Improving the current system of planning Army MFC activities faces daunting challenges. This study has identified the following problems that hamper any cost-benefit assessment and evaluation of these efforts: (1) difficulty in obtaining input measures to assess effectiveness; (2) lack of standardized output measures of effectiveness; and (3) absence of an underlying set of goals and an Army-specific framework for MFC. Because of the basic nature of the third problem, attempting to tackle the first two without dealing with it can lead only to partial solutions. Starting from a concept of an “idealized end-state,” we specified a four-step process that (1) identifies the most likely long-term U.S. coalition partners, (2) provides a means of pinpointing the compatibility shortcomings of the potential partners, (3) links specific MFC policies to the shortcomings, and (4) allows for cost-efficiency assessments at the program level and within the overall planning framework suggested here. The first three steps can be implemented immediately, whereas the fourth step is feasible in the future, if the Army modifies its organization of data that deal with its international activities. Once cost-effectiveness assessments of MFC efforts become possible, a fifth—currently hypothetical—step of integrating the Army’s own force planning with that of allies and likely partners would become a realistic option. In other words, Army planners could carry out cost-benefit assessments on the basis of tradeoffs between own and ally capabilities, knowing in detail the costs involved and possibly in cooperation with select allies and partners. Such assessments potentially may lead to moving some Army capabilities to the reserve component while enhancing these capabilities among several allies.
This research effort began on the assumption that effective interactions among U.S. and partner ground forces result from successful efforts by all participants to think, plan, and allocate resources as coalition partners. As such, a high level of ground force performance results from three elements: U.S. Army capabilities developed under its Title 10 responsibilities, contributions by coalition partners, and the collective ability to interact effectively to accomplish coalition military goals. Given the near certainty that Army units will participate in a coalition framework in future operations, preparing them for cooperation with units from other armies forms an essential element of the Army’s Title 10 responsibilities. The integrated framework for planning that we suggest here, especially when extended to resourcing, will allow for early planning and consideration of potential contributions by partners and thus provide the mechanism that will enhance the collective ability to function effectively in a coalition.

The methodology for predicting a given country’s propensity to participate in a coalition operation that was developed as part of this study is not meant to be applied mechanistically. Certainly, the list of prioritized countries presented here does not imply abandoning international actions with the countries not identified as deserving priority. After all, the Army has limited leeway over choosing military-to-military activities with other ground forces. Not all U.S. goals served by such contacts are distinctly or uniquely related to MFC, and the Army has a duty to work to meet those objectives as well. National-level policies and guidance from the DoD and the Joint Staff constrain the choices and lead to the Army’s engagement in MFC-enhancing activities as part of fulfilling such national security policies. However, a great deal of leeway exists between the usually general guidance on MFC received from JCS and the detailed plans worked out by the CINCs. The service-specific framework we suggest fits into that middle ground so as to coordinate MFC actions more effectively and take advantage of the synergies possible. In addition, the MFC framework we suggest would provide more accurate input by Army personnel into planning for coalition operations by Joint Staff and the CINCs. The introduction of TEPMIS means that information about the extent of activities of U.S. armed forces with troops from other countries will become more transparent and allow for more detailed planning. But TEPMIS provides only a tool to
a goal and, without a clear goal in mind, may not reach its full potential. The prioritization of coalition partners proposed here provides that set of clear goals to guide the use of TEPMIS.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Several specific policy recommendations for the Army derive from the analysis above:

- The Army should adopt the methodology to ascertain propensity to participate in coalitions with the United States and the Military Compatibility Assessment Tool as the basic processes for prioritizing partners and developing long-range Army priorities for MFC by country and activity. Headquarters can work through the Army component commanders to ensure that Army priorities are given reasonable consideration during development of the CINC theater engagement plans.

- The Program Evaluation Groups should be sensitized to the need for improved resource information to support tradeoff evaluations among activities. This need not entail the development of major accounting modifications, but rather the identification and reporting of international activity expenditures that might not be identifiable by people outside of the PEG.

- The Army should continue to participate in the development of TEPMIS, with particular attention to the process for identifying the resource implications of planned activities.

- Standardized criteria for evaluation of MFC activities should be developed matching the categorization in the MCAT. For optimum effect, further evaluation and budgeting overhauls need to take into account the MCAT.