Introduction

This paper discusses cultural intelligence and its importance in understanding multinational partners from a military perspective. Cultural intelligence refers to an individual's ability to work effectively in diverse cultural settings. According to Claflin et al. (2010), cultural intelligence involves understanding better other people's cultures and ways of life to make military actions less challenging and reduce potential conflicts associated with the military's lack of cultural knowledge.¹ The multinational operating environment necessitates a deeper conceptualization and understanding of cultural intelligence between the international interagency and inter-service partners. Improved cultural intelligence will enhance cooperation and foster an account that will lead to positive operational environment outcomes. This paper's case study will be the Gulf War in 1990-1991, otherwise called Operation Desert Storm, and how cultural intelligence impacted it.

How Multinational, Interagency and Multiservice Operate

According to Spirtas et al. (2008), multinational, interagency, and multiservice operations need to involve group bonding during training to ensure that the individuals learn about each other's culture.² For example, Britain has been an ally of the United States of America since World War 2 and had a better understanding of each other's cultural background during the 1990-1991 Iraq invasion. The cultural agreement between both sides can only be realized by allowing the military personnel to interact and learn the cultural values they have in common.


thus making it easy to command them. Consultations are another essential thing to be adopted. As Spirtas et al. (2008) state, the joint coalition may have differing ideas on particular actions. Each party pushes for their own opinion, but through consultations, interagency and international harmony are achieved. Without cultural intelligence, such consultations can be of little to no use due to misunderstandings during the communication.

**Negative Repercussions Due to Lack of Cultural Intelligence**

Multinational operations involve militaries from different countries with different cultures. Other languages, for instance, can have a significant impact on the success of an international military operation. For example, in the 1990-1991 war, communication with the local community was a challenge, limiting intelligence gathering. Also, few Arabs understood the English culture and vice versa and, when civilians were ordered to stop at roadblocks, they could not comprehend both the spoken and sign languages and kept moving forward, which resulted in the military opening fire to a friendly group as a result of ignored command caused by language and cultural barriers. According to Culhane et al. (2016), a better understanding of different cultures in multinational operations helps manage and improve communication, thus enhancing cooperation and intelligence gathering between the military and the host community.

---

3 Papaargji, Linda. "Role of US in the War in Iraq Case Study." PhD diss., Worcester Polytechnic Institute, 2008, pg.27


5 Ulrich, Uwe. "Intercultural competence in the Bundeswehr." 2012,p.12


7 Ibid

8 Culhane, Elizabeth, Patrice Reid, Loring J. Crepeau, and Daniel McDonald. "Beyond frontiers: the critical role of cross-cultural competence in the military." *The Industrial-Organizational Psychologist* 50, no. 2012, pg.33
Lack of cultural competence may lead to persistent conflicts. For example, during Operation Desert Storm in Kuwait, military men in the multinational army campaign invaded even the holy places, thus resolving the locals who could have otherwise supported them. Cultural intelligence would have helped the military know what places to avoid bombing or setting up a base, which would have created a friendlier attitude from the locals.  

**Recommendations**

Several militaries around the world have adopted the policy of carrying out multinational training. According to Goldenberg and Dean (2017), international training help identifies weak areas that the military commanders need to address, like coordinated communication in command centers. If soldiers deployed in Iraq in 1991 had carried out multinational training before the actual war, deaths from friendly fire accidents would have been reduced, for example, during the battle of Norfolk in the Desert Storm operation.  

Language barriers make it difficult to relate with the local communities, thus leading to a hostile reception. For example, American and British forces experienced language barriers with Arab-speaking allied forces, making it necessary to have two commanders: General Schwarzkopf for the American and British troops and LTG Kahlid Bin Sultan Arab-allied forces.

---

9 Papaargjir, Linda. "Role of US in the War in Iraq Case Study." PhD diss., Worcester Polytechnic Institute, 2008, pg.28


11 Deresky, Helen. *International management: Managing across borders and cultures.* Pearson Education India, 2017, pg.21
Communication is an essential element in joint operations. Experience sharing among the officers should help create a mutual learning environment and improve cultural competence. In Operation Desert Storm, most friendly fire deaths resulted from the poor communication on the battlefield between the British, American, French, and Arab forces caused by cultural and language differences. Military trainers worldwide encourage communication and information sharing among allied militaries to better understand different multicultural environments and eradicate friendly fire deaths. Effective communication ensures orders are correctly received and followed, thus reducing unnecessary deaths during multinational operations.

**Conclusion**

Cultural intelligence is just as critical as military hardware. Joint operations rely on cultural intelligence to achieve success with minimal casualties from friendly groups and armies. Lack of cultural intelligence can have detrimental effects on military activities in a war zone. Military formations worldwide are encouraged to invest more in the areas that help improve cultural intelligence. Improved cultural intelligence will enhance the cooperation and understanding that will enable positive outcomes in the operational environment.

---


13 Ibid., pg.18
Bibliography


