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14. ABSTRACT

This essay assesses the Marine Corps' participation in international military standardization (IMS) by considering two questions: First, do the Marine Corps' current NATO-centric efforts properly effect its interests among NATO partner nations? Second, to support the strategic rebalance to the Asia-Pacific region, does the Marine Corps need to adjust or improve its standardization efforts in that region?

The essay asserts that, considered as a whole, the Marine Corps' engagement with IMS appears to be enough for the task. Including in the Asia-Pacific region, the Marine Corps' current IMS program is evidently a properly-prioritized use of resources, selectively leveraging the efforts of other services, with the appropriate amount of input from user-level experts. The current Marine Corps process for formal IMS, despite its NATO-focused preponderance of effort, is adequate to fulfill the interoperability needs of the Marine Corps even as it rebalances to the Asia-Pacific region.

This essay recommends one improvement to Marine Corps IMS: Consider establishing a process to assess Marine Corps doctrinal publications to determine if new multinational (NATO) doctrine ought to be initiated.

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Executive Summary

Title: U.S. Marine Corps International Military Standardization and the Rebalance to the Pacific

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Thesis: The current Marine Corps process for formal international military standardization (IMS), despite its NATO-focused preponderance of effort, is adequate to fulfill the interoperability needs of the Marine Corps even as it rebalances to the Asia-Pacific region.

Discussion: This essay assesses the Marine Corps' participation in IMS by considering two questions: First, do the Marine Corps' current NATO-centric efforts properly effect its interests among NATO partner nations? Second, to support the strategic rebalance, does the Marine Corps need to adjust or improve its standardization efforts in the Asia-Pacific region?

The first portion of the essay addresses Marine Corps IMS efforts, which are focused on formal standardization forums such as NATO. The essay explains the current process and notes that the Marine Corps program for IMS is characterized by selectively engaging only those issues most important to the Corps, leveraging the leading efforts of other services, and concentrating standardization work in user-level experts who are personally invested in standardization success. The essay next considers whether Marine efforts succeed in these formal standardization forums, concluding in the affirmative: Marine views are effectively advocated in those forums, individual Marine lessons learned are effectively communicated to Marine IMS representatives, and the system is adequately responsive to changes. The essay identifies a potential improvement in this area, recommending a process to assess more-detailed Marine Corps doctrinal publications to determine if new multinational (NATO) doctrine ought to be initiated.

The second portion of the essay addresses Marine Corps efforts aimed at interoperability and standardization specifically in the Asia-Pacific region. The section describes challenges to standardization and the range of current interoperability mechanisms in the region. Several potential means of improving Asia-Pacific standardization are next considered: advocating greater NATO participation, advocating an independent NATO-style organization, or advocating consolidation of standardization. The section concludes that none of these means are necessary to achieve adequate interoperability.

Conclusion: Considered as a whole, the Marine Corps' engagement with international military standardization appears to be enough for the task. Even in the Asia-Pacific, the Marine Corps' current NATO-focused program for IMS is evidently a properly-prioritized use of resources, selectively leveraging the efforts of other services, with the appropriate amount of input from user-level experts.

DISCLAIMER

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.

Table of Contents

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Any mistakes, omissions, or mischaracterizations are my own.

Introduction

Today's Marine Corps is near the beginning of what is likely to be a substantial reduction in budget, manpower, and capability. National fiscal concerns have prompted the government to propose a reduction in planned military spending on the order of one trillion dollars over the next ten years.[1] As the Commandant of the Marine Corps has explained, the effect of this budget reduction will be a substantially smaller Marine Corps, strained to meet the requirements of the President's National Security Strategy.[2] At the same time, the global security environment is becoming "increasingly complex," as the 2012 Defense Security Guidance terms it, and the focus of U.S. international engagement is shifting to prioritize the Asia-Pacific region.[3] In order to confront and resolve global crises effectively under these resource constraints, the Marine Corps (and the Department of Defense at large) will be required to leverage the capabilities of international partners to a greater extent. In order to work successfully with these partners, the Marine Corps must ensure a measure of interoperability.

Multinational interoperability is formalized in large part through a process of international military standardization (IMS). The current IMS framework, however, focuses primarily on the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), which has developed a robust and far-reaching standardization process founded on decades of multinational cooperation. A consideration of the current rebalance to the Asia-Pacific and the general standardization focus on NATO prompts two questions. As a starting point, does the Marine Corps' current NATO-centric IMS participation properly effect its interests among NATO partner nations? Secondly, to support the strategic rebalance, does the Marine Corps need to adjust or improve its standardization efforts in the Asia-Pacific region?

A study of these questions produced both a characterization of Marine Corps IMS participation and an evaluation of its applicability for NATO and the Asia-Pacific region. The Marine Corps program for IMS is characterized by selectively engaging only those issues most important to the Corps, leveraging the leading efforts of other services, and concentrating standardization work in user-level experts who are personally invested in standardization success. Furthermore, the current Marine Corps process for formal IMS, despite its NATO-focused preponderance of effort, is adequate to fulfill the interoperability needs of the Marine Corps even as it rebalances to the Asia-Pacific region.

This essay will begin by recounting generally how the Marine Corps participates in formal IMS, with specific detail on processes and responsibilities. Potential shortfalls in this effort will be identified and discussed. Next, the current standardization efforts in the Asia-Pacific will be described. Finally, several possible ways to improve Asia-Pacific standardization will be considered.

Background – Defining Standardization

Two items must be clarified to properly frame the succeeding discussion. First, this essay requires distinguishing between standardization and interoperability.[4] Interoperability, on the one hand, refers to the extent to which two forces can operate together. Interoperability can be achieved through a variety of ways, formal or informal. For example, motivated tactical leaders who speak a common language can achieve a fair amount of interoperability between forces using limited equipment loaning and informal mutual rehearsals. Standardization, on the other hand, formally facilitates interoperability by defining common standards and procedures. While standardization does not guarantee interoperability, properly-implemented standardization establishes the structure through which operators of all experience levels can achieve acceptable

interoperability, and achieve it with a minimal amount of frustration and ad-hoc improvisation. Standardization efforts are commonly sub-divided into operational, materiel, training, and administrative areas. This essay particularly focuses on standardization, not interoperability, though interoperability naturally arises in the discussion as an appropriate goal toward which effective standardization aims.

A second area needing clarification is the acceptable level of standardization effectiveness for the Marine Corps. Every large organization has identifiable errors, mistakes, and inefficiencies scattered throughout its activities. However, these are, to some extent, an intentional byproduct of institutional choices regarding structure, vision, and resource allocation.[5] This essay does not intend to "nitpick" every area where international military standardization could potentially be improved, aiming for a perfect process by which the risk of interoperability has been reduced to zero. Rather, its perspective is more general: does the way the Marine Corps approaches and accomplishes international military standardization facilitate interoperability? Could changes be productively made without incurring large additional workload or financial burdens?

Marine Corps Participation in Formal International Military Standardization

General

Interoperability is a primary requirement for building practical partnership capability. Standardization of doctrine and equipment sets the stage for effective interoperability. The policy of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff notes that "It is in the best interest of the United States that its Armed Forces be interoperable with its allies, Coalition partners, multinational organizations, and other friendly nations. … Operational standardization should be

achieved on a worldwide basis so that U.S. forces may operate as effectively as possible with forces of all allied, Coalition, multinational and/or friendly nations."[6]

Formal "operational standardization … on a worldwide basis" is conducted by the Marine Corps through participation in several international standardization forums. The largest by far, in both number of standardization documents and number of participating countries, is the NATO Standardization Agency. More select, higher-level standardization is found in the "Five-Eyes" collection of organizations.[a] The Five-Eyes forums most connected to the Marine Corps are the ABCA (American, British, Canadian, Australian and New Zealand) Armies and the Air and Space Interoperability Council (ASIC). Multiple other Five-Eyes forums work toward establishing interoperability in areas such as naval warfare, communications/electronics, geospatial intelligence, unmanned aerial systems, logistics, and computer network defense. Beyond NATO, ABCA and ASIC, the Marine Corps monitors the work of some forums with non-Marine U.S. participation, such as the other Five-Eyes organizations, the Multilateral Interoperability Programme, the Conference of American Armies, and FINABEL (France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Belgium). One additional forum that does not fit into a neat category is the Multinational Planning Augmentation Team (MPAT), which resides in the U.S. Pacific Command (USPACOM) and has participation from Marine Forces Pacific but requires no oversight from the IMS office. MPAT will be discussed in more detail later in this essay.

The following sub-sections will consider the structure of NATO and ABCA standardization, the Marine Corps' IMS structure, and general principles characterizing Marine Corps international standardization efforts.

[a] "Five-Eyes" refers to the countries of the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

NATO Standardization Structure[7]

To shed light on the largest portion of Marine Corps standardization efforts, NATO's process for producing standardization documents will now be briefly outlined. In general, NATO standardization documents are created in response to standardization tasks initiated by either a top-down "objective" or a bottom-up "proposal" by a NATO country or body. The documents are drafted and periodically reviewed in multinational working groups, convening semi-annually. Representatives from interested countries attend working groups and provide input on those standardization documents that are up for discussion. The United States may assign multiple service representatives to a working group, but one entity is designated the "lead agent" and assigns the Head of Delegation to arbitrate the U.S. position on issues for that working group.[8] Each draft document produced during working group meetings is distributed to interested parties for review, then comments are collected, discussed, and incorporated. The completed document is submitted for ratification or approval via either an Agreement (STANAG) or Recommendation (STANREC), respectively, and must be accepted by a predetermined number of countries. Finally, the standardization document is promulgated. Countries that ratified or approved the document are then responsible to implement it, which could mean, for example, reflecting the content of the agreement in national doctrine or distributing the new standard directly to the user level.

ABCA Standardization Structure

ABCA's approach to standardization, as might be expected, is more targeted than that of NATO. Their mission of "optimiz[ing] ABCA Armies' interoperability in order to deliver success in coalition operations[9]" is implemented through a coordinated program of effort that is adjusted each year. At the annual meeting, ABCA's executive council disseminates strategic

guidance for that year, which is informed by lessons learned, results of other interoperability forums, and input from member nations. The strategic guidance is turned into specific interoperability objectives, which are used by a handful of capability groups to focus their efforts in the upcoming year. Capability groups establish project teams to work particular tasks designed to accomplish the defined objectives. The product of task completion may include a formal standard (requiring ratification), a descriptive publication, a system architecture, a database, or a written report.[10]

Marine Corps IMS Formal Organization

Marine Corps international military standardization is coordinated within the Capabilities Development Directorate (CDD), a part of Combat Development and Integration. The IMS Coordinator is part of the Doctrine Control Branch and works side by side with the service and joint doctrine coordinators.[b] IMS participation is governed by a Marine Corps Order (MCO 5711.1 series), subordinate to related instructions from the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, the Department of Defense (DOD), and the Secretary of the Navy. The order covers a variety of typical topics such as background, organization, procedures, responsibilities, and the like, but three key components stand out. First, the Marine Corps membership in the Department of the Navy (DON) and components including major ground and aviation forces means that nearly all international standardization agreements (ISAs) affect, or could affect, the Marine Corps. Consequently, the Marine Corps must "review and make a subscription determination on all ISAs … [and] participat[e] in the preparation of ISAs impacting on Marine Corps equities and interests."[11] Second, while the Marine Corps gives input to hundreds of ISAs, it is not designated as the lead agent for any. Rather, the Marine Corps works by, through, and with the sister service, joint staff section, or DOD entity leading the U.S. effort. Third, the Director,

[b] See the Appendix A for an organizational diagram.

Capabilities Development Directorate, is responsible to execute coordination, supervision and records maintenance for the IMS process. However, the field commanders and headquarters staff agencies are also assigned responsibility to monitor the adequacy of ISAs as well as coordinate with CDD to determine appropriate service positions and to send representatives for ISA meetings. (Marine Corps Systems Command (MARCORSYSCOM) and the Marine Corps C4 Director[c] are tasked to weigh in on issues pertaining to their areas of expertise.)[12]

Practical Principles of Marine Corps IMS

The key components extracted above from the Marine Corps Order governing IMS reveal three general principles that characterize the Marine Corps approach to international military standardization. First, it selectively applies its efforts only to those issues most central to the Marine Corps mission. Second, it aims to leverage the work of the other services to the maximum extent possible. Third, it draws standardization input from the user level—from those who are experienced experts in their fields. These principles are reflected in the practical processes of Marine Corps IMS.

The first principle is that of prioritizing resources to engage only the most relevant issues. In practice, participation in ISA development or review is prioritized based on what level of doctrine (Marine Corps, multiservice, or joint) the ISAs are implemented in, and which ISAs the Marine Corps is the DON proponent for.[13] The Marine Corps provides input for those agreements that are directly implemented in Marine Corps doctrine or multiservice/joint doctrine of particular import to the Corps. Prioritization is a necessary corollary to the small personnel footprint used in the formalized standardization effort. A single full-time civilian International Military Standardization Coordinator oversees Marine Corps input (if required) into more than 1500 NATO standardization documents, plus several hundred non-NATO agreements. About

[c] C4 stands for Command, Control, Communications, and Computers.

forty Marines directly participate in working groups, contributing several weeks a year to standardization. A larger number of people occupy a place in the review chain for those documents scheduled for formal review; this entails about seven reviewers each for 250 documents per year.[14]

The second principle, that of leveraging the work of other entities, is in some ways an extension of the first. Though Marines have a cultural value of bravado and pride in being "first to fight" (and begrudging subordination to other services), the Marine cultural value of doing more with less has gained the upper hand here—and the strategy of letting others take the lead can be observed at multiple levels.[15] One is the no-lead-agent policy, which intentionally places the burden of working-group coordination on other organizations. (The CJCS instruction on international standardization never mentions the Marine Corps except to provide a point-of-contact mailing address.[16]) Second, while many NATO working groups have Marine representation, non-NATO standardization is largely relegated to others. In ABCA, while the Marine Corps is, since 2004, considered a full member of this collection of "armies," the services present a unified national position with the Army in the official lead.[17] Similarly, despite its integral aviation component, the Marines are content to largely let the Air Force represent its interests in ASIC. Even at the level of individual documents within NATO working groups, the Marine Corps seldom takes the lead – it is currently custodian of only 2 of the 1,523 NATO standardization documents tracked by CCD.[18] Taken as a whole, the Marine Corps' minimization of its administrative responsibilities allows it to focus instead on supplying personnel to attend workshops and review agreements.

The third observable IMS principle, that of pushing contribution decisions to the experts, facilitates effective input. The leveraging principle described above relegates the "final say" on

numerous issues to outside agencies. Consequently, making Marine Corps concerns heard when it matters depends on the expertise, passion, and persuasiveness of individual Marines. Selecting the right Marines with personal experience and investment in particular standardization areas provides the institutional credibility necessary to carry the point. The intention of the selection process is to send a Marine who has subject expertise, has doctrine-development experience, and will be able to provide a measure of continuity. To practically fulfill this goal, the IMS Coordinator habitually selects the Marine Corps doctrine proponent[d] or a member of the Marine Corps doctrine working group as the representative to the working group concerned with that doctrine.[19] For example, the delegate to the NATO Close Air Support Operations writing team (for STANAG 7144/ATP-3.3.4.1) is one of the pilots responsible for revising Joint Pub 3-09.3 Close Air Support. While representatives are typically active-duty Marine officers, civilians are sometimes used to provide better continuity – always retired Marines who are currently employed as school instructors or in other jobs directly contacting the operating forces.[20] Representatives to materiel standardization working groups are sourced from the naval systems commands, each of which maintain their own standardization officer and which are collectively overseen by the Department of the Navy Departmental Standardization Officer.[21]

Does the NATO/ABCA International Standardization Effort Need to be Improved?

The first research question to be answered, then, is whether the current process effectively incorporates Marine Corps interoperability insights into NATO standards, and incorporates NATO standards into Marine Corps doctrine. The Marine Corps' well-established formal international military standardization process may be susceptible to particular errors or inefficiencies. Several areas will now be considered: perhaps the Marine Corps is

[d] The doctrine proponent is the individual or entity responsible for writing or revising Marine Corps doctrine, coordinating input from various resources. (MCO 5600.20P)

underrepresented due to their limited personnel engagement; perhaps user lessons learned are not adequately communicated to IMS representatives; perhaps the process of change transmission is too slow to achieve adequate standardization; perhaps international standards receive inadequate visibility in the operating forces.

Communication of Marine Corps Issues to International Standards Organizations

A potential drawback to leveraging work through DOD or sister-service representatives is the possibility that Marine-Corps-specific issues get overlooked. However, this is unlikely to happen in a way that substantially impacts the Marine Corps for three reasons: the Marines prioritize those issues most necessary to engage, the IMS office selects experienced and knowledgeable representatives, and the dependence of international standardization on joint doctrine adds an additional layer of rigor to the process.

The prioritization of effort process has been mentioned already; representation is allocated to those standards that will be directly incorporated into Marine Corps doctrine. The process to select Marine Corps representatives for IMS also seems to work well. The Marines selected (typically the Marine Corps doctrine proponent, as explained above) bring an inherent credibility into standardization forums that is borne out by their operational expertise. For example, Marines reviewing STANAG 7241/ATP-3.3.4.4 (Air Transport Airborne Operations) made a compelling case to change the hand-and-arm signal to emergency-release a "towed parachutist" stuck on a static line: they could personally vouch that the force of an aircraft slipstream made it impossible for a towed parachutist to perform the current signal of putting his hands on his head.[22] One potential shortfall in this area of representative selection is that the unit responsible for providing each delegate is not formalized in a Marine Corps Order.[23] However, doctrinal proponents are assigned annually by MCBul 5603;[24] given the proponents' obvious

qualification for IMS representation and the IMS Coordinator's historical success in gaining their participation, the administrative burden of an additional MCO seems unnecessary.

A final backstop to effective active participation comes indirectly through the Marine Corps participation in joint doctrine-writing. After all, many international working groups have no Marine Corps representation at all. The Marine Corps representative in a working group discussion or reviewing a document may be susceptible to the same sorts of errors or omissions as are likely in any other endeavor due to tiredness, workload, unfamiliarity, focus, or incompetence. However, all does not depend on the presence or performance of Marine representatives or reviewers: The starting position for U.S. inputs to international military standardization is established joint doctrine or standards.[25] Consequently, the joint military doctrine, whose production process includes a robust Marine Corps effort, acts as an enduring standard. This standard then passively but authoritatively communicates a Marine-Corps-rooted position to the international community, even in the absence of a participatory Marine.

Communication of Operator Shortfalls and Lessons-Learned to IMS Representatives

A potential drawback associated with a needs-based approach to standardization is one of need visibility. That is, do user-level lessons-learned get incorporated into standardization documents? The linkage discussed above between Marine Corps doctrine, doctrine-writers, and IMS supports the assumption that Marine Corps-level changes will consequently be reflected in joint and multi-national standards when applicable. This section will now assess the process through which Marine Corps lessons-learned are incorporated into Marine Corps doctrine, training, and equipment. A look at this Marine Corps process revealed a defined method for coalescing lessons-learned into training and doctrine, but a less-formalized process for providing feedback on materiel issues.

The central organization for collecting lessons-learned is the Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned (MCCLL). The approximately-forty employees of MCCLL are distributed across the Marine Corps to include a permanent presence at each division, air wing, and logistics group as well as forward-deployed to Afghanistan. Topics for lessons-learned reports are chosen based on operating-force recommendations, and reports are produced using information collected via unit-level interviews, surveys, and document analysis. Finished reports are maintained in a searchable online archive and disseminated via the MCCLL website and weekly emails. MCCLL also collects unit after-action reports and analyzes them to extract specific lessons.

Formal procedures have been established to incorporate appropriate lessons-learned into both training and doctrine.[26] As a subordinate of the Marine Corps Training and Education Command (TECOM), MCCLL has an established process for compiling lessons-learned and submitting them to TECOM's Trend Reversal and Reinforcement Process, through which they are validated and incorporated into training requirements, documents and curriculum. Lessons-learned are also transmitted to the Combat Development Directive via various venues for incorporation into doctrine. For example, draft MCCLL reports are reviewed by CDD doctrine coordinators, and doctrinal proponents formally reviewing or revising publications are required to consider a MCCLL compilation of lessons-learned on the subject.

Materiel procurement appears as one potential gap in responsiveness to user lessons-learned. MCCLL products are polled when processing Universal Needs Statements, which are often materiel-related. However, no formal process is established to push MCCLL observations to Marine Corps or Naval Systems Command for adjudication, nor do those commands regularly ask MCCLL personnel to provide lessons collections. Instead, individual systems commands identify materiel issues via annual Operational Advisory Groups or their own interactions with

users, either directly or via HQMC Requirements personnel. MCCLL-identifed materiel issues may, of course, be communicated informally (e.g., a MARCORSYSCOM Marine reading a generally-distributed report and taking action on an issue identified within).

The necessary follow-on question, then, is does the Marine Corps need to expend effort to formalize MCCLL feedback to acquisition commands in order to produce better international military standardization? Research suggests the answer is no, for two reasons. First, standardization in materiel acquisitions (particularly related to Military Standards and Military Specifications) is guided from the top down through the DOD-run Defense Standardization Program.[27] Most standardization issues are, or ought to be, encountered and resolved in the developmental phases of acquisition, before generic end users are involved. For IMS specifically, the Systems Commands are tasked to monitor ISAs dealing with materiel standards and specifications by both the Marine Corps and the Secretary of the Navy.[28] From one perspective, the Systems Commands are the end users of materiel standards and specifications, so they are best suited to provide input. The second reason that formalizing a MCCLL-Systems Commands link for IMS is probably not worth the effort is that the problem of international materiel standardization pales in comparison to the ever-present struggles of the services to standardize *within* DOD, or even within each service. A 2005 article in the *Defense Acquisition Review Journal* on the implication of globalization on Command and Control draws on a variety of sources to make the same observation, quoting a European NATO member's comment that while the United States takes a leading role in the creation of materiel standards, they "all too often [do] not adhere to them."[29] In keeping with the idea that the most standardization effort should be aimed at those areas most likely to need interoperability, it does not appear that the Marine Corps needs to expend additional resources on perfecting international materiel

standardization until the Marine Corps and the DOD have more success in national materiel standardization. In the meantime, MCCLL remains a useful resource for Systems Command program offices as they look to justify or prioritize system upgrades and new acquisitions.

Responsiveness

A third potential drawback in the current standardization process is turn-around time. How long does it take lessons-learned to become doctrine, and how long does it take STANAG changes to be implemented in Marine Corps doctrine? Is this time adequate, or excessive? To answer the first question, consider the review cycle of Marine Corps doctrinal publications and of NATO standardization documents. The review cycle of Marine Corps "practical" doctrine – Marine Corps Warfighting Publications and Marine Corps Reference Publications – is nominally every four years, though they may be reviewed more frequently in response to user demand. Newly-introduced interim publications must be reviewed for disposition within two years.[30] NATO standardization documents are reviewed every three years, also with a caveat allowing more frequent review if necessary.[31]

Answering the question concerning adequacy requires first recalling the link between interoperability and standardization. Standardization serves interoperability, either by formalizing those procedures that are already producing interoperability or by formalizing a standard that, when achieved, will facilitate interoperability. Thus non-technical interoperability ("cooperability," as it has been referred to[32]) can be achieved in particular coalitions via establishment of local standardized operating procedures unique to each coalition. Immediate standardization of best practices is not required to achieve situational interoperability. Therefore, the current system of using a set time interval, with the option of expedited review in response to user demand, appears to be adequate.

Visibility of Multinational Doctrine within the Marine Corps

Finally, is multinational doctrine given sufficient visibility within the Marine Corps? The United States DOD has the resources to expand upon the basic character of most NATO standardization documents and turn them into more usable or practical publications with "DOD" or "Marine Corps" stamped across the top instead of "NATO." The downside of this ability, however, is that Marines at the tactical level tend to appeal to U.S. standards rather than international standards. ("Do you mind if we/I do this in accordance with the standards listed in my manual here?") This occurs either because they are unfamiliar with the NATO-equivalent publication or because no NATO publication exists at the level of detail required. If the former is true, exercise personnel miss the opportunity to familiarize themselves with the governing NATO publication. If the latter is true, no lessons-learned demand signal will identify a shortage in NATO standardization (if there is one) because the multinational partner will use the American publication. While the small scale of exercises typically allow this informal tactical interoperability with minimal impact, formal standardization is likely desirable in many cases in order to facilitate long-term success on a larger scale.

The Marine Corps could perhaps productively advocate for producing more practical international standards in areas where multinational interaction is most frequent – for example, hand-and-arm signals for vehicle control in multinational loading and staging areas.[33] The appropriate level for this to occur is somewhere in between the central IMS-coordinator level (who has neither the time nor the expertise for extensive detailed review) and the individual tactical user level (where much educational effort would be wasted on Marines unconcerned about international standards). This would best be accomplished at the doctrinal proponent level, and could be implemented by the Doctrine Control Branch adding a step in the proponent's

drafting process for the proponent to assess whether a NATO standardization document covers, or ought to cover, the doctrine under review.

Standardization and Interoperability in the Asia-Pacific Region

The U.S. Strategic Rebalance to the Asia-Pacific Region

During the end of 2011 and the beginning of 2012, the Obama administration outlined a strategic shift of national focus to the Asia-Pacific that is intended to place America, as then-Secretary-of-State Hillary Clinton said, "in the best position to sustain our leadership, secure our interests, and advance our values."[34] The execution of this effort, termed a "rebalance," necessarily includes the Department of Defense as a major player—"forging a broad-based military presence" was one of the six lines of effort in Secretary Clinton's description of the rebalance. The Defense Strategic Guidance published in 2012 reflected the strategic shift, asserting that "relationships with Asian allies and key partners are critical to the future stability and growth of the region."[35] In light of this strategic rebalance, regional military interoperability gains increased importance.

Challenges to Standardization in the Asia-Pacific Region

The security environment of the Asia-Pacific region is not conducive to an independent standardization process in the style of NATO. (Consider as an initial historical example the ineffectiveness and eventual collapse of the Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO).[36]) NATO's standardization arose from a tight security alignment among similar countries against a common threat. Admittedly, the United States has strong connections to a number of regional countries as an outworking of historical ties or a local threat (i.e. North Korea). But beyond our established treaty partners, the developing countries in the Asia-Pacific region tend toward limited alignments that are unlikely to become substantially stronger in the near future.

Political scientist John D. Ciorciari, in his book *The Limits of Alignment*, laid out evidence that developing countries tend to avoid both strict non-alignment and tight alliances, opting instead for limited alignments. (Cioriari defined as "limited" an alignment that has less than two of four tight alignment indicators: "a formal defense treaty[,] … basing rights, joint combat operations, or a significant alliance bureaucracy."[37]) Ciorciari's analysis of the existence of limited alliances focused on the developing countries of Southeast Asia, but the underlying reasons he gives for countries to remain in limited alliances apply well to all of the Asia-Pacific region. He notes that, unless a developing country faces a vital and unmanageable security threat, it lacks the motivation to closely align with a protective great power (such as the United States) because the risks outweigh the reward. Close alignment restricts state autonomy and requires additional resources, while at the same time risking backlash from other states in the region opposed to the selected great power. Limited alignment, conversely, maintains autonomy and also hedges against the uncertainty of regional power balances. Particularly in times of relative regional stability, adequate security can be attained through limited alignment, thus garnering benefits from the aligned great power while retaining the freedom to build economic ties with all countries in the region.[38] It may seem elementary to assert that countries can be expected to act in their own interests, but the application of this principle in the Asia-Pacific region means that most governments will not see their countries' interests as best served by aligning with the United States to a closeness that would include formal standardization.

Even if a regional great power becomes such a threat that other states seek defense through tight alliance with the United States,[e] the fact of economic and military dissimilarity remains a hindrance to interoperability and formal standardization. Developing countries' developing militaries are likely to have lower proficiency levels and older, less-advanced, non-

[e] Note the failure of the communist Cold War threat to rise to a level that produced a meaningful regional alliance.

Western equipment. While international military standards may be useful as training goals or acquisition guidelines, a formal commitment to standardization would likely require substantial and lengthy investments in, and adjustments to, training, organization, doctrine and materiel. Therefore, even if closely aligned, the marginal interoperability benefits may not be worth the cost of formal standardization to an Asia-Pacific developing country.

Current Interoperability/Standardization Measures in the Asia-Pacific Region

In light of these challenges, interoperability and IMS in the Asia-Pacific region is typically not at the NATO-standardization level. It operates instead in a tiered approach: The level of standardization is commensurate with the closeness of our security cooperation. Those countries most closely aligned with the United States have some level of NATO participation. Other countries with fewer common interests gain interoperability with the United States through bilateral or multinational exercises and other modes of participatory engagement. The least-connected countries have, as may be expected, the weakest interoperability ties, with minimal standardization.

The closest standardization measures are established with the other Five-Eyes nations in the Asia-Pacific: Australia and New Zealand. These countries are NATO "Partners across the Globe," and each have signed an Individual Partnership and Coordination Programme (IPCP) with NATO; Australia in February 2013 and New Zealand in June 2012. Both of these documents specify "enhanced interoperability" as a "priority area for cooperation."[39] A small detachment of Marines is currently stationed in Darwin, Australia, practically exercising that interoperability through combined training. Existing Marine Corps standardization efforts using ABCA and NATO channels appears clearly adequate in the case of these two countries.

Similar levels of standardization are in place with Japan and South Korea. The United States has long-standing bilateral security treaties with these nations, and stations substantial forces in both countries. Japan and South Korea are also NATO "Partners across the Globe." South Korea signed an IPCP with NATO in September 2012, and Japan made a joint political declaration with NATO in April 2013 "looking forward to the finalisation of an Individual Partnership and Cooperation Programme."[40] Additional standardization occurs through the development of bilateral operational plans and standard procedures at the U.S. Forces level.

Standardization with the remaining countries in the Asia-Pacific region is less rigorous. The Philippines and Thailand have bilateral security treaties with the United States and are designated as major non-NATO allies to allow increased levels of aid and arms sales. Other countries are engaged via numerous regional exercises: the Asia-Pacific-based III Marine Expeditionary Force participates in more than 70 exercises a year.[41] The largest exercises with these countries in which Marine Forces Pacific participate are Rim of the Pacific (biennial naval exercise with 22 countries in 2012), Balikatan (annual, bilateral exercise with the Philippines, with additional observers), Cobra Gold (annual exercise led by the United States and Thailand, also including Japan, Singapore, South Korea, Indonesia and Malaysia), Khaan Quest (annual peacekeeping exercise begun with Mongolia with multinational participation), and PHIBLEX (Amphibious Landing Exercise; annual, bilateral exercise with the Philippines). But, while these exercises may encourage interoperability, they do not by themselves connote standardization.

To fill the need for standardized military interoperability among Asia-Pacific region nations, USPACOM established the Multinational Planning Augmentation Team (MPAT) in 2000. MPAT is designed to train military planners and produce a multinational force standard operating procedure (MNF SOP) available for multinational coalitions conducting crisis

response. MPAT's MNF SOP is regularly updated through collaborative workshops and regularly tested in multinational exercises. Participation in MPAT is open to all interested Asia-Pacific nations (31 participate, as well as experts from the United Nations, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations) and requires no formal agreements.[42] USPACOM also encourages interoperability standardization of "best practices" on the civilian side of governance via the Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance (CFE-DMHA), which was established to "enhance civil-military coordination through collaborative partnerships, education and training, and applied research," and the Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies (APCSS), which was established to "[build] capacities and communities of interest by educating, connecting, and empowering security practitioners to advance Asia-Pacific security."[43]

Lastly, countries are also able to voluntarily adopt NATO standards pertinent to their military capacity and operations. Different STANAGs garner different degrees of participation, but one of the most popular publications, the HOSTAC (STANAG 1194/APP-2 – Helicopters Operating from Ships Other Than Aircraft Carriers), has been formally adopted by 29 non-NATO countries with another 13 non-NATO countries expressing interest in HOSTAC working group activities.[44]

Does the Asia-Pacific Region Standardization Effort Need to be Improved?

To summarize the previous section, the Marine Corps pursues interoperability in the Asia-Pacific region in three ways. First, interoperability among those countries more closely aligned with the United States utilizes NATO/ABCA participation, including its underlying standardization. Second, informal standardization through MPAT and a few other agencies appeals to additional countries that have no NATO connection. Third, practical interoperability is exercised through

dozens of exercises each year, though these exercises may not appeal to a non-U.S. standard of performance. This existing structure for the Marine Corps' Asia-Pacific regional standardization efforts appears to be adequate, but should the Marine Corps work to improve it, perhaps in light of the NATO model of international military standardization? Several areas will now be considered: Should the Marine Corps expend effort to advocate NATO participation more actively? Should the Marine Corps expend effort to advocate establishing an independent Asia-Pacific standardization body similar to NATO's? Should the Marine Corps expend effort toward merging standardization venues that may have overlapping purposes or outputs?

Advocate Greater NATO Participation?

Considering the discussion above of developing countries' preference for limited alignment, active Marine-Corps-level to advocacy for countries to participate more fully in NATO does not seem efficient. More countries will adopt NATO standards independently as they see the standards as useful their countries' needs. Therefore, the Marine Corps should continue to concentrate on its current efforts to make the standards applicable, effective and clear. Additionally, Marine Corps support of non-binding, cooperatively-developed standards such as MPAT's MNF SOP seems to strike an effective balance of practicality and state independence.

An Independent NATO-Style Regional Standardization Organization?

While an independent NATO-style regional standardization body might in theory be beneficial to promote interoperability without the political baggage of the "NATO" label, further consideration casts doubt on this as an effective application for Asia-Pacific regional use. First, NATO's standards are already recognized as broadly-accepted criteria for higher-end militaries; establishment of a competing body would likely engender either redundancy or confusion,

depending on the degree to which its standards matched those of NATO. Second, the Asia-Pacific region is ill-suited to such formal alignment, even within itself, as mentioned above. For example, while the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) considered a proposed ASEAN Defense Industry Collaboration (ADIC), little progress has been made and ASEAN continues to declare that it is not a security partnership.[45]

Interestingly, NATO's standardization agency has already begun an effort to make NATO standards available to all countries without requiring the politically-thorny move of officially associating with NATO. A 2011 change to standardization document procedures included a requirement to make all possible NATO publications "non-classified" – that is, to remove the classification markings entirely, rather than retaining the current label of "NATO-UNCLASSIFIED" (which meant "only releasable to NATO partner countries"). As each publication comes up for its normal review, a defined step in the review process is now to consider whether it is possible to make the entire document non-classified, or to make the majority of it non-classified and collect the classified portions into a supplement.[46]

Advocate Merging Various Standardization Venues?

Merging standardization venues with overlapping purposes has the potential to save effort and increase interoperability. However, the Marine Corps does not appear to need to dedicate effort, at either the joint or international level, to encouraging more centralized standardization. The trajectory of globalization and the desire for bureaucratic efficiency have already set this process in motion. Within the DOD, for example, joint doctrine governs service actions; service-specific positions can only be established in areas outside of established joint doctrine. Stated DOD policy is to use international standards (such as ISO-9000, for example) for acquisition contracts whenever possible, instead of using MILSTDs or MILSPECs.[47]

Internationally, NATO has a stated policy, incorporated into its triennial review cycle, to check to see if the NATO standard can be replaced in whole or in part by a civilian standard, in order to "reduc[e] the costs attributed to maintaining standardization documents, and [remain] abreast of technological advances in the civilian community."[48] ABCA, too, looks first to NATO or civilian standards to resolve interoperability issues.

Conclusion

This essay began by asking two questions: Does the Marine Corps' current NATO-centric IMS participation properly effect its interests? To support the strategic rebalance, does the Marine Corps need to adjust or improve its standardization efforts in the Asia-Pacific region?

Consideration of the first question showed that selection of Marine Corps standardization representatives with expertise in both doctrine and the particular subject matter, combined with leverage of sister service and joint activities, allows the Marine Corps to get its perspective heard within the formal NATO/ABCA standardization process. Appropriate mechanisms exist to collect lessons-learned and turn them into Marine Corps doctrine and training that will matriculate up to joint and international doctrine, and interested individual users can advocate for particular change. While formal changes to international standards and subsequent doctrine dissemination occur only every few years, the process can be expedited in response to high demand and mitigated practically by using local SOPs for interim guidance in particular partnerships. One potential way to improve standardization effectiveness would be to increase visibility of IMS at the Marine Corps doctrinal-proponent level by requiring consideration of NATO-standard adequacy during each doctrinal publication review.

In the Asia-Pacific region, those countries most strongly connected to the United States – and most likely to participate in mid- or high-intensity conflict – maintain standardization

through their participation in NATO/ABCA as well as bilateral exercises and agreements. Those countries in the region who have only limited alignments with the United States gain an adequate level of standardization through selective acceptance of NATO standards (such as the HOSTAC), participation in established informal military forums like the Multinational Planning Augmentation Team, or participation in informal nonmilitary forums like the APCSS and CFE-DMHA. Thus the amount of standardization correlates to the need for interoperability: Not all countries are formally standardized with the United States, and this is appropriate because not all countries need to be. Yet as relationships with Asia-Pacific countries deepen, those countries can further formalize security cooperation by subscribing to already-established international standards.

Considered as a whole, the Marine Corps' engagement with international military standardization appears to be enough for the task. Even in the Asia-Pacific, the Marine Corps' current NATO-focused program for IMS is evidently a properly-prioritized use of resources, selectively leveraging the efforts of other services, with the appropriate amount of input from user-level experts.[f]

[f] Appendix B includes potential areas for further research related to this essay's topic.

Appendix A: Marine Corps IMS Hierarchy

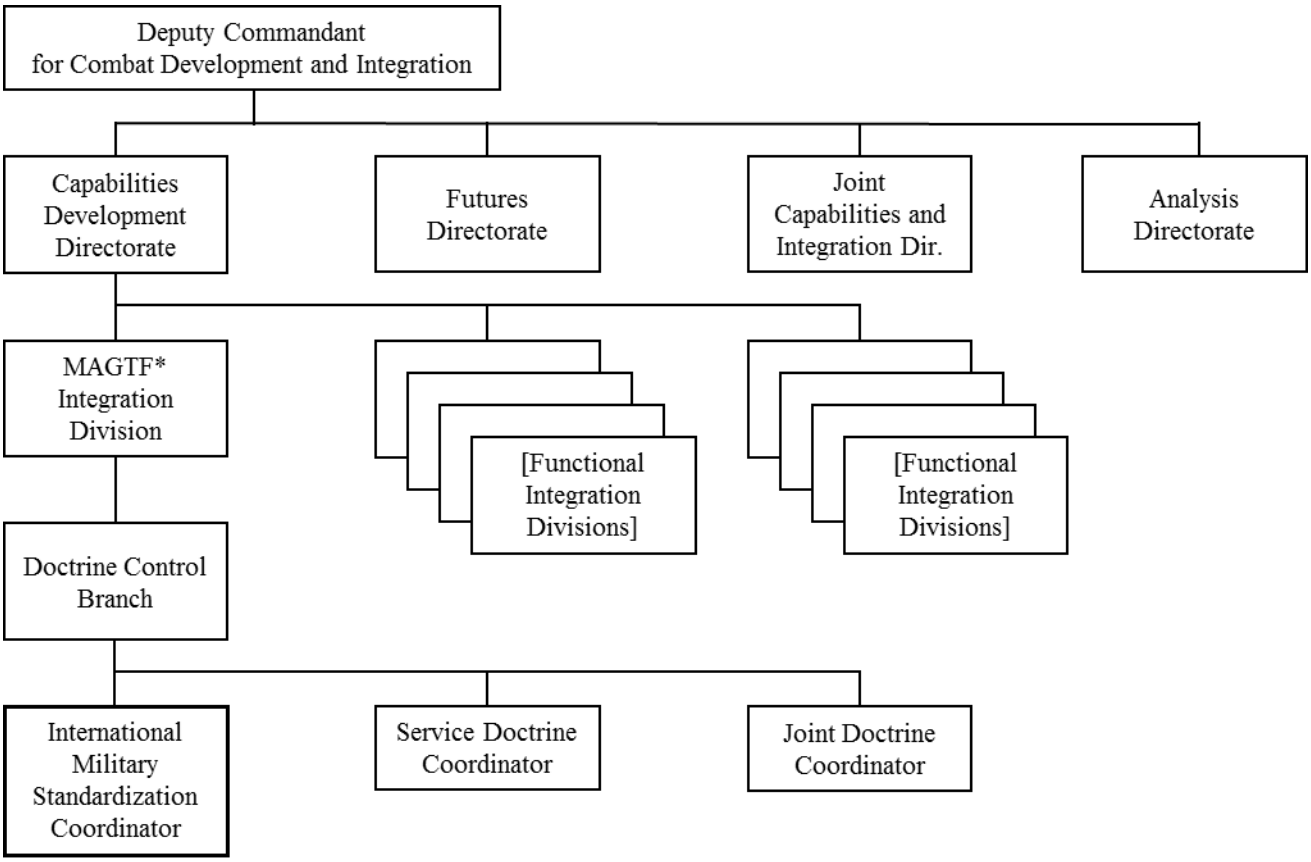

Figure 1: Location of the International Military Standardization Coordinator in Marine Corps Organizational Hierarchy[49]

* MAGTF: Marine Air-Ground Task Force

Appendix B: Related Topics for Further Research

Future researchers interested in building on the observations in this essay might productively consider whether the benefits of a shorter doctrine review process, or the addition of an interim change distribution process, would be worth the cost in time, expense and effort. Another topic of potential research could be a detailed analysis of possible shortfalls in coordination between lessons-learned and materiel procurement and how to mitigate them, or an analysis of the reasons U.S. service interoperability is so difficult to achieve. A third area of beneficial research might relate to possible ways the Marine Corps could improve user knowledge of the right way to advocate for changes to doctrine, training or materiel.

Endnotes

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[2] James F. Amos, "Resourceful Force Design," *Marine Corps Gazette 97*, no. 12 (December 2013): 15.
[3] U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, January 5, 2012), 1-2.
[4] The definitions in this paragraph are the author's and are targeted at clarity for the purpose of this essay. More formal definitions of interoperability and standardization can be found, for example, at NATO Standardization Agency, *Production, Maintenance and Management of NATO Standardization Documents*, AAP-03(J)(2) (Brussels, Belgium: NATO Standardization Agency, November 25, 2011), 9, http://nsa.nato.int/nsa/zzLinks/AAP3(J)_Related.html; or at U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *International Military Agreements for Rationalization, Standardization, and Interoperability (RSI) Between the United States, Its Allies, and Other Friendly Nations*, Instruction 2700.01E, January 18, 2012, GL-3, http://www.dtic.mil/cjcs_directives/cdata/unlimit/2700_01.pdf.
[5] A description of the characteristics of bureaucracy that logically force inefficiency can be found in Canice Prendergast, "The Limits of Bureaucratic Efficiency," *Journal of Political Economy 111*, no. 5 (October 2003): 933. http://www.jstor.org.
[6] U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *International Military Agreements*, A-1 - A-2.
[7] NATO Standardization Agency, *AAP-03(J) Implementation Guide – Edition 1 Revision 2*, Brussels, Belgium: May 7, 2012, 2-5, http://nsa.nato.int/nsa/zzLinks/AAP3(J)_Related.html.
[8] U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *International Military Agreements*, B-6 - B-9.
[9] ABCA Armies homepage, accessed February 20, 2014, http://www.abca-armies.org.
[10] ABCA Armies, "ABCA Products and Planning," accessed February 20, 2014, http://www.abca-armies.org/Planning.aspx.
[11] [Draft] Commandant of the Marine Corps, *U.S. Marine Corps Procedures for Participation in the International Standardization Process*, MCO 5711.1G, draft version 10, accessed October 15, 2013, 1-2; the currently-signed version, MCO 5711.1F dated December 7, 1988 and available at http://community.marines.mil/news/publications/Documents/MCO%205711.1F%20W%20CH%201.pdf, dictates substantially similar intent.
[12] [Draft] Commandant of the Marine Corps, MCO 5711.1G. 2-4.
[13] Robert L. Cooney (Marine Corps International Military Standardization Coordinator), "NATO STANAGs," (working document, October 15, 2013), Microsoft Excel File.
[14] Robert L. Cooney (Marine Corps International Military Standardization Coordinator), email to author, December 4, 2013.
[15] The phrase "first to fight" is part of the Marines' Hymn, which also refers to the Marine Corps' superiority to the Army and the Navy; the concept appears in, e.g. Amos, 10-11 "possessing the ability to respond to crises on a moment's notice" and "ready to respond rapidly to crisis" as well as Headquarters Marine Corps Division of Public Affairs, *Marine Corps Communication Current News Playbook* (January 24, 2014), 3, https://www.mccll.usmc.mil, "our Nation's force of first resort … a highly capable, strategically mobile, ready force that responds to today's crisis…today." The concept of the Marine Corps as proudly efficient is appears in Amos, 10, "In the past, America has chosen to depend heavily on the Marine Corps to provide a lean, flexible, and economical expeditionary force …;" and Marine Corps Division of Public Affairs, 2-4, "We … thrive in austerity;" "As responsible stewards of our nation's resources during a time of austerity, the Marine Corps is inherently a cost-effective element of our Nation's defense that yields significant return on investment;" "Our … enduring stewardship of the Nation's resources … has been our hallmark for more than two centuries."
[16] U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *International Military Agreements*.
[17] ABCA Armies, "History and Purpose," accessed February 20, 2014, http://www.abca-armies.org/History.aspx.
[18] Cooney, "NATO STANAGs," "Custodians" tab.
[19] Cooney email, February 14, 2014.
[20] Cooney email, February 14, 2014.
[21] Cooney email, January 19, 2014.
[22] Cooney email, December 4, 2013.
[23] Cooney email, February 14, 2014.

[24] Commandant of the Marine Corps, "Publication Development Responsibilities," Enclosure (2) of *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication Systems*, MCO 5600.20P, November 8, 2006, 2.
[25] U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, *International Military Agreements*, B-7.
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[28] Commandant of the Marine Corps, MCO 5711.1G [draft]; Secretary of the Navy, *Implementation of the Defense Standardization Program in the Department of the Navy*, Instruction 4120.24, September 14, 2012, http://doni.daps.dla.mil/; U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Standardization Program*, Instruction 4120.24, July 13, 2011, http://www.dtic.mil/whs/directives/corres/pdf/412024p.pdf.
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[30] David Vickers (MAGTF Integration Division, Doctrine Control Branch), "USMC Doctrine Orientation" (slide presentation, November 15, 2012), Microsoft PowerPoint File.
[31] NATO Standardization Agency, *Implementation Guide*, 5.
[32] Wayne Eyre, "Preparing for Coalition Warfare in the Age of Austerity," United States Army War College, May 3, 2012. Quoting from, U.S. Center for Research and Education on Strategy and Technology, "Coalition Military Operations the Way Ahead Through Cooperability," Report of a French-German-UK-U.S. Working Group (April 2000).
[33] Credit belongs to Robert Cooney for this example.
[34] Hillary Clinton, "America's Pacific Century," *Foreign Policy* (October 11, 2011). http://www.foreignpolicy.com.
[35] U.S. Department of Defense, *Sustaining Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Defense, January 5, 2012), 2.
[36] U.S. Department of State Office of the Historian, "Southeast Asia Treaty Organization (SEATO), 1954," http://history.state.gov/milestones/1953-1960/seato.
[37] John D. Ciorciari, *The Limits of Alignment: Southeast Asia and the Great Powers since 1975* (Washington: Georgetown University Press, 2010), 8.
[38] John D. Ciorciari, *The Limits of Alignment*, 8-10. Satu P. Limaye also puts forth the idea that the optimal situation for developing countries in Southeast Asia is to maintain economic ties with China while the U.S. ensures regional stability in his article "Southeast Asia in America's Rebalance to the Asia-Pacific," *Southeast Asian Affairs* 2013, no. 1 (2013): 49-50, http://books.google.com.
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[47] U.S. Department of Defense, *Defense Standardization Program.*
[48] NATO Standardization Agency, AAP-03(J)(2), 49-50.
[49] Compiled by author based on Vickers, "USMC Doctrine Orientation"; and "MCCDC CDI Command Brief Website Oct 2013," accessed March 3, 2014, Adobe Acrobat Document File,

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List of Abbreviations

ABCA	American, British, Canadian, Australian, and New Zealand
ADIC	ASEAN Defense Industry Collaboration
APCSS	Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASIC	Air and Space Interoperability Council
C4	Command, Control, Communications and Computers
CDD	Capabilities Development Directorate
CFE-DMHA	Center for Excellence in Disaster Management and Humanitarian Assistance
DOD	Department of Defense
DON	Department of the Navy
FINABEL	France, Italy, the Netherlands, and Belgium
IMS	International Military Standardization
ISA	International Standardization Agreement
MAGTF	Marine Air-Ground Task Force
MARCORSYSCOM	Marine Corps Systems Command
MCCLL	Marine Corps Center for Lessons Learned
MCO	Marine Corps Order
MILSPEC	Military Specification
MILSTD	Military Standard
MPAT	Multinational Planning Augmentation Team
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
STANAG	Standardization Agreement
STANREC	Standardization Recommendation
TECOM	Training and Education Command
USPACOM	U.S. Pacific Command

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