

Strategic plans, joint doctrine, and antipodean insights (SuDoc D 101.146:2001041200)

Douglas C. Lovelace

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Over the past decade, ?jointness? has become a paean in the quest to improve the effectiveness of the U.S. armed forces, and justifiably so. Recent military operations have demonstrated a high correlation between joint operations and success on the battlefield. Consequently, the trend toward increased ?jointness? is not likely to abate. The congressional perception of the importance of joint operations by the U.S. armed forces was underscored by the passage of the 1986 Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act (?Goldwater-Nichols Act?), the most significant reorganization and redistribution of authority and responsibilities within the Department of Defense since 1958.1 In an effort to assure more effective joint operations, Congress increased the powers of the combatant Commanders-in-Chief (CINCs), made the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (CJCS) the principal military advisor to the National Command Authorities (NCA), and assigned the CJCS specific responsibilities in the areas of strategic planning, joint training and joint doctrine. Additionally, the Joint Chiefs of Staff lost their baronial influence and the Joint Staff was reoriented to serve the CJCS, vice the corporate Joint Chiefs of Staff.2 This does not suggest that this seminal legislation has overcome all the institutional impediments to raising, training and employing joint forces. Problems remain; one of which is the focus of this essay. Difficulties in the development and implementation of sound joint doctrine have been caused, in large measure, by the systemic gap in the existing strategic planning process. The absence of a direct link between the strategic direction of the U.S. armed forces and the operational planning for their employment has hindered the development of coherent and integrated joint doctrine. Also, this situation has not provided effective incentives for the services to embrace joint doctrine, in total. These limitations point to a common solution. They illuminate a missing link in strategic planning for the U.S. armed forces that would connect the National Military Strategy (NMS)3to key joint planning documents. Filling this strategic planning void would enhance the development and implementation of sound and comprehensive joint doctrine. In short, there is a needfor a coherent, traceable, and accountable connection between the NMS and the body of joint doctrine developed to support it.



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