Both the form and substance of professional military education (PME) have been subjected to basic and revolutionary reforms in recent years. The farsighted Goldwater-Nichols Act, though hotly debated and strongly resisted at the time of its passage, mandated and catalyzed this change. Initially the law had little appeal to the military departments. Today each service accepts, indeed embraces, these reforms because their contribution to the effectiveness of joint warfare outweighs the new burdens which they have admittedly placed on the services.

PME reforms were the result of two profound and complementary thrusts found in title IV of Goldwater-Nichols that dealt with officer personnel policy. The first, which addressed form or process, created joint specialty officers (JSOs) and imposed criteria for their selection, education, utilization, and promotion. The second, one of substance, revamped the content of military science as it applies to the education of JSOs through its focus on emerging joint doctrine.

Recalling that the military is defined, as well as delimited, by its expertise in military science and that this expertise is an intrinsic part of the self-concept of the officer corps and its relationship to the state, it is easy to see the prescient mutual significance of these two new thrusts in PME. Together, they have produced joint officers of a kind rarely before found in our military institutions and culture. Some
### Emergence of the Joint Officer

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Joint culture continues to emerge. Its ultimate impact on the individual services is not yet fully known, nor is the ethos it advocates. One outcome appears certain: the next logical steps in the evolution of joint PME will present serious challenges. As we face them, it is vital—especially for younger officers—to recall that the Armed Forces successfully adapted to new realities under title IV of the Goldwater-Nichols Act.

Influences on PME

The principal changes brought about in joint PME under Goldwater-Nichols include actions that:

- established the Chairman as principal adviser to the President and Secretary of Defense on all military issues including PME (previously the domain of the corporate military staffs);
- defined "joint matters" for educational and other purposes as relating to the integrated employment of land, sea, and air forces in the areas of national military strategy, strategic and contingency planning, and command and control of combat operations under unified command, whereas before they were not clearly defined and traditionally included only joint planning;
- created a JSO career track to improve the quality and performance of officers assigned to joint duty, mandated that critical positions identified in joint organizations be filled only with JSOs contingent upon their completion of joint PME;
- mandated maintaining "rigorous standards" at joint PME institutions for educating JSOs, where previously there had been neither joint educational programs nor required standards;
- mandated promotion policy objectives for officers in joint duty assignments, objectives directing that as a group these officers should be promoted at a rate comparable to officers serving on service staffs in the military departments;
- required newly promoted flag and general officers to attend the Capstone course, which is designed specifically to prepare them to work with all the services;
- designated a PME focal point in the vice director, Operational Plans and Interoperability (J-7), Joint Staff, who is dual-hatted as the deputy director, Joint Staff, for military education and oversees the Military Education Division (J-7).

Moreover, a program for joint education has evolved into a PME framework which relates five educational levels to career phases (namely, pre-commissioning, primary, intermediate, senior, and general/flag officer), each with its own mandated learning areas and objectives. The next logical steps in the evolution of joint PME will present serious challenges.

These provisions, with others too numerous to detail here, linked assignments, education, and promotion potential to joint duty. The law had remarkable effects on service policies relating to professional development. Officers had to adjust traditions, particularly the convention that officers did not serve outside their service nor their service career specialty lest they fall behind their contemporaries who remained in the service's mainstream.

To effect change in the services, Goldwater-Nichols needed to define the nature of joint officer development and create institutional incentives sufficient to promote its ultimate legitimacy. As indicated, it did this initially by linking assignments, education, and later promotion potential. In subsequent years, the effectiveness of joint combat operations has been even more powerful in persuading officers that joint duty is both personally fulfilling and career enhancing.

Institutional Costs

The services have adapted to the new realities of Goldwater-Nichols, but not without costs. The requirement to assign promising officers to joint billets who otherwise would receive positions which their service deemed important to its own missions has complicated personnel management. The increased quality of officers serving in joint assignments resulted in a corresponding decline in the overall quality of service headquarters and operational staffs, a cost more quickly recognized by some services than others. Further complications have arisen over the time officers spend outside their services for joint PME and in joint duty assignments, which in many cases now approaches 20 percent of professional careers.

The third cost has been an unremitting increase in the number of joint billets, more than 10 percent over the last six years alone, a period in which the services markedly reduced their strength in officers. Lastly, inflexibility in managing JSO assignments and increased turbulence because of the requirement to attend phase II of the program for joint education (PJE) during twelve weeks in residence at the Armed Forces Staff College constitute ongoing costs to the services.

Notwithstanding their expense, these reforms have been so fruitful that on balance the record has been the emergence of a new joint culture. America's evolving approach to warfare, which is increasingly joint in all respects, has been supported, even led and facilitated, by officers professionally educated and employed under Goldwater-Nichols.

Ultimately, the benefit of PME reforms must be measured against the performance of the Armed Forces in defending and furthering national interests. In this case the record is clear—better officers, better prepared for joint force employments, with markedly better results in integrating service capabilities on the battlefields and in regional conflicts.

With so much successful adaptation over the past decade, is joint PME now established for the decades ahead?
If not, what issues should occupy those responsible for preparing officers for joint duty? Two broad sets of ongoing changes in the security environment create challenges for designers of joint PME. The first relates to future missions of the Armed Forces—those purposes for which the Nation will employ the military in the next millennium. The second centers on the response of Western democracies, including the United States, to a new security environment and its implications for civil-military relations.

Future Missions

With respect to missions of the future, it would appear that within the residual, state-centric international system, conflicts among major powers will be the exception. But nonstate actors have increasingly created capabilities which endanger U.S. and allied interests in widely separated regions. Threats exist along two vastly different segments of the conflict spectrum: at the low end with operations other than war (OOTW), and at the high end—beyond conventional war as seen in regions like the Persian Gulf—through the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD), some potentially to nonstate actors. Recent OOTW missions which have involved joint forces—in Somalia, Haiti, Rwanda, Bosnia, Liberia—contrast sharply with the focus of the Cold War era and the regional conflict in the Gulf that immediately followed it. But in fact they have been the normal missions of the Armed Forces save for the historical anomaly of the Cold War.

The need to be prepared for vastly contrasting missions—from OOTW to regional war with WMD or a return to major power competitions—poses significant challenges for joint PME. First, since OOTW missions do not usually involve our vital interests (with the exception of international terrorism), the polity will expect them to be achieved without casualties and other costs which are not commensurate with the significance of those interests. Thus these missions must be conducted swiftly and efficiently, with even a higher premium on preconflict integration of service capabilities and joint training readiness. Furthermore, they are likely to have limited objectives and be of short duration, creating the aura of constabulary missions.

The tensions within these evolving missions already are, and will continue to be, quite real for officers. Will core competencies and self-concepts be focused on the role of the warrior or on that of the constable and peacekeeper? Most OOTW missions have also called for decentralized mission execution. This dispersion requires greater political-military sophistication in younger officers, to include direct contact with the media, non-governmental organizations, and foreign governments, as well as coping with the inherent ambiguities and complexities of such international operations.

**will core competencies be focused on the role of the warrior or on that of the constable and peacekeeper**

Such missions also require officers of exemplary character since the ambiguities and complexities of international operations often have a moral-ethical character, and joint commanders must work with foreign officers whose culture and institutions reflect a different value orientation.

Since the Nation will always rightly expect that its Armed Forces be prepared across the full spectrum of potential conflict, the success of future adaptations of joint PME may well depend on how this dilemma is resolved. The challenge will consist of further developing competencies for new, limited missions while enhancing joint warfighting—a daunting task given the likelihood of continuing resource constraints. This brings us to the second set of ongoing changes that will influence joint PME—the nature of the responses by democratic governments, including the United States, to changes in security imperatives.

**A New Environment**

Democratic responses can be aggregated into four areas, each diverging sharply from the patterns of the past five decades, and with some quite important differences between America and its allies. First, the resources being allocated to national security have been sharply reduced and will remain so until a new threat to our vital interests emerges for which elected governments can extract the necessary resources from internally oriented publics. Coupled with the requirement for political legitimacy in the use of military force, as observed in the Gulf War and Bosnia, this means that Western democracies will fight future conflicts with political-military coalitions.

Secondly, unlike the Cold War era of long-standing coalitions, the future norm will consist of ad hoc and conditional commitments by democratic governments, again as seen in the Gulf War and recent OOTW missions. The implications for joint PME are clear. For every joint concept, doctrine, or course, the United States must develop...
parallel combined capabilities in con-
cert with its allies. Those responsible
for joint PME should urgently consider
the profound implications of the rapid
internationalization of U.S. military in-
stitutions and processes.

The third response is the evolving
specialization in U.S. military capabili-
ties vis-à-vis those of our allies. Basically,
Washington has indicated its intention
to maintain a high-tech competitive ad-
vantage—in pursuit of a revolution in
military affairs (RMA)—whereas other
countries, with the possible exception of
France and Japan, have eschewed such a
role. Unfortunately, any intention to
adapt and reshape the Armed Forces
through an RMA is unresourced as yet.
Further, developments to date indicate an
imbalance of RMA ca-
pabilities across the conflict spectrum,
with few benefits for OOTW, currently
the most frequent grounds for employ-
ing joint capabilities.

Since joint PME operates at the in-
tersection of intellectual development
and operational art, adapting to an RMA
requires the formation of officers who
are analytic, pragmatic, innovative, and
broadly educated.10 History teaches that
effective PME—though insufficient by
itself—has proven to be necessary for
military innovation, experimentation,
and adaptation. This resulted primarily
when PME provided the dual benefits of
training in new factual knowledge as
well as influencing officer attitudes and
perceptions toward fundamental shifts
in military doctrine and organization.11
But the success of such investments in
human capital is problematic at best
given the political clout of congres-
sional-industrial interests that favor
spending on defense hardware and soft-
ware. Thus, only at senior levels where
the civilian and military leadership
make these trade offs can the specific
challenge from a potential RMA to joint
PME be met.

In the fourth area of response, our
allies have significantly reshaped their
force structures, in some cases even
making changes in reserves and con-
scription, although America has done
little. The most notable examples are
Britain and France, who have exten-
sively reduced and reorganized their
militaries. France even announced the
end of obligatory national service.
Collectively, the implications of
these responses for PME—at service,
joint, and combined levels—are omi-
nous. Just as role specialization, a po-
tential RMA, and sharp declines in re-
sources are making adaptation, innova-
tion, and reshaping more criti-
cal to military institutions—processes
historically facilitated by PME—the
Armed Forces are heavily engaged in
missions for which they are relatively
least suited, consuming even greater
shares of declining resources. This is
more true of the most critical asset for
change: the focus of senior military
leaders.12 Thus, unless resourced and
nurtured by them, PME may regress
from the notable strides made under
Goldwater-Nichols.13

Overarching Challenges

Regardless of which future un-
folds, those responsible for PME will
face two transcending and thus key
challenges. The first is retaining the
right balance between service and
joint/combined PME. The second and
more important is maximizing the
contribution of joint PME to the
moral-ethical development of officers.
At the “point of the spear” in joint
warfighting are service capabilities that
enable the Armed Forces to conduct
land, sea, and air operations in succes-
sive and successful battles. Developing
and educating officers in the integrated
employment of these capabilities, joint
or combined, should not serve to di-
minish core service capabilities. PME
should not become too joint. If it does,
the profession of arms could be critici-
cized for “majoring in minor.”14 Calls
for substantial amounts of joint educa-
tion down to the precommissioning
level, among other initiatives, could
rapidly lead to that point. By contrast,
service culture and interservice compe-
tition, especially on the tactical level,
are constructive aspects of maintaining
an effective defense establishment.15

Of course such competition at higher
levels has occasionally gotten out of bounds, such as when con-
strained resources inflame it, and per-
haps could once again. On the other
hand, officer education is not the most
effective method to deal with per-
curred excesses in interservice rivalry.
Effective civilian leadership, which can
easily channel such competition to
constructive adaptations and innova-
tions, is a more appropriate corrective.
Civilian leadership cannot, how-
ever, effectively address the second
challenge. The moral-ethical dimen-
sion of military service, vital in educat-
ing officers, is inherently part of the
“contract” that the Armed Forces have
maintained with the Nation. Were the

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The Desirability of Joint Duty—1982

Joint assignments are seldom sought by officers. A joint position removes them from the environment
in which they have been trained, in which they have established relationships and reputations, and in
which they seek advancement. It places them instead in a wholly new environment involving unfamil-
iliar procedures and issues for which most of them have little or no formal training. Their fitness reports
(which affect their careers and prospects for advancement) are often entrusted to officers of other services
with little in common by way of professional background.

Adding to these concerns is the perception that much of the work on the Joint Staff is unproductive,
and that too much effort is wasted on tedious negotiation of issues until they have been debased and re-
duced to the “lowest common level of assent.”

The general perception among officers is that a joint assignment is one to be avoided. In fact, within
one service it is falsely believed to be the “loss of death” as far as a continued military career is con-
cerned. In contract, service assignments are widely perceived as offering much greater possibilities for concrete ac-
complishments and career enhancement. As a result, many fine officers opt for service assignments rather
than risk a joint duty assignment. Yet joint positions have the potential for making major contributions to the
defense effort, and often challenging work to the finest officers.

—Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Study Group,
The Organization and Functions of the JCS (1982)
military to abrogate that pledge, as recent actions by a few officers have demonstrated, it would cease to be a profession. It would become unattractive to those who might wish to serve and unsupported by those it is dedicated to protect. Furthermore, and aside from this contract, officers have always had to act with integrity and

**officer education is not the most effective method to deal with perceived excesses in interservice rivalry**

trustworthiness. Such attributes will remain a functional requisite to mission accomplishment in a profession that unleashes violence as a team, with each member subject to unlimited liability. As noted, OOTW test such trustworthiness early in an officer’s career. Therefore at a time when individual character is becoming less central to the society which professional officers serve, it remains of unrelenting importance to them regardless of grade or assignment. To meet that need, all services are making serious efforts to develop and maintain leader character. But such efforts are not coordinated and appear to be implemented unevenly. Improvements in moral-ethical development are needed. Recent cases of untrustworthiness include adultery and fraternization on the part of senior officers, personal use of government aircraft, and more intrusive “zero defect” command climates which severely test character. Senior military leaders should not forget the lessons of the past. The challenge now is to re-shape PME—balancing the Nation’s investment in its future military leaders and their character against investment in technology and forces—without relying on Congress.

An overriding need exists to imbue joint PME with an ethos which is suited to the emerging culture. The moral-ethical development of leaders, their education in character, occurs much more in the field and fleet than in academic settings. But knowledge of ethics and values, which can be conveyed through joint PME, is a necessary component of this development. PME curricula are already overflowing with good joint subject matter. That is exactly the point. For the moral-ethical development of joint officers, the military risks supplanting the essential with the good. Desiring to remain a profession, those responsible for the future of joint PME should settle for so little.

In 1986, Congress transformed the officer corps over harsh opposition from the Pentagon. Not discounting the remarkable progress of the last decade, new difficulties have emerged for joint education. Senior military leaders should not forget the lessons of the past. The challenge now is to re-shape PME—balancing the Nation’s investment in its future military leaders and their character against investment in technology and forces—without relying on Congress.

**NOTES**

1 The authors are indebted to the deputy chiefs of staff for personnel of all the services for providing candid comments which assisted in the preparation of this article.

2 Here we subscribe to the definition of organizational culture advanced by Edgar H. Schein, “Culture is what a group learns over a period of time as that group solves its problems of survival in an external environment and its problems of internal integration.” See “Organizational Culture,” American Psychologist, vol. 45, no. 2 (February 1990), pp. 109, 111.

3 Not all the reforms summarized were mandated by the Goldwater-Nichols Act. Of particular importance was the legislation passed in 1989 as a result of the efforts of a House panel chaired by Representative Ike Skelton. See U.S. Congress, House, Committee on Armed Services, Report of the Panel on Military Education, report no. 4, 100th Cong., 1st sess., 1989.

4 That such institutional change is possible, even predictable, is well documented. For example, see Deborah Avant, *Political Institutions and Military Change: Lessons from the Peripheral Wars* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994).


13 General Shalikashvili is attempting to do this but has noted a lack of progress in critical areas: “We . . . despite the importance we have attached to simulations, nobody has yet developed a single, fully-tested, reliable joint wargaming model.” See “A Word from the Chairman,” Joint Force Quarterly, no. 6 (Summer/Winter 1994–95), p. 7.