

The Marine Corps Way of War: The Evolution of the U.S. Marine Corps from Attrition to Maneuver Warfare in the Post-Vietnam Era

Adam Taylor

Anthony J. Piscitelli

entire primer or as a separate annex might have stitched the elements of the book tighter together and made it resonate more. Regardless, leaders at all levels who want to increase their chances of successfully implementing and sustaining an organizational change effort will benefit from making this an essential addition to their tool kit.

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The Marine Corps Way of War: The Evolution of the U.S. Marine Corps from Attrition to Maneuver Warfare in the Post-Vietnam Era, by Anthony J. Piscitelli. El Dorado Hills, CA: Savas Beatie, 2017. 264 pages. \$27.50.

Despite battlefield success in both Iraq and Afghanistan over the past fifteen years, the threat environment confronting the United States and its Marine Corps only has grown more dangerous. The United States now confronts a variety of challenges both old and new, including the return of great-power conflicts in the Asia-Pacific and Europe; operating in (what until recently has been called) an antiaccess/area-denial (A2/AD) battle space; nuclear proliferation; and navigating the effects of global climate change on military operations. Such an environment calls for both refining old solutions and thinking in new, bold ways to ensure that the U.S. military—and especially, for purposes of this review, the Marine Corps—is ready to meet, fight, and defeat any future threats. Author Anthony Piscitelli leverages his years of State Department and academic experience to map the evolution of the Marine Corps's approach to war in the post-Vietnam War era, all the while highlighting the personalities

involved in that process. Piscitelli's work ultimately is most useful, though, not for reviewing why the Marine Corps adopted maneuver warfare but for providing a model for instituting structural changes at the service level necessary for future battlefield success.

Following the Vietnam War, a combination of external and internal pressures led the Marine Corps to institutionalize and train to a war-fighting philosophy it had practiced to varying degrees throughout its history. *The Marine Corps Way of War* details how the Marine Corps had practiced elements of maneuver warfare from Belleau Wood to Beirut. This historical survey provides the context for the interpersonal and bureaucratic battles that Piscitelli then recounts that led to the Corps's full embrace of maneuver warfare in the post-Vietnam era.

Piscitelli then uses an excellent combination of first-person interviews and after-action reports to summarize how the Corps's success in all the humanitarian operations, low-intensity conflicts, and wars in Iraq and Afghanistan after Vietnam resulted from the major internal and external bureaucratic struggles over the service's future during that era. The book's emphasis on education and the impact of maneuver warfare on Marines' professional development also deserves mention. Piscitelli's decision to explore how the adoption of maneuver warfare also forced the Corps to rethink the professional development of its enlisted and officer populations underscores how the human element of war remains the most important variable in any conflict. One should be forgiven for thinking that parts of the book serve as justification for MCDP-1, *Warfighting*. Yet, despite providing an excellent analysis that explores how the Corps

evolved into its current form, the book disappoints readers who want to learn more about the implications of maneuver warfare on future battlefields. Although one might argue that such a discussion falls outside the scope of this work, it seems like a missed opportunity not to devote some pages to answering that question. How will the Marine Corps use maneuver warfare to fight in an A2/AD environment? What capabilities does the Corps need to exploit Russia's or China's critical vulnerabilities? How does the service operate effectively and jointly in a twenty-first-century great-power conflict? Similarly, one also wonders how changes to the Marine Corps's maneuver-warfare theory that may be necessary to succeed on future battlefields will alter the professional development and training of the service's next generation of recruits. Institutions such as the Basic School or Marine Combat Training might need a face-lift. Military occupation schools also will need to rethink how they equip their students with the skills necessary to support the Corps's war-fighting philosophy in future fights.

One question Piscitelli does answer about the future of maneuver warfare is how the service can promote the institutional change necessary to confront future challenges. His discussion of the informal civilian advocacy networks and formal top-down leadership that Marine leaders used to transform the Corps after Vietnam provides a possible blueprint to effect future force shaping. This might be the book's greatest contribution to current national security narratives, because it highlights how America's most unique service can facilitate effectively the necessary structural, service-level changes to the force.

ADAM TAYLOR



On Her Majesty's Nuclear Service, by Eric Thompson. Oxford, U.K.: Casemate, 2018. 269 pages. \$32.95.

The last few years have seen a surge in titles covering different aspects of the Royal Navy's submarine service during the Cold War. Together, these have provided the armchair naval enthusiast with welcome insights into a famously understated and secretive part of that service's recent history. Whereas the majority of these titles have been written either by those who have commanded ships and submarines or by historians with long naval connections, this book is distinctly different, coming as it does from neither of these backgrounds. Instead, this is an intensely personal account of one man's naval journey: from curious schoolboy learning the naval "religion," through some early personal disappointments, and finally to his emergence as a successful and highly respected member of the elite brotherhood of nuclear-qualified engineers. The book is different because the mystique of command at sea is not the centerpiece, having been replaced by the equally demanding but far less well understood world of nuclear safety, with its attendant "zero defect" mentality.

Thompson is perhaps perfectly suited to weave this tale. A career naval officer and early volunteer for submarines who was forced to make an early "course change" into the engineering specialization on account of his eyesight, his destiny became inextricably bound up with the buildup of the nuclear submarine force in the United Kingdom. In his case, this was reinforced further by the adoption of the Polaris missile system and the ballistic-missile