



Service Rivalry Overshadowed*

DR WILLIAM E. TURCOTTE

THIS ARTICLE proposes that although service rivalry will—and *should*—continue, it will be less significant in the future. New senior resource competitors, integrative technologies, and integrative decision points at the joint planning level will create a multidimensional conflict matrix with governing influence over national military strategy and congruent supporting force structure. Momentum is building to prioritize service functions according to their contribution to joint warfare assessment capabilities rather than by service preference or essence. We are entering a McNamara-like era of conflict; however, in this era the determination of service functions that will prosper or decline is in the hands, or minds, of senior, joint military officers—not the dreaded whiz kids. The opportunity now exists for the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) to be the most influential strategy and future force structure advisor to the secretary of defense. Nonetheless, it is reasonable to ask whether one can find officers with the experience, knowledge, and perspective to intellectually advise and decide on the very best joint force structure.

Instead of *service rivalry*, one could easily substitute other terms, such as *competition*, *conflict*, and *unnecessary duplication*. All of them imply unhealthy circumstances, with one organization seeking resources, capabilities, or status at the expense of others. Often we think of the employed tactics in a pejorative way. Pursuit of suborganizational goals does not complement goals of the larger organization, thus contributing to aggregate inefficiencies and friction. This bifurcation of interests, some people suggest, is the result of individuals or organizations narrowly perceiving and pursuing subgoals to expand or protect their own spheres of activity¹—a pursuit thought to use expert, connective, and alliance power. At least that can be the often exaggerated view of competitors who fear specific or unspecified resource losses. As in most conflict situations, one side is regarded as an enemy; communications become guarded; and a subculture develops, promoting selective perceptions of resource opponents as unfair or even unscrupulous. New members socialized into that culture view opponent organizations selectively and warily.²

As an example, in the early phases of the Pro-

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gram Objectives Memorandum (POM) process,³ there is guarded concern that other services might learn of an initiative—particularly systems initiatives—threatening to their function or perceived share of the larger budget. POM briefers are often quick to observe that another service’s program is out of balance and cannot be funded (read “except at the expense of others”). I have, for example, heard more about the Army’s need to reduce personnel to fund modernization from non-Army briefers than I have heard from Army briefers. We can recall as well the great chagrin of the chief of naval operations when the Air Force chief of staff suggested that the Navy had 23 aircraft carriers—or should we say “air capable” ships?—while the Navy was using all of its influence to retain 12 large deck carriers. To some people, a landing platform helicopter ship (LPH)/landing platform dock (LPD) at about 40,000 tons does look like an aircraft carrier. Indeed, in all other navies, it is an aircraft carrier. But in the US Navy, for sound reasons, only the large deck carrier fully satisfies power-projection requirements. Did the Air Force chief err on his ship-identification exercise, or was he making a more subtle point? Why the strong Navy reaction? Could the real issue be the deep-strike mission? Was it a harmless observation?

All of this rivalry and these competitive claims would be less significant if the services were profit-making organizations. Product claims could be tested in the free market, and consumers of security could buy them according to perceptions of value. Alternative service capabilities might then be contrasted by return-on-investment analysis or similar economic valuations. During the 1950s, for example, no amount of argument from the Ford Motor Corporation could characterize the Edsel as a success. It failed in the marketplace.

But the Department of Defense (DOD) does not have a marketplace, nor do we have really good measures to judge competing capabilities—especially when they are used across varying spectrums of warfare and over an exceptionally long time frame. Instead, reduction and expansion of certain capabilities will be accompanied by continuing argument—not defining

measurement—by sophisticated people. Rarely will convincing proof exist that competitive capabilities are superior except in narrow and sometimes constrained scenarios.

Nonetheless, it is reasonable to ask whether one can find officers with the experience, knowledge, and perspective to intellectually advise and decide on the very best joint force structure.

Grand strategy, military strategy, technological implications, and future budgetary uncertainties guarantee a sharp rivalry of ideas. Perhaps we should “globally reach,” or perhaps it is better to be “forward from the sea” or prepare to win major land wars. Maybe we should prepare to do all of these in two near-simultaneous major regional conflicts while carrying out peacemaking, peacekeeping, and humanitarian operations. All of these have different implications for future force structure and the prosperity of functions that best fit whatever is prioritized.

Major military strategy alternatives are the inevitable support for preferred force structure and will not favor service capabilities equally. They will be heatedly debated, and such debate will be made more contentious by the growing emphasis on truly new technologies, the implications of the system of systems,⁴ the substitution of certain technologies for presently accepted service-dominated functions, and the shifting choice of preferred functions and capabilities to higher, more integrated, joint decision points.

All of this will reduce service independence in prioritizing preferred capabilities. Selection of optimum joint-force capabilities will be improved by information and command systems, leading, I suspect, to more centrally determined, highest valued capabilities across foreseen dimensions of integrated use. Longer-distance precision capabilities, unmanned reconnaissance (soon to be strike) vehicles, and space wonders offer the possibilities of

obsolescing—or at least diminishing—certain service functions. Possibilities do not, by themselves, generate easy acceptance when the stakes are high. Ownership, control, and preponderant use of these possibilities in an environment of shrinking resources will promote intense rivalry. New technologies will suggest recapitalization but not on a one-for-one replacement basis. Depending on which platforms are adversely affected, we can anticipate intense argument that, to some people, will have characteristics of rivalry.

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This open rivalry of ideas regarding future force structure deserves encouragement. Managed conflict and tension of ideas are good insurance against functional or platform stagnancy. Conflict, some people argue, is needed in knowledge-based and technology-producing organizations⁵—descriptions that seem to fit today's and tomorrow's military. Of course, uncontrolled conflict can lead to chaos, and crisis organizations have little room for conflict when they are actually carrying out their functions. Thus, one should stimulate rivalry and competition of force-structure ideas, including views by one service on the emphasis of another service. One hopes, too, that competing ideas will not yield compromises of unnecessary duplication—or capability over capacity—broadly described by David Chu.⁶ One suspects that, as the Joint Staff measures recapitalization against future budget expectations, it will feel compelled to search out and reduce duplication.

After this benign election year, we will likely see increasingly intense debate as budgets continue to shrink. Balancing a budget in seven years and retaining substantial entitlements will surely lead to DOD decreases. Most likely, in about a year, a new equivalent of the Bottom-Up Review will be char-

tered. This review will surely include a close examination of technology thrusts, and this time the key player will be the Joint Staff, who will use the integrative Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC)⁷ to make service functions compete against Joint Warfighting Capabilities Assessments (JWCA).⁸ Vice-chiefs of the various services now spend about 10 hours per week in the JROC—an organization with powerful future potential to shift key force-structure recommendations away from former conflict-resolution points in the Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD). When the emphasis is on capabilities and systems—not platforms—and when joint warfighting areas such as sea, air, and space superiority are discussed as entities, vice-chiefs will dare not miss a meeting as the best integrative—not service—position is sought as the CJCS's position.

The service chief's view is but one position in the new debate. Positions of war-fighting commanders in chief (CINC) count, and they tend to look for the best military capabilities to meet regional needs. It is not in the CINCs' interests to represent a service preference if it contradicts a theater's requirement, and CINCs inevitably have a near-term orientation. CINCs themselves are not in agreement on what service capabilities are most important. Moreover, they compete for the amount of forces available to them and seem always to want more—not fewer—current capabilities. CINCs have their own needs, and geographical (GEO)CINCs have different needs than functional CINCs. The representations of Transportation Command (TRANSCOM), for instance, are a powerful future influence on the type of future lift—more so than the service view. Strategic Command (STRATCOM), Space Command, and Special Operations Command (SOCOM) have their own organizational essence, compete for overall resources, and will ally with or oppose services or CINCs, depending on their agenda, power, and access to resources. An array of functional defense agencies (e.g., Defense Logistics Agency, Defense Intelligence Agency, National Security Agency, Defense Institute of Security Assistance, Defense Mapping Agency, Defense Nuclear Agency, etc.)

have their own sense of what is important. Their emphasis can conflict with service priorities.

So the cliché of service rivalry, an old refrain, has given way to a complex multiplayer bargaining and rivalry environment. Services, GEOCINCs, functional CINCs, and defense agencies view today and the future through different lenses. The Joint Staff is positioned to be the only military body that addresses integration and conflict resolution from a total organizational perspective. That is what the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act sought, and that is what it seems to be achieving. That need has always been there, and by default it was passed to OSD, while the services, unable to agree amongst themselves, lamented the substitution of civilian analysis for military judgment. Now the CJCS is licensed for strategy formulation, military requirements determination, requirements prioritization, and, perhaps most importantly, program recommendations and budget proposals. And the CJCS and his staff are military—not the young whiz kids of former secretary of defense Robert S. McNamara’s Planning, Programming, and Budgeting System (PPBS) era. Service positions are but one feature of the new competition for priorities within joint capability assessment. Indeed, driven together by a common bond of resource peril, services may increasingly become allies against shifting alliances and disputes among the new and increasingly powerful senior resource players. These new, complex alliances will be issue-dependent and will shift, requiring the most astute, energetic, and knowledgeable leaders to fully represent service capabilities and resource aspirations. Services will ally as they see resource or power shifts to the CINCs (e.g., training responsibility from service to Atlantic Command [LANTCOM] or transportation determinations to TRANSCOM or theater logistics to joint theater logistics commands or service assets to defense total-asset visibility).

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Inevitably, the services, in pursuit of what they believe, will still deploy organizational snipers to take a shot or two at each other. But these will be mere tactical-proficiency exercises in contrast to the old “revolt of the admirals” organizational wars of the 1940s. Many issues will provide opportunities for heated discussion, sniping, occasional nasty press leaks, and subtle courting of sympathetic congressional staffers. These issues include independent decisiveness of air power or sea power; the utility of long-range bombing; theater-based air versus carrier aviation; alternatives for theater ballistic missile defense; rapid deployment of robust Army power versus Marine expeditionary forces; declining blue-water threats; the deep-strike mission; vertical short takeoff and landing (VSTOL) technology; surface-ship long-distance weapons versus carrier battle groups; jointly developed attack aircraft; new attack submarines; force components that should be more ready than others; forward presence; and so forth.

Talk as they may, services will find more and more of their problems resolved at the Joint Staff level. JROC, JWCA, or similar integrative decision points have at least the potential to make the big calls and the most influential representations to the secretary of defense. This will be particularly the case if databases are organized around capability assessments. Moreover, integrative thinking—stressing a Joint Task Force approach—dominates the GEOCINC level. Although conflict of opinion exists, the governing

incentive is the best combination of capabilities—not capabilities most favored by a service.

The naval service, as the test bed for the subsequent Joint Staff emphasis on functional missions and recapitalization, has experienced a shift from platform-community dominance to a new focus on major functional mission areas as the mechanism for assigning resources. Platform communities are still present, but their former power has been reduced. Now they must use mission / functional areas as criteria for gaining resources at the expense of other areas, and, of course, the mission-area sponsors themselves are competing. Indeed, the Naval Postgraduate School was commissioned to discover decision tools to gain “quantifiable” evidence to judge competing proposals.

An older matrix has been replaced by a new one at the Joint Staff level. Matrix organizations tend to encourage rather than suppress conflict.⁹ They place functional pieces of an organization in competition with larger, integrative mission outputs of the entire organization. The integrative resolution point in the matrix is the JROC, and the principal decision tool will be JWCA. Within that assessment concept, services must let relative capabilities compete with each other.

Further, individuals are sources of conflict. What can one say about an officer’s disposition to view resource-allocation choices from a joint, rather than a service, perspective? The new emphasis on joint tours and joint education will contribute to a balanced and integrative point of view. But contradictory influences exist also. Can we expect soon to hear cries of “Beat the Joint Staff” rather than “Beat Army” or “Beat Navy” or “Beat Air Force”? (Note that no one says, “Beat the Marine Corps,” which may account for its recent success in resource competition.) Perhaps we should charter a Defense Football Agency to stock all football players and then issue them to the academies. We will also need a Joint Football Capability Assessment and a Joint Football Oversight Council to prioritize allocations. Indeed, if any academy is to beat Notre Dame, perhaps the best players should all be allocated to one academy under a CINC Football. (Which academy should be favored?)

As a source of rivalry, officers continue to be strongly socialized into the beliefs and culture of one service. As officers progress toward command, socialization and knowledge are fractionalized into increasingly narrow war-fighting specialties within each service. Mastery of increasingly complex technologies dominates energies and perspectives for at least 15 years and even up to 20 years for nuclear submariners. As we have seen in medicine, new and narrower officer specialties are emerging. Professional subdivisions have their own advocacy and decision-making lenses. Tactical aviators like multi-purpose fighters; physicians like X-ray machines; tankers like tanks; special operations forces like face paint; surface-warfare officers like particular types of ships, and so forth. All of this is not so much an intentionally biased position against other capabilities. Rather, we all have a natural tendency to advocate what we know best and to slight capabilities that remind us of the limitations of our professional knowledge.

Although this perceptual limitation is unflatteringly labeled parochialism, it is really the human preference for what one knows best. It is not, in my judgment, a conscious rejection of those areas that one does not know well. And new areas of specialization are coming. Will the information warrior be more important in advocacy than, for example, the infantry warrior? More broadly put, will technologies designed to assist war-fighting functions become ascendant over the functions themselves—and will that be a new source of rivalry? I recall when business moved into the computer age. Computer experts, typically young, were initially subordinate to older functional managers. However, as computer systems increasingly linked functions, both status and power shifted toward computer experts at the expense of older, more experienced leaders with only one functional orientation. Will then the cyberwarrior be the profession of preeminent influence? Is a new CINC of information warfare likely?

Mastery of technological war-fighting units suggests intense and narrow assignments through the O-5 and probably early O-6 segments of careers. Some officers may divert from that pattern

but, historically, at risk to advancement. Soon after that, officers will be asked to take a larger view of strategy and total, relevant force structure. Can they bring balanced knowledge of competing capabilities to a JROC/JWCA process? What education, job experience, and incentives will transform perspective and knowledge into that of a balanced, integrative joint-capabilities decision maker or advisor? Processes, by themselves, are not integrative. Very, very smart human beings make processes work. It will take the rarest and most determined officer to make integrative, across-the-services capabilities judgments in this increasingly central decision-making structure.

To summarize, rivalry has roots in differing individual perspectives, new strategic concepts, powerful functional and regional orientations, and technological initiatives, each having differing force structure implications. Budget reductions add stress and sometimes urgency of choice. All of these conditions and more exist in abundance. New and powerful competitors have joined the struggle for power and resources. Services are no

longer the key rivals. The field is crowded. Defense agencies, GEOCINCs, and functional CINCs can on some issues dominate service preferences. Traditional defining platforms and a service's or organizational essence may be threatened by advances in technology and capabilities for more centralized decision making. The complexity of the current array of power centers mandates central, integrative mechanisms such as JROC and JWCA. Moreover, Goldwater-Nichols underwrites authority for joint integration of capabilities. All of this is somewhat similar to the not-so-widely-applauded McNamara PPBS revolution. This time, however, the decision structure emphasizes senior, joint, military officer perspectives—not the whiz kids of the sixties. Will this structure be more acceptable to the services? I doubt it. Joint Warfighting Vision 2010, mandated by the CJCS, is instructive. According to *Inside the Navy*, “none of the service chiefs can agree on what Joint Vision 2010 should look like.”¹⁰ Who was it who said, “When God wishes to punish us, he answers our prayers”? □

Notes

1. Philip Selznick, *TVA and the Grass Roots: A Study in the Sociology of Formal Organization* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1949), 30–37.

2. See Perry M. Smith, *Assignment Pentagon: The Insider's Guide to the Potomac Puzzle Palace* (Washington: Pergamon-Brassey's, 1993).

3. See William C. Keller, *The Defense Resource Allocation Process* (Newport, R.I.: Naval War College, June 1988).

4. William A. Owens, “The Emerging System of Systems,” *US Naval Institute Proceedings* 121, no. 5 (May 1995): 35–39. In this article, the former vice-chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff outlines his views on the revolution in military affairs.

5. David R. Hampton, Charles E. Summer, and Ross A. Webber,

Organizational Behavior and the Practice of Management (Glenview, Ill.: Scott, Foresman Co., 1973), 669–70.

6. See David S. C. Chu, “Refocusing the ‘Roles and Missions’ Debate,” *Marine Corps Gazette*, November 1994, 20–25, for an examination of interservice competition as it affects the roles-and-functions debate.

7. For an explanation of the significance of JROC and JWCA, see William A. Owens, “JROC: Harnessing the Revolution in Military Affairs,” *Joint Force Quarterly*, Summer 1994, 55–57.

8. *Ibid.*, 56.

9. Hampton, Summer, and Webber, 764–67.

10. “Gen. Shalikashvili's Joint Vision 2010 Draws Ire from Service Chiefs,” *Inside the Navy* 9, no. 5 (5 February 1996): 1.