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Command of Coalition Operations in a Multicultural Environment:
A Canadian Naval Niche?
The Case Study of Operation Apollo

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Abstract: For the better part of two years – from December 2001 until the end of October 2003 – senior Canadian naval officers exercised the unique responsibility of commanding a multinational coalition fleet gathered in the Arabian Sea, culminating in command of Task Force 151 (CTF 151). This initial stage of Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) was known in Canada as Operation Apollo. Key to mission success was effective employment of network-enabled operations (NEOps) technology, as well as attention to a variety of cultural factors. In analyzing the operational level command function, this paper employs the unifying framework of the “environment-technology-culture triad,” where the three factors of environment (the sea), technology (a major control mechanism for exercising command), and culture (service, organizational, and national) are taken to be the most important factors that impact on naval command styles. It follows with a detailed discussion of each of those factors in the recent Canadian operational context, allowing for the fact that there is some iterative overlap amongst them. The paper concludes that the case study of Operation Apollo demonstrates that the Canadian Navy possesses significant attributes that makes coalition naval command a “niche” role for which it is ideally suited.

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Introduction

For the better part of two years – from December 2001 until the end of October 2003 – the Canadian Navy was a major contributor to the multinational coalition fleet gathered in the Arabian Sea for the initial stages of the war against terrorism. Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF, the American codename for the struggle) continues, but Operation Apollo (as this phase was known in Canada) is over, and it is useful to begin assessing the “lessons learned”.

Operation Apollo generally has gone unremarked by naval analysts, largely because of the absence of much high profile action. Quite apart from the standard operational assessments, however, it was a remarkable achievement. Throughout this period, Canadian naval commanders exercised a unique operational level command: the at-sea employment of a wide range of surface, air and sub-surface forces from a disparate collection of navies – some of them not typical “allies” and a great many from very different cultural backgrounds (in the military as well as political and social senses). The apex was the designation of a Canadian commodore as Commander Task Force 151 (CTF 151) from February through June 2003, including the complex period covering separate American-led action resulting in the overthrow of Saddam Hussein – Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF).

At one level, it is possible to categorize this command role as just another amongst similar coalition activities over the years and indeed through the course of Operation Enduring Freedom. After all, a Royal Australian Navy (RAN) commodore exercised command of multinational forces in the Northern Persian Gulf in the early days of OEF, as part of the continuing enforcement of United Nations sanctions against Saddam Hussein’s regime.¹ Later, at the same time that CTF 151 was established, another coalition task force (CTF 150) operated in the Horn of Africa region commanded in rotation by continental European Union allies. However, the scope of the Australian command did not extend so broadly as CTF 151, while CTF 150 was not as effective in closing off regional traffic; neither command enjoyed the same level of “seamless connectivity” with the USN as did the Canadian. Interestingly, neither of the other senior Coalition partners – Britain and France – exercised a multinational command.²

Something clearly was different in the Canadian performance of multinational coalition command. Closer analysis suggests that it was undertaken in a fashion that is “quintessentially Canadian”.³ Indeed, one recent study points to Operation Apollo as “the realization of what can be termed a ‘Canadian [naval] command style.’”⁴ Essentially, as a

¹ Commodore (RAN) James Goldrick, “In Command in the Gulf,” *US Naval Institute Proceedings* (December 2002), 38-41; and, Captain (RAN) N.S. Coates, *The Royal Australian Navy in the Gulf, 1990-2005* (Canberra, Australia: Sea Power Centre, 2005).

² Iain Ballantyne, *Strike From the Sea: The Royal Navy & US Navy at War in the Middle East, 1949-2003* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2004), underplays the role of other coalition members, in an attempt to buttress the author’s claim for a special RN-USN relationship.

³ Richard Gimblett, *Operation Apollo: The Golden Age of the Canadian Navy in the War Against Terrorism* (Ottawa: Magic Light, 2004), 133.

⁴ Allan English, Richard Gimblett, Lynn Mason and Mervyn Berridge Sills, *Command Styles in the Canadian Navy* (DRDC Toronto Contract Report CR 2005-096, 31 January 2005), 108-111, at: <http://pubs.drdc->

medium power navy with limited resources, the Canadian Navy has sought “command parity” with its larger allies (the US and Great Britain) so as to ensure its operational independence from them; but as an essentially small-ship navy with limited power projection capabilities, it has had to compensate through technical and tactical innovation, much of that resulting from a unique level of interoperability with the USN. At the same time, what can be styled the “values” behind Canada’s increasing multicultural diversity, and what seems to be a national pre-disposition for multilateralism, have been internalized by the senior commanders of the service making them uniquely sensitive to the fostering of coalition operations. The authors of that study concluded:

One could argue that Canada’s national culture with its traditions of bilingualism and multiculturalism; Canada’s military culture with its history of alliance and UN operations; and Canadian naval culture based on operational and command competence, enlightened leadership and management techniques, and a judicious exploitation of available technology make the Canadian Navy’s command style a model for coalition operations.

Subsequent research developing certain aspects of this “command style” theme as part of an examination of “networked capabilities” points to a conclusion “reinforcing the validity of an approach that balances the human and technological factors... [in] developing... network-enabled systems and procedures.” It specifically refers to the success of Operation Apollo in arriving at that conclusion:⁵

Fundamentally, human-centred networks are the basis of the Canadian naval command style: primarily in the pre-disposition to engage the widest variety of coalition members in task force composition, and then to ensure their effective participation in any operations.

Canadian command of the multinational naval coalition in the Arabian Sea was not pre-ordained. Rather, it was the logical culmination of a variety of factors over a long period of gestation. Certain elements of these can be discerned as coalescing in recent years, but it was not until Operation Apollo that they were all to combine to noteworthy effect.

This paper will undertake a deeper exploration of the nature of the Canadian Navy’s “coalition command” role. It will argue that a useful model for understanding it is the unifying framework of the “environment-technology-culture triad,” where the three factors of environment (the sea), technology (a major control mechanism for exercising command), and culture (service, organizational, and national) are taken to be the most important factors that impact on naval command styles.⁶ It will follow with a detailed discussion of each of those

rdc.gc.ca/BASIS/pcandid/www/engpub/DDW?W%3DAUTHOR%3D%27English%27*+ORDER+BY+REPD+ATE/DESC%26M%3D4%26K%3D524426%26U%3D1

⁵ Allan English, Richard Gimblett, and Howard Coombs, *Beware of Putting the Cart Before the Horse: Network Enabled Operations as a Canadian Approach to Transformation* (DRDC Toronto Contract Report CR-2005-212, 19 July 2005), 40 and 100, at: <http://pubs.drdc-rddc.gc.ca/BASIS/pcandid/www/engpub/DDW?W%3DAUTHOR++%3D+%27ENGLISH%2C+A.%27%26M%3D4%26K%3D524520%26U%3D1>

⁶ As developed in English *et al*, *Command Styles in the Canadian Navy*, 3 and *passim*.

factors in the Canadian context, allowing for the fact that there is some iterative overlap amongst them. The paper will conclude that the case study of Operation Apollo demonstrates how, in this era abounding with arguments that the Canadian Forces must specialize in areas of strategic effect,⁷ these factors have combined in a special permutation that makes coalition naval command a “niche” role for which our Navy is ideally suited.

Environment

A number of factors work to determine the precise fleet mix of the Canadian Navy, but its general structure is the result largely of the physical environment in which it must operate. The Navy is required to patrol a vast offshore estate on two separate coasts (the Atlantic and the Pacific), with operational responsibility for a third (the Arctic), and none of the regular operating areas close to either of the two principle ports (Halifax and Esquimalt). The combination of distances and the most challenging spectrum of sea conditions in the world demands a basic fleet composition of vessels with long range to deploy and patrol for a useful period between fuelling, and with good sea keeping ability to provide a stable platform from which to operate with reasonable effectiveness. The further budgetary demands for economy have driven the compromise solution to adopt the frigate as the basic hull type best satisfying those purposes: to prove the point, the smaller corvettes of the Second World War are generally accepted as having been relatively ineffectual, while the St Laurent class “destroyers” that constituted the bulk of the fleet through the Cold War are now recognized to have actually been “frigates” in all but name; only lately have frigates such as the *Halifax* class topped over 5000 tonnes, mostly due to the requirements of crew comfort (habitability).⁸ The specialized function of command and control demands a larger vessel (such as the true destroyer type) with more internal space for the additional communications equipment and task group staff needed to deliver the capability. Finally, to round out the mix, an underway fleet replenishment capability assures operational independence and the ability for a force to remain at sea for extended periods. The end result is a fleet capable of oceanic ranges and possessing a balanced trinity of general-purpose warfighting capabilities: command and control (C2, as presently epitomized in the DDG-280 class of destroyers); operational depth (frigates, submarines and attached aircraft, both helicopter and fixed-wing); and integral sustainment (an operational support ship). The consequence of meeting these national requirements just for domestic defence, therefore, is that the Canadian Navy is also remarkably suited to overseas deployments.

The adaptability of such a fleet mix – and the implications for coalition command – were first impressively demonstrated in the Persian Gulf War of 1990-91, when the Canadian Navy found its operating environment literally turned on end, from a focus on Cold War North Atlantic anti-submarine operations to tropical inshore anti-air and anti-surface operations in a new era of uncertainty. The transition was effected relatively easily in part due to the technical and cultural points that will be discussed below. In large measure, however, it was because the long Cold War patrols and exercises to the far reaches of the Atlantic and Pacific

⁷ Government of Canada, *Canada's International Policy Statement. Defence: A Role of Pride and Influence in the World* (April 2005), at: http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/Reports/dps/index_e.asp.

⁸ On the notion of frigates in the Canadian Navy as the embodiment of classic “cruiser” employment, see Kenneth P. Hansen, “Kingsmill's Cruisers: The Cruiser Tradition in the Early Royal Canadian Navy,” *The Northern Mariner / Le Marin du nord*, XIII:1 (January 2003), 37-52.

oceans had made the Navy entirely comfortable in deploying over long distances for prolonged periods with minimal external support. Since then, over the course of the 1990s and now into the 21st century, the South West Asia theatre of operations has become naturalized as a second home for the Canadian Navy: between the frigate deployments with USN carrier battle groups through the 1990s and the effort of Operation Apollo, practically every major surface vessel has seen service in the region, and it is rare to find a sailor who has not been there at least once (and many on several occasions); these latter ranks include a significant proportion of current senior naval commanders.

The Navy's operating environments over the past half-century, primarily through Cold War operations and exercises with our allies, but more recently through growing involvement in peace support operations, have seen extended deployments around the Pacific Rim (from MARPAC – Maritime Forces Pacific – on the west coast), into European and Caribbean waters with NATO (from MARLANT – Maritime Forces Atlantic – on the east coast), and around South America (from both coasts). A not-unrelated consequence is that the Canadian Navy has established direct relations and close operational ties with practically every navy (and in their own home waters) over which it would exercise coalition command in more recent years: in the first Gulf War (Operation Friction, 1990-91); off Haiti (Operation Forward Action, 1993-94); in the Adriatic (in command of the Standing Naval Force Atlantic, SNFL, 1993-94 and 1999-2000); off East Timor (Operation Toucan, 1999-2000); and the second Gulf War (Operation Apollo, 2001-03).⁹

Technology

The greatest driving factor in the realm of technology has been the Navy's quest for "communications interoperability" (sometimes referred to as "connectivity") with the United States Navy. In a uni-polar geopolitical context where interoperability with the USN is the goal to which all navies aspire, it usually goes unremarked that the Canadian Navy has enjoyed this for a long period and at a privileged level not possible for any other allies, due to Congress-imposed constraints on the sharing of US technology that has been mitigated only to facilitate the shared responsibility for the defence of North America. For most of its existence, this "very special CAN-US relationship" was culturally driven, going back to the drafting of the Basic Defence Plan in 1940 in preparation for defence against an apparently triumphant Nazi Germany in the Second World War, and its continuation into the postwar period for defence against an attack by the Soviet Union. Through the Cold War, the relationship tended to be construed as an exclusively air force role, in the form of NORAD (the North American Aerospace Defence Command), but there was always an important naval dimension, demonstrated most visibly when the Canadian Navy sailed during the Cuban Missile Crisis in October 1962 to its assigned stations in accordance with established plans and procedures. For the most part, however, operations between the two navies tended to be coordinated at a higher level with little direct interaction amongst ships at the tactical level.

⁹ A useful overview of these and other operations is Laura Higgins, *Canadian Naval Operations in the 1990s: Selected Case Studies* (Dalhousie University Centre for Foreign Policy Studies [CFPS], Maritime Security Occasional Paper [MSOP] No. 12, 2002).

In the 1980s, however, the changing Canadian naval operating environment added impetus to our involvement in what would prove to be a revolutionary technological change that has become the focus of interoperability, the advent of what is known as “network-enabled operations” or NEOps. The development of the Canadian Patrol Frigate program, and more specifically the introduction of new passive towed array sonar (TAS) sensor technology that promised detection ranges in the order of hundreds of miles, allowed open-ocean ASW to be waged most effectively with widely dispersed formations. On a basic technical-procedural level, the exchange of contact information required over-the-horizon communications beyond the capability of the standard line-of-sight UHF Link-11 tactical datalink (inter-ship computer-to-computer communications), but the alternative longer-range HF link was not only too unreliable for high data-rate flows but also too easily intercepted by enemy direction finding. The solution developed by the USN was satellite communications (SATCOM), at UHF and higher frequencies (all beamed into space and returned on a narrow undetectable line-of-sight “footprint”). An additional improvement came from the fact that the Canadian version of the TAS processor was demonstrating significantly greater detection ranges over the USN version, leading American commanders to invite TAS-fitted Canadian ships to participate in the strategic ASW prosecution of Soviet ballistic missile nuclear submarines off the shores of North America. Initially this involved the older steam destroyers experimentally fitted with TAS in anticipation of production of the CPFs, but it soon led to the establishment of Canadian exchange officer positions on the staffs of both the USN Pacific and Atlantic fleet commanders. Additionally, this role required connectivity between Canadian and USN ships at a much higher level than had ever existed, even through the tactical datalinks, resulting in the fitting initially of the JOTS (Joint Operational Tactical System) digital display and eventually its web-based successor, GCCS-M (Global Command and Control System, Maritime), for the exchange of detailed positioning information.¹⁰ The stipulation of SATCOM and JOTS/GCCS-M as standard fits on the CPF was soon broadened for it to be included as part of the TRUMP (Tribal Update and Modernization Program) package aimed in part at transforming the aging *Iroquois*-class destroyers into proper command and control flagships. Fundamentally, this meant not only privileged Canadian access to these revolutionary communications developments, but also that every ship in the fleet was a potential command and control platform (this came to include also the replenishment vessels, which were outfitted as alternate command ships for overseas deployments).

Brought together, these technical developments had significant implications for the nature of command in the Canadian Navy. Previous notions of command and control optimized for close-in ASW no longer were appropriate. At the ship level, individual commanders discovered a new independence, requiring greater emphasis on their initiative and technical competence. Operational level commanders found their tactical horizons broadened significantly beyond the immediacy of close-in convoy escort to responsibility over ranges literally oceanic in breadth. At about the same time, the USN was finding the management of modern naval warfare increasingly complicated, and began to promote the concept of subdividing the responsibility of the overall “Composite Warfare Commander” among “Subordinate Warfare Commanders” for each of the anti-air, anti-submarine, anti-surface and

¹⁰ Background on the development of JOTS through the follow-on system of JMCIS (Joint Maritime Command Information System) to the current GCCS-M can be found at: <http://www.fas.org/irp/program/core/jmcis.htm>

strike duties, who would “command by negation” within the scope of the principle commander’s general guidance (that is, juniors are authorized to operate within a pre-planned broad scope of action unless over-ridden by senior commanders).¹¹ By the late-1980s, with their new technical anti-submarine and command and control capabilities, increasingly Canadian task group commanders found themselves assigned the major warfare responsibility of ASW Commander in NATO and allied exercises.¹² During the first Gulf War, when US Navy commanders looked for a subordinate warfare commander to oversee the Coalition Logistics Force (CLF), they turned naturally to the Canadian Task Group Commander – who became the only non-US officer to hold such a high warfare coordinator’s position in that conflict.¹³

The 1990s witnessed the accelerated pace of the technical aspects of networking as it is understood today, with the incorporation of personal computers and the development of a classified internet on which web-based formats have become the norm. The Canadian Navy again enjoyed privileged access to USN developments, including witnessing the introduction by the Commander Task Force 12 (CTF 12, the Pacific theatre ASW commander based in Pearl Harbor) in the mid-1990s of the “WeCAN” (Web-Centric Anti-Submarine Warfare Net) as “a real-time theatre and tactical level information sharing capability for Under-Sea Warfare collaborative planning and execution.”¹⁴ This eventually served as the model for the lower classified COWAN (Coalition Wide Area Network) employed in RIMPAC exercises, of which Canada was a major participant. From about the mid-1990s, the Canadian Navy began deploying its new frigates to the Persian Gulf to assist in the enforcement of United Nations sanctions against Iraq. By special agreement between the head of the Canadian Navy (the Commander of Maritime Command, then-Vice-Admiral Lynn Mason) and the Chief of Naval Operations (Admiral Mike Boorda), these ships were fully “integrated” into their respective carrier battle groups.¹⁵ This higher level than mere tactical coordination required the Canadian ships to have full communications connectivity, including access to the more complex and classified SIPRNET system (the Secret Internet Protocol Router Network, a US DoD managed system to allow the sharing of classified information among military personnel, with multiple levels of access). The concept proved a great success, and over the course of several years, the bulk of Canadian Navy ships thus came to be fitted with the hardware and crews familiarized with network concepts. Future Canadian commanders gained additional exposure to the developing concept of “network-centric warfare” (NCW) through participation in the high level annual USN Global War

¹¹ The Composite Warfare Commander (CWC) concept is described succinctly in an unclassified format in United States, Department of the Navy, *Multinational Maritime Operations Doctrine Manual* (Norfolk, VA, Naval Doctrine Command, 1999), 3-21 and 3-22.

¹² Eric Grove (with Graham Thompson), *Battle for the Fiords: NATO’s Forward Maritime Strategy in Action* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), is an account of the NATO Exercise Teamwork 1988, including a good description of the part played by the Canadian Task Group (CATG).

¹³ Gimblett, “MIF or MNF? The Dilemma of the ‘Lesser’ Navies in the Gulf War Coalition,” in Michael Hadley, et al., *A Nation’s Navy” In Quest of Canadian Naval Identity* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1996), 190-204. One of the few instances of a Canadian naval commander telling his own story at full-length is Duncan E. Miller and Sharon Hobson, *The Persian Excursion: The Canadian Navy in the Gulf War* (Clementsport, NS: Canadian Institute of Strategic Studies, 1995).

¹⁴ See Orincon, http://www.orincon.com/techfinder/project_detail.cfm?key_project=64&key_subcategory=35

¹⁵ Interview Vice-Admiral (ret’d) Lynn Mason with Dr Richard Gimblett (Halifax, NS, 12 May 2005).

Games, after Admiral Arthur Cebrowski, the leading proponent of the concept, became president of the Naval War College in 1998.¹⁶

In the wake of the Al-Qaeda attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001, Canada deployed a task group to support the global war on terrorism (Operation Enduring Freedom / Apollo). The Canadian Navy was the first major non-American force to arrive in-theatre, and quickly found itself charged with the significant undertaking of exercising overall command of other Coalition naval forces as they arrived in the Arabian Sea (four Canadian commodores served in succession over the eighteen-month period from November 2001 through June 2003). The appointment as Warfare Commander for the Arabian Sea theatre of operations, CTF 151 (Commander Task Force 151) was arguably the first true exercise of operational-level command by a senior Canadian officer since the Second World War.

It could not have been accomplished as successfully or as professionally as it transpired but for the employment of networked operations. The full range of network-enabled capabilities in Operation Apollo comprised: the “secret” level COWAN (the Coalition Wide Area Network), with its cross-linked web pages, e-mail and “Sametime Chat” features; MCOIN III (the most recent web-based version of the Maritime Command Operational Information Network, a classified national wide area network similar to the American SIPRNET, with COWAN residing on it); and the Link-16 and Link-11 tactical datalinks, as well as GCCS-M to maintain the “recognized maritime picture”. The level of Canadian communications interoperability with the USN was unparalleled; in the words of Commodore Eric Lerhe, “The Task Group Commander embarked in a Canadian destroyer enjoyed a level of C3I unmatched outside of a USN cruiser.”¹⁷ As will be discussed below, they put it to even better effect, by working hard to expand the technology net to include those outside of it. Indeed, the Canadian Navy has recognized its “force multiplier” potential by acting in a “Gateway C4ISR” capacity between the USN and less well-equipped coalition members.¹⁸ The challenge remains the ability to maintain the pace being setting by the USN. As observed by a senior Canadian naval officer, “Technological solutions are being developed to overcome these obstacles, however a restrictive information sharing culture in the US is proving to be as difficult as the technical one. Until these problems are resolved, the Canadian Navy’s necessary vision of seamless technological procedural interoperability with the USN will remain highly problematic.”¹⁹

¹⁶ Vice Admiral Arthur K. Cebrowski and John J. Garstka, “Network-Centric Warfare: Its Origin and Future,” *US Naval Institute Proceedings*, 124:1 (January 1998).

¹⁷ Interview Commodore (ret’d) Eric Lerhe with Dr Richard Gimblett (Halifax, NS, 13 May 2005). Lerhe was the second task group commander, from April through September 2002, and was instrumental in establishing the Arabian Sea communications networks.

¹⁸ Canada, Department of National Defence, *Canada’s International Policy Statement. Defence: A Role of Pride and Influence in the World* (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, April 2005), 163-4, at: http://www.forces.gc.ca/site/Reports/dps/index_e.asp. C4ISR is an expansion of the old “command and control” (C2), and stands for: command, control, communications, computers, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance.

¹⁹ Captain (Canadian Navy) Paul Maddison, “The Canadian Navy’s Drive for Trust and Technology in Network-Centric Coalitions: Riding Comfortably Alongside, or Losing Ground in a Stern Chase?” (unpublished paper prepared for Advanced Military Studies Course [AMSC] 7, CFC, 2004), at <http://wps.cfc.dnd.ca/papers/amsc/amsc7/maddison.htm>.

Yet another dimension of the growing technology gap between the USN and prospective coalition partners is providing additional rationale for the Canadian role in command of coalition forces. Increasingly, the transformation of the United States Navy is focused upon the acquisition of larger and more technologically advanced power projection warships that are beyond the capacity of most medium-sized navies, such as nuclear powered aircraft carriers, Aegis cruisers and destroyers, and nuclear attack submarines (even the smaller “Littoral Combat Ship” is likely to prove prohibitively expensive for others to acquire in sufficient numbers to warrant employment according to its concept of operations); meanwhile, the bulk of the older ships being retired by the USN are the frigates and smaller destroyers that perform the myriad fleetwork tasks of scouting and interdiction farther afield from the carrier battle groups. This fleetwork gap, therefore, is tending to be filled by other coalition partners, the majority of their medium-sized navies being composed largely of frigate-type vessels. As discussed in the “environment” section above, that also has been the traditional structure of Canada’s navy, giving us a good understanding of the range of mid-level tasks inherent in those types of operations; what with our unique level of communications interoperability with the USN, that situates us ideally to command coalition fleetwork operations. Indeed, in private conversation, USN admirals will candidly admit that the Canadian Navy manages the frigate navies of other nations better than they could hope to.²⁰ The reasons for that will be developed in the following section.

Culture

As discussed in the environment section, one consequence of Canadian naval operations spanning the globe is that practically every member of the various coalitions with which we have participated was a known quantity well in advance of actual operations. This naval “reach” is in direct correlation to the number of multilateral organizations to which Canada belongs, chief among them being NATO, the Commonwealth, La Francophonie, the OAS (Organization of American States), APEC (the association for Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), and of course the United Nations. In short, the Canadian multilateralist instinct that is presumed to exist primarily at the political level is equally at play at the military level.

The bigger allies (the United States, Britain and France) also are broadly represented in these forums, but Canada has never been in a competitive power relationship with any of the other junior countries – in other words, to put it bluntly, our participation comes without the “imperial baggage”, making our command role less problematic for many of them. The “coalition of the willing” that gathered in the Arabian Sea in late 2001 and through 2002 at various times included (in rough order of appearance) British, French, German, Dutch, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Australian, Japanese and New Zealand forces (the list comprised 21 nations in total²¹) – a multinational *mélange* far more complex in its makeup than its ostensibly “western” appearance might indicate. Simple matters of *realpolitik* meant that very few of them could have worked comfortably under the direct command of any of the others, especially as competing national objectives came to the fore into 2003 in the debate over what action to take against Saddam Hussein’s Iraq. As will be discussed below,

²⁰ Gimblett, *Operation Apollo*, 135.

²¹ See the Central Command listing at: <http://www.centcom.mil/Operations/Coalition/joint.htm>.

Canadian naval command presented a non-threatening compromise option that arguably was critical for maintaining the integrity of the coalition.

The reasons why our naval leadership should be acceptable are several, and go deeper than any purely political attempts at objectivity. Indeed, they spring from a national military makeup that reflects cultural origins in common with the political. In the case of the Canadian Navy, there is very good evidence to suggest the realization of the old adage, that the military should reflect the values of the nation which it serves. Just as the Navy has broadened its French-English representation beyond the old stereotype of the RCN as a bastion of Anglo-Saxon prejudice, so too in recent years it has come to include evolving post-Charter social norms and the multicultural diversity of many new immigrant communities. It is not a perfect proportional representation – the low number of visible minorities serving in the Navy attest to this (even if they are no lower than the other services)²² – but recent operational experience demonstrates that modern naval commanders have internalized the values associated with our multicultural makeup: an ease of working with others who are different, and a desire to foster inclusiveness. This statement from a Canadian government web site, responding to its own question “What is Multiculturalism?”, applies with only minor variations to the approach of Canadian naval commanders in the Arabian Sea, if the terms “all citizens” and “Canadians” are replaced with “Coalition members”:²³

Canadian multiculturalism is fundamental to our belief that all citizens are equal. Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging. Acceptance gives Canadians a feeling of security and self-confidence, making them more open to, and accepting of, diverse cultures. The Canadian experience has shown that multiculturalism encourages racial and ethnic harmony and cross-cultural understanding, and discourages ghettoization, hatred, discrimination and violence.

Through multiculturalism, Canada recognizes the potential of all Canadians, encouraging them to integrate into their society and take an active part in its social, cultural, economic and political affairs.

Another dimension to the spirit behind this desire for inclusiveness is motivated by the place Canada sees for itself in the world. But the willingness of others to defer to Canadian command is granted not just to satisfy our desire; it comes also in recognition of our competence to act in that capacity. The notion of middle power functionalism is falling out of favour amongst political science theorists, but in the real world of practical military application it remains very much an animating impulse. Over the years, it has been witnessed in our own quest for “command parity” with the navies of our bigger allies, originally the Royal Navy and more lately the United States Navy, to ensure our operational

²² DND News Release, “Defence Advisory Groups promote diversity, Employment Equity,” Canadian Forces Personnel Newsletter, Issue 1/05 – 26 January 2005, at:

http://www.forces.gc.ca/hr/cfpn/engraph/1_05/1_05_dags_e.asp.

²³ Government of Canada, Department of Heritage, Multiculturalism and Human Rights Branch, http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/multi/what-multi_e.cfm.

and hence political independence from them. Command parity was first realized during the Second World War with the establishment of the Canadian Northwest Atlantic area, the only theatre of war ever to be commanded by a Canadian, in recognition of the vital role being played by the RCN in the Battle of the Atlantic. The subsequent experience of the Korean War, during which Canadian ships were divided amongst American and British task groups, convinced Canadian commanders that however operationally sound such measures were the political impact of the deployments had been diminished; thereafter it has been “practically an article of faith” for Canadian naval commanders that warships on operational deployments should be kept together as a recognizable national naval task group.²⁴ Being able to offer a viable task group to an exercise or operation – complete in all the constituent elements of command and control, sufficient units to ensure operational depth to accomplish a variety of fleetwork tasks, and integral sustainment – consequently legitimized the expansion of our national groups to bring within their control the vessels of other nations that were either surplus to their requirements (as with the USN) or which could not support such an independent group (most smaller European powers with a regional focus).

Where the benefit to less capable nations should be obvious, what is truly significant in this respect is the willingness of the USN to assign their warships to act under Canadian command in recent operations. That is a recognition of confidence and trust that they extend only sparingly to other national services in peacetime exercises, and is practically unprecedented in an active combat zone. Indeed, it was underscored from the very beginning of Operation Apollo, which saw the Canadian task group assigned responsibility immediately upon arrival in theatre in November 2001 for the close protection of the US Marine amphibious ready groups operating off the coast of Pakistan. To assist in that task, and others that developed from it, the USN generally assigned also at least one Aegis-class destroyer and one or two other frigates to act under Canadian command.²⁵

Bringing the matter back full circle, there is something about Canadian naval culture that drives our commanders to take more particular care to seeing to the needs of coalition partners in the interest of obtaining their most effective operational employment. Bigger allies tend either towards the expectation that contributors to an operation will do so in full compliance with previously agreed commitments as required to undertake the mission, or towards discounting forces with obvious technological handicaps as little more than an obstruction to the efficient conduct of the mission; such tendencies miss the range of nuances between coalition partners having very different political objectives, and their very real desire to participate meaningfully despite acknowledged capability shortcomings. The very different Canadian approach again probably stems from our own desire to be recognized and appreciated by our senior partners. Within NATO, the Canadian Navy has always strived to “punch above its weight”. Even in the 1980s, when the aging fleet of steam destroyers was the butt of media disdain as “the rust bucket fleet”, Canadian commanders endeavoured that our ships be meaningful participants (within their capacity) in NATO exercises, and Canadian staff officers were especially influential within the NATO command structure, with for example a vice-admiral serving as Chief of Staff to SACLANT (the Supreme Allied

²⁴ Jean Morin and Richard Gimblett, *Operation Friction: The Canadian Forces in the Persian Gulf, 1990-1991* (Toronto: Dundurn, 1997), 179.

²⁵ Gimblett, *Operation Apollo*, 47 and *passim*.

Commander Atlantic) coordinating the staff efforts of that headquarters, many members of which were Canadian exchange officers. That disproportionate dominance in SACLANT was borne as much from the desire to participate as from the professional competence that earned such positioning, and it contributed to significant developments, such as the CONMAROPS (Concept of Maritime Operations) that was to shape NATO naval developments through the 1980s.²⁶

This has been reflected in recent operations by our own commanders paying special attention to the technical capabilities and limitations (“caps & lims”) of coalition members, to ensure their best operational employment, while also taking account of their political direction and aspirations. The examples are legion, but two will suffice to demonstrate that this is not an isolated phenomenon. In the first Gulf War, the Canadian task group commander had among the multinational members of the Combined Logistics Force under his command a Danish warship with very restrictive ROE (rules of engagement) that prevented its captain from aggressively patrolling his assigned sector to take pre-emptive action against potential threats; recognizing this, the Canadian commander purposely stationed the Dane up-threat, so that it might legitimately invoke its “inherent right of self-defence” to protect the supply ships he was escorting further down-threat.²⁷ Another example in the more recent Arabian Sea operations involved all Canadian commanders going to great lengths to include the Japanese Maritime Self Defence Forces operating in the area. The JMSDF was the only other nation to undertake the deployment of a potent task group similar in composition to our own (typically comprising one of their newer-generation Aegis-class destroyers, an older destroyer or frigate, and a supply ship), but their employment was guided by the significant constitutional restriction of not being able to engage directly in combat operations. As such, each of the Canadian commodores in turn made frequent personal visits to their Japanese counterparts and invited them to the Canadian flagship to share information and discuss procedures, always mindful not to compromise the national direction to which the Japanese commanders were responsible. From all accounts, it was an arrangement that was mutually and professionally beneficial: although their constitutional imperatives were never compromised, on many occasions the JMSDF provided information that was critical to compilation of the recognized maritime picture.²⁸

This cultural disposition practiced by Canadian naval commanders is captured nicely in the observation that, “Overall, the maintenance of a deep-seated foundation of professional values inherited from the RN, with an overlay of Canadian social values, and to a lesser extent Canadian naval experiences, has resulted in an operational culture that is distinctively Canadian.”²⁹ The true measure of how deeply this national propensity for multilateralism and the notion of middle power functionalism has been inculcated in the Canadian Navy is that our naval commanders appear to understand political objectives of coalition naval

²⁶ Peter T. Haydon, “The Evolution of the Canadian Naval Task Group,” in Ann Griffiths, Peter Haydon and Richard Gimblett (eds.), *Canadian Gunboat Diplomacy: The Canadian Navy and Foreign Policy* (Halifax, NS: Dalhousie University Centre for Foreign Policy Studies, 2001), 95-129. This role remains with the shift in NATO command structure that saw SACLANT re-organized as Allied Command Transformation, although with an army lieutenant-general currently in the COS position.

²⁷ Miller and Hobson, *Persian Excursion*, 163 and 173.

²⁸ Gimblett, *Operation Apollo*, 49, 133 and *passim*.

²⁹ English *et al*, *Command Styles in the Canadian Navy*, 102.

operations better than our elected governments. This was evident in the first Gulf war, when the Canadian theatre commander, then-Commodore Ken Summers, appreciated that our national headquarters should be located in Bahrain (from where the USN was directing the UN-mandated sanctions effort) as opposed to Riyadh (from where US Central Command was directing the more controversial coercive action against Iraq); the result was that our task group was more effectively positioned to participate in the Coalition embargo effort. This thinking again animated the approach to Operation Apollo, which saw the Navy able to convince the government that a bold naval deployment (both in terms of the maintenance of a fairly sizable force, and of the range of missions it was authorized to perform) was the best means of achieving the delicate balancing act that Prime Minister Chretien was attempting to perform in keeping his distance from the Bush administration while contributing effectively to our more general security. In both cases, the naval role ensured Canadian military participation in a Coalition context, serving as a counterweight to US dominance; and command of those operations was the ideal expression of the government's geopolitical objectives, while the effective exercise of that command worked ultimately to the operational and strategic benefit of all.

Environment-Technology-Culture in Operation Apollo

The various elements of the environment-technology-culture triad came together to great effect for the Canadian Navy with the dispatch of a naval task group to the Arabian Sea in the fall of 2001. The ability to deploy a significant combat force capable of working with the USN immediately upon arrival in theatre demonstrated the inherent adaptability of the fleet stemming from its domestic environmental conditions. Along with the gateway C4ISR technical capabilities resident in the task group's flagship, the obvious professional competence of the Canadian sailors and their commanders in a variety of warfare skills, and a cultural pre-disposition to act in concert with others, a succession of Canadian commanders very quickly earned and maintained a command role over other coalition forces as they came and went. The ability to sustain that command for the better part of two years, as the operation evolved through different phases, including the enormous strains of conflicting national sentiments over operations in Iraq, is testament to the notion that command of coalition forces is a role for which the Canadian Navy is ideally suited.

The exercise of that command was raised to a particularly high level through the constant interplay of various environmental, technological and cultural factors. The ranges of the area of Canadian responsibility, spanning from the longitude of the Indo-Pakistani border in the eastern reaches of the Arabian Sea, well south of the Arabian Peninsula to the Horn of Africa, and then north into the Persian Gulf, presented enormous challenges to the command and control of the operations. The key to success was effective employment of networked links with the USN, for which the prerequisites were access to the American communications channels and possession of SATCOM to ensure reliable connectivity. For a variety of reasons, Canadian commanders enjoyed the highest entry levels to both of those prerequisites: on one hand, USN commanders are constrained from sharing access too widely even with other close allies; on the other hand, other forces were unable to invest fully in the expensive proposition of obtaining the required hardware and maintaining the several associated satellite channels on a continuous basis. To extend the connectivity throughout the task force, the Canadian task group commanders undertook a variety of initiatives to gain

as many other coalition members as possible to adopt COWAN (the Coalition Wide Area Network), if only on a limited basis. Eventually a modest short-range network was established for the non-SATCOM fitted coalition members, through the mediums of HF Battle Force E-mail (BFEM) and Link-11 tactical datalink (TADIL).

Although such efforts as maintenance of the networks were necessary for effective tactical mission performance, they served also to reinforce a feeling of inclusiveness amongst other coalition partners. The strategic benefits arose when the United States embarked upon the invasion of Iraq and very few other member governments were willing to go along with them. The existence of CTF 151 facilitated the continued engagement in the war against terrorism of those coalition members, presenting a clear separation of activities between the overt warfighting of Operation Iraqi Freedom and the picture compilation and maritime interdiction of the on-going Operation Enduring Freedom. It is possible to postulate that, without a Canadian naval commander able to exercise such a command, coalition solidarity would have been fractured, delivering at least a moral victory to the enemy.

If only for that, Operation Apollo warrants more detailed examination, as setting the standard for future coalition naval operations. More specifically, the coalition command role exercised by the Navy was a great success, and a useful model for understanding its nature is the unifying framework of the environment-technology-culture triad. Because the geography of our environment will not change (the possibilities of global warming notwithstanding), future Canadian fleets will continue to incorporate a balanced set of capabilities in vessels able to deploy over long distances for sustained periods. The shared responsibility with the United States for the defence of North America will continue to require our investment in such technology as networked capabilities for maintaining effective command and control with the USN, in what is likely to remain a privileged if not unique relationship, positioning us to continue acting as a gateway C4ISR between the USN and other navies. It is to be expected that our national cultural predisposition for multilateralism will continue to be translated through the professional competence of our senior naval officers into their ability to take command of the forces of other nations in a collegial fashion to obtain the most mutually beneficial operational employment.

Because each of these factors involves some quality that is uniquely Canadian, and their future combination as in Operation Apollo is entirely possible, it is not unreasonable to argue that command of multinational coalition forces is something for which the Canadian Navy is uniquely qualified.



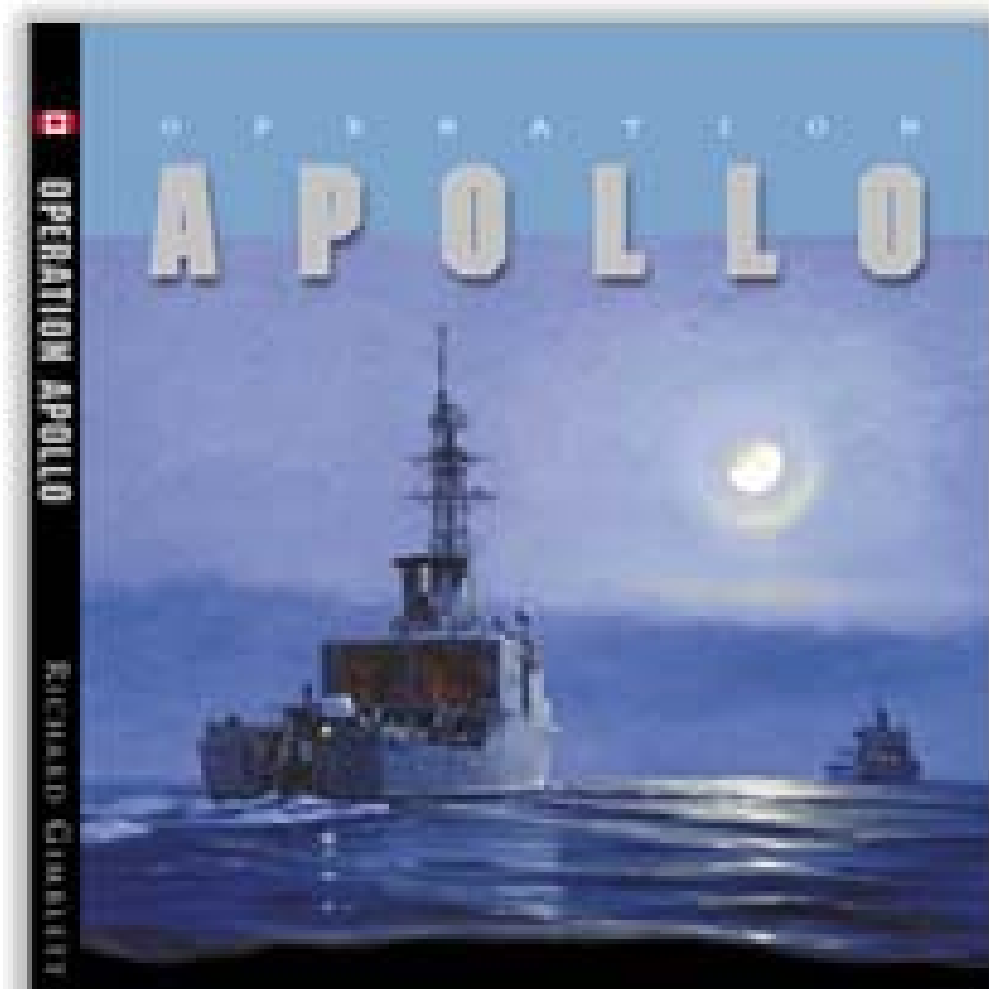
Command of Coalition Operations: A Canadian Naval Niche?

Dr Richard Gimblett

Canadian Forces Leadership
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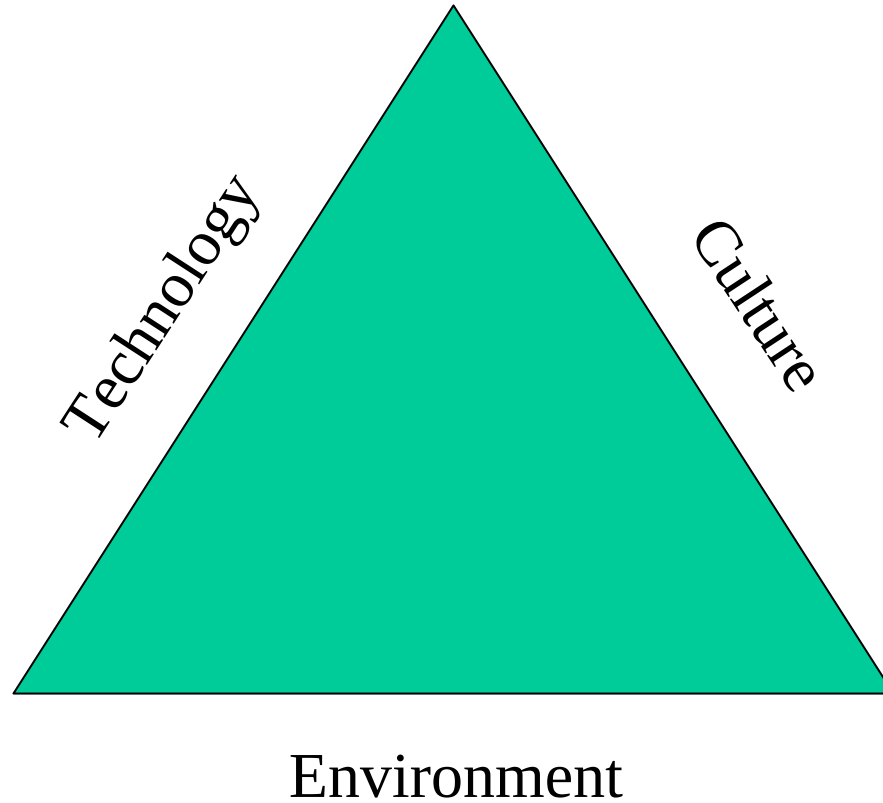
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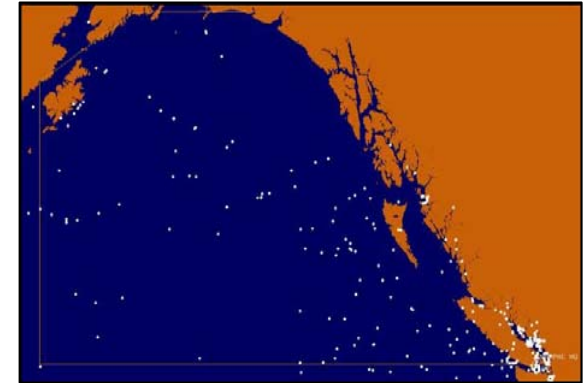
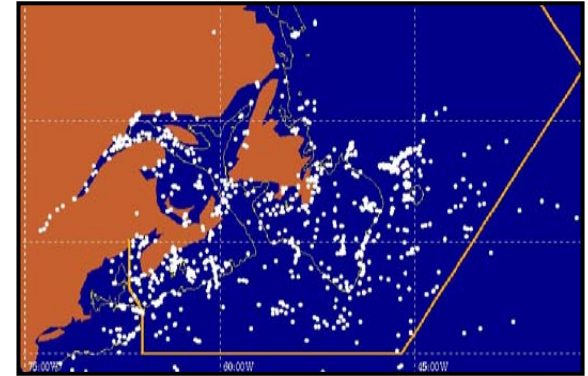


Environment-Technology-Culture Triad



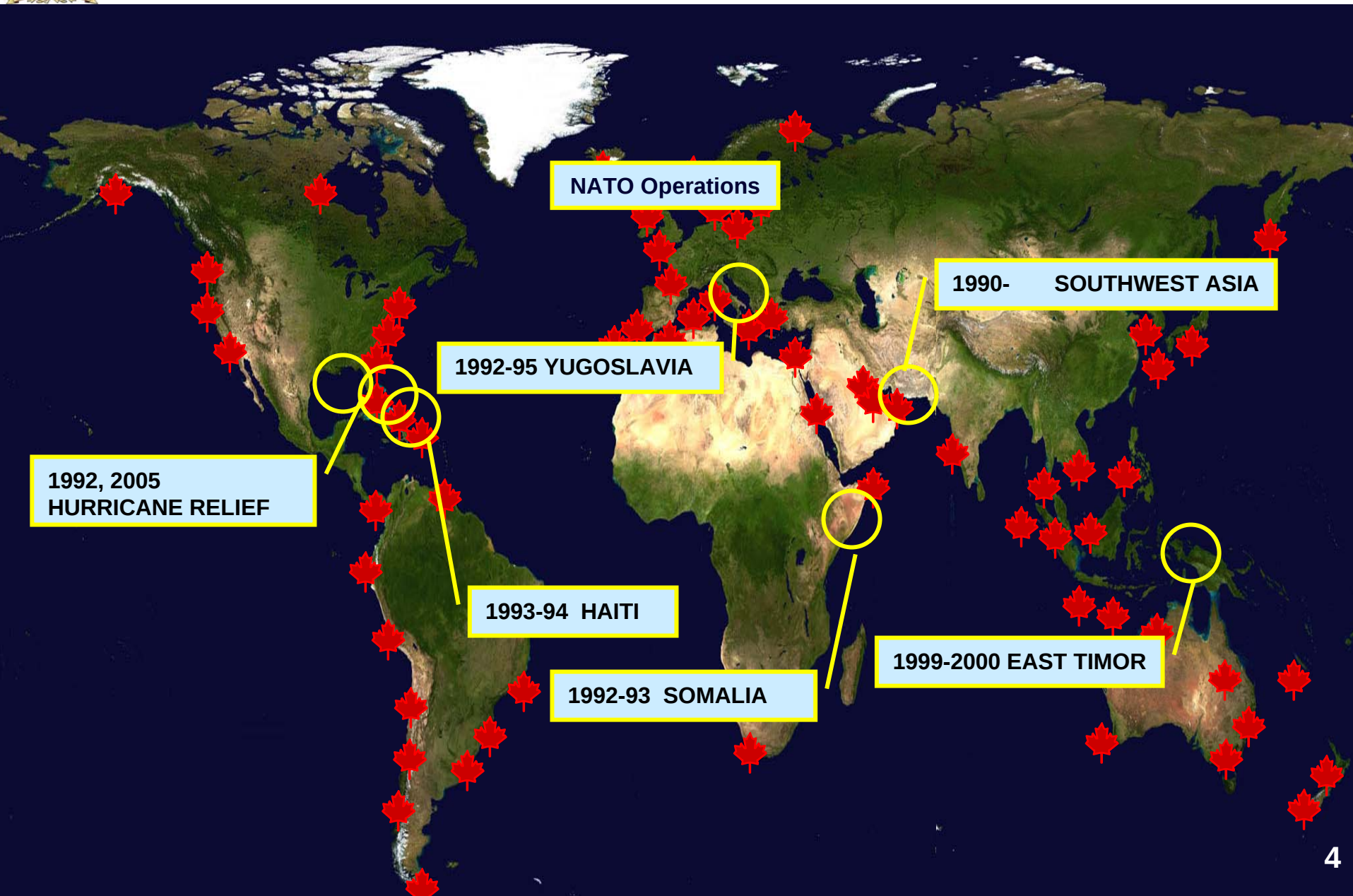


ENVIRONMENT: Naval Fleet Mix



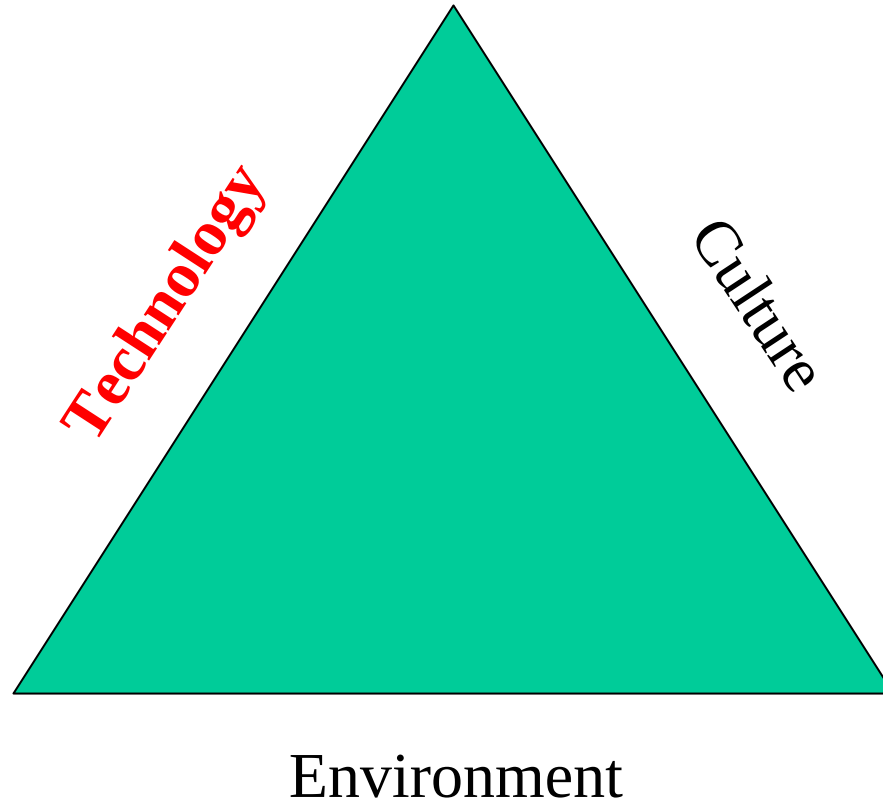


ENVIRONMENT: Naval Ops Abroad





Environment-Technology-Culture Triad

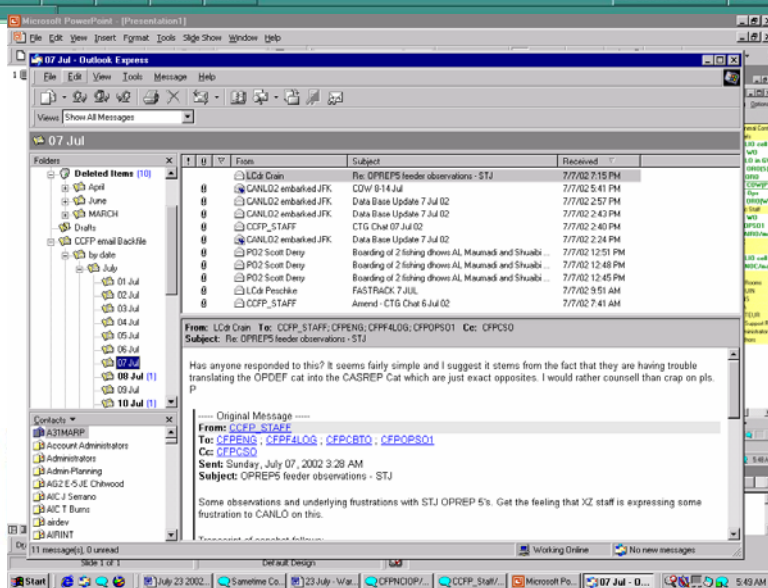
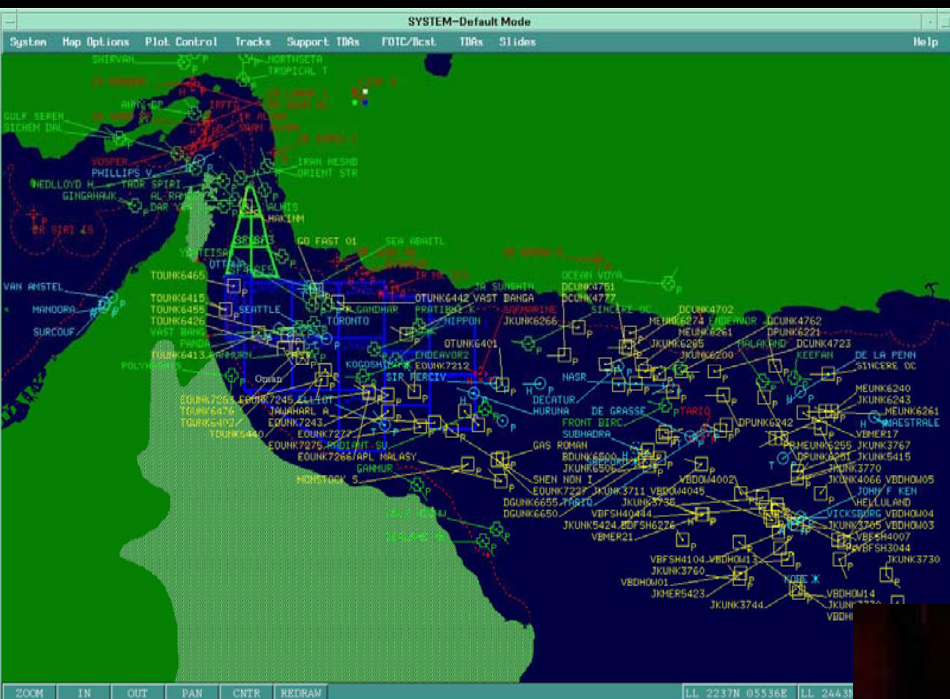




TECHNOLOGY: Battle Group Interoperability

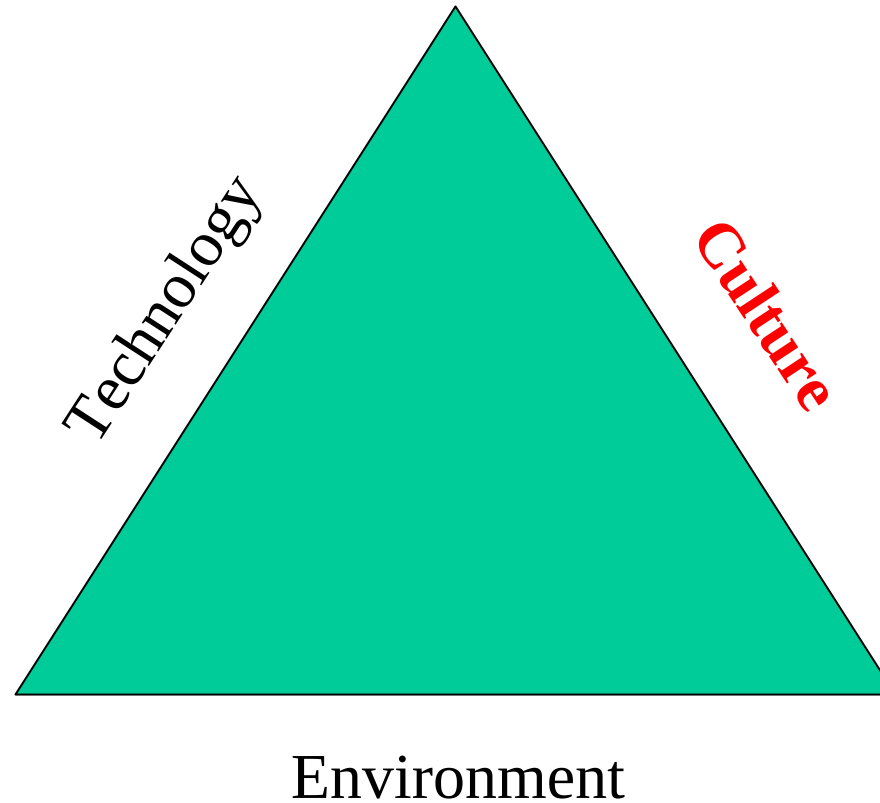


OEF / Apollo Networked Capabilities





Environment-Technology-Culture Triad



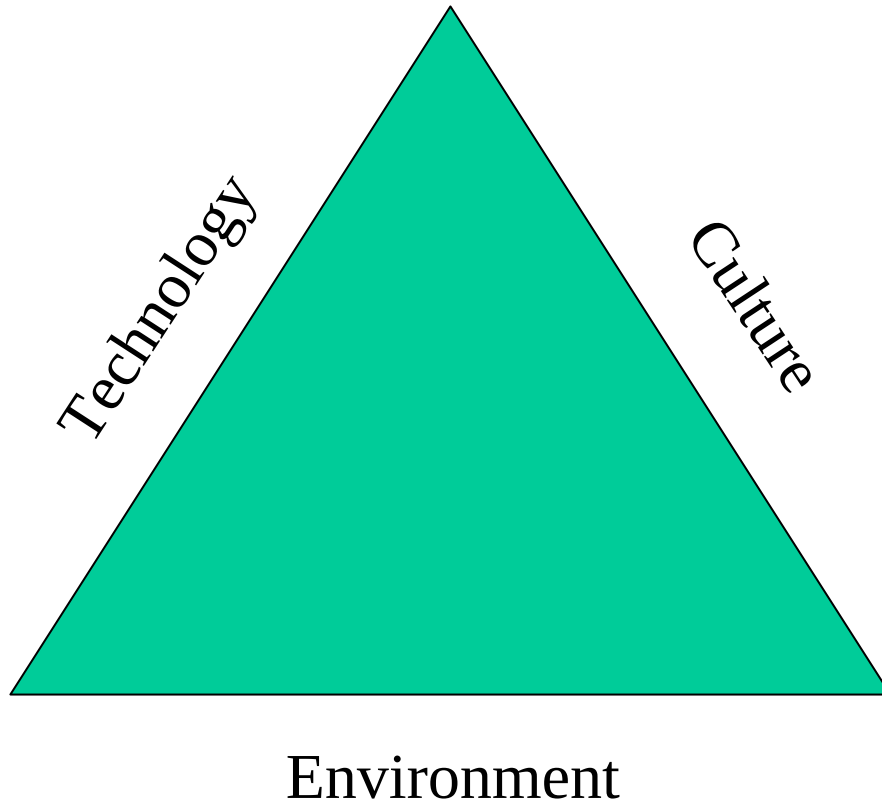


CULTURE: Elements to Consider

- MULTILATERALIST INSTINCT
- MIDDLE POWER FUNCTIONALISM
- COMMAND PARITY
- PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE
- CARE AND FEEDING OF PARTNERS



CTF 151 in the Arabian Sea



Discussion

