

# JFQ—Seen from

The following appraisal of *Joint Force Quarterly* appeared in volume 86, number 1 (January 1998) of *Naval Review*, a professional military journal published in the United Kingdom. It was written by Lieutenant Commander J.R. Stocker, Royal Navy Reserve, who has contributed to past issues of *JFQ*.

The newest, and one of the better, American military professional journals is *Joint Force Quarterly*. First published in 1993, it is still not widely known on this side of the Atlantic but deserves to be. The National Defense University (NDU) is the alma mater of “jointness” in the United States, and these days every ambitious officer needs to get his “joint ticket” punched if he is to rise beyond commander/lieutenant colonel. *JFQ*’s glossy format with lots of good pictures belies its serious purpose and content. Despite being officially sanctioned and funded, with a regular foreword by the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, it contains a wealth of authoritative, original, and questioning articles, overwhelmingly but not exclusively from serving U.S. officers.

*JFQ* exists “to promote understanding of the integrated employment of land, sea, air, space, and special operations forces. The journal focuses on joint doctrine, coalition warfare, contingency planning, combat operations conducted by the unified commands, and joint force development.” By and large, it succeeds in its objectives and is invariably a good read. There is always something to attract the attention of a diverse readership, though one should be wary of the occasional piece of single-service advocacy masquerading as “jointness.” (No surprise there.)

Predictably, joint doctrine features prominently in most issues. The joint empire in the United States extends much more widely and



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deeply than in the United Kingdom, though interservice rivalries are as great, and in some important respects U.S. forces on the ground are no more truly integrated than those of their allies. Indeed, one often detects an underlying feeling (somewhat justified) on the part of the Navy-Marine Corps “team” that they’ve always been joint in all warfare environments, and what’s the big fuss about? The United States has not one or two joint doctrine publications, but more than a hundred, including JTTP 4-02.2, *Patient Movement*; JTTP 3-55.1, *Unmanned Aerial Vehicles*; JTTP 1-06, *Financial Management*, as well as more significant books on joint intelligence, amphibious operations, information warfare, air defense, and so on. At the higher levels of joint doctrine in the United States is clearly an evolving process, and a recent article specifically identified doctrine as still not a part of naval culture.

A recurring theme in *JFQ* is the American revolution in military affairs. The RMA debate is making an appearance in the United Kingdom, but its true home is in the United States. Americans have always had a more technologically-focused military and strategic culture, and the information warfare concept is but the latest embodiment of that. In the future it will be “cyber-war,” in which computers do not just aid conventional weapons to do their job more effectively but become weapons in their own right, disabling vital parts of a modern state’s infrastructure “on the net”—a form of warfare that the United States is probably more vulnerable to than most. The extent to which the application of new technologies is fundamentally altering the nature of warfare is hotly debated, but the U.S. military is deeply committed to the hypothesis that “information superiority” will enable them to assert and maintain “battlespace dominance,” employing precision stand-off systems that minimize casualties and collateral damage. Some of the more skeptical views on this come from the Marine Corps, whose concept of “Operational Maneuver... from the Sea” seeks nonetheless to bypass

the beach and reduce their “footprint” ashore by exploiting superior maneuverability.

An annual RMA essay contest produces a wide selection of forward-looking pieces ranging from philosophical views on the future of armed conflict, such as “Dynamic Inter-Dimensionality,” to the very specific, such as “Acoustics on the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Battlefield.”

Historical pieces regularly appear, especially on World War II, and often purport to draw lessons from the past that can be applied in the future—always a contentious undertaking. The Middle East, ballistic missile defense, training and simulation, military operations other than war, and European defense have been other recent themes. Many articles are very U.S.-specific, but a larger number have a much wider appeal and provide good material for anyone interested in the current and future state of armed conflict and military operations.

To understand what the American defense establishment is doing and thinking, look no further. To get real insights into “the higher aspects” of the military profession, again you will be hard pressed to find a better source. It can be depressing to see how much original, well-argued, and thoughtful work is produced by U.S. officers, in somewhat stark contrast to the continuing anti-intellectual culture that still permeates our own armed forces. One should note, however, how much of *JFQ*’s content does originate from commanders, their staffs, and teaching establishments.

Much as *Proceedings* gets a regular airing in the *Naval Review*, it is planned to review *JFQ*’s content in the future on an annual basis.