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Making the Corps

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adequately the growing risks from these emerging threats.

In sum, *Strategic Appraisal 1997* offers a good benchmark of the state of the art of current thinking with regard to long-range defense issues in an era of great change. It is also indicative of how much intellectual work lies ahead if a compelling case is to be made for a radical restructuring of the U.S. military.

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Ricks, Thomas E. *Making the Corps*.
New York: Scribner's, 1997. 320pp.
\$24

"Now! Sit up straight. Get your eyes on me. Now, get off my bus. Let's go. Now. Move. Move! Move!"

Welcome to Marine Corps basic training.

In *Making the Corps*, Thomas E. Ricks follows the members of Platoon 3086 through the most difficult eleven weeks of their lives. Ricks, a Pentagon correspondent for the *Wall Street Journal*, is there when the recruits get off the bus and when, nearly three months later, most of them graduate. He then follows them onto active duty, showing how their personalities and performance in training relate to their ultimate success or failure in the Corps. Looking through the eyes of not only the recruits but also the drill instructors, the reader will watch as the culture of the Marine Corps is developed within its newest members.

Ricks accompanies the recruits through all phases of their training at Parris Island. In doing so he explains

the Marine Corps culture and shows how new Marines are brought into the fold. The reader comes away understanding that unlike that of the other services, the Marine Corps' basic training is primarily designed to indoctrinate new members into the culture rather than to develop military skills; combat readiness comes later. Parris Island (and its counterpart in San Diego) forces new recruits into the Marine mold, through drill, weapons training, physical conditioning, and constant reminders of their heritage and obligations.

The discussion of Marine culture is a timely one. The other services seem to be going through an identity crisis as the world changes around them, and they appear to be looking to Marine culture as a template. The Army has created contingency forces, smaller and lighter than its main formations, ready to deploy rapidly, much as the Marines have always done. The Air Force is developing an Air and Space Basic Course for new officers that seeks to develop a common identity among lieutenants from all the commissioning sources, similar to what The Basic School does for new Marine officers. In *Making the Corps*, leaders from the other services are given the opportunity to see what it takes to create an organization like the Marine Corps; they may decide the cost of doing it right is too high. After all, if their soldiers, sailors, and airmen wanted to be Marines, they likely would have joined the Marine Corps in the first place.

What is it that makes a Marine? Ricks does not pull any punches. He portrays the recruits and their indoctrination honestly, using their words and

those of the drill instructors, as well as his own observations. To hear him talk, many of the recruits he knew were the dregs of society. "They are, with a few exceptions, denizens of the bottom half of the American economy, or on their way there—poor kids with lousy educations, and a few wealthier ones sliding off the professional tracks their parents had taken." There are university graduates and community college dropouts, pacifists and bullies, gang-bangers, and skinheads. Turning them into contributing members of society is tough enough; turning them into Marines is an especially daunting task, and Ricks does an excellent job of showing the transformation.

The author addresses more than just the culture of the Marines; he goes on to discuss the state of civil-military relations today. As the recruits become indoctrinated into Marine culture they shed their civilian values, at least on the surface. Most take on a holier-than-thou attitude, looking down on the civilian culture from which they came. The fact that many do not actually internalize these beliefs is reflected in the fact that out of 3,086 graduates, nearly 15 percent will not finish their first year in the Corps. It is also a little scary how some of these recruits come together: the gang member from Washington, D.C., and the skinhead from Alabama find their common bond in anti-Semitism. Ricks uses the recruits' harsh opinions of civilian society to demonstrate the perceived division between today's military and the population at large. It is here that the book's only real fault becomes glaringly evident: it is difficult to tell where the recruits' and the drill instructors' views end and the

author's opinions begin. Is he merely explaining their perspective, or is he adding his own commentary on the subject? It is hard to be sure, but when examining the issue Ricks seems to fall into the social science trap of looking for views that support one's own while missing other important evidence.

That is not, however, a fatal flaw. This is an excellent book for anyone who is interested in how the Marine Corps turns young men and women into a force that, to paraphrase one sergeant major, can hold babies one day, kill the next, and know the difference between the two. Given the changes in the world, it is helpful to see how one small service has already addressed many of the challenges facing the larger services today. Conducting military operations other than war, operating as an expeditionary force, and getting by with limited resources are issues that have always been a part of the Marine Corps. *Making the Corps* will be an excellent stroll down memory lane for every Marine, and an excellent guidebook for everyone else.

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Zartman, I. William, and J. Lewis Rasmussen, eds. *Peacemaking in International Conflict: Methods and Techniques*. Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1997. 412pp. \$19.95

William Zartman and Lewis Rasmussen have assembled a stable of contributors whose experience encompasses scholarship and field work in