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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

**THE RISE OF FIRES: A 21ST CENTURY CULTURE SHIFT
FOR THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS**

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

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AY 2020-21

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Executive Summary

Title: The Rise of Fires: A 21st Century Culture Shift for the United States Marine Corps

Author: Major Matthew Zach, United States Marine Corps

Thesis: The future relevance of the Marine Corps is tied directly to challenging its Infantry focused cultural paradigm with a new model tailored toward contemporary Great Power competition.

Discussion: The rising Chinese Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) threat in the Western Pacific Theater caused a pivot in the 2018 United States National Defense Strategy. In the following years, United States Marine Corps concepts, Joint Force strategy, and executive-level military guidance have significantly adjusted the technological development and organizational structuring efforts across the Department of Defense (DoD). The Marine Corps accepts its pivotal role in securing the close-in and contested sea lanes in support of the United States Navy's ability to safely navigate and project power in and beyond these littorals. These sweeping adjustments, clear identification of the Chinese *pacing threat*, and the explicit focusing of the institutional mission have created the conditions for assessing the culture of the Marine Corps.

Conclusion: The Infantry centric culture of the Marine Corps is not optimized to support the new institutional direction called for in the most recent DoD concepts and defined by the Chinese *pacing threat*. This Infantry bias creates a flawed paradigm, characterized by the phrase *to a hammer every problem appears a nail*. This paper offers an alternative, fires centric, cultural adjustment and proposes an additional employment concept aimed at supplementing existing Marine Corps and DoD concepts. This paper does not advocate for the elimination of the Infantry, rather it proposes missions which the Infantry is uniquely suited to fill within DoD's future concepts and advocates for retaining some level of its existing competencies for employment against *non-pacing* threats.

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THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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Preface

Built on the heels of two World Wars, the last 75 years of U.S. Counterinsurgency (COIN) and irregular warfare policy have created arguably the most lethal and revered military organization the world has ever known. A well-earned increase in U.S. reverence for the Infantry has allowed the branch to grow in prestige so that the sacrifices of this most bloodied section of the military receives its due recognition. My time in the Infantry has only known such unquestioned cultural ascendancy, and I wish to express how blessed I consider myself for having been associated with this illustrious community. In fact, in addition to having shaped a large part of who I am today, I feel the Infantry has benefited me in more ways than I think I have been able to repay. It is not out of any animosity or prejudice to the community that I set off on my research, nor were these factors in my recommendations. I merely wish to acknowledge and therefore draw to light that such relatively privileged perspective colors the lens through which future conflicts are viewed – which has the potential to blind us from what would otherwise be strategically obvious.

I must express my most sincere appreciation to Dr. Matthew Flynn, who not only served as my master's thesis advisor, but who was also my War Studies Instructor at Marine Corps Command and Staff College. I have benefitted from your leadership in the classroom, guidance on this project, and friendship throughout. I would also like to thank Dr. Lauren Mackenzie and Lieutenant Colonel Douglas Downey, USMC, for serving as Second Readers on this paper and sharing their respective Cross-Cultural Communications and Infantry perspectives. Next, thank you to Dr. Eric Shibuya of Marine Command and Staff College, Colonel Timothy Barrick, USMC, and his incredible staff of professionals at the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory's Wargaming Division. You provided an incredible venue for researching the Chinese *pacing*

threat, my introduction to wargaming, and an exceptional practical application of *Operational Art*. Not least of all, I must thank my wife, Captain Stephanie Damren, USMC, for her love and support. I know the additional hours spent on this endeavor compounded the stressors of the global pandemic, our geographic separation, and the operational demands of your final year of Company Command. You have handled it all with grace, and I cannot thank you enough.

I. Introduction

Today's threat landscape forces the Marine Corps to reevaluate its core tenet: every Marine, a Rifleman.¹ This ethos may prevent the Marine Corps from maintaining its relevancy and keep the United States from achieving strategic victory in a future dominated by the rising threat of China. A continued Infantry centric way of war leads to strategic defeat for it centers on a type of battle that a peer adversary recognizes as a U.S. center of gravity (CoG) and will seek to exploit by avoiding a confrontation featuring this U.S. strength. Not to prepare to face this threat of avoidance is unforgivable. Therefore, the future relevance of the Marine Corps is tied directly to challenging its Infantry focused cultural paradigm with a new model tailored toward contemporary Great Power competition.

The exponential Chinese political and military acceleration currently underway dominates the U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) threat analysis priorities and is the pre-eminent pacing threat behind the Marine Corps' future Force Design (FD) and operating concepts.² Russian expansionism hits the charts as the second largest threat to U.S. interests, specifically regarding international order and the relative stability enjoyed by nation-states for approximately the last quarter century, world-over.³ Despite this and other lesser priority threats, the U.S. military must accept the risk of prioritizing interwar period reshaping efforts around China. Otherwise, the constant measuring of threats breeds indecision, the "prepare for everything" mentality, which would advance ill preparedness for the next fight.

The Marine Corps accepts this challenge and has set an ambitious charter for organizational, structural change as seen in the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC) Planning Guidance (CPG) and Marine Corps FD 2030.⁴ Such momentous change will reshape the culture of the organization.⁵ Optimization around a pacing threat holds potential for proactive

cultural reform, like modernizing the ethos of “every Marine, a Rifleman.” Failure to acknowledge the role and importance of organizational culture and proactively direct its inertia likely leads to fighting tomorrow’s wars with yesteryear’s mentalities. This failure stems largely from two schools of thought, the first is an overreliance on perceived competitive advantages, where next generational technologies will serve as the third offset. The panacea for the building battlefield parity threatening the international status quo cannot revolve exclusively around mastering non battle-proven technological advancements, for the price of testing in battle is most often paid in blood. As for the second school of thought, the conceit in maintaining the culture based purely in nostalgic reverence to historic Infantry battle, one needs not look further than Psalm 16:18 for wisdom; “pride goeth before destruction, and a haughty spirit before the fall.”⁶ To address one of these two flawed mentalities without consideration paid to the other invites disaster in an Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) environment, referring to China’s unparalleled ability to threaten sinking U.S. capital naval assets with 21st century sensing and strike capabilities.

The Infantry’s Rise

To understand the strength of the Infantry’s central role in contemporary Marine Corps culture and understand the scope of the challenge of recrafting that culture, one must have an appreciation for how it developed in the first place. In analyzing the conditions that bred the Infantry’s rise in importance one can see similar conditions prevalent today suggestive of revolutionary military change. The ability to recognize, pivot around, and capitalize on these conditions before war breaks out could prove the difference between victory and defeat.

The emergence of a standing military with Infantry, Cavalry, and Artillery branches can be traced back to Alexander the Great in the 1st Century Anno Domini. Over the ages, the

Roman Legions, Napoleon's Grand Army, and the Central European Powers of the 19th Century famously experimented with these interdependent branches – each increasingly impacting the U.S. military's organization and strategy. As one branch became more effective and efficient in its lethality, mobility, and survivability, pressure was placed on the other branches to adapt. Additional domains like sea, air, space, and now information along with cyber, diluted the effects of ground warfare since strategic ends could be pursued while bypassing the bulk of the adversarial military force.⁷

Despite such conventional ground dilution, nothing is more central to Marine Corps dogma than the primacy of the Infantry. The preparation for armed hostilities waged by the Infantry dominates recruitment, inspires enlistment, serves as the foundation of all entry training, and drives peacetime active service consciousness. It is a belief system written into Marine Corps doctrinal publications.⁸ It is at the heart of the Marine Air Ground Task Force (MAGTF) concept, which emphasizes integration amongst all elements for increased Infantry support.⁹ It has surfaced throughout U.S. history as a contributing factor to the increased fighting power and efficiency resonant within the self-contained, hive-minded warrior culture.¹⁰ In short, it is the nucleus from which all else derives its purpose. The Marine Corps conception of war historically and ideologically knows no other way than that of Infantry exuberance. To suggest supplanting that principled pillar in favor of a more balanced support role within the context of a future great power struggle is currently viewed as heresy. However, surviving on the modern battlefield requires a review of this doctrinal creed.

Past successes can be a source of great pride and reinforce institutional ethics, derive ethos, drive esprit de corps, fill the ranks, and promote institutional credibility and viability. It can also cause the blinders through which future problems are incompletely viewed, paying

homage to the adage that to a hammer, every problem appears a nail. If China is truly accelerating toward technological local overmatch with the desire of surpassing the United States as the regional hegemon, then pursuing a future advanced warfighting theory that employs the Infantry traditionally relegates them to sponges for Chinese long-range precision guided missiles.¹¹

A regiment seizing Guadalcanal, Tarawa, Peleliu, or any of the legendary and bloody Pacific Theater island battles of World War II stands a very real chance of not even getting ashore in today's threat environment, especially considering they barely made it ashore in the 1940s. Public outcry for the 3,000 wounded and killed during the battle of Tarawa rang throughout the United States in 1943.¹² Those were the days where technological advancement necessitated sending a Marine Division of 12,000 Marines and Sailors ashore to take a small but heavily defended island. Replaying the same tactics 75 years later will most certainly prove exceedingly wasteful given improved weaponry and likely fail, jeopardizing strategic and operational objectives. It is only in removing *opposed* amphibious beach seizures from the menu that the United States can focus its operational and enterprise FD efforts on achieving effective deterrence and if necessary strategic victory in war.

While U.S. strategists in the World War II Pacific Theater ultimately arrived at the understanding that strategic bombing was the prelude to future warfare, the tools available at the time (apart from the atomic bomb) were simply too crude and ineffective to make it a reality.¹³ This theme was carried through the Korean and Vietnam Wars until the first Gulf War where non-linear warfare was proven with the Guided Bomb Unit (GBU), specifically the GBU-12 Paveway IIs.¹⁴ Today's long range, loitering, precision strike, and mass production capabilities, along with autonomous and artificial intelligence capabilities, hold the potential to extend kill

zones and Engagement Areas (EA) well beyond the range of ground forces. Additionally, U.S. joint operational planning and execution has advanced significantly since the costly U.S. naval, land, and air campaigns of World War II. The systems-of-systems that denote modern battlefields have only exponentially increased in sophistication and cost. With a relatively newfound unity of effort, the United States' military strategy poses an exponential threat to any would-be adversary in the Pacific.

The great power competition of today between the United States and China brings into question the beginning of the end of the United States uncontested enforcement of the global commons, a period spanning the last 75 years and featuring U.S. military superiority. This advantage reinforced the Infantry's primacy within the military culture because Infantry formations could maneuver on land, under the umbrellas of uncontested air, naval, and electro-magnetic spectrum domination. Put another way, the last 75 years of U.S. engagements continued an over reliance on ground forces, specifically the Infantry, because of fighting increasingly limited wars where opposition was contained largely within only one domain.

In a future war with China, all domains will not only be contested, but Infantry formations and traditional employment methods will be marginalized, shrinking land warfare's relevance. The Pacific Theater of operations exemplifies this concern with its massive ocean and near countless, small, and highly dispersed islands. Under these conditions, Infantry-on-Infantry battle will be avoided because of high casualty rates and logistical burdens associated with the vulnerability of extremely expensive platforms linked to supporting the Infantry on such remote real-estate. Such an acknowledgement recognizes the role of not just the platforms themselves, but the criticality of limiting their exposure within enemy threat EAs, known as threat rings for their appearance on maps.¹⁵

While the Infantry has undoubtedly earned its place as a critical component of the battlefield, that reality merits reevaluation given today's threat environment. Arthur Schopenhauer, an 18th Century German philosopher, once said "all truth passes through three stages: first it is ridiculed, second it is violently opposed, and finally it is accepted as being self-evident."¹⁶ Replacing the Infantry centric paradigm will undoubtedly face such phasing. This paradigm shift is reinforced by the Marine Corps' future warfighting publications, evidenced by the call for long range precision weapons, the American public's lack of appetite for U.S. military bloodletting, modern access to battlefield reporting, and the rise of the information domain's grey space operations.

Balance of Power Resurges: Conditions for Culture Shaping

The technological proliferations of U.S. rival states like China and Russia usher in a new era analogous to a resurgence of the 18th century balance of power paradigm that dominated the cradle of nation-states in Europe until the middle of the 20th century. These centuries of near continuous military campaigning bred primitive Infantry formations and established a heavy, necessary reliance on Infantry within national military cultures resonant in today's structures. Giant leaps forward in the technological advancement of long-range weapons have often and increasingly threatened the national military culture's Infantry centric focus. This can be seen in a wave top historical assessment of artillery advancements from wheeled cannons to the high angle and area fire of howitzers to the high precision, 300-kilometer range of High Mobility Artillery Rocket Systems (HIMARS),¹⁷ or the long, medium, and short range ballistic missiles that dominate China's arsenals today.¹⁸ The Infantry's waning primacy in the face of these more recent artillery advancements are only reinforced by the families of unmanned, loitering, long-range, and precision strike systems currently in service and those whose Commercial-Off-The-

Shelf (COTS) benefits encourage rapid evolution and increasing (non-Infantry) lethality potentials.

Similarly, where the 18th century was defined largely by limited warfare between belligerents and international coalitions aimed at keeping any one power from outright domination of the political landscape, so too will the future of conflict.¹⁹ The threat of nuclear weapons only reinforces the limited nature of future conflict as peer competitors possess these capabilities in troves. Mutually assured destruction theory thus exclusively raised the bar of conflict intolerance, where nuclear weapons would likely be employed by nation-states to the highest levels of strategic objectives centered on regime annihilation/preservation or where national collapse is otherwise threatened.²⁰ This albeit high-stakes and unreliable theoretical assumption opens conflict below these high strategic thresholds and creates maneuver space for peers wishing to increase their relative power with respect to their lesser strategic objectives. Under this train of thought, nuclear weapons are not the panacea for preventing all future conflict, but rather the ceiling preventing limited conflict from spilling into unlimited warfare.

The United States' rivals bolstering, harassing, subversion, and non-kinetic chess moves specifically in the cyber, information, and space domains aim to incrementally attain their expansionist national policy objectives while operating below the threshold of overt U.S. military kinetic engagement. The Center for Strategic and International Studies website provides a timeline of significant cyber incidents since 2006 with a focus on those carried out against the U.S. government, defense, and high-tech companies where losses exceeded one million dollars.²¹ China populates on the list over 60 times. Warfare on the modern state-on-state battlefield is tempered between these chess moves on the low end of conflict to the nuclear catalysts leading to mutually assured destruction on the high end, which leaves any version of awkward kinetic

conflict below such a doomsday event squarely in the limited warfare realm. None-the-less, U.S. conventional military forces must be organized, manned, equipped, sustained, and prepared for hostilities where operations at least threaten battle as though nuclear weapons were not on the menu.

To that end, the last four years' worth of National Military Strategy Planning documents, including Littoral Operations in a Contested Environment (LOCE) of 2017; the U.S. National Defense Strategy (NDS) of 2018; Expeditionary Advanced Based Operations (EABO) of 2018; Distributed Maritime Operations (DMO) of 2018; and the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard's Tri-Service Strategy of 2020 establish the vector of change and immediacy required to maintain the U.S. national competitive military advantage against these threats. The march of revolutionary enterprise change across the Marine Corps to meet this central vision will necessitate a cultural paradigm shift. Such an adjustment will likely move the main effort role away from the Infantry community as a suite of highly specialized military specialties and accompanying technological advancements predominates the future littoral lethality and survivability needs of the Joint Force.

Intellectual Foundation

Evaluating these key publications, mentioned above, establishes a needed intellectual foundation of where things stand today when it comes to the role of the Infantry. The 2018 EABO Handbook and recently released 2021 EABO Tentative Manual were created by the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab (MCWL) and the Deputy Commandant for Combat Development and Integration, respectively, to guide Marine Corps force development into the year 2030. They acknowledge the need for informed improvements to the handbook's theoretical framework and for additional related concepts regarding naval integration, operational designs, and capability

requirements. This iterative and collaborative approach to the EABO concept's future realization represents a fundamental aspect of its design and serves as the catalyst for this paper's research. Similarly, as current and future years' experimentation and wargaming efforts will benefit EABO development, they will also stand to gain significant insight from the cultural adjustments presented herein.

At the macro level, EABO addresses problems posed by near peer adversaries and presents a way for forward deployed U.S. naval forces, their allies, and partners to operate, fight, and survive in an A2/AD challenged environment. Developments in long-range precision fires, their sensor networks, the threat of their mass distribution, and corresponding ability to contest close and confined sea lanes have created the central challenge to the theorized next Great Power, or near peer to peer, war. The U.S. military recognizes the ever-changing character of war and seeks to leverage the current interwar period to advance Doctrine, Organization, Training, Materiel, Leadership and Education, Personnel, Facilities, and Policy/Cost (DOTMLPF-P/C) so as not to cede tactical initiative at or before the commencement of such hostilities. The handbook's scope is centered around shaping the Marine Corps into a future force that pivots around China within the Western Pacific, the U.S. '*pace threat*', and supports future joint and naval concepts like the Joint Concept for Access and Maneuver in the Global Commons (JAM-GC), LOCE, and DMO.

To this end, the handbook presents four *new operational imperatives*, which implicitly demand significant adjustments in organizational culture as they are tied to major force shaping decisions, which have already started being implemented.²² The imperatives are:

- Generate the virtues of mass without the vulnerabilities of concentration.
- Create more dispersed, resilient, and hard to target forward basing infrastructure.

- Create a more resilient Continental United States (CONUS) sea base to shore sustainment infrastructure capable of supporting distributed forces and operations.
- Win the hinder/finder competition.

These imperatives represent a 180-degree course adjustment in the status quo, which evolved over the last 75 years of U.S. global dominance. Failure to proactively assess and steer cultural reform will default change to chance as internal subcultures and countercultures remain unaddressed. Such unchecked resistance is at a minimum an irritation and at its worst either counterproductive or even devastating to success across all levels of war, especially if such countercultures drive the enterprise to view the problem set incorrectly.

The JAM-GC concept is the joint framework for attacking the A2/AD challenge and serves as the military hierarchy's higher-level guidance for the services to craft their respective initiatives around. The EABO Handbook, as the Marine Corps' concept, identifies JAM-GC's largest contribution to how the Marine Corps will posture and fight as the need for a *dual-postured* force. JAM-GC defines this term as possessing both *inside* and *outside* forces relative to the threat rings defining enemy long-range precision fire capabilities. Similarly, the future naval concepts, LOCE and DMO, incorporate and mutually support EABO to this end.

Within the *dual-postured* force there are both advantages and disadvantages that the *inside* and *outside* forces bring to the fight. Understanding these pros and cons will help shape the discussion about suitability of the Infantry for one mission versus the other and ultimately indicate whether an enterprise cultural shift is necessary. The former force is restricted by size, emission abilities, mission type orders, and is constricted by its persistent presence and, at times, reliance on partnering. However, it presents the enemy with the challenges of identifying, tracking, and the weapon-to-target low yield mismatch if it desires to eliminate the *inside* force.

The *outside* force is restricted by the time it can remain in the austere and increasingly vulnerable positions within the threat rings, however, they are decisive and bring both mass firing capabilities and large-scale maneuverability. The dynamic created between leveraging these two polar-opposite forces creates complex problems for the enemy to solve and gives rise to a competitive advantage over the adversary.

This context is reinforced within the EABO Handbook, and it is here where the current culture of the Marine Corps is primed to drive in the wrong direction without proactive cultural shaping operations. If the Infantry forms the nucleus of the *inside* force as historical employment methods and future force composition is currently being shaped, then the size of such *inside* forces is already starting off with ‘full boat seats’ before the capabilities and specialties required by the *inside* force’s mission are accounted for. This ‘bolt on as required’ mentality quickly decreases the asymmetric advantage required by such a force if it is to support the *outside* force.

This analysis also addresses key thinking beyond the official publications mentioned above. Before digging into the literature that inspired these military concepts, it is first important to examine the respective books by authors Jeannie Johnson and Paula Homes-Eber, *the Marines, Counterinsurgency and Strategic Culture*, and *Culture in Conflict* because they help tell the story of where the institution is today and how it arrived. Both authors are highly regarded, not only for their ability to deconstruct the essence of what it is to be a Marine in today’s Marine Corps, but their works are lauded as must reads for their descriptions of COIN warfare, innovation within the military, and shifting strategic identity. Johnson warns that even the Marine Corps, which prides itself on its ability to innovate, can be blinded by its own institutional biases. Her work even comes with an endorsement, in the form of a foreword by Jim Mattis, a retired United States Marine General and former Secretary of Defense (SecDef), who

spent much of his executive military and civilian careers advocating for improving America's military lethality.²³ To this end, Holmes-Eber's work is complementary and examines Mattis' cultural pivot of the Marine Corps circa 2005, when he was the commander of Marine Corps Combat Development Command. Holmes-Eber wrote how Mattis' initiative centered on transforming the Marine Corps into a "cultural savvy" organization, one which could rise to the challenges of irregular warfare confronting Marines in Iraq and Afghanistan and which sustains it today. With an eye for how the Marine Corps recently and significantly adjusted its culture, it is possible to see not only the possibility of another culture shift, but the undeniable necessity, given the pivot away from COIN and back to conventional warfare with a peer pacing threat.

Next, this study examines the literature which describes the multidomain operational environment that today's military must compete and win within. Authors Christian Brose and Kim Zetter, and co-authors P.W. Singer and August Cole, in their respective books, *The Kill Chain*, *Countdown to Zero Day*, and *Ghost Fleet*, are touted on official U.S. military reading lists, dominate contemporary scholastic discussions in and out of classrooms, and are heavily promoted by Marine Corps generals and senior field grade officers. Their influence at the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of the military cannot be overstated. Individually these books cast an ominous shadow over the future of armed conflict, but, when taken collectively, they present a more holistic view of the challenges that lay ahead in a U.S.-Chinese conventional-irregular hybrid war waged in the Western Pacific, and in that way provide a blueprint for change.

The 2020 publication of *The Kill Chain* expresses how America's sources of historically uncontested military strength are rapidly eroding and how China has used the last two decades of U.S. military engagement in the Middle East to play catch-up, with the ultimate aim of

challenging U.S. sea and air power projection within their sphere of influence. This seminal work builds upon concepts espoused in the 2014 release of *Countdown to Zero Day* and the 2015 publication, *Ghost Fleet*. The former tells the story behind the malicious cyber-engineered threats, known as *zero-day* attacks, that sabotaged Iran's nuclear proliferation program circa 2010. This story aptly articulates the beginning of an era in warfare where a digital attack can levy the scale of devastating strategic effects comparable to what would have historically only been achievable through a kinetic fire action on par with dropping a megaton bomb. *Ghost Fleet* channels the essence of *Countdown to Zero Day* in a U.S.-Chinese future war scenario. It expands the 2010 proven digital attack to include other issues not prevalent in modernity including supply chain exploitation; Global Positioning System (GPS), space-based communications, and imagery network dismantling via anti-satellite weapons and electronic attack; and swarming Unmanned Autonomous Systems (UAS) with various payloads and capabilities simultaneously being brought to bear in mass formations. These are but a few *wicked issues*. The fusion of these threats inches closer to the hidden potential of the next Great Power Conflict and undoubtedly contributed to the orientation of JAM-GC, EABO, LOCE, and DMO.

The threats presented may only scratch the surface of future warfare capabilities, but they certainly drive home the notion that war is increasing in complexity. Expanding domains and significant technological leaps require a military cultural assessment and likely update given that the last time 'Great Powers' conventionally fought dates back 75 years. The risk of strategic defeat in future war forces the U.S. military to solve these problems in the interwar period to higher degrees than in the past when adapting mid-war was costly, but sufficient. Solving the question of whether the Infantry ought to remain the central focus of the Marine Corps going

forward will inform every aspect of DOTMLPF-P/C and could prove the deciding factor in not only what the *inside* and *outside* forces look like, but whether they will be successful.

Just as important to consider are the conclusions arising from the Marine Corps focus on wargaming. The MCWL wargames include scenarios where Chinese expansionist aggression provokes U.S. military intervention and erupts into full scale war. This author has participated in one such wargame, which afforded an opportunity to test this paper's working theories.

Additionally, the MCWL provided (unclassified) instruction on Chinese national strategy and evolving military capabilities, centered largely around Rand Corporation reports. These reports also reinforced for this author the idea that large Infantry-on-Infantry battle has largely been eclipsed by modern sensor and strike capabilities. Perspectives gained from planning and then wargaming from the Red Cell, or Chinese, perspective provided the following insights:

- A2/AD ships (including large numbers of submarines) and missile threats pose significant risk, which proved difficult to account for.
- Attrition warfare erupts at the commencement of hostilities and offers advantage to the first side to strike.
- General sea and air control is not realistic.
- Temporary and local sea and air control will require significant material and time investments.
- Ground forces will play merely a minor and supporting role compared to naval and air power projection.
- Targeting priorities followed a theme of naval, anti-air, aviation, rocket, and then ground forces.

- Once a firing asset's location is compromised it stands a high likelihood of being destroyed.
- To increase survivability, distribution of firing assets must be maximized.
- Terrain offers only temporary advantage.
- Attaining targeting data for strike packages following hostilities commencing becomes exponentially difficult as time progresses, giving advantage to the side that targets earlier than the opposition.
- Cyber, information, and electromagnetic warfare operations pose serious local and general ramifications.

The above insights may seem obvious or generalized, but when faced with an opponent in a wargame they became focal points that either dominated planning or severely punished one side or the other if not paid enough attention. The mission of Marine Infantry units revolves around locating, closing with, and destroying the enemy by fire and maneuver. This broad phrase could easily apply to the operational concept of a future war by recognizing the difficulties in pairing targeting data with killing assets, in preserving those assets for future utility, and avoiding strengths while pursuing weaknesses. In short, wargaming is likely to help fuel a possible reassessment of the role of the Infantry and reinforce the assumption that the Infantry has a [supporting] role to play in winning a future Pacific campaign.²⁴ The question remains, is the Infantry's primacy in question? If so, what specialty offers the solution for dislodging it?

Military Culture Analysis and Models

Organizational culture plays an important role in how the Marine Corps structures itself for the next fight. China examines these ways and means as a variable in its assessment against its own power to gage the cost-benefit and likelihood of success in achieving its strategic ends by

engaging in limited war with the United States. In *Arms and Influence*, Thomas Schelling describes the principles that countries use toward leveraging their violent capabilities as diplomatic bargaining chips. He argues that throughout history military power has been used to persuade, intimidate, and coerce other countries into actions that are favorable for the influencing country. It is the power to hurt, encompassing perceptions and threats of force, that he claims is the bargaining power, which drives international relations.²⁵ Under Schelling's coercion theory framework, the Marine Corps holds a pivotal role at the blunt and strike layer, the forward edge of the U.S. engagement zone, within the U.S. strategy of deterring China from going to war.

The ways in which the Marine Corps shapes its future exercises within the Pacific Theater, the prepositioning of Marine Corps manpower and capabilities within Chinese threat zones prior to war, and especially how the Marine Corps will organize, man, train, and equip are all intertwined with culture. It is the U.S. military's (and the Marine Corps', as a critical subcomponent) culture with which China will ultimately derive its war calculations. Simply put, a large Infantry centric footprint remains in keeping with more traditional employment methods reminiscent of the World War II island hopping campaign, but with modern technology. Such a continued force posture and ethos would reasonably be perceived as capable of being defeated given that large formations of ground troops on a small island can be easily located, tracked, targeted, and killed with current technology.

The notion that naval support will remain offshore in support of large ground forces was proven a fallacy during World War II when the United States Navy was confronted with the opposing strategy of seeking out and destroying the Imperial Japanese Fleet.²⁶ The Chinese Navy will most certainly present the same competing interest and preoccupy U.S. Fleets leaving ground forces under supported. Also, China's stockpiles of medium and long range

intercontinental ballistic missiles serve as one example of the killing means, which would quickly counter a large U.S. ground force. These threats serve as the largest operational constraint requiring small ground force footprints so that once placed ashore, they stand the greatest odds of remaining undetected and if detected, then register as a relatively low payoff target.

Within Schelling's description of diplomacy, he discusses the ability to project military power and influence a nation's actions. He adroitly points out that doing so requires more than mere military capabilities and hinges on a nation's ability to persuade another country that they are willing to fight at great cost and risk.²⁷ The imitation and power of suggestion principles Schelling discusses in his analysis of the U.S.-Soviet arms race during the Cold War offer a glimpse into the future of U.S.-Chinese competition.²⁸ In their books, Singer and Brose each discuss the arms races of the future and arrive at the conclusion that the brute force, production centric, highly centralized, but still lacking, integration amongst systems and networks model of America's military makes it incredibly vulnerable. Large platforms like Aircraft Carriers and F-35 Joint Strike Fighters have relatively long production timelines and astronomical financial costs, especially when compared to the technology that can kill them. The U.S. Navy is confronting the challenges of reshaping and distributing its fleets to build resiliency.²⁹ As an element of the Navy, the Marine Corps must shape its future culture with careful consideration to the rest of the Naval Service. This encompasses the monumental cultural changes that are associated in moving from the one dozen multibillion-dollar carriers and the support ships within their strike groups to a fleet of 1.5 times the Navy's current size. Such change leads to more independent naval missions capable of simultaneously covering more sea space and supports the

dual-forces concept. The CMC has anticipated and reinforced this concept with FD 2030 and the CPG.

Perhaps the most well-known scholarly work on cultural analysis models is Edgar Schein's "levels of analysis," which serves as the framework that R. Zimmerman uses in his 2019 Rand Study, *Movement and Maneuver: Culture and the Competition for Influence Among the U.S. Military Services*.³⁰ This Rand Study analyzes large-scale, key transition periods within the DoD and how the existing subcultures worked against the organizational changes that years later have become staples of daily operations. The Marine Corps' longtime opposition to creating a Special Operations Forces (SOF) unit despite SecDef Donald Rumsfeld urging serves as a credible example. The study asserts three essential arguments:

- Service personalities are strong and evolve slowly.
- Each Service's edge over their strategic higher headquarters has decreased.
- Increasing complexity altered the character of inter-Service competition where the Marine Corps and United States Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) have increased in clout and thus their share in limited resources and missions.

These arguments are equally valid for intra-Service analysis, and specifically within the Marine Corps for the purposes of Marine Corps future culture shaping. They can be summarized as:

- Military occupational specialties (MOSs) are strong, evolve slowly, and the Infantry dominates the rest.
- Each specialty's edge over headquarters and decision-making agencies has declined relative to the Infantry.
- Increasing complexity altered the character of inter-Service competition giving the Infantry the largest voice at the table.

These three Marine Corps Infantry focused arguments provide the lens for looking at the institutional biases and heuristics that shape how the Service addresses planning along the conflict continuum. Challenging this sacred cow will undoubtedly draw other elements of organizational change to light and present additional areas of future study.

In crafting a new cultural paradigm, the lens through which the threat and its intentions are viewed will undeniably have an impact on strategic and operational design efforts. These efforts directly feed organizational planning considerations. In international relations theory, realism and liberalism are often contrasted perspectives of how state actors view the world and interact on the world stage. Understanding and building around both lenses is essential in crafting a robust military strategy that will hold up over time as U.S. national policy ebbs and flows. The goal in creating a military strategy is engineering enough flexibility to absorb shifting political views, and ensuring it is inseparable from and responsive to adversarial interpretation and actions. The enemy always gets a vote.

John Mearsheimer and his 2000 book, *Anarchy and the Struggle for Power*, serves as a vanguard for political realism. He states, “Great Powers are always searching for opportunities to gain power over rivals, with hegemony as their final goal... the system is populated with great powers that have revisionist intentions at their core... a compelling logic behind their seeking to maximize their share of world power.” Mearsheimer’s often cited descriptions pit actors against one another in a sort of zero-sum game where offensive actions and might aid actors to improve and retain their position. He further distills his five assumptions of the international system as:

- The international system is anarchic.
- Great powers inherently possess some offensive capability.
- States can never be certain about other states’ intentions.

- Survival is the primary goal of great powers.
- Great powers are rational actors.

Mearsheimer states that a “combination of the five assumptions leads to three general patterns of behavior: fear, self-help, and power maximization.” Under this paradigm China may provoke a future war fearing that U.S. regional influence is weakening the communist regime. They may view a requirement to escalate in a sort of arms race until they believe they have tactical and operational advantages. With these advantages comes the ability to strike as an essential and natural means of regime normalcy and/or legitimacy. Lastly, China could commence hostilities to increase their operational reach and strategic power to weaken international actors. All three scenarios speak to a need for a strong and legitimate deterrence strategy of which the United States’ and allied military overmatch remains essential. Elements of all three rational are on display in China’s provocations, most notably their military build-up blatantly centered on surpassing existing U.S. military capability. Drastically redefining the context for how the United States would fight a future war reigns paramount against this realist backdrop.

On the other end of the spectrum is Thomas Walker’s and David Rousseau’s, *Liberalism: A Theoretical and Empirical Assessment*, describing a democratic peace theory. While China can hardly be considered a democracy by western definitions, they possess a contemporary, free market, global economy and are increasing their international outreach. These are on display within their 2013 concept for a global infrastructure plan named the *Belt and Road Initiative* and make their political aims subject to some liberal analysis.³¹ To this end, Walker and Rousseau provide the following remarks on how democratic states behave:

- They are less likely to initiate and escalate conflicts with other states.

- They are more likely to engage in international trade and investment, and the resultant interdependence will contribute to peace.
- They are more likely to seek cooperative solutions through international institutions.

Again, China, as an anti-Marxist yet communist state, does not adhere perfectly to the liberal perspective. However, their ties to the international system and global economy certainly create vulnerabilities should conflict arise. As should always be the case, a whole of government approach must ensure U.S. interests are protected in the Pacific and, if conflict breaks out, to continue such an approach so as not to limit military might as the sole means of enacting resolution. Pursuing a military strategy, which centers on a conventional ground force, specifically Infantry, likely unhinges the joint and whole of government strategy. Doing so results in bloodletting, which either bogs down services at the tactical and operational level or bifurcates their strategies altogether, thus weakening their overall ability to achieve strategic success.

II. A NEW PARADIGM: EVERY MARINE A RIFLEMAN, NO MORE

Marine Corps Warfighting Publications are strewn with the phrase “every Marine a Rifleman.” Coined by General Alfred M. Gray, the 29th CMC, this theme is echoed as the narrative driving the identity of today’s Marine Corps and has served the Corps well for the last 40 years. This idea is taught to Marines early in entry training, parroted annually as they are sent back to the rifle range for two weeks of qualification training, in various iterations of annual basic skills refresher training, and is a unique moniker among the branches, which many argue helps ensure its future relevance. Undeniably a hallmark of the institution the phrase has been under attack by critics for years following sentiments that all Marines may be qualified with a rifle, but not all Marines are Riflemen – a title which also marks a basically trained Infantry

Marine. The dilution of this Infantry title creates a straw man argument with no greater depth than a hierarchical pecking and scratching, usually advocated by the dominant, institutional “main effort” class – the Infantry. While this author recognizes that such sentiments exist, he wishes to break from that line of exclusive cultural elitism and instead argue for the phrase’s refinement from a point of strategic necessity.

Indeed, there are many benefits to having such a phrase, which creates a proud, fighting ethos within the ranks, separates the Marine Corps from the rest of the DoD, and sends a message externally to our partners, allies, and even adversaries. However, the institution would lose none of these advantages if the word “Rifleman” were replaced with “Warrior.” This word choice has nothing to do with political correctness – although benefits from it – and everything to do with sending a clearer message both internally and externally and providing the endorsement to fully embrace other warfighting functions as equal contributors to the waring agency.

In an age of increased technological sophistication and complexity, where time off the battlefield is a precious preparatory commodity, a ripple throughout the institution to address the issues of an antiquated slogan while maintaining and even enhancing its desirable intangibles is effort well spent. The modern battlefield is too complex to make the Infantry a master of all things and the threat environment will not permit large Infantry formations with large enabling capabilities. Now is the time to shift to a culture where historic enablers are thrust into (semi-) independent main effort roles and where they may have to perform traditional Infantry skill sets on their own or with limited enabling Infantry support. To be clear, this paper advocates for retaining an Infantry background across the Service’s specialties for the known benefits and likelihood that pure Infantry formations will be stripped away from Expeditionary Advanced

Bases (EABs). Modernizing the slogan merely removes a cultural obstacle that is currently inhibiting the institution from embracing prioritizing other specialties as potential main efforts.

This brings up a discussion about what it means to be a *main effort* and how the concept relates to replacing the title Rifleman with Warrior within the Corps' cultural slogan. In battle, the main effort unit rotates to maintain tempo and momentum, which helps keep the enemy off balance. If a unit remains the main effort in perpetuity, it will eventually reach a culmination point, where its energy, resources, or will are depleted or worse yet, the enemy is able to analyze, dissect, adapt to, and exploit even a highly effective unit. If one cannot be strong everywhere all at once, then one must choose where and when to weight effort; and those lines of operation, and units conducting them, become the main effort. In the multi-domain wars of the future, assessing the domains where the enemy is strong and striking him where he is weak will continue to be a timeless principle of war and reinforces the argument that there is always something to exploit. If the Infantry represents the preponderance of the ground forces pushed ashore and the *inside* force contains several mirror imaged EABs, which look and fight similar to the World War II paradigm, but with modern systems, then the United States is ceding significant asymmetric advance potential and making it possible and easier for China to exploit.

Maintaining an organizational culture where the Infantry is always the base unit for attacking a problem and forcing all other supporting elements to cram Infantry training into their specialized deployment training programs – especially in a future warfighting concept that prioritizes fighting beyond the front line of troops – screams counterproductive. A cultural shift that recognizes the need for other specialties to rotate into and out of the institutional main effort role is needed more so now than ever. Revisiting the phrase, “to a hammer, every problem appears a nail,” further embodies this point. Creating a culture where other specialties are thrust

into the strategic, operational, and/or tactical main effort role creates compounding asymmetric and nonlinear competitive advantages, which is something the Infantry will be hard pressed to continue to do. Examples of what a rotating main effort paradigm would look like follow, with a deep dive on the specialty which offers the most significant threat to countering rising Pacific challenges.

The artillery community's historic claim as "the King of Battle" will be reinforced as the next generation of long range, precision strike, and loiter-able capabilities comes online.³² In an EABO future war where a central role of the Marine Corps is predicated on protecting naval assets in the close and confined sea lanes of the Western Pacific, long range precision fires will rule supreme. The Low Altitude Air Defense (LAAD) military specialty, which was largely sidelined over the last several decades when U.S. air dominance was assured will now see a significant rise in hierarchical clout, as will the specialized communications, signals intelligence, ground reconnaissance, and Intelligence, Surveillance, and Reconnaissance (ISR) drone operators. The Infantry base operating unit will need to shrink in size to accommodate supporting these other specialties and adopt a mindset centered on an aversion for decisive, small arms, direct-fire, and ground based battle – all of which running counter to the current Infantry ascendancy and institutional ethos. The Marine Corps, in many respects, is the best postured U.S. military branch to adopt required changes, as the CPG and FD 2030 readily note. The 'Warrior' cultural adjustment makes this clear and while not much of a shift, it is still significant and necessary.

Future war in the Pacific, as was the case in World War II, prioritizes local air and naval superiority and power projection.³³ This naval warfare distinction is an important break from the ground centric operational approaches employed across Europe and the Middle East from World

War I to present.³⁴ The Marine Corps' role in supporting this naval reality is threatening enemy sea lines of communication and the zero-sum game of localized Freedom of Navigation (FoN). The standard hub for ground employment models within the *inside* force should therefore center on a single long-range, precision-fires capability and replicating this *hub* to create a mutual reinforcement effect. Additionally, in order to subtract Infantry from this employment method requires a focus toward minimizing optical, radio frequency, and electromagnetic detection to the greatest degree possible and distributing additional mutually supporting fires capabilities across as many islands and choke points as feasible. The desired end state is to complicate the enemy's FoN calculus while achieving the benefits of mass without the vulnerabilities of concentration.

The artillery hubs would need 'bolt-on' enabler support like the current Marine Special Operations Command employment models.³⁵ At a minimum, these capabilities would include specialists in communications, Joint Terminal Air Control (JTAC), signals intelligence, medium range ISR detachments, and engineers. Cyber and Information Operations Specialists would remain critical supporting multipliers, however, they must not be physically located with the forward hubs as they pose significant risk to the electromagnetic obfuscation of the hubs. Additional enabling capabilities in direct support to the fire's hubs would be countermining forces and the surface and air connectors that would move the hubs to and from shore.

Various tailorable task organization solutions are demanded in the future fight. The above fire's hub with mission tailorable enabler suites is no panacea, but it does provide guidance for reshaping and standardizing Marine Corps training and organization methods. The largest immediate criticism of this concept would be that it threatens the viability of the institution in suggesting that the Infantry is no longer relevant – currently the largest specialty within the Marine Corps, which handles the majority of non-combat, forward deployed missions, and from

which all other specialties derive their essential purposes.³⁶ In fact this paper's assertions do not advocate for the irrelevance of the Infantry, rather, they leave room for new additional Infantry-centric missions and the continuation of those on-going, on-call, and cyclical missions, which characterize the Marine Corps' steady-state planning. Within a future Pacific threat environment, one new Infantry-centric mission would be as a strategic or operational reserve deployed as an *outside* force. Another new mission would be to fill some of the limited 'bolt-on' enabler boat seats in support of the fire's hub within the *inside* force, when demanded by certain mission planning requirements. However, with a strategic and/or operational focus on avoiding large Infantry-on-Infantry battle, attention shifts to the small scale, mass distribution of artillery and joint fires as the focal point. Therefore, the current Marine Corps model of organizing around a large Infantry battalion, regiment, or division sized hub and supplying 'bolt-on' enabler sets as required is no longer viable as the [standard] baseline unit, specifically when in support of naval and air warfare.

Future warfare's long range fires abilities from distributed and obfuscated firing positions require minimal manning, increasing the odds of remaining hidden or, if discovered, to tip the scales of cost inequality in favor of the United States. Latching the advocated fire's hub and enablers onto an Infantry unit breaks this model; however, when required, an Infantry detachment could be bolted onto the former. Although the Marine Corps stereotypically scrutinizes manning requirements more so than other services, the future fight will require still leaner formations to a degree organizationally popularized as: "if it is not painful to operate that small, then the formation is not small enough" or "where every boat space matters."

The larger the footprint that needs to be put ashore – i.e., Forward Arming and Refueling Points (FARPs), airfields, logistics centers, etc. – the more that fire's centric teams will be

needed further forward. The hubs will offensively disrupt the enemy's internal sea control lines that threaten the larger friendly force and contribute to the greater, joint defense in depth. Additionally, this employment model requires an organizational mentality predisposed to viewing physical terrain as serving a temporary purpose, which can be abandoned as quickly as it is taken. This mentality must permeate not only the small fire's centric hubs, but the larger footprints as well. This fire's centric, small-scale hub will need to be temporarily established ashore, ideally on deserted islands, and periodically relocate its cold and hot firing positions on the same and different islands. If an enemy threatens to seize the island, then the option to engage them with the team's organic fires or additional joint fires remains in play. However, due to the small size of the force and their capability footprint, the hubs may also decide to withdraw from the locale – potentially sabotaging their equipment and leaving in place, or with the purpose of re-establishing on an adjacent island, or even drawing the enemy into a known area for joint targeting and striking them soon thereafter.

As discussed, organizational cultural inertia will vehemently balk at such perceived regressive changes, and simply shrinking the overall size of the Infantry community writ large without significantly reshaping the employment model and proactively reshaping its culture misses the point entirely. The type of changes necessary moving forward require flipping the current operational paradigm on its head. Specifically, decisive (operational) battle is a mirage as peer-on-peer Infantry battle in modernity leads to ever increasing bloodletting on both sides without a corresponding advance toward (strategic) victory. This outcome is reinforced by adversarial recognition of U.S. Infantry might in modernity and suggests their operational approach will avoid this conventional CoG in favor of more efficient and effective means.

III. Recommendations

Shrinking the overall size of the Infantry, as announced in the CPG with the elimination of three active duty and two reserve Infantry battalions and one Infantry regimental headquarters, is a necessary step in growing and improving the above-mentioned sensing and killing specialties and capabilities within the realities of institutional budgetary constraints. Such changes are not drastic enough, especially in scope and size. Driven by tactical necessities, the Infantry employment model must also change and with it the Marine Corps' operational approach to achieving the strategic ends specified in EABO and JAM-GC. This can be accomplished by proactively addressing the elements of institutional culture. Specifically, one significant suggestion revolves around updating the slogan "every Marine a 'Warrior' vice 'Rifleman.'" The related organizational change to accompany this culture shift, may be realized in replacing the Infantry hub of the current employment model with a fire's hub reinforced with highly specialized enabler sets. The technological modernization of these fire's hubs, how they locate, close with, and destroy the enemy, is a corresponding necessity to address and although outside the scope of this paper, it remains a critical point of future research.

Given the current threat environment and lacking sufficient mobility and survivability platforms for establishing lodgments in the face of prepared peer opposition ashore, the Marine Corps would do well to strike this task from its playbook. Amphibious (via sea and air) landings ashore should only be conducted against either vacant shores or shores made vacant by precision fires. Conventional Infantry employment models are best suited as predominantly *outside* forces that could be periodically called forward to verify the security of islands cleared by fires. They could also be utilized as *inside* forces protecting temporary, expeditionary infrastructure like FARPs, airfields, and logistics bases. However, these larger positions would remain better protected if under the umbrella of multiple, more forward operating fire's hubs. When not in

support of future Pacific naval and air campaigns, the Marine Corps would be well suited to retain its more traditional employment methods for the Infantry.

In a future Pacific fight, surveillance of an island should yield a high degree of certainty via geospatial intelligence that enemy formations do not exist. If they do exist, they should be targeted by long range, precision weapons until they are eliminated. Once an island is cleared by ISR and confirmed as such by a small reconnaissance element, specialized fire's hubs such as long-range observation posts/listening posts, ground-maritime teams, and ground-air missile teams should be emplaced. Periodically relocate these teams. Disengage and withdraw hubs that come under enemy pressure. Destroy the agents of pressure through joint precision fires. The Infantry should be sent in to confirm either the destruction of an enemy formation or to prove that the island was clear to begin with, if a small reconnaissance element cannot sufficiently achieve the same end. Should the reconnaissance element encounter chance contact, there is minimal benefit to giving decisive battle. Ground forces seeking decisive engagement with an enemy ground force will cede their anonymity and quickly slew enemy sensors and precision, long-range weapons to their positions. Regiment, battalion, or even company sized formations on islands will be easily targeted by geospatial and even terrestrial sensing provided by satellite, electro-magnetic, and radio-frequency monitoring technologies. Therefore, every Marine and Sailor pushed ashore must be scrutinized for their contribution to the mission of protecting sea lanes, a mission which is not aligned to decisive ground combat or the Infantry.

This study began with a research question centered around the assigned Chinese *pacing threat*: can the Marine Corps maintain its relevance and achieve strategic, operational, and tactical victory with an Infantry centric culture? The recommendations in this analysis should help U.S. strategic and operational planners and decision makers think about how to change with

respect to China. Additional study should be conducted to focus on how these changes address other threats below China, i.e., Russia, Iran, and Violent Extremist Organizations. And lastly, accepting any of the assertions presented herein will drive near unlimited future research questions for the Marine Corps as it steps into the EABO mandate, including:

- Is the Infantry going to kinetically clear islands? If so why?
- Is the Infantry going to secure islands without direct fire kinetic engagements? If with kinetic engagements, then why? If without kinetics, why is the Infantry needed?
- Which close in and contested sea lanes need protecting? This will drive how many large footprints and fire's hubs are needed.
- What are the effects needed from Marines landed ashore? i.e., FARP security? Overt presence with anti-ship/anti-air assets to threaten the adversary/demonstrate sea lanes are controlled? If so LAAD and HIIMARS are needed, so what is the Infantry doing?
- Is the United States currently operating in the specific areas of interest prior to a war declaration?
- Why do Tomahawk Cruise Missiles on subs and surface ships not threaten the area that ground forces will be employed on sufficiently?
- What are the future fires hub's strike capability requirements?
- What is the optimal [standard] size and specialty task organization and table of equipment for the above advocated fire's hub?

End Notes

1. A 2016 Marine Corps Gender Neutral Titles Review replaced the word ‘man’ within several but not all, now legacy, titles. For instance, Infantryman was replaced with Infantry Marine. However, Rifleman was not updated. This author has focused on whether the Infantry branch remains viable as the main effort in a future war where the Marine Corps is strategically in support of the Joint Force. Rescoping this paper’s intent to revisit gender is a topic for future research.
2. M. M. Gilday. *CNO NAVPLAN 2021*. Chief of Naval Operations, United States Navy. (Jan 2021). Admiral Gilday reiterates in his Tri Service Announcement that China is the United States’ “most pressing long-term strategic threat.” This reiteration of the “pacing threat” defined in the 2018 U.S. National Defense Strategy and other following Service level capstone documents remains the military focus.
3. Jim Mattis. *Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America*. (19 Jan. 2018) www.dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf.
4. United States Marine Corps. *Force Design 2030: March 2020*, in *CMC38 Force Design 2030. Report Phase I and II.pdf* (2020). See also, United States Marine Corps. *Commandant's Planning Guidance: 38th Commandant of the Marine Corps*, in *38th Commandant's Planning Guidance 2019.Pdf*. (2019). www.hqmc.marines.mil.
5. The Marine Corps defines culture as a web of meanings shared or partially shared by members of a group. To be successful, commanders and staffs consider five fundamental aspects of culture when planning and executing military operations: People use culture to understand the world and make decisions. Aspects of culture are interconnected, sometimes in unfamiliar ways. Culture is learned. Culture is not homogenous in a group; there will be internal variation. Culture is created by people and can and does change. United States Marine Corps. *The Marine Corps Language, Regional Expertise & Culture (LREC) Strategy: 2016-2020*. https://www.usmcu.edu/Portals/218/CAOCL/files/2016-20_USMC_LREC_Strategy_MCCDC_22Dec15.pdf?ver=2018-10-01-124416-513
6. *The Holy Bible. Psalm 16:18*. King James Version, (Oxford UP, 1998).
7. Victor Davis Hanson. *Carnage and Culture Landmark Battles in the Rise to Western Power*. (New York: Anchor, Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2002). Hanson delivers his assessment of western cultures’ superior and inseparable impacts on the advancement of warfare with a look at nine landmark battles from ancient Greece to modern times.
8. United States Marine Corps. *MCDP 1-0 Warfighting*. (2017) 1-4. This seminal publication states 6 Enduring Marine Corps Principles, the first of which is “Every Marine is a Rifleman.”
9. Marine Corps Order 3120.3, *The Organization of Marine Air-Ground Task Forces*. (December 1963). This order answered the 1952 Congressional mandate for the Marine Corps to integrate its air and ground forces and has stood in place ever since.
10. Tom Clavin and Robert Drury, *The Last Stand of Fox Company*. (Grove Press, 2009). This book illustrates an iconic Korean War Marine battle at the Chosin Reservoir where non infantry Marines could be counted on to reinforce a depleted Marine defense and fend off significant Chinese advancements.
11. House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence. *A Redacted Summary of the China Deep Dive: A Report on the Intelligence Community’s Capabilities and Competencies with Respect to the People’s*

Republic of China. (Sept. 2020). This Intelligence Community report assesses the threats posed by Chinese developmental and existing capabilities, like bomber aircraft, land-attack cruise missiles, land-based intermediate-range ballistic missiles, hypersonic cruise missiles, unmanned aerial vehicles, and long-range submarine launched cruise missiles.

12. Joseph Alexander. *Across the Reef: The Marine Assault of Tarawa*. (Washington D.C.: Marine Corps History Center, 1993) 1-13.

13. Mark Clodfelter. *Beneficial Bombing: The Progressive Foundations of American Air Power, 1917-1945*. (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2010).

14. Tad A. Schnaufer. "Redefining Hybrid Warfare: Russia's Non-Linear War against the West." *Journal of Strategic Security*, vol. 10, no. 1, (2017) 20. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/26466892. Accessed 20 Jan. 2021. This article defines non-linear war as a more efficient means of achieving strategic goals without having to fight conventionally, citing the terms emergence in the 1990s.

15. Christian Brose. *The Kill Chain: Defending America in the Future of High-Tech Warfare*. (Hachette Books, 2020). The author discusses the over reliance the U.S. military places on easily targetable platforms like aircraft carriers and the disproportionate cost-benefit overwhelmingly favoring China in launching a missile(s) to destroy them.

16. Arthur Schopenhauer. *The World as Will and Representation*. Translated by E. F. J. Payne. Preface to the First Edition, Vol. 1, (Dove Publications, 1966).

17. Lockheed Martin. *Fast Facts: High Mobility Artillery Rocket System*. (2020). <https://www.lockheedmartin.com>.

18. Michael S. Chase. *PLA Rocket Force Modernization and China's Military Reforms*. Rand Corporation Testimony of Michael S. Chase to the U.S.-China Economic and Security Review Commission. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corp., 2018). This report states that in 2015, China redesignated their Second Artillery Force into a Rocket Force and made it a full service with the focus on modernizing land-based ballistic and cruise missiles. At the time, China's arsenal had 75-100 intercontinental ballistic missiles with clear intent to continue to exponentially increase their magazines.

19. David G. Chandler. *The Campaigns of Napoleon*. (Scribner Publishing, 1973). This account shows the evolving alliances that rose to balance the French Army during the reign of Napoleon.

20. Alan J. Parrington. *Mutually Assured Destruction Revisited, Strategic Doctrine in Question*, in *Airpower Journal*, (Winter 1997).

21. Center for Strategic and International Studies. *Significant Cyber Incidents: Full Incidents List*. (2021). <https://www.csis.org>.

22. See the following definition of organizational culture: "the pattern of shared assumptions that an organization learns as it solves problems and that has worked well enough to be considered valid and is therefore taught to new members as the correct way to approach those problems." Leonard Wong and Stephen Gerrass, *Culture and Military Organizations*, in *The Culture of Military Organizations*, Peter Mansoor and William Murray eds. (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2019) 17-32.

23. Jeannie Johnson. *The Marines, Counterinsurgency, and Strategic Culture*. Forward by Gen. Jim Mattis, USMC, Ret. (Washington. D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2018).

24. Based on the Academic Year 2020-21 *Challenge in the Pacific Wargame* initiative between Marine Corps Command and Staff College's Grey Scholar Program and the Marine Corps Warfighting Lab.
25. Thomas C. Schelling. *Arms and Influence*. (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966) v-vi.
26. Alexander. pp. 4-5.
27. Schelling. pp 36.
28. Ibid., pp 275.
29. Gilday.
30. Edgar Schein and P. Schein, *Organizational Culture and Leadership*, 5th ed. (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons. 2017), 17.
31. Andrew Scobell, Bonny Lin, Howard J. Shatz, Michael Johnson, Larry Hanauer, Michael S. Chase, Astrid Stuth Cevallos, Ivan W. Rasmussen, Arthur Chan, Aaron Strong, Eric Warner, and Logan Ma, *At the Dawn of Belt and Road: China in the Developing World*. (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018). <https://www.rand.org>. The Chinese infrastructure initiative is aimed at strengthening economic ties within over 70 countries.
32. "King of Battle" is a widely accepted standard mantra amongst the U.S. Artillery Community.
33. Joseph H. Alexander. *Closing In: Marines in the Seizure of Iwo Jima*. (Washington D.C.: Marine Corps History Center, 1994) 5 and 7. Alexander describes the frustration of Lieutenant General Oliver P. Smith was left wanting during the planning for Iwo Jima, with regard to all fires support requests. The Navy-Marine tension on D-day at Iwo Jima exemplifies this point, as demonstrated in other island battles of World War II, when Admiral Spruance ordered Task Force 58 and all of its eight Marine Corps fighter squadrons and fast battleships with their 16-inch guns to Honshu prior to the attack, and although they returned for D-day support, were ordered away again two days later leaving the month-long battle under supported.
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