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Compositional and Operational Flexibility in the "New Wars": Military Mission Formations and Collective Action

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In contemporary conflicts, militaries participate in multi-member mission formations: temporary structures composed of armed forces, governmental organizations, and civilian entities. To achieve flexible, coherent, collective action, these formations must be adaptable to in-theater conditions and external demands, and to expectations about how armed force is used. This article is integrative and synthetic: integrative in that it incorporates diverse sources and cases, and synthetic in that it formulates a model of how today's forces are shaped and used for successful adaptation. First, it argues that today's formations are marked by a scale, complexity, and diversity that is very different from past amalgamations. Second, it contends that internal diversity allows them to adapt both to changing operational environments and external demands. Third, it explains that their internal diversity represents both an adaptive potential but also difficulties for achieving coherent, collective action. The article concludes with six major dilemmas in the design of current-day mission formations.

Keywords: mission formations, adaptation, organizational flexibility, new wars

Introduction

Clearly how armed forces of industrial democracies operate in contemporary armed conflicts has changed. These conflicts, often characterized as the "new wars," are complex and fuzzy, relatively permanent or lingering, and combine an often-bewildering array of actors with manifold interests, values, and goals. Accordingly, operating in theater has come to involve not only multiple units (often spanning the entire spectrum of military capabilities) but also a host of governmental organizations (intelligence and espionage or diplomatic and developmental) and civilian entities (such as humanitarian movements and the media, or private security companies and logistics firms). In addition, in-theater forces have to meet the demands and expectations of external actors (governments, the media, judicial systems, or social movements) regarding where, when, and how they use armed force. As a consequence, we are told, militaries have, or should, become variously modular, malleable, seamless, ambidextrous, or hybrid (Haltiner & Kummel, 2009; Kummel, 2011; McChrystal, 2015; Shields & Travis, 2017; Soeters, 2008). All these terms emphasize flexibility and adaptability given the diverse and at times conflicting expectations and dictates directed at armed forces in theater. But how does one achieve such flexibility and adaptability?

To meet the challenges of current conflicts and enabled by new technologies (King, 2011; Shields, 2011), the armed forces have developed organizational structures based both on older forms of hierarchy and newer ones, such as networks, teams of teams, heterarchical models, or temporary ad hoc coalitions. Organizationally these, most often temporary, structures are diverse in terms of numbers and diversity of components, size and boundary status, motive structures, temporal orientations, and types of internal and external linkages. The highly diverse composition and modes of action of the new military formations are the organizational answer to the complex, often contradictory, environments within which armed forces operate (Hasselbladh, 2007; King, 2011; Zaccaro et al., 2011). In other words, the internal diversity of the new ensembles must match the variety and complexity of the environment if they are to address and adapt to the multiple challenges before them (Finkel, 2011; Gill & Thompson, 2017; Nuciari, 2007; Poole & Contractor, 2011). Thus, how is collective, coordinated, and concerted action possible within flexible, adaptable structures marked by high internal diversity?

Adaptation is the process of adjusting one's actions, assumptions, or predictions about operational environments in ways that alter interaction with those environments either in the immediate timeframe or in preparation for future interaction (Murray, 2011). Adaptation contrasts with innovation that takes place during periods of relative calm, and involves thinking through problems and adopting previous adaptations within an organization so that it will be able to succeed in a similar fashion. Seen in this manner, the question guiding this article differs from the one usually asked by scholars and professionals about military adaptation. Many previously published studies focus either on the macro-level of states and armed forces (for instance, Barry, 2016; Fox, 2017; Finkel, 2011) or the micro-tactical level (see Griffith, 1996; Lupfer, 1981; Gudmundsson, 1989). Furthermore, the majority of such studies focus on adaptation in conventional wars and usually investigate one national military (or compare discrete national cases). Studies of today's conflicts—amalgams of older and newer forms—usually continue to concentrate on one country (Catignani, 2014a; Marcus, 2017; Russel, 2010; Schmitt, 2017; Serena, 2011). Theoretically, these works typically use various forms of organizational learning models to analyze the propensities toward adaptation and the processes by which it takes place (Jensen, 2018). Farrell's work alone or with others (Farrell, 2010; Farrell et al., 2013a; Farrell et al., 2013b) is

representative of this very fruitful line of analysis that emphasizes the dimensions that shape adaptation (military culture and history, civil-military relations, or different kinds of national political dynamics).

The focus of this article, however, is different and is much closer to the relevant literature on forms of multinational forces (McCrystal, 2015; Goldenberg & Dean, 2017) in that it does not analyze inclinations to adapt or the dynamics by which units acquire new abilities. Rather, it centers on the potential for a particular organizational form that has evolved: to the how rather than the when, and under what circumstances of actual adaptation. Along these lines, I adopt Finkel's (2011) emphasis on the importance of flexibility in war, but shift the analysis to its organizational building blocks. Again, the article does not deal with how mission formations came about (through improvisation or planning, top driven or emerging from the bottom) but rather what this new paradigm looks like and what potential it represents.

I thus approach the question of adaptation through an analysis of how contemporary military formations (alone or with civilian partners) are designed and operate both to adapt and achieve coherent, collective action. My analysis is based on a wide-ranging reading of professional and scholarly literature on the contemporary armed forces of industrial democracies and is integrative and synthetic in its aims: integrative in that it incorporates diverse sources and cases, and synthetic in that it formulates a model of how today's forces are shaped and used to adapt successfully to both in-theater operational challenges and external demands.

Before moving on, let me further clarify my analytical focus. To begin, one could surely argue that such mission formations have long been used by the armed forces (Finkel, 2011) and that military doctrine of many forces already embody the importance of such formations. However, I show that today's amalgamations are far more diverse than those used until the end

of the Cold War, even though the beginnings of change were evident already then. In addition, the very scale and level of formations is very different from that found in conventional wars with, for example, divisions now spanning hundreds of kilometers and including a vast array of elements, including many civilian (King, 2019). Hence, this is not an article about doctrine or military theory, nor is it a text that provides recipes for how to improve the effectiveness of current operations (although such prescriptions can be derived from it). Rather, it offers a sustained investigation from the perspective of organization studies that aims to widen our understanding of the kinds of forms through which many of today's missions take place. This point definitely does not mean that mission formations are a guaranteed solution to all current security problems and armed conflicts. Instead, it shows the organizational potential that has led decision makers to adopt these organizational forms.

My argument is threefold. First, I contend that today's formations are marked by a scale, complexity, and diversity that is very different from such amalgamations in the past. Second, I argue that their internal diversity allows them to adapt both to changing operational environments and challenges and to transforming political and social expectations about how armed force is to be used. Third, I explain that their internal complexity and diversity represents both an adaptive potential but also difficulties for achieving coherent, collective action.

Mission Formations and Collective Action

To answer the question about collective action, I develop a conceptual framework initially formulated with colleagues (Ben-Ari 2011, 2015, 2017; Brond, Ben-Shalom, & Ben-Ari, forthcoming; Sher et al., 2011), focusing on the composition, dynamics, and dilemmas of what we called military mission formations: combinations, fusions, and blends of various

military units, sometimes with civilian entities (governmental and non-governmental) in temporary, usually mission-specific amalgams for specific tasks, including violent encounters. In theoretical organizational parlance, these mission formations are organizational ecosystems marked by their own internal logic and order but also capable of adapting to their environments. The concept of mission formations may include not only fighting configurations, but groupings centered on military units working alongside others in disaster relief or supplying medicine and food to endangered populations.

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Thus, I use the concept of mission formations rather than task forces or multi-team systems (Zaccaro et al., 2011) to convey a wider array of organizational phenomena that include temporary battle groups, intelligence fusion centers (Dostri & Michael, 2019; Michael et al., 2017), study missions, multi-national contingents (Friesendorf, 2018; King, 2006; Ruffa, 2018), mission control rooms, project teams, alliances between units and NGOs, technical unions (Lo, 2019), groupings of military forces and private companies (providing, for example, security and infrastructure) (Osinga & Lindley-French, 2010), modular forms organized for high-intensity policing, ensembles of regular and reserve forces (Bury, 2019; Schilling, 2019), groups for humanitarian work (Eldridge, 2017), or logistical task forces (van Kampen et al., 2012). For the purposes of this article I do not examine more or less permanent structures like

NATO, but do refer to formations as the forces constructed in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) in Afghanistan, Peace Keeping Operations, or the special forces task force created in Iraq (McChrystal, 2015). In addition, all these organizational forms are peopled by troops that are diverse in terms of gender and sexual orientation, race and ethnicity, class and educational level, as well as motivations and experiences, military occupation, and training or belonging to support or combat units (Michael, 2007).

Analytically, the concept of mission formations is intended to capture the (ongoing) processual nature of the amalgamations, assemblages, or combinations that military involvement in conflicts necessitates (Brond, Ben-Shalom, & Ben-Ari, forthcoming). They are all what Czarniewska (2005 ,2004) calls action sets oriented toward goals and seeking information about their environments, possessing internal (sometimes contradictory) structures, and marked by specific social and organizational characteristics and by degrees of temporariness (with many being one-time ventures). Mission formations habitually carry out tasks both sequentially (differing actions along a timeline) and simultaneously (heterogeneous activities at the same time). Moreover, in contrast to permanent organizations, there is no assumption about mission formations reproducing themselves and remaining constant over time (Poole and Contractor, 2011) (although a series of overlapping and interlocking mission formations may coalesce into a more lasting structure [Mathieu, 2011]). Accordingly, my focus is on "tailored" temporary organizational "conglomerates" that include an array of capabilities and expertise to meet the complex demands of today's missions (only some of which are akin to classic task forces).

The governing consideration in all of these formations is that they fit and adapt to the challenges of their specific environments (Kramer et al., 2012). Thus, there is no set, "standard" (schoolbook) model for such

formations, although general guidelines for design are useful and can be found in some military doctrine (Leonhard, 2008). The very specificity of each mission formation is especially important in today's "complex irregular warfare" or "hybrid wars" (Hoffman, 2007) where the complexity of arenas and adversaries necessitate unique compositions and operation. But the challenges are not only "in theater," because such formations must also answer macro social expectations—casualty aversion, marketization, technologization, or juridification of the military, to mention a few (Shaw, 2005; Levy, 2012)—that inform and shape concrete prescriptions for action. In other words, today's mission formations must meet not only military challenges but the newer social expectations emanating from their societies that dispatched them and the international community.

This point explains the reason for the internal organizational diversity of today's mission formations, as the internal diversity of formation must match the variety and complexity of its environment if it is to deal with the operational challenges and social expectations of that environment (Finkel, 2011; Gill & Thompson, 2017). Concretely, the fact that any specific conflict is no longer limited to the actual theater where violence is used but takes place in other arenas—the media, parts of societies, or judicial systems—has brought about the creation of new, or expansion of older, organizational structures whose aim is to answer the new challenges. It is for this reason that many of today's formations include such roles as military lawyers, spokespersons, and liaison officers who hold boundary-spanning roles linking the formation to external environments and who operate variously as mediators, brokers, cultural interpreters, negotiators, or sometimes "fixers" (see McChrystal, 2015 on liaisons).

The classic, if at times stereotyped, military solution to achieving collective action in uncertain environments has centered on planned, controlled, and coordinated

actions based on professional training and socialization, and embedded knowledge and competence in organizational doctrines, recipes, and practices (Hasselbladh, 2007). This design and standardization serves to ensure the exchangeability of personnel who are trained similarly and are versed in articulated procedures. But in today's mission formations, it is hard to standardize across so many participating roles, units, and organizations (many outside the armed forces), and hierarchical authority must be complemented by persuasion and partnering.

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Against this background the especially problematic nature of achieving coordinated, collective action in mission formations is evident. Such collective action among any group of actors involves dependency on partners' cooperating behavior (Bollen & Soeters, 2007) and often competition over resources (Michael et al., 2017), and is intensified in mission formations since the constituent units are all embedded in differing "home" organizations, be they national militaries or "organic" regiments or outfits (Zaccaro et al., 2011). Thus, the problems of achieving collective action are compounded by differences in professionalism, inter-service, and sometimes inter-agency rivalries, modes of operation, and in the case of multinational forces, differences in national military ways or communications styles (Autesserre, 2014; Friesendorf, 2018; King, 2006; Ruffa, 2018;

Soeters et al., 2012). Compounding these difficulties is the fact that these formations are usually loose, temporary structures sometimes marked by unclear division of labor and authority, and are political arenas through which constituent actors promote and advance their own ends (Winslow, 2002). One example is the Provincial Reconstruction Teams established in Afghanistan where tensions often arose between military officers, civilians dealing with political and developmental tasks and police who handled law and order with each having different goals and motivations, images of "customers," assumptions about security, or temporal orientation (Dziedzic & Seidl, 2005; Poole & Contractor, 2011).

Key Features of Mission Formations

While the built-in diversity of components and the existence of boundary-spanning roles help mission formations achieve their goals, they do not suffice. Rather, other conditions and processes must be in place to achieve adaptable collective action.

Standardization within participating entities. For all of the flexibility necessitated in today's missions, it is clear that there is a continued need for standardization and solidity *within* a formation's components—especially in its military units. While standardization and bureaucratization of organizations can lead to rigidity and inertia (Biehl, 2008), they also have advantages. With too much change and adjustment, military units lose their robustness, resilience, and consistency (Hasselbladh & Yden, forthcoming). The deployment of military forces in situations marked by an inherent potential for violence, chaos, and strategic ambiguity means that military organizations, perhaps even more than other large scale organizations, depend on formal rules and procedures (Barkawi & Brighton, 2011). In other words, it is the very solidity of the constituent military units—their capacity for autonomous action—based on standards, intense socialization, training, doctrine, and discipline that grants them the

capacity to be central modules of mission formations (De Waard & Kramer, 2007); in fact, solid, robust, and resilient autonomy facilitates operational flexibility (Kramer & De Graaf, 2012).

Two examples may illuminate this point. While Europe's new brigades studied by Anthony King (2011) are composed of a much larger variety of components than the brigades of the Cold War, their constituent units (e.g., companies of engineers or units of artillery as well as infantry and armored forces) are capable of autonomous action and predicated on organizational solidity. This means that under trying circumstances they have the potential for survivability. Similarly, in the combined special operations formation in Iraq, each unit was expected to stay true to its own ethos while capable of being linked to other units in various ways (McChrystal, 2015). Hence just as professionalism, a clear doctrine, and mastery of drills allow improvisations, so component-centered stability, solidity, and order enable flexibility.

Autonomy and collective action. While the autonomy of constituent units contributes to the adaptability of mission formations, membership in mission formations is not "natural" for the constituent entities, since they may not have previous relations between them, and joining in collective action involves a loss of independence and discretion, and possible loss of uniqueness and identity. Formations are not just means for coordination where there are clear boundaries between organizations so that there is no hindrance between the actions of one and the other as in national battalions working alongside each other in many multinational forces (Friesendorf, 2018; King, 2006; Ruffa, 2018), nor are they mergers where the constituent units lose their independent identity and structure. Rather, the idea is that participating in formations necessitates both a consciousness of common goals and the independent, autonomous contribution of each member entity (a similar conceptualization can be found in Michael et al., 2017).

Dominant cores. A key feature of successful mission formations is the existence of a dominant core, whether it be a main military discipline or arm or (as in multinational formations) a major nation (say, as in the PRTs). This core provides a strong national or disciplinary collective repertoire for understanding (classification, selection, and interpretation) and action (prescriptions) (Hasselbladh & Yden, forthcoming) and is what directs and controls the formation. For example, in Afghanistan's Uruzgan the Australians had to adapt to the larger Dutch component, and in Iraq's Samawah the Japanese had to adapt to the Dutch contingent that led the efforts there (Aoi, 2017). In both cases, the Dutch component supplied a structure as an anchoring core for other units. Similarly, to follow King (2011), in multinational headquarters there is an advantage if the key element of formation speaks its own language, has common professional practices, and sometimes is composed of personnel who know each other. Other components can unite around this core staff since they provide a common reference point. Or, to offer another example of the Joint Special Forces Task Force in Iraq headed by McChrystal (McChrystal, 2015), the team of teams coalesced around the dominant American core. The disadvantage of this situation is that too strong a core may lead to domination by one group. This has sometimes been the case, as in the supremacy of US components in NATO's efforts in Bosnia-Herzegovina or the missions in Iraq and Afghanistan (Gill & Thompson, 2017; Soeters et al., 2012).

Designed modularity. The constituent elements can then be assembled into formations in modular forms that combine different kinds of expertise to enhance their adaptability (Kramer & de Graaf, 2012). This is the basis for their flexibility because a modular composition makes it easier to change overall composition as new circumstances emerge. Furthermore, this design balances a preference for core units around which the formation is created with the creative potential arising out of the upredictable relations developing between the constituent units in what McChrystal (2015) calls serendipitous encounters.

Communication and trust. Designing and assembling formations is not enough since the interactions linking their components are no less central to effectiveness and adaptability. As in all relations, trust is a key element. At their inception, trust in mission formations involves swift trust based on categorical knowledge, that is, interactions based on stereotypes of others (Ben-Shalom et al., 2005; Hyllengren et al., 2011; Schilling 2019). But over time more lasting forms evolve (Gill & Thompson, 2017; McChrystal, 2015; Michael et al., 2017; Soeters et al., 2012). Trust—and not necessarily friendship—is usually the outcome of military competence and mutual professional respect, as among many of Europe's highly professionalized troops (Biehl, 2008; King, 2011) or SOF where members learn a "fluency" with their team members (McChrystal, 2015). Yet according to studies of mission formations, trust can also evolve out of other processes, be they informal meetings over food and drink or "conversations at the coffee machine" (Elron et al., 1999, 2003; Goldenberg & Dean, 2017; Leonhard, 2008; Maniscalco, 2008; Van den Heuvel, 2007) or the sharing of information that is seen as both an index of and a way to gain confidence in relations (Bury, 2019; Kramer & de Graaf, 2012; Resteigne & Van den Bogaert 2013; Soeters et al., 2010).

Operationally, trust emerging across components of formations is often the result of overlapping personal networks through which much of the informal communication, information sharing, and social exchange occur. As studies have shown, these networks are crucial, since they allow disseminating knowledge that is often non-transferable via formal means (Catignani, 2008, 2014b; Goldenberg & Dean, 2017; Hasselbladh & Yden, forthcoming; Leonhard, 2008; O'Toole & Talbot, 2011). This localized learning is related to the collective action of formations:

double-loop learning is what gives formations the ability to change norms and practices according to local circumstances or emerging contingencies. Yet such networks also carry potential disadvantages, since sharing may create local parochial knowledge that cannot be generalized, and horizontal ties can lead to cliques and over-politicization of formations.

Control and direction: Leadership. To achieve cooperative, coordinated action, any system needs some kind of control and direction personified in command (Ben-Ari, 2011). The emphasis is command and not commanders, since functions of leadership may be divided among a group of individuals into what King (2019) calls a "command collective" or what is known in organization studies as "distributed leadership" (Bolden, 2011). This point is important since "command" combines the executive function of making decisions along with motivating, creating a common consciousness, and managing operations. Importantly, in temporary structures like mission formations, shared consciousness—or shared mental models (Crichton et al., 2005; Goodwin et al., 2018)—does not imply some kind of sameness of interpretation and action, but rather a common understanding that leaves place for discretion. To cite McChrystal (2015), this means a generalized awareness with specialized expertise.

> The advantage of mission formations lies in the fact that in today's complex conflicts they are tailor-made by combining entities of different size, expertise, or capacity according to circumstances (composition flexibility). Further, once in place, such compositions are ideally able to adapt flexibly to local circumstances by changing configurations and capacities in uncertain environments (operational flexibility).

Commanders have an especially important role in creating these shared understandings through concrete practices that also underlie trust. One such set of practices centers on managing distributive fairness (a seemingly just allocation of resources), burden sharing (in terms of risks), or power (access to decision making processes) (Bogers et al., 2012). Perceived justice can also be symbolic as in acknowledgment by leaders of even temporary status as a member of the formation. But composed as they are of diverse components, this point may be problematic in formations since there is a need to share glory and achievements with others, and some member entities may not be satisfied with such a situation.

One fruitful way to understand command in temporary, ad hoc formations is via the idea of missions as ventures or projects; an idea that encapsulates undertakings requiring concerted, coordinated effort toward organizational goals according to planned and emergent schemes for a limited period but allowing for their constantly contingent nature and the emerging processes by which such schemes come to fruition. Commanders as managers of projects thus often head temporary organizations, and their role lies in setting objectives, motivating team members, and planning and executing work (Gill &Thompson, 2017; Goldenberg & Dean, 2017; Soeters, van Femema, & Beeres et al., 2010; Zaccaro et al., 2011).

Flexibility, Adaptability, and Control

Against this background, the (potential) adaptability of mission formations should be analyzed. Here de Waard and Kramer's (2007) differentiation is instructive. They distinguish between strategic flexibility entailing the ability to assemble and reassemble different configurations or components into an organizational form, and operational flexibility involving the capacity to deploy effective task forces able to adapt and remain adaptable to local conditions. Modularity of diverse components is at the heart of both kinds of flexibility, and systems are modular when their components can be disaggregated and reconfigured into new configurations with little

loss of functionality (de Waard & Soeters, 2007), due to their autonomy and in the case of the military solidity and resilience.

From an operational point of view, the advantage of mission formations lies in the fact that in today's complex conflicts they are tailor-made by combining entities of different size, expertise, or capacity according to circumstances (composition flexibility). Further, once in place, such compositions are ideally able to adapt flexibly to local circumstances by changing configurations and capacities in uncertain environments (operational flexibility). Because components of formations differ in their capacity for autonomous action or the degree of "local autonomy" given them, in different instances they may be loosely or tightly coupled with other entities and controlled or directed to a greater or lesser degree.

Control and coordination are crucial here. In strictly military formations the coordination leading to collective action is relatively simple given hierarchical structures and clearly defined authority. However, the greater the diversity of components—e.g., in multinational contingents or those combining military and civilian entities—the more the need not only for formal authority but for softer forms of motivation, regulation, supervision, and oversight. Here the role of the core component is central in that it provides the headquarters and liaison roles and uses combinations of orders, persuasion, coercion, or bargaining through material or other incentives. However, a central component is not enough. To operate coherently, participants need to be able to interact and cooperate with each other laterally, sometimes independently of the explicit direction of their commanders. A "simple" emphasis on mission control or mission command with autonomy granted to local level commanders misses the point of how so much of collective action is the outcome of horizontal linkages (some tightly and some loosely coupled, with more or less permeable boundaries) that any given unit develops. The interstitial nature of these forms is crucial, as suggested by Michael

et al. (2017), whose analysis of the adaptable potential of intelligence fusion centers is applicable more generally. They posit that such centers—in my conceptualization, mission formations—are a separate space (away from each entity's home organizations) within which new kinds of knowledge and action become possible. Within these organizational forms the individual autonomy of each entity is granted, even promoted, but in a way that contributes to the overall goal.

Until now the emphasis in my analysis has been on operational requirements. What I add to de Waard and Kramer's conceptualization is that mission formations must meet not only operational demands, but the contemporary social and political expectations of how armed conflicts are waged. Hence, I now move onto the macro-social changes that, while outside the theater, greatly influence the composition and modes of action of mission formations. While mission formations bear similarities to parallel civilian cases, being military in nature, they always contain the potential for using organized (legitimate) state violence. In this respect, Shaw (2005) has posited the emergence of "risk-transfer war" centered on minimizing life risks to the military, and thus the political risks to their civilian leaders. This consideration is compounded by the much greater monitoring of military—its "global surveillance" (Shaw 2005)—by a plethora of political overlords, senior commanders, the media and the courts, and NGOs and various "locals." This situation signals a clear change from the ad hoc task forces of the conventional wars (e.g., the October 1973 War or the Gulf War of 1991). Today's mission formations now include a complex of media, legal, and new logistical roles and units, and no less important, the integration of these functions into the key decision making processes of formations.

First, the very legitimacy of international missions is based on a multi-national configuration (Leohard, 2008) signaling through its composition that it is implementing the will of the international community. In armed struggles

waged by one country, say Israel, international legitimacy is no less important. This legitimacy in turn is predicated on meeting expectations about when, where, and especially how the conflict is pursued. Historically the most obvious answer to external expectations and dictates has been a host of "hyphenated roles" combining new responsibilities with conventional military ones. To Janowitz's (1971) soldier-police officers charged with constabulary roles, Moskos (1988) added the soldier-diplomat, soldier-statesman, and Goodwin (2005) the soldier-scholar. But at present there seems to be a proliferation of such military roles that include soldier-media expert, soldier-social scientist, soldier-social worker, soldier-nation builder, soldier-relief worker, or soldier-alderman (Haltiner, 2005). These roles are not only a means to control military operations, but also measures that the military uses to manage its relations with groups in the civilian environment and whose values, needs, and identities may contradict its own.

In a related manner, such processes as the mediatization, juridification, and "humanitarianization" of military action affect the composition and operation of mission formations (privatization is beyond the scope of this article). Mediatization (Bet-El, 2009; Maltby, 2012; Moskos, 2000b; Sweeney, 2006) refers to how media reports from missions are part of a feedback circle in which publics are courted if their support is essential. Consequently, armed forces have created or strengthened organizational units placed at the operational level—e.g., liaison, public relations, or press units—to mediate between them and various media. These roles control information, offer positive portrayals of military action, or provide its narratives of events. One example from Israel (Shai, 2013) are the ensembles established during the second initifada, the Second Lebanon War, and the series of operations into Gaza to handle Israel's public diplomacy efforts: while a key component of these were units from the IDF Spokesperson's Office, they also included civilian governmental and non-governmental

entities, with the latter more loosely coupled to the IDF-government nexus.

Another development has been the "judicialization" of military action centered on minimizing casualties (Rubin, 2002). Today's armed forces are required to abide by and clearly signal their acceptance of closely monitored demands that they use armed violence in a legal and acceptable manner. It is for this reason that military lawyers have become an essential part of operational decision making cycles (Cohen & Ben-Ari, 2014). At the beginning, there was much tension within missions between commanders and legal experts, but as judicial considerations have become integrated in operational concerns, so lawyers have become an integral part of today's formations.

Yet another addition is related to the emergence or reinforcement of various humanitarian and CIMIC officers that create ties with locals and NGOs (Byman, 2001; Winslow, 2002) and that again answer social expectations that the armed forces ensure the basic needs of populations in areas of conflict. Analytically, humanitarian or CIMIC officers are mediators that link the military to civilian entities through embodying in their functions the logics of two or more organizations. In effect, in CIMIC organizations members wear uniforms but also represent part of the military's responsibility for civilians. As such, its members are, in a sense, both in and out of the military, and it is not surprising that sometimes CIMIC officers have been labeled as having dual loyalty (Rietjens & Bollen, 2008).

Common to these organizational entities is that they link mission formations to external communities of professional practice on which they are mutually dependent (Hajjar, 2017). These are all boundary-spanning components that may exchange information, coordinate, or integrate (Alvinius et al., 2014). Accordingly, these roles and organizational arrangements are internal roles that "represent" and mediate the relations with various external actors and their demands and expectations. Boundary-

spanning thus allows adaptation to changing circumstances within and outside the theater. While many of these mechanisms have existed historically, they are now integrated at the operational and sometimes tactical levels.

Yet in contrast to potential tensions between combat components, these units add a different kind of problem for formations, related to their role as boundary-spanners. Take the "symbiotic" relationship between the media and the military: while differing in expectations, professional socialization, and modes of action, they are still dependent on each other in today's conflicts. Yet in many if not most contemporary formations the tension between the military and media communities is intensified because members of the media are much more independent of the military than in the past. The relations between members of the armed forces and members of human rights and humanitarian movements are no less complex. In this case, the differences between the two sides seem more far reaching than those between the military and the media (Winslow, 2002). Humanitarian movements are marked by a very different type of organization from the military in that that they possess an egalitarian (as opposed to the military's hierarchical) mode of deciding and operating, often international (in contrast to national) loyalties, or definitions of success and time frames for realizing it (Archer, 2003). Indeed, while members of humanitarian movements may fear loss of independence when military components become directly involved in humanitarian action, the military may see them as potential hazards in carrying out their assigned missions (Dobbins et al., 2007).

Conclusion: Dilemmas and Tensions

Today's armed forces are marked by greater compositional flexibility (facilitated by technology and training) than in the past. This flexibility refers to the variety of entities and expertise—military and at times civilian—that can be combined in temporary mission formations. Moreover, the sheer diversity of capacities and varied proficiencies of the constituent units marks a clear difference from the ad hoc task forces of the past. Compositional flexibility, in turn, allows much greater operational flexibility, since the potential of utilizing the capacities of constituent units in adapting to local circumstances is much greater.

In conclusion, five points should be emphasized, four related to the analysis of mission formations and one centered on key operational dilemmas in their organizational design. First, the model charted is cumulative rather than linear in the sense that new military capacities, conditions, and organizational configurations have been added to conventional ones. New ad hoc formations create a necessity for newer and older forms of training, professional practices, and no less important, expectations. Thus, the classic military emphases on intense socialization, strict discipline, hierarchical authority, and personal commitment continue to be important, especially among the combat arms.

Second, the analysis emphasizes the need for a much more dynamic—and social and organizational—view of militaries-in-use than those provided by classic formulations in the social scientific and professional military analyses of combat units. It is for this reason that both the compositional and operational flexibility of mission formations are emphasized. In today's conflicts, military formations have to answer at once operational challenges in the theater and external expectations about how they achieve their missions. This is the armed forces' answer to the central features of today's conflicts that combine not only a vast array of means and actors used by enemies but a much closer monitoring of military activities by external bodies that express external demands and expectations. It is for this reason that the focus on mission formations can well illuminate the combinatorial organizational forms through which the armed forces answer both operational and social and political necessities.

Third, the political dimensions of mission formations are especially important since they link the strategic to the tactical. Ruffa et al. (2013) explain that in contemporary armed conflicts, the tactical level can be politically problematic given the actions of "strategic corporals" (Krulak, 1999) or participation of

> The creation of mission formations is a key way the armed forces of the industrial democracies have been operating, and that these formations, when designed and operated carefully, may provide many answers to today's conflicts. In turn, this situation necessitates development of proper social scientific and organizational tools for the analysis of mission formations.

troops in non-combat tasks such as nation-building or provision of humanitarian aid. Political problems are multiplied in mission formations. First, in multinational forces there are different national stipulations about what is and what is not appropriate, and this can lead to tensions as well as harm to collective action. Second, new roles such as lawyers or humanitarian officers as integral parts of some formations may limit the kinds of actions deemed apt and may even become "lobbies" for external publics. Third, and in a related manner, the mechanisms for monitoring formations become complex, particularly in multi-national contingents where forces are open to regulation by national and global entities and by institutional and extra-institutional actors. Thus, the media may control mission formations both through the actions of in-house media experts or the scrutiny of media in the theater. Finally, within formations, monitoring of non-traditional roles is more difficult than control and direction of troops and units that are similar to commanders.

Fourth, the analytical approach used here could be adopted to the study of other forms of collective action among actors in the security and strategic communities. Indeed, if one

looks at formations constructed in regard to major challenges entailing national security, a similar need for adaptability arises. Thus, for example, issues related to national disasters (earthquakes, floods, or tsunamis), protection of civilian communities during wars, or efforts combining traditional and new forms of diplomacy all necessitate the establishment of organizational configurations that span them and create a temporary interstitial space within which collective action emerges.

The fifth part of the conclusion suggests six key dilemmas evident in the design and operation of mission formations. The first is the tension, or balance, between maintaining unit identity and separateness and the "surrender" of some capacities and credit in the name of synergy and successful adaptability. The idea is to achieve a combined effect through collective action alongside preservation of the identity and professional capacity and authority of its component organizations.

The second dilemma involves the dominant core around which the formation is designed and created. This core must provide both the basic terms of reference and essential capacities, but it must not overshadow the other components so as to neutralize them or relegate them to be mere servants of the mission without due sense of participation and recognition.

The third and closely related predicament is between the openness of communication and interactions between the component units and the potential for the emergence of cliques and promotion of sectional interest. To be sure, any organization and perhaps mission formations in particular are arenas for political action, but given the need for a common set of goals, leaders must harness all the elements without the emergence of parts that are bent solely on advocating their own goals.

Fourth, a principal tension in execution is between central control and allowance for the operational autonomy of components. Adaptability is based on elements of operational

flexibility in which there is leeway for discretion and self-organizing in local circumstances. This again is a classic military dilemma, but in mission formations it is especially acute given the diverse kinds of linkage between units and the fact that components are often embedded in very different home organizations and differ in modes of interpreting reality and operating on it.

Fifth, adaptable mission formations must be able to undertake a translation of the strategic into the operational and tactical levels. Translation refers to how complex understandings are turned into concrete tactical prescriptions; to the manner by which the diverging, often contradictory, external dictates and interpretations are formulated as prescriptions for concrete action.

The sixth dilemma is how to manage formations without the "hijacking" of action by either external or internal expectations, i.e., how one set of expectations may come to govern action. For example, casualty aversion (derived from political demands) may dictate ways of using armed violence and the risks to one's troops in ways that jeopardize the achievement of goals.

In conclusion, my argument is not some simple plea for more combinations, additional jointness, or added amalgams as a panacea for any contemporary problem, a slogan that has sometimes been over-hyped in the professional military literature. Rather, from this analysis and on the basis of studies published over approximately the past three decades, it seems that the creation of mission formations is a key way the armed forces of the industrial democracies have been operating, and that these formations, when designed and operated carefully, may provide many answers to today's conflicts. In turn, this situation necessitates development of proper social scientific and organizational tools for the analysis of mission formations.

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