Chapter Two

THE PROBLEM

The Army Vision makes it clear that operating in a coalition framework has become an assumption underlying the future employment of Army forces:

The spectrum of likely operations describes a need for land forces in joint, combined, and multinational formations for a variety of missions extending from humanitarian assistance and disaster relief to peacekeeping and peacemaking to major theater wars.¹

In this sense, the current vision does not differ from the projections in Army Vision 2010:

Land component operations in 2010 will be fully integrated with those of joint, multinational, and non-governmental partners. Recent experience reminds us that Army operations have never been and will never be independent.²

The Army’s official doctrine recognizes that multinational operations can be beneficial: (1) politically, because they give a particular deployment greater legitimacy, and (2) militarily, when effective coalitions relieve the United States of the burden of supplying most of the troops and assets.

The continuing importance of MFC operations has implications for how the Army approaches international activities in peacetime.

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Operating effectively and to the fullest potential in a multinational coalition framework entails a successful effort by all participants to think, plan, and resource as coalition partners. While ad hoc "workarounds" just before an operation may result in at least minimum effectiveness in the given coalition mission, such arrangements have little chance of enabling the combined coalition forces to reach their full potential. A better course of action that genuinely addresses the long-term Army vision must include extensive peacetime cooperation, especially with the most important and most likely partners. The Army’s international activities, most of which enhance MFC, thus play a vital role in implementing the Army’s long-term vision.

In theory, Army MFC efforts derive from the following flow of decisions:

1. National-level (President’s guidance) and Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD) guidelines provide the strategic parameters for the Army’s international activities, including its MFC efforts.

2. In cooperation with the Joint Staff and the commanders in chief (CINC s), Army planners prioritize partners and identify their major problems with conducting coalition operations with Army units.

3. Army planners and the CINC s define the appropriate MFC packages and allocate resources.

4. Army component commands and agencies implement the plans and provide feedback on the effectiveness of the efforts. Feedback loops also provide a check on the continued appropriateness of the MFC packages and prioritization choices.

The Army has a secondary role in steps 2 and 3, and a central role in step 4. But in practice, rather than being secondary, the institutional Army’s role in steps 2 and 3 is negligible, and no recognizable Army perspective is brought into the process. This is not an ideal outcome, because the institutional Army, as part of its “train, organize, and equip” function of preparing the force, has a clear interest in advancing compatibility with the likely coalition partner forces. The primary mechanism to achieve greater compatibility is the Theater Engagement Plan (TEP), prepared by each CINC. The TEP amounts
to a list of all the envisioned activities with individual militaries in the given theater. Each CINC’s preferences as to activities and partners are driven by a variety of military and nonmilitary factors. From the Army’s perspective of preparing for coalition operations, some of the military factors behind CINC preferences may not be optimal. For example, the preferences may reflect a CINC’s dominant short-term or, at best, mid-term, focus, or they may not take sufficiently into account the coalitional potential of some countries’ forces in operations outside the given CINC’s command. If the Army component commands were to act as proponents of the Army’s perspective within the process of constructing a TEP, then they would ensure that longer-term institutional Army concerns are taken into account. Moreover, such a role has the potential to advance the national-level goal of achieving better ground force compatibility with the likely coalition partners in future operations while avoiding the artificial constraints of CINC commands or the limited time-frames set by the CINCs.

For Army component commands to act as proponents of the Army’s perspective on MFC within the TEP process, they need an overall guiding Army blueprint for MFC, one that the Army component commands could also use in their own planning process. Moreover, to come up with such a general MFC blueprint, the Army needs a way to determine which resources are for advancing MFC and to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of MFC efforts. The problem is that even though the Army has recognized the need for greater coordination of its international activities, its current accounting and information systems for tracking MFC activities are insufficiently developed.

None of the above is to question the dominant role of the CINCs in planning international activities within their commands. Instead, the suggestion that the Army can and should play a stronger role in the TEP process is meant to strengthen the ability of the services and the combatant commands to achieve national-level goals for improving the coalition readiness of U.S. forces.

In recognition of the need for greater coordination of the Army’s international activities, in 1995 the Secretary of the Army set up the
office of DUSA-IA to plan, coordinate, and facilitate the Army’s international activities. Despite the creation of DUSA-IA, a coherent formulation of guidelines for the Army’s international activities is still hampered by a lack of information sharing and coordination across Army agencies. Such coordination remains elusive because (1) the current budgetary system makes it difficult to identify resources devoted to IA, and (2) DUSA-IA/MFC does not have the ability to monitor or influence the allotment of funds for all relevant Army international activities programs. The lack of information sharing and coordination leads to two consequences detrimental to Army MFC efforts. First, the lack of clear and detailed knowledge of resources devoted to the Army’s international activities (and MFC efforts specifically) reduces the visibility of the Army’s efforts in the intra-Army planning, programming, and budgeting process. With few funds under its control, DUSA-IA faces the problem of being relegated to a level of little importance and sometimes even “below the decimal line” in intra-Army decisionmaking. Second, the lack of knowledge about the resources devoted to MFC makes it virtually impossible to evaluate meaningfully the Army’s MFC efforts. Inability to calculate the cost-effectiveness of MFC efforts makes it difficult to present the potential benefits in terms of resources and thus nearly impossible to assess tradeoffs accurately and choose MFC efforts judiciously. For instance, a lack of information on funding or activities by individual country makes it difficult for the Army to know whether activities with some countries are under- or over-emphasized. Thus, the visibility and verifiability that the Army’s MFC efforts require in view of the explicit importance placed on multinational coalition operations in the current Army Vision (as well as in Army Vision 2010) are not provided. This is a problem of an absence of effective and appropriate processes and a lack of Army adaptation to contemporary planning, where the effectiveness of coalition forces as a whole is increasingly important to the success of a mission. The current system was not designed for, and therefore is not capable of, supporting DUSA-IA in its official role as the agency that (1) establishes and disseminates policy guidance on how Army IA programs are to set substantive objectives and funding priorities.

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3The responsibilities of DUSA-IA were codified in 1997: General Orders No. 10, Assignment of Functions, Responsibilities, and Duties Within the Army Secretariat, Washington, D.C.: Headquarters, Department of the Army, August 12, 1997.
and (2) provides a high-level evaluation of how the MFC “system” is performing as a whole.

For the reasons mentioned above, it is no easy matter to put together an analysis of the Army’s MFC efforts along the lines of either efficiency or effectiveness. Indeed, standard evaluations of the Army’s MFC efforts meet currently impregnable data barriers.

In terms of an efficiency, or cost-benefit, evaluation, the way the Army organizes its budgetary data makes it extremely difficult to calculate the inputs (measured in funds devoted to specific activities) needed to arrive at some measure of the costs of international activities in general, and activities directly influencing MFC specifically. Data that would allow for calculations of specific figures for Army MFC activities organized along functional and geographic lines are currently not available to RAND.

In terms of the outputs of any cost-benefit evaluation, measures of the compatibility levels of allied and partner militaries in crucial categories are available, though they are not organized in an easily attainable form. The best assessments of the compatibility of other militaries come from the Army’s own experiences with them. Both the Joint Staff and the Army gather comprehensive data on other militaries and lessons learned from multinational exercises and operations. However, evaluation processes capture MFC lessons learned only in the context of the specific operation and the relationship of the MFC issues to the commander’s operational objectives. In addition, the evaluation of program effectiveness at the level of individual programs or exercises is not complemented by a robust “macro” view of whether resources are being allocated effectively for the whole system.

Any evaluation of the effectiveness of MFC efforts has to compare the outcomes of those efforts against the goals they are meant to accomplish. But the Army has no identifiable institutional set of goals in the MFC realm. Individual Army commands and agencies set priorities for international and MFC efforts, but any stated goals and benchmarks are program-specific. Summing them does not necessarily translate to an Army set of goals.

The current situation makes it difficult to identify the shortcomings that may be present in existing MFC efforts and to provide a fully
justifiable set of recommendations for improvement. The remainder of this report deals with the two basic problems, the transparency of resource data and the formulation of a central guiding plan.

Chapter Three presents a detailed overview of how budgetary data are now compiled, and it outlines some recommendations to change the current state of affairs. As for a set of Army guidelines regarding MFC, we tackled the problem backwards. Thinking along the lines of the desired “end state,” we constructed a framework for thinking about Army MFC policy that focuses on what the Army, within its institutional constraints, ideally would wish to accomplish in the realm of MFC. Then we worked backward to identify the specific policies that might lead to such an ideal end state. Most of all, defining the desired end state requires accurate identification and ordering of partners for cooperation in MFC efforts. Among the partners identified as priorities, the Army then needs to ascertain areas of need and match appropriate measures to deal with them. This approach has the merit of outlining the most appropriate directions for Army MFC efforts even without a detailed knowledge of the efficiency and effectiveness of current efforts. The framework and the decision support system that we propose have utility for long-term planning of Army MFC policy even under the current conditions of little knowledge of resources spent on MFC. The framework we propose tackles the fundamental question behind the Army’s MFC efforts, namely, how to make sure that the Army cooperates with the proper partners in an appropriate manner.