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**In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century can we look towards the planning and execution of Operation OVERLORD for useful lessons on the challenges of conducting coalition operations?**

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## Abstract

Coalitions are considered a vital feature of contemporary warfare. However, they are not a modern phenomena and history offers many examples of nations uniting to address security threats. One of the most complex coalition operations in history is Operation OVERLORD, the Allied invasion of North West Europe in 1944, and this paper focuses on the Anglo-American relationship during the planning and execution of the operation. By reviewing current doctrine publications, academic literature, memoirs and biographies, the paper will conclude that OVERLORD still offers lessons regarding the management of coalitions that are relevant to modern coalitions. The paper will note however, that, as a number of factors have changed since 1944, the case study must be handled with care.

## Introduction

The importance of coalitions to modern warfare was underlined by the Prime Minister during his speech on defence in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.<sup>1</sup> However, coalition warfare is not a modern phenomenon. While Wellington takes much of the credit for the victory at Waterloo, von Blücher's contribution cannot be overlooked. Ancient history provides examples of coalitions and the French, British and Americans worked together during the First World War. The Second World War also relied on a coalition. In February 1944 General Dwight D Eisenhower received a directive that tasked him to '*enter the Continent of Europe and, in conjunction with the other United Nations, undertake operations aimed at the heart of Germany and the destruction of her armed forces.*'<sup>2</sup> Eisenhower had therefore been formally directed to undertake OVERLORD. This simple phrase did little to emphasise the complexity and scale of effort that the invasion would entail but the requirement to work with other '*United Nations*' did underline the fact that it would be a coalition effort. The popular image of OVERLORD is one of Allies united in their struggle to defeat Nazi Germany and to some extent this is true. However, the Operation's success was not guaranteed from the outset. Therefore tensions between coalition partners were exposed during both the planning and execution of the campaign. While several nations were involved in the coalition, the predominant partners were the Americans and British and this study focuses on these 2 nations. This paper will, therefore, explore the Anglo-American relationship during the planning and execution of OVERLORD to determine whether it provides any lessons that are useful in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Working within a coalition provides many advantages. It enables partners to share the burden of operations and spread risks. In addition to addressing a direct threat to a nation's interests, providing support for a coalition can also be used as a foreign policy tool to secure influence within the international system. As Lawrence Freedman suggests, the size of the force which the UK deployed to the Gulf in 1990 '*was almost entirely geared to the requirements of getting entrée into American decision-making at the highest political and operational levels.*'<sup>3</sup> Coalitions are not, however, solely a tool of weaker nations seeking to achieve their aims by supporting stronger countries. Even though the USA is more powerful than its potential coalition partners, America still seeks cooperation because it provides a degree of legitimacy that would not be present for most unilateral actions.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Blair, Tony, '*Our Nation's Future-Defence*', 12 Jan 2007, [Online]. Available from: <http://www.number-10.gov.uk/output/Page10735.asp>. Accessed 1 May 07.

<sup>2</sup> Ramsey Winston G, (ed), *D-Day Then and Now Vol 1*, (London: Battle of Britain Prints International, 1995), p.12.

<sup>3</sup> Freedman, Lawrence, 'Britain at War From the Falklands to Iraq' *RUSI Journal*, February 2006, p.12.

<sup>4</sup> Riscassi, Robert, 'Principles For Coalition Warfare', *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Summer 1993, p.59.

Churchill's statement that '*There is only one thing worse than fighting with allies – and that is fighting without them*' indicates that, while coalitions offer opportunities, they also present a number of interesting problems.<sup>5</sup> The paper will begin by examining current literature and doctrine to establish characteristics which are liable to create challenges in modern coalitions. This analysis will suggest that cohesion, unity of command, the need to share the burden of effort and risk across the coalition, and understanding how national, cultural and historical backgrounds affect the actions of coalition partners, are all important and demanding issues. Leadership style is also a significant factor in a coalition's effectiveness and developing trust amongst partners is a key enabler. After establishing this framework, the paper will go on to examine several facets of OVERLORD to determine the extent to which modern thinking is supported by the historical case study.

The paper will continue by highlighting that, although both the Americans and British were united in their determination to defeat Germany, the Allies had vastly differing views on how this should be achieved. The Americans favoured a direct approach through an early invasion of North West Europe, whereas, the British sought to wear the Germans down through a series of operations in Africa and the Mediterranean. The paper will examine how these issues were discussed at various wartime conferences and how the British managed to steer the course of the campaign. The paper will, however, note that British dominance of the strategic debate was reducing with time and will show how the Americans used the proposed invasion of Southern France, Operation ANVIL, to secure influence over the campaign's direction. This section of the paper will conclude by arguing that, despite the differences in their strategic outlook, the clear threat posed by Germany helped the Allies maintain cohesion. In modern operations the threat may be less stark or obvious and, as a result, the management of strategic differences may be more demanding.

Although today Eisenhower would appear to be inextricably linked with OVERLORD, his selection as supreme commander was not certain in 1943. The paper will therefore take a brief look at Eisenhower's performance in the North African and Mediterranean campaigns to examine why he was appointed to command the invasion of North West Europe. The paper will propose that, despite his lack of experience as a field commander and his apparent failings in Africa, it was Eisenhower's ability to build an integrated multinational team that made him an excellent candidate for command. The paper will also note that the benefits of integrated headquarters and planning teams have been recognised in modern operations.

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<sup>5</sup> Tsouras, P, (ed), *The Greenhill Dictionary of Military Quotations*, (London: Greenhill Books, 2000), p.34.

Although it is natural for a supreme commander to seek clear command and control relationships over the multinational forces assigned to an operation, in coalition it is often difficult to achieve simple unity of command. Strategic bombers would make a vital contribution to OVERLORD and the paper will therefore look at the efforts, and compromises, Eisenhower made to secure an acceptable degree of control over these aircraft. It will be argued that the battle for command of the strategic bomber force has resonance for modern coalition operations because it demonstrates the usefulness of having an integrated headquarters, the need to divide burdens and risks fairly, and the problems engendered when a commander is compelled to share assets and forces with other operations and theatres.

Although the initial landings in Normandy were relatively successful, the fear of stalemate grew after D-Day. The paper will, therefore, examine elements of the ground campaign in order to determine why inter-Allied tensions developed and how these problems were managed. The interaction between the Supreme Commander and Montgomery will be discussed to illustrate how trust between the Allies became strained. The paper will suggest that Eisenhower's leadership style and understanding of the unique challenges presented by coalitions played a key role in maintaining cohesion, despite the inter-Allied problems. Notwithstanding the passage of time, the paper will propose that this approach to coalition command remains relevant to contemporary operations.

The paper will conclude by noting there are a number of factors that will stretch modern coalitions which were not present to the same extent in 1944 and by suggesting that the changing nature of warfare has altered the problems faced by commanders. In 1944 the German threat was very clear but in the 21st century, when faced with wars of choice, leaders may find it more difficult to maintain cohesion and unity of purpose. Therefore, although the OVERLORD case study has its limitations, there are sufficient parallels between it and contemporary operations to suggest that it remains relevant to modern commanders.

### Coalition Warfare – A Challenging Concept

Coalitions are by their nature ad hoc arrangements normally created in response to a specific problem or task.<sup>6</sup> Each coalition will therefore have a different nature and may generate unique problems. However, it is possible to highlight generic traits and challenges that complicate coalition warfare. British Defence Doctrine identifies that maintaining the cohesion of a force is essential in warfare but that this can be particularly difficult in coalition or multinational operations.<sup>7</sup> Indeed during recent

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<sup>6</sup> Scales, Robert, Trust, Not Technology, Sustains Coalitions, *Parameters*, Winter 1998, [Online]. Available from: <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/parameters/98winter/scales1.htm>. Accessed 29 April 2007.

<sup>7</sup> *Joint Warfare Publication 5 – Joint Operations Planning*, March 2004 Edition, p.2-4.

western-led coalition operations the most pressing threat to the alliance has not been direct military defeat but a breakdown in the force's cohesion.<sup>8</sup> A coalition's cohesion will be improved if a common set of goals can be agreed. However, Churchill's view that '*In war it is not always possible to have everything go exactly as one likes. In working with Allies it sometimes happens that they develop opinions of their own,*'<sup>9</sup> illustrates coalition partners do not always agree. The nature of the task which the coalition is formed to tackle will, in part, influence the degree of difficulty experienced in agreeing these objectives across the partnership. This is, in turn, related to the degree of threat felt by the participating nations, as in wars of national survival the need for action is often clearer than in operations of choice such as an expeditionary peace support operation.<sup>10</sup> However, even when the coalition's purpose appears to be clear, longer-term national agendas can often complicate the issue. While the UK and France entered the First World War with a shared goal of defeating Germany, the French also sought to secure sovereignty over the Alsace-Lorraine region whereas the British were seeking to further their imperial ambitions.<sup>11</sup> However, differing strategic aims do not necessarily result in coalition failure. The important factor is to ensure that aims are consistent, harmonised, understood by all partners and acceptable to all the coalition members.

While unity of command within a coalition is highly desirable, national considerations in multinational operations will often lead to complicated command and control chains. Each force will retain the right to report back to their national governments in order to seek clarification and direction. This can sometimes result in the forces of specific nations refusing to undertake certain tasks and playing the so called '*red card*'. These incidents have the potential to create considerable friction within a coalition and this could eventually undermine its cohesion.<sup>12</sup> National pride is also a factor in decisions relating to the command of forces, as countries are often reluctant to delegate the authority of sovereign assets to a foreign power.<sup>13</sup> It is consequently very important that commanders manage potential areas of difficulty by developing an understanding of the command relationships and the limitations that may be placed on some of their forces.

The nations contributing to a coalition may not provide the same level of capability. In some cases the numbers of troops and assets will be limited and in others the quality will vary. The contributing

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<sup>8</sup> Wilkins, Thomas, *Analysing Coalition Warfare from an Intra-Alliance Politics Perspective: The Normandy Campaign 1944*, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol 29, No 6, p.1123.

<sup>9</sup> Tsouras, op. cit., p.35.

<sup>10</sup> Deverell, Jack, *Coalition Warfare and Expeditionary Operations*, *RUSI Journal*, February 2002, p.18.

<sup>11</sup> Silkett, Wayne A, *Alliance and Coalition Warfare*, *Parameters*, Summer 1993, [Online]. Available from: <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/parameters/1993/silkett.htm>. Accessed 9 January 2007.

<sup>12</sup> Gardner, S, *Operation Iraqi Freedom – Coalition Operations*, *RAF Historical Society*, 2006, p.22.

<sup>13</sup> Rice, Anthony J. *Command and Control: The Essence of Coalition Warfare*, *Parameters*, Spring 1997, [Online]. Available from: <http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usawc/parameters/97spring/rice.htm>. Accessed 29 April 2007.

nations may also have different appetites for risk and their rules of engagement may not be identical. The commander will therefore need to exercise careful judgement in the way he allocates tasks across the force. Some nations may be welcomed as partners for political reasons, although their military contribution is limited. However, if these forces are underutilised, national pride may be damaged. If the commander concentrates too much on trusted and capable forces, he may degrade their morale and this also has the potential to degrade the coalition's coherence.<sup>14</sup> Care must be taken to ensure that the burden of operational tasking and risk is managed carefully across the coalition.

The cultural and historical backgrounds of the contributing nations will influence their approach to operations and warfare. Their doctrine may be different and it is important that these factors are assessed, and accommodated, in operational plans. The views and beliefs of junior partners should not be dismissed, as it would be an act of hubris on behalf of the coalition leader if it were assumed that different automatically meant worse.<sup>15</sup>

In coalitions a certain degree of difficulty will always exist and operational failures or setbacks will add to coalition tension.<sup>16</sup> Despite the presence of a clear threat driving the coalition, differences in purpose, capability and ambiguity of command will persist. It is therefore vital that a coalition commander understands these problems and develops methods for managing them; good communications and rapport between the partners should assist him in that task.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, British Doctrine reminds commander that they cannot afford to publicly criticise their partners.<sup>18</sup> The commander's personality and his leadership style will also make a vital contribution to the coalition's success. An indecisive character will not be effective but an overbearing leader may increase friction within the coalition. As Silkett suggests authority '*tends to be collegial, and a successful coalition leader will be persuasive rather than coercive*'.<sup>19</sup> Integrated headquarters and planning processes enable coalitions to develop a common appreciation of the challenges they are facing and leave them better placed to develop coherent plans. Working with coalition partners prior to the start of operations enables the development of trust between contributing nations and individuals. When the inevitable fog and friction of war develops, this trust is often the most valuable asset in the coalition's armoury and is a key factor in determining success.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> *Joint Warfare Publication 3 – Joint Operations Execution*. 2<sup>nd</sup> Edition March 2004, p.3-15.

<sup>15</sup> Silkett, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup> Deverell, op. cit., p.18.

<sup>17</sup> *Joint Publication 3 – Doctrine for Joint Operations*, US Joint Chiefs of Staff, 10 September 2001, p.VI-3

<sup>18</sup> *Joint Warfare Publication 3*, op. cit., p.1A-1.

<sup>19</sup> Silkett, op. cit.

<sup>20</sup> Scales, op. cit.

## The Journey to the Second Front – Allies Divided by a Common Goal

Although the United States had come under direct Japanese attack, President Roosevelt adopted a '*Germany First*' principle to the Second World War as he believed the defeat of Germany would lead to Japan's demise, whereas, delaying operations in Europe would strengthen Hitler's domination.<sup>21</sup> It would therefore appear that the unity of purpose between the United States and Britain was remarkably strong: the total defeat of Germany. However, each country had differing views about the strategy which should be employed in the European Theatre. The discussions leading to the decision to mount OVERLORD in 1944 are therefore interesting to explore, as they highlight a number of potential difficulties in the coalition's cohesion.

British strategy was informed by its experience of both the First and Second World Wars. Churchill's own involvement in the Gallipoli landings had given him a stark warning on the dangers of amphibious operations and the disastrous Dieppe raid showed the problems of making opposed landings. Churchill said to Eden '*Remember that on my breast there are medals of the Dardanelles, Antwerp, Dakar and Greece*'.<sup>22</sup> Britain could not afford to be involved in a Pyrrhic struggle and consequently sought to avoid confronting the enemy at his strongest point.<sup>23</sup> In January 1942 at the ARCADIA conference the British suggested '*tightening the ring around Germany, then stabbing in the knife when the enemy was exhausted*'.<sup>24</sup> The ARCADIA conference agreed that Germany should be the focus for operations but did not decide how the plan would be taken forward. However, the conference did create the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee which formally established a method for developing coalition war plans.<sup>25</sup>

The Americans saw the struggle in different terms. Their huge industrial might meant that they could out produce the Germans and, while British military strength had reached its peak, American power was increasing with time.<sup>26</sup> The Americans were prepared to take a more direct approach and wanted to launch an early invasion into North West Europe. This was not just an act of bravado based on an over-confident assessment of their fighting ability but also an acknowledgement of the need to support the Soviet Union. General Marshall believed that it would be '*the worst blunder in history if eight*

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<sup>21</sup> Kissinger, Henry, *Diplomacy*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1994), p.403.

<sup>22</sup> Keegan, John, *The Second World War*, (London: Pimlico, 1997), p.259.

<sup>23</sup> Wilmot, Chester, *The Struggle for Europe*, (Hertfordshire: Wordsworth, 1997), p.129.

<sup>24</sup> D'Este, Carlo, *Decision in Normandy*, (London: Penguin Books, 2001), p.23.

<sup>25</sup> Harrison, Gordon, *Cross Channel Attack*, (New York: Konecky & Konecky, 1951), p.2.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p.13.

*million [soviet] men were lost through British-American inaction*'.<sup>27</sup> A plan was therefore developed for an invasion of Europe in 1942 under the codename SLEDGEHAMMER and this was discussed by Marshall and Harry Hopkins, the President's Special Emissary, during their visit to London in April 1942. The British had originally proposed SLEDGEHAMMER as an operation to exploit a sudden and unexpected German collapse or as an attempt to support the Soviet Union.<sup>28</sup> However, given Germany's relatively strong position, Sir Alan Brooke, Chief of the Imperial General Staff, believed that the plan was liable to engender significant losses and he also contested its potential effectiveness as a relief operation.<sup>29</sup> While the British and Americans could not agree about the direction operations should take in 1942, they did approve Marshall's plan for a cross channel invasion in 1943, Operation ROUNDUP.<sup>30</sup>

At this stage of the war Churchill was in a politically weak position and had to proceed with considerable caution.<sup>31</sup> He was the subject of a Parliamentary vote of no confidence in his handling of the war and he was therefore keen to seek opportunities to take the fight to the Germans; it was, in his view, the Mediterranean that offered this opportunity.<sup>32</sup> However he also had to tread very carefully with his American allies. Roosevelt had to manage an American electorate who thought that their focus should be on Japan.<sup>33</sup> Churchill could not afford to let his caution over a cross channel attack force the Americans into reversing their Germany First policy. Churchill's policy was therefore '*Germany First – but not quite yet*'.<sup>34</sup> Although Churchill was still not convinced that the Allies would have generated sufficient force by 1943 to overcome Germany's Atlantic defences, the need to balance British priorities with those of America was a key factor in his agreement to ROUNDUP, as it helped maintain Allied unity and gave the leverage required to develop a case for operations in the Mediterranean.<sup>35</sup>

Although he harboured some thoughts of renewed operations in Norway, Churchill believed that French North Africa provided the best opportunity for supporting the Russians during 1942.<sup>36</sup> The proposed operation was initially known as GYMNAST but later became called TORCH. However, during Marshall's visit to London in April 1942, the British Prime Minister could not get agreement for

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<sup>27</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.24.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> Harrison, op. cit., p.17.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., p.18.

<sup>31</sup> Churchill, Winston, *The Second World War Vol IV*, (London: The Reprint Society, 1953), p.356.

<sup>32</sup> D'Este, op. cit., P.26.

<sup>33</sup> Wilmot, op. cit., p.128.

<sup>34</sup> Keegan, op. cit., p.259.

<sup>35</sup> Hastings Max, *Overlord – D-Day and the Battle for Normandy 1944*, (London: Pan Books, 1985), p.25.

<sup>36</sup> Churchill, Vol IV, op. cit. p.357.

the North African plan. Churchill did nevertheless gain American agreement for Operation BOLERO,<sup>37</sup> the build up of US forces in Great Britain, and used this as a basis to further the debate in support of TORCH. Churchill believed that the American voters would wish to see the forces they were deploying to Britain in action during 1942 and, if an invasion of Europe was not practical, then they should be employed on TORCH.<sup>38</sup> On 17 April 1942 Churchill wrote to Roosevelt saying '*The Campaign of 1943 is straightforward, and we are starting joint plans and preparations at once. We may however, feel compelled to act this year.*'<sup>39</sup> He re-emphasised this latter point during his meeting with Roosevelt in June 1942 and gained agreement that '*The possibilities of French North Africa ... will be explored carefully, and plans will be completed in all details as soon as possible.*'<sup>40</sup> However, TORCH was still not agreed and Marshall was dispatched to London in July 1942 in order to finalise the matter and draw up plans for the year. On this visit Marshall was accompanied by Admiral King, Commander-in-Chief US Fleet, who was inclined to believe that the US should focus on Pacific operations.<sup>41</sup> King's presence at the meetings may have been expected because it was already clear that the availability of shipping would be a key factor in deciding when an invasion of Europe could take place. However, Roosevelt may have also been emphasising that Churchill needed to give ground to ensure that the US retained its '*Germany First*' policy. Although it is by no means certain that Marshall would have carried out a threat to turn the Pacific into his first priority, there was genuine concern in the US War Department about the British position, as emphasised by Gordon Harrison's view that '*The events between 15 April and the end of July 1942 produced, ..., a disturbing shift in Allied strategy.*'<sup>42</sup> Marshall was in no mood to compromise over TORCH and after the meetings had ended without resolution, it was agreed that Roosevelt should be asked to decide.<sup>43</sup> This may have been seen as a risky strategy on Churchill's behalf but he had prepared the ground well. A review of the correspondence in Volume IV of Churchill's '*History of the Second World War*' shows that he was at pains to underline his support for ROUNDUP. Furthermore, Churchill had made significant progress during his meetings with Roosevelt in June 1943 and used his relationship with Harry Hopkins to influence the President.<sup>44</sup> However, despite Roosevelt's eventual approval for TORCH, support within America was not total. Indeed Eisenhower said the decision to invade North West Africa could be the '*blackest day in history.*'<sup>45</sup> Eisenhower was nevertheless appointed commander

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<sup>37</sup> Hastings (1985), op. cit., p.24.

<sup>38</sup> Keegan, op. cit., p.261.

<sup>39</sup> Churchill, Vol IV, op. cit., p.266.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., p.316.

<sup>41</sup> Wilmot, op. cit., p.107.

<sup>42</sup> Harrison, op. cit., p.21.

<sup>43</sup> Keegan, op. cit., p.261.

<sup>44</sup> Churchill, Vol IV, op. cit., p.368.

<sup>45</sup> Ambrose, Stephen, *Eisenhower – Soldier and President*, (London: Pocket Books, 2003), p.66.

for TORCH and, while the effectiveness of his leadership has been the subject of some debate, the North West African campaign did provide some valuable lessons which will be returned to later.

Although TORCH had been agreed on the condition that it should not delay ROUNDUP, it was becoming clear to the Americans that an invasion of North West Europe would not be possible in 1943.<sup>46</sup> However, divisions in strategic view still provided the backdrop against which the Casablanca Conference took place in January 1943. The British came to the conference extremely well prepared and were consequently able to win the debate. They argued that threatening southern Europe from North Africa could lead to Italy's collapse and would be more effective than invading North West Europe in 1943.<sup>47</sup> While accepting the validity of Britain's arguments about the tactical options for expanding operations in the Mediterranean rather than attacking North West Europe, the Americans were concerned that the war's overall direction was being driven by events rather than strategic necessity.<sup>48</sup> Indeed when he agreed to the invasion of Sicily, Operation HUSKY, Marshall said '*he was most anxious not to become committed to interminable operations in the Mediterranean.*'<sup>49</sup> After the conference General Wedemeyer, US Army War Plans Division, said of the American performance '*We had lost our shirts....we came, we listened and we were conquered.*'<sup>50</sup> This statement, together with Marshall's concerns, means that it is hard to capture an image of a coalition united by a common sense of purpose after the conference. However, a degree of unity had been maintained as the Chief's of Staff report emphasised the need to focus on defeating Germany by stating '*Operations in the European theatre will be conducted with the object of defeating Germany in 1943 with the maximum forces that can be brought to bear on her by the United Nations.*'<sup>51</sup> The report also acknowledged that North West Europe would be attacked directly by air offensive and that a force should be established in Britain that could re-enter the continent if Germany's ability to resist had been eroded sufficiently by other operations.<sup>52</sup>

The decision to mount HUSKY did not see an end to Allied discord regarding how operations should develop and the TRIDENT Conference of May 1943 discussed what should happen after Sicily. Learning from the experiences of Casablanca the Americans were much better prepared for TRIDENT. Despite his firm belief that Italy should be invaded from Sicily, the best agreement that Churchill could get was that '*the Allied Commander-in-Chief North Africa will be instructed,...., to plan such operations in exploitation of HUSKY as are best calculated to eliminate Italy from the war and to*

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<sup>46</sup> Hastings (1985), op. cit., p.25.

<sup>47</sup> Harrison, op. cit. p.40.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., p.41.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., p.43.

<sup>50</sup> Keegan, op. cit., p.263.

<sup>51</sup> Churchill, Vol IV, op. cit., p.554.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

*contain the maximum number of German forces*'.<sup>53</sup> As Churchill feared, at this stage the Americans envisaged an assault on Sardinia as the last major action in the Mediterranean.<sup>54</sup>

At the next major Allied conference, QUADRANT August 1943, it was decided that the invasion of North West Europe, OVERLORD, should take place on 1 May 1944, thus confirming the provisional agreement made during TRIDENT.<sup>55</sup> However, as it had become clear that Italy was close to surrender, it was agreed that a limited invasion to bring about '*the elimination of Italy as a belligerent; the establishment of bases near Rome and, if possible further north,*' and the '*maintenance of unrelenting pressure on German Forces in North Italy so as to create conditions favourable to OVERLORD*'.<sup>56</sup> Thus while Churchill had won the day and achieved his ambition to invade mainland Italy, the link between this event and the overall OVERLORD strategy had been maintained. By agreeing a date for the invasion of North West Europe, the Americans had achieved their aims for the QUADRANT conference. However, they remained suspicious of the British commitment to the Operation. Sir Alan Brooke's comment that OVERLORD should not be seen as '*the pivot of our whole strategy*' suggests that their concerns had some foundation.<sup>57</sup> The Americans therefore used the Teheran conference with Stalin as means to tie Britain to OVERLORD. Without consulting the British, the Americans explained the OVERLORD plan to Stalin who greeted the development with enthusiasm.<sup>58</sup> Gaining Stalin's approval for the plan allowed the Americans to argue that OVERLORD could not be changed significantly without Russian approval thus limiting Britain's future scope for manoeuvre. These decisions did, however, set the ground for an even more difficult debate: the utility of invading Southern France in support of OVERLORD.

During the QUADRANT conference of 1943 the US Joint Chiefs of Staff presented a proposal for an invasion of Southern France, an operation initially known as ANVIL but later change to DRAGOON. While disagreements over ANVIL were not entirely divided along national grounds, in general terms the US supported the operation whereas the British were opposed. At times the differences in opinion were bitter and as the historian Carlo D'Este observed '*Of the many contentious issues separating the two Allies none generated more passions than this one*'.<sup>59</sup> At the military level the Americans believed that ANVIL would draw German forces away from the OVERLORD invasion area and provide Eisenhower with additional ports for moving troops and supplies into the European Theatre. ANVIL

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<sup>53</sup> Ibid., p.650.

<sup>54</sup> Harrison, op. cit., p.80.

<sup>55</sup> Hastings (1985), op. cit., p.26.

<sup>56</sup> Porch, Douglas, *Hitler's Mediterranean Gamble*, (London: Weidenfield & Nicolson, 2004), p.457.

<sup>57</sup> Overy, Richard, *Why the Allies Won*, (London: Pimlico, 2006), p.176.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.64.

was also seen as a way to ensure that the Italian Campaign did not overshadow OVERLORD.<sup>60</sup> The British, however, held the view that the Italian campaign would be more effective at drawing German resources away from Normandy and diverting resources to Southern France would give the enemy a useful period of respite. Indeed in his final report on the campaign General Wilson, Supreme Allied Commander Mediterranean, stated '*the best contribution that my Theatre could make to the success of the invasion of Northern France would be to continue the offensive in Italy.*'<sup>61</sup> However, in drawing this conclusion Wilson acknowledged he was looking at the problem from the perspective of the Mediterranean theatre and that wider issues, such as the need for additional ports, may have made the ANVIL proposal more attractive to the Combined Chiefs of Staff.<sup>62</sup> The invasion of Southern France was originally scheduled to take place concurrently with OVERLORD but delays in the Italian campaign, together with a general shortage in shipping, meant that ANVIL was delayed; the British felt this further weakened the justification for invading Southern France. The military judgement for ANVIL was therefore finely balanced but wider political pressures were also a factor in the decision to continue.

Churchill had reputation for delving into the details of military campaigns. As Eisenhower noted '*During the war Churchill maintained such close contact with all operations as to make him a virtual member of the British Chiefs of Staff; I cannot remember any major discussion with them in which he did not participate.*'<sup>63</sup> The American political-military relationship was different. Roosevelt's efforts to ensure that military strategy was not driven by political ambitions are underlined by Secretary of State Cordell Hull's statement that '*The question of where the armies would land and what routes they would take across the continent in the Grand military movement to conquer Hitler was a subject never discussed with me by the President or any of his top military advisors.*'<sup>64</sup> Churchill took a different approach and was concerned that Stalin would have too much influence over post-war Europe.<sup>65</sup> It is not fair to suggest that the Americans were entirely devoid of political motives and their concerns about British post-war foreign policy objectives in the Balkans were a factor in their commitment to ANVIL. As Roosevelt said '*there would be no military support for British interests real or imagined, in Europe.*'<sup>66</sup> Therefore, while it is by no means certain that the British had ambitions in the Balkans,<sup>67</sup> a

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<sup>60</sup> Ibid., p. 70.

<sup>61</sup> Wilson, H, M, *Report by The Supreme Allied Commander Mediterranean to the Combined Chief of Staff on The Operations in Southern France*, (London: HMSO, 1946), p.17.

<sup>62</sup> Wilson, op. cit., p.18.

<sup>63</sup> Eisenhower, Dwight, 'Churchill as an Ally in War' in, Eade, Charles, (ed), *Churchill by his Contemporaries*, (London: The Reprint Society, 1955), p.128.

<sup>64</sup> Wilmot, op. cit., p.131.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., p.130.

<sup>66</sup> Stanton, W, 'Could WW2 Have ended in 1944: Was ANVIL a Big Mistake, *Army Quarterly*, Jul 1992, p.348.

<sup>67</sup> Wilt, Alan, 'The Summer of 1944: A Comparison of Overlord and ANVIL/DRAGOON, *Journal of Strategic Studies*, Vol 4 No 2 June 1981, p.188.

desire to limit Churchill's plans was a factor in the US decision to support ANVIL. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that Roosevelt was considering the US position in post-war Europe. During the Teheran conference he had promised Stalin that ANVIL would take place and was unwilling to renege on this undertaking because he wanted to secure trade agreements with the Russians and establish support for post-war peace organisations.<sup>68</sup> Stalin's motivations certainly had a political edge, as he did not want an Allied presence in the Balkans.<sup>69</sup>

Even after the Normandy landings had taken place doubt existed over the future of ANVIL. On 13 June 1944 the Combined Chiefs of Staff met and agreed to exploit the Italian successes and that no allied forces should be removed from that task. They also directed that planning should take place for a further landing in France which would take place after the Pisa-Rimini line had been reached.<sup>70</sup> However, on 17 June 1944 Marshall overturned this decision and argued '*the invasion of Southern France was the first priority*'.<sup>71</sup> As there was no agreement, Marshall turned away from the political aspects of the debate by emphasising that Eisenhower, as the Normandy Commander, was best placed to say how his operation should be supported. The British Chiefs of Staff Committee was outmanoeuvred by their American counterparts and Eisenhower supported Marshall's proposal. The operation was scheduled for 15 August but even as late as 4 August Churchill wrote to Roosevelt in an attempt to get the invasion's objective changed.<sup>72</sup> The Americans had, nevertheless, won the argument and ANVIL was executed. This was a significant course of events because it was the first time that the Americans had refused to alter their position in response to British pressure.<sup>73</sup>

The debate over the development of a Second Front in Europe highlights a number of interesting coalition issues. Despite a clear unity of purpose, there were potentially damaging differences in opinion in the way this aim should be achieved. These contrasting views had their roots in the 2 nations' divergent attitudes to warfare, their cultural and historical backgrounds, their relative strengths, and their post-war objectives. The debate was between a war weary nation whose power was declining and a growing self confident country eager to deal with the problem directly in order to get their troops home as quickly as possible. Churchill showed considerable tenacity in developing and winning the argument for operations in the Mediterranean. Although he did not agree with the American view that the cross channel invasion should take place in 1942 or 1943 he was careful not to dismiss these proposals outright and risk the coalition's cohesion. Instead he used delaying tactics by

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<sup>68</sup> Stanton, op. cit., p.348.

<sup>69</sup> Wilmot, op. cit., p.140.

<sup>70</sup> Stanton, op. cit., p.350.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid., p.352.

<sup>72</sup> Churchill, Winston, *The Second World War Vol VI*, (London: The Reprint Society, 1956), p.356.

<sup>73</sup> Hastings (1985), op. cit., p.68.

agreeing to a proposal in principle and then allowing it to '*drown in a sea of reasonable objection*'.<sup>74</sup> He achieved his objective of delaying operations in North West Europe until he felt they had a good chance of success. In his account of the Teheran conference, Churchill claims that he never attempted to stop OVERLORD.<sup>75</sup> It is probably fair to say Churchill accepted a cross channel attack would be required to defeat Germany but the Americans had another perception of the tactics he used to delay the invasion. This period therefore cost Churchill considerable political capital.<sup>76</sup> This may have led the Americans to question Churchill's strategic judgement and consequently damaged the trust between the 2 sides. Therefore, despite a lack of evidence supporting the idea that Churchill had serious ambitions in the Balkans, the Americans were wary of the long-term intentions behind Churchill's passionate opposition to ANVIL. While ground was given on both sides in order to maintain coalition cohesion, Churchill had eventually to acknowledge the USA's overwhelming power, and influence, on the debate, and he was ultimately defeated in his quest to concentrate on Italy and have ANVIL cancelled. This raises interesting questions for contemporary operations when the UK is once again often seeking to maintain influence over the USA, despite the mismatch in the respective nations' military power.

So what was the key factor which kept the Allies together despite serious strategic disagreements and how does this relate to contemporary operations? In the Second World War the threat posed by Nazi Germany was extremely clear. Therefore, while the coalition partners had differing strategic views, their goals were harmonised to the extent that they remained focussed on the aim of defeating Germany. The debate was hard fought but the management arrangements agreed at ARCADIA did eventually enable both sides to reach an acceptable agreement. In the modern era, where conflicts have moved away from total warfare for national survival, the nature of the threat is less recognisable. This suggests that the cohesion offered by a sense of purpose at the strategic level will be reduced and that nations will have to work hard to develop strong coalition bonds that are capable of overcoming differences in strategic opinion. Nations seeking to build '*coalitions of the willing*' will also need to be very clear in their articulation of the threat and at times limit, or adjust, their strategic objectives in order to maintain the coalition.

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<sup>74</sup> Keegan, op. cit., p.260.

<sup>75</sup> Churchill, Winston, *The Second World War Vol V*, (London: The Reprint Society, 1954), p.356.

<sup>76</sup> Griffin, Stuart, *Joint Operations: A Short History*, (2005), p.54.

## Supreme Command – Eisenhower's Leadership Credentials

General Morgan was appointed as Chief of Staff to the Supreme Allied Commander and began planning for the invasion of North West Europe in April 1943. However, without the authority of a Commander it was difficult for Morgan to tackle some of the pressing questions such as the allocation of landing craft across the various theatres of war. The need to identify a supreme commander was therefore pressing. Had they gone ahead, SLEDGEHAMMER and ROUNDUP would have taken place with a high proportion of British personnel but by 1944 the balance of effort was shifting towards America. Therefore, Churchill agreed at the Quebec conference that the commander would be an American.<sup>77</sup> When he made this decision he could well have assumed that Marshall would be appointed. While Roosevelt wanted to reward Marshall with the Commander's post, he was concerned about losing influence on the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee and an alternative candidate was therefore required.<sup>78</sup>

Eisenhower had not seen action in the First World War and, although he was widely respected, his career up to the start of the Second World War was not spectacular. His first true field command had been TORCH. As this was the first major Allied amphibious operation of the war it would appear that the experience it offered made Eisenhower an ideal choice for Supreme Commander of OVERLORD. However, in some quarters his performance during TORCH was open to question. Eisenhower had struck a deal with Admiral Darlan, the Commander-in-Chief of Vichy Forces; in exchange for the French laying down their arms the Admiral was appointed Governor General of French North Africa. Despite Churchill's support,<sup>79</sup> the arrangement proved highly controversial and Eisenhower was criticised for dealing with a fascist.<sup>80</sup> Eisenhower's military judgement was also debateable. Kasserine Pass was his first battle and resulted in '*embarrassment*' for the Allies.<sup>81</sup> Alexander was appointed as Deputy Commander Allied forces in French North Africa and his assessment was that Eisenhower had condoned failure and had not devised an overall strategy for the campaign.<sup>82</sup> Eisenhower was also accused of being overly cautious because he failed to exploit an opportunity to invade Sardinia.<sup>83</sup> However, despite the campaign's apparent failures, it did provide some useful lessons for the Allies which would be called upon as preparations for OVERLORD gathered pace. Importantly, the campaign also gave Eisenhower an opportunity to demonstrate his credentials as a coalition leader. He gained the reputation for '*being a good manager of men, [and] a good chair for a*

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<sup>77</sup> Churchill, Vol V, op. cit., p.80.

<sup>78</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>79</sup> Churchill, Vol IV, op. cit. p.509.

<sup>80</sup> Ambrose (2003), op cit., p.75.

<sup>81</sup> Porch, op. cit., p.402.

<sup>82</sup> Ibid., 390.

<sup>83</sup> Ambrose (2003), op. cit, p.78.

*committee*.<sup>84</sup> Eisenhower developed his leadership style based on diplomacy, tact and the gradual growth of Allied unity.<sup>85</sup> Admiral Cunningham noted Eisenhower's qualities when he said that in his view no other man could have brought the Allies together so effectively.<sup>86</sup> Importantly, Churchill had the '*warmest regards*' for Eisenhower and, although surprised by the decision, was content to endorse Roosevelt's selection.<sup>87</sup>

Given the relative size of the American contribution to OVERLORD some may have expected the Commander-in-Chief positions to be occupied by US officers. However, the Mediterranean campaigns had demonstrated the value of integrated headquarters and planning staffs. Therefore, as in Africa, Eisenhower built a multinational team under him with most of the senior key positions occupied by British officers. In addition to taking his American Chief of Staff, Beddel-Smith, to London, Tedder was appointed deputy Commander, Ramsay was Naval Commander-in-Chief, Montgomery was given Command of 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group and control of the land operation during OVERLORD's early phases, and Leigh-Mallory was Air Commander-in-Chief.

Much is always said of the need to understand the enemy's cultural background, but it is equally dangerous not to understand what motivates your coalition partners. Eisenhower mitigated against this problem by giving partners influential positions throughout the command structure and this lesson remains relevant today. Indeed, it is common to find officers from junior coalition partners in influential positions, such as the post of Deputy Commanding General of the Multinational Force Iraq which is normally filled by a British officer, despite the overwhelming numerical superiority of American forces in the country.<sup>88</sup> In his report on the North West European Campaign Eisenhower said '*In the matter of command, it can be said here that all relationships between American and British forces were smooth and effective*'.<sup>89</sup> History suggests that this statement is perhaps the most striking testament to Eisenhower's diplomatic skills and the paper will return to his leadership style when it examines some of the challenges the Supreme Commander faced after the invasion took place.

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<sup>84</sup> Overy, op. cit., p. 176.

<sup>85</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.50.

<sup>86</sup> Ambrose (2003), op. cit., p.108

<sup>87</sup> Churchill, op. cit., p.328.

<sup>88</sup> *MNF-I Senior Leaders*, [Online]. Available from: [http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=16](http://www.mnf-iraq.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=22&Itemid=16). Accessed 26 May 2007.

<sup>89</sup> Eisenhower, D, *Report by the Supreme Commander to the Combined Chiefs of Staff on operations in Europe of the Allied Expeditionary Force*, (London: HMSO, 1946), p.11.

## The Strategic Bombers – A Struggle for Unity of Command

When he was Supreme Commander of Allied Forces in the Mediterranean, Eisenhower had command of all assets in the theatre. As one of the key lessons of the Mediterranean campaign was the need for unified control of the air forces, it was natural for Eisenhower to seek similar arrangements for OVERLORD.<sup>90</sup> However initial arrangements put the US and British tactical air forces under Leigh-Mallory, but did not define his relationship with the US and British Strategic Bomber Commanders, Spaatz and Harris.<sup>91</sup> The debate over the command and control of air assets, especially the strategic bomber force, was at times bitter and led Tedder to warn Portal, Chief of the Air Staff, that unless the problem was solved to Eisenhower's satisfaction '*very serious issues will arise affecting Anglo-American cooperation in OVERLORD*'.<sup>92</sup> As with the controversy surrounding ANVIL the divide over air command and control was not purely run along national lines. The US and British '*Bomber Barons*' were amongst the chief agitators against Eisenhower's plans. However the battle for control of the bombers does highlight some interesting differences in national attitude and is therefore worthy of study.

The British approach of allowing the Chiefs of Staff Committee to have a direct involvement in operations was unfamiliar to many Americans, as at the beginning of the War the US did not have an equivalent to this committee structure.<sup>93</sup> Indeed, Eisenhower believed strongly in unity of command.<sup>94</sup> In his view, Eisenhower could not be certain that he would get the support he required until robust command and control arrangements for the strategic bomber forces were decided. However, the British had serious misgivings over relinquishing the command of its bomber forces to a foreign supreme commander.

Although the United States had been attacked by the Japanese at Pearl Harbour, for Americans the war was still fought away from their home shores. In contrast the British public had been under direct threat for many years and it was reasonable to assume the Luftwaffe might attack UK mainland targets in response to OVERLORD. The British Chiefs of Staff would therefore wish to retain some forces capable of responding to national priorities and emergencies. The V1 attacks on England can be used to illustrate this point. The Supreme Commander could have ignored such attacks, as they did not prejudice OVERLORD to any great extent. However, the potential effects on civilian morale

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<sup>90</sup> Orange, Vincent, *Tedder: Quietly in Command*, (London: Frank Cass, 2004), p.255.

<sup>91</sup> Tedder, A, 'Command Decisions' in Ramsey Winston G, (ed), *D-Day Then and Now Vol 1*, (London: Battle of Britain Prints International, 1995), p.76.

<sup>92</sup> Orange, op. cit., p.255.

<sup>93</sup> Harrison, op. cit., p.3.

<sup>94</sup> Ambrose (2003), op cit., p.81.

and the subsequent domestic political ramifications justified action. The case for this being the sole reason for British objections to placing the strategic bombers under Eisenhower is somewhat undermined by the command arrangements which had been agreed. Leigh-Mallory was also responsible for the air defence of Britain during the early stages of the invasion.<sup>95</sup> Judgements prioritising the safety of the mainland against the success of OVERLORD would therefore already be under the Supreme Commander's influence. Wider British concerns must therefore be examined to explain fully the reluctance to adhere to Eisenhower's wishes.

Throughout much of the Mediterranean campaign the British had driven the overall strategy. However, as has been seen, the decision to continue with ANVIL was indicative of a turning point in the War. The Americans were growing in confidence and were increasingly keen to exert their influence. Earlier in the War the Americans had mounted their first bomber mission in Europe using borrowed British aircraft.<sup>96</sup> By 1944 the balance of power had shifted and US heavy bombers outnumbered those of Bomber Command, although the latter was still capable of delivering a greater payload.<sup>97</sup> As Max Hastings observes '*The British squirmed desperately to prevent their own forces from being engulfed in these [American] monoliths.*'<sup>98</sup> At the Casablanca conference a directive for the Allied bomber offensive was agreed which said the objective of the bomber force was to '*secure the progressive destruction and dislocation of the German military, industrial, and economic system, and the undermining of the morale of the German people to a point where their capacity for armed resistance is fatally weakened.*'<sup>99</sup> This directive was the basis for Operation POINTBLANK and Bomber Command's role in this task was seen as the last major independent way in which the British could contribute to the War.<sup>100</sup> Therefore, a British desire to maintain some level of independence from the US was a factor which prolonged the debate over command and control of the Strategic Bomber Force.

Churchill thought that the problem could be solved by giving Tedder a more direct involvement in the air campaign and said:

*'Tedder ... ought to be in fact and in form complete master of all air operations. Everything is then quite simple. There need only be one tactical air force that Leigh-Mallory can command.*

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<sup>95</sup> Tedder (1995), op. cit., p.77.

<sup>96</sup> Harrison, op. cit., p.21.

<sup>97</sup> Hastings, Max, *Bomber Command*, (London: Pan Books, 1999), p.271

<sup>98</sup> Ibid., p.272.

<sup>99</sup> Tedder (1995), op. cit., p.79.

<sup>100</sup> Hastings, (1999), op. cit., p.187.

*Spaatz will come directly under Eisenhower as his senior officer and can be told to obey Tedder. There will be no difficulty in arranging between Tedder and Harris.*<sup>101</sup>

As Harris had a reputation for not liking outside interference in his command, Eisenhower remained unconvinced that the arrangement would work, despite Tedder's attempts to reassure him that the Commander-in-Chief Bomber Command would obey orders.<sup>102</sup> In fact Eisenhower was so concerned that he told Churchill he would resign unless satisfactory command arrangements were agreed.<sup>103</sup> This threat did appear to have an effect on Churchill, as shortly after the meeting the Prime Minister said that, while Bomber Command could not be entirely handed over to Eisenhower because the demands of POINTBLANK, OVERLORD '*must be the chief care of all concerned and great risks must be run in every other sphere and theatre in order that nothing should be withheld which could contribute to its success*'.<sup>104</sup> On 5 March 1944 Portal issued a directive that gave Tedder the authority to coordinate strategic operations in support of OVERLORD. Leigh-Mallory was to have control over tactical air operations but his authority over the strategic bombers was limited to those operations in direct support of the D-Day landing. As the bomber commanders did not like or respect Leigh-Mallory, it was useful that the command arrangements placed him under Tedder's supervision.<sup>105</sup> It would appear that the problem had been solved and compromise reached where Eisenhower was to have '*direction*' over Bomber Command rather than command.<sup>106</sup> However, before assets were assigned to OVERLORD, Portal was required to approve the overall air plan on behalf of the Combined Chiefs of Staff. Therefore with the planned invasion date approaching another agreement was required to determine how the strategic bombers should support OVERLORD.

The results of Professor Zuckerman's study into the effects of the bombing campaigns in Sicily and Italy implied that attacks on specially selected railway targets could support OVERLORD by reducing the Germans' mobility.<sup>107</sup> Tedder supported Zuckerman's view and therefore recommended that the Professor should join Leigh-Mallory's bombing committee. Zuckerman's ideas were developed and became known as the '*Transportation Plan*'. However support for the plan was not universal. Spaatz and Harris were among the chief opponents of Zuckerman's proposals, as they felt that the '*Transportation Plan*' would dilute the strategic bomber force's efforts in support of POINTBLANK. This was important because Spaatz held the controversial view that the strategic bombers could end

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<sup>101</sup> Tedder, A, *With Prejudice*, (London: Cassell & Company, 1966), p.499.

<sup>102</sup> Tedder (1995), op. cit., p.78.

<sup>103</sup> Orange, op. cit., p.255.

<sup>104</sup> Ibid.

<sup>105</sup> Hastings (1985), op. cit., p.52.

<sup>106</sup> Hastings, (1999), op. cit., p.273.

<sup>107</sup> Terraine, John, *The Right of the Line*, (London: Wordsworth Editions, 1997), p.621.

the war in 20 or 30 clear operational days without the need to conduct OVERLORD.<sup>108</sup> Harris said that while attacking targets directly linked to OVERLORD '*might give a specious appearance of supporting the Army, in reality it will be the greatest disservice we could do them. It would lead directly to disaster*'.<sup>109</sup> Harris even took the unusual step of saying that the '*Transportation Plan*' could not work because his crews did not have the skill or equipment required to destroy the targets; a suggestion which Tedder was able to refute after some successful experimental raids on rail targets during March 1944.<sup>110</sup> Harris also had wider concerns regarding the role of his bombers and the future of his service. After the First World War the RAF was engaged in a fight for survival and it used strategic bombing as an argument to justify its independence.<sup>111</sup> Harris' views on the role of strategic bombers therefore represented a deeply ingrained cultural belief, one which was not easily overcome. However, intra-Service politics were not confined to the British side. As it was still under the administrative control of the US Army, the United States Army Air Force still felt the need to justify the validity of its doctrine and its position in the post-war defence organisation would be strengthened by a strong independent role in Germany's defeat.<sup>112</sup>

Spaatz felt that the strategic bomber forces should concentrate their attacks on the German's ability to produce oil. While few did not recognise the German's dependence on oil, there was some concern about the effectiveness of this strategy, as the RAF had achieved little success attacking oil-related targets earlier in the War.<sup>113</sup> Moreover, by Spaatz's own admission the '*Oil Plan*' would take 4 to 5 months to become effective.<sup>114</sup> As these discussions were taking place during March and April of 1944, time was not on his side. Although Harris and Spaatz appeared to be united in their opposition to the '*Transportation Plan*', coalition tensions once again surfaced. After a night out in Oxford, Spaatz admitted to Zuckerman '*I believe you are right. But what worries me is that Harris is being allowed to get off scot-free*'.<sup>115</sup> It is difficult to judge how much this statement owes to the amount of alcohol consumed earlier in the evening but it does highlight Spaatz's concern that the burden of effort was not going to be shared equally amongst the coalition partners. While his forces attacked French railways, Spaatz could see Harris continuing attacks on German cities and winning the victory that they had both predicted would make OVERLORD unnecessary.

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<sup>108</sup> Tedder (1966), op. cit., p.508/9.

<sup>109</sup> Ibid., p.504.

<sup>110</sup> Tedder (1995), op. cit., p.80.

<sup>111</sup> Hastings (1999), op. cit., p.38.

<sup>112</sup> Finnegan, Michael, , General Eisenhower's Battle for Control of the Strategic Bombers in Support of Operation OVERLORD – A Case Study in Unity of Command, (Carlisle, US Army War College, 1999), p.25.

<sup>113</sup> Terraine, op. cit., p.621.

<sup>114</sup> Tedder (1995), op. cit., p.85.

<sup>115</sup> Orange, op. cit., p.257.

As the transportation plan involved attacking targets in occupied territories, it was inevitable that some French civilians would become casualties. This disturbed Churchill deeply and caused him to question whether the military value offered by the '*Transportation Plan*' was worth the cost.<sup>116</sup> He was also concerned that, as the British would attack at night, they would take an unequal share of the blame. The War Cabinet decided they needed to ensure the Americans shared the burden and blame. Churchill therefore wrote to Roosevelt saying:

*'the War Cabinet is unanimous in its anxiety about these French slaughters, ..., and also in its doubts as to whether almost as good military results could not be produced by other methods. Whatever is settled between us, we are quite willing to share responsibilities with you.'*<sup>117</sup>

Roosevelt was also concerned about civilian deaths but he maintained his principle of not interfering overly with military matters and replied '*I am not prepared to impose from this distance any restriction on military action by the responsible commanders that in their opinion might militate against the success of OVERLORD or cause additional loss of life to our Allied forces of invasion*'.<sup>118</sup> As Eisenhower wanted the '*Transportation Plan*', the matter was effectively decided.

One of the most damaging aspects of the command and control argument is the length of time that it had taken to solve. Roosevelt and Churchill's exchange of correspondence did not end until 11 May. The debate was certainly confused by intra-Service rivalries but it also highlights the difficulties of making decisions within coalitions, where cultural differences and divergent national agendas must be considered. Eisenhower did not get the clear unity of command over all air assets he desired. He, nevertheless, judged that he had achieved sufficient authority to satisfy his purpose. Eisenhower's threat to resign illustrated that, at times, a firm hand is required within coalitions but his eventual willingness to make concessions is an interesting lesson. In the future the US will continue to dominate most coalitions and its leadership position will give it the ability to dominate the decision making process. However, if the US, or any nation leading a coalition, values the contribution of junior partners then they must at times be willing to compromise. Command and control will continue to be an issue that stretches coalition commanders. Spaatz's concern that Harris would be allowed to continue strategic bombing while US bomber forces executed the '*Transportation Plan*' also illustrates the need to share the workload evenly across coalition partners. However, in addition to receiving an equal share of the glory, Churchill's concern about the political implications of bombing French

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<sup>116</sup> Tedder (1995), op. cit., p.86.

<sup>117</sup> Terraine, op. cit., p.622.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid.

civilians and his need to consult with Roosevelt on the matter, shows that operational and political risks must be shared as well.

It was an obvious choice for Eisenhower to use Tedder, an airman, as his agent in unpicking the command and control controversy. However, it was also useful that 2 chief supporters of the '*Transportation Plan*', Tedder and Leigh-Mallory, were British as it prevented the discussion from polarising purely along national grounds. Eisenhower was therefore well served by having coalition partners integrated within his Headquarters. Although Tedder and Leigh-Mallory argued for the '*Transportation Plan*' because they thought it was the best course of action, they were forced to confront senior personalities from their own service and their own Prime Minister.

As most contemporary coalitions are operating in deployed locations, it could be argued that the unity of command Eisenhower gained in the Mediterranean is once again a realistic prospect. However, this assessment ignores the reality that many air assets operate across a number of theatres in modern conflicts. A single Combined Air Operations Centre controls air assets operating over both Iraq and Afghanistan. The situation is further confused when strategic forces with global reach are added to the equation. Modern theatre commanders may therefore recognise many of the challenges faced by Eisenhower as they develop their campaign plans.

#### The Land Campaign – A Relationship Strained by Fear of Stalemate

In November 1945 Montgomery gave a lecture to RUSI during which he said '*The operations developed in June, July and August exactly as I had planned.*'<sup>119</sup> Given that Montgomery had intended to be at the Seine by D+90 and that by D+80 the 4 Allied armies has already established themselves on the River's banks, there appears to be some justification to his statement.<sup>120</sup> However, it contradicts the cliché that '*no plan survives contact with the enemy*' and opinion amongst historians is divided about its accuracy. Controversy was just as rife during OVERLORD and at times the conduct of the land operation threatened to split the coalition. The execution of the land campaign and the effect this had on the coalition therefore bears some analysis.

Morgan's Anglo-American planning team believed Normandy was the best invasion site. The weaker coastal defences made it more attractive than the short crossing and better air cover offered by the other option, Pas-de-Calais. Morgan's team proposed a narrow assault using just 3 seaborne

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<sup>119</sup> Montgomery, B, '21<sup>st</sup>(British) Army Group in the Campaign in North-West Europe, 1944-45', *The RUSI Journal*, Vol XC No 56, November 1945, p.432.

<sup>120</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.432.

divisions and with airborne troops dropping at either end of the bridgehead<sup>121</sup>. When they first saw the plan both Eisenhower and Montgomery felt the assault was too light and that the initial invasion force should comprise 5 seaborne and 3 airborne divisions<sup>122</sup>. While it is easy to criticise Morgan's plan, it should be remembered that he was working within constraints placed on him by the Combined Chiefs of Staff Committee. The critical resource was landing craft and the numbers allocated to him would not support a larger invasion. Without the authority of a Supreme Commander, Morgan had little scope for manoeuvre. After Eisenhower's appointment action could be taken to provide OVERLORD with additional landing craft. ANVIL was postponed and the invasion of North West Europe was delayed by one month in order to give allied shipyards additional time to produce landing craft. These actions made it possible to consider the 5-division amphibious assault force Montgomery sought.

During a briefing session on 7 April 1944, known as Exercise THUNDERCLAP, Montgomery expressed the view that it would take at least 3 months to complete his OVERLORD objectives. Gen Kennedy, Assistant Chief of the Imperial General Staff (Operations), assessed that Montgomery meant to '*expand the bridgehead gradually, get ports, and eventually arrive, in about three months, on the line of the Seine-Paris (exclusive) – Brittany Ports*'.<sup>123</sup> The British forces would land on the eastern side of the bridgehead and the American forces would land to the west. There appears to be no political reasoning behind the allocation of landing beaches.<sup>124</sup> American follow-on forces would come directly from the US and it was easier for them to sail directly into the western sector. However, as it had been judged that most German reinforcements would arrive from the east, the allocation of beaches put the British in a vital position.<sup>125</sup> The eastern flank would have to be held firmly to prevent the Germans from rolling up the Allied invasion force.

During THUNDERCLAP Montgomery briefed using a map showing a number of phase lines indicating the positions he expected to hold at various stages of the campaign. Montgomery held another major pre-invasion briefing session at his Headquarters on 15 May 1944 and the phase lines were once again used. These lines were, and still are, the subject for some controversy and provided the background to the bitter discussions which took place later in the campaign regarding the effectiveness of Montgomery's Master Plan. Bradley, Commander of the US 1<sup>st</sup> Army, objected to the lines because he felt they limited flexibility and he had not been consulted on the specific dates.<sup>126</sup> Montgomery, consequently, removed the phase lines from the American sector. However, there is

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<sup>121</sup> Keegan, op. cit., p.314.

<sup>122</sup> Ibid.

<sup>123</sup> Hamilton, Nigel, *Monty Master of the Battlefield 1942-1944*, (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1988), p.559.

<sup>124</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.72.

<sup>125</sup> Ibid., p.73.

<sup>126</sup> Hamilton, op. cit., p.560.

much debate surrounding whether it is fair to judge Montgomery's success against his ability to achieve the targets set out by the phase lines. Hamilton, Montgomery's official biographer, claims that the lines were for illustrative purposes. He quotes Lt Col Dawney, Montgomery's Military Assistant, as drawing the lines in an arbitrary fashion because in Montgomery's opinion '*it was not of any importance where he would be groundwise between D plus 1 and D plus 90, because he felt sure he could capture the line D plus 90 by the end of three months, and he was not going to capture ground, he was going to destroy enemy forces*'.<sup>127</sup> While accepting that the phase lines were an indication of intention rather than absolute guarantees, D'Este argues that when combined with other evidence, such as Dempsey's Operational Order Number One issued 2 weeks after THUNDERCLAP, the lines indicate that Montgomery's strategic plan was not successful.<sup>128</sup> However, the extent to which you support each argument regarding the importance of the phase lines is, in some respects, irrelevant. The fact remains that there was room for interpretation and this allowed tensions to develop that were indicative of the Anglo-American difficulties which emerged later in the campaign.

Montgomery's performance during his briefing on 15 May 1944 was widely considered to be successful. Even Tedder, who was later to become one of Montgomery's chief opponents, was impressed, as he felt that some of the lessons of earlier amphibious operations had been taken into account.<sup>129</sup> However a speech by Churchill did sour Anglo-American relations to some extent. While Montgomery found Churchill's closing address to be rousing, it reignited American concerns about British commitment to the invasion.<sup>130</sup> Churchill said '*I am hardening on this enterprise*' which Eisenhower took to mean that the Prime Minister had not believed in the plan and questioned whether it would be successful.<sup>131</sup> Churchill claims that this was not his intention and supports this by referring to earlier correspondence with Marshall where he used the same wording as an indication of commitment to OVERLORD.<sup>132</sup> Although in the context of other disagreements this one was relatively minor, it does illustrate the importance of using language carefully, especially when it could be misinterpreted by coalition partners.

By the end of 6 June 1944 some 159,000 Allied personnel had landed in Normandy.<sup>133</sup> The resistance met by the Allied forces was mixed with the Americans at Omaha beach facing the sternest test. Although a lodgement had been secured, the Allies had not taken all of their D-Day objectives.

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<sup>127</sup> Ibid.

<sup>128</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.77/8.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid., p.78.

<sup>130</sup> Hamilton, op. cit., 591

<sup>131</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p. 87.

<sup>132</sup> Churchill, Vol V, op. cit., p.478.

<sup>133</sup> The D-Day Landings, Northern France (6 June 1944), (London: MOD, 2005) [Online] Available from: <http://www.mod.uk/DefenceInternet/AboutDefence/History/WW260thBooklets/>. Accessed 18 Apr 07.

Attempts to liberate Caen failed and a link up between American and British forces was not achieved until 7 June.<sup>134</sup> The lodgement area required expanding to give the Allies sufficient space within which they could establish a force large enough to develop their operations. The Germans were also trying to counter the Allied threat by moving reinforcements to Normandy. Time was therefore critical and the side which could amass a decisive force first would have an advantage. Montgomery assessed that Rommel could be in a position to launch a full scale counter attack by D+6 and by D+8 the Germans would have up to 24 divisions facing the Allies' 18.<sup>135</sup> The equation was therefore finely balanced. The German's fought with considerable tenacity and this, combined with the difficult terrain and some periods of poor weather, placed the Allies under some strain. Eisenhower and his staff were becoming increasingly frustrated by the campaign's seeming lack of progress. Some of these frustrations had their roots in national issues which meant that Britain and the US viewed the campaign from differing perspectives. It is therefore worth examining some of the factors driving the US and British approaches to the land campaign before looking in more detail at the operations Montgomery mounted to secure the breakthrough.

At the strategic level the Allies had found it difficult to agree on the best way to defeat Germany and these differences were mirrored at the operational level. Eisenhower had sought to deal with differences between the nations' approaches to battle by agreeing that '*no unit lower than corps level would be placed under the command of the other nationality except where unavoidable military necessity made this imperative*'.<sup>136</sup> However, this action did not prevent friction between the Allies and, as the campaign developed, Montgomery was accused of being too cautious.<sup>137</sup> On 14 April 1944 Montgomery wrote to Dempsey, Commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> British Army, and Bradley saying that he would employ aggressive tactics in order to keep the initiative and that he was '*prepared to accept almost any risk in order to carry out these tactics*'.<sup>138</sup> It is therefore unfair to say that Montgomery was unwilling to consider taking risks. However, his experiences in the First World War did mean that he would not gamble the lives of his men without careful consideration, or continue offensives when it became clear they were unlikely to reap advantages.<sup>139</sup> Montgomery was not simply being sentimental about the wellbeing of the soldiers under his command. He believed that the Battle for Rome had been lost in 1943 because the Allies had not developed their operational plans to reflect what was realistically possible and sustainable.<sup>140</sup> While he was determined that this mistake would not be

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<sup>134</sup> Overy, op. cit., p.198.

<sup>135</sup> Hamilton, op. cit., p. 586.

<sup>136</sup> Eisenhower, op. cit., p.11.

<sup>137</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.80.

<sup>138</sup> Ibid., p.81.

<sup>139</sup> Carver, Michael, 'Montgomery' in Keegan, John, (ed), *Churchill's Generals*, (London: Warner Books, 1993), P.161.

<sup>140</sup> Hamilton, op. cit., p.571/2.

repeated, there was also considerable concern about the British Army's ability to generate reinforcements.<sup>141</sup> The British Cabinet was briefed in early June 1944 that the Army had an impending deficit of 90,000 men.<sup>142</sup> Importantly, the shortfalls were not spread evenly across the Army with the replacement of infantry units being of particular concern.<sup>143</sup> The shortage was so severe that Montgomery had been told that he could not expect replacements after the campaign's first month.<sup>144</sup> He was therefore working within some significant restraints. The Americans on the other hand did not face the same problems and consequently had a greater willingness to accept casualties.<sup>145</sup> It is therefore not surprising that the British and Americans had differing views on how the campaign should develop. Richard Overy encapsulated the differences in British and American strategy when he described Eisenhower as being the '*hare to Montgomery's tortoise*'.<sup>146</sup> Eisenhower preferred to advance on a broad front whereas Montgomery chose to conserve manpower by getting the enemy to concentrate his forces against one strongly defended sector.<sup>147</sup> It is clear that these differences created considerable tension amongst the Allies as Brooke wrote '*Ike has the very vaguest conception of war*'.<sup>148</sup> The American frustration with the British approach was recorded by Bradley when he said '*When Montgomery prepared to attack he dragged up everything he had for an all-out campaign... We Americans ... constantly nibbled away at key positions of an enemy and sought to prevent him from entrenching himself in position*'.<sup>149</sup> The choice between a direct approach and a gradual '*tightening of the noose*' which had influenced the strategic level debate was, therefore, also evident at the operational level.

Montgomery's strategy for the campaign was to use the British forces to pressurise the Germans on the eastern flank. Caen was vital ground for the Germans as it blocked the route to Paris and represented the most promising area for them to mount counter attacks. Montgomery believed that the Germans would defend the region around the city and that this would prevent them from moving assets to face Bradley's 1<sup>st</sup> Army on the western flank. Operations were to develop in such away that the British efforts around Caen would facilitate a breakout by US forces. After the Allies' failure to liberate Caen on D-Day, Montgomery launched a series of attacks aimed at the city. The attempts on 7-8 June and 13 June were repelled by the Germans and a larger scale effort was required.<sup>150</sup> Operation EPSOM took place between 25 June and 1 July 1944. Its objective was to force the

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<sup>141</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.250.

<sup>142</sup> Churchill, Vol VI, op. cit., p.543.

<sup>143</sup> Hamilton, op. cit., p.573.

<sup>144</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.250

<sup>145</sup> Wilmott, op. cit., p.129.

<sup>146</sup> Overy, op. cit., p.204.

<sup>147</sup> Ibid.

<sup>148</sup> Ambrose (2003), op. cit., p.145.

<sup>149</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.340.

<sup>150</sup> Keegan, op. cit., p.324.

Germans to withdraw from Caen by sending units of the 2<sup>nd</sup> British Army across the River Odon in order to outflank the city from the west.<sup>151</sup> Although, the Operation was not helped by poor weather, it did establish a small bridgehead across the Odon. However, Montgomery could not sustain the attack because of the high casualty rates and the threat of a German counter attack.<sup>152</sup> When Montgomery called off EPSOM he was reported as being satisfied with its results because significant German resources had been drawn into the eastern flank.<sup>153</sup> Eisenhower was nevertheless disappointed by the results and was becoming concerned that the British were undertaking siege tactics around Caen.<sup>154</sup> On 7 July Eisenhower made his views clear to Montgomery when he wrote *'It appears to me that we must use all possible energy in a determined effort to prevent a stalemate or facing the necessity of fighting a major defensive battle with the slight depth that we now have in the bridgehead'*.<sup>155</sup> Montgomery replied with characteristic confidence by saying *'I am, myself, quite happy with the situation. I have been working throughout on a very definite plan, and I now begin to see daylight'*.<sup>156</sup> Although this exchange of correspondence demonstrates the divergent assessments of the operational situation during early July, whether it was Montgomery or Eisenhower who summed up the situation with greatest accuracy is not the central factor. The important issue is that misunderstanding was allowed to develop and this would have increased the tension between the generals.

Montgomery decided to continue his efforts to gain ground in the Caen region and he launched another operation, CHARNWOOD, on 8 July. Despite being preceded by a massive aerial bombardment, the 2<sup>nd</sup> British Army met fierce resistance and did not achieve all of its objectives. After 2 days of fighting the 2<sup>nd</sup> Army had succeeded in capturing the town's outskirts and had virtually isolated Caen from the rest the German defences but it could not make further progress<sup>157</sup> As there was some evidence to suggest the Germans planned to move armoured units to reinforce the front facing Bradley, Montgomery needed to keep the Germans in the Caen region under pressure and he initiated Operation GOODWOOD.<sup>158</sup> Due to Britain's dwindling infantry reserves, the plan focused on the 3 British armoured divisions in Normandy in a south-westerly thrust to the east of Caen. The operation, which was preceded by an aerial bombardment, started on 18 July 1944 and initially made good progress. However, the narrow bridgehead created a number of difficulties for Dempsey's forces and these, combined with increasingly stiff German resistance, meant that the attack stalled. When it

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<sup>151</sup> Carver, *Britain's Army in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century*, (London: Pan Books, 1999), p.280.

<sup>152</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.243/4.

<sup>153</sup> Hamilton, op. cit., p.695

<sup>154</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.247.

<sup>155</sup> Hamilton, op. cit., p.716.

<sup>156</sup> Ibid., p.720.

<sup>157</sup> Keegan, op. cit., p.327.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

became clear to Montgomery that the operation would not make further progress without the commitment of infantry, he called the attack off.<sup>159</sup>

Since D-Day, Bradley's 1<sup>st</sup> US Army had been involved in some serious fighting. Montgomery's strategy of drawing German armour to the eastern flank appeared to be having some success, as by the end of June Bradley faced approximately 140 German tanks whereas Dempsey was opposed by over 700.<sup>160</sup> However, the terrain facing Bradley's army was ideally suited to defence and the Germans had used it to good effect. The American progress during this period has been described as '*glacial*' and it took until 18 June to reach the Cotentin Peninsula's west coast.<sup>161</sup> Cherbourg was considered to be a critical objective, as it offered substantial port facilities, and, although the Americans captured the port on 26 June, their progress had come at some cost. Montgomery's records for the period up to 10 July indicate the Americans had suffered nearly 40,000 casualties while the British had taken just over 22,000.<sup>162</sup> These figures led to the accusation that the Americans were being used as '*sacrificial lambs*' while the British were taking an overcautious approach around Caen.<sup>163</sup> Interestingly Montgomery implied the campaign was experiencing problems as the Americans were unwilling to attack in a south westerly direction at the same time as they were conducting operations to secure Cherbourg.<sup>164</sup> As with many of the issues surrounding the Normandy campaign the debate was not entirely polarised by national allegiances but the fear of stalemate was creating difficulties within the coalition. After GOODWOOD was called off Eisenhower is described as being '*blue as Indigo*' due to his frustration at the delays.<sup>165</sup> Eisenhower may have been reflecting on the criticism he received for being timid in the Mediterranean campaign. The differences between Eisenhower's and Montgomery's approaches to warfare would have also contributed to this frustration. It is interesting to examine why the relationship with Montgomery became so difficult and what was done to rectify the situation.

Montgomery and Eisenhower had very different characteristics. Eisenhower had a personality and temperament that allowed him to base his command style on tact and diplomacy.<sup>166</sup> In contrast Montgomery had many qualities to commend him as a general but even his supporters noted that he had a reputation for being vain, boastful and egocentric.<sup>167</sup> Although differences in command style

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<sup>159</sup> Hamilton, op. cit., p.734

<sup>160</sup> Overy op. cit., p.204.

<sup>161</sup> Ambrose, Stephen, *Citizen Soldiers*, (London: Pocket Books, 2002), p. 51.

<sup>162</sup> Montgomery, *The Memoirs of Field-Marshal Montgomery*, (Barnsley: Pen & Sword Military, 2005), p.258.

<sup>163</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.300.

<sup>164</sup> Ambrose (2002), op. cit., p.50.

<sup>165</sup> Overy, op. cit., p. 208.

<sup>166</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.50.

<sup>167</sup> Hamilton, op. cit., p.136.

and attitude do not necessarily mean that a relationship is bound to fail, the link between Eisenhower and Montgomery was clearly vital and, given the importance of this relationship, the limited communications between the 2 generals is surprising. Indeed during the campaign they only met on 9 occasions, preferring instead to send each other letters or converse through de Guingand, Montgomery's Chief of Staff.<sup>168</sup> It is therefore not surprising that friction would grow between the 2 commanders.

Montgomery is clear in his memoirs that he understood the differences between his approach to operations and that of Eisenhower.<sup>169</sup> As a subordinate it could have been considered Montgomery's duty to make sure that Eisenhower understood the strategy. Various studies of the campaign debate the intent behind Montgomery's plan and the extent to which Eisenhower had grasped its meaning. Again the validity of the various arguments is not the prime point but the fact that sufficient substance exists to support both sides illustrates that potential for confusion existed. GOODWOOD provides an example of how misunderstandings could develop. Dempsey's original operational order for GOODWOOD was issued on 13 July and included the intent to drive on to Falaise.<sup>170</sup> As Montgomery was concerned about this aspect of the plan, the order was reissued on 17 July with reference to Falaise removed, but this revised document did not reach Eisenhower's Headquarters. Hamilton claims that Montgomery went to great pains to ensure that the objectives for GOODWOOD were not misunderstood and also suggests that it was Eisenhower who exaggerated the aims in order to secure the required air support.<sup>171</sup> However, if Eisenhower did really understand the operation's purpose, it is surprising that he wrote to Montgomery saying '*I am viewing the prospects with the most tremendous optimism and enthusiasm. I would not be at all surprised to see you gaining a victory that will make some of the "old classics" look like a skirmish between patrols.*'<sup>172</sup> It could be considered even more surprising that Montgomery allowed the Supreme Commander to continue with this view. Montgomery held a press conference during the Operation's early phase and he admits that he was '*too exultant*' about progress but goes on to suggest in his memoirs that this was done partly to give the Germans a false impression of GOODWOOD's objectives.<sup>173</sup>

Other members of the command structure were also unclear of Montgomery's intentions. Leigh-Mallory was keen to establish airfields in Normandy in order to improve tactical air support. This requirement had been highlighted during OVERLORD's planning phase and senior airmen therefore

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<sup>168</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.302.

<sup>169</sup> Montgomery, op. cit., p.262.

<sup>170</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.364.

<sup>171</sup> Hamilton, op. cit., p.726/7.

<sup>172</sup> Hastings (1985), op. cit., p.272.

<sup>173</sup> Montgomery, op. cit., p.257

held an expectation that Montgomery would try to secure land around Caen for this purpose.<sup>174</sup> It is easy to have some sympathy with Montgomery's view that he was fighting to win the battle for Normandy not to establish airfields and that if he won everything else, including air bases, would follow.<sup>175</sup> However, Montgomery allowed the misunderstanding to develop and this further enhanced the impression of failure within Eisenhower's headquarters. It is also unclear whether Montgomery made any efforts to explain the manpower constraints that were shaping his strategy for the British Army in Normandy.<sup>176</sup> It can therefore be seen that the poor communications between Montgomery and Eisenhower when added to the normal friction created by warfare resulted in considerable tension. This in turn would have degraded the trust between the 2 generals. The apparent lack of progress was also concerning the US press corps and they were seeking to determine why the Allies' overwhelming air power was not having a greater effect.<sup>177</sup> Eisenhower was, therefore, under considerable pressure to take decisive action in the campaign.

Eisenhower took personal responsibility for the problems that were developing in Normandy. He attacked his critics by telling them that he was '*inescapably responsible for strategy and general missions in this operation*' and reminding them that if he was dissatisfied it was his '*responsibility to determine the efficiency of [his] various subordinates and make appropriate report to the Combined Chiefs of Staff.*'<sup>178</sup> Montgomery had been given temporary command of land operations until Patton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Army was established in Normandy forming a US Army Group under Bradley's control and operating in parallel with Montgomery's 21<sup>st</sup> Army Group.<sup>179</sup> These Army Groups would then report to Eisenhower. A date had not been set for the transfer of command, as it would be directed by the operational situation. Although both Roosevelt and Marshall felt that Eisenhower should assume greater control of the land operation by bringing forward the move of his headquarters to France, the Supreme Commander resisted this pressure.<sup>180</sup> Moving the entire staff to France would have created significant logistical problems and this could explain the Supreme Commander's decision not to take early control. Alternatively he may have considered that such a move would not improve the situation.<sup>181</sup> Instead of taking direct control, Eisenhower could have replaced Montgomery and some commentators suggest that even Churchill reminded the Supreme Commander that this was an acceptable course of action.<sup>182</sup> Had Eisenhower decided to sack Montgomery he would have been supported by many of his officers, including key British figures such as Tedder. Churchill was also

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<sup>174</sup> Tedder (1966), op. cit., p.550.

<sup>175</sup> Montgomery, op. cit., p.257.

<sup>176</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.261.

<sup>177</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.330.

<sup>178</sup> Pogue, *The Supreme Command*, (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1954), p.190/1.

<sup>179</sup> Eisenhower, op. cit., p.7.

<sup>180</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.330.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Griffin, op. cit., p.79.

concerned about Montgomery's progress and raised the matter at a Chiefs of Staff meeting on 6 July.<sup>183</sup> Eisenhower's close relationship with Churchill was based on mutual respect and this would have given him a degree of influence over the Prime Minister. However, rather than using this position to court support for Montgomery's sacking, there is some evidence that Eisenhower defended Montgomery and tried to allay Churchill's concerns about the campaign.<sup>184</sup> Despite his concern, Eisenhower may have considered that the poor weather conditions and resolute German defence were presenting Montgomery greater challenges than were expected during the planning phase. He would have also noted that the stated aim of drawing German resources to Caen was being achieved and he may have taken the view that removing Montgomery could have stiffened German resolve. There was also the issue of deciding who would replace Montgomery. Eisenhower also had to consider wider coalition issues when making his decision. Montgomery was a national hero and extremely popular with the soldiers under his command. Importantly he also had the backing of Brooke. Sacking Montgomery had the potential to have a serious detrimental effect on morale and publicly criticising the performance of such a distinguished British officer would have placed the coalition under further strain. Eisenhower therefore showed considerable strength of character in refusing to replace Montgomery or alter his original concept of the command structure. Eisenhower took a more indirect approach in his attempts to manage Montgomery.

When they met on 2 July Montgomery and Eisenhower discussed the campaign's progress and, despite his initial concerns, the Supreme Commander is reported as being reassured by the briefing he received.<sup>185</sup> Eisenhower still felt it was necessary for him to write his 7 July letter warning Montgomery of the need to avoid stalemate.<sup>186</sup> Eisenhower wrote again on 21 July saying '*Eventually...the American ground strength will necessarily be much greater than the British. But while we have equality in size we must go forward shoulder to shoulder, with honors and sacrifices equally shared.*'<sup>187</sup> This letter shows Eisenhower's frustration and also suggests he did not believe that the British were taking an equitable share of the risk. However, many felt that Eisenhower should take more robust action. Patton confided in his diary that '*Ike is bound hand and foot by the British and does not know it. Poor fool. We actually have no supreme commander – no one who can take hold and say that this shall be done and that shall not be done.*'<sup>188</sup> Condemnation was not the preserve of the Americans and Tedder felt that, as Eisenhower's letter did not give a direct order, it gave Montgomery the opportunity to evade its intent.<sup>189</sup> Eisenhower is also criticised for not being more

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<sup>183</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.303.

<sup>184</sup> Ibid., p.302/3.

<sup>185</sup> Hamilton, op. cit., p.705.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid., p.716.

<sup>187</sup> Pogue, op. cit., p.190.

<sup>188</sup> Ambrose (2002), p.57/8.

<sup>189</sup> Tedder (1966), p.567.

forceful with his own Headquarters in stopping the rumours that were developing against Montgomery's strategy.<sup>190</sup> This argument does not give credit to Eisenhower's even-handed approach, as he showed equal latitude to Montgomery, and his staff.

In continuing with his original plan to keep Montgomery as land commander until the 12<sup>th</sup> US Army Group stood up, Eisenhower was exposing himself to criticism from both superiors and subordinates. This decision was consequently affecting his own professional credibility and it is a sign of Eisenhower's commitment to the coalition that he was willing to see his own reputation damaged in order to maintain Montgomery in command. Brooke's views on Eisenhower's qualities were made clear when he said that the American General was '*Just a coordinator, a good mixer, a champion of inter-Allied co-operation...But is that enough?*'<sup>191</sup> However, this statement appears to underplay the importance of coordinating efforts across coalition partners or the benefits of having an inter-Allied champion in command. Despite Montgomery's claims that the operation was developing in accordance with the Master Plan, there was a perception that the campaign was approaching stalemate and that the burden was not being borne fairly across the Allied armies. Eisenhower was forced to act in order to maintain coalition cohesion. However, given the pressures that Eisenhower was under, his measured approach of seeking to influence Montgomery rather than assuming direct control was remarkable. While some consider this approach to be one of Eisenhower's weaknesses, it is difficult to argue with Max Hastings view that '*His behaviour at moments of Anglo-American tension, his extraordinary generosity of spirit, proved his greatness as Supreme Commander*'.<sup>192</sup> Eisenhower understood that a successful coalition commander needed to have a grasp of politics to ensure success. Dawney observed that Montgomery was focussed solely on military issues maintaining that these factors were the primary key to success.<sup>193</sup> Therefore had the two Generals' positions been reversed, it is difficult to believe that Montgomery would have shown the same understanding of the demands of coalition command.

Eisenhower's view was that '*In a war such as this, when high command invariably involves a president, a prime minister, six chiefs of staff, and a horde of lesser "planners", there has got to be a lot of patience – no one person can be a Napoleon or a Caesar*'.<sup>194</sup> It is difficult to judge how long Eisenhower's patience, or that of the political leadership, would have lasted in the face of continued stagnation in Normandy. However, the Allies were about to achieve the breakout they desired. Operation COBRA was designed to penetrate the German's defences in the St Lô region and to

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<sup>190</sup> Hamilton, op. cit., p.660.

<sup>191</sup> Hastings (1985), op. cit., p.34.

<sup>192</sup> Ibid.

<sup>193</sup> Hamilton, op. cit., p.828.

<sup>194</sup> Ambrose (2003), op. cit., p.56.

provide opportunities for US armour to exploit the breakthrough and attack the enemy's rear. It had been originally planned to coincide with GOODWOOD on 18 July but bad weather had forced a delay. On 25 July the Operation had a disastrous start when Allied bomber aircraft mistakenly attacked American positions inflicting serious casualties. In a departure from the normal American approach, COBRA was a concentrated blow but progress was initially very slow.<sup>195</sup> The momentum behind the attack gradually built up until on 27 July the German defences, weakened by continuous fighting since D-Day, disintegrated.<sup>196</sup> Although Patton's 3<sup>rd</sup> Army was not stood up until 1 August he was given immediate control of a corps and used it to exploit the breakthrough. The Allies still faced German resistance but significant progress was made and by 3 August US forces were driving into Brittany. At this stage of the campaign the Allies were in agreement regarding strategy and Patton attacked eastwards against the remaining German forces in Normandy.<sup>197</sup> However, the battle for Normandy did not end without further controversy.

Hitler ordered a German counterattack on the evening of 6/7 August. American ground forces combined with tactical air forces to stop the attack and inflict significant casualties on the Germans.<sup>198</sup> On 7 August Montgomery ordered the Canadians to attack in the direction of Falaise and, although this operation did not achieve its objectives, it did offer the opportunity to trap the remaining German armour. The Allies agreed that Patton should swing north to cut off the German's escape route and he advanced to within 20 miles of the Canadian forces.<sup>199</sup> Montgomery did not reinforce the advance towards Falaise and Bradley ordered Patton to stop before he reached the Canadian positions.<sup>200</sup> The gap was therefore not closed until 19 August and, despite suffering heavy losses, a considerable number of Germans escaped. Hitler's insistence that the German army should fight to the last man removed its ability to conduct an ordered withdrawal and the Allies therefore made rapid progress.<sup>201</sup> On 25 August Paris was liberated and by 4 September the Allies had entered the Belgium port of Antwerp. The War was not over but, despite bitter inter-allied argument and disputes in the campaign, the battle for Normandy had been won.

Even amongst close allies doctrinal differences and variations in strategic outlook persist in the modern era. While drawn together by a common purpose, the nations which took part in Operation DESERT STORM had vast differences in cultural background and capability. Therefore, like Eisenhower, the commander could not afford to ignore the role of politics in coalition command.

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<sup>195</sup> Overy, op. cit., p.209/10.

<sup>196</sup> Ambrose (2002), op. cit., p.86.

<sup>197</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.412.

<sup>198</sup> Keegan, op. cit., p.336.

<sup>199</sup> Overy, op. cit., 213/4

<sup>200</sup> D'Este, op. cit., p.426/30.

<sup>201</sup> Overy, op. cit., 215

Norman Schwarzkopf had a very loose form of control over the allies fighting to liberate Kuwait in 1991. A Coalition Coordination, Communications and Integration Centre was established to ensure unity of effort amongst the partners.<sup>202</sup> Shadows of Eisenhower's coordinating role can therefore be seen in the modern era. Schwarzkopf appears to have understood the sentiment behind Eisenhower's view that *'Patience, tolerance, frankness, absolute honesty in all dealings, particularly with all persons of the opposite nationality, and firmness are absolutely essential'* in coalition command.<sup>203</sup> Eisenhower accepted compromises and worked hard to maintain cohesion and these efforts were mirrored by Schwarzkopf in 1991.

The strained Anglo-American relationship during the Normandy operation had the potential to cause the campaign significant damage. However, TORCH and the Mediterranean operations gave the Allies an opportunity to develop an understanding of each other's modus operandi and develop trust. It could, therefore be argued that these early coalition efforts did much to sustain OVERLORD during its most difficult phases. In the modern era such large scale preliminary operations are unlikely and coalition commanders therefore face the prospect of mounting operations supported by unfamiliar subordinates. Another approach is consequently required. In 2003 this trust was built between the Americans and British through integrated planning and exercises prior to the invasion of Iraq.<sup>204</sup> Basing coalitions loosely around existing alliances, such as NATO in Afghanistan, also has the potential to provide a degree of relief. Eisenhower's leadership style and character added much to the coalition in 1944 and the role of personality cannot be dismissed for modern operations. Brooke's disappointment that a commander who possessed both the military qualities of a field commander and the coordinating, and diplomatic, skills of a coalition leader could not be found in 1944 is liable to persist today. The most appropriate coalition leader may not always be the person who has the most impressive military credentials.

## Conclusion

A review of contemporary doctrine and articles has revealed a number of factors which have the potential to cause problems in coalition warfare and the study of OVERLORD has indicated that many of these issues were present in 1944. The intense strategic debate between the Americans and British regarding how the war against Germany should be prosecuted strained the coalition's cohesion, undermined its unity of purpose and led the partners to question each other's motives. This discussion was informed in part by differing domestic and foreign policy agendas as well as historical,

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<sup>202</sup> Rice, op. cit.

<sup>203</sup> Scales, op. cit.

<sup>204</sup> Gardner, op. cit. p.20/1.

doctrinal and cultural differences between the 2 nations. Nevertheless, at the end of the debate a common set of goals had been agreed and both nations were committed to OVERLORD. The battle for control of the strategic bomber force also opened divisions in the coalition and demonstrated how command and control of multinational forces can be complicated. Eisenhower sought unity of command over the bomber force. However, national prestige and the desire to retain the ability to conduct operations in addition to OVERLORD meant the British were concerned about losing control over an essential element of the RAF's armoury. These discussions delayed the implementation of the '*Transportation Plan*' but a compromise was reached and Eisenhower was eventually satisfied with the level of control he had achieved. The land campaign also presented some interesting issues. The American and British armies followed different doctrines and it is not clear that either side understood the nature and causes of these dissimilar styles of warfare. Success did not come as quickly as some felt it should and tension in the coalition rose as the fear of stalemate developed. The British were accused of being overcautious and the Americans felt that they were taking an uneven share of the burden and casualties. The British strategy of holding German resources in the Caen area does not appear to have been clearly understood across the coalition and this gave an impression of failure. Montgomery's insistence that all was going to plan did not help and poor communications between the commanders exacerbated the situation.

Although trust is considered a key factor in successful coalition operations, the OVERLORD case study shows that this was at times stretched to breaking point. Rumours of Montgomery's sacking spread and discontentment at the political level emerged on both sides of the Atlantic. However, Eisenhower did not change his concept of command. Although it could be argued that he had just cause for distrusting Montgomery, the Supreme Commander may have judged that he needed to tolerate the situation, as it would have been more damaging to remove such an iconic figure as Montgomery. Alternatively Eisenhower's course of action could suggest that the trust relationship between the 2 commanders did not fail entirely despite the strain it was under. It is true that the command relationships could have been improved but the integrated nature of Eisenhower's team and the understanding developed during TORCH probably did much to sustain the coalition during its most tense periods. The formation of the Combined Chiefs of Staff and the personal rapport that Eisenhower developed with Roosevelt, Marshall and, importantly, Churchill also appears to have helped the coalition.

Eisenhower's approach to the challenges presented by the operation and, in particular, Montgomery led to accusations he was not strong enough in command. However, would a stronger line have produced better results? It could be argued that if Eisenhower had been more robust in his dealings with his subordinates the debate would have fractured still further along national lines, trust would

have continued to suffer and the Allies' cohesion stretched beyond breaking point. The collegial nature of coalition leadership is supported by Eisenhower's performance during OVERLORD and the operation adds weight to the view that military skills are important but the commander's diplomatic and political credentials should not be forgotten.

Throughout the paper it has been possible to draw parallels with modern operations. However, although OVERLORD does show many of the features that would be expected to challenge a 21<sup>st</sup> Century coalition commander, some factors are different. Domestic agendas did shape opinions. Churchill had to survive a vote of no confidence and the American public wanted revenge for Pearl Harbour. However, unlike Churchill, Roosevelt attempted to maintain a divide between politics and strategy. It is uncertain that a 21<sup>st</sup> Century President could maintain this policy. There is little evidence to suggest that Eisenhower had to manage difficulties arising from limitations of the nation's differing national rules of engagement. The balance of power was shifting towards America but they were not as dominant as they are in modern conflict. Eisenhower did not face the problem of managing junior partners who were required to give the coalition legitimacy rather than provide military capabilities. Moreover, as OVERLORD was a predominately an Anglo-American alliance, it is difficult to argue that the problems presented by the cultural, historical and doctrinal differences would have been as challenging as those facing the International Security Force Commander in Afghanistan as he attempts to build, and lead, a team comprising troops from 37 nations.<sup>205</sup> Eisenhower did face press criticism, especially from his own domestic audience, but level of scrutiny was not the same as modern commanders can expect to face. How long could Eisenhower's patience have lasted in the face of 24-hour news coverage and a modern population that expects conflict to be quick and relatively painless?

This paper has outlined a number of challenges which will face coalition commanders and has described instances where these problems confronted the Allies and Eisenhower in the Second World War. The effectiveness of the Allied response to these issues will continue to be the matter of academic debate and this underlines an important fact. It is not possible to describe a set of pass-or-fail criteria that will characterize a successful coalition or coalition leader. However, the nature of individual coalitions will vary and it must be remembered that the nature of warfare has changed in many respects since the Second World War. Therefore, as with all case studies, the lessons offered by OVERLORD must be treated with care but there are sufficient similarities with the stresses and strains of modern coalition operations to suggest that OVERLORD still has much to offer a 21<sup>st</sup> century commander.

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<sup>205</sup> ISAF – NATO [online] .Available from: <http://www.nato.int/issues/isaf/index.html>. Accessed 25 May 2007.

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