It Ain't New

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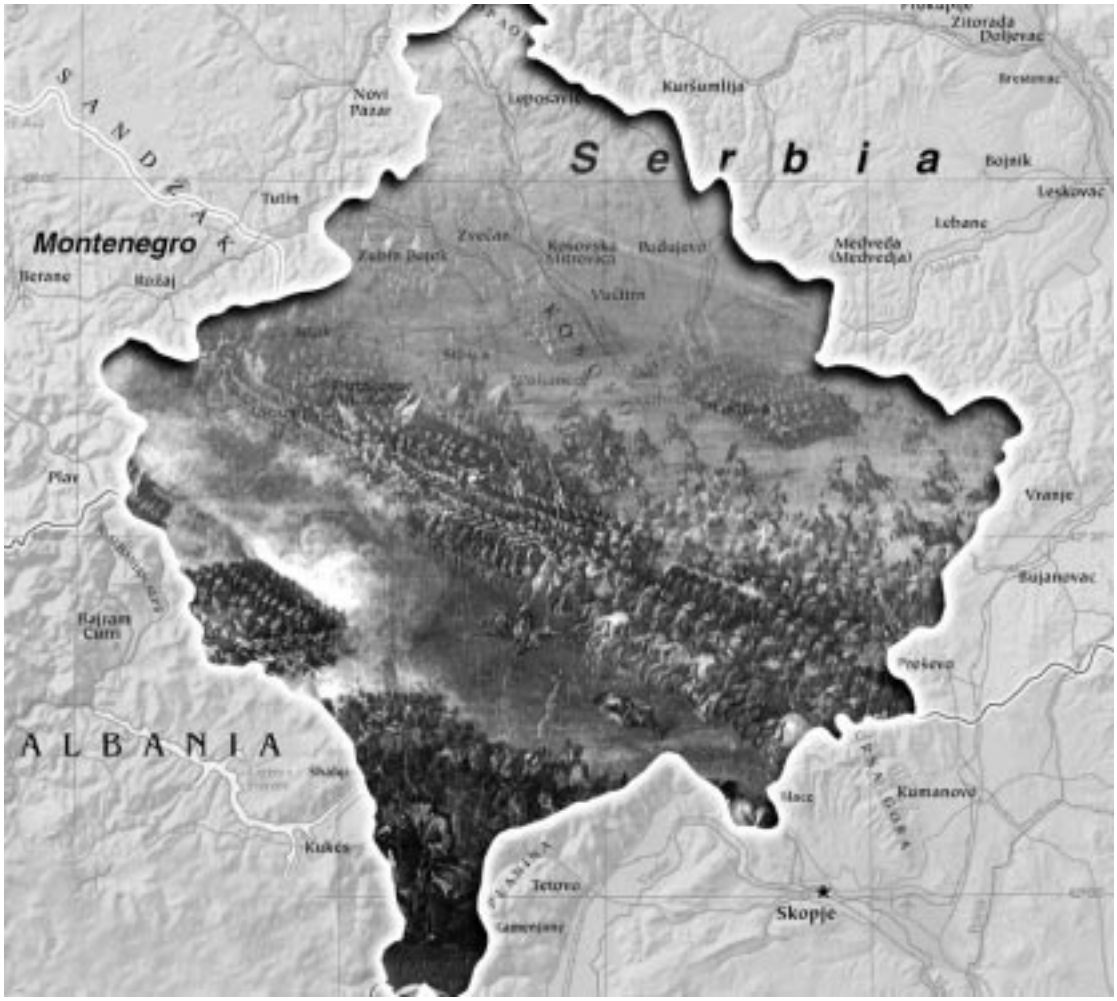
Editorial Abstract: What follows is wise counsel about the importance of paying attention to history. The Honorable Ike Skelton reflects on similarities among various historical events and our technological, organizational, and leadership challenges in the military today. Particularly in the joint and coalition arenas, we can profit from the beneficial insight that historical analysis provides. As the preeminent military power in the world today, we should remain cognizant of historical precedents if we wish to continue to successfully organize, train, equip, and employ aerospace power.



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Unless history can teach us how to look at the future, the history of war is but a bloody romance.

—J. F. C. Fuller

IN MY ROLE as ranking member of the House Armed Services Committee, I rely on the lessons of history to help me understand and reach decisions about the future of the armed forces of today. Over the years, I have discovered that most dilemmas that face the military are actually not new issues. Frequently, I find similar situations from the past to use as guideposts to frame the issues of today.

Some national-security professionals, both civilian and military, think that a brand-new era of warfare is at hand. They believe that modern battles will be joint operations fought by loose coalitions of countries with various national interests. They also believe that US Air Force, Army, Navy, and Marine Corps forces will use controversial weapons produced by twenty-first-century technological breakthroughs. In fact, true students of military history realize that these concepts—joint operations, coalition warfare, and the integration of new technology—have their roots in battles of yesteryear. They look to the past for lessons on how to fight today.

Joint Operations

The nature of modern warfare demands that we fight as a joint team. This was important yesterday, it is essential today, and it will be even more important tomorrow.

—Gen John Shalikashvili

I've noticed an increase in the number of people who assume that joint operations began after enactment of the Goldwater-Nichols Department of Defense Reorganization Act of 1986. Nothing could be further from the truth, although our most recent well-known and successful joint operation—Desert Storm—owes a great deal of its success to that important legislation. The truth is that the United States armed forces have a long tradition of cooperation among the services in order to accomplish their missions.

One of America's First Joint Operations: The Siege of Veracruz

For example, the siege of Veracruz in 1847 during the Mexican War was the most successful of many joint operations during that war.[1] This operation, planned and executed by the Army and Navy, represented the first major amphibious operation in American history and the largest one conducted until World War II. Maj Gen Winfield Scott, the senior Army commander, developed a plan that was clearly joint in every sense of the word. He placed great reliance on the Navy in order to execute his plan, including the unprecedented step of putting Army transports temporarily under the command of Commodore David Conner of the US Navy.[2] General Scott also created a joint procurement process and developed command and control procedures to allow the Army and Navy to communicate with each other during the operation. Army troops on the transport ships needed small landing craft in order to get ashore, so Scott had "surfboats" specifically constructed for the amphibious assault. Although these vessels were contracted through the Army quartermaster, a naval officer—Lt George M. Totten—designed them.[3] In order to synchronize the Army and Navy effort, General Scott and Commodore Conner worked out a new set of signals for supporting fires, loading surfboats, and assaulting the beach because the existing signals assumed an all-Army invasion.[4] Once the Army troops assembled onshore, the Navy brought guns and personnel off the ships to Army emplacements in order to coordinate artillery efforts from ship- and land-based artillery. The landing and successful siege at Veracruz opened

the way for more victories during the Mexican War, which resulted in the acquisition of additional US territories.

A Modern-Day Joint Operation: Desert Storm

Nearly 150 years after the siege at Veracruz, Gen Norman Schwarzkopf of the US Army commanded one of history's most successful joint military operations. He planned to maximize the military services' unique capabilities at each stage of the campaign to defeat Iraq. The offensive air campaign phase of Desert Storm integrated Air Force, Navy, Marine, and—to some extent—Army airpower to strike critical Iraqi targets. His determination to use the best of what each service had to offer continued into the ground-campaign phase. On G day, US ground forces, consisting of two Army corps and a Marine expeditionary force, together with coalition ground forces, assembled more than two hundred thousand soldiers to face the Iraqis. Numerous ground-attack aircraft continued to bomb hostile artillery sites, armored units, supply vehicles, and troops. Naval forces also contributed to the ground offensive. Surface ships supported amphibious operations, and the USS *Missouri* (BB 63) and USS *Wisconsin* (BB 64) bombarded Iraqi coastal positions and provided naval gunfire support to advancing troops.[5]

General Schwarzkopf was instrumental in keeping the joint effort on track. When conflicts arose among the services over their roles, Schwarzkopf adjudicated their differences. Early in the conflict, for example, he had to settle a disagreement between the Navy and Air Force concerning beyond-visual-range rules of engagement for attacking hostile aircraft.[6] Fearing incidents of fratricide, the Air Force wanted a friendly aircraft to make two types of independent verification of hostility before its fighter aircraft launched air-to-air missiles. Since Navy aircraft could conduct only one type of verification, they wanted an airborne warning and control system (AWACS) aircraft to perform the second verification. Otherwise, Navy fighters could not use the Phoenix air-to-air missile at optimal range. The Air Force resisted using AWACS, believing that it did not provide an accurate location of hostile fighters when they flew in proximity to friendly aircraft. When Vice Adm Stan Arthur and Lt Gen Chuck Horner, the Navy and Air Force component commanders, respectively, could not reach an agreement, they asked General Schwarzkopf to make the final determination. He supported a modified Air Force position that resulted in both Admiral Arthur's and General Horner's continuing their good working relationship and respecting each other's viewpoints.[7]

One can examine the success of joint operations during Desert Storm by considering the relationship among General Schwarzkopf, the supporting commanders in chief (CINC), and the service chiefs. US Transportation Command provided the logistics to get the necessary troops and equipment in-theater; US Space Command warned of Scud missile launches, and its Global Positioning System satellites facilitated operations; and the geographic CINCs provided air, sea, and ground forces from their theaters. The service chiefs fulfilled their roles as force providers to General Schwarzkopf, giving him all the well-trained and equipped forces he needed. They also acted as a source of information on how best to employ these forces without trying to interfere in the command relationships established by the Goldwater-Nichols Act.

Coalition Warfare

> *There is only one thing worse than fighting with allies—and that is fighting without them.*
>
> —Sir Winston S. Churchill

The Department of Defense (DOD) has increased the emphasis on training and fighting with our allies, especially since the end of the Persian Gulf War. It is important to recognize that, because they lack either the support of world opinion or the military capabilities to operate independently, few countries can fight alone. The need for countries to form alliances based on common national in-

terests or security concerns has existed for millennia.

The Duke of Marlborough: Skilled at Coalition Warfare

John Churchill, the duke of Marlborough, acted as commander of British, Dutch, Prussian, Danish, and other Grand Alliance forces during the War of the Spanish Succession, fighting four battles successfully against the French army from 1701 to 1712. For nearly 10 years, his personal diplomacy effort, unusual at the time, was the driving force behind the daunting task of keeping the incredibly fractious coalition together. Churchill understood that face-to-face meetings with allied rulers and ministers in Berlin, Vienna, and the Hague could prove more effective in resolving difficulties and formulating plans than written communication.[8] Because of his efforts, the allies gave him their confidence and trust, as well as control of their armies.

Churchill's attempts to win over the members of the Grand Alliance paid off for him years later while he prepared for his last campaign against the French in 1711. When his enemies in England's new Parliament wanted to replace him, other leaders of the Grand Alliance spoke on his behalf. The duke of Hanover and the king of Prussia threatened to withdraw their troops unless he remained in command, which led the rest of the Grand Alliance to state their strong belief that he should continue to be in charge. They saw him as their champion, especially since he had already led the alliance to victory in three battles against the French.[9]

Gen Wesley Clark: Leading NATO's First Fight as an Alliance

Maintaining a cohesive alliance or coalition today is just as important, if not more so, than in the past. As the supreme allied commander, Europe in mid-1999, Gen Wesley Clark of the US Army led the North Atlantic Treaty Organization's (NATO) first military campaign, Operation Allied Force. In addition to trying to convince Yugoslav leader Slobodan Milosevic to pull his forces out of Kosovo, General Clark had to ensure that internal differences among NATO countries concerning the conduct of the campaign and the desired outcome did not pull NATO apart.

To General Clark, maintaining alliance cohesion during Allied Force was just as important as avoiding casualties, targeting Serb forces and associated targets, and minimizing collateral damage.[10] He had a difficult time keeping his targeting strategy on track because every target required unanimous approval of the allies, some of whom opposed the entire campaign or certain aspects of it. For example, Greece and Italy opposed an extended bombing campaign, France resisted plans for a naval blockade, and Germany opposed any consideration of a ground war.[11] General Clark had to rely on his diplomatic skills to convince NATO allies of the need to escalate the campaign and to consider the possibility of a ground war. He used personal phone calls and meetings to persuade them to reduce bombing constraints in order to intensify the campaign, yet maintain allied consensus and cohesion.[12]

In an effort to obtain approval of two particularly important targets—the Yugoslav Interior Ministry and the headquarters of the Serbian special police—General Clark personally briefed Javier Solana, NATO secretary-general, on the intricacies of targeting. He included such details as the blast radius of warheads and how the desired point of impact controlled whether the building would collapse inward or explode outward. Clark thought it important to send a message by striking these targets during the first missions to Belgrade. The North Atlantic Council debated the request but in the end left the final decision to Secretary-General Solana, who gave his approval a few days later.[13]

General Clark earned the admiration of NATO for his leadership in the Balkans. During the change-of-command ceremony for General Clark, Lord Robertson, Solana's successor as NATO secretary-general, praised him for his "unique combination of military

expertise, political knowledge and diplomatic skill."[14] Lord Robertson went on to say that General Clark was "the right man in the right place at the right time" to lead the first major military offensive in the 50-year history of the alliance. General Clark's command ensured NATO's success.

Allies with Unequal Military Capabilities Benefit from Unity

In addition to ensuring shared goals among the alliance nations, coalition warfare involves another concern. In the year since the end of the bombing over Serbia, the United States and the rest of the NATO countries have had an opportunity to study the lessons learned from NATO's first military operation. Among these many lessons, everyone emphasizes and agrees that the European countries have fallen behind the United States, both militarily and technologically—a matter of great concern that NATO will address over the next few years. Again, this situation is not new to us, and we should not let it interfere with our reliance on our allies during times of crisis. There was a time in American history when the opposite was true—we Americans fielded the inexperienced, poorly equipped force and had to rely on the superior capabilities of our European allies.

Specifically, the American Continental Army largely owed its victory over superior British forces during the American Revolution to the military assistance of France, which sent officers, soldiers, gunpowder, and ships to the Americans. The commander of French forces in America also had a strong hand in shaping the objectives of the war. Jean-Baptiste-Donatien de Vimeur, comte de Rochambeau, argued for an attack on Lord Charles Cornwallis in the south despite Gen George Washington's desire to lay siege to New York instead.[15] The comte de Rochambeau had already begun planning for a siege at Yorktown when he requested assistance from the commander of the French fleet in the Caribbean. Adm François-Joseph-Paul de Grasse responded by canceling all other missions, readying every ship, obtaining troops and field artillery, borrowing money, and immediately setting sail for the American coast. The tremendous support for the operation at Yorktown convinced General Washington to march his troops south instead of north to New York.

Meanwhile, the French defeated the British fleet off the Virginia coast, ensuring that Lord Cornwallis would not receive the reinforcements he urgently needed from New York. The allied army began preparations for the offensive, supported by the accurate bombardment of the British by the French cannoneers. American and French troops successfully attacked, forcing Lord Cornwallis to surrender. British reinforcements arrived five days later, but the French fleet still controlled the Chesapeake. The British returned to New York without engaging French forces.[16] Despite the disparity in expertise, the American and French military efforts complemented one another. The Americans fought for freedom and the birth of a nation, while the French brought the necessary professionalism, technical expertise, and equipment.

Operation Allied Force: American Military Technology Pulls Ahead

It quickly became clear during Allied Force last year that US military capabilities have dramatically pulled ahead of those of our European allies. The Kosovo after-action report to Congress noted this gap, especially in the areas of precision strike; mobility; and command, control, and communications.[17] This forced the United States to conduct the majority of the precision strike sorties, especially during the first days of the conflict when the Yugoslav air defenses remained fully operational. As it became clear to the NATO political and military leadership that the United States would bear the brunt of the cost of the military effort, the allies agreed that the Europeans would cover the majority of the cost of the peace enforcement and reconstruction efforts in Kosovo. Although the exact division of costs is the subject of spirited debate, the Europeans seem to be living up to their promise.

Even though the United States led the military effort during Allied Force, we could not have carried out the entire operation without assistance from our European allies, who provided personnel, equipment, and—more importantly—political and diplomatic support. One should also note that the United States benefited from use of the NATO allies' military infrastructure, including military bases, airfields, and airspace. Although the B-2 bomber proved very effective in operating from Whiteman Air Force Base in Missouri, aircraft usually must launch from a location much closer to the theater in order to accomplish their mission. For that reason, US forces deployed to facilities in countries closer to Kosovo and Serbia—such as Italy, the United Kingdom, Germany, Spain, France, Hungary, and others.

However, the gap in military capability—certainly a reason for concern and a topic of discussion at the summit recognizing the 50th anniversary of NATO—could affect future alliance efforts. To reduce this gap, NATO adopted the Defense Capabilities Initiative, which seeks to enhance allied capabilities in deployability and mobility; sustainability and logistics; effective engagement; survivability of forces and infrastructure; and command, control, and information systems. The overall goal is to improve interoperability between US military forces and the rest of NATO.

Integrating Technological Innovations into the Military

> *We must be the great arsenal of democracy.*
>
> —President Franklin D. Roosevelt

DOD feels strongly, as do some members of Congress, that other nations can overcome the technological advantage long enjoyed by the United States if we don't continue to invest in research and development and field the weapon systems resulting from these efforts. Counterarguments come from those who believe that, although we eventually will have to modernize, our technological lead is so great now and for the foreseeable future that we can afford to "take a breather" from a policy of constant modernization. Congress is charged with finding the balance between the two sides. Unfortunately, this is not a simple exercise, and we will measure the consequences of being wrong in the loss of America's sons and daughters. I find it helpful to look to history to study another time when America faced a similar situation.

The current debate concerning precision warfare and the role it should play in future conflicts has a strong precedent in the integration of the airplane into the US military. Prior even to the debates about establishing the Air Force as a separate branch of the armed services, controversy existed over the capabilities and limitations of the airplane and the role it should play. The airplane and precision-guided weapons are parallel issues almost one hundred years apart, with consequences affecting doctrine, operations, tactics, and, certainly, resource priorities.

Airplanes: Discovering Their Military Usefulness

The introduction of the aircraft to the US military did not proceed smoothly. Many political and military leaders failed to see the need to expend resources to develop military aviation to its fullest potential. After World War I, Army leaders for the most part considered the airplane little more than another form of reconnaissance and artillery, and the United States did not follow Great Britain's example in establishing a separate air force. As the United States began to focus on domestic spending after the war, Gen Henry "Hap" Arnold and Gen William "Billy" Mitchell began a public-relations campaign around the country to increase support for funding the Air Service. The support generated by their demonstrations forced the Navy to agree to a bombing test in 1921. After modifying the official rules of the test, Air Service pilots sank three captured German vessels, including the "unsinkable" battleship *Ostfriesland*. Two years later, the Air Service successfully repeated the tests by sinking two obsolete American battleships. Despite these

achievements, the tests failed to gain any significant funding from Congress.

In addition to demonstrating the airplane's potential military capabilities, early airpower advocates began to develop airpower theory, doctrine, and tactics. The Air Corps Tactical School at Maxwell Air Force Base, Alabama, is generally credited with considering the early airpower theories espoused by Mitchell, Gen Hugh Trenchard, and perhaps Gen Giulio Douhet—and with establishing the first airpower doctrine developed in the United States.[18] This doctrine advocated precision, high-altitude, daylight strategic bombardment against the enemy's military-industrial complex. However, its publication did not convince skeptics in Congress—or the Army and Navy—of the usefulness of airpower. Only the success of actual strategic-bombardment missions and support to the ground troops during World War II convinced naysayers of the value of military missions for the airplane—and of the need for an independent Air Force.

Surprisingly, remnants of the debate about the role of airpower and its ability to play a decisive role in conflict continue in Congress and the Pentagon today, despite the critically important airpower demonstrations in both Desert Storm and Allied Force. The airplane now performs an extensive array of missions for all of the services, and I would not want to fight an adversary without the best aircraft America can produce.

Precision-Guided Weapons: Living Up to Their Promise

Today, I see many similarities between the airplane's struggle for acceptance and the way the armed forces are integrating precision-guided munitions (PGM) into the force structure. The effort to achieve more accurate weapons began in World War I and approached modern capabilities with PGMs toward the end of the Vietnam War. However, not until Desert Storm did the American public get a close-up view of the capability of PGMs. Increased emphasis on precision will drive changes in military doctrine, operations, and tactics. Already, it is clear that we need to make our intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance capabilities more responsive and accurate in order to support the efficient targeting of precision-guided weapons. Other questions remain concerning their role, compared to that of traditional weapon systems, and the impact they will have on other military concepts, such as maneuver.

An F-117A Nighthawk drops a laser-guided bomb.

Each of the services must examine the part of their war-fighting doctrine that addresses precision-guided weapons and develop the best plan for employing precision capability. They need to answer questions about when to use these weapons and against what types of targets. They should be able to logically answer critics who claim that striking a $50,000 target with a million-dollar missile is unjustified, whether it is based on reducing risk to our service members, the unique importance of the target, or some other factor. That done, the Pentagon must educate American leaders and the general public about these new weapons. Just as education about the airplane many years ago led to building the world's greatest air force, so does the nation need to learn the capabilities and limitations of precision-guided weapons in order to understand why they represent a wise investment for the future.[19]

We need educational efforts not only to justify resources but also to effectively employ PGMs against critical targets. For example,

during Desert Storm, coalition political and military leaders hesitated to allow the bombing of high-value targets located in or near population centers. However, after receiving briefings detailing the accuracy of PGMs, these leaders felt more comfortable using them against targets in cities.[20] As previously mentioned, General Clark gave the same types of briefings during Allied Force in order to gain NATO consensus to bomb certain targets in highly populated areas.

Conclusion

My study of history tells me that the challenges facing the military today—and into the future—are not new. The US military must continue to develop leaders who understand *jointness* in order to fight as a joint force. This is important because the nation needs the strength created when all of the armed services work together. In addition, because America will continue to lead and participate in coalitions, the services must prepare military leaders of tomorrow to operate comfortably in a *multinational environment*. They must understand the different national interests that may drive their counterparts and must recognize allied military capabilities in order to get the most out of their contributions. Finally, the United States cannot afford to haphazardly integrate *new technology* into its force structure. We must look ahead in order to understand the potential implications of technology and to ensure that theory, doctrine, and strategy do not fall behind. One of the best ways for future military leaders to prepare is to study military history. It might surprise them to discover how much yesteryear has in common with today. In other words—it ain't new. □

Notes

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