

Letters . . .

THE DOCTRINE DEBATE

To the Editor—In his article entitled “The Plight of Joint Doctrine after Kosovo” (*JFQ*, Summer 99), COL Peter Herry misleads his readers by claiming that joint doctrine is terribly flawed, when in fact much of it is quite good. He confuses doctrine and strategy, misinterprets current doctrine, and impugns the integrity and courage of those who participated in Operation Allied Force.

Herry profoundly misinterprets the role of doctrine in formulating wartime strategy by asserting, “Operation Allied Force was inconsistent with joint doctrine in both word and spirit.” The purpose of doctrine is to describe the best practices drawn from experience; it informs strategy but is not prescriptive. Strategy applies the tools of statecraft to political problems. In this case, the National Command Authorities (NCA) selected a course of action based on an assessment of the risks and limited aims of the United States. If the details of that strategy are the source of his concern, he should say so. Then his argument could be reduced to matters of cause and effect, or intent and actual results. Only then can a discussion of the relevancy of current doctrine to shaping the planning and execution of strategy take place.

Herry compounds the confusion by overemphasizing and misinterpreting current doctrine. First, he nitpicks the use of the term *air campaign* by the media and some members of the military, when doctrine only refers to a single, overarching *joint campaign*. This is a nonissue. If *air campaign* is invoked as shorthand to refer to the aerospace portion of an overall joint campaign, rest assured that no one in the Air Force is losing sleep over this sloppy use of terminology. More importantly, the joint force air component commander understands that the only mission of joint air is to support the joint campaign.

That said, Herry seems to have a different definition of *joint campaign*. If I am correct, his interpretation means that every service must be represented for a force to be called joint. This is the antithesis of true joint thinking. Joint warfare is not little league baseball in which each player gets a turn at bat. Force structure is tailored to handle the task at hand, not to ensure equity among all possible participants. If NCA orders an air-only joint campaign, that's the force that one builds. Allied Force was joint—including Navy and Marine air components (in fact, it was multinational). It was not an Air Force-only campaign, as Herry implies. He also makes a sweeping assertion: “Joint Pub 3-0 . . . acknowledged that air power was equal to land and naval power. . . .” This claim calls for closer scrutiny. The current version of Joint Pub 3-0 is

clearly land-centric—as one would expect, because it was derived from Field Manual 100-5. It firmly posits surface commanders and forces as the focus of joint operations, with airpower in a support role. Fortunately, Joint Pub 3-0 is under revision, with unanimous joint support to cast aerospace power in a more balanced perspective, as a capability that can be supported as well as support.

Having objected to the air campaign, Herry presents an equally off-balance discussion of strategic attack, which he sees as another less-than-desirable manifestation of airpower theory. He has a dated view of this concept, associating it with Douhet and pre-World War II notions of targeting the morale of an enemy and breaking its will. Then he ties the idea to collateral damage. This interpretation (inflicting shock and terror on enemy cities) is inconsistent with the current construct. Today strategic attack is far more nuanced than the imprecise bludgeoning implied in the article.

Herry attempts to ground his objections in joint doctrine, but he fails. Like his nitpicking of the air campaign, he errs in claiming that Joint Pub 3-0 doesn't mention strategic attack: “JFCs seek to extend operations throughout the breadth and depth of the operational area. . . . Strategic attack and interdiction continue throughout to deny the enemy sanctuary or freedom of action.” The fact that it doesn't go into greater depth on strategic attack is understandable; this is a high-level publication which largely deals with overarching concepts, not nuts and bolts. For that matter, Joint Pubs 1 and 3-0 do not explicitly mention most other types of missions that may be assigned to joint forces. That is the role of other joint pubs, several of which discuss strategic attack, foremost among them Joint Pub 3-56.1, *Command and Control for Joint Air Operations*. They identify

strategic attack as a valid and recognized mission normally assigned to joint force air component commanders. The Air Force was recently designated as lead agency in developing Joint Pub 3-70, *Strategic Attack*, the final proof of the existence of strategic attack as a doctrinal construct. Strategic attack is indeed an accepted concept. The danger of Herry's article is that if one is unfamiliar with joint doctrine, his argument appears to be factual and buttressed with credible documentation.

Today strategic attack is not focused on leveling cities or inflicting terror. The Air Force defines this concept as “operations intended to directly achieve strategic effects by striking directly at the enemy's centers of gravity.” Herry asserts that “advanced technology lessens the odds that strategic attack will work,” which is only true if one presumes that strategic attack is synonymous with its original meaning. Advanced technology offers unprecedented capabilities to strike centers of gravity in urban areas with less concern over excessive collateral damage. Both Desert Storm and Kosovo demonstrated the ability to discretely attack key targets in urban areas with acceptable degrees of collateral damage to surrounding facilities and personnel. An *acceptable degree* is, of course, relative, but a B-2 releasing one weapon against one target is a far cry from several wings of B-17s dropping hundreds of bombs over a wide area to destroy one facility.

Finally, by belittling the contribution of airmen, Herry throws out a scurrilous insult to all warriors. He cites a French general who said: “What good are members of an armed force who are permitted to kill but not to die?” The answer is found in a line ascribed to George Patton: “No dumb bastard ever won a war by dying for his country. He won the war by making some other



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dumb bastard die for his country." Herrly further declares "An obsessive fear of casualties not only robs warfare of useful tools . . . but on a deeper level strips away its redeeming qualities." Is Herrly suggesting that American sons and daughters be sacrificed to prove U.S. commitments, or that joint commanders always put troops on the front lines to keep aerospace power in its place? This point smacks of a suspicion of the morality of using aerospace power that recalls turn-of-the-century objections by the Navy to the submarine and the longstanding antipathy by the Army to the sniper. Both innovations were undeniably effective, yet they fell outside the norms of symmetrical attrition warfare that is the hallmark of Western combat. In both cases, traditional-minded officers objected to what they believed was a less than manly instrument of war—as if one-on-one combat was the only edifying form of military engagement.

"The Plight of Joint Doctrine after Kosovo" does little to advance the debate on the future of joint warfare. Instead it perpetuates myths and masks the state of existing joint doctrine, which does fairly well in describing how the services can form a coherent joint team. The real problem is getting all members of the Armed Forces in the field and fleet to use it. The call by Herrly to revise joint doctrine is based on basic misinterpretations that would have adverse results on jointness.

—Col Ronald Dietz, USAF
Headquarters, Air Force Doctrine Center
Maxwell Air Force Base

WORD FROM THE SCHOOLHOUSE

To the Editor—As a faculty member at a professional military education (PME) institution, I was extremely interested to read "The Revolution in Military Education" by Richard Chilcoat in the Summer 99 issue of the journal. Although it was gratifying to read such forceful advocacy of JPME, I believe the article missed two critical points.

Many discussions of the changing nature of PME are focused immediately on technological developments. Indeed, impressive advancements such as laptop computers, Internet access, and virtual classrooms have made a great difference in educating the Armed Forces, especially given increased operational tempo. Yet I am afraid that emphasis on technological solutions obscures the fact that education, in particular military education, is basically a human undertaking. Without a well-designed curriculum and dedicated professionals to present it, technology is an empty vessel.

It is commendable that Chilcoat begins his argument with a journey into history, noting the decisive contribution that the war colleges and other institutions made to victory in World War II. But this success did not occur because the colleges were

on the forefront of technological change: they were not. Rather it was the graduates with their skills to adapt to the unforeseen. The faculty and alumni of the Naval War College who developed War Plan Orange over decades were able to adjust to the shift from coal to oil propulsion, and from big guns to dive bombers. There were many reasons for this flexibility—but a critical one was that the services in the interwar years assigned their best and brightest to faculty billets. I would rather find senior leaders advocating top-quality faculty than learning technologies.

My second point is that senior leaders need to set a certain tone if the revolution in PME is to take root. It starts with a consistent, positive message. Some senior visiting lecturers delight in remarking "That's the seat I slept in when I was here," "I never opened a book," "I was here on an athletic scholarship," or otherwise minimizing the value of PME. These witticisms get a laugh, but I'm concerned about the sentiment behind them. It seems to range from benign neglect to open disdain. I don't believe the Air Force is the only service suffering from this malady.

I was most dismayed that the ten conclusions of the JPME study cited in the article did not make mention of the critical center of gravity: the faculty. Without the actions of service chiefs to put latter-day Ray Spruances on PME faculties and to support them, all the wonderful advances in cyberspace, net-centric education technology, and distance learning will mean very little.

—Richard R. Muller
Air Command and Staff College

To the Editor—The ideas on joint professional military education reflected by Richard Chilcoat (*JFQ*, Summer 99) are forward-looking and in ways revolutionary in themselves. Transmitting information farther, faster, and on demand will bring JPME within reach of everyone and could be career-long, much like professional development in other sectors. Linkages to foreign institutions should also have payoffs in the long run.

Capitalizing on technological advances, JPME must also be closely examined in terms of the substance of what is taught, who teaches it and how, and what skills are developed at the war colleges. In this regard, analogies to industry might be helpful, but only to a degree. If it is true that in the corporate world rapid access to information can mean survival, the movers and shakers in the private sector are able to anticipate, recognize, and analyze basic changes in the environment. They also know how to adapt and when adaptation must give way to revolutionary change. Senior officers must have

similar knowledge and skills. Accordingly PME institutions must be changed structurally despite their unique charters and constituencies.

Currently war colleges tend to expose student bodies to accumulated knowledge and texts. Instead they should resemble modern universities, where a range of strategic issues are studied in depth under tutors who have mastered their subjects. Less time should be spent on core curricula, which can be taught at a distance or more appropriately at the staff college level, and more on individual research and writing. The adult learning model which dominates some colleges should not take precedence over deeper learning, serious analysis, and critical student work.

War colleges should be an incubator for future leaders by providing the means to transition from the operational to strategic level. Students must throw off the yoke of training and embrace exercises to solve difficult problems. Although creative thinking can be discussed in a classroom, they must be given serious projects in which creativity can be supported, guided, and subjected to critical debate. Two initiatives would be most helpful: written products that recommend innovative strategies and participation in gaming and simulations. The latter must be laboratories for innovation. Students should design games that posit various scenarios. They should control the play and have access to both regional and functional expertise. International students can play an effective role in unclassified games. Students must be able to wrestle and live with their strategic decisions.

JPME should be taken to the next level—interagency education. This could fill the gap that prevents real integration of agency perspectives at a critical formative stage, one that occurs before officers are actually thrown together in the interagency process.

Curricular changes would release faculty members to pursue their academic interests, which would prevent the problem of dumbing down the core curricula so that just anyone can teach it. More is needed. Crafting defense policies to meet the threats confronting the United States often entails country, language, and ethnic/religious knowledge that only true regional experts possess. In addition, historical perspective should imbue all levels of teaching and research.

War colleges must be integrated into the career paths of the services and joint community. In addition, standards for military education must be devised that are realistic but that also reflect more than simple ticket-punching. Congress performed a great service by setting JPME requirements, but it should look more closely at the content of the education being offered at war colleges.

These transformations must take place as part of a serious approach to education. In turn, this

requires a renewed emphasis on critical thought and methods of analysis. Military education must lose its strong emphasis on training. The civilian and military students who attend JPME institutions should be granted their desire for intellectual challenge and transformation.

—John F. Garafano
Strategic Studies Institute
U.S. Army War College

PROVINCIAL, WHO ME?

To the Editor—In “Leadership and Parochialism” (*JFQ*, Summer 99), Brooks Bash argues that service parochialism continues to influence senior military decisionmaking despite the passage of the Goldwater-Nichols Act. Although his contention is unobjectionable at first reading, a closer look reveals that the author is guilty of the same parochialism he ostensibly deplores. In fact, some of the proposed solutions would increase parochialism.

Bash states that he “examines the organizational impediments to optimal military responses in a crisis.” While strictly true, he succumbs to a common error in policy research: selection bias in choosing cases from which to draw conclusions. He looks at Panama and the Persian Gulf War to illustrate his thesis that “organizational and individual bias still adversely affect force employment.” In both cases, he implies that the Army backgrounds of the regional CINCs and Chairman led them to select courses of action that favored their service at the expense of “the best possible defense.”

The author ignores the possibility that the course favored by Powell may have been the best one available for accomplishing national objectives. The fact that it appears to favor the Army does not prove it was not the best available option; to make that case one must demonstrate that Powell purposefully ignored hard evidence that the Army plan was flawed. The fact that the chiefs of the Navy and Air Force were unhappy with the final plan is hardly unbiased evidence.

The Desert Storm case similarly uses selected evidence to support the assertion that Army officers chose less than optimal force packages and employment options out of loyalty to service rather than national interest. Bash is particularly perturbed by Schwarzkopf’s insistence on the use of airpower to support allied ground forces and to prepare the battlefield for the ground offensive. He cites the commander of the 1st Marine Air Wing: “[Schwarzkopf] was not willing to let any of us go off and shoot down airplanes or conduct deep strikes at the cost of preparing that battlefield in front of the Army, Marines, and coalition forces.” As one member of that force (commander of a tank platoon in the First Cavalry Division), I believe that Schwarzkopf made the right choice and that only

Douhetian devotees who believe in victory through strategic airpower alone can possibly disagree. Ground forces were decisive in Panama and the Persian Gulf, and the fact that Army flag officers were in command positions was incidental to their courses of action.

The author’s argument is further weakened by examining more recent cases. The air war in Kosovo was directed by an Army regional CINC and with another Army officer serving as Chairman. Nonetheless, the forces deployed and manner in which they were employed were almost exclusively beneficial to the Air Force and Navy. More interestingly, both the Army Chief of Staff and Chairman opposed the request by the Army CINC for increased involvement of Army forces in the conflict. Their reasoned evaluation of the situation and the national interest led them to an opposite decision from the one service parochialism dictated.

This is not to argue that service parochialism does not exist. So long as we have separate services, senior officers will continue to be more comfortable with the forces they grew up with. However, suggesting that they intentionally choose less than optimal courses of action, at risk to the national interest and the lives of servicemembers, is an allegation requiring more support than the article presents. Similarly, suggesting that stricter adherence to a service rotation policy in the appointment of Chairmen and unified commanders is a flawed solution to a problem that does not exist. It would be better to increase joint education for officers throughout their careers (as Bash correctly suggests) and then continue selecting the most qualified officer for the job, regardless of service. Any other interpretation—like the notion that military leaders are basing their decisions on anything except what is best for the Nation—is itself a reflection of service parochialism.

—MAJ John A. Nagl, USA
U.S. Military Academy

INTO THE LOOKING GLASS

To the Editor—In “Which Way to the Future?” (*JFQ*, Summer 99) by Ian Roxborough and Dana Eyre, it is the discussion of the failure to embrace cultural change and not organization (a strike force, cybercorps, constabulary force, and unconventional/special operations force) that lures the reader. The military today has become a complex adaptive system, seeming to change while maintaining the status quo. An example was the air operations war during Allied Force in the Balkans when the Army attempted to deploy an ad-hoc task force to Albania and new technology was imposed

on old structures and cultural practices. Command relationships were numerous, redundant, and vertical; voice communications drove nodal connectivity; the structure for information exchange requirements was single service in character; systems architecture was overly complex and dependent upon legacy system technology; the flow and exploitation of information were restricted; and information assets were centralized at the highest level. Today’s culture limits the potential of smart soldiers and new technology.

The inability to adapt is especially evident in the military’s sustaining of its industrial-age personnel system. This institution must be changed first if reforms of other areas such as doctrine, force structure, and education are to succeed. Current plans for the future Army look too much like the Army of today where forces still resemble World War II divisions—slow and centralized and not organized for rapid deployability within a joint task force.

Unfortunately, changes in personnel laws and policies, doctrine, and force structure have taken second place, falling in line behind the adaptation of new technology. Emerging concepts, which fall under Force XXI and the Army After Next programs, pledge revolutionary changes in the way wars will be fought. The focus on Europe and defense was eliminated, and the emphasis shifted to jointness, especially Army-Air Force cooperation, and coalition warfare, as exemplified by Desert Storm and NATO against Serbia. The problem with these brilliant and expensive efforts is that they will take the Army down the road to centralization (literally overcontrol) if the cultural foundation is not addressed. The service needs a *revolution in human affairs*, which should occur in parallel to advances in technology.

Advanced communications, precision-guided munitions, and the greater range and accuracy of weapons present a paradox for the Army. While offering opportunities for rapid movement and swift concentration of superior force, the Army is becoming obsessed with technology to the point that breakthroughs in weapon systems are unmanageable and dysfunctional. During the Advanced Warfighting Exercise at Fort Irwin in 1997 over 70 systems were evaluated. It is apparent that the Army seeks technology to avoid direct confrontation and to control the tempo of the battlefield with fires from sensors and precision guided munitions.

Not only has the Army gone overboard for technology, its plans for adopting new systems are terribly flawed. At the current pace it will experiment for roughly sixteen years before fielding a modernized corps. And what kind of force will experimentation produce? Army simulations are built on attritional model-based scenarios from the Cold War. Will these simulations translate over to real-world scenarios? The Army has placed limits on the

type of operations conducted as well as their environment. Recent experiments have been conducted in the desert, where command and control and communications are easiest because of line of sight and a lack of obstructions. In the conduct of games in 1998, many pitfalls seen in past conflicts arose, including too much overhead and emphasis on technology. So far, such efforts point to a force that will be overcentralized, addicted to technology, and divorced from capabilities. In sum, the Army is shoe-horning doctrine into technology that it hopes to have in the future. Army culture will ensure that "the tradition of independent action . . . cannot survive on the digital battlefield."

The problem with Force XXI doctrine, its supporting force structure, and the personnel system is the focus on a perfect opponent, an enemy with centralized command and conventional forces of armor, artillery, and aircraft. In this regard, the Army is preparing to refight Desert Storm. The emphasis on precision strikes, stealth, and other technological advances only makes sense in that light. However, this may not be the wave of the future. Michael Howard has warned that the Western concept of long-range war puts the Army at a disadvantage against agrarian age forces which are willing to fight ruthlessly for a cause. We have already seen evidence of fourth generation warfare in Bosnia, Rwanda, Somalia, Colombia, and Kosovo. Despite the setback of Somalia and slow deployment of ad-hoc, heavily laden units to Albania during the war in Kosovo, history is again repeating itself as the Army seeks to apply technological solutions, placed on top of old organizations and personnel systems, to battlefield problems.

If Roxborough and Eyre are correct, forces must be reshaped for contingencies beyond the narrow vision of the Army. Future warfare calls for a sharp contrast in the way personnel policies, force structure, and doctrine develop forces today. Dispersed land forces operating independently but moving toward a common goal, as Napoleon discovered with his *Corps de Armée* concept, the Germans with *infiltration tactics*, and the Israelis with their version of *Blitzkrieg*, require competent and agile leaders and soldiers in stable, cohesive units. Information age technology with its ability to guide precision weapons and overwhelm military leaders with data will not make a difference in the future if officers—both junior and senior—have not been educated, trained, and allowed the autonomy to make decisions. To coalesce to attack enemy formations, then melt away, requires more than new field manuals.

But changing culture means forcing senior officers to alter institutional imperatives, flatten force structure to accelerate decisions, and shift manpower to support a unit personnel system. Proven methods of selecting promising leaders early for

command, staff, and technical positions erase the concept of equity, where everyone strives to command battalions and then advance to flag rank. This means changing the definition of success from becoming a general officer to mastering a particular specialty. Flexible careers instill trust at the lower reaches of the officer corps so talent can be used to benefit the Army. A new education system organized on par with the best civilian universities will also prepare officers for the complexities of war on the tactical, operational, and strategic levels. It will make many uncomfortable because only a few can be selected to teach and educate Army officers.

In addition, combat and combat support units must possess more than boots on the ground. They must rotate in and out of combat with agility and resilience, and their force structure must be supported by personnel policies that bolster unit cohesion. This will lead to change in the way the Army evaluates individual and unit performance. Evaluations will be based on force-on-force exercises. This is a lot to ask, but it is necessary to ensure success.

The Army should not abandon the drive for technology. It will be of immense value in the future and provide joint forces an edge over enemy decision cycles. However, this quest must be tempered with caution. The Army can't wish away real threats and dream of an experimental force developed in a conceptual vacuum. It must be prepared to face third and fourth generation warfare threats and defeat enemies in the only way possible: by rapidly taking the fight to them and being better at an enemy's way of fighting. The revolution in military affairs may be over, but a revolution in the way the Army thinks and practices warfare must begin.

—MAJ Donald Vandergriff, USA
Georgetown University

"WESTY" VERSUS "ABE"

To the Editor—Nearly everything I read on Vietnam makes my blood boil. Ever since H.R. McMaster published *Dereliction of Duty*, I can't forget how badly our senior leadership served the Nation. So while I found the review of *A Better War* by Dale Andradé (*JFQ*, Autumn/Winter 99–00) engaging, it overstated some observations that were actually understated in the book itself.

Lewis Sorley's account doesn't begin in early 1969, as alleged, but in the summer of 1968 when Abrams took over U.S. Military Assistance Command, Vietnam. Andradé suggests that the change of command was more transitional than asserted in *A Better War*, in part because Abrams learned from the mistakes of Westmoreland. Both men, it claims, came to regard pacification as a function of winning the ground war. My reaction to this point is mixed.

I fought both wars: during Tet 1968 outside Hue and then several years later in Tay Ninh as a district advisor. The course I took at the Vietnam Training Center prior to my second tour didn't resemble any previous training. Kissinger addressed our class, and his presence suggested dramatic change, which wasn't lost on us. We were hearing directly from the President (albeit once removed) that pacification was a U.S. strategic priority. We hadn't heard that before.

The thrust of this book isn't that we won the war, but that we *might* have won had Nixon and Ford been able to deliver on promises to the leaders of South Vietnam. There is nothing new here. What is new is the evidence that Sorley brings to the table on pacification in the Abrams era.

Without making direct comparisons, Abrams is venerated for his integrity. After Tet 1968 he told my battalion commander after an awards ceremony that it was okay to cry. Our casualty rate was over 60 percent. Men like Abrams don't come along that often. *A Better War* explains why. Sorley doesn't deny we lost the war. The question he raises is did we throw it away?

—LTC Charles A. Krohn, USA (Ret.)
Fairfax, Virginia

To the Editor—Your review of *A Better War* which appeared in the last issue was, in a word, disappointing. Twenty-five years after the Vietnam War one might assume that we have reached a point where logic and detachment prevail—where frozen opinions have thawed. Not so, it seems, if the words of Dale Andradé are any indication. Indeed, the review serves as an illustration of the muddled thinking that has too long confused real analysis of the course and conduct of the war.

I write not to defend *A Better War*, but rather to lament a missed opportunity to advance the debate over Vietnam to a higher level. Lewis Sorley will stir controversy because he challenges conventional wisdom. But those who rise to the challenge should rise above emotion and express their disagreement coherently. A reasoned position deserves a reasoned response.

The last two-thirds of the review is a personal attack on the author. "How dare Sorley call into

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question beliefs long-held and dear?" Andradé seems to be asking. He uses a non-sequitur in reproach: "But despite [Sorley's] contention that Abrams' new leadership pushed Hanoi up against the wall in South Vietnam, the reality is that some of the biggest battles were still to come."

He insinuates positions not taken by the author: "Sorley may not have seen this change in tactics for what it was, but he uses a quote that makes it clear that Abrams did." (Sorley, after all, was attempting to present the views of Abrams.) And he introduces information that is irrelevant to the book's thesis: "Sorley also fails to mention one onerous Abrams undertaking that combined both body counts and statistics—Operation Speedy Express."

Any critic who disputes an hypothesis should counter it with a coherent thesis of his own. Dale Andradé sadly does not. *A Better War* deserved a better review. The book strives to elevate the debate on the Vietnam War while the review remains mired in the polemical muck of the past.

—LTG Dave R. Palmer, USA (Ret.)
Minneapolis, Minnesota

GETTING ON WITH TRANSFORMATION

To the Editor—I agree with the position of Andrew Krepinevich, "Why No Transformation?" (*JFQ*, Autumn/Winter 99–00), on the need for transformation and on his analysis of obstacles to that process. I would differ, however, in his judgment about where transformation fits into the relative priorities of the defense establishment.

First, transforming infrastructure—a logical reaction to the revolution in military affairs—is supported by the last Quadrennial Defense Review, National Defense Panel, U.S. Commission on National Security in the 21st Century, and both political parties. Yet besides conceptual guidance, there is not an agreed upon blueprint for transformation. Looking at current modernization plans for evidence of this generation-long endeavor will remain problematical.

For example, do F–22s, Commanche helicopters, and joint strike fighters—and the billions to be spent on them—contribute to transformation, or are they the last hurrah of an outmoded paradigm that is partly justified by the age of our current aircraft? And what about national missile defense? Is it part of transformation or simply a necessary reaction to lesser competitors entering the latter stages of the industrial age? Although rational people can disagree on such issues, my point is simple: in insisting on the need for transformation, we must have more dialog about its structure, a common vision of where we are going, and a more refined notion of what speed is required.

Second, in finding a common vision and making judgments on its urgency, the advocates of transformation must address present and future events. Many who want transformation skirt such pesky details. They appear only concerned about the long term. Transformation seems to mean fast forwarding to a time when the United States will confront an international military competitor, and the Armed Forces will be dominated by an array of systems as yet unspecified that will replace tanks, carrier battle groups, and manned fighters.

But reality intrudes. The Nation must contend with issues of low-level ethnic conflicts, protracted peace operations, and a current force that has 10 pounds of tasks but only 7 pounds of resources. As Krepinevich points out, with future years defense plans that are \$40–\$100 billion short of stated requirements, there are lots of claimants on future defense dollars.

Third, a close look at the present and mid-term future suggests that there may be more time to transform than many originally thought. The postulated evolution of hostile states and coalitions has not appeared on the horizon. Relations with Russia, China, and India are not problem-free, but neither are they precarious. Our hubris and policy mistakes on either side of the equation may yet lower that C+ grade, but so far so good. Moreover, rogue states are either contained like Iraq, or evolving in a positive direction. Even North Korea is coming out of its shell and taking tentative steps toward international legitimacy. Although peace is not busting out all over, it is difficult to claim that we are living in a pre-war era analogous to the much heralded interwar years. Indeed, the security environment today is sufficiently benign (and complex) that it has become increasingly hard to maintain the modest force levels needed to deal with two major theater conflicts.

Even more fortuitous, the technological competition that prompted the sense of urgency for transformation has not taken place. The United States is farther ahead of its main and subsidiary competitors than in the early 1980s when ideas on the revolution in military affairs first emerged. Conceptually, the barriers to technological innovation are low, though few have surmounted them. The Nation has the only modern military and the only

one remotely poised for the information age. In fact, adapting to the information age has led some of our allies to insist that we slow down and wait for them to catch up!

This does not equate to invulnerability. Indeed, U.S. strength abroad has a way of creating vulnerabilities. Asymmetric threats—terrorism, missile proliferation, anti-access tactics—may well pose significant challenges. But it is difficult to see any developments by states, nongovernmental organizations, or militaries on the horizon that would require us to undergo a rapid transformation to the detriment of the pressing needs of the present and the immediate future.

Our top needs are improving leader development, modernizing an aging stock of military equipment, recruiting and retaining people, and improving the capability to safeguard the homeland against terrorism. Above all, the Nation must balance its commitments, force levels, and resources to reduce the stress on the Armed Forces.

—COL Joseph J. Collins, USA (Ret.)
Center for Strategic and
International Studies

TRUE FAILURES

To the Editor—Though I was pleased to see my article, "False-Failed Innovation," appear in the Autumn/Winter 99–00 issue of *Joint Force Quarterly*, I want to set the record straight on some points that must have gotten lost on the cutting room floor. First, the use of airships as fleet scouts by Germany during World War I was not limited to coastal reconnaissance. Since the Royal Navy retreated to a distant blockade, the Germans needed to scout distant waters. German naval airships operated with the High Seas Fleet throughout the North Sea and even shadowed the British base at Scapa Flow on occasion. Second, the answer to *technological determinism* is that a given technology may not necessarily develop in other societies in the same way it does in one's own. Nor will it necessarily take the same form as it evolves. This phenomenon is known as *the social construction of technology* and is the opposite of technological determinism.

—Lt Col Gregory G. Wilmoth, ANG
Joint History Office

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