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Future battle: The merging levels of war.

Accession Number : ADA528099

Title : Future Battle: The Merging Levels of War

Descriptive Note : Journal article

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Full Text : <http://www.dtic.mil/dtic/tr/fulltext/u2/a528099.pdf>

Report Date : Dec 1992

Pagination or Media Count : 16

Abstract : Warfighting doctrine is one of the most sensitive instruments of national security policy. In this essay, we shall explore the doctrinal implications of change within the conceptual framework of the three levels of war-strategic, operational, and tactical. The analysis suggests that in the future, the technologically altered battlefield dimensions of time and space will merge the three levels of war into a single new structure for the integration of complex air-land-sea combat operations. Linked to this greater scope for directing joint

simultaneous offensive operations is the emerging capability to immediately convert tactical success on the battlefield into decisive strategic results. Before tackling the issue of future war, however, we need to take a selective glance at wars of the past. Although a detailed account of the evolution of modern warfare is beyond the compass of this essay, it is possible to infer the general contours of change in the levels of war from the evidence provided by three watershed events in military history: Napoleon's Ulm campaign in 1805, the German blitzkrieg against France in 1940, and the American-led Operation Desert Storm in 1991. Such a review will establish a basis for judging the extent to which the levels of war are evolving into a new conceptual structure diverging dramatically from all previous experience. Recognition of this evolution is important. At the outset of World War II, far too many officers failed to realize that the time and space factors prevalent in World War I were outmoded and irrelevant. They grasped too late modern warfare's potential for accelerated reaction time and extended battlefield space. They were thus unable to adapt and adjust to the new requirements of wartime leadership. The Army's officer corps can not afford to repeat this experience in the future.

Descriptors : *MILITARY DOCTRINE , *TACTICAL WARFARE , *STRATEGIC WARFARE , NATIONAL SECURITY , LEADERSHIP , PERSIAN GULF WAR , BATTLEFIELDS , MILITARY OPERATIONS , OFFICER PERSONNEL , MILITARY HISTORY , REPRINTS , JOINT MILITARY ACTIVITIES

Subject Categories : Military Operations, Strategy and Tactics

Distribution Statement : APPROVED FOR PUBLIC RELEASE

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