

NATIONAL DEFENSE UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL WAR COLLEGE

**JOINT DOCTRINE: OUT OF SYNCH WITH NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY  
AND TRANSFORMATION**

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# Report Documentation Page

Form Approved  
OMB No. 0704-0188

Public reporting burden for the collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports, 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to a penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number.

1. REPORT DATE <b>2002</b>		2. REPORT TYPE		3. DATES COVERED <b>00-00-2002 to 00-00-2002</b>	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE <b>Joint Doctrine: Out of Synch with National Security Strategy and Transformation</b>				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S)				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) <b>National War College, 300 5th Avenue, Fort Lesley J. McNair, Washington, DC, 20319-6000</b>				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES)				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT <b>Approved for public release; distribution unlimited</b>					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES <b>The original document contains color images.</b>					
14. ABSTRACT <b>see report</b>					
15. SUBJECT TERMS					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES <b>12</b>	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT <b>unclassified</b>	b. ABSTRACT <b>unclassified</b>	c. THIS PAGE <b>unclassified</b>			

# JOINT DOCTRINE: OUT OF SYNCH WITH NATIONAL SECURITY STRATEGY AND TRANSFORMATION

*“The knowledge and use of joint doctrine positions us for success in fighting the Nation’s wars — where winning is the only choice. To that end, Commanders must understand, teach, and apply joint doctrine as they prepare and train the Nation’s Service men and women for joint force employment.”*<sup>1</sup>

*General Henry H. Shelton, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS)*

*“These broad principles that guide operations are neither policy nor strategy — they are doctrine.”*<sup>2</sup>

*Joint Publication 1*

*“Doctrine is a crutch for those who can’t think on their feet in the heat of action”*

*Anonymous US Air Force officer, National War College Locker Room*

*“The future ain’t what it used to be”*

*Yogi Berra*

An armed force’s doctrine is its philosophical justification for existence and method of operations. As such, individual Service doctrines should derive from the overarching joint doctrine and compliance with joint doctrine should be unquestioned. Moreover, joint doctrine should be linked directly to national policy and national military strategy. Doctrine translates definitions of war into the means to achieve the policy objectives of war<sup>3</sup> thereby providing the nexus between national military strategy and the conduct of military operations. Therefore, joint doctrine is as essential to operational objectives as strategy is to national strategic objectives.

The evolving global strategic context, beginning before 11 September 2001, but accelerating thereafter, will require concentrating the combat power of widely distributed forces. This entails smaller, more agile combat and support units, physically separated from each other, operating within more closely networked command structures. The net result of this

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<sup>1</sup> Joint Publication (JP) 1, *Joint Warfare of the Armed Forces of the United States*, 14 November 2000, Chairman’s Letter

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, ii

<sup>3</sup> David Szelowski, “Disjointed: Just how joint are we?” *Proceedings* (United States Naval Institute, Annapolis), September 2000, 58-61

transformation will be lowering the level at which joint synchronization takes place.<sup>4</sup> In other words, the future for U.S. armed forces will move toward even greater jointness with joint doctrine playing a pivotal role in successful operations.

*Joint Vision 2020 (JV2020)* is the previous CJCS' chart for future transformation and uses 'doctrine' eleven times. As to the centrality of joint doctrine in the future, *JV2020* states:<sup>5</sup>

“To build the most effective force for 2020, we must be fully joint: intellectually, operationally, organizationally, *doctrinally*, and technically.”

“...material superiority alone is not sufficient. Of greater importance is the development of *doctrine*, organizations, training, and education...”

“...form a vision for integrating *doctrine*, tactics, training, supporting activities, and technology into new operational capabilities.”

So, if the future of U.S. Armed Forces is toward more agile, smaller, and joint units with doctrine essential to current operations and future transformation and force structure, why has joint doctrine been so ineffective?

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 made jointness the mantra for improved combat effectiveness. Yet, this seminal legislation has not overcome the institutional hurdles of employing joint forces. Several problems remain in the implementation of joint doctrine.

First, the current joint doctrine process is administratively slow and unsuited for rapid changes in technology and certainly insufficient to support Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld's transformation. Furthermore, the development process gives disproportionate influence to Service orthodoxies.

Second, the requirement to build consensus among a multitude of parties can make the resultant joint doctrine the lowest common denominator. Critical obstacles in this lack of harmony are differing Service views of doctrine and lack of a joint culture.

Third, since doctrine is central to joint operations and the future of U.S. armed forces is toward more (not less) jointness, the lack of a direct and formal linkage between the strategic direction of forces and operational planning for their actual use hampers development of

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<sup>4</sup> Phase 2 Course of Action Development Report, “*Preparing the Total Force for Tomorrow's Challenges*”, Joint Staff, J-7, II-3

<sup>5</sup> Joint Vision 2020, US Government Printing Office, Washington DC, June 2000

integrated joint doctrine.<sup>6</sup> This disconnect removes a powerful incentive for the Services to embrace joint doctrine. More importantly, the linkage between joint doctrine and the national strategic vision has vast implications for budgets and future procurement and force structure.

Finally, joint doctrine is authoritative and, as such, is applicable at all times except when, in the judgment of the commander, exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise.<sup>7</sup> However, the Goldwater-Nichols Act restricts the CJCS's power to direct compliance with joint doctrine. He has no command authority and the Joint Staff cannot exercise executive authority. The inability to assure across-the-board compliance with joint doctrine has negative implications that impair operations and seriously hamper the development of effective joint doctrine.

### THE PROCESS

The definitions:

- Doctrine: Fundamental principles by which the military forces or elements thereof guide their actions in support of national objectives. It is authoritative but requires judgment in application.<sup>8</sup>
- Joint Doctrine: Fundamental principles that guide the employment of forces of two or more Military Departments in coordinated action toward a common objective. It is authoritative; as such, joint doctrine will be followed except when, in the judgment of the commander, exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise. It will be promulgated by or for the CJCS, in coordination with the combatant commands and Services.<sup>9</sup>

U.S. forces have waged joint and multi-national warfare from the Revolutionary War to the present. The defeat of Cornwallis' army was a combined U.S.-French land campaign supported from the sea by French naval forces. During World War II, U.S. forces fought alongside British and Canadian forces in the amphibious assault on Normandy. The joint Army, Navy, and Marine Corps landing at Inchon during the Korean conflict is yet another example of

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<sup>6</sup> Douglas C. Lovelace, JR., and Thomas-Durell Young, "Joint Doctrine Development: Overcoming a Legacy" Joint Forces Quarterly/Winter 1996-7, 94

<sup>7</sup> Joint Publication 1-01 Change 1, *Joint Doctrine Development System*, 29 June 2001, V

<sup>8</sup> Joint Publication 1-02, *Department of Defense Dictionary of Military and Associated Terms*, 132

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 220

joint warfare. In all these examples, the aim was to coordinate the unique combat capabilities of the Services and coalition partners to achieve military advantage. However, the idea of joint doctrine is recent. Before 1986, no single individual agent had overall responsibility for joint doctrine.

The Goldwater-Nichols Act of 1986 made the CJCS singularly responsible for “developing doctrine for the joint employment of the armed forces.” In order to carry out his new responsibilities, he reorganized the Joint Staff assigning responsibility for joint doctrine to the Operational Plans and Interoperability Directorate, J-7 and established a separate Joint Doctrine Development Division within the new Directorate to specifically manage joint doctrine development. On paper, this division is the caretaker of the joint doctrine process and primary spokesperson on doctrinal issues within the Pentagon.<sup>10</sup> The United States Joint Forces Command Joint Warfighting Center (JWFC) normally assesses joint publications for the CJCS after promulgation to ensure that they meet the needs of the joint community.<sup>11</sup>

The current process is broadly outlined below in Figure 1. When the need for some new aspect of doctrine or periodic review arises, the Director of the J-7 publishes a program directive assigning a lead agent (LA) who is responsible to develop, coordinate, and maintain an assigned joint doctrine publication throughout its life cycle, or until properly relieved.<sup>12</sup> The LA with support from the JWFC oversees two draft coordinations and then passes the publication back to the J-7 who assigns a Joint Staff Doctrine Sponsor (JSDS). The JSDS supervises the Final Coordination resolving any remaining issues and presents the publication for CJCS approval. The Joint Doctrine Development Process Timeline encompasses 21 months from concept to approved publication.<sup>13</sup>

“Fast-track Doctrine” is a method to accelerate the doctrine development process and reduce the timeline to 12.5 months.<sup>14</sup> However, few joint publications can be fast-tracked. In

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<sup>10</sup> Joint Doctrine History, Joint Electronic Library, [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/joint\\_doctrine\\_story.htm](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/joint_doctrine_story.htm)

<sup>11</sup> JP 1-01 Change 1, vi

<sup>12</sup> Ibid, II-6

<sup>13</sup> JP 1-01 Change 1, III-2

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, III-10

fact, only those proposals personally requested by a combatant commander, Service Chief, or Director of a Joint Staff Directorate and approved for development by the Director of the Joint Staff fit in this category.<sup>15</sup>

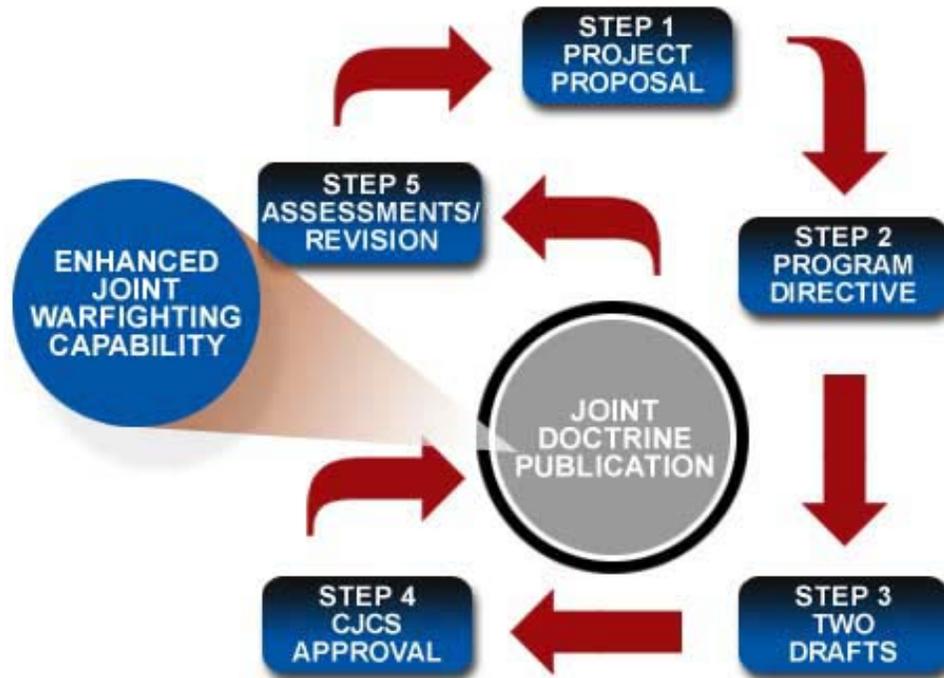


Figure 1 The Joint Doctrine Process

The lead agent is, in all but a few cases, a Service Action Officer (AO). The AO may have a warfare specialty that relates to the subject or at least some background knowledge. The worst case is assigning it to an officer with little or no experience on the subject. Regardless of the AO's background, with little or no joint guidance, the AO by default infuses the draft with parochial service views.

This has the unfortunate result of encouraging adversarial relationships among the Services. These Service orthodoxies have the further negative consequence of delaying the process by extending coordination to settle contentious issues.

When the second draft coordination is complete, the LA submits it to the Joint Staff for the Approval Stage. The J-7 then assigns a JSDS from within the Joint Staff who is responsible for directing the Final Coordination and subsequent approval. At present, joint doctrine

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<sup>15</sup> JP 1-01 Change 1, III-9

responsibilities are distributed by function, i.e. operational publications (JP 3-XX) go to the J3, logistics publications (JP 4-XX) go to the J-4, etcetera.

Unfortunately, this is a collateral responsibility for any Joint Staff AO tasked as JSDS. As the assignment responsibility within each JS Directorate is purely random, this AO may have little or no expertise on the subject matter. Furthermore, this assignment takes a back seat to the AO's primary responsibilities inside his Directorate. More importantly, this AO has few if any contacts within the doctrine community and little or no experience with the process. Compounding his/her difficulties, the process is extremely time consuming and requires countless hours of administrative work. As a result, disinterested parties develop doctrine with tasking in one hand and a deadline in the other.

### JOINT CULTURE

At present, there is no joint culture. Service cultures play in the development of joint doctrine, but no real joint command develops doctrine. At the heart of this disharmony are the differing Service views of doctrine and the compartmented way it is developed.<sup>16</sup>

Historically, the Services have not agreed on the definition of doctrine, much less its purpose. To understand the meaning of doctrine one must examine various Service perspectives.

Doctrine has long been regarded as essential to the Army. It is the basis for all operations and organization as well as the engine of change.<sup>17</sup> Army doctrine preceded joint doctrine and experience in developing and using it made Army a prime contributor to joint doctrine. The U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command is more mature and experienced than the other Service doctrine center. Thus, the other Services may feel the Army has undue advantage in the development process.

The Navy, traditionally the most independent Service, has only recently begun to formalize and institutionalize doctrine. This is due in part to a custom of autonomous operations and a focus on technology. Naval Doctrine Publication 1 defines doctrine as conceptual, a shared way of thinking that is not directive.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Lovelace and Young, 95

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 95

<sup>18</sup> Naval Doctrine Publication 1, *Naval Warfare*, 28 March 1994, [http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/service\\_pubs/ndp1.pdf](http://www.dtic.mil/doctrine/jel/service_pubs/ndp1.pdf).

Marines consider doctrine a philosophy of warfighting. Doctrine delineates a particular way of thinking about war, a philosophy of leading Marines in combat, and a mandate for professionalism and common language. Overall, the Marine Corps does not view doctrine as a body of knowledge used in preparing for and conducting war.

Air Force Manual 1-1 defines doctrine as “what we hold true about aerospace power...a guide for the exercise of professional judgment rather than a set of rules to be followed blindly.”<sup>19</sup> Air Force culture stresses technologically advanced systems and sees weaponry as a defining feature of war. This fundamental focus on systems and technology leads to an orientation on system characteristics and a subordination of doctrine and operational procedures.

The lack of a consistent acceptance of joint doctrine leads to friction and inefficiency in joint operations. A short analysis of the doctrinal fall out of Desert Storm illustrates this problem.

The Army felt that the U.S. Central Command joint force air component commander (JFACC) reneged on prior commitments on battlefield air interdiction sorties. The Army attempted to use its concept of AirLand battle, which sought to synchronize ground maneuver elements with artillery and air support. This doctrine was the outgrowth of the Army’s NATO obligations and required critical support from the Air Force. During Desert Storm, Army planners were astonished to discover that the AirLand concept had never been Air Force doctrine<sup>20</sup>. As a result, the Army position has been for greater control of air sorties to the shape the battlefield.

The Air Force built the JFACC concept on the assertion that centralized control air assets can take advantage of airpower’s intrinsic flexibility through detailed planning. The Air Force strives to ensure that airpower does not revert to the Vietnam-Tactical Air Command view when it used as little more than aerial artillery for the Army<sup>21</sup>. The Air Force airpower doctrine is to mass fires against strategic or operational targets to attain results independent of ground or naval

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<sup>19</sup> Air Force Manual 1-1, *Air Force Basic Doctrine*, September 1997  
<http://afpubs.hq.af.mil/pubfiles/af/dd/afdd1/afdd1.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> Szelowski, 3

<sup>21</sup> Gordon Wells, “Deep Operations, Command and Control, and Joint Doctrine: Time for a Change?” *Joint Forces Quarterly*, Winter 1996-97, 102

forces. Therefore, the JFACC organization did support the Army corps and the Air Force's air campaign stressed different targets from those in the AirLand battle.

This interservice doctrinal rivalry has two important consequences for future joint operations. First, interoperability problems persist. The assumption that current doctrine promotes interoperability is wrong.

Service component commanders are effective in employing forces because of deeply ingrained service doctrine. Functional component commanders, with vague or no ingrained doctrine, are not. Therefore, Joint Task Forces organization is around service components because service components are fluent in their own doctrine whereas functional component commanders have none. For example, if there are two land commanders, one Army and one Marine Corps, operating jointly, they do not know what doctrine to follow. Desert Storm employed Marine and Army ground forces, fighting on boundaries as service components – no joint force land component commander was identified.<sup>22</sup>

Secondly, service parochialism leads each branch to procure incompatible systems. Individual service acquisition and budgets are often closely related to and service doctrinal views. Doctrine discusses interoperability as a vision, but does not address the strategic guidance required for true joint interoperability. Therefore, joint doctrine design has consequences for conducting operations that translate directly into indeterminate costs of time, resources, and lives.<sup>23</sup>

### STRATEGIC LINK

National military strategy has little operational value without coherent national military strategic plan. Joint doctrine should be based on specific strategic concepts found in such a plan. Currently, the National Military Strategy (NMS) is a military policy and public information document that communicates the CJCS's views on the relevancy of military power to national security strategy.

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<sup>22</sup> Christopher Richie, "We need functional doctrine," *Proceedings*, (United States Naval Institute, Annapolis) September 2001, 52-55

<sup>23</sup> Wells, 103

Unfortunately, the NMS lacks adequate guidance for developing specific objectives, let alone the means of achieving them. It is broad in scope, general in content, and subject to diverse interpretations. As a result, it is inadequate for the development of doctrine by itself.

Title 10 of the U.S. code indicates that the CJCS is required to provide and review contingency plans which conform to guidance from the President and Secretary of Defense. The CJCS performs this duty through the joint strategic capabilities plan (JSCP).<sup>24</sup> The NMS is an effective vehicle for the CJCS to assist the National Command Authority with strategic direction and the JSCP impels CINCs to prepare contingency plans. However, neither adequately addresses strategic plans and that has a negative impact on the development and implementation of joint doctrine.

Strategic plans should list and prioritize specific strategic objectives, identify constraints, present a strategy for achieving such objectives, and determine force capability requirements. They should be comprehensive and based on global perspectives. Furthermore, they should put forward strategic concepts closely tied to the more general concepts found in the NMS. These concepts must be specific if the derivative doctrine is to be useful in attaining objectives stated in both the national security and military strategies.<sup>25</sup>

Therefore, the value of strategic plans to joint doctrine is substantial. They provide specific strategic concepts on which to base doctrine and serve as a framework for developing doctrine. Moreover, they provide a unifying mechanism for the Services, CINCs, and defense agencies that would:<sup>26</sup>

- Legitimize the preeminence of joint doctrine over Service doctrine
- Result in more rationalized Service doctrines
- Produce a more coherent body of joint doctrine
- Increase service compliance with joint doctrine

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<sup>24</sup> Lovelace and Young, 98

<sup>25</sup> Lovelace and Young, 99

<sup>26</sup> Ibid, 99

## CJCS ROLE

Lack of a common perspective on joint doctrine and enduring Service parochialism combine to constrain joint doctrine development. Criticism of the process leads individual Services not to feel compelled by joint doctrine even if it came from a consensus.

Significant differences exist among the Services and their doctrine attends to their unique needs. Joint doctrine must transcend individual perspectives and provide an overarching framework that integrates all individual Service contributions. Therefore, in order to be effective, a top-down approach is required for joint doctrine development.

Since the development of joint doctrine is a statutory responsibility of the CJCS, it need not base its legitimacy on service consensus. Joint doctrine must remain authoritative and the CJCS should continue efforts to ensure compliance. *JV2020* is a step in the right direction, but more is needed. For example, JFCs should be encouraged to think more along functional vice service lines.

The CJCS and his various agents need to exert a more assertive role in doctrinal development to further subordinate Service roles. The resultant unifying effect on joint doctrine will more closely follow the intent of the Goldwater-Nichols Act. Contradictions between Service and joint doctrine will be resolved and the fundamental purpose of doctrine understood by all.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The future of U.S. Armed Forces is toward more agile, smaller, and joint units. In this context, doctrine will remain essential not only to operations but also to future transformation and force structure. However, the current body of joint doctrine has limited value because it is unresponsive to rapid change, lacks common acceptance among the Services, caters to the lowest common denominator, and is only weakly linked to national military strategy.

The joint doctrine development process has several flaws. First, the 21-month timeline is too slow. The process should be streamlined analogous to the fast-track process. Two coordinations should be sufficient. Not only will that accelerate the process, but also force resolution of contentious issues. Currently, there is no real incentive to compromise until the approval phase and then only under threat of a JCS Tank session.

Second, joint doctrine development should be the purview of a joint organization. The JFWC or some comparable command should have complete responsibility for doctrine

development and maintenance. The center fosters a joint perspective from the outset and ensures that it is carried through to publication. The JFWC or its equivalent would further eliminate inconsistencies among doctrinal publications and reduce problems in the current process.

The JSDS responsibilities are too important to be collateral duties for some harried JS AO. Therefore, assigning responsibility for joint doctrine to a joint organization would remove the inherent Service biases that exist today, make for 'one stop shopping' in regards to doctrine, and demonstrate the CJCS' commitment to joint doctrine.

The lack of a joint culture may not have any easy or quick solution. It will require top-down leadership and a shift from service centric thinking to functional centric. Moreover, the many benefits of strategic plans and the unifying mechanism they would provide would legitimize the preeminence of a joint culture and give the Services more incentives to implement joint doctrine. Regardless, the lack of a joint culture has consequences for interoperability and procurement of incompatible weapons systems.

Neither NMS nor JSCP meets the requirements of strategic planning directed by the Goldwater-Nichols Act. The development of strategic plans would allow all the services to reach a common understanding of strategy. Additionally, they would arrive at a unified commitment to joint doctrine that would better support that strategy. Furthermore, implementation of doctrine would be enhanced because contingency plans and joint doctrine would be consistent with an overarching strategic plan. Therefore, such a document would introduce new rigor into doctrine development and implementation and ultimately joint operations.