For instance what is the distinction between a coalition and an alliance? What about a pact, bloc or cartel? Some scholars differentiate based on the number of actors involved; others, by the method rewards are distributed or by the presence of an official convention; and still others, by the type of interests involved.<sup>3</sup> Although these distinctions are important to analyses aimed at developing specific theses, propositions and theories, it is the more general dynamics of collaborative situations providing a broad range of application

that are of concern to us. Therefore, a less restrictive definition is of greater utility.

In this study the term coalition is used to describe the situation where two or more actors have agreed to coordinate their actions to achieve an outcome preferable to that which would result if each were to act alone.<sup>4</sup> Actors should be thought of in terms of nation-states. Although some of the literature espousing basic theory is derived from observations and experiments involving individuals, little is lost in extending these arguments and propositions to the more general case of nation-states.

The term coalition should not be limited to an image of a military coalition such as was formed during the recent Persian Gulf conflict; nor should the image of an alliance such as NATO automatically come to mind. The broad definition applied here is intended to cover bilateral and multilateral cooperation in political, military and economic spheres at the strategic level. Although the examples given are predominately political-military in nature, the dynamics are generally applicable to all of these spheres.

Numerous theories, hypotheses and propositions of coalition behavior have been put forth. One study attempting to canvas the body of knowledge on the subject even lists 347 propositions affecting coalition formation, structure, purpose and duration.<sup>5</sup> Most scholars generally see coalitions and power politics as social-psychological interactions where relationships are



important but not very subject to precise empirical mathematical models. Nonetheless, much modeling has been attempted to prove or discount various hypotheses. Regarding coalition formation, one theory proposes that actors will form the smallest coalition possible to ensure success, the principle determinant being size in terms of number of partners and resources.<sup>6</sup> Another theory uses power as the central determinant in coalition formation suggesting that "...parties will prefer the coalition that maximizes the number of others they have control over."<sup>7</sup>

Some theorists feel that reward is the dominant factor in coalition formation in that actors will join or form coalitions that offer them the greatest payoff.<sup>8</sup> To others a common ideology is the principle basis for coalition formation and aids in maintaining that relationship.<sup>9</sup>

The list of theories and models continues *ad infinitum*, each with its proponents and compelling arguments. This plethora of prescriptive theories actually implies one truth: there is no single encapsulating theory. What then can we focus on to gain a better understanding of coalition dynamics?

In the succeeding sections, we will examine the four major dynamic forces that seem to run throughout the many extant propositions and theories: interests, power and influence, rewards, and decision making. The first three affect both coalition formation and maintenance. The latter deals primarily with maintaining a coalition. By examining coalitions from this perspective, we can better understand the forces that affect

strategic and senior leaders as they pursue major policy objectives.

A final note. Although much of the discourse of this paper is aimed at the strategic level involving national interests and relationships between nation-states, the forces examined and principles discussed have applicability at the senior leadership level as well. Senior political, military and business leaders are confronted with the same dynamics but apply them in a necessarily different context. Additionally, a greater understanding of coalition dynamics at the strategic level aids the senior leader who is often charged with executing strategic policies in the context of a coalition. In any case, senior leaders are never immune to the actions and effects of strategic or international coalitions.

#### INTERESTS

It is the nature of man that he engages in cooperative efforts to achieve some purpose when it is in his interest to do so. While we can extend this motivation to coalitions, it is the number, nature and clarity of interests an actor brings to the situation that are of critical significance. These factors will dictate coalition formation, organization, decision making, maintenance and ultimately success.

Affiliation theorists propose that coalitions are the political reflection of common culture, ideology, values and institutional systems -- such as forms of government and

economies.<sup>10</sup> These are referred to as homogeneous coalitions. Implicit in this theory is that commonality of culture, ideology, etc., infers commonality of interests. One study of 36 war coalitions between 1821-1967 -- producing 624 cooperative dyadic combinations -- concluded that the closer two states' ideology and culture the more likely they were to enter into a coalition arrangement.<sup>11</sup>

There is considerable evidence, however, to suggest this factor of homogeneity is not as strong as its proponents suggest. A second study examining 130 political, military and economic alliances between 1815-1939 concluded that, although ideological and cultural similarity does aid in initial coalition formation, it is not strong enough to predict international behavior, and has minimal impact on maintaining a coalition over time.<sup>12</sup> An example of this is the two extremes of Nazi Germany and Communist Russia entering into a nonaggression pact in 1939.<sup>13</sup> Another is the alliance between England and Russia as part of the Grand Alliance of World War II. We can state, therefore, that ideological, cultural and institutional homogeneity is a force that assists in coalition formation, but not so strong a force as to be predictive of that occurring or to have a significant impact on coalition duration.

Since heterogeneous states do form coalitions, it is reasonable to ask why and what forces are operative within? The answers are articulated in the Theory of Expediency which is a central element of the realist view of strategy. These

proponents believe that actors are primarily concerned with security and attaining sufficient power to achieve their objectives based on an assessment of interests.<sup>14</sup> While recognizing that ideology and culture aid in coalition formation, they are minor considerations and not the dynamic operative force that interest is. Hans Morgenthau, one of the foremost proponents of this view, summarizes its thesis: "Whether or not a nation shall pursue a policy of alliances is, then, not a matter of principle but of expediency."<sup>15</sup> Numerous historical examples and the results of the studies cited earlier support this proposition.

The number, type and intensity of interests clearly affects coalition formation and maintenance. The least complex situation is when coalition partners share a single common interest to overcome a clear and substantial threat to both. The difficulty is that this situation seldom exists. It is expected that each actor will possess several interests which are not exactly the same as his coalition partner's. What is crucial to coalition success, however, is that the actors agree on a single common purpose even though this purpose will usually not satisfy all the disparate interests involved. One is reminded of Clausewitz's warning that "One country may support another's cause, but will never take it so seriously as it takes its own."<sup>16</sup>

The strongest bond a coalition can possess is the agreement that maintaining the coalition is its principle collective interest. Such is the case with NATO as a collective defense

coalition, the European Economic Community from 1957-1967 as an economic development coalition, and the Austrian Grand Coalition of 1945-1966 as a political coalition aimed at restoring the Austrian state.<sup>17</sup> In each of these situations the coalition was of value in itself.

In war coalitions the single greatest strategic purpose is victory.<sup>18</sup> However, this implies that war partners can only marshal sufficient power to attain this goal through coalition action. Therefore, maintaining the coalition until victory is achieved becomes the preeminent interest. For the military leader, understanding the essentiality of maintaining the coalition is critical and must be afforded his highest priority.<sup>19</sup>

The formulation of a common purpose or interest does not negate the importance of identifying and attempting to satisfy the individual actor's multiple interests. All actors understand that by joining a coalition they may operate to achieve another actor's interest. So long as this interest is not in direct conflict with one of their own, the coalition will not collapse.<sup>20</sup> However, this is a disintegrating force that needs to be recognized and resolved during the coalition formation period.

The destructive effect of incompatible interests, even on coalitions with a clear common purpose, is significant. The case of the military alliance opposing Napoleon in 1813-1814 illustrates this point. The coalescing of Austria, Prussia,

Russia and Sweden in 1813 had the common purpose of defeating Napoleon. Each state, though, possessed different interests in the outcome which affected how the war was prosecuted and the objectives or outcomes desired. Austria wanted to restore European balance of power by reestablishing a viable France within her 1792 borders -- rather than destroying her -- as a counterweight to Russian hegemony. Prussia and Sweden sought to minimize casualties, thereby increasing their power and influence in a post-war Europe. Sweden specifically wanted to maintain her ability to annex Norway after the threat of Napoleon was eliminated. Russia wanted to crush the French culture and replace it with institutions of its own design, effectively establishing hegemony over Europe.<sup>21</sup>

This clash of interests came to a head when Napoleon was weakened after the battle of Leipzig and the coalition could not agree on the military objectives for the final campaign. Prussia and Russia wanted to immediately pursue and crush the withdrawing French, while Austria and Sweden -- the latter already beginning another campaign against Norway -- wanted to engage in negotiations that would keep Napoleon in power but within France's 1792 borders.<sup>22</sup> The alliance had effectively achieved its military aims but not the political interests that drove them. The crisis was averted by two events. Austria called for a council of sovereigns to identify and agree on the political interests sought, and Napoleon refused to enter into negotiations.<sup>23</sup>

This example highlights several dynamic forces involving interests and coalitions. First, a single common purpose does assist in coalition formation and maintenance. The absolute fear of Napoleon and acknowledgement that his defeat was the preeminent interest of each coalition partner held the alliance together during periods of military and political crisis.

Second, coalition partners do bring other and divergent interests into coalition situations. Third, these divergent interests, depending on the intensity, need not collapse a coalition. So long as coalition leaders recognize this, look for the differences and respect them while emphasizing the commonality of purpose, coalitions can survive.<sup>24</sup>

Finally, communication of interests is critical to forming and maintaining coordinated efforts. The inability to effectively communicate with coalition partners, either generally or selectively, retards the flow of information concerning interests, and, by extension, strategies to achieve those interests.<sup>25</sup> Only Austria's call for a council of sovereigns after the battle of Leipzig to discuss interests, objectives and their concomitant strategies averted the collapse of the alliance. Additionally, it must be recognized that interests shift over time, either in substance or intensity, as the internal and/or external environment changes. Thus, communications becomes increasingly important the longer a coalition endures.

Two more factors relating to interests bear mentioning: the

actual number of stated interests and their ambiguity. The analysis cited earlier of 130 formal alliances concluded that coalitions with four or more stated goals tended to weather crises better and survive longer than did those with fewer goals. Moreover, ambiguity of coalition goals tended to have no impact on coalition maintenance or performance. In fact, there was a slight tendency for coalitions with ambiguous goals to endure longer than those with unambiguous goals.<sup>26</sup>

Most probably this is because multiple and vaguely stated coalition goals allow members greater bargaining space and trade-offs when matching their individual interests to achieving the coalition's common purposes. Differences can be resolved without breaking the coalition. One caution to this, however, is that war coalitions with multiple parties and numerous interests have greater difficulties resolving the conflict and agreeing to a settlement that satisfies all members.<sup>27</sup>

A final dynamic force related to interests is the impact of previous cooperative arrangements on coalition formation. One can speculate that actors who have corroborated in the past for a common purpose are more likely to form a coalition in the future. Regardless of ideological, cultural and institutional differences, the communicating and understanding of interests that accompanies coordinated actions should tend to reduce suspicions between actors and assist in future situations requiring coalition formation.

A study of political interest groups in coalition



governments tends to support this proposition. The more frequently a political coalition forms, the more likely it is to form again.<sup>28</sup> As actors coalesce on issues they establish an understanding of interests, distribution of power and patterns for apportioning rewards. Antithetically, historical animosities between parties work against forming future coalitions, regardless how substantive the differences were.<sup>29</sup>

Other studies show that wartime coalitions are inextricably linked to peacetime relationships -- both favorably and unfavorably. The more congenial relationships are during peacetime, the more likely wartime coalitions are to form.<sup>30</sup>

The proposition can be extended to wartime coalitions and their effects on coalition formation during future conflicts. A rather exhaustive study of 36 conflicts involving 172 war coalition partners found that wartime allies became enemies in future conflicts only 28% of the time.<sup>31</sup> This suggests that the consequence of wartime partnership tends to be future partnership.

From this review of interests as a dynamic of coalition behavior, a few propositions can be summarized. Similarity of ideology, culture and institutional systems assists in coalition formation, but has little impact on coalition maintenance or performance over time. Partners must agree to a common coalition purpose or set of purposes, while accepting and accommodating that each brings multiple and frequently different interests into the coalition. To succeed in maintaining the coalition, partners

need to look for these differences while emphasizing the common purpose. Additionally, identifying and expressing multiple coalition goals in ambiguous terms tends to aid in maintaining a coalition over time by providing bargaining room for trade-offs during crisis and decision making. Finally, the impacts of past relationships affect future cooperative action in proportion to the nature of that past relationship -- cooperation fosters future cooperation while animosity creates future animosity.

#### POWER AND INFLUENCE

In all systems power is sought, contested, and employed to determine outcomes and course of events. In cooperative arrangements such as coalitions, power plays a central role in formation and maintenance as objectives are pursued and rewards disbursed. Some scholars espouse that power is the *sine que non* of international politics, as nations participate in coalitions only to attain, maintain or increase their power over other nations.<sup>32</sup> Others expanded this quest for power into social-psychology and suggest that the basis for all social interaction is the attempt to enhance one's power relative to that of another -- if not to increase one's own power, then to at least reduce the power another has over them.<sup>33</sup>

There are three aspects of power that are important to the study of coalition dynamics: influence as the dynamic aspect of power; the impact size and the distribution of power has on formation; and finally, the effect power has on stability.

Within every coalition there are two types of power: authority and influence. Authority is the structural aspect of power and refers to the formally sanctioned right to make final decisions. It is unidirectional, flowing from higher to lower. Deriving its source from the coalition structure, its limits are clearly delineated and therefore static in nature.<sup>34</sup>

Even in highly structured coalitions, all actors and the established authority are subject to influence -- the informal aspect of power. The sources of influence are personality, expertise and opportunity. Its basis is knowledge or information (e.g. technology).<sup>35</sup> Influence is multi-directional and can flow upward, downward and horizontally. Not being sanctioned, influence is informal and infers no organizational rights. By its nature, influence is ambiguous and dynamic, often shifting over time and circumstance. From its dynamic nature, it is the basis for innovation and change within the coalition.<sup>36</sup>

Whether one subscribes to the theory that power is the root of all coalition dynamics or not, the impact it has on coalition formation can not be dismissed. The essence of these impacts are encapsulated by the "size principle" developed by William Riker: "...participants create coalitions just as large as they believe will ensure winning and no larger."<sup>37</sup> Size is important because it ultimately determines the distribution of power and rewards. Stated otherwise, power and reward distribution is a function of the number and type of members joining the coalition.

According to the size principle, actors consciously attempt

to minimize coalition membership and resource contribution to only that which ensures a winning amount of power over non-members.<sup>38</sup> By so doing, coalition members are intent on maximizing rewards and reducing the complexity of coalition formation and maintenance.

In practice this theory has limitations. First, it is based on "zero-sum" game theory where the winner takes all. Second, it assumes the actors have perfect communications and, therefore, knowledge of costs and rewards involved in all potential coalition combinations.<sup>39</sup> Although this is never the exact situation or case, to the degree that the situation approaches this case the principle is operative. An example of such situations is an economic or political coalition situation where communication and information between potential members is more precise and the winner gets the business contract or political office and the loser receives nothing.

It is in the area of war and conflict that the size principle is least applicable. Here again studies of war coalitions discount the size principle. War coalitions tend to be larger than that which is just sufficient to win. There are several reasons for this. Wartime situations are extremely complex and characterized by a high degree of uncertainty, thus determining the minimum winning size is problematic. Adding to this is the reality that communications between nations is never as complete or perfect as that assumed in theory. Moreover, even with good communications a desire to ensure a quick victory

compels a wartime coalition to increase in size -- and power -- relative to the enemy's.<sup>40</sup> Another factor is that actors are often granted coalition membership to eliminate them as potential enemies. Finally, larger wartime alliances offer legitimacy to its members and thus the coalition's central purpose.<sup>41</sup>

Though the foregoing discussion somewhat discounts the principle that minimizing size is an absolute determinant to coalition formation, it cannot be entirely dismissed. There is merit in its general thrust. Although coalitions are never of minimal size, they do tend to be smaller rather than larger. By doing so they offer each member a greater share of rewards, are easier and take less time to form, and more equitably distribute costs.<sup>42</sup> The smaller a coalition the greater is each member's visibility and concomitant influence over decisions affecting its interests.<sup>43</sup> Finally, smaller coalitions have a greater propensity to endure than their larger counterparts.<sup>44</sup>

Besides size and coalition formation, influence affects coalition stability. If the sum total of all members' influence within a coalition is equal to one, then the increase of one member's influence is gained at the expense of one or all the others.<sup>45</sup> This does not negate that a coalition's combined power may increase relative to other coalitions or to non-members. However, within the coalition the shifting of influence -- that dynamic aspect of power -- can create episodic periods of instability.

A realist view of coalition dynamics proposes that conflict

and instability are inherent in relationships among states without the presence of a single overwhelmingly powerful member. However, where power is centralized in a single member the coalition gravitates toward a "zero-sum" attitude as that hegemonic member forces subordination of individual interests for the collective interest. With time these become viewed as losses by the lesser members, and cooperation can only be sustained for short periods.<sup>46</sup> Unless the coalition can accommodate change by shifting influence, this gravitation toward "zero sum" feeds discontent leading eventually to greater instability and the potential for coalition collapse as the tendency to defect increases.

Influence, therefore, must be recognized as a natural positive aspect of power and accommodated if a coalition is to endure. A hegemonic member may facilitate coalition formation by the sheer force of its power, but eventually situations change and the longer the coalition is in place the more likely it will lose its hegemony. When this occurs that initially hegemonic member must live with the good or ill-will it has created.<sup>47</sup>

Centralization of power in coalition situations is very akin to the patron-client relationship among states, such as the former Soviet Union and Cuba. By definition the patron state and the client state will have different interests even though they may agree on the coalition's common purpose. These differing interests can be transcended, but over time the cost to the patron state of doing so increases.<sup>48</sup>

Small seemingly weak coalition members can wield great influence. A member with a moderate or central position along the spectrum of coalition power and interests will usually possess a degree of influence exceeding its resource contribution, since its preference can determine the outcome of decision.<sup>49</sup> Similarly, coalition members that control critical resources will command influence beyond that which is indicated by their size or the structural hierarchy.<sup>50</sup> So within coalitions, the quest for influence by control of central position or critical resources is dynamic and never ending.

There is one final aspect of power and coalition stability that deserves mention. The more powerful and dangerous the adversary or threat, the more stabilizing the effect it has on the coalition. Although often couched in military terms, the concept is also applicable to political and economic situations. As Kissinger wrote:

"As long as the enemy is more powerful than any single member of the coalition, the need for unity outweighs all considerations of individual gain...But when the enemy has been so weakened that each ally has the power to achieve its ends alone, a coalition is at the mercy of its most determined member."<sup>51</sup>

This can be seen in the example of the military alliance against Napoleon discussed in the earlier section on interests. The overpowering fear of Napoleon drove the coalition to unity. However, as the French strength eroded the relative strength of Russia increased to the point where Czar Alexander threatened to continue a policy of annihilation, alone if necessary. Only the personal influence of Austrian Chancellor Metternich, on the one

hand, and Napoleon's refusal to negotiate a settlement, on the other, held the coalition together.

This section examined the effects of power on coalition formation and maintenance, and suggested several principles. Influence, as a dynamic force capable of adjusting and shifting as conditions change, is the more critical aspect of power and the key to both formation and maintenance of cooperative endeavors. The desire of individual actors to maximize their power within a coalition affects coalition formation by tending to limit its size. An exception to this proposition are war coalitions which tend to be larger than absolutely necessary because of complexity, uncertainty, and desire for legitimacy and quick victory.

Smaller coalitions tend to endure longer than larger coalitions as power and influence is spread over fewer members. This limited dispersement of power makes it easier for each member to identify and attain their distinct interests while sharing in a greater proportion of the rewards. Also proposed was that hegemonic members help form and initially maintain a coalition by forging unity for a common purpose. To endure, however, this static authoritative power must eventually give way to dynamic influence power as conditions change.

Finally, it is suggested that the more ominous the threat relative to the power of any single coalition member, the more stable the coalition. As this threat wanes the coalition becomes increasingly unstable as individual members place more importance



on their own interests than the coalition's collective interest.

### REWARDS

Many theorists believe that the desire to maximize rewards is the overriding dynamic in coalition behavior. Whether an actor's efforts are to minimize size, maximize power, and/or control decisions, the intended effect is to maximize rewards.<sup>52</sup> This section discusses the effects this desire for rewards have on the decision to join a coalition, three different reward distribution models employed by coalitions, and the impact of a disconnect between interests and rewards.

A focus on rewards has some not so surprising effects on the decision to join a coalition. Theoretical and historical studies on rewards and coalition formation tend to show that the greater the certainty and immediacy of reward the greater the pressure to join a coalition.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, the likelihood that a given coalition will win affects an actor's choice of which coalition to join "independent of size."<sup>54</sup> Thus winning and the expectation of reward is a stronger determinant of coalition formation than size alone. It is better to gain something by participating in a winning coalition than to maximize the potential for gain by joining a smaller coalition with less assurance of winning. This does not obviate entirely the size principle discussed earlier as participants in a winning coalition will still attempt to minimize their size. But it does place probability of reward and size in perspective.

If probability of winning is equal among alternative coalitions, actors tend to chose the one requiring the least resource contribution as determined by a cost-benefit analysis. Therefore, the decision to join a coalition is a function of expected rewards based on both the probability of winning and the net value of what may be won.<sup>55</sup>

Once formed and objectives achieved, how does a coalition determine the appropriate distribution of rewards? Three models have historically been employed to determine this: battle losses, community, and contribution. The battle losses model is peculiar to war coalitions and determines reward distribution based on the losses a nation sustains -- losses usually referring to casualties but may include industry, territory and other national resources. Accordingly, this model posits that the greater a state's losses, the greater the share of spoils it will receive.<sup>56</sup>

Although it is infrequently used, the Soviet's presented this model in claiming their sphere of influence over Eastern Europe after World War II where 85% of the Germans were killed and Russia lost more men than the UK and USA combined.<sup>57</sup> Another example of the battle losses model is the formation of Israel. When the issue of Palestine came before the UN in 1947, the Soviet delegate supported establishing a separate Jewish state partially on the grounds that the Jews lost so many lives during World War II.<sup>58</sup>

The community model is based on an idealistic view of

coalition behavior, which suggests that when actors form coalitions based on shared values and friendly relationships, rewards are distributed on an equity basis. The degree of equity is equal to the degree of friendliness and ideological similarity.<sup>59</sup> This model is seldom used in practice, although when a coalition is formed based on similarity of culture and ideology it can apply.

The final model of reward distribution is based on participation and degree of contribution. Stated succinctly, this model proposes that distribution of rewards is based on the amount an actor contributes to the achievement of coalition goals -- the greater the contribution toward attaining the objectives, the greater the share of rewards an actor receives.<sup>60</sup> The previously mentioned study of 36 war coalitions between 1821-1967 involving 122 participants concludes that contribution is the strongest and most frequently applied determinant of reward distribution.<sup>61</sup>

When the contribution model is applied to political coalitions, rewards are not necessarily distributed in a rigid mathematical manner. Larger contributors get a larger reward but not necessarily in amounts exactly proportionate to their contribution of resources.<sup>62</sup> This is a reflection of the inherent dependency nature of coalitions. Although larger members expect larger rewards, they can not attain their objectives without the assistance of the other smaller members. As a result, smaller members usually command greater influence

and a larger share of rewards than is commensurate with their contribution. Therefore, large coalition members usually receive rewards that are approximately halfway between proportionality and an equal division.<sup>63</sup>

Whatever the model used in determining reward distribution, the reward received must be viewed by each coalition member as satisfying its interests. Interests and rewards cannot be separated. The most prevalent model applied in coalition situations is the contribution model. It assumes that the amount and type of resources an actor contributes to the coalition is commensurate with its interests. Unfortunately, interests are not always communicated in a clear and precise manner or are not heeded by those deciding on reward distribution. When this occurs and there is a mismatch of interests and rewards, animosity results.

The case of the First Balkan War illustrates this point. Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece formed the Balkan League in 1912 seeking to eliminate Turkish power in the Balkans and increase their own territorial area. Bulgaria contributed 180,000 soldiers, Serbia 80,000 and Greece 50,000. The Turkish force opposing them consisted of 240,000 soldiers.<sup>64</sup> Serbia's expected reward was to gain Albania. Bulgaria wanted to gain back Salonika and Macedonia as part of "greater Bulgaria" proclaimed by the Treaty of San Stephano in 1878. Greece too wanted Salonika, but this was not communicated when the coalition was formed.<sup>65</sup>

Bulgaria contributed the greatest force, bore the brunt of fighting and frequently fought in areas -- such as Thrace -- she had no territorial interests over. Yet the Treaty of London brokered by the Great Powers of Europe that followed Turkey's defeat granted Albania independence, compensated Serbia by awarding her Macedonia, awarded Salonika to Greece, and Bulgaria was granted Thrace. Even though Thrace represented the largest land mass awarded, reflecting Bulgaria's participation and generally following the contribution model, the reward did not satisfy Bulgarian interests.<sup>66</sup> The resulting bitterness was the catalyst for the Second Balkan War of 1913.

The preceding discussion examined the effects rewards and their distribution have on coalition formation and maintenance. Actors want to join coalitions with a high probability of winning and where the greatest net reward is expected. When expected rewards between alternative coalitions are equal, actors will maximize their share of rewards by joining the coalition requiring the least contribution. Also, the greater the certainty and immediacy of reward, the easier it is to form a coalition.

Three models for distributing rewards seem to govern coalition action. By far the most acceptable and frequently applied is a distribution based on contribution. However, recognizing the disparity of contribution that frequently occurs in coalition situations, large members usually receive rewards that are less than proportionate to their contribution but

greater than mathematically equal.

Finally, the relationship between interests and rewards can not be disregarded. Rewards distributed to coalition members must reflect their interests. Although identity and clarification of interests can be problematic when communication between actors is less than perfect, it represents a critical function of coalition formation that impacts on maintenance and future coalition behavior.

#### DECISION MAKING

The last decision an actor will make alone is the decision whether or not to join a coalition. So long as that actor remains a member of the coalition the power to make decisions is a shared one. This section looks at those aspects of coalition decision making that tend to facilitate or disrupt coalition cohesion and performance.

The first imperative of decision making -- beginning with the decision to form or join a coalition -- is communications. The importance of communicating interests during coalition formation was discussed earlier, but bears emphasizing and impacts on maintenance. Without a clear communication of interests prior to coalition formation all subsequent decisions risk offending one or many members. In addition, future decision making flounders for lack of knowledge of resident interests, which degrades coalition performance and may eventually lead to members' frustration. Once a coalition is formed, communication

of interests does not take on a lesser importance. To the contrary, interests shift over time as they are adjusted and refined in relation to both internal and external events and conditions.

Early works on organizational and coalition theory assumed perfect communication between actors resulting in perfect information and optimum decisions for the individual actors and collective body.<sup>67</sup> This is unrealistic, but to the degree that it can be achieved the greater the coalition's cohesion and performance. To overcome its imperfections, communications must be continuously affected through multiple and redundant means. This tends to bind partners together by reducing suspicion, misunderstanding, and feelings of distrust.<sup>68</sup> In short, communicating within an organization needs to occur frequently and be made easy.

This requirement for communication can be facilitated through institutional structure. Some examples of structural schemes that contribute to effective communications and decision making are: multiple working groups specializing in well defined areas of interest to the coalition; permanent joint bodies sitting in continuous session; layered joint committees formulating recommended policies; a dedicated secretariat with a permanent joint staff; and liaison groups. OPEC struggled from its inception in 1960 until its ascension to prominence in 1973 partly because it did not have such institutionalization.<sup>69</sup> However, organizational structure and the communications it

facilitates is only one aspect of the decision making process.

For a coalition to pursue its goals effectively, it must decide how it will make decisions, understand the rules established, and then follow them. Four different methods of granting decision authority are discussed here: resource contribution, functional contribution, unanimity, and majority. As will be shown, these methods are not necessarily mutually exclusive. For instance, resource contribution -- loosely equating to power and influence -- can have significant effect on majority votes and even unanimity. Regardless of the rules selected, however, mutual consultation with all parties is critical so no party feels it is not treated as a member, taken for granted, or not given an opportunity to voice a position.<sup>70</sup>

Resource contribution has historically been a favored decision making method. Its simple proposition is that a member's weight in decision making is relative to the resources it contributes. The partner who contributes the most to the coalition has the greatest say on the outcome. The 1813 coalition of Austria, Russia, Prussia and Sweden opposing Napoleon discussed earlier operated under this method. Austria contributed 300,000 soldiers to the alliance total of 570,000, thereby gaining the right to name the alliance's military leader and develop the campaign plan.<sup>71</sup>

This method is not without its dangers. If coalition members do not feel the decisions made complement their interests, the tendency to defect can become irresistible. This



point reemphasizes the importance of mutual consultations. In the above example, the Austrian general commanding the alliance forces briefed each sovereign on the initial campaign plan and all subsequent changes. Not all of them agreed with the plan and some modifications were made, but in the end the Austrian plan was executed.<sup>72</sup>

Related to the resource contribution method is the functional contribution method. Essentially, this method states that a coalition member should be consulted and have the greatest influence over those areas in which its contribution to the joint cause is most significant.<sup>73</sup> Canada championed this approach during World War II in its relations with the UK and USA.

Fully understanding it would not have a deciding vote in all coalition decisions, Canada chafed at the major powers' presumption of Canadian support and participation without due consultation or consideration. Once the functional method was placed in effect, Canada was granted a seat on those boards and commissions that decided issues relating to the areas of greatest interest to her such as agriculture and war production.<sup>74</sup>

The functional method clearly increases coalition cohesion and enhances long term relations among its members. Its greatest application is in large coalitions operating in complex environments attempting to satisfy a multiplicity of interests. It should not be assumed, however, that it is only applicable in such situations or that it can substitute for non-participation in major decisions involving critical interests. In combination

with other decision making methods, the functional method can enhance coalition maintenance and performance; without it animosity of smaller members can grow, along with the temptation to defect.

The two most pervasive methods of decision making are unanimity and majority. A caution is appropriate concerning these two methods. Many studies have shown there is an important practical need for unanimity even where formal decision rules permit hierarchial -- such as resource contribution -- and majority decisions.<sup>75</sup> Although the tendency is to discuss unanimity and majority decision making methods as counter-points to each other, there is a dynamic toward consensus building in both.

Unanimity is the predominate decision making method used in coalitions and the only one used in political coalitions of European coalition governments. It requires the explicit agreement of every coalition member to approve a decision. Unanimity has several positive effects on coalitions. It promotes a spirit of consensus, minimizes opportunities for actors outside the coalition to exploit differences between members, and ensures that no party is forced to accept a policy it deeply opposes.<sup>76</sup>

Unanimity is an effective and important decision making method because it determines objectives, policies, and reward distribution in at least a minimally acceptable manner so no member feels decisions are forced upon it. This encourages the

implementation of decisions by ensuring that every member has ownership in them, and precludes withholding cooperation in future decision making or withdrawal all together<sup>77</sup>. For those coalitions with a clear and strong commitment to a common purpose, it may be the best method for compensating a multitude and variance of interests.

There are negative impacts to unanimity. It is the most time consuming decision making method, leads to minimally acceptable decisions, and relies heavily on the desire of members to maintain the coalition. These points are important because they imply a considerable amount of energy must be expended to broker agreement and that the coalition can sustain its central purpose. This can be most difficult in a dynamic environment and is, therefore, not necessarily the best decision making method for all coalitions.

For collective defense coalitions -- such as NATO -- where sovereignty, survival and war making are the central purposes, unanimity is the only viable decision method. No state can be expected to participate in a decision that threatens its survival because it lost a vote. However, in economic coalitions and collective security coalitions, majority decision making is a viable method. For example, the European Community has adopted the majority method. One of its predecessors, the European Economic Community, also adopted this method -- even though it actually achieved unanimity on all but seven of its 107 major decisions.<sup>78</sup>

The binding and disintegrating effects of majority voting are nearly the converse of unanimity. Decisions can be made quickly facilitating crisis action and issue resolution. More issues and interests are voiced and acted upon. Decisions are not limited to that which is minimally acceptable to all. Moreover, it better represents the contribution larger members provide the coalition. Majority decision making, however, encourages dominance by a single large member or subcoalition, risks disenfranchising some members, and fosters non-compliance by dissenters.

Whatever the decision method adopted, there is one aspect to the process that clearly has a binding effect on coalitions. That is deliberating in closed session. Although secret deliberation is anathema to political democracies, it has wide utility for coalitions in general and is employed with great regularity. Since it allows coalition members to discuss positions in private, their actions are less susceptible to scrutiny by their constituencies. This reduces rigidity of position, produces a truer and more frank expression of interests, and permits compromise without loss of face.

The more exposed coalition members are to their constituencies during deliberations the more "purity of interest" that member must maintain over an issue.<sup>79</sup> Likewise, the greater the involvement of the constituents with their coalition representative, the greater that representative's accountability and the narrower his vision becomes during bargaining.<sup>80</sup>

Finally, public deliberations force coalition members into posturing for outside consumption. It also denies them the opportunity to say to their constituents that they raised and argued issues of local interest without being chastised for not arguing hard enough -- or in some cases not at all.<sup>31</sup>

This desire for "spin control" was very much operative in the aftermath of the Reykjavik Summit between Reagan and Gorbachev and usually carries a negative connotation. However, it is a very positive force from a coalition perspective. Spin control allows members to legitimize coalition actions -- not just personal actions -- to both internal and external constituencies. Ultimately, the effectiveness of the coalition depends upon the support and continued participation of these constituencies.<sup>32</sup>

In this section the impact of communications on decision making and four decision methods were discussed, along with the role of secrecy in the deliberative process. It was suggested that continuous and redundant communications is critical to whatever decision method is adopted by the coalition.

Of the several decision methods discussed, unanimity was determined to be the strongest form relative to coalition maintenance, but is not applicable to all coalition situations. Two other propositions were made. First, unanimity is frequently operative regardless of the formal decision rules adopted by coalitions since it fosters participation and consensus. Second, the functional method of decision making has a significant

maintenance value as a means of engaging smaller members in fora that impact on interests of importance to them.

Finally, deliberating in secret is a valid and critical process for enhancing member participation, frankness and compromise, without which decision making can become paralyzed.

### CONCLUSION

Collective and cooperative behavior is a complex subject. Coalitions are affected by a plethora of forces that are not well understood nor subject to empirical study. This paper has outlined and discussed many of the internal forces impacting on coalition behavior and grouped them into four major categories: interests, power, rewards, and decision making. The dynamic forces presented are not intended to be exhaustive, rather only to highlight the more important and fundamental aspects of the problem.

Each force acts upon the others and in turn is acted upon. Interests affect rewards, which are influenced by power, that is a reflection of decision making largely determined by interests. Appreciating and understanding the sinews of these dynamic forces facilitates their management against an external environment while pursuing common objectives.

One thing is certain, no general proposition or capstone theory governing coalition behavior exists. Indeed there is little agreement on which dynamics actually operate within coalitions, much less the intensity they operate at or their

precise effects upon each other. However, the dynamics discussed here and the forces within them do represent the major internal determinants of coalition behavior.

Interests are the heart of coalitions for it is the pursuit of interests that provides the catalyst of coalition formation. Each member will not bring to the coalition the same set or intensity of interests, but a common purpose can and must be discovered. Although the coalition's stated goals can be couched in relatively vague terms, each member's interests cannot. Shared ideology, culture and institutional systems aid in coalition formation, but are not a predictor of the same nor guarantor of duration and success. Regardless of member makeup, previous cooperative effort engenders future cooperative arrangements.

Power within a coalition is never absolute, nor should it be. Although coalitions tend to be as small as possible to maximize each member's power and expected reward, uncertainty and complexity will usually cause them to be larger than necessary. Influence, rather than authority, is the dynamic aspect of power enabling a coalition to weather crises and adapt to its external environment. Because influence shifts as circumstances change, instability is an inherent coalition characteristic. With proper communication of interests, decision making and distribution of rewards instability is minimized and accommodated.

Rewards, tangible and intangible, are the ends members seek

in pursuit of their interests and are distributed predominately as a function of each member's resource contribution. The greater the certainty and immediacy of rewards the easier and more likely a coalition will form. Knowing the interests pursued and rewards sought by each member can avoid the mismatch of both, thus, the seed of future animosity and conflict.

Finally, of the several methods of decision making available to coalitions, some degree of unanimity binds members together. All partners need to have a voice and accept ownership in the decisions made. Failure to achieve this risks non-compliance at the least and defection in the extreme.

Individuals, organizations and states have always endeavored to form coalitions in order that they may further interests and achieve otherwise unattainable ends. This is no less true of the future. By understanding the dynamic forces which bind and disintegrate coalitions, the strategic and senior leader will be better equipped to manage them and fulfill his responsibilities.



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