

Joint Doctrine Development: Overcoming a Legacy

By DOUGLAS C. LOVELACE, JR., and THOMAS-DURELL YOUNG

Over the past decade jointness has become a paean in the quest to improve the effectiveness of the Armed Forces. Congress emphasized its importance by passing the Goldwater-Nichols Act which increased the power of the combatant commanders in chief (CINCs), made the Chairman the principal military adviser to the National Command Authorities (NCA), and assigned him specific responsibilities for strategic planning as well as doctrine and training. In addition, the Joint Chiefs of Staff lost their baronial influence, and the Joint Staff was reoriented to serve the Chairman.

Yet this seminal legislation has not overcome all the institutional impediments to effectively employing joint forces. One remaining problem in

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implementing joint doctrine is caused largely by a flaw in the strategic planning process. The lack of direct linkage between the strategic direction of forces and operational planning for their actual employment hampers development of integrated joint doctrine. Because of this disconnect between national military strategy and key joint planning documents, the services have been denied the greatest incentive for embracing joint doctrine.

The Centrality of Doctrine

Joint doctrine is as vital to operational objectives as strategy is to national strategic goals. Operationally, it links what must be accomplished to the available (or required) tools by providing the nexus between national military strategy and the conduct of military operations. Joint doctrine should thus derive from, *inter alia*, national military strategy and thereby help implement it.¹

Just as objectives and resources are rationalized in national military strategy, joint doctrine guides the employment of joint forces and military capabilities to achieve strategic and operational objectives. Accordingly, the joint operation planning and execution system (JOPES) requires that theater operation plans conform to established joint doctrine.

Joint doctrine also has a collateral value. It enables senior leaders to determine the sort of capabilities needed by CINCs and ensures effective and efficient application of those capabilities to specific objectives.² Moreover, it informs senior civilian leaders and government agencies about how they may expect the Armed Forces to be employed and thus illuminates force strengths and limitations and consequent risks of using force. It may serve a similar purpose for our allies and coalition partners, which is particularly apropos when establishing a U.S. position for developing multinational doctrine. It also forms part of the rationale for force structure.

Goldwater-Nichols assigned responsibility for developing joint doctrine to the Chairman. More generally, he is also responsible for developing

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joint professional military education (PME) and training policies that are influenced by documents such as the universal joint task list (UJTL). In addition, he can prescribe how training will be evaluated and shape joint exercises by stressing specific areas of interest.³ In the case of PME, he can influence the nature and amount of joint matter taught at service colleges.⁴ These education and training responsibilities thus provide opportunities for advancing the implementation of joint doctrine.

The impact of joint doctrine extends beyond the employment of joint forces to virtually all the Chairman's strategic planning responsibilities, to include soliciting, evaluating, integrating, and setting priorities for CINC requirements. Discharging this duty forms the basis of the Chairman's advice to the Secretary of Defense on the needs of CINCs. Moreover, the Chairman advises the Secretary on the extent to which service program recommendations and budget proposals conform to priorities in strategic plans and CINC requirements. This advice may include recommendations that differ from those submitted by the services.

The Chairman logically must consider existing and emerging joint doctrine in establishing and integrating priorities for the requirements of CINCs and in assessing service programs. Therefore, if elements of service programs do not conform to the doctrine, the Chairman, as principal military adviser to the Secretary and President, may recommend program adjustments.

The triennial report on the roles, missions, and functions of the Armed Forces also contains recommendations influenced by joint doctrine. A case in point was the proposal by one former member of the Joint Chiefs that the battlefield be partitioned and each section assigned to a service or functional component command.⁵ The intent was to assign the rear and close battles mainly to the Army and the high and deep battles primarily to the Air Force. This proposal, inconsistent with joint doctrine, would have transferred close air support to the Army and deep interdiction—now shared by all services—primarily to the Air Force and, to a lesser extent, to the Navy. Therefore, the Army would have lost its high and deep battle systems and the funding to acquire and maintain them. The rejection of this proposal suggests that service-initiated changes to roles and functions that do not conform to joint doctrine will not be favorably considered.

Common doctrine is also crucial since it provides principles to orient and focus education and training. For example, the universal joint task list is guided by joint doctrine. Armed with this list,

joint force commanders perform focused mission analysis and develop joint mission essential task lists (JMETL). They can then plan training programs to meet JMETL requirements. During joint training, commanders can rely on shared doctrine to frame broad tasks and suggest measures of effectiveness. The influence of doctrine on training thus improves warfighting capabilities.

If joint doctrine is indeed vital, how can its development and implementation be enhanced? The solution to this problem is complicated by the disparate ways the services define and perceive joint doctrine and in the individual service roles in developing it.

The Development Process

A good deal of current joint doctrine has not met the needs of the services and combatant commands. Just over two years ago the Chairman stated that joint doctrine "is not well vetted . . . well understood. It is certainly not disseminated out there and is almost never used by anyone."⁶ One weakness in the development process has been the requirement to build consensus among the services by removing portions of draft doctrine pubs which are vigorously challenged by any service. Thus, much joint doctrine can reflect the lowest common denominator, which results in imprecise, confusing, or contradictory concepts. Internal inconsistencies are therefore common. Key factors in this disharmony are differing service views of doctrine and the compartmented way it is developed. Moreover, no effective vehicle for cross-checking the consistency of doctrine pubs is applied.

Historically, the services have not agreed on what doctrine means, let alone its purpose. The dictionary defines it as "something that is taught, held, put forth as true, and supported by a teacher, a school, or a sect; a principle or position or the body of principles in any branch of knowledge." Joint Pub 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, renders it as: "Fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgement in application." However, to understand the meaning of doctrine one must examine various service perspectives.

Doctrine has long been seen as essential by the Army. It is regarded as the basis of current operations and organization as well as the engine of change. According to Field Manual 100-1, *The Army*, it is pervasive, encompassing the service ethos, professional qualities, esprit de corps, legal basis, readiness, principles of war, and military operations other than war. While accepting the definition found in Joint Pub 1-02, the Army appears

USS Wasp transiting Norwegian fjord for Strong Resolve.



U.S. Navy (Franklin P. Call)



U.S. Air Force (Jeffrey Allen)

C-130 approaching Tuzla air base.

to interpret “judgement in application” more liberally than the Chairman.⁷ The Army’s doctrine preceded joint doctrine, and experience in developing and using it made that service a prime contributor to joint doctrine. Thus other services may feel the Army exerts inordinate influence in the development process.⁸ Given the maturity of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command and the relative inexperience of the doctrine centers of the other services, such leverage is plausible.

The Navy only lately has begun to formalize and institutionalize doctrine.⁹ This situation can be partially attributed to culture, especially a focus on technology and independent operations. Traditionally the Navy saw doctrine as procedures for applying capital systems. Naval Doctrine Publication 1, *Naval Warfare*—which provides the foundation for a body of doctrine as yet largely unwritten—defines doctrine as *conceptual*, that is,

“a shared way of thinking that is not directive.” Though the Navy believes that doctrine should bridge national military strategy and service tactics, techniques, and procedures, a Navy doctrine-based culture will not arise overnight.

Marines consider doctrine a philosophy of warfighting. At higher levels it does not provide specific techniques, but instead broad concepts and values. In fact, Fleet Marine Force Manual 1, *Warfighting*, reveals that Marine Corps doctrine sets forth a particular way of thinking about war and of fighting, a philosophy of leading marines in combat, and a mandate for professionalism and a common language. Overall, the Corps views doctrine as a codification of its essence rather than a body of knowledge to be consulted in preparing for and conducting war.



Marines landing at Kauai, Hawaii, RIMPAC '96.

U.S. Navy (Jeffrey S. Viano)



101st Airborne in Saudi Arabia.

U.S. Army

effective joint doctrine can only be effectively developed using a top-down approach

Air Force Manual 1-1, *Basic Aerospace Doctrine of the United States Air Force*, defines doctrine as “what we hold true about aerospace power . . . a guide for the exercise of professional judgement rather than a set of rules to be followed blindly.” It suggests that doctrine development and revision is a living process. This concept can be explained in terms of a culture that stresses technologically advanced systems and their improvement through enhanced human contributions. As a result, the Air Force sees weaponry as a defining feature of war and has developed a lexicon that includes system-oriented terms such as sortie generation, weaponeering, and target servicing. This central focus on systems and adopting the latest technology results in an orientation on system characteristics and, in effect, a subordination of doctrine and operational procedures.¹⁰

Clearly, significant differences exist among services, and their doctrines are developed to meet their unique needs. Joint doctrine, on the other hand, must transcend individual perspectives and provide an overarching approach to warfare that integrates all individual service contributions. Whereas service doctrine can arguably be developed via a bottom-up approach, effective joint doctrine can only be effectively developed using a top-down approach.

Development of joint doctrine has been subjected to these differing service views. When the director for operational plans and interoperability (J-7), Joint Staff, decides on behalf of the Chairman that some new aspect of doctrine is needed, he publishes a program directive assigning a lead agent to manage its development. This agent, usually a service, writes or directs the writing of a draft pub and can inject parochial views into the process. Whether or not such views survive the coordination phase, they encourage adversarial relations among the services. And the impulse to settle contentious issues at the lowest possible level coupled with a natural reluctance to submit them to the Chairman for adjudication further runs the

risk of developing doctrine that is not only diluted but also biased in favor of the lead agent.

Joint doctrine development can be contentious for another reason. The services disagree on the very role of doctrine. The Air Force, for instance, completely agrees with the proviso found in Joint Pub 1-01 that “joint doctrine will be written to reflect extant capabilities.” Therefore, from its perspective, technological advances will dictate new or revised doctrine. The Army, alternatively, believes doctrinal concepts should be engines of change, heavily influencing decisions on systems and capabilities. The lack of a common perspective on the nature of joint doctrine and the potential for enduring service parochialism, combine to constrain the doctrine development process.

Criticism of this process leads individual services to feel unobligated by joint doctrine even though it emerges from a consensus. Furthermore, the ability of the Chairman to direct that joint doctrine be followed is limited since by law he has no command authority and the Joint Staff is prohibited from exercising executive authority. Yet this inability to assure effective development and uniform application of doctrine has serious negative implications. One example was the downing of two Army Blackhawk helicopters in 1994 by Air Force F-15s which cost the lives of everyone on board. Recognizing that teamwork might have prevented this tragedy, the Chairman directed that “immediate and serious attention” be given to applicable joint doctrine.¹¹

Strategic Planning

To the extent that joint doctrine corresponds to strategic planning, incomplete planning can inhibit its development and implementation. Thus it should not be surprising that both problems share a common solution. Joint Pub 1 notes that “though neither policy nor strategy, joint doctrine deals with the fundamental issue of how best to employ the national military power to achieve strategic ends.” Militarily, national strategic ends can be realized through strategic and operational objectives. To be effective, joint doctrine should help translate national and theater level strategies into operationally useful methods.

National-level strategic concepts in strategic plans should guide the disciplined development and implementation of joint doctrine. But absent these strategic plans, current joint doctrine can, at best, be only loosely connected to national military strategy. Developing national strategic plans would permit strategic guidance, as first expressed in the form of national security strategy and then by national military strategy, to be better conveyed to service chiefs and CINCs as confirmed strategic concepts. This top-down approach should provide specific guidance for

developing more useful and accepted joint doctrine for conducting operations and rationalizing types, numbers, and balance of forces. A process that integrates strategic planning with doctrine development would better conform to the intent of Goldwater-Nichols. And in an era of penury, such reforms would assist NCA in assuring Congress that an effective and efficient defense capability is being pursued.

While it is clear that national military strategy has little operational use until it is refracted through the prism of a coherent national military strategic plan, it is equally clear that joint doctrine should be based on specific strategic concepts found in such a plan. The *raison d'être* of national military strategy is to translate strategic guidance provided in national security strategy into military terms. By design, the unclassified, artistically arranged, and widely distributed national military strategy serves more as a military policy and public information document. It communicates the views of the Chairman on the relevancy of military power to national security strategy as opposed to delving into the specifics needed to achieve particular objectives.

Such national military strategy lacks adequate guidance for developing specific objectives, let alone the means of achieving them. Broad in scope and general in content, it is open to diverse interpretation.¹² Consequently, it is insufficient to guide doctrine development by itself. Title 10 of the U.S. Code requires the Chairman to prepare strategic plans that “conform to resource levels projected by the Secretary of Defense to be available for the period of time for which the plans are to be effective.” These joint plans should conform to national military strategy and carry strategic direction to a greater level of specificity.

Title 10 indicates that the Chairman is required to provide “for the preparation and review of contingency plans which conform to the policy guidance from the President and the Secretary of Defense,” a duty fulfilled by the joint strategic capabilities plan (JSCP). Although national military strategy is an effective vehicle for the Chairman in assisting NCA with strategic direction and JSCP impels CINCs to prepare contingency plans, neither fully responds to his duty to prepare strategic plans.¹³ This void has a negative impact on the development and implementation of joint doctrine.

Strategic plans should enumerate and set priorities for specific strategic objectives, identify constraints, offer a strategy for securing such objectives, and be key in determining force capability requirements. They are envisaged to be comprehensive plans, based on a global perspective,

that contain strategic priorities and strategies for attaining them. They should set forth specific strategic concepts distilled from broad general concepts found in national military strategy. These concepts should guide joint doctrine development. Therefore, they must be specific if the derivative doctrine is to be useful in achieving the objectives outlined in both national security and military strategy.

An illustration is helpful. A *strategic concept* within the context of current national military strategy is overseas presence. Together with power projection, this concept facilitates the three components of the strategy: peacetime engagement, deterrence and conflict prevention, and fighting and winning wars. Such strategy provides general definitions of overseas presence and peacetime engagement. It also describes them in terms

current joint doctrine has limited value because it caters to the lowest common denominator

of where forces are currently located and why they are there. For peacetime engagement, it delineates both the forms it may take and why it is important. The strategy is educational in that it provides broad concepts and components of national military strategy and why they are vital. But there is nothing in current national military strategy to guide defense planners on *how* to apply overseas presence to achieve the appropriate type and amount of peacetime engagement in the right priorities and to promote U.S. interests, given military capability (resource) limitations, for the period under consideration.

Therefore, the value of strategic plans to joint doctrine development would be considerable. Not only would they provide specific strategic concepts on which to base doctrine; more critically they would serve as a contextual framework for developing doctrine. In addition, strategic plans would provide a unifying mechanism for the services, CINCs, and defense agencies. This would:

- legitimize the preeminence of joint doctrine over individual service doctrines
- result in more rationalized service doctrines
- produce a more coherent body of joint doctrine
- increase service predilection to implement joint doctrine.

In summary, neither national military strategy nor JSCP meets the requirements of strategic planning as found in Goldwater-Nichols. The development of strategic plans would among other things allow all the services to reach a common understanding of strategy and unified commitment to a body of joint doctrine that would better support that strategy. Moreover, the applicability and implementation of doctrine at theater level

would be enhanced because contingency plans and joint doctrine would be consistent with an overarching strategic plan. Thus such a document would introduce new rigor into strategic and operational plans, doctrine development and implementation, exercises, and ultimately operations.

The current body of joint doctrine has limited value because it caters to the lowest common denominator and is only weakly linked to national military strategy. From the foregoing analysis, it is clear that joint doctrine can be improved by closer bonding it to national military strategy through a national military strategic plan. It is also evident that since developing joint doctrine is a statutory responsibility of the Chairman, it need not base its legitimacy on service consensus.

The Chairman has taken major steps to address these problems. Foremost was the release of *Joint Vision 2010* and the task given to the Joint Warfighting Center (JWFC) to add operational definition to the vision. If the flesh put on the vision's skeleton effectively links national military strategy and joint doctrine, the coherence and value of doctrine will increase. Even if *JV 2010* was not intended to be the type of strategic plan described above, it may serve an important surrogate purpose with regard to joint doctrine, pending the development of a national military strategic plan.

In addition, JWFC is assuming a more active role in managing joint doctrine development. It established policies to improve joint scrutiny of draft doctrine publications which should inhibit parochial influence. Moreover, the center fosters a joint perspective from the outset and ensures that it is carried through into publication. In that way, JWFC can eliminate inconsistencies among doctrinal pubs and reduce problems in the current process.

As the Chairman and his various agents exert a more assertive role in doctrinal development and service roles are further subordinated, the unifying effect of joint doctrine will more closely follow the intent of Congress as expressed in the Goldwater-Nichols Act. Contradictions between service and joint doctrine will be resolved and the fundamental purpose of doctrine clarified. While there has been marked progress in developing joint doctrine over the last decade, more needs to be done. Recent initiatives and others under consideration promise to enhance its quality and increase its acceptance. **JFQ**

NOTES

¹ Joint Pub 1, *Joint Warfare of the U.S. Armed Forces*, p. vi; Joint Pub 0-2, *Unified Action Armed Forces (UNAAF)*, p. vi; Joint Pub 3-0, *Doctrine for Joint Operations*, pp. I-1 through II-3.

² While acknowledging the proviso in *Joint Pub 1-01* that “joint doctrine will be written to reflect extant capabilities,” we consider it to be simplistic and superficial with respect to the proper relationship between joint doctrine and force capability development. Obviously, DOD would not develop capabilities and then try to ascertain how best to use them. Alternatively, the joint doctrine development process should consider potential force capability development options. Calling for joint doctrine to reflect extant capabilities ignores the dynamic and reciprocating link between joint doctrine and force capability development. See Joint Pub 1-01, *Joint Publication System Joint Doctrine and Joint Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures Development Program*, p. I-2.

³ For a critical review of the management of joint training, see U.S. General Accounting Office, *Military Capabilities: Stronger Joint Staff Role Needed to Enhance Joint Military Training*, Report NSIAD-95-109 (Washington, 1995).

⁴ CJCS Instruction 1800.1, *Officer Professional Military Education Policy* (1996), pp. 2-3 and enclosure C.

⁵ Bradley Graham, “Air Force Chief on Attack: McPeak Boldly Criticizes Other Services’ Roles and Plans,” *The Washington Post*, October 24, 1994, p. 1; see also, Merrill A. McPeak, briefing to Roles and Missions Commission, Washington, September 14, 1994.

⁶ John Boatman, “The Jane’s Interview,” *Jane’s Defence Weekly*, vol. 22, no. 23 (December 10, 1994), p. 32.

⁷ On behalf of the Chairman, the director of the Joint Staff issued a memo on joint doctrine dated July 28, 1994 to the service chiefs and CINCs. It directed that the doctrinal concept found in the preface of each joint pub be changed to read: “The guidance in this publication is authoritative; as such, commanders will apply this doctrine (JTTP) except when exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise.” In a September 15, 1994 memo, the commander of U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) stated that the Chairman’s “views are consistent with the Army view that doctrine is authoritative, but requires judgement in application.” While acknowledging doctrine as authoritative, TRADOC appeared to be endorsing the exercise of “judgement and application” for situations with less than “exceptional circumstances.”

⁸ In a memorandum dated February 8, 1995 to the Commission on Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces, Maj Gen Charles D. Link, USAF, registered his concern that “joint doctrine is largely dominated by outmoded perspectives which handcuff airpower to the constrained mission of land component commanders.” Moreover, an analysis of Joint Pub 1-01 (appendix H) reveals that the Army has been designated as the lead agent significantly more often than the Air Force and almost twice as often as the Navy and Marine Corps combined.

⁹ James J. Tritten and Gary W. Anderson, “Lessons from the History of Naval Doctrine Development,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, vol. 78, no. 10 (October 1994), pp. 50-52. In response to criticism that the Navy’s use of

doctrine has been spotty at best, the Naval Doctrine Command has issued a number of historical documents on past or current doctrine. This revisionism was not very convincing.

¹⁰ Carl H. Builder, *The Masks of War: American Military Styles in Strategy and Analysis* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 18-30.

¹¹ In a July 28, 1994 memo (CM-378-94) to service chiefs and combatant commanders in chief, the Chairman called attention to command and control for joint air operations and JTTP for close air support.

¹² See Douglas Lovelace and Thomas-Durell Young, *U.S. Department of Defense Strategic Planning: The Missing Nexus* (Carlisle Barracks, Pa.: Strategic Studies Institute, 1995).

¹³ Chairman, JCS, *Instructional Joint Strategic Capabilities Plan*, MCM-126-92 (1992). This document contains a précis of national military strategy, offers general planning guidance to services and CINCs, assigns specific and regionally focused planning tasks to CINCs, and lists and apportions forces for planning. Of particular note is what JSCP does not provide. It neither assigns missions nor furnishes national level integration of planning efforts of the various CINCs. It thus cannot be considered a strategic plan in the context of section 153, Title 10, U.S. Code.