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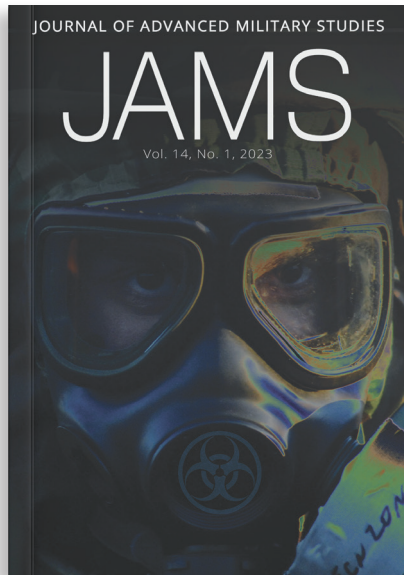
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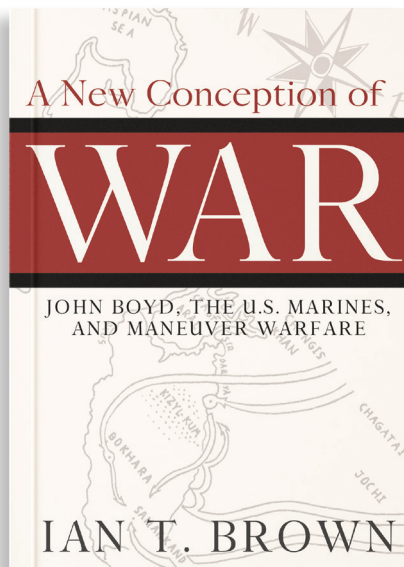
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JAMS

The *Journal of Advanced Military Studies* focuses on topics within the international relations, political science, security studies, and political economics spectrum. The Spring 2024 issue of JAMS will focus on the militarization of space. Article submissions are due by 1 January 2024. Book reviews, review essays, and historiographical essays also welcome.

Article submissions for all three journals should be between 4,000 and 10,000 words, footnoted, and formatted according to the *Chicago Manual of Style* (17th edition). For more information about submission guidelines or to submit an article idea, please visit our website or contact MCU_Press@usmcu.edu.

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FROM THE EDITORS

For every issue of *Marine Corps History* (MCH), the editors strive to offer readers articles that not only explore the rich history of the U.S. Marine Corps but also give valuable insights into it. This periodical provides authors a unique venue for their research that is supported by the academic rigor they expect in a scholarly journal while also providing the Corps a method to preserve a deep and broad analysis of its history and to share it with the world.

In this issue, the editors present a selection of articles that not only explore the Corps' history but also tease out potential lessons for the future from operations that occurred long before U.S. Marines existed. With "The Siege of Enniskillen Castle, 1594: An Object Lesson in Combat Across the Land-Water Interface," retired U.S. Navy captain Jamie McGrath examines the 1594 English attack on Enniskillen Castle in Ireland, a key operation in the Irish Nine Years' War (1593–1603) that demonstrates the value of coordinated waterborne and land-based forces at the tactical level. The U.S. Marine Corps spent the years between the world wars developing a doctrine of opposed landings from the sea in an arena where the ocean provided the only maneuver space, but the opposed amphibious operation is not the province of ocean-borne amphibious assaults alone. McGrath asserts that much can be learned from the application of amphibious assaults found in history and that considering the lacustrine assault on Enniskillen alongside U.S. riverine warfare experiences in the American Civil War and Vietnam War can inform Marine planners as they develop and test the Marine Littoral Regiments.

Commandant General David H. Berger released *Force Design 2030* in March 2020, which effectively eliminated the Corps' tank units, but historians will rightly continue to study its tank-supported operations and the efficacy of its past tank doctrine with pieces such as "The 4th Tank Battalion in the Pacific: A Case Study in Field-Inspired Ingenuity" by Dr. Robert P. Wettemann Jr. Using the 4th Tank Battalion as a case study, this article argues that U.S. Marine tankers in World War II possessed a uniquely American mechanical aptitude that allowed them to make necessary modifications to their equipment that enhanced combat effectiveness in the Pacific. In particular, these Marines fabricated various armor add-ons, extended periscopes, and tank-to-infantry communications systems, among other innovations, to enhance their abilities as warfighters.

The editors publish historiographical essays to provide readers perspectives on the state of historical fields that relate to Marine Corps history. In "The Cuban Missile Crisis at 60: Where Do We Stand?" Dr. William Morgan considers how our understanding of the Cuban Missile Crisis has evolved from the initial portrayal of the situation as an American victory achieved by brilliant crisis management by John F. Kennedy and his advisors to a more deeply researched and nuanced description of a dangerous draw reached only after misconceptions, miscalculation, last-minute compromise, and good luck.

MCH could not bring you articles such as these without the vital contributions of subject-matter experts who serve as peer reviewers for each manu-

script submitted. Peer review is a crucial component of any scholarly publication's academic rigor; it provides MCH's editors with an expert basis for deciding which manuscripts to publish. Peer reviewers assess the quality, scope, and integrity of the research an author presents and evaluate the originality, clarity, reasoning, and persuasiveness of the author's arguments. In addition to informing editorial acceptance decisions, this process also offers authors informed and unbiased critiques of their work with the aim of improving it for publication, if deemed necessary.

There are different forms of peer review, and MCH uses a double-anonymized process, meaning that neither authors nor peer reviewers know each others' identities. After removing all identifying information from an author's manuscript, editors send each submission to two peer reviewers. On receipt of the reviewers' comments and suggestions, editors remove any identifying information from the critiques, process them, and forward the reviewers' comments to the authors. This is an important part of maintaining as bias-free a reviewing environment as possible, considering the small size of the military history community and the even smaller niche in which MCH exists.

For those evaluating manuscript submissions for MCH, the editors provide transparent guidelines for peer review, and reviewers have an obligation to conduct reviews in an ethical and accountable manner. A peer review above all should be constructive, thorough, professional, fair, and timely. Reviewers should maintain a focus on evaluating the quality of the manuscript's content and its overall scholarly value, setting aside concerns about editorial and style issues. Any potential conflicts of interest for the reviewer (such as known authorship) should be disclosed immediately to the editors and the reviewer should recuse themselves. Confidentiality should be maintained throughout the review process, and reviewers should not discuss or cite the manuscripts they are reviewing.

To guide their evaluation, peer reviewers for MCH receive the anonymized manuscript along with a reviewer worksheet with prompts for considering different aspects of the manuscript. The worksheet aims to assist reviewers in maintaining focus while critiquing the work to ensure that the resulting reviews are as constructive and useful for the authors as possible. This is particularly important for new or inexperienced scholars who submit their work to MCH for consideration. At the end of their critique, reviewers make a final recommendation on the manuscript's acceptance; they may recommend to accept, to reject, or to request revision and resubmission.

The editors are always seeking more subject-matter experts to contribute to this process, casting the net as widely as possible to ensure a diversity of perspectives and expertise within the community of scholars who focus on military history generally and the Marine Corps' history specifically. If you are interested in serving as a peer reviewer for MCH, get in touch with the managing editor.

This issue of the journal rounds out with a review essay and a selection of book reviews. The editors invite readers to contribute to the discussion and submit articles for consideration; we are also accepting submissions of historiographical essays examining the extant sources on the Marine Corps' history and the shape of scholarly debate on specific events or actions or on broader general history topics. We look forward to hearing your thoughts on these topics and to your future participation as an author, reviewer, or reader. Junior faculty and advanced graduate students are especially encouraged to submit articles and book reviews. Join the conversation and find us online on our LinkedIn page (<https://tinyurl.com/y38oxnp5>), at MC UPress on Facebook, MC UPress on Twitter, and MCUPress on Instagram, or contact us via email at MCU_Press@usmcu.edu for article submission requirements and issue deadlines.

The Siege of Enniskillen Castle, 1594

AN OBJECT LESSON IN COMBAT ACROSS THE LAND-WATER INTERFACE

By Captain Jamie McGrath, USN (Ret)

Abstract: The U.S. Marine Corps spent the years between the world wars developing a doctrine of opposed landings from the sea in an arena where the ocean provided the only maneuver space, but the opposed amphibious operation is not the province of ocean-borne amphibious assaults alone. The land-water interface impacts warfare well inland from the coast, and much can be learned from the application of riverine and lacustrine amphibious assaults found in history. One such example is the siege of Enniskillen Castle in Ireland in 1594. English operations at Enniskillen demonstrated the value of coordinated waterborne and land-based forces at the tactical level. Considering English lacustrine operations in the Irish Nine Years' War (1593–1603) and U.S. riverine warfare experiences in the American Civil War and Vietnam War can inform Marine planners as they develop the tactics, techniques, and procedures of the Marine Littoral Regiments.

Keywords: riverine, amphibious, inland amphibious warfare, stand-in force, Marine Littoral Regiment, land-water interface, riverine assault, lacustrine assault, littorals, Nine Years' War, Tyrone rebellion, Enniskillen Castle

Introduction

For many naval enthusiasts, the roots of amphibious warfare reach back only as far as the British disaster at Gallipoli in 1914–15. Looking more broadly, the use of the sea as a military maneuver space dates to antiquity, but primarily as navies transporting an army to an undefended landing site, after which the army engages in land warfare once established ashore. The U.S. Marine Corps famously spent the years between World War I and II devel-

oping a doctrine of opposed landings from the sea in an arena where the ocean provided the only maneuver space. Even today, amphibious doctrine talks of naval task forces and combined arms landing forces derived from that interwar development. But the opposed amphibious operation is not the province of ocean-borne amphibious assaults alone. The land-water interface impacts warfare well inland from the coast, and much can be learned from the application of riverine and lacustrine amphibious assaults found in history.¹ Considering English riverine/lacustrine operations in the Irish Nine Years' War (1593–1603, a.k.a. the Tyrone rebellion) and U.S. riverine warfare experiences in the American Civil War and Vietnam War can inform Marine planners as they develop the

Capt Jamie McGrath, USN (Ret), served 29 years as a nuclear-trained surface warfare officer. He is now director of the MajGen W. Thomas Rice Center for Leader Development at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and as an adjunct professor in the U.S. Naval War College's College of Distance Education. Passionate about using history to inform today, his area of focus is U.S. naval history, 1919 to 1945, with emphasis on the interwar period. He holds a bachelor's in history from Virginia Tech, a master's in national security and strategic studies from the U.S. Naval War College, and a master's in military history from Norwich University. <https://doi.org/10.35318/mch.2023090101>

¹ *Lacustrine*: related to or associated with lakes.

tactics, techniques, and procedures of the Marine Littoral Regiment.

England conducted amphibious operations in several theaters at the end of the sixteenth century, including several riverine and lacustrine operations executed in Ireland during the Nine Years' War. Ireland's riverine and lacustrine nature encouraged an amphibious strategy, and both Irish and English forces adopted tactics to deal with the Irish geography. As historian Mark C. Fissel notes, the result was that English amphibious operations in Ireland were "remarkably and consistently successful in a theater of operations where the English were failing in the prosecution of land warfare."² The siege and assault on the Irish castle at Enniskillen provide one example of Irish and English operations among Ireland's rivers and loughs.³ Operations such as those at Enniskillen help demonstrate why the English eventually succeeded in quelling the rebellious Irish lords.

This article began as an exercise in historical writing from limited primary sources. In this case, a combination of written and visual evidence about the English capture of Enniskillen Castle allows for some detailed analysis of one specific amphibious operation in Ulster early in the Nine Years' War. The evidence available for that exercise, being from English sources alone, provides an incomplete picture of events. But the compelling nature of the event, its connection to the broader amphibious campaign in Ulster and as an example of inland amphibious warfare, provides a catalyst for discussion of the expanded nature of amphibious operations that might be encountered by a stand-in force such as the modern Marine Littoral Regiment.

Riverine and Lacustrine Warfare

Since land transportation was slow and ineffective at easily carrying large quantities of material until the

twentieth century, water transport was the preferred method of moving goods between communities. Seaports situated far inland on bays and rivers supported the transshipment of goods in and out of the hinterlands. Rivers and canals thus served as corridors to the sea, connecting inland communities, resources, and wealth to the international market. These fluvial systems of waterways and seaports supported entire regions, and control of the waterways was often crucial to control those regions. Rivers, lakes, and canals remain a highly efficient mode of transporting large amounts of goods for relatively low cost. These inland waters remain the loci of commerce and civic life. This is especially true in areas with underdeveloped road systems and rail networks. Even in regions with extensive road and rail networks that allow efficient movement of goods over land, waterways remain critical avenues of transport and, therefore, areas vital to military operations in riverine and lacustrine environments.

Inland amphibious warfare, referred to colloquially today as riverine or brown water operations, like its open water cousins, sea control and sea denial, focuses on two essential elements. The first is to preserve freedom of action to use the rivers and lakes as a maneuver space, to project power, and to protect friendly commerce and military traffic along riverine, lacustrine, and coastal waterways. The second is denying the enemy that freedom of action by disrupting their ability to operate in that same terrain. These competing elements present significant challenges due to the often-expansive nature of the fluvial system supporting a given region. Control of seaports alone is insufficient to control a fluvial system since multiple rivers, lakes, and canals feed individual ports. However, seizing critical junctures could disrupt the ability to move goods or troops over the waterways. By identifying these critical points, effective defenses could be erected, or offensive military operations could be focused.

One method of control is to fortify key terrains, such as river junctions, narrow channels, or points through which most traffic must pass. In the British

² Mark C. Fissel, "English Amphibious Warfare, 1587–1656: Galleons, Galleys, Longboats and Cots," in *Amphibious Warfare, 1000–1700: Commerce, State Formation and European Expansion*, ed. D. J. B. Trim and Mark Fissel (Leiden, NL: Brill, 2006), 218.

³ *Lough*: lake (Ireland).



Enniskillen Castle.

Courtesy of Romeparis, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 3.0 Unported license

Isles during the Elizabethan period, these fortified positions often took the form of forts or fortified castles erected along the riverbanks and lough shores. Such fortifications became the object of military operations.⁴

Irish Way of War

The fluvial systems that defined much of northern Ireland consisted of a series of loughs and rivers combined with bogs and wooded corries and drumlins subject to frequent flooding.⁵ This geography made waterborne movement an effective method of military operations. It also presented critical locations that controlled the flow of commercial and military

traffic in the waterways. Traditionally, the Irish fortified these vital points by erecting keeps on islands in the middle of loughs.⁶

Enniskillen Castle is an example of such a fortification. Built in the early 1400s by Hugh “The Hospitable” Maguire (d. 1428), Enniskillen Castle stood on an island in the River Erne as it flows from Upper to Lower Lough Erne.⁷ John Thomas’s illustration of the siege of Enniskillen Castle shows it occupying the entirety of its island and positioned on a bend in the river, allowing the castle to command about 270 degrees of river approaches.⁸

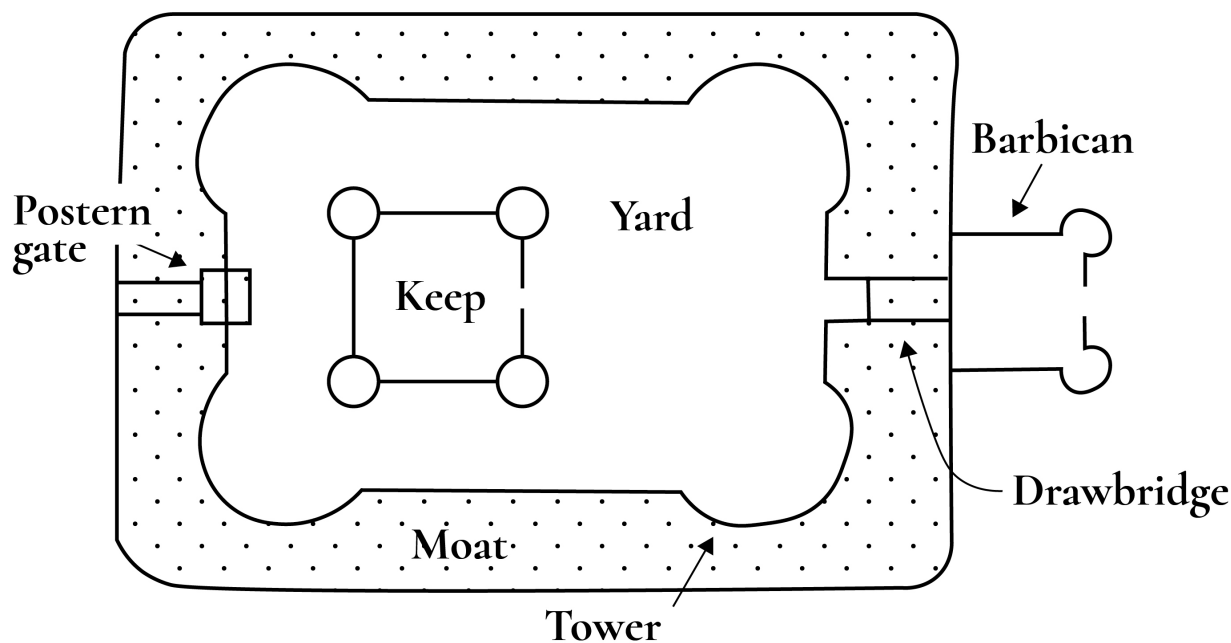
⁴D. J. B. Trim, “Medieval and Early-Modern Inshore, Estuarine, Riverine and Lacustrine Warfare,” in *Amphibious Warfare, 1000–1700*, 360–63.

⁵*Corries*: horseshoe-shaped vallies formed through erosion by ice or glaciers; *drumlin*: a hill made of glacial till deposited by a moving glacier, usually shaped like half an egg.

⁶Fissel, “English Amphibious Warfare, 1587–1656,” 235.

⁷John Thomas, “Siege of Enniskillen Castle, 1594,” color illustration, C13343-69, Cotton Augustus I.ii.39, British Library Board; and Paul Logue, “Siege of Enniskillen Castle Map, 1594,” PDF, Fermanagh, A Story in 100 Objects, Fermanagh County Museum, 1, accessed 25 September 2016.

⁸Thomas, “Siege of Enniskillen Castle, 1594.”



Parts of a typical medieval castle.

Adapted by MCUP

Recognizing the vulnerability of these keeps to amphibious assault, the Irish constructed sconces, or small defensive earthworks, surrounding the keep. They planted sharpened stakes in the water approaches to foul assaulting boats. Irish castles varied in design, but the construction of Enniskillen Castle featured a barbican containing a single landward gate with a bridge across the narrow portion of the river that served as a moat. The castle walls surrounded a central keep that stood four stories tall, capped with a catwalk that provided commanding views in all directions. The height of the keep also allowed for plunging fire on forces attacking the barbican.⁹

In his book, *At the Water's Edge*, Theodore Gatchel describes three basic methods of amphibious defense: the naval defense, defense at the water's edge, and the mobile land defense.¹⁰ Although written to describe twentieth-century amphibious operations, these defense methods also reflect those available to forces in the late 1500s. Lacking a naval force, the naval defense was not an option for the Irish, and the Irish tactic of retreating to their keep removed the prospect of a mo-

bile land defense. This limited the defensive options to defending at the water's edge and thus inhibited their ability to engage the English amphibious raids where they were most vulnerable, on the water and during disembarkation. Fissel notes in his analysis of the Nine Years' War that, given Irish specialization in mobile operations, it is amazing that defenders sat in wait instead of going out and disrupting the attack.¹¹

English Way of War

English amphibious operations in Ireland during the Nine Years' War proved significantly more successful than those attempted by the English in their concurrent war against Spain. When the English arrived in Ireland to quell the rebellious lords, they recognized the need for amphibious capability and transformed their transport watercraft into vessels of war. The geography of Ulster, a vital center of the conflict, with its maze of waterways, lent itself to the use of combined land and waterborne operations, in other words, amphibious operations. The frequent inundation of the Irish landscape made land operations problematic and compelled the English to depend on riverine and

⁹ Thomas, "Siege of Enniskillen Castle, 1594."

¹⁰ Theodore L. Gatchel, *At the Water's Edge: Defending Against the Modern Amphibious Assault* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1996), 2–3.

¹¹ Fissel, "English Amphibious Warfare, 1587–1656," 235.

lacustrine transportation. Control of the river routes was essential to subjugating the region and, by extension, the whole of Ireland.¹²

Captain Sir John Dowdall (ca. 1545–ca. 1608) pioneered Hibernian amphibious operations, and his assault on Enniskillen Castle demonstrated the amphibious tactics adopted by the English. Those tactics focused on firepower and mobility, including the use of light, shallow draft cots, and longboats.¹³ One key element to English success was adapting material, both indigenous and already in hand, to the local geography. The English adopted the longboats carried by English seagoing vessels for use in Ireland. Frequently employed as landing boats from larger sailing ships, eight or ten oarsmen rowed the longboat, which had good seakeeping qualities that allowed it to operate in the surf zone. Cots were indigenous flat-bottom boats explicitly developed for the loughs and rivers in Ireland.¹⁴ Operations on Irish rivers required oared vessels to maneuver in the many twists, turns, and hilly terrain, as wind power was unreliable. The boats also carried a medium-caliber swivel gun in the bows, which allowed the English to bring firepower to bear on the Irish castles from their less-defended watersides.¹⁵ It is, however, important to note that larger caliber artillery available to the English was not fielded at Enniskillen due to the limited carrying capacity of the boats available, a potential limitation to inland amphibious operations conducted in the modern era as well.¹⁶

Modern Riverine Warfare

Amphibious operations in a riverine environment remain relevant today. But the U.S. military “is not adequately prepared to use rivers as a maneuver space—or prevent adversaries from doing the same—and it has

not been for years.”¹⁷ This is despite several examples of riverine warfare in America’s past.

The primary examples of American riverine war began as ad hoc operations, adapting existing equipment, just as the English did for the operations around Enniskillen Castle. During the American Civil War, Union forces in the western theater and the Chesapeake basin adapted local warcraft for use as transports and gunfire support vessels to use the rivers as maneuver spaces. In the west, General Ulysses S. Grant used his riverine forces to bypass, outflank, or surround Confederate strongholds. In the east, Union forces used the rivers that penetrate inland from the Chesapeake Bay to rapidly move forces toward Richmond, Virginia, provide fire support to troops battling along the peninsulas, and resupply ground forces. They also used the rivers to evacuate troops, an all-too-frequent occurrence in these peninsular campaigns. Using rivers as a maneuver space proved critical to Union victories in the west. While less conclusive in the east, the rivers provided critical logistical avenues for Union forces, especially in Grant’s final campaign.

A century later, during the Vietnam War, the Navy and Marines again adapted existing equipment to the riverine fight. Riverine operations combined swift patrol boats, plodding fortified landing craft, and fast-moving light attack helicopters to engage the National Liberation Front/People’s Liberation Army in the expansive river deltas of southern Vietnam. While primarily a Navy mission and often conducted from the water alone, Marines provided the land component for the more complex operations when needed to control key terrain along the rivers. While heroic, the riverine operations of the Vietnam War were inconclusive and, like the English seizure of Enniskillen centuries before, ultimately contributed little to the war’s eventual outcome.

The U.S. Navy maintains a limited riverine capability in the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC). Much of the contemporary iteration of this

¹² Fissel, “English Amphibious Warfare, 1587–1656,” 233.

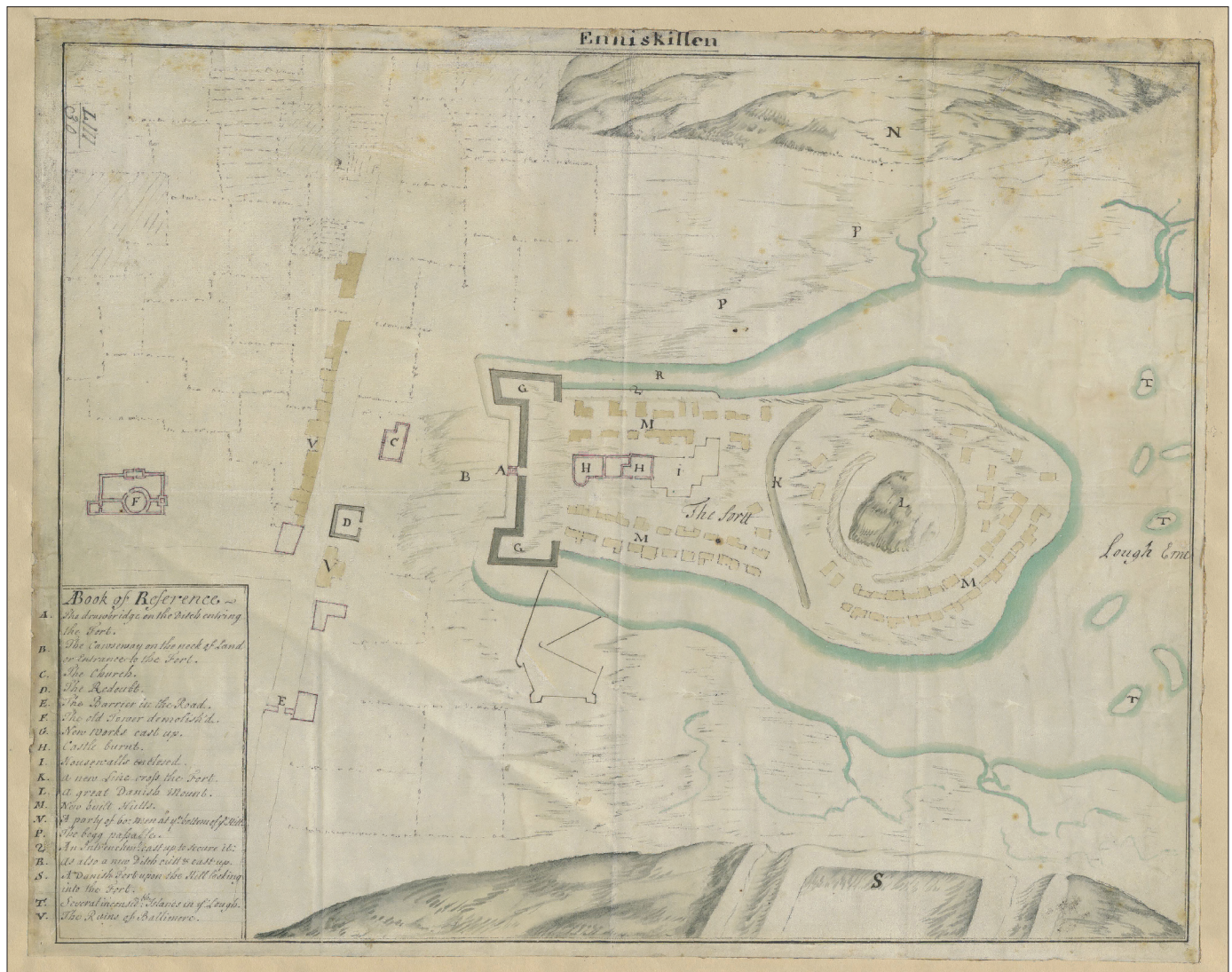
¹³ Fissel, “English Amphibious Warfare, 1587–1656,” 218, 233–36; and Hans C. Hamilton, ed., *Calendar of the State Papers, Relating to Ireland, of the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth*, vol. 5, *October 1592 to June 1596* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1890), 210.

¹⁴ “Traditional Boats and Replicas,” Irish Waterways History, accessed 5 April 2022.

¹⁵ Fissel, “English Amphibious Warfare, 1587–1656,” 234.

¹⁶ Fissel, “English Amphibious Warfare, 1587–1656,” 236.

¹⁷ Walker Mills, “More than ‘Wet Gap Crossings’: Riverine Capabilities Are Needed for Irregular Warfare and Beyond,” *Modern War Institute*, 9 February 2023.



Map of Enniskillen, ID 004982433, King's Topographical Collection, George III, King of Great Britain, former owner. Enniskillen, 1690, British Library Board Enniskillen, 1690, map on vellum. This map shows the motte and bailey mound on the peninsula and the new works about the castle, hills above and below, with Lough Erne to the right. Includes a key to the lower left within a cartouche.

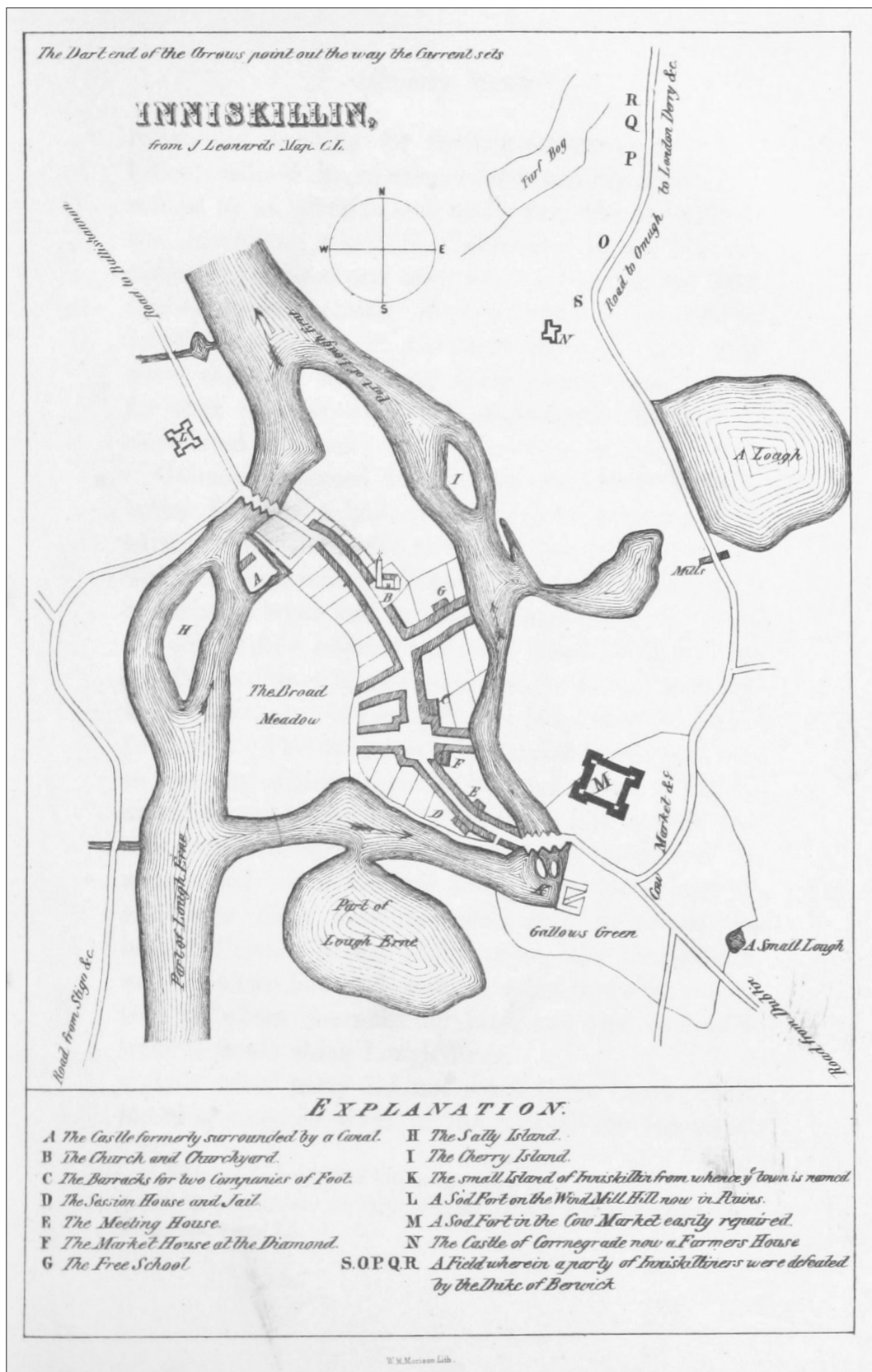
Navy mission evolved during the Marine Corps' focus on counterinsurgency operations, throughout which time the Corps abandoned riverine operations. But the Navy's capability lacks the robust land component required to expand and exploit control of the rivers and lakes by seizing and controlling the adjacent key terrain. Additionally, in the past few years, the Navy has reduced its riverine capability, citing its lack of relevance as the Navy reshapes its force to counter threats from Russia and the People's Republic of

China—the very threats that the Corps' expeditionary advanced base operations are designed to address.¹⁸

The Siege of Enniskillen Castle

Hugh Maguire (d. 1600) led some of the forces in the Irish rebellion and controlled a major avenue (the Erne) in Ulster with the castle Enniskillen, built by his ancestor Hugh the Hospitable. As long as Maguire held this chokepoint on the Erne, he stymied the English ability to subdue Ulster. In the summer of 1593,

¹⁸ Richard R. Burgess, "The Navy's Shrinking Patrol Boat Force," *Seapower*, 2 June 2021.



ID 015115593, Robert Cane, *The History of the Williamite and Jacobite Wars in Ireland; from Their Origin to the Capture of Athlone. [With Plates and Maps.]* (1859), 137, British Library Board Enniskillen, map.

the lord deputy in Dublin offered Maguire protection for two months if he would disband his forces and lay down his arms. Maguire countered with a request for six months of protection and stipulated the discharge of Sir Richard Bingham's troops as well, thinking that Bingham's troops were forming to invade his lands. The lord deputy, doubting Maguire's motives, dismissed this request, noting "the Council and I dare not give order to discharge the soldiers until we know what will become of this traitor Maguire."¹⁹ Unwilling to deal with Maguire and his "traitorous" band, the English determined that he must be defeated militarily. On 11 October 1593, English forces under Sir Henry Bagenall (ca. 1556–98) scored "a splendid victory over Maguire's full strength, being 1,000 foot and 160 horse, 300 slain . . . near the Ford of Golune."²⁰ Maguire's defeated force retreated to his fortified castle at Enniskillen, where they awaited the English assault.

Ensnared in Enniskillen Castle, Maguire's men must have felt secure from English attack. Situated as it was, the castle provided commanding views of the approaches in all directions. The castle walls abutted the river on two and a half sides, with a narrow channel of the river forming a moat on the remaining sides, making a land approach relatively confined and easily defended. The land approach to the castle was also an island, providing an additional barrier for attackers to cross. To enhance the defensive barrier provided by the island, the castle builders had placed sconces at the entrances to the section of the river that had to be crossed, blocking river access to the island. Complementing the sconces were stakes planted in the river approaches to the castle designed to foul any boats attempting to pass.²¹ The castle consisted of an outer wall surrounding a tower keep—a tall, sturdy structure with loopholes for firing on attacking forces. A tower and a narrow bridge that canalized an attacking force protected the single land gate. Atop the wall was a protected catwalk from which defenders could

fire down on attacking troops and quickly reposition within the castle's defenses.²²

Captain John Dowdall's troops arrived outside Enniskillen Castle in early January 1594. With accounts of Maguire's strength running from less than 50 to more than 500 troops, Dowdall had to plan his attack carefully to ensure victory. Rather than storm the castle immediately, Dowdall worked to position his force and harass Maguire's supply lines. In a letter to the lord deputy in Dublin, Dowdall reported that he "took 700 cows from the traitor" on 18 January. Thinking Dowdall's troops were his own, Maguire came out in a cot to investigate, and the English troops fired on the cot, killing two men. Dowdall followed this with an assault on one of the sconces defending the castle, putting "the defenders to the sword, and burned the same."²³

To ensure sufficient forces to take Enniskillen Castle, Dowdall had requested reinforcements from Bingham. These forces arrived during the next few days and were employed in besieging the castle. By 25 January, the English had "entrenched and placed our shot within one caliver shot of the Castle, and the same night we placed our three [falconets]."²⁴ Drawings of the siege indicate that these entrenchments laid down fire on the castle from two directions. Two positions placed across the River Erne, west of the castle, under the command of Captain Bingham, took the castle under fire with muskets, a falconet cannon, and a robinet cannon.²⁵ None of these weapons could penetrate the castle's thick walls, but their fire kept the Irish defenders behind their defenses. Additionally, based on their position relative to the castle entrance, the English could fire into the flank of any force that ventured out of the castle against them.

²² Thomas, "Siege of Enniskillen Castle, 1594."

²³ Hamilton, *Calendar of the State Papers, Relating to Ireland, of the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth*, 199–203, 204.

²⁴ The *caliver* is halfway between a musket and an arquebus and has a higher bore and heavier barrel than the arquebus, but is otherwise identical in design. A *falconet* was a light cannon that fired a one-pound ball about 5,000 yards. Hamilton, *Calendar of the State Papers, Relating to Ireland, of the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth*, 204.

²⁵ A *robinet* was a light cannon that fired a three-quarter pound shot with a range of approximately 2,000 yards. Thomas, "Siege of Enniskillen Castle, 1594."

¹⁹ Hamilton, *Calendar of the State Papers, Relating to Ireland, of the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth*, 127–28.

²⁰ Hamilton, *Calendar of the State Papers, Relating to Ireland, of the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth*, 166–67.

²¹ Fissel, "English Amphibious Warfare, 1587–1656," 235.



Photo courtesy of the author

Trim Castle, County Meath, Ireland, provides an example of a medieval castle barbican (right) and keep (center).

Amphibious operations on 24 January by Dowdall's forces facilitated the placement of English entrenchments on the island adjacent to the castle. English troops passed the castle in the river and were forced, by scones and stakes that hindered further passage of their boats, to put men ashore to defeat these defenses. Defeating the scones allowed the English to advance, using a sowe to shield them from musket fire from the castle, and to place the three falconet cannons mentioned in Dowdall's report and additional musketeers in entrenchments south of the castle, directly across from the castle gate.²⁶

The castle's defenders returned musket fire at both entrenchments but likely lacked cannons in the

castle for heavier fire against the attackers. Thirty-six men defended the castle, and 30 or 40 women or children were holed up within its walls.²⁷ The defenders had retreated into the castle when Dowdall's force overran the scones on the island's eastern end adjacent to the castle earlier in the assault. Curiously, the defenders left intact the bridge to the castle gate, depending on the gate's sturdy door for defense against a breach of the barbican.²⁸

The siege of Enniskillen Castle lasted nine days before Dowdall launched his assault from the Erne on 2 February 1594. The assault consisted of three vessels:

²⁷ Thomas, "Siege of Enniskillen Castle, 1594"; and Hamilton, *Calendar of the State Papers, Relating to Ireland, of the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth*, 210.

²⁸ Logue, "Siege of Enniskillen Castle Map," 6; and Thomas, "Siege of Enniskillen Castle, 1594."

²⁶ A sowe is a siege engine used to protect assaulting forces. Thomas, "Siege of Enniskillen Castle, 1594."

a “greate boate” carried the breaching force, and two cots provided a scaling party. Twelve oarsmen powered the greate boate, covered with hurdells and hides to protect the 100 men inside.²⁹ The two cots, each rowed by 8 oarsmen, carried 15 troops with a scaling ladder in the stern and were armed with a swivel gun in the bow. The assault force, under cover of the musket and cannon fire of the English entrenchments “assault[ed] the castle by boats, by engines, by sap, and by scaling,” with the greate boate laying alongside the western barbican and the two cots scaling the southern barbican.³⁰ To save himself from hanging, Connor O’Cassidy, Maguire’s messenger whom the English had captured, served as a guide to Dowdall’s assault force and helped the English place their assault craft in the best position to breach the barbican. The men of the greate boate breached the castle wall using “pickaxes and other instruments.”³¹ Once the wall was breached, Maguire’s defenders retreated into the keep where, according to O’Cassidy, they were forced to surrender under threat of being blown up by powder.³²

With Enniskillen Castle now in the hands of the crown, Dowdall garrisoned it with 30 men, 10 from each company present, and set to “ransacking all [Maguire’s] sconces in their loughs and islands wheresoever.”³³ While losses during the siege and assault were minimal on both sides, Dowdall’s forces slaughtered the Irish occupants of the castle, and sickness soon reduced the English ranks to one-half their original strength. Thus, despite successfully taking Enniskillen in the siege, Dowdall withdrew the majority of his garrison, leaving only 100 men to maintain a hold on the castle and surrounding areas.

²⁹ A *hurdell* (or hurdle) during this period was a light section of fencing used for temporary barriers, for crossing rivers, and, in this case, as light armor against projectile weapons.

³⁰ Hamilton, *Calendar of the State Papers, Relating to Ireland, of the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth*, 204–10; and Thomas, “Siege of Enniskillen Castle, 1594.”

³¹ Hamilton, *Calendar of the State Papers, Relating to Ireland, of the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth*, 210; and Thomas, “Siege of Enniskillen Castle, 1594.”

³² Hamilton, *Calendar of the State Papers, Relating to Ireland, of the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth*, 210.

³³ Hamilton, *Calendar of the State Papers, Relating to Ireland, of the Reigns of Henry VIII, Edward VI, Mary, and Elizabeth*, 208.

Unfortunately for the English, the capture of Enniskillen did not end the rebellion in Ulster. Within six months, the garrison was besieged by Maguire’s forces, prompting Sir Henry Duke and Sir Edward Herbert to mount a relief expedition to the castle in August 1594. This English expedition was defeated at the Battle of the Ford of the Biscuits, but the garrison at Enniskillen held until relieved by another expedition later that summer.³⁴ Strategically, the capture of Enniskillen may have been of little consequence. Still, its seizure demonstrates how the effective use of inland amphibious warfare can achieve military objectives in riverine and lacustrine environments.

Lessons for the Modern Marine Corps

Considering English riverine operations in the Nine Years’ War, such as the siege of Enniskillen Castle, in addition to the American river warfare experiences in the American Civil War and Vietnam War, can inform Marine planners as they develop the tactics, techniques, and procedures of the Marine Littoral Regiment (MLR). It may be difficult to see lessons for today’s Marine Corps from a sixteenth-century assault on a river-island castle. Technology has clearly advanced from the falconets, cots, greate boates, and scaling ladders employed by the English in their assault on Enniskillen Castle. But lessons abound as the Marine Corps seeks to reinvent itself as a stand-in force for the twenty-first century.

The first thing to note is the pervasiveness of rivers and lakes that crisscross the land of the littorals where the Marine Corps intends to operate, such as the islands of the Philippine archipelago or the littorals of Southeast Asia. Movement of traditional infantry or other ground forces is constrained in riverine, lacustrine, and archipelagic regions as small amounts of land are interspersed with rivers, marshes, lakes, and other water features. If the Marines wish to be a stand-in force in the western Pacific and Southeast Asia littorals, they will need to be able to operate seamlessly across the inland land-water interface.

³⁴ James O’Neill, “Death in the Lakelands: Tyrone’s Proxy War, 1593–4,” *History Ireland* 23, no. 2 (March/April 2015): 14–17.

English operations at Enniskillen demonstrated the value of coordinated waterborne and land-based forces—not on the grand scale of a World War II D-Day style invasion, but at the tactical level. Having the flexibility to envelop—on land and on the water—the castle prevented the defenders from concentrating on one threat vector. Coordinated operations across both land and water after the arrival of the landing force provided the English commander with the flexibility to control the tempo of the assault.

The advent of airpower, including vertical lift and aerial assault capability, may cause some to argue that the inland land-water interface is no longer pertinent. We can put Marines in helicopters or tilt-rotor aircraft, and they can bypass the land-water interface and go straight to the objective. That may be true, but it is not always an option, especially when the MLR operates as a stand-in force in an air-denied environment. The modern Marine commander needs options, so restoring and expanding a riverine capability to the Marine Corps, specifically in the MLR, is essential to providing flexibility to our Marines. As a stand-in force, the MLR must be able to operate across all domains in the littorals—including the land-water interface.

Conclusion

During the Nine Years' War, English operations in Ireland were the most effective English amphibious operations of the era. This effectiveness resulted from several factors, including the geography of Ireland, the early recognition by the English that amphibious operations were necessary, the Irish tendency to eschew

an active defensive position and instead hole up in their fortified keeps, and the English use of mobility and firepower to overwhelm the Irish defenses. Most critical of these were the riverine and lacustrine features of Ireland. Pioneers in Hibernian amphibious operations such as Captain Dowdall recognized the ineffectiveness of land operations in this environment and adopted tactics to take advantage of the mobility provided by the waterways. Dowdall's combined operations to invest, besiege, and then take Enniskillen Castle by an assault from the river exemplify these operations. Identifying and overcoming the Irish defensive structures like sconces and water obstacles meant to impede boat movement, the English were then able to lay siege and storm the weakened castles and eventually quell the rebellious lords of Ireland.

Dowdall adjusted his tactics to the geography in which he fought, and he adapted the tools at his disposal to take advantage of that geography. Today's Marine commanders should take their cue from Dowdall in understanding the riverine and lacustrine operating environment and be prepared to adapt their tactics to match the environment. Adapting to the operating environment is not a new idea. But considering examples such as the siege at Enniskillen Castle allows commanders to equip MLRs with the tools to operate in the riverine and lacustrine environments that permeate the western Pacific littorals in advance of need. However, MLR commanders should also be prepared to adapt indigenous tools, often designed over centuries to operate in the local environment, to maximize MLR effectiveness in the riverine and lacustrine settings they can expect to face.

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The 4th Tank Battalion in the Pacific

A CASE STUDY IN FIELD-INSPIRED INGENUITY

By Robert P. Wettemann Jr., PhD

Abstract: Using the 4th Tank Battalion as a case study, this article argues that U.S. Marine tankers in World War II possessed a uniquely American mechanical aptitude that allowed them to make necessary modifications to their tanks that were crucial to combat effectiveness in the Pacific. Having grown up during the Great Depression and possessing a “use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without,” mentality, these tankers recognized what could be done to improve their tanks, and applying American ingenuity, fabricated armor and tank-to-infantry communications systems, among other innovations to enhance their abilities as warfighters. While this trait was not necessarily unique to the 4th Tank Battalion, their leaders, Captain Robert M. Neiman and Lieutenant Henry L. Bellmon in particular, encouraged such activity, and the battalion was certainly among the most mechanically creative among the Marine tank battalions in the Pacific.

Keywords: 4th Marine Tank Battalion, tanks, ingenuity, armor, Robert M. Neiman, Henry L. Bellmon

In the closing pages of General George S. Patton’s *War as I Knew It*, the foremost practitioner of armored warfare in World War II offered this observation on the subject of American ingenuity:

The Americans . . . are the foremost mechanics in the world. America, as a nation, has the greatest ability for the mass production of machines. It therefore behooves us to devise methods of war which exploit our inherent superiority.¹

Although Patton had little, if any, direct contact with the U.S. Marine Corps during a distinguished career

that culminated in leading the Third Army in defeating Germany, his characterization of the American soldier could also be applied to many Marine tankers who fought against the Japanese in the Pacific. With a reputation as “incorrigible tinkerers, constantly making changes to their tanks that they hoped would make life easier or help increase their chances of survival in combat,” Marine tankers, and especially those of the 4th Tank Battalion, repeatedly demonstrated a uniquely American brand of ingenuity as they constantly modified the tanks they employed in the Marshall Islands, on Saipan and Tinian, and on Iwo Jima.² Using the 4th Tank Battalion as a case study, this article seeks to show that Marines—encouraged by the forward-thinking leadership of Captain Robert M. Neiman and inspired by men such as Lieutenant Henry L. Bellmon and Gunnery Sergeant Samuel D.

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¹ George S. Patton Jr., ann. Colonel Paul D. Hankins, *War as I Knew It* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1947), 366.

² Oscar E. Gilbert, *Tanks in Hell: A Marine Corps Tank Company on Tarawa* (Philadelphia: Casemate, 2015), 63.

Johnston—repeatedly embraced the Great Depression-era adage of “use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without,” and employed their ingenuity, born of necessity, to improve their tanks and counter the challenges presented by a determined enemy. Having grown up in the nation’s farms and factories, the men of the 4th Tank Battalion possessed an American mechanical spirit that emanated “from the bottom up,” a trait that they demonstrated throughout the war against the Japanese in the Pacific.

A Unique Cultural Context

The 4th Tank Battalion Marines during the Second World War were products of a unique moment in time. While some may regard General Patton’s comments praising America’s mechanical aptitude as hyperbole, the Americans who fought in World War II were the first generation to reach maturity in the United States with widespread access to the internal combustion engine. As the war began, they owned or operated these machines at a higher per capita rate than the rest of the Axis and Allied nations combined, and did so in a society that emphasized free thinking and problem solving as the “American Way.”³ As U.S. Army chief of staff George C. Marshall recognized in 1939, “Almost every boy in this country knows how to handle a motor vehicle, and many of them understand a great deal about the repair of motor equipment.”⁴ The erstwhile civilians of the war against the Japanese in the Pacific had spent their youths devouring such book series as *Tom Swift* and *The Hardy Boys* and peri-

Table 1. World per capita automobile ownership, 1939

Country	Cars per 1000 people
United States	227
United Kingdom	54
France	51
Germany	25
Italy	11
U.S.S.R.	5

Source: Table 1.1, in Bernhard R. Kroener, Rolf-Deiter Muller, Hans Umbreit, *Das Deutsche Reich und der Zweite Weltkrieg: Organisation und Mobilisierung des Deutschen Machtbereichs*, 2 vols. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1988), 1: 651.

odicals such as *Popular Science* and *Popular Mechanics*. Such publications extolled the virtues of the machine in a manner appealing to young boys and lauded a mechanic’s ability to tinker with, repair, and improve on whatever technology was available to them.⁵ The result was a special brand of skill with machinery, which, after the attack on Pearl Harbor, became part of the American military arsenal as the United States went to war in the Pacific.

Marine Armor in the Opening Campaigns

On 7 December 1933, *Naval Department General Order No. 241* created the Fleet Marine Force (FMF), task-

³ These notions are explored in greater detail by Victor Davis Hanson in *The Second World Wars: How the First Global Conflict Was Fought and Won* (New York: Basic Books, 2017), 224. Statistics maintained by the League of Nations in 1939 established U.S. automobile production levels at more than 2,656,000 annually. This production far outstripped production of the other major powers: Germany—342,000; France—223,000; USSR—215,000; Italy—69,000; and Japan—30,000. These statistics combine production of passenger cars with production of lorries, omnibuses, and other wheeled transportation, excluding tractors. See *Statistical Year-Book of the League of Nations, 1938–39* (Geneva: League of Nations, Economic Intelligence Service, 1939), 197; and David M. Kennedy, *Freedom from Fear: The American People in Depression and War, 1929–1945* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 617.

⁴ “Emergency Supplemental Appropriation Bill for 1940, Hearings before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Appropriations,” House of Representatives, 26th Cong., 3d Sess. (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1939), 6–8.

⁵ Beginning in 1872, E. L. Youmans began publishing *Popular Science Monthly*, building the magazine’s reputation by documenting the great inventions of the day: the telephone, the electric light, the airplane, and the automobile. Thirty years later, his competitor Henry Windsor began publishing *Popular Mechanics*, a magazine dedicated to the wonders of science and technology that would be, as Windsor hoped, “written so you can understand it.” By the 1930s, not only had publications like *Popular Science* and *Popular Mechanics* captured the nation’s attention, but young boys also had a growing host of adolescent heroes like Tom Swift and the Hardy Boys, who used technological tinkering to great effect in solving their own problems. See Francis J. Molson, “American Technological Fiction for Youth: 1900–1940,” in C. W. Sullivan III, ed., *Young Adult Science Fiction* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1999), 9–10; Arthur Prager, “Bless My Collar Button, if It Isn’t TOM SWIFT,” *American Heritage* 28 (December 1976), 64–75; Robert Von der Osten, “Four Generations of Tom Swift: Ideology in Juvenile Science Fiction,” *Lion and the Unicorn* 28 (April 2004): 268–84; Carol Billman, *The Secret of the Stratemeyer Syndicate: Nancy Drew, the Hardy Boys, and the Million Dollar Factory* (New York: Ungar Publishing, 1986); and Russell Nye, *The Unembarrassed Muse: The Popular Arts in America* (New York: Dial, 1970), 84–85.

ing it with organizing, planning, supporting, and conducting future amphibious operations. The following year, the Marine Corps published the *Tentative Manual of Landing Operations*, defining all aspects of future amphibious operations including command and control, landing area selection, ship-to-shore movement, beachhead landing and defense, aviation and artillery support, logistical support, and the use of tanks in support of landing forces. The *Tentative Manual of Landing Operations* provided only two pages of instruction to guide future Marine tank officers, leading some historians to conclude that the Marines relied on evolving U.S. Army tank doctrine to guide future operations in the Pacific, with the Tarawa debacle prompting a meaningful review of Marine armor doctrine that later produced *Amphibious Operations: Employment of Tanks* in 1946.⁶ Others, however, contend that the unique amphibious mission of the Marine Corps, with tank and armor units subordinated to larger Marine divisions, yielded little in the way of unique Marine tank doctrine, as individual tank units developed doctrine independently.⁷ Consequently, Marine tank crews received “one-on-one tutelage as individuals within units” or as specialists who “learned their skills in the field, often under fire.”⁸ With this minimal doctrinal framework, the potential existed for individual commanders to have significant influence over the means by which tanks were employed in the field, something that was certainly the case with the 4th Tank Battalion.

Early Marine landings on Guadalcanal included an armored presence, but tanks had limited influence in the campaign, due largely to the challenges associated with operating in rugged jungle terrain. On Guadalcanal, Companies A and B of the 1st Tank Battalion landed with the two reinforced infantry regi-

ments of the 1st Marine Division on 7 August 1942. As the forces initially faced little enemy resistance, the tanks became a division reserve, directed by General Alexander A. Vandegrift. Major Francis Cooper of Company B reported that from their landing until reassignment in November 1943, Marine armor was only employed against the enemy three times. In the first instance, a five-tank platoon successfully supported infantry in the final stages of fighting along the Tenaru River in August, attacking enemy machine-gun and mortar positions by crushing the dug-in enemy under their treads. The next day, tanks provided a “morale factor” for Marines mopping up the Japanese that had escaped from the previous day’s fighting. In September, Cooper characterized the employment of six tanks in support of 3d Battalion, 1st Marines, along Edson’s Ridge as “quite disastrous,” as enemy fire knocked out three tanks in a short engagement. In this loss, Cooper identified numerous “costly” lessons, notably the tank commanders’ minimal visibility, their preoccupation in directing drivers in the jungle environment, and poor reconnaissance in advance of movement over difficult terrain. Thus, the prospect of continued employment of tanks in tropical areas appeared “very limited.”⁹

Even less favorable was the employment of I Marine Amphibious Corps’ (IMAC) tank battalion in support of Operation Galvanic, the November 1943 seizure of Betio in the Gilbert Islands. The initial landing craft carrying Major General Julian C. Smith’s 2d Marines got hung up on a coral reef, forcing some troops to wade nearly 500 yards to the landing beaches, while others were shuttled between

⁶ *Tentative Manual of Landing Operations* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 1934), paragraphs 2-1000-6; and Joseph DiDomenico, “The U.S. Army’s Influence on Marine Corps Tank Doctrine,” *Marine Corps History* 4, no. 1 (Summer 2018): 26, 41.

⁷ Kenneth W. Estes, “The U.S. Marine Corps Tank Doctrine, 1920–50,” *Marine Corps History* 6, no. 2 (Winter 2020): 45–46, 54, <https://doi.org/10.35318/mch.2020060203>.

⁸ Oscar E. Gilbert, *Marine Tank Battles in the Pacific* (Boston: Da Capo Press, 2001), 16; and Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*, rev. and exp. ed. (New York: Free Press, 1991), 361.

⁹ Major F. H. Cooper, “Notes on the Operations of Tanks (Light) in the Solomons,” in Col B. Q. Jones, “Interviews and Statements by Officers of the First Marine Division on the Guadalcanal Operations,” 5 December 1942–19 January 1943, World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library. See also John L. Zimmerman, *The Guadalcanal Campaign* (Washington, DC: History Division, Headquarters Marine Corps, 1949), 69, 89–80. Kevin C. Holzimmer makes a case for armor effectiveness in latter stages of the Pacific campaign in New Guinea, in “In Close Country: World War II American Armor Tactics in the Jungles of the Southwest Pacific,” *Armor* 106 (July–August 1997): 21–26; but Joseph DiDomenico noted that during the testing period of 1941–43, “Armor played a limited role in the overall success of the Guadalcanal campaign because of the restricted jungle terrain.” DiDomenico, “The U.S. Army’s Influence on Marine Corps Tanks Doctrine,” 30.

grounded landing craft and the sea wall in amphibious tractors capable of climbing over the atoll. Enemy fire hit the landing craft carrying IMAC's reconnaissance section, challenging survivors to mark an approach channel for tanks arriving in the fifth wave. Consequently, when company commander First Lieutenant Edward L. Bale ordered his headquarters section and three tank platoons to disembark from their landing crafts, mechanized (LCMs), the surviving members of the reconnaissance section had to expose themselves as they navigated underwater shell craters and guided the tanks to the beach. Lacking fording kits, extended exhaust stacks that allowed for deep-water operations, the Marine M4A2 Sherman tanks could not operate in more than three feet of water.¹⁰ Of the battalion's 14 tanks, only the 2d Platoon tanks *Cobra* and *Conga* and 3d Platoon's *Colorado*, along with *Commando* from the headquarters section, remained operational by midafternoon on 20 November, victims of underwater shell craters or concentrated enemy fire. By the end of the day, only *Cobra* and *Colorado* still functioned, though radio failures hindered their ability to communicate.¹¹ The next morning, Lieutenant Bale freed the jammed breech block that had rendered 1st Platoon's *China Gal* inoperable, and he remounted it as a command tank, directing fire in support of troops on the western tip of Betio on 22 November.¹² When the Marines reduced the last pocket of Japanese resistance on 23 November, only *Colorado* and *China Gal* remained, though once fighting was over, Bale's Marine tankers, eager to salvage any equipment that could be returned to service, recovered 1st Platoon's *Chicago*, disabled when its electrical system shorted in a submerged shell crater.¹³

Prior to the Gilbert Islands landings, the Marines entertained minimal discussion regarding how tanks should be employed on landfall, making it apparent that a capable commander with vision could dramatically increase the effectiveness of a single tank battalion. Private Joe D. Woolum, gunner aboard 3d Platoon tank *Condor*, regarded the instructions he received in advance of the Betio landings as "asinine," as he was told only to "push across the island as quickly as possible and return, firing only as necessary, turn around, and come back. Then if you happened to see something, shoot it."¹⁴ Furthermore, a classified report entitled "Amphibious Operations During the Period August to December 1943" failed to address doctrine in a meaningful way, elevating the importance of a forward-thinking commander largely through omission. In a discussion of landing operations in the Gilbert Islands, the Mediterranean theater, and the South and Southwest Pacific, medium tanks are mentioned in support of amphibious landings, with no specific mention of the challenges encountered on Betio, particularly with respect to intertank communication, amphibious armored doctrine, or tank-infantry coordination once tanks were ashore. Instead, the report emphasized the importance of amphibian tractors over traditional landing craft, noting that tracked vehicles "though unarmored, proved invaluable for landing troops and supplies, for tearing out wire and log barricades, for dragging drowned trucks ashore, and for towing stranded boats off reefs." Medium tanks were to be used "in accordance with the tactical plan," unique to each invasion situation. The commander of V Amphibious Corps that landed on the Gilberts offered a few specific comments with respect to medium tanks, observing only that "one company of medium tanks supported by turret mount amphibians [amphibious tractors] will be adequate for any one objective island."¹⁵

¹⁰ Joseph H. Alexander, "Baptism by Fire: Sherman Tanks at Tarawa," *Leatherneck* (November 1993), 34–37; and Gilbert, *Tanks in Hell*, 107–10. The 14 tanks of Bale's Company C all had names that began with the letter C: Bale's own tank was named *Cecilia*, and he was accompanied by his deputy commander aboard *Commando*. 1st Platoon tanks were *Chicago*, *China Gal*, *Count*, and *Cherry*; 2d Platoon tanks were *Cobra*, *Clipper*, *Cuddles*, and *Conga*; and 3d Platoon tanks were *Cannonball*, *Condor*, *Colorado*, and *Charlie*.

¹¹ Gilbert, *Tanks in Hell*, 125–56.

¹² Gilbert, *Tanks in Hell*, 157–86.

¹³ Gilbert, *Tanks in Hell*, 187–91, 195.

¹⁴ As quoted in Gilbert, *Tanks in Hell*, 124.

¹⁵ R. S. Edwards, Chief of Staff, Headquarters of the Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, "Amphibious Operation During the Period August to December 1943," 22 April 1944, World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library.

Creating the 4th Tank Battalion

Such were the circumstances faced by Captain Robert M. Neiman, who assumed command of Company C, 4th Tank Battalion, in June 1943. A former life insurance salesman from Maryland, Neiman had joined the Marine Corps in November 1940, graduating from the first Officer Candidates class and serving in the 1st Scout Company before his assignment to the 1st Tank Battalion in April 1942. In November 1942, Neiman chose Camp Elliott, California, home of the Fleet Marine Force Tank School, over aviation school, when Colonel Robert E. Hogaboom promised Neiman that he could have command of the next tank company formed on the West Coast. Moreover, he was told that in forming his new company, he could make by-name selections for the officers and enlisted from those he encountered in the training program.¹⁶

When 4th Tank Battalion was formed, Neiman's company took on a unique character almost immediately, undoubtedly a product of his being allowed to "handpick the officers and men" for his new company. Selecting the first two platoon leaders from men he knew at the Marine Tank School, Fleet Marine Force Training Command, at Camp Elliott, the third platoon leader he selected was a product of a fortuitous meeting during driving training at Jacque's Farm north of San Diego. As they watched a group of 15 tanks speeding through a training course, one of the tanks "came up fast, spun to a halt, and threw a track." The tank commander of the disabled tank instructed his driver to drive slowly forward and backward, and with two crewmen using hand tools, quickly walked the track back on, allowing the crew to resume training in no time at all. Impressed, Neiman approached the tank commander, asked his name, and demanded an explanation for how he could replace a thrown track so quickly. Second Lieutenant Henry L. Bellmon,

the product of a Billings, Oklahoma, wheat farm and recent graduate from Oklahoma A&M College (now Oklahoma State University), quickly replied that he had been around farm equipment since his father had begun replacing horses with Allis-Chalmers tractors in the late 1930s. Recognizing the value of a man who knew his way around machinery, Neiman decided he had found his final platoon leader.¹⁷

Bellmon joined Neiman in selecting the remaining men in the unit, advising his commander that they should choose personnel who were former members of either the 4-H or Future Farmers of America clubs, as that would "bring in the farm boys who could probably maintain and operate mechanical equipment with a minimum of problems." According to Bellmon, this became one of the criteria for future manpower selections to the company, a decision that eventually yielded remarkable results.¹⁸ Although Neiman's Company C, 4th Tank Battalion, would not be the first or the last Marine tank battalion raised for service in the Pacific, the manpower choices inspired by Bellmon's comments, coupled with 4th Tank Battalion commander Major Richard K. Schmidt's decision to allow company commanders latitude to run their individual companies as they saw fit, produced notable results, particularly with respect to field ingenuity.¹⁹

Theirs was not an easy task, for little in the way of lessons learned had filtered from the early campaigns to the handpicked men of the company.²⁰ While they did receive diesel-powered M4A2 medium tanks to replace the M5 Stuart light tanks they had trained on at Jacques's Farm, it was difficult to convince the 23d Marine Regiment commander, Colonel Louis R.

¹⁶ Robert M. Neiman and Kenneth W. Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches: A Marine Tanker in the Pacific War* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2003), 16–17, 32–33, 51–52. Although he never spoke with him, Neiman recalled seeing Gen Patton while the latter was commanding the 2d Armored Division in the General Headquarters Maneuvers in 1941. Neiman and another lieutenant had been assigned as observers to an Army mechanized cavalry regiment and saw Patton while his regiment had set up an ambush for elements of Patton's unit when it attacked a trestle bridge.

¹⁷ Neiman and Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches*, 51–67, 62; Henry Bellmon, with Pat Bellmon, *The Life and Times of Henry Bellmon* (Tulsa, OK: Council Oaks Books, 1992), 30–39, 45.

¹⁸ Bellmon, *The Life and Times of Henry Bellmon*, 45.

¹⁹ Neiman and Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches*, 65. In his memoir, Neiman regarded the failure to "coordinate the efforts of all the companies," particularly with respect to procedures and techniques as "a big mistake" (p. 65).

²⁰ Neiman stressed this point in his first speech before what was then Company A (they became Company C when they traded in their light tanks for the medium M4A2s later that November), stressing that because of their presence in the company, they were "the best of the best, and then said that we would train very hard and become the best tank company in the Marine Corps," Neiman and Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches*, 67.

Jones, of the need for coordination between armor and infantry. For Neiman and his men, training with the recently arrived medium tanks meant emphasizing practical armor operation and tank maintenance, as the Marine tank battalions lacked their own maintenance units.

Ingenuity in the Marshall Islands

In the aftermath of the Tarawa debacle, the Marine Corps developed deep-wading kits to allow tanks to vent their engines in water deeper than three feet. While the Army used experimental kits in the Mediterranean theater in Operation Torch (1942) and Operation Husky (1943), such developments were largely independent of Marine operations in the Pacific.²¹ By the time of the Marshall Islands campaign, not only had elements of the Army's 767th Tank Battalion, 7th Infantry Division (destined for landings at Kwajalein), began employing wading stacks, these stacks were also adopted by Neiman's 4th Tank Battalion, tasked with supporting the Marine landings on Roi and Namur.²²

In addition to the landing stacks provided by the Corps, Neiman's tankers also worked at the platoon level to make a number of unique additions to their tanks in efforts to deter attacks by Japanese infantry. Recognizing the threat posed by Japanese Type 99 magnetic mines, and the Japanese tactic of sticking these mines to the vertical sides of tank hulls, Company C installed 2-inch-thick planks of Douglas fir to the sides of the tanks to reduce their relative magnetism.²³ Neiman reportedly took this idea from First Lieutenant Leo B. Case, who had served with 1st Tank Battalion on Guadalcanal; when Japanese soldiers swarmed the light tanks at that landing and damaged or knocked them out using these weapons, Case realized that the addition of wood planking could deter future attacks, an effort for which he realized considerable success.²⁴

Neiman and his tankers followed another suggestion offered by Case, who subsequently became 4th Tank Battalion's operations officer, and Staff Sergeant Gerald L. De Moss, a company communications noncommissioned officer (NCO).²⁵ Recognizing the challenges posed by tankers operating in a buttoned-up turret, they installed a field telephone handset in a satchel on the right rear fender of each tank and wired it through the engine compartment into the tank's intercom system. This made tank-to-infantry communication possible, as the radio nets normally used by tank and infantry battalions were incompatible.²⁶

The confidential report on amphibious operations in the Marshall Islands issued by the U.S. Fleet on 20 May 1944 in the aftermath of combat on Roi and Namur does not specifically mention Company C's innovations, though it repeatedly speaks to the importance of the "tank-infantry" team and the "great neutralization value" gained by tanks and infantry working together.²⁷ The official report on Japanese defense and battle damage encountered on Marshall Islands is similarly sparse when it comes to comments on tank-infantry coordination. Colonel Claudius H. M. Roberts of the U.S. Army Ordnance Department, in the closing comments of his 57-page report, stated only that "the use of tanks for close support of infantry is invaluable and the medium tank is recommended. If possible, it should be landed with the assault waves and should be capable of firing en route to the beach."²⁸

Following the landings at Roi-Namur, the 4th Tank Battalion received new M4A2 medium tanks

²¹ Stephen J. Zaloga, *US Amphibious Tanks of World War II* (Oxford, UK: Osprey, 2021), 8–10, 30–36.

²² 767th Tank Battalion, *After Action Report, 1 January through 31 December 1944*, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library, 2–6.

²³ *Japanese Tank and Anti-Tank Warfare*, Special Series no. 34 (Washington, DC: Military Intelligence Division, War Department, 1945), 169, 178–95.

²⁴ Neiman and Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches*, 85.

²⁵ Neiman and Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches*, 86.

²⁶ Gilbert elaborates on these challenges extensively in *Tanks in Hell*, 65–72, noting the absence of any practical communication between tanks and infantry on Tarawa. It is not known that the lack of communication on Tarawa contributed to Neiman's decision to install phones on Company C's tanks. It can be inferred that this was a result of dealing with the 23d Marine Regiment at Camp Pendleton in advance of the Kwajalein Atoll operation.

²⁷ R. S. Edwards, Chief of Staff, Headquarters of the Commander in Chief, United States Fleet, "Amphibious Operations—The Marshall Islands—January–February 1944," World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library.

²⁸ W. D. Mission, "Marshall Islands Japanese Damage and Battle Damage: Comments on Amphibious Operations, 1 March 1944," World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library.

to replace those used in the Marshalls. According to Lieutenant Bellmon, these tanks came equipped with the new fording kits that helped the tanks navigate through sea water in depths up to “eight feet for several hundred yards.”²⁹ In addition to these enhancements provided by the Marine Corps, Neiman’s tankers, assigned to support landings on Saipan, improved their new medium tanks, making the same sorts of additions to them that they had made prior to the previous operation. In the battalion combat report drafted after the Saipan operation, battalion commander Major R. K. Schmidt noted that “during the period of training allowed this organization following the Roi-Namur operation, and prior to the Saipan Operation” an “improvised tank-infantry telephone was placed on each tank,” with additional communication provided between infantry and tank commanders through the employment of “SCR 536 and TCS equipped jeeps [by] the entire battalion.”³⁰ These makeshift tank-infantry phones, “installed in the tanks before embarking for Saipan,” provided “a very satisfactory method of tank-infantry coordination.”³¹ It should be noted that the Marines embarked for Saipan on 30 May 1944, well in advance of the Normandy invasion. Due to their relative isolation halfway across the globe, it would have been impossible for them to know about the Army’s efforts to develop effective tank-infantry communication in Normandy, as the Army’s use of the EE-8 telephone as a temporary solution to the challenges posed



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Lt Henry Bellmon atop his tank *Calcutta* on Iwo Jima. The modifications made by the 4th Tank Battalion are conspicuous in this photo, and include water tank and spigots, target clock on the wading stack, phone on the rear fender, and up-armoring efforts with wood planking, sandbags, and wire mesh “birdcage” hatch protectors.

by fighting in the hedgerows of Normandy did not come into being until mid-June 1944 at the earliest.³²

The 4th Tank Battalion also received recently developed flamethrower tanks in advance of the Saipan operation. Nicknamed “Ronsons,” these tanks mount-

²⁹ Bellmon, *The Life and Times of Henry Bellmon*, 53.

³⁰ SCR refers to set, complete radio; TCS refers to tactical communications system.

³¹ Maj R. K. Schmidt, Headquarters report, in “Fourth Marine Division Operations Report—Saipan, Annex K, Report of the 4th Tank Battalion,” 20 August 1944, 2; and Maj Robert N. Neiman, Company C report, in “Fourth Marine Division Operations Report—Saipan, Annex K, Report of the Tank 4th Tank Battalion,” 20 August 1944, both in *Fourth Marine Division Operations Report, 15 June to 9 July 1944*, World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library, 32.

³² For U.S. Army examples of early tank-infantry communications efforts, see “Battle Experiences No. 8, 27 July 1944,” in *Battle Experiences July 12, 1944–May 5, 1945* (Headquarters, European Theater of Operations: Combat Lessons Branch, G-3, 1945), 369; and “Immediate Report No. 27 (Combat Experiences), 10 August 1944,” in *Immediate Reports of Combat Operations* (Headquarters, European Theater of Operations: Combat Lessons Branch, G-3, 1945), 462, both World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library. These suggestions were repeated in “Battle Experiences No. 13, 1 August 1944,” which recognized the “success” encountered with linking “a microphone or telephone on the outside of certain tanks connected with the intercommunication system of the tank,” and repeated verbatim in “Battle Experiences No. 17, 11 August 1944,” in *Battle Experiences July 12, 1944–May 5, 1945*, 351, 359.



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A pair of up-armored Marine tanks equipped with water tanks and infantry radios advancing on a sniper's nest on Saipan, June 1944.

ed a flamethrower in the tube of a light tank and had an effective range of 80–100 yards. These new weapons were not received favorably, and despite sending 2 officers and 20 enlisted men to attend the flamethrower school at Pearl Harbor prior to the operation, they were reported as “unsatisfactory” in the formal operation report submitted 20 August 1944.³³

In the aftermath of the Saipan operation, other tankers, undoubtedly inspired by Neiman's efforts, equipped their tanks with “[F]rench phones” and improvised handsets made by using “a radio earphone as the receiver and a microphone as the mouthpiece, and taping them together.” As before, these were mounted on the left rear fenders of the tanks.³⁴ These phones enjoyed mixed reviews, no doubt a consequence of how well commanders had familiarized Marine infantry with the new additions. The forward-thinking Neiman specifically noted that the added intercom

system worked best when an infantry officer, usually a company commander or executive officer, walked directly behind the control tank, communicating with the tank constantly. In contrast, Company A commander First Lieutenant Stephen Horton Jr. noted in his combat report that while his company had phones installed, “much confusion was encountered due to people that did not know how to operate them.”³⁵

In addition to the improvised telephones, Company C added supplemental “armor” to their new medium tanks to counter evolving Japanese infantry

³³ Schmidt, Headquarters report, in “Fourth Marine Division Operations Report—Saipan, Annex K, Report of the 4th Tank Battalion,” 20 August 1944, 3, 5.

³⁴ Schmidt, Headquarters report, in “Fourth Marine Division Operations Report—Saipan, Annex K, Report of the 4th Tank Battalion,” 20 August 1944, 6.

³⁵ Neiman, Company C report, in “Fourth Marine Division Operations Report—Saipan, Annex K, Report of the 4th Tank Battalion,” 20 August 1944, 32; and 1stLt Stephen Horton Jr., A Company Report, in “Fourth Marine Division Operations Report—Saipan, Annex K, Report of the 4th Tank Battalion,” 20 August 1944, *Fourth Marine Division Operations Report, 15 June to 9 July 1944*, World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library, 16. In his report, Company B commander 1stLt Roger F. Seasholtz had an immediate assessment, as he reported that “phones installed on the right grouser box were of great value in co-ordination to both infantry personal [sic] and tank reconnaissance [sic] personel [sic]. Roger Seasholtz, Company B report, in “Fourth Marine Division Operations Report—Saipan, Annex K, Report of the 4th Tank Battalion,” 20 August 1944, *Fourth Marine Division Operations Report, 15 June to 9 July 1944*, World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library, 28.



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A battle-scarred *Davy Jones* reloads ammunition on 22 February. Note the welded spikes protecting hatches and vents.

tactics, layering sandbags over the rear engine compartment to protect against satchel charges hurled onto vulnerable vents and hatches by Japanese troops. They also covered “all possible hull armor” with one-inch lumber planks, but quickly realized that in leaving one-inch air space between the lumber and the hull, they had formed “perfect forms for pouring reinforced concrete” and subsequently poured concrete in the space to further protect the hull.³⁶ Only the tanks of Neiman’s Company C received these additions, though by the end of the campaign, First Lieutenant Roger F. Seasholtz, commanding Company B, realized the value of this protective space above the tank’s hull to deter the impact of magnetic antitank (AT) mines.

³⁶ Schmidt, Headquarters report, in “Fourth Marine Division Operations Report—Saipan, Annex K, Report of the 4th Tank Battalion,” 20 August 1944, 6; and Neiman and Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches*, 93–94.

Noting that the “magnetic anti-tank mine was effective when thrown or placed on top of the tank” and that such weapons were capable of blowing a hole in the armor plate, he suggested the addition of “chicken wire, metal strips or wood.” He professed that the addition of space between the mine and the tank hull would “greatly reduce the shock of a magnetic AT mine explosion,” stating the desire to test such arrangements when the time and situation permitted.³⁷ In the ensuing operation on Tinian, which had “much more suitable tank terrain” compared to Saipan, not only did the tanks of 4th Tank Battalion encounter “little trouble” in the operation, but First Lieutenant Stephen Horton, Company A commander, realized

³⁷ Seasholtz, Company B report, in “Fourth Marine Division Operations Report—Saipan, Annex K, Report of the 4th Tank Battalion,” 20 August 1944, 29.

that “flat surfaces of the tank covered with wood and pouring sand in between the wood and armor plate should neutralize the magnetic mine, as well as minimize the effect of anti-tank fire,” as the Japanese also employed 47-mm antitank weapons against the Marine tanks. Furthermore, “special attention should be paid to the hatches in protection against magnetic mines,” as the Japanese had come to embrace attacking those potential weak points as an antitank tactic.³⁸

Neiman also specifically mentioned another improvement made by Company C: the addition of an extended periscope made to improve a tank commander’s vision. Lengthening a standard periscope by cutting one in half and inserting a periscope base between the two halves, then “welding the three pieces together” gave the tank commander the ability to see the ground directly in front of the tank, something that was not normally possible. To protect this contrivance, the tankers added an armored cage to protect the longer periscope.³⁹ In addition to these crew-developed improvements, each platoon in Neiman’s company received a medium M4 tank mounting a flamethrower, weapons that were products of a Joint Army, Navy, and Marine Corps effort.

Preparations for Iwo Jima

In the aftermath of Saipan and the “perfect landing” at Tinian, the Marines of the 4th Tank Battalion returned to Hawaii to recuperate prior to the invasion of Iwo Jima.⁴⁰ While engaging in a battalion-wide refit, Neiman’s tankers discovered an issue of the *Armored Force Journal* or *Infantry Journal*, describing the antimine “flail” tanks originally developed by the British and used for mine-clearing operations. Recognizing the potential for such apparatus but knowing that

none existed within the Marine Corps, Neiman and his officers decided to build one from scratch. Neiman singled out two of his NCOs, Sergeants Sam Johnston and Ray Shaw, as instrumental in the tank’s construction. Bellmon provided insight into Johnston’s background, which is illustrative of the character of the Company C tankers and why they appear to be at the forefront of Marine armor innovation in the Pacific. Bellmon lauded the mechanical ability of fellow Oklahoman Johnston, who “had worked as an oil field roughneck and driller” prior to joining the Marine Corps. To build the mine-clearing tank, Johnston salvaged a dozer tank and replaced the dozer blade with a flail. Using “the drive shaft and differential of an abandoned truck” with heavy chain attached to a rotating drum, they transferred power from the tank drive shaft via a transmission stripped from a jeep. After a successful test, Neiman subsequently assigned the tank to Bellmon’s 2d Platoon for the Iwo Jima invasion.⁴¹

The 4th Tank Battalion received new tanks in advance of the Iwo Jima landings, turning in the M4A2 mediums, powered by twin diesel engines, for the recently developed M4A3 Sherman model with a single Ford gasoline engine. This led to new names for the individual tanks in Bellmon’s platoon, as he gave up

³⁸ Maj R. K. Schmidt, Headquarters report, in “Fourth Marine Division Operations Report—Tinian, Annex K, Report of the 4th Tank Battalion,” 22 August 1944, 5; and 1stLt Stephen Horton Jr., Company A report, in “Fourth Marine Division Operations Report—Tinian, Annex K, Report of the 4th Tank Battalion,” 22 August 1944, 11, both in *Fourth Marine Division Operations Report Tinian, 24 July 1 August 1944*, World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library.

³⁹ Neiman, Company C report, in “Fourth Marine Division Operations Report—Saipan, Annex K, Report of the 4th Tank Battalion,” 20 August 1944, 34.

⁴⁰ Neiman and Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches*, 112.

⁴¹ Neiman and Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches*, 113–17, 119; and Bellmon, *The Life and Times of Henry Bellmon*, 60–61. Bellmon was somewhat critical of his commander in the creation of the ersatz flail, as he noted that “Captain Bob was much taken by this device and bragged about it at every opportunity. Finally, word reached the commanding general who insisted on seeing the machine so he could decide whether or not it might be applicable for use in other war theaters. On the day of the general’s inspection, Captain Bob took the general in tow, took full credit for the idea and construction, and received the general’s congratulations. The captain never once mentioned Sam’s name or even bothered to introduce Sam to the General or his party.” Orders note the presence of the 127th Naval Construction Battalion on Maui during the same period as the 4th Tank Battalion. *127th Naval Construction Battalion, Historical Information*, Naval History and Heritage Command, accessed 10 April 2023, 1. The concluding pages of their historical information includes a photograph of the same Sherman flail tank reportedly built by Neiman’s Marines, making it altogether unclear as to which unit played the greatest role in its construction, though R. P. Hunnicutt offers the same illustration and notes that the flail was “constructed by the Seabees for the U.S. Marines.” R. P. Hunnicutt, *Sherman: A History of the American Medium Tank* (Stamford, CT: Historical Archive Press, 1994), 463.

his tank *Jezebel* for a new one he christened *Cairo*.⁴² Neiman quickly noted that his Marine tankers “applied all of our usual modifications to the new tanks before embarking.”⁴³ The result represented the pinnacle in Marine field expedient ingenuity during the Central Pacific campaign, with Company C in the vanguard, making additions to their tanks that other company commanders did not embrace. Company C took specific measures to support the infantry that would accompany them. Neiman located a number of spare gasoline tanks designed for light tanks, cleaned them, and bolted them to the rear deck of 21 of the company’s medium tanks. With bungs and spigots on each end, they would be used as supplemental water tanks for Marines on foot, an essential addition in the tropical conditions they would face in subsequent campaigns.⁴⁴

Company C also improvised a method for fire direction that could be used by Marine infantry outside the tank. They painted a clock face on the side of the wading stack closest to the telephone with the simple statement “TARGET CLOCK” above the images. This allowed any Marine to approach the tank, pick up the phone, and ask for suppressing fire at the appropriate direction by simply stating the appropriate time.⁴⁵ It should be noted, however, that while Neiman described these additions, he did specifically state that the tank-infantry telephone, which other companies eventually picked up on, was the only additional modification embraced by other companies of 4th Tank Battalion.⁴⁶

In advance of the landings on Iwo Jima, the 4th Tank Battalion also received additional flame-throwing tanks, much improved from the Ronsons they had employed earlier. Neiman reported their development as a product of a Joint Army, Navy,

and Marine Corps effort on Hawaii, which allowed the employment of a heavier flamethrower in a medium tank. Holding 290 gallons of fuel in a reservoir mounted below the tank’s turret basket, the 4th Tank Battalion had eight of these tanks as they embarked for Iwo Jima.⁴⁷ They became “probably the most valuable single weapon employed on Iwo Jima in spite of considerable mechanical failures,” with the ability to maintain them during the course of the operation yet another testament to the mechanical acumen of the Marine tankers.⁴⁸

The after action report of the 4th Tank Battalion offers a complete list of modifications made by the tankers of Neiman’s company. His Marines started by welding spare track block to the turrets and front slope plates as added protection against fire from both 47-mm guns and shaped charges. Fifty-four tanks had 1.5-inch wire mesh welded over the tops of all hatches, creating what the Marines had come to call “birdcages” that provided space to dissipate the blast of satchel charge. In 45 tanks, the crews replaced the 75-mm ammunition ready box on the floor of the turret with a 75-mm ready rack that allowed each tank to carry 25 additional rounds of ammunition. Ten tanks had their vision cupolas rotated 45 degrees clockwise, allowing the hatch to open to the rear rather than the right side, to keep “branches, wire, etc., from hitting the hatch,” a modification they recommended “should be incorporated in all tanks.” Thirty-four others had several pieces of one-inch rod welded perpendicularly to the front slope plate to allow the towing cable to be stored in a more readily accessible position. Sixteen tanks had the commander’s periscope lengthened to provide better vision, and 18 tanks had their deck escape hatch modified by cutting it in half, hinging it

⁴² Neiman and Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches*, 119; and Henry Bellmon to Parents, 18 November 1944, file 7, box 1, Correspondence, September 1943 to 23 November 1944, Henry Bellmon Papers, Special Collections and Archives, Edmon Low Library, Oklahoma State University, Stillwater, OK.

⁴³ Neiman and Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches*, 119.

⁴⁴ Neiman and Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches*, 119.

⁴⁵ These additions prior to Roi-Namur are explicitly described by Neiman and Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches*, 85–86.

⁴⁶ Neiman and Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches*, 85.

⁴⁷ Neiman and Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches*, 120; *Flame!*, Special Technical Intelligence Bulletin no. 9 (Washington, DC: Office, Director of Intelligence, Army Service Forces, War Department General Staff, 1945), 9–10, World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library; Patrick J. Donahoe, “Flamethrower Tanks on Okinawa,” *Armor* 103 (January–February 1994): 6–10; and Steven J. Zaloga, *U.S. Marine Corps Tanks of World War II* (Oxford, UK: Osprey, 2012), 18–20.

⁴⁸ “Annex Jig to Fourth Marine Division Operations Report, Iwo Jima, Fourth Tank Battalion Report,” 18 April 1945, World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library, 21.



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Another 4th Tank Battalion tank, *Comet*, with crew resting on the edge of the island's first airstrip, 23 February 1945. Note the welded track block as supplemental armor on the front glacis plate, and extensive use of "birdcage" protection applied to all hatches and vents.

to the deck armor, and securing it from inside. A cover and hatch were constructed for the two otherwise open-topped M32B3 armored recovery vehicles to protect their crews from small arms fire. Collectively, these additions represented the high point of Marine modifications to the M4A3 medium tanks made during World War II.⁴⁹

While the innovations in the 4th Tank Battalion seemed to be applied to all the tanks in the unit prior to the Iwo Jima landings, other battalions were not as systematic, though they embraced the same sort

of bottom-up ingenuity and attempted solutions of their own. Tankers of the 5th Tank Battalion secured a "small amount of sheet metal" and used it to cover the tank sponsons, with other tanks using wooden planking and additional track blocks on the hull and turrets in a manner not unlike that of 4th Tank Battalion. In lieu of the battalion's birdcages, 5th Tank Battalion used 16-penny nails welded point up in a 2-inch square pattern as well as various patterns of wire netting over hatch and periscope covers. Collectively, these provided a four-inch blast space as well as complicated the enemy's ability to pry open hatches. The Marines also affixed wire mesh atop the fording adaptor to prevent grenades from being dropped into the exhaust system,

⁴⁹ "Annex Jig to Fourth Marine Division Operations Report, Iwo Jima, Fourth Tank Battalion Report," 15–17.



Record Group (RG) 127, Records of the United States Marine Corps, Still Photographs Division, National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Washington, DC

By the time of the Okinawa campaign, other tank battalions had followed the lead of 4th Tank Battalion, and had applied supplemental armor to their tanks. Taken near Naha, Okinawa, May 1945.

layered sandbags over the engine compartments, and mounted spare bogies on the tank bustles in an effort to thwart magnetic mines and satchel charges.⁵⁰ The 3d Tank Battalion was even less systematic in their efforts, as their commander, undoubtedly influenced by what he saw on the other two battalions when they were brigaded together in a single unit, wrote in his after action report that in future operations “it will be

necessary to immediately devise increased armor protection for the M4A2 Medium tank (i.e., additional spaced armor, welded track blocks),” even going so far as to recommend white asbestos in the fighting compartment to reduce the fire hazard.⁵¹

Marine armor reached the zenith of its overall performance during the Iwo Jima campaign. The 4th Tank Battalion performed admirably, with Lieu-

⁵⁰ “Annex Love, Fifth Tank Battalion, Action Report,” in *Fifth Marine Division (Reinforced), Action Report, 19 February to 26 March 1945*, part 5, World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library, 2–3.

⁵¹ “Enclosure H, 3d Tank Battalion, Action Report,” in *Third Marine Division, Iwo Jima Action Report, 31 October to 16 March 1945*, part 17, World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Research Library Digital Library, 31.

tenant Bellmon earning a Silver Star for “conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity” during the course of the campaign. Shortly after landing, a Japanese mine damaged his tank, and he remained with the stricken vehicle, maintaining fire control and further directing his company. Leading his platoon through a heavily mined area the next day, his tank was immobilized “far beyond friendly lines,” and he abandoned it and returned to take command. Mounting a new tank the next day, he led his platoon in continued attacks until his new tank was hit by an antitank projectile that killed a number of his crew. Undeterred, he commandeered another tank and continued the attack until the enemy position was reduced.⁵² In the latter stages of the battle, Bellmon remained in action, joining elements of the 3d, 4th, and 5th Tank Battalions as part of a single armored phalanx led by Lieutenant William R. Collins of the 5th Tank Battalion, with 4th Tank Battalion’s Major Neiman serving as executive officer.⁵³

These efforts notwithstanding, the battle was costly for 4th Tank Battalion, as only nine tanks remained operational by the end of the campaign.⁵⁴ Although Neiman originally believed that the battalion’s fabricated flail tank had bogged down and failed to perform, that was not the case. According to tank commander Sergeant Robert Haddix, the tank made it off the beach and as far as the first airfield, where it encountered a series of flags. Though the tankers initially believe that the flags marked the edges of a minefield, they were in fact range-finding flags for Japanese heavy mortars. When heavy enemy fire damaged the flail mechanism, Haddix and his crew had no choice but to abandon their tank, and consequently, they never had the opportunity to test its functionality.⁵⁵

Iwo Jima marked the end of combat operations for the 4th Tank Battalion, though it did not mark the end of comparable Marine tank modifications in

the Pacific. In the battle for Okinawa, the 1st and 6th Marine Divisions formed part of Lieutenant General Simon B. Buckner Jr.’s Tenth Army, with the 2d Marine Division serving as a floating reserve. As part of the 1st Marine Division, the 1st Tank Battalion made a number of “special preparations” in advance of the operation, additions that echoed the innovations developed by 4th Tank Battalion during the course of its campaigns across the Pacific. Specifically, 1st Tank Battalion tanks had sections of track block “spot-welded around the turret and front slope plate” and beach matting welded on tank sponsons “as protection against magnetic mines and AT grenades,” with additional plate added to cover all spoke-type bogie wheels and rear idlers.⁵⁶ Additionally, 1st Tank Battalion improved tank-infantry communication by improvising phone boxes and welding them on the left rear sponson of all tanks.⁵⁷ The 6th Tank Battalion followed suit, adding tank-infantry radios, with sections of steel track blocks added to the turrets of tanks and additional steel plate welded to cover portions of the sponsons and track. As they were unable to procure enough armor plate to cover the entire sponson, extra protection spaced from the main hull by a distance of “about one inch” was only added to the areas opposite the driver, assistant driver, and gasoline tanks.⁵⁸ Army tankers also tested what they called a “backscratcher,” attaching antipersonnel mines on the sides of tank turrets and detonating them when threatened by Japanese soldiers wielding satchel charges. Such efforts were eventually disap-

⁵² 1stLt Henry L. Bellmon, Silver Star citation, USMC Silver Star Citations WWII (B) PDF, “USMC WWII Silver Star Citations,” Headquarters Marine Corps, 125, accessed 11 April 2023. Surprisingly, Neiman makes no mention of this award in his memoir.

⁵³ Neiman and Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches*, 133.

⁵⁴ Neiman and Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches*, 138.

⁵⁵ Neiman and Estes, *Tanks on the Beaches*, 126.

⁵⁶ Such efforts had apparently been undertaken since Guadalcanal. There, a Seabee machinist, recognizing how a Japanese soldier immobilize a tank by thrusting a metal bar into its open drive sprocket, cut the top off a 55-gallon drum and welded it over the sprocket, all the while muttering how he had to “protect those helpless Marines,” as described in William Bradford Huie, *Can-Do: The Story of the Seabees* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1944), 180.

⁵⁷ “Tank Annex: Special Action Report Nansei Shoto, Phase III,” *First Marine Division (Rein), Special Action Report, Nansei-Shoto Operation, 1 April–30 June 1945*, part 3, World War II Operational Documents, Ike Skelton Combined Arms Library Digital Library, 198.

⁵⁸ “Annex E-Sixth Tank Battalion Report,” *Sixth Marine Division, Special Action Report on Okinawa Operations*, 2 vols., 719, box 8, folder 2, World War Two/Okinawa, Collection 3720, Archives Branch, Marine Corps History Division, Quantico, VA.

proved by General Joseph W. Stilwell.⁵⁹ With these additions, the 1st Tank Battalion listed 79 tanks damaged, with 27 as “totally lost,” while the Japanese knocked out 51 of 6th Tank Battalion’s Sherman tanks in the fight for Okinawa, though the number of tanks actually damaged in combat was much higher, with Marine maintenance crews returning many to battle before the island was considered secure.⁶⁰

Conclusion

The Marines of 4th Tank Battalion were not the only ones to demonstrate a brand of bottom-up ingenuity to face the challenges posed by Japanese troops in the Pacific. By Operation Iceberg (1945), the invasion of Okinawa, both the veteran 1st Tank Battalion and untested 6th Tank Battalion had added spare track blocks to the hulls and turrets of their tanks as supplemental armor. By the end of the campaign, these improvements, coupled with the addition of infantry radios, wooden slats, and metal shields to hinder Japanese efforts to throw satchel charges under tank treads represented individual efforts devised at the unit level as a way of coping with many of the same problems faced by Neiman, Bellmon, and the tankers of the 4th Tank Battalion on Roi-Namur, Saipan, and Iwo Jima.⁶¹

By emphasizing Marine Corps technical ingenuity in the Pacific during World War II, the connection between Depression-era mechanical familiarity and prowess from the platoon level up is perhaps most manifest. When comparing the innovative capabilities

of the various Marine tank battalions, 4th Tank Battalion, made up of men like former farm boy Lieutenant Bellmon and oil-field roughneck Sergeant Johnston, led the way in contributing to the Marine reputation of scrounging whatever material was needed to make something of almost nothing, adding field expedient armor, communications instruments, and logistical additions to improve their chances of operational success on the battlefield.⁶² Although Marine tankers in other battalions practiced mechanical ingenuity, the members of the 4th Tank Battalion elevated their technical creativity to a higher level. In that sense, they ably demonstrated the traits of the American soldier as recognized by Eisenhower in his memoir of the war in Europe. There were few military commanders who understood the American fighting man as well as Eisenhower, and his words, like those of Patton’s, could have applied to Neiman, Bellmon, and Johnston when the Supreme Allied Commander observed:

The trained American possesses qualities that are almost unique. Because of his initiative and resourcefulness, his adaptability to change and his readiness to resort to expedient, he becomes, when he has attained a proficiency in all the normal techniques of battle, a most formidable soldier.⁶³

Such a characterization was certainly true of the 4th Tank Battalion.

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⁵⁹ Nicholas Evan Sarantakes, ed., *Seven Stars: The Okinawa Battle Diaries of Simon Bolivar Buckner, Jr., and Joseph Stilwell* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2004), 97–98.

⁶⁰ “Tank Support Annex: Special Action Report Nansei Shoto,” *First Marine Division (reinforced), Special Action Report, Nansei Shoto Operation, 1 April–30 June 1945*, 240; and “Annex E-Sixth Tank Battalion Report,” *Sixth Marine Division, Special Action Report on Okinawa Operations*.

⁶¹ Zaloga, *U.S. Marine Corps Tanks of World War II*, 40–45.

⁶² Gilbert, *Tanks in Hell*, 63.

⁶³ Dwight D. Eisenhower, *Crusade in Europe: A Personal Account of World War II* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1948), 453.

HISTORIOGRAPHICAL ESSAY

The Cuban Missile Crisis at 60

WHERE DO WE STAND?

By William M. Morgan, PhD

During the past 60 years, our understanding of the Cuban Missile Crisis has evolved from the initial portrayal of the situation as an American victory achieved by brilliant crisis management by John F. Kennedy and his advisors to a more deeply researched and nuanced description of a dangerous draw reached only after misconceptions, miscalculation, last-minute compromise, and good luck.

Pro-Kennedy insider accounts dominated early writings. Kennedy's confidante and speechwriter, Theodore C. Sorensen, quickly produced a vivid biography of 781 pages a year and a half after the president's assassination. In 1965, renowned historian Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., a special assistant in the White House, used more than 1,100 pages to describe the "Thousand Days" of Kennedy's tenure. The journalist Elie Abel's popular history emerged from background interviews with insiders. The classic insider account was Robert Kennedy's *Thirteen Days*, drafted to boost his presidential bid and heavily edited by Sorensen for publication after Robert Kennedy's 1968 assassination. These early writings portrayed a heroic president and his brother making the aggressive Soviets back down. This image still lives in the public mind, though few living Americans know much about the crisis.¹

A second wave of "insider" writings appeared from the 1970s, less devoted to polishing the Kennedy legacy but still claiming victory. Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara, National Security Advisor McGeorge Bundy, and others produced memoirs. On the Soviet side, Nikita Khrushchev's posthumous memoirs, though self-serving, provided the first glimpse of Soviet internal politics.² A 1971 blockbuster by political scientist Graham Allison, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, a blending of factual narrative and analytical theory, dominated the literature of the 1970s and, via a 1999 rewrite with historian Philip Zelikow, remains an important study.³

The 1980s saw the emergence of new U.S. and Soviet sources. The discovery of Kennedy's White House taping system initiated the slow but steady release of transcripts through the supposedly final batch, released in 2004. Transcripts of the meetings of the executive committee of the National Security Council, the president's hand-picked secret advisory group, hugely illuminated the administration's debate of options.⁴ Mikhail Gorbachev's *glasnost* policy led to the first documentary releases from Soviet archives. The end of the Cold War accelerated the flow of information from the Russian side. A series of international conferences of crisis participants as well as scholars

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¹ An excellent bibliographical essay (as of 2011) appears in Don Munton and David A. Welch's fine overview, *The Cuban Missile Crisis: A Concise History*, 2d ed. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

² The first appeared in 1970 with a slightly expanded edition in 1976.

³ Graham Allison and Philip Zelikow, *Essence of Decision: Explaining the Cuban Missile Crisis*, 2d ed. (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, 1999).

⁴ Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House during the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1997).

began in the late 1980s, initially between Russians and Americans, with Cubans, including Fidel Castro, soon joining. Not only did participants provide startling and previously unknown detail, such as the presence of Soviet tactical nuclear weapons on the island, but their accounts were often accompanied by supporting documents.⁵

By the late 1990s, much more information became available. On the U.S. side, the *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) volumes for the Kennedy administration appeared, as well as other material declassified by the 1967 Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) process initiated by scholars and organizations such as the National Security Archive of George Washington University and the Cold War International History Project of the Wilson Center. Russian archives opened a bit, and former Soviet officials and military officers published memoirs. During the past 10–20 years, scholars digested the new information, which has continued to emerge, albeit slowly.

Recent scholarly writing falls into two categories: overviews and specialized monographs. The earliest overviews of the crisis focused on the famous “Thirteen Days” from Kennedy learning of the missiles in Cuba on 16 October through Khrushchev’s letter on 28 October announcing he would withdraw the missiles. Recent overviews have become increasingly detailed and more nuanced, tending to see the crisis not as an American victory but as, simultaneously, a lucky draw and a near-catastrophe. Two fresh overviews exemplify the trend. The late Martin J. Sherwin’s *Gambling with Armageddon* nested the Cuban Missile Crisis in post–World War II American nuclear policy and included the latest archival discoveries. Harvard professor Serhii Plokhy burrowed into the unit histories and officer memoirs of the Soviet forces sent to Cuba in *Nuclear Folly*. Many of these units had been based in Ukraine and had many Ukrainian soldiers. Because Ukrainian records were more accessible than archives

in Moscow, Plokhy filled in some blank areas in the historical record.⁶

Targeted studies of underexamined aspects of the crisis dove deeper into precrisis events such as the Bay of Pigs (April 1961), the Khrushchev-Kennedy summit in Vienna (June 1961), and the 1961 Berlin Wall confrontation, all of which shaped the subsequent approaches of both Khrushchev and Kennedy during the 1962 crisis. Scholars also surveyed the impact of domestic/internal factors on Khrushchev’s motivations to deploy the missiles and Kennedy’s resolve that the missiles be removed. Lastly, they cast new light on the difficult post-crisis Soviet-American and Soviet-Cuban negotiations over implementing the general commitments of Kennedy and Khrushchev.

Origins of the Crisis

Recent scholarship has explored—even back to the Dwight D. Eisenhower administration—four shaping factors (political atmospherics) that made the October 1962 crisis so dangerous. One powerful shaping factor was fierce high technology competition with the Soviet Union that increased dramatically with the Sputnik launches in 1957. Americans feared the United States had fallen behind in the high technology field, and disastrous attempts to quickly catch up, such as the Vanguard satellite-carrying missile that exploded on the launch pad in early 1958, enhanced the feeling of inferiority. Consequently, both Eisenhower and Kennedy accelerated satellite and manned mission programs. The Minuteman intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) and Polaris submarine-launched ballistic missile (SLBM) programs were already underway but received even more resources. Most importantly, as Philip Nash noted in his outstanding monograph *The Other Missiles of October*, the Sputnik launches triggered the deployment of American intermediate-range ballistic missiles (IRBMs) to Europe to “restore U.S. strategic credibility in post-Sputnik alliance politics” by restoring Allied confidence in U.S. extended

⁵ James A. Blight, Bruce J. Allyn, and David A. Welch, *Cuba on the Brink: Castro, the Missile Crisis, and the Soviet Collapse* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littleton, 2002); and James A. Blight and David A. Welch, *On the Brink: Americans and Soviets Reexamine the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1989).

⁶ Martin J. Sherwin, *Gambling with Armageddon: Nuclear Roulette from Hiroshima to the Cuban Missile Crisis, 1945–1962* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2020); and Serhii Plokhy, *Nuclear Folly: A History of the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2021).

deterrence. This deployment proved a crucial causal building block in the eventual 1962 crisis. Sixty Thor missiles went to Britain, 30 Jupiters to Italy, and 15 Jupiters to Turkey.⁷

A second shaping factor was the myth of the nuclear missile gap, a key issue in the 1960 presidential election. According to the myth, the United States lagged the Soviet Union in ICBMs and strategic bombers. Better intelligence in 1961–62, much aided by the first generation of reconnaissance satellites, proved that rather than a gap, the United States had a decisive advantage in strategic weapons. A widely publicized speech in October 1962 by Deputy Secretary of Defense Roswell L. Gilpatric destroyed the myth, but while it lasted, it intensified Soviet-American tensions and contributed to the U.S. deployment of missiles in Europe.⁸

A third shaping factor was more than a century of contentious U.S.-Cuba relations, culminating in the Communist revolution that brought Castro to power in December 1958. Castro's seizure of American oil companies and other corporations in Cuba and his harsh repression of dissent convinced U.S. officials that he was unpredictable and possibly dangerous.⁹

A final shaping factor was the impact of internal politics on the leaders of both countries, and their mutual ignorance of each other's problems. Khrushchev did not understand Kennedy's determination not to look weak, either to Khrushchev or to the American people. Led by Republican New York senator Kenneth B. Keating, domestic critics claimed Kennedy's Cuban policy was timid. They pointed to the Bay of Pigs failure, the lack of progress at the Vienna summit, and the building of the Berlin Wall as signs of weakness. Cuba was Kennedy's domestic Achilles heel. For the first two years of his presidency, Kennedy enjoyed significant Democratic majorities. If he

misplaced Cuban policy, his Democratic party might lose seats, perhaps even its majority, in the November 1962 midterm elections. Khrushchev knew and cared little about Kennedy's political struggles.

For their part, Kennedy and his advisors ignored Khrushchev's domestic troubles. His much-touted agricultural reform program foundered. Despite some successes in space, Russia's ICBM program was grossly inferior in quality and numbers. Soviet missiles were liquid fueled, a process which took several hours. The fueled missiles could only remain launch-ready for a couple of days because the toxic fuel eroded the tanks. The missiles had to be defueled and taken off alert. By contrast, the American Minuteman ICBM and Polaris SLBM used inert solid fuel and were always prepared to launch. Moreover, the Soviets had far fewer ICBMs. Khrushchev implemented a big shakeup in the ICBM program, but even his hand-picked advisors told him it would be years before the Soviets could match U.S. missile technology or ICBM numbers. Lastly, Khrushchev had few diplomatic successes; he needed a win.

Four Precrisis Events Worsen Tensions

Besides broad shaping forces, four events worsened tensions and made the 1962 crisis more likely. First was the May 1960 shoot-down over the Soviet Union of an American Lockheed U-2 piloted by Captain Francis Gary Powers. Because the Soviets produced both wreckage and, miraculously, a live pilot, they reaped a huge propaganda windfall. The incident ruined a Geneva meeting between Eisenhower and Khrushchev and scuttled a promised Eisenhower visit to the USSR. Thus, Kennedy took office amid strained bilateral relations.¹⁰

A second event was the inept Bay of Pigs invasion of April 1961. From 1961 to the present, scholars and policymakers alike have judged the Bay of Pigs as a major error by Kennedy, who failed to think through the plan or challenge its faulty assumptions. While all scholars have seen the episode as a failure, pro-Kennedy insiders like Sorensen and Schlesinger

⁷ Philip Nash, *The Other Missiles of October: Eisenhower, Kennedy, and the Jupiters, 1957–1963* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 26–27, 68, 106–7.

⁸ Address by Roswell L. Gilpatric, Deputy Secretary of Defense, before the Business Council at The Homestead, Hot Springs, VA, 21 October 1961, CIA Analysis of the Warsaw Pact Forces, Special Collection.

⁹ Irwin F. Gellman, *The President and the Apprentice: Eisenhower and Nixon, 1952–1961* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2015), 543–55.

¹⁰ “Francis Gary Powers: U-2 Spy Pilot Shot Down by the Soviets,” CIA.gov, accessed 9 May 2023.

asserted that Kennedy inherited a flawed invasion plan from the Eisenhower administration, and so the blame for failure should be spread around. Their interpretation persisted until quite recently. In his excellent recent study, Irwin Gellman demonstrated that although Eisenhower approved limited training of exiles as early as March 1960, he never approved or ordered an amphibious assault plan for Cuba. The final, failed plan—chiefly a Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) product—emerged during the first months of the Kennedy administration. Kennedy never liked the CIA plan and watered it down a bit (which decreased its already minimal chances for success), but in bad judgment let the invasion proceed to its tragic end.¹¹

For Khrushchev and Castro, the Bay of Pigs fiasco strengthened their belief that the United States intended to topple the Castro regime. Khrushchev thought that Kennedy was young, inexperienced, and weak, unable to control all the elements of his government, especially the military and intelligence organizations. For Kennedy, the failed invasion soured his trust in the CIA and to a lesser extent his military advisors. He soon replaced CIA director Allen W. Dulles with John A. McCone and forced the resignation of Air Force lieutenant general Charles P. Cabell, the agency deputy director, and Richard Bissell, the deputy director for plans.

Third, the June 1961 Vienna summit gave the leaders powerful but skewed personal impressions of each other. They committed to the summit soon after Kennedy's inauguration, despite Khrushchev's anger at the Bay of Pigs debacle. In a masterful chapter in his book *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century*, David Reynolds concluded that Khrushchev did not want a crisis over Berlin in the summer of 1961. Rather, he hoped to use Berlin as a lever to

obtain a broader settlement of German issues.¹² Kennedy sought to convince Khrushchev of the reasonableness of the American position. Each man thought if he "played it tough, the other man would come around. Each had fundamental blind spots about his adversary."¹³ Kennedy expected Khrushchev to be rational, open to argument. But he encountered a rigid ideologue for whom the Berlin issue was vital. For his part, Khrushchev discovered that Kennedy would not be pushed around at the summit table, but he did not completely rid himself of his presummit impression of Kennedy as young and inexperienced, someone who might flinch under certain circumstances.¹⁴

For some years, it was thought that Kennedy lost the Vienna summit, partly because of his later lament to journalist Joseph Alsop that Khrushchev had rolled right over him. Unprepared for Khrushchev's rants, Kennedy felt postsummit that he had looked weak. But in reality, he made no concessions, as the State Department summary of the 4 June meeting makes clear.¹⁵ Indeed, as Martin J. Sherwin explains, Kennedy revamped American foreign and security policies to demonstrate strength to Khrushchev. The president emphasized support for West Berlin in tough speeches, warning that any attempt to block access to West Berlin would be confronted: "The NATO shield was long ago extended to cover West Berlin—and we have given our word that an attack on that city will be regarded as an attack upon us all."¹⁶ He obtained from Congress blanket authority to mobilize Reserve and National Guard units. Presummit, there had been discussion of pulling the obsolete Jupiters out of Turkey and replacing their deterrent value with a Polaris ballistic missile submarine in the eastern Mediterranean. But

¹¹ Gellman, *The President and the Apprentice*, 555–62. For a similar analysis based partly on extensive interviews with former officials, see Piero Gleijeses, "Ships in the Night: The CIA, the White House and the Bay of Pigs," *Journal of Latin American Studies* 27, no. 1 (February 1995): 1–42, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022216X00010154>.

¹² David Reynolds, *Summits: Six Meetings That Shaped the Twentieth Century* (New York: Basic Books, 2007), 198. While Kennedy may have been somewhat overwhelmed by Khrushchev's lecturing during the morning meeting of the Vienna summit, he held his own, giving no ground, in a long discussion of Germany and Berlin. Soviet Union, Doc. 87, Memorandum of Conversation, 4 June 1961, 1015, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963*, vol. 5, eds. Charles S. Sampson and John Michael Joyce (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1998).

¹³ Reynolds, *Summits*, 199.

¹⁴ Reynolds, *Summits*, 219.

¹⁵ Soviet Union, Doc. 87, Memorandum of Conversation; and Reynolds, *Summits*, 216, 219.

¹⁶ Sherwin, *Gambling with Armageddon*, 176.

postsummit, Kennedy agreed with the State-NATO-DOD recommendation that withdrawal “might seem a sign of weakness” given Khrushchev’s hard line at Vienna. Kennedy let construction proceed on the launch sites. The first site, manned by Americans, became operational in March 1962. In a peculiar coincidence, after Turkish technicians completed training in the United States, the Turks assumed control of the first launch site on 22 October 1962, the day of Kennedy’s naval quarantine speech.¹⁷

The contentious Berlin Wall dispute constituted the fourth milestone event. In 1949, Britain, France, and the United States merged their occupation zones into the Federal Republic of Germany, or West Germany. It became fully sovereign on 5 May 1955 and joined NATO four days later. Khrushchev wanted East Germany, set up in 1949 in response, to have the same control inside its borders as West Germany now had. As revealed in Frederick Kempe’s deeply researched monograph, *Berlin 1961*, and in Hope Harrison’s nuanced article, Khrushchev was under great pressure from Walter Ulbricht, the East German leader. East Germany’s Communist economy steadily lost ground to that of West Germany. Young, talented, and educated East Germans fled to the West by passing through East Berlin into West Berlin and then onward to West Germany via the air and ground corridors permitted to the Western powers. From 1945 to 1961, approximately 2.8–4 million people, perhaps 1 in 6 East Germans, escaped to the West. This immense brain drain hindered the economy and was an embarrassing example of the poor conditions in Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe. To curb the exodus, Khrushchev allowed the East Germans to build a wall through the city. Harrison concluded that “the Wall, although proposed by Ulbricht, ended up being Khrushchev’s compromise solution for preserving East Germany while not provoking the West.”¹⁸

Though most scholars have praised Kennedy’s handling of Berlin, Kempe criticizes his actions. Well aware of the brain drain problem, in late July 1961, Kennedy told his advisor, Walt Rostow, that Khrushchev might use “perhaps a wall” to curb the refugee flow, but he did not intend to prevent it. He could get NATO to defend West Berlin, he said, but not the eastern part of the city.¹⁹ Kempe judges Kennedy’s Berlin policy as weak and inept: “As the Cuban Crisis would later show, Kennedy’s inaction in Berlin only encouraged greater Soviet misbehavior.”²⁰ He criticizes Kennedy for signaling that West Berlin was the main concern, thereby freeing Khrushchev to use the wall to cut off East Berlin and stem the outflow.²¹

His criticism is overdone. He is probably correct that when Democratic Arkansas senator J. William Fulbright said in a July 1961 television interview that the East Germans had a right to close the Berlin border and Kennedy did not repudiate the statement, Khrushchev was reassured that the Americans would not react. That is not quite the same as signaling. It is also likely that this was a rare occasion when Khrushchev read Kennedy—and probable American policy—correctly. More importantly, what was Kennedy’s prudent alternative? Soviet and East German forces heavily outnumbered American forces isolated in the middle of East Germany. Resupplying U.S. forces in combat would have been virtually impossible. The Soviet Army was dominant in conventional forces. U.S.-NATO war plans for Berlin relied on the use of nuclear weapons. Compared to the disaster that would have resulted from a Soviet-American nuclear shooting war over Berlin, accepting the wall was a wise if distasteful course of action.

Why Did Khrushchev Send Nuclear Weapons to Cuba?

While the roots of the crisis lay in previous years, the famous 13 days began on 16 October, when National Security advisor McGeorge Bundy told Kennedy—in his pajamas and reading the morning papers in his

¹⁷ Nash, *Kennedy and the Jupiters*, 101–3.

¹⁸ Frederick Kempe, *Berlin 1961: Kennedy, Khrushchev and the Most Dangerous Place on Earth* (New York: Penguin, 2011); and Hope M. Harrison, *Ulbricht and the Concrete ‘Rose’: New Archival Evidence on the Dynamics of Soviet-East German Relations and the Berlin Crisis, 1958–61*, Cold War International History Project Working Paper no. 5 (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center, 1993), 62.

¹⁹ Kempe, *Berlin 1961*, 293.

²⁰ Kempe, *Berlin 1961*, 489.

²¹ Kempe, *Berlin 1961*, 490.

bedroom—that a U-2 flight discovered strategic missiles in Cuba. For decades, a central question has been “Why did Khrushchev send strategic nuclear missiles to Cuba?” As Kennedy wrote to Khrushchev during the crisis, “The step which started the current chain of events was the action of your government secretly furnishing offensive weapons to Cuba.”²²

Regarding Khrushchev’s motives, several explanations are common in the literature.²³ There were several significant possible motives.

1. **A desire to partially rectify the strategic missile imbalance.** The Soviet Union was grossly inferior to the United States in strategic weaponry, possessing only a few dozen missiles that could reach the United States from Soviet bases, and some of those were unready. However, the western Soviet Union held more than 500 intermediate and medium-range missiles that could reach most European targets. Placing some of those in Cuba would double or triple the number of warheads that could reach the United States, though even that amount paled compared to the 1962 American arsenal. Khrushchev had reorganized his missile development teams and, within 10 years, the Soviets would catch up in the ICBM race; but the impatient premier did not want to wait.
2. **A guarantee of Cuban defense.** Khrushchev believed—more strongly than his KGB analysts—that the United States intended to invade Cuba in the near term. After all, the United States had cut diplomatic relations with Cuba, applied sanctions, and attempted the Bay of Pigs invasion. Though Khrushchev did not know the details of Operation Mon-goose (November 1961), the CIA program to topple or kill Castro, there were clear signs of an American clandestine program. And the

United States held large military exercises for a possible invasion, including a 1962 exercise in the Caribbean to remove a dictator called Ortsac (Castro spelled backward). Khrushchev was personally fond of Castro, whose spirit reminded him of his own revolutionary youth.

3. **A risky gamble to secure a badly needed win.** There was grumbling in the top ranks of the Soviet Communist party. Khrushchev’s much-touted agricultural reforms had collapsed. He failed to cow Kennedy over Berlin. His ICBM program was a shambles. After Gilpatric’s speech destroyed the myth of the missile gap, Khrushchev lost that intimidating diplomatic lever. And inside Cuba, supporters of Beijing’s Communist model seemed on the rise. Castro exiled Anibal Escalante, the pro-Soviet executive secretary of the Cuban revolutionary party. Che Guevara, who urged hemisphere-wide Maoist-style insurgency programs, was on the rise. Khrushchev needed something to rebuild his prestige and influence.
4. **A trade for American Jupiter missiles in Turkey.** To Khrushchev, the Jupiters were much more an emotional issue than a strategic one. Fifteen obsolete and vulnerable rockets hardly contributed to the USSR’s strategic inferiority. Rather, their deployment was an insult to Khrushchev’s sense of self-respect—an insult he frequently mentioned to colleagues during the creation of the nuclear arms package. He sought a tit-for-tat payback, calling it “throwing a hedgehog down Uncle Sam’s pants,” forcing Kennedy to accept a deployment close to home, just as Khrushchev endured. As Philip Nash pointed out in his definitive study of the Jupiter deployments, at the Vienna summit Khrushchev strongly displayed his dislike of hostile missiles on Soviet borders. After Vienna, Khrushchev embraced an analogy: if the Americans could put missiles in Turkey and he had to accept that fact, surely Kennedy would have to accept the fact of Soviet mis-

²² Kennedy to Khrushchev, 23 October 1962, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963*, vol. 11, *Cuban Missile Crisis and Aftermath*, eds. Edward C. Keefer and Louis J. Smith (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1996).

²³ Perhaps the most comprehensive list can be found in Munton and Welch, *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, 22–26. They discuss seven possible motives.

siles in Cuba.²⁴ Though understandable, the false analogy led him to ignore Kennedy's fear of appearing weak and his consequent insistence on the removal of the missiles.

5. **A trump card to trade for a Western withdrawal from Berlin.** At the beginning of the 13 days, Kennedy and others initially thought the Berlin issue lay behind the missile deployment. Graham Allison's original book suggested this was likely Khrushchev's chief motivation. However, during the crisis Khrushchev never raised the Berlin issue. In his mind, it was not connected to the missile deployment.

How to rank the motivations for deployment? Would any one of the motivations mentioned have been sufficient to trigger deployment? In the case of the Cuban Missile Crisis, no motivation appears strong enough to have caused deployment on its own, but Cuban defense and rejiggering the strategic balance are the two strongest. Probably the best we can do, barring new archival discoveries, is declare those two motivations as the chief drivers of the crisis, followed by the other three. Multicausal events are common in history. And as Sergey Radchenko notes, Khrushchev likely had multiple motivations that to his mind may have been inseparable. For example, the strategic missiles might have made it riskier for the United States to attack Cuba, and they simultaneously improved Russian strategic inferiority.²⁵

Over the years, the Berlin trump card explanation (no. 5) has all but disappeared, simply because no one has been able to make a persuasive case for it. Partial rectification of the strategic missile imbalance has remained at the top, recently joined by the Cuban defense argument. The third and fourth motivations—a gamble for a win and an emotion-driven trade for the Jupiters, have gained supporters. Both are intertwined with Khrushchev's emotional personality, ideological beliefs, political vulnerabilities, and

cognitive practices. As Robert Jervis put it, "To separate power-political from ideological-identity motives is probably impossible . . . but the latter have gained [the] most currency over the years."²⁶ (This trend will be discussed below.)

That Khrushchev personally invented the missile deployment plan now seems beyond question. April and early May 1962 were bad times for the premier. Part of Khrushchev's calculations involved the possible weakening of pro-Moscow elements in the Cuban government. Castro had soured on Escalante, an ambitious man well-liked in Moscow because he was cautious about supporting revolutionary movements throughout Latin America, but whose loyalty to Castro appeared weak. Escalante fled to Moscow. He claimed that Chinese influence was growing in the Castro regime. Alarmed, the Kremlin pondered how to retain Castro's confidence. In early April, the Central Committee publicly supported Castro's criticisms of Escalante. The Kremlin's desire to retain Castro's good will peaked during consideration of military aid options.²⁷

Khrushchev decided to beef up Cuban defense. Besides the obvious military benefits, this step might also solidify Castro's trust in the Soviet Union. On 12 April 1962, the State Council Presidium approved an initial draft plan of sending over a hundred V-75 anti-aircraft missiles, a battery of Sopka shore-to-ship cruise missiles, and a 650-troop Soviet military training mission. Moreover, Cuba would jump ahead of Egypt in the V-75 delivery queue, receiving the missiles in the next few months.²⁸

In May, Khrushchev made an official visit to Bulgaria where, he claimed in his memoirs, he got the

²⁴ Nash, *Kennedy and the Jupiters*, 100.

²⁵ Sergey Radchenko, "The Cuban Missile Crisis: Assessment of New, and Old, Russian Sources," *International Relations* 26, no. 3 (September 2012): 327–43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/00471178124519>.

²⁶ Robert Jervis, "Cuban Missile Crisis," in *The Cuban Missile Crisis: A Critical Reappraisal*, eds. Len Scott and R. Gerald Hughes (London: Routledge, 2015), 11.

²⁷ Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, "One Hell of a Gamble": *The Secret History of the Cuban Missile Crisis: Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958–1964* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997), 160–70.

²⁸ Fursenko and Naftali, "One Hell of a Gamble," 170.

idea of sending strategic nuclear missiles to Cuba.²⁹ This would further defend Cuba, he reasoned, please Castro, strengthen pro-Soviet elements in Cuba, and help rectify the strategic imbalance with the United States. His assistant, Oleg Troyanovsky, later recalled that “Khrushchev had a rich imagination, and when some idea took hold of him, he was inclined to see in its implementation an easy solution to a particular problem, a sort of cure-all. . . . He could stretch even a sound idea to the point of absurdity.”³⁰ Indeed, in his definitive biography of Khrushchev, William Taubman titled the chapter on the missile crisis “The Cuban Cure-all.” The son of a diplomat, Troyanovsky grew up in the United States and graduated from Swarthmore College, but Khrushchev did not ask his opinion about the probable American reaction to the plan, which Troyanovsky believed would be hostile. Nor did the premier consult his KGB/GRU intelligence analysts. He did run the idea by Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, who told him that deploying nuclear missiles to Cuba would create a political explosion in the United States.³¹ Miscalculating, Khrushchev did not change his mind.

Returning from Bulgaria on 21 May 1962, Khrushchev pitched his nuclear deployment idea to the State Council Presidium, meeting only open opposition from his deputy in the Council of Ministers, the practical and cautious Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan. The presidium approved the plan. Defense Minister Malinovsky assigned the planning to a small cadre, including Major General Anatoli Gribkov, whose book, *Operation Anadyr*, is the best account of the Soviet deployment.³²

²⁹ Khrushchev apparently thought of the Jupiters as near the Soviet Union's borders or “just over the horizon” on the other side of the Black Sea. Yet, the Jupiters were based at Turkey's Cigli Air Base near Izmir, which fronts the Aegean. Khrushchev's dacha on the Black Sea was at Pitsunda in the Soviet Socialist Republic of Georgia, now in the Russian-occupied province of Abkhazia in the independent nation of Georgia. Pitsunda is roughly 1,600 kilometers from Cigli Air Base. The placement of Soviet missiles in Cuba was far closer to the United States.
³⁰ William Taubman, *Khrushchev: The Man and His Era* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2003), 541.

³¹ Plokhly, *Nuclear Folly*, 57.

³² Gen Anatoli I. Gribkov and Gen William Y. Smith, *Operation Anadyr: U.S. and Soviet Generals Recount the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Chicago: Edition Q, 1994). Gen Smith's half of the book covers the American military's reaction.

Gribkov and colleagues greatly expanded the April draft plan. As Khrushchev ordered, the strategic missiles now composed the vital heart of the new arms package: 36 medium-range ballistic missiles (MRBMs) with a 1,770-kilometer range and 24 IRBMs with a 4,025-kilometer range. Though construction started on the launch facilities for both types in early September, the IRBMs did not make it to Cuba. The missiles were still on the water when the U.S. blockade went into effect, so Khrushchev sent them back home.³³ The Soviets also sent shorter-range, dual-use (conventional or nuclear-capable) systems: 36 Luna surface-to-surface missiles and, for coastal defense against invasion, 80 front cruise (FKR) missiles and 32 Sopka cruise missiles. The Soviets included six nuclear-capable Ilyushin IL-28 light bombers.³⁴ A final, significant step was adding four mechanized infantry regiments. Soviet personnel totaled about 43,000 by mid-October.

From July to October 1962, the Soviets sent a torrent of ships to Cuba, all monitored by U.S. planes and naval vessels. But the Russians had carefully masked the cargoes, loading the missiles into deep-hulled cargo ships with nothing on the decks to betray their presence. The thousands of troops aboard were kept below deck in the daytime. The first shipments were chiefly the V-75 surface-to-air missile systems and the technicians and construction workers needed to install them. V-75 installation began in August; a U-2 mission of 29 August photographed some of them. The strategic (and other) missiles arrived later; the first MRBMs arrived on 9 September. They were unloaded at night and then, during two to three days, trucked to their launch sites. They were not photographed until 14 October.

For the various missiles, the Soviets sent 164 nuclear warheads to Cuba aboard two ships, one arriving on 4 October and the second on 25 October, just before the blockade went into effect. The war-

³³ The 24 nuclear warheads for the IRBMs did make it to Cuba aboard the *Aleksandrovsk* on 25 October. Sherwin, *Gambling with Armageddon*, 200.

³⁴ Munton and Welch, *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, 34–38; and Sherwin, *Gambling with Armageddon*, 198–201.

heads were hidden in the cargo holds. There were 36 1-megaton warheads for the MRBMs, 24 for the IRBMs, 80 2-to-20-kiloton warheads for the FKR cruise missiles, 12 2-kiloton warheads for the Luna surface-to-surface missiles (added by Khrushchev in early September), 6 warheads for Sopka shore defense missiles, and 6 gravity bombs for the IL-28 bombers.³⁵

When American reconnaissance flights finally spotted the strategic missiles on 14 October, analysts and decisionmakers properly assumed that warheads for the strategic missiles were nearby, as MRBMs and IRBMs were useless in a conventional role. But the dispatch of the additional 104 tactical warheads was unknown. These warheads had not been photographed, and more importantly, U.S. civilian and military officials did not presume that tactical warheads had been sent for the FKR, Luna, and Sopka dual-use missiles. After the crisis ended, the Soviets removed their missiles and the U.S. Navy took pictures of them on board the ships. But the Soviets never told the United States that tactical warheads had been on the island. They removed the warheads secretly, and U.S. intelligence did not spot the warheads on their way back to the Soviet Union. American policymakers were therefore unaware of the presence of the tactical warheads for 30 years. In 1992, at a U.S.-Russia-Cuba conference in Havana, General Gribkov revealed their presence, stunning McNamara and other American participants.

Khrushchev's public diplomacy for the deployments was ill-considered, indeed counterproductive. Several aides and Cuban officials urged him to announce simply a conventional (nonnuclear) arms package and the signing of a Soviet-Cuban defense pact. Their thinking was that the presence of more than 40,000 Soviet military with modern weapons—including surface-to-air missiles (SAMs)—would deter a U.S. invasion. Or Khrushchev could have announced the conventional arms and troops, the defense pact, and even the supply of the tactical nukes,

whose shorter range could not endanger the American homeland but could deter an invasion force.

Khrushchev rejected both suggestions, but if Cuban defense was his main goal, he should have accepted them. The United States might have been deterred from any action. But even if the Americans did react, it would surely be less confrontational than the discovery of secretly shipped strategic nuclear weapons that would reach most of the United States. That discovery might well trigger a massive air strike and possibly an invasion. In sum, adding strategic nuclear missiles to the arms package was counterproductive. Instead of making Cuba safer from American intrusion, Khrushchev endangered it.

The Tardy Timing of Discovery

We now know much more about why the missiles were discovered on 14 October rather than earlier or later. The tardy timing of discovery was critical as it severely limited the menu of options considered by the president and the executive committee. Earlier discovery would have allowed more time for diplomacy, as missile construction would have been in the earliest stages. A later discovery date might have meant dealing with many installed, operational nuclear-tipped missiles. The facts are these: the first MRBMs arrived in a Cuban port on 9 September 1962.³⁶ After being unloaded at night, they were transported to the first launch site in San Cristobal, where installation began as early as 15 September.³⁷ A U-2 mission over San Cristobal might have detected the initial MRBM shipload on 15 September.

Thanks to an excellent article by Max Holland followed by a book cowritten with David Barrett, we know that infighting between cautious White House and State Department officials and more proactive CIA and DIA analysts derailed the twice-monthly U-2 flights over the middle of Cuba, a schedule and route that had been followed for months. On 30 August

³⁶ Plokhly, *Nuclear Folly*, 125.

³⁷ Mary McAuliffe, ed., *CIA Documents on the Cuban Missile Crisis—1962* (Washington, DC: Central Intelligence Agency, 1992), 7. Construction had apparently started a week earlier (before 5 September) on an IRBM site in Guanajay, but the IRBMs themselves were en route to Cuba and in fact never made it to the island, though their warheads did.

³⁵ Munton and Welch, *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, 34–38; and Sherwin, *Gambling with Armageddon*, 198–201.

1962, an American U-2 strayed over Soviet airspace for more than an hour, as Soviet fighters scrambled to intercept it. On 8 September, the Chinese shot down a Taiwanese U-2 using the Soviet V-75 missile that brought down Gary Powers's U-2 over the USSR in 1960 and which was being emplaced all over Cuba. A small, very senior group headed by Bundy met on 10 September and decided that, at least for the moment, the regular flights over the center of the island were too risky. Crucially, this led to a five-week pause in such flights just when the missiles arrived. Instead of direct overflights, the overly cautious Bundy group authorized only flights on the edge of Cuban territory, with cameras taking less-accurate distant photographs from an oblique angle. Four of these restricted missions were flown: 26 and 29 September and 5 and 7 October. They saw nothing. Meanwhile, the internal pressure from the CIA and DIA for direct overflights grew stronger as reliable human intelligence reports worked their way through the system. The Bundy group finally blessed a direct overflight that, delayed several days by cloudy weather, discovered MRBMs in San Cristobal on 14 October.³⁸

Fresh studies have given us a clearer picture of the super-charged reconnaissance efforts undertaken after discovery. William B. Ecker and Kenneth V. Jack ably recount the extensive low-level reconnaissance mission, called Blue Moon, flown by the U.S. Air Force McDonnell RF-101 Voodoos and U.S. Navy and Marine Corps Vought RF-8 Crusaders.³⁹ During the crisis, the U-2s flew constantly, as well. In his heavily detailed series of books, the latest in 2015, British pilot and U-2 expert Chris Pocock has covered virtually all aspects of that remarkable aircraft.⁴⁰ Though an in-

teresting read, another book about the U-2 missions, *Above and Beyond: John F. Kennedy and America's Most Dangerous Cold War Spy Mission*, contains factual errors as well as an unproven claim that the Soviets fired V-75 missiles at a U-2 on 25 October, two days before they did shoot down a U-2 over eastern Cuba, killing the pilot, Major Rudolph Anderson Jr.⁴¹ Besides U-2s and low-level reconnaissance flights, the United States had early October photographs from the new Corona spy satellite, but as Joseph Caddell's recent article explains, the resolution of the early Corona equipment did not allow image interpreters to identify the missile sites. In 1962, the Corona could only resolve objects about 13 feet in diameter, good enough to image airfields and bases. The U-2 was roughly five times better, with resolution of targets as small as two to three feet, permitting analysts to "see" missiles and launchers.⁴²

How Was the Crisis Settled?

Recent writing has not substantially changed the standard interpretation of the Kennedy administration's internal deliberations of options. An airstrike was initially considered, but led by the president, opinion slowly coalesced around a naval blockade. An airstrike would not destroy all the missiles, would kill plenty of Russians, and would leave no room for diplomacy. As a final check, on 21 October, Kennedy spoke personally with Tactical Air Command chief General Walter C. Sweeney, who confirmed that even a large air strike would destroy only 90–95 percent of the strategic missiles. Kennedy announced the blockade in a national television address on 22 October.⁴³ He thought of the blockade as an intermediate step to pressure Khrushchev to stop missile installation. If that did not work,

³⁸ David Barrett and Max Holland, *Blind Over Cuba: The Photo Gap and the Missile Crisis* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2014), 8–9. See also Max Holland, "The 'Photo Gap' that Delayed Discovery of Missiles," *Studies in Intelligence* 49, no. 4 (2005).

³⁹ William B. Ecker and Kenneth V. Jack, *Blue Moon Over Cuba: Aerial Reconnaissance During the Cuban Missile Crisis* (New York: Bantam Books, 2012). The Navy squadron was Light Photographic Squadron 62 (VFP-62), and the Marine squadron was Marine Composite Reconnaissance Squadron 2 (VMCJ-2).

⁴⁰ Chris Pocock, *The Dragon Lady Today: The Continuing Story of the U-2 Spyplane* (self-published, 2015). See also Pocock's encyclopedic *50 Years of the U-2: The Complete Illustrated History of the "Dragon Lady"* (Atglen, PA: Schiffer, 2005).

⁴¹ Casey Sherman and Michael J. Tougas, *Above and Beyond: John F. Kennedy and America's Most Dangerous Cold War Spy Mission* (New York: Public Affairs, 2018). See Col H. Wayne Whitten, review of *Above and Beyond: John F. Kennedy and America's most Dangerous Cold War Spy Mission*, by Sherman and Tougas, *Air and Space Power Journal*, 22 October 2018.

⁴² Joseph Caddell, "Corona over Cuba: The Missile Crisis and the Early Limitations of Satellite Imagery Intelligence," *Intelligence and National Security* 31, no. 3 (April 2016): 416–38, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02684527.2015.1005495>.

⁴³ John F. Kennedy, "Radio and Television Public Address" (speech, Oval Office, White House, Washington, DC, 22 October 1962).

the president would bless air strikes alone or coupled with an invasion.

On Saturday morning 27 October, the executive committee considered a rambling, stream-of-consciousness letter from Khrushchev that ended with a proposal to withdraw the missiles if the United States promised never to invade Cuba. As the Americans pondered, a more businesslike second letter arrived, adding the condition that the United States withdraw the Jupiters from Turkey. For years, it was thought that a worried Khrushchev, alone in his office on Friday night, and perhaps sipping vodka, wrote the first rambling letter. The second letter was thought to come from other members of the State Council Presidium who wanted to extract an additional concession—the Jupiters—from the United States. Scholars are now sure that Khrushchev wrote both letters.

The president and his advisors debated that Saturday whether to answer only the first letter by making the noninvasion pledge—this was the majority executive committee view—or by giving up the Jupiters as well, as the second letter requested. The president clearly favored adding the Jupiters, knowing they were obsolete and thinking the crisis would be more quickly resolved if Khrushchev could portray the Jupiter withdrawal as a win. Repeatedly during the debate, he kept returning to the Jupiter trade. Interrupting the discussion, the Air Force reported that a U-2 on a routine air-sampling mission had strayed into Soviet airspace. It was soon learned that the Soviets had shot down Major Anderson's U-2 over Cuba. Kennedy had previously declared that a U-2 shoot-down would trigger an attack against the offending V-75 site, and possibly other V-75 sites. But now he decided against a strike that would kill Soviets and escalate the crisis just as Khrushchev offered a deal. No one could explain, however, why the Soviets destroyed the U-2 just as they reached out; the two actions seemed contradictory.

In fact, the U-2 shootdown was not ordered by Moscow. Khrushchev had forbidden his forces to shoot down a U-2, thinking such a move would escalate the crisis. But the crew of a V-75 battery in eastern Cuba tracked Major Anderson's U-2. Worried that

the photographs would be used in the invasion everybody thought imminent, the crew called headquarters. General Issa A. Pliyev was out, but his deputy, Lieutenant General Andrei Grechko, authorized the shootdown. Defense Minister Malinovsky later told Pliyev that the action had been "too hasty," but no officer received punishment.⁴⁴

Meanwhile, the executive committee agreed that Kennedy's reply to Khrushchev should be only a non-invasion offer, with no mention of the Jupiters. That formal letter was sent, and the president adjourned the committee at 1945. Kennedy asked Robert Kennedy and a few of his innermost circle to remain, telling them he intended to offer the Jupiter withdrawal as a secret pledge to be carried out in four or five months. He swore them to secrecy.⁴⁵ Kennedy sent his brother to pass the offer to Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin and stress the need for an answer within one day. Khrushchev and the State Council Presidium, meeting Sunday morning 28 October in Moscow, accepted the deal. The main crisis was over, though touchy issues between Cuba and the Soviet Union, and between them and the United States, took several months to work out.⁴⁶

While the overall picture of events during 16–28 October has not changed much, historians have provided more granularity about several key aspects. An example is a well-known but inaccurate scene in the 2000 movie *Thirteen Days*, when McNamara and Admiral George W. Anderson, chief of naval operations, angrily clashed over how the Navy would execute the tracking and "hold down" of Soviet submarines. When blockade emerged as a likely option, Kennedy asked questions about implementation methods. Following up, McNamara and his deputy, Gilpatric, fretted over the Navy's procedures for signaling Soviet submarines to surface. To be sure the Soviets would understand

⁴⁴ Munton and Welch, *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, 78.

⁴⁵ Sherwin, *Gambling with Armageddon*, 442. Besides his brother Robert, the president asked seven others to remain: Bundy, Sorenson, McNamara, Rusk, Gilpatric, Ball, and Thompson. In direct questioning, occasionally before Congress, several advisors—McNamara and Rusk among them—lied for years that there had been no secret deal to end the crisis.

⁴⁶ For a fresh look at the resolution of what might be called the post-crisis stage, see David G. Coleman, *The Fourteenth Day: JFK and the Aftermath of the Cuban Missile Crisis*, rev. ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2014).

the signals, he ordered the Navy to prepare a signaling system, called Submarine Surfacing and Identification Procedures. Passed to the Kremlin during the crisis, there is no evidence that it reached the captains of the four nuclear-armed, diesel-powered *Foxtrot*-class submarines already in Cuban waters. As Svetlana Savranskaya explained, signaling American warships would drop harmless explosive devices along with a specified underwater sound to advise the subs to surface.⁴⁷ Until they did, the warships would hover above the subs, dropping the signaling charges and pinging with sonar. The subs attempted to evade until they were forced to surface to recharge batteries and ventilate the putrid internal air.

In the real meeting, McNamara did not berate the admiral, but there was indeed a confrontation. According to Gilpatric, he and McNamara “weren’t being told anything; we were just being assured that this overall type of action was being implemented, and the navy would take care of everything.” They went to the admiral’s office and found

a phalanx of fifteen or twenty, at least, navy brass all lined up around him. We were the two civilians. And Anderson was very high in color and obviously very, very angry about the whole [*sic*], what he regarded as intrusion. And he listened to a whole series of questions from McNamara that he hadn’t got answers to. And then Anderson just sort of exploded. And I don’t know whether he said goddamn it, but he used some very strong expletives to the effect that, “This is none of your goddamn business— This is what we’re here to do. We know how to do this. We’ve been doing this ever since the days of John Paul Jones, and if you’ll just go back to your quarters, Mr. Secretary, we’ll take care of this.” And

during this tirade I could see the color rising in McNamara’s countenance.⁴⁸

Visibly angry, McNamara controlled his temper, and as he and Gilpatric walked back to their offices, the secretary of defense muttered, “That’s the end of Anderson. I’ll never. . . . He won’t be reappointed, and we’ve got to find a replacement for him. As far as I’m concerned, he’s lost my confidence.” But in the short run, McNamara got what he wanted. After the clash, every half hour the chief of naval operations sent an officer to the secretary’s office to brief any details he wanted.⁴⁹

Most writers once considered executive committee deliberations a highly rational process of evaluating options under Kennedy’s purposeful guidance. With the recordings released, most scholars now agree that, at a minimum, the process had nonrational elements. Sociologist David R. Gibson’s fascinating “conversational analysis” of the deliberations examines how the way participants talked to each other influenced decisions. He analyzes what people said overall and in individual sentences. Did they interrupt or talk over each other? Did they coalesce around certain participants or band together against others? In particular, Gibson explores how blockade became the option of choice even though no one could make a case that it alone would force Khrushchev to withdraw the missiles. Gibson argues that the dynamics of the meetings and the need to reach consensus at each stage required the [executive committee] to avoid, or cease, consideration of some of the risks: the risk of hav-

⁴⁷ Svetlana V Savranskaya, “New Sources on the Role of Soviet Submarines in the Cuban Missile Crisis,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 2 (2005): 249–51, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390500088312>.

⁴⁸ Roswell L. Gilpatric oral history interview, JFK#2, 27 May 1970, JFKOH-RLG-02, John F. Kennedy Oral History Collection, John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum (JFKPLM), 59–61. Note that p. 60 in the source is mistakenly placed after p. 50; the transcript reads 50, 60, 51–59, 61. McNamara’s later account jibes with Gilpatric’s. Adm Anderson remembered the incident differently.

⁴⁹ George W. Anderson Jr. oral history interview, JFK#1, 25 April 1967, JFKOH-GWA-01, John F. Kennedy Oral History Collection, JFKPLM. Anderson was not reappointed as chief of naval operations, but Kennedy appointed him as ambassador to Portugal. For a third and quite different account based on the 1989 recollections of Adm Isaac Kidd Jr., then a captain and one of Anderson’s senior aides, see Robert M. Beer, “The U.S. Navy in the Cuban Missile Crisis,” *U.S. Naval Academy Trident Scholar Report*, 1990, 161–66.

ing to bomb operational missiles if the blockade failed; the risk that letting the *Bucharest* pass [the blockade] would leave Khrushchev with the impression that Kennedy was weak; and the risk that by accepting Khrushchev's first offer and ignoring his second, the first real path out of the crisis (like-for-like missile withdrawal) would be sacrificed.⁵⁰

Though Kennedy initially favored an air strike, he came to favor a blockade because it would minimize loss of life, allow Khrushchev time to reflect, and still allow an air strike or invasion if Khrushchev would not remove the missiles. Gibson concludes that, aware of the president's leanings, the executive committee debate adjusted to them.

Scholars have clarified three important aspects of the worst day of the crisis—Saturday 27 October—when Kennedy and Khrushchev were jolted by unplanned events into the realization that they were sliding over the brink. First, as mentioned, there is now scholarly consensus that Khrushchev wrote both letters the executive committee assessed. After proposing missile withdrawal in exchange for a noninvasion pledge, Khrushchev reflected for several hours and decided he could obtain the Jupiter withdrawal as well. Why the delay? Why did Khrushchev not simply make both demands in a single letter? Just after sending the first letter, Khrushchev read a translation of Walter Lippman's 25 October column in the *New York Herald-Tribune* suggesting "a face-saving agreement" that would swap the Jupiters for the Soviet missiles in Cuba.⁵¹ Khrushchev promptly wrote the second letter and directed it be announced by Radio Moscow, so Washington would receive it around the time that

the first cabled letter arrived. It is possible, though unproven, that with Kennedy's blessing, an administration official informed Lippman that the missile swap was a feasible option, hoping that the columnist would give Khrushchev a hint.⁵²

Erratic and unpredictable behavior by Soviet officers and Castro made Khrushchev feel events were slipping out of his control, forcing him to consider how to end the crisis. Soviet troops built and staffed the V-75 missile batteries. Falsely overconfident in the degree of camouflaging done at the MRBM and IRBM sites, Khrushchev forbade the V-75 units from shooting at the U-2 flights, which might trigger American counterstrikes. Yet, Soviet generals, convinced that an invasion was imminent, destroyed Major Anderson's midday flight on 27 October.

Likewise convinced of impending American landings, Castro stormed over to the Soviet embassy and, using Soviet ambassador Alexander Ivanovich Alekseyev as notetaker, dictated a letter intended to stiffen Khrushchev's spine. Castro asserted that any invasion would end up with a massive exchange of nuclear missiles. Therefore, the Soviets should launch a full-scale nuclear strike should America invade, eliminating the American danger forever "through a legitimate act of self-defense, however harsh and terrible the solution would be." Taken aback, Alekseyev asked if Castro wanted him to write that "we should be first to launch"? Castro replied that he did not want to say that directly, but that is definitely the meaning that Khrushchev correctly took away from the missive.

Coupled with the unordered U-2 shootdown, Castro's emotional, irrational letter contributed to Khrushchev's growing sense of unease and to his ultimate compromise. Khrushchev later wrote to Alekseyev that "aside from other factors, your telegram also

⁵⁰ David R. Gibson, "Decisions at the Brink," *Nature* 487, no. 7405 (5 July 2012): 27–29, <https://doi.org/10.1038/487027a>. Gibson's full study is *Talk at the Brink: Deliberation and Decision during the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012). See also Gibson, "Avoiding Catastrophe: The Interactional Production of Possibility during the Cuban Missile Crisis," *American Journal of Sociology* 117, no. 2 (September 2011): 361–419, <https://doi.org/10.1086/661761>.

⁵¹ Walter Lippmann, "Blockade Proclaimed," *New York Herald-Tribune*, 25 October 1962.

⁵² Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War: The Inside Story of an American Adversary* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2006), 485–88; Sherwin, *Gambling with Armageddon*, 384–85; and Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight*, 199. Sherwin notes that during an executive committee meeting Ball mentioned that he often talked with Lippman. However, Ball's opposition to the Jupiter trade—calling it "simply a fishing expedition in Moscow"—makes it unlikely that he carried a message to Lippmann. See Sheldon M. Stern, *The Week the World Stood Still: Inside the Secret Cuban Missile Crisis* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 164.

played a role in our being forced to accept Kennedy's conditions. . . . So we made this decision [to remove our missiles from Cuba] literally a day later."⁵³ In fact, Alekseyev's "head's up" telegram reached Moscow at 1400 on 27 October, and the completed letter arrived at 1300 the following day.

Though even before the U-2 shootdown and the Castro letter, the premier had sent his two crucial messages to Kennedy, the deal had not been closed. The frightening sequence of the U-2 shootdown and the apocalyptic letter made him even more determined to cement the agreement with Kennedy, which he did on Sunday by accepting the public noninvasion pledge and Kennedy's secret promise to remove the Jupiters.⁵⁴

Regarding nuclear weapons in Cuba, American civilian policymakers, senior military leaders, and intelligence specialists failed in three respects. First, they overlooked evidence—which they had already collected and assessed—that the Soviet Union had secretly deployed nuclear-tipped weapons outside its borders once before. In 1959, the Soviets deployed medium-range ballistic missiles in East Germany, north of Berlin, for six months, apparently to bring the United Kingdom within range. Though unknown to American intelligence at the time, CIA analysts later connected the dots and in January 1961 published a report that strangely never surfaced during the Cuban crisis. The CIA Special National Intelligence Estimate of 19 September 1962 claimed that deployment of strategic missiles would be unique, an aberration in Soviet policy, and that there were no signs of such a policy change. The writers had, for some reason, not seen the January 1961 memo. Similarly, in the executive committee and other deliberations, no one mentioned the previous deployment to East Germany. If that episode had resurfaced in September, as it should have, analysts might well have wondered if the Soviets were doing it again, this time in Cuba. They would

have increased, not decreased, direct U-2 overflights, probably leading to earlier discovery of the missiles.⁵⁵

A second failure was blindness to the implications of the deployment of short-range nuclear-capable missiles, such as the FKR's and Lunas. When reconnaissance discovered the construction of the MRBM and IRBM sites, leaders and advisors assumed that nuclear warheads for those missiles had also been sent, though the United States could not yet identify the warhead storage sites. Hence, nuclear capability of the strategic missiles was factored into American consideration of options such as air strike, blockade, or diplomacy. But in the case of the FKR's, Sopkas, and Lunas, though they were discovered by air reconnaissance, U.S. officials failed to evaluate the impact on an American invasion if these missiles carried nuclear warheads. Not until after Khrushchev's 28 October concession on missile withdrawal was the topic discussed, and then not very carefully. Why?

Motivated thinking was an important reason, skewing the analysis of contingencies—things that might happen. When pushing for invasion, Air Force Chief of Staff Curtis E. LeMay, Army Chief of Staff Earle G. Wheeler, and others did not imagine that there might be dangerous unknowns. *Known unknowns* exist in poorly understood situations. An adept planner or analyst knows a knowledge gap exists, but for various reasons, usually a lack of information, cannot close the gap, leading decisionmakers—correctly—to hedge. By contrast, *unknown unknowns* emerge from completely unpredictable directions that are not pos-

⁵³ Sherwin, *Gambling with Armageddon*, 439; and Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight*, 203–5.

⁵⁴ Alekseyev statement in Blight, Allyn, and Walch, *Cuba on the Brink*, 118.

⁵⁵ Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, 194–95; and Matthias Uhl and Vladimir Ivkin, " 'Operation Atom' The Soviet Union's Stationing of Nuclear Missiles in the German Democratic Republic, 1959," *CWHP Bulletin*, no. 12/13 (Winter–Spring 2001), 299–307. Deployed by the beginning of 1959, the missiles were repositioned to Kaliningrad, Russia, in August 1959. Uhl and Ivkin believe U.S. intelligence detected the initial deployment, but the evidence is murky. Amy Zegart notes that a January 1961 report from the Bureau of Intelligence and Research in the State Department assessed that the Soviets had deployed medium range ballistic missiles in East Germany between 1958 and 1960, but this report was not integrated into the 19 September 1962 CIA report. Zegart notes that Kennedy asserted in an executive committee meeting that the Cuban deployment was the first time the Soviets had deployed nuclear weapons outside the Soviet Union. Amy B. Zegart, "The Cuban Missile Crisis as Intelligence Failure," *Policy Review*, no. 175 (October–November 2012): 23–39, FN2.

sible to discern in advance. Sometimes called “black swans,” they seemingly emerge from nowhere.

The presence of tactical nukes was not a black swan but a known unknown. LeMay and others should have evaluated the probable presence of tactical nukes when creating their best military advice, to use the common term. But because of their motivated thinking—a conviction and strong desire to invade to completely eliminate the Communist threat—the Joint Chiefs of Staff failed to temper its pro-invasion advice with an assessment of tactical nukes on the island. Their failure could have been catastrophic if the Soviets used tactical nukes against the landing force.

Civilian analysts did no better. On 26 October, two days before the crisis ended, John McCone showed the president a photograph of a Luna and noted that such weapons were dual use, indicating the possible presence of “tactical nuclear weapons for fighting troops in the field.”⁵⁶ This significant statement disappeared into the mist. Nobody pushed for a follow-up, certainly not the invasion advocates.

More understandable was a third failure—a lack of imagination by all analysts. The CIA team that created the 19 September Special National Intelligence Estimate could have been more imaginative in trying to assess Khrushchev’s feeling of Soviet weakness (a feeling he had for many months), which might have led them to look for signs of a risky gamble to try to rebalance relative nuclear power. Admittedly, this was a difficult task. Even Khrushchev’s colleagues in the Presidium found him unpredictable, often surfacing—and pushing—strange new ideas. Moreover, as Amy Zegart persuasively recounts, the CIA’s process for separating the wheat from the chaff of human field reports was slow, though Sherman Kent, the legendary director of analysis, defended it as careful and professional.⁵⁷ The CIA had field agents in Cuba who sent

reports; CIA analysts also debriefed Cuban refugees at a special facility in Opa-locka, Florida. It must be remembered that the strategic weapons did not arrive until mid-September; Serhii Plokhyy concludes the first batch arrived 9 September. Of the roughly 1,000 human reports and debriefs received after that date, perhaps only a dozen or so were significant. But in the three to four weeks after the missiles arrived in Cuba, the CIA processed and circulated a few reliable human intelligence reports that suggested unusual activity near San Cristobal in western Cuba. These reports helped proactive officers in the intelligence community lobby successfully for the resumption of direct overflights, which promptly discovered the missiles.

Could the Crisis Have Led to Nuclear Exchanges?

The crisis could easily have led to nuclear exchanges. Yet, even with the discovery more than 30 years after the crisis that there were at least 104 tactical nukes plus 60 warheads for the MRBMs and IRBMs on the island and that the four *Foxtrots* being harassed by the U.S. Navy had nuclear-tipped torpedoes, some observers are reluctant to accept that we came close to nuclear exchanges. They say the obvious: “Nobody knows what would have happened.” This is a dodge, a cop-out, for whenever we assess alternatives or counterfactuals of any event, we never know what would have happened. But counterfactual analysis allows deeper understanding of events. The relevant task is to examine the forces at play and assess probabilities. Admittedly, counterfactuals must be handled carefully. Some are much more realistic, relevant, and useful than others.

In the Cuban crisis, relevant and realistic counterfactuals suggest a likely nuclear exchange. Had Kennedy and Khrushchev not settled the crisis on 28 October, Kennedy intended to order air strikes and an invasion to remove the strategic missiles. He warned the military to be ready to implement that plan on

⁵⁶ Thomas Blanton, “The Cuban Missile Crisis Just Isn’t What It Used to Be,” *CWHP Bulletin*, no. 17/18 (Fall 2012): 18, FN33. See also Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight*, 145 and endnote on 381.

⁵⁷ Zegart, “Intelligence Failure,” 23–39; and Sherman Kent, “A Crucial Estimate Re-lived,” *Studies in Intelligence* 8, no. 4 (Spring 1964). Declassified in 2013. Possibly because relevant documents are still classified, no scholar has yet explained how U.S. intelligence missed the assembly of strategic missile units in the USSR and their transport to Cuba.

29 or 30 October. How do we assess the most likely counterfactuals had invasion occurred?⁵⁸

First and most dangerous was a Russian intent to use tactical nukes to destroy the 5,000-person Marine garrison and facilities in Guantánamo. As Michael Dobbs revealed in his ground-breaking account, the Russians deployed a detachment of three FKR missiles armed with 14-kiloton nuclear warheads (Hiroshima-size weapons) near Guantánamo to await launch orders. As Dobbs makes clear, it is probable that an American invasion meant nuclear destruction of Guantánamo and thousands of Americans dead.⁵⁹ Very likely, the U.S. response would have been use of nuclear weapons, probably against several Russian missile sites or, if identified, against storage areas for Russian nuclear warheads. Whether a tactical nuclear exchange inside Cuba would have escalated to a strategic weapons exchange between the Soviet Union and the United States is less likely, but certainly possible, as emotional and muddled thinking (both had already appeared in earlier stages of the crisis) distorted a more rational response.

Second, should an invasion have occurred, it is quite likely that the Soviets would have used tactical nukes to defend their units. Why else had the tactical weapons been sent to the island? In addition to strategic missile forces and antiair missile units, the Soviets had four infantry regiments, which, more capable than the Cuban forces, would have been the main targets of U.S. landing forces. Initially the Soviet commander, General Issa Pliyev, had authority to use the tactical nukes for defense against landing forces, which is why shore-to-ship missiles with warheads had been sent to Cuba. Kennedy warned on 7 September that if offensive missiles were found to be in Cuba, “the gravest consequences” would occur. Deterrence theory suggests that deterrence increases if defenders clearly communicate red lines as well as the consequences that would result if the red lines were

violated. But instead of making Khrushchev cautious, the warning made him more committed to giving his conventional forces powerful weapons to defend against an American attack. He ordered additional tactical nuclear weapons delivered to Cuba; they were immediately loaded on the *Indigirka* and sent speedily to the island. Although Moscow retained authority for their use, Khrushchev would have been under great pressure to permit tactical nukes to defend against an invasion force killing thousands of Soviet soldiers. Again, why send tactical nukes to the island if they were never to be used under any circumstances? And why increase the number of tactical warheads after Kennedy’s warning? If the tactical warheads, both the first and second batches, were intended to deter an invasion, why did Khrushchev not announce their deployment? Rather, the warheads were intended for use depending on circumstances.

Third, there was the possible, even probable use of the weapons on the initiative of local commanders. By 10 October, most warheads had arrived in Cuba and were stored near the launchers. General Nikolai Beloborodov, who managed the warheads, “took partial measures to move the warheads closer to very remote combat units to reduce the amount of time required for their transfer once we received the special orders [to use them].”⁶⁰ Once the invasion began, while under attack—the Russians expected an invasion plan to include air strikes on missile sites followed by ground assault—local Soviet commanders would have mated warheads and missiles. It seems logical that they would defend themselves with the most powerful weapons they had. As Beloborodov later wrote, “It was clear that in the conditions of the existing balance of forces in conventional arms, which was ten to one against us, there was only one way we could repel a massive assault—by using tactical nuclear weapons against the invaders.”⁶¹ A good test case

⁵⁸ A variation would have been air strikes on 29 or 30 October as stand-alone actions rather than as part of the invasion. With this scenario, Khrushchev would have had to accept the air strikes and certain loss of Russian lives and promptly agree to withdraw the surviving missiles, or the United States would invade.

⁵⁹ Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight*, 178–81, 205–6.

⁶⁰ Nikolai Beloborodov, “The War Was Averted (Soviet nuclear weapons in Cuba, 1962): Memoir of Lieutenant General Nikolai Beloborodov, head of the Soviet nuclear arsenal in Cuba,” 1998, trans. Anna Melyakova and Svetlana Savranskaya, National Security Archive, George Washington University, 6, 9.

⁶¹ Beloborodov, “The War Was Averted (Soviet nuclear weapons in Cuba, 1962),” 10.

was the shootdown of the U-2 on 27 October, an act forbidden by Moscow. But stressed local commanders, believing the U-2 was gathering data on the latest Soviet positions for the imminent invasion, approved the shootdown. This kind of decision under intense stress would have occurred repeatedly across Soviet forces if the U.S. invaded. It is quite likely at least a few of those local decisions would have brought tactical nukes into play. The warheads for the FKR missiles had no security devices and could be launched by a lieutenant and a couple of technicians.⁶²

Nor would have American airstrikes been able to take out the Russian tactical warheads before the invasion began. As Beloborodov noted, “When I met with the Americans 30 years later, they were very interested to find out about the places where the nuclear warheads were actually located in Cuba in 1962. It is obvious that they did not have accurate information, which in the event of a U.S. military action would have excluded [the possibility] of impact on the warheads.”⁶³

Finally, regarding a fourth dicey scenario, recent analysis has lowered the probability of a submarine destroying an American warship with a nuclear-tipped torpedo. The USSR sent four *Foxtrot* submarines to Cuban waters. Each carried a single nuclear-tipped torpedo (range 19 km) for defensive purposes, along with 21 conventional torpedoes. As noted above, the U.S. Navy tracked and pressured these subs using so-called practice depth charges—similar to a hand grenade—to signal that the subs should surface. Commanders would use Morse code sonar signals to transmit “IDKCA,” which meant “rise to surface.” To be considered as nonthreatening under the new U.S. Navy procedures, the subs had to surface and sail an easterly course. Unaware of this new American guidance and unsure if U.S.-Soviet combat had started, the submarine captains attempted to evade the pursu-

ers and remained submerged as long as possible. The temperature inside the subs rose beyond 120 degrees Fahrenheit. Officers and crew were fainting from the heat and bad air. On one destroyer at least, U.S. sailors encased practice depth charges in cardboard, which kept the trigger from popping until the cardboard disintegrated deeper than normal. Detonating beside the subs rather than far above them, the magnified sound was like being in an oil drum struck with a sledgehammer.⁶⁴

It now appears that Soviet submarine *B-59*—the *Foxtrot* often associated with use of a nuclear torpedo—was not quite as close to firing as previously thought. Forced to surface with exhausted batteries, noxious air, and the concussions of the practice depth charges, a frazzled Captain Valentin Savitsky climbed into the conning tower to face blinding searchlights, a Lockheed P2 Neptune firing .50-caliber warning shots on each side of the bow, and loudspeaker demands from hovering American destroyers. It is unclear whether these procedures were the ones described to McNamara. Believing he was about to be attacked, Savitsky ordered his watch officers below and yelled that he was going down to launch his nuclear torpedo. Fortunately, one officer, loaded with signaling equipment, briefly blocked the narrow ladder down into the submarine. This delayed Savitsky long enough for the submarine flotilla’s chief of staff, Captain Vasili Arkhipov, on board *B-59* and still in the conning tower, to calm Savitsky by pointing out that the American actions were not an attack but aggressive signaling. *B-59* quickly signaled the American units to stop their harassment. Monitored by the Navy, *B-59* remained on the surface, recharging batteries and cooling the submarine’s interior for more than a day.⁶⁵

In the first three scenarios above, tactical nuclear use by the Soviets was likely and so was an Ameri-

⁶² Dobbs, *One Minute to Midnight*, 206.

⁶³ Beloborodov, “The War Was Averted (Soviet nuclear weapons in Cuba, 1962),” 6. Beloborodov said “the warheads for the R-12 medium-range missiles were located in the Bejucal region (Romanov), the warheads for the operational-tactical ‘FROG’ were in the region of Managua (Vasyukov), the warheads for the front cruise missile (FKR) in the region of Santiago de Cuba (Trifonov); there were nuclear warheads in other places as well.”

⁶⁴ Blanton, “The Cuban Missile Crisis Just Isn’t What It Used to Be,” 14.

⁶⁵ Svetlana Savranskaya, “The Underwater Cuban Missile Crisis at 60,” Briefing Book #808, National Security Archive, George Washington University, 3 October 2022, 1. This briefing digital book contains Arkhipov’s 1997 account of the incident. See also an article by the captain of another *Foxtrot*: Capt Ryurik A. Ketov, “The Cuban Missile Crisis as Seen Through a Periscope,” *Journal of Strategic Studies* 28, no. 2 (April 2005): 217–31, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01402390500088304>.

can nuclear response. If the United States invaded, all three scenarios would have occurred simultaneously, increasing the probability that at least one of them would have triggered nuclear use. There is ample reason to regard the Cuban Missile Crisis as a nuclear near miss.

The Role of Cognition in Leader Motivation

The nature of the cognitive processes used by the participants played a key but still only partly understood role in the crisis. Scholars increasingly find the concept of strategic empathy useful. Strategic empathy is not sympathy but an understanding of the personality and circumstances of the adversary and how those factors motivate or constrain adversary actions. The lack of strategic empathy by both leaders helped cause the Cuban crisis by preventing them from properly assessing their opponent's political pressures and circumstances.⁶⁶ Instead they "mirror-imaged," using their own experience and beliefs to explain their adversary's motives.⁶⁷ Until the final days of the crisis, for example, Khrushchev wrongly believed Kennedy would accept the strategic missiles in Cuba just as he had been forced to accept the Jupiters in Turkey. Khrushchev gave little thought to the possibility that Kennedy might see the missile deployment as a disastrous internal political blow and react strongly. Kennedy did a bit better, particularly as the crisis wore on. The executive committee transcripts reveal Kennedy often asked questions about Khrushchev's motivations.

⁶⁶ Strategic empathy is not sympathy but rather the ability to understand someone's underlying drivers and constraints. An excellent introduction is Zachary Shore, *A Sense of the Enemy: The High Stakes History of Reading Your Rival's Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014).

⁶⁷ Munton and Welch, *The Cuban Missile Crisis*, 30–31, 100. Mirror-imaging is a heuristic, a mental shortcut. When analysts confront the challenge of building a mental model of an adversary but have little real information, they sometimes attribute to the adversary the same tendencies and pressures they would have. Observing an adversary action, they conclude that the motivations and drivers for that action would be the same—a mirror image—of what American decisionmakers would do if placed in the same circumstances. Mirror-imaging can be useful if the adversary thinks and plans the same way as the analyst but is misleading when the adversary is operating under different and unknown pressures and operating principles. Mirror-imaging rests on the fundamental assumption that the adversaries being analyzed think like the analysts themselves.

A powerful reason for Soviet misbehavior in Cuba was not because Khrushchev thought Kennedy was weak on Cuba. More important were Khrushchev's fears of Soviet strategic and political weakness, as well as his own psychological and political need to strengthen his position in the State Council Presidium. Kennedy's strong stance on Berlin, his signaling via the Gilpatric speech that the United States had nuclear superiority, and his military and clandestine efforts to demonstrate an ability—if not a clear intent—to topple Cuba increased Khrushchev's worries.⁶⁸

In early 1962, no longer able to play the missile gap card and fearing American invasion of Cuba, Khrushchev tilted toward a policy of extreme brinkmanship, his only remaining tool to influence events. He developed the idea of the meniscus as a model for his dangerous brinkmanship. When a glass is very slowly filled with water, the surface tension of the water might allow a meniscus, or small ring of water, to protrude very slightly above the lip of the glass. Khrushchev's idea of a meniscus was not scientifically sound, but it explained his intention to practice brinkmanship so extreme that it approached but did not quite "spill over" into conflict. In short, he would accept a lot of risk.⁶⁹ It is important to note again that the meniscus strategy emerged from weakness. Alas, akin to touching the meniscus slightly above the rim of a glass of water, his brinkmanship soon spilled over the edge in the Cuban crisis. Kennedy and his advisors did not sense Khrushchev's weakness; they saw only his bullying and provocations.

Recent progress in political psychology provides new approaches to explain Khrushchev's risky nuclear deployment. Though Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky developed prospect theory in 1979, in recent

⁶⁸ Richard Ned Lebow, "Domestic Politics and the Cuban Missile Crisis: The Traditional and Revisionist Interpretations Reevaluated," *Diplomatic History* 14, no. 4 (October 1990): 471–92, 480, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-7709.1990.tb00103.x>.

⁶⁹ Fursenko and Naftali, *Khrushchev's Cold War*, 414–15.

years international relations scholars have used it.⁷⁰ Simply stated, prospect theory says that humans worry much more about great potential loss than about significant potential gains. Therefore, they adopt riskier actions to prevent major loss than to achieve gains. Khrushchev was operating in the domain of potential loss, though of course he was unaware of his internal cognitive processing. To prevent loss of influence and control he took a risky step—the conventional arms buildup—then doubled down with an even riskier step by adding strategic nuclear arms to the package, partly to slightly remedy the strategic imbalance and partly to prevent the potential loss of Cuba and with it, Soviet prestige and his own prestige. One might assume that Khrushchev's feeling of weakness would spur caution and curb risk-taking. Instead, his fears led to increasingly risky behavior to avoid the further loss of influence and prestige.

In their insightful article "The Pitsunda Decision," Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali make this point clearly.⁷¹ In response to the charge by Senator Kenneth Keating and other Republicans that his Cuban policy was timid, Kennedy released the statement on 4 September 1962 declaring that "the gravest issues would arise" if the Soviets placed offensive weapons in Cuba.⁷² Kennedy hoped to deter Khrushchev from sending such armaments to Cuba, but as Fursenko and Naftali show, his statement had the opposite effect. Learning of Kennedy's warning while vacationing at his Black Sea dacha at Pitsunda in Georgia on 7 September, Khrushchev doubled down, adding tactical nuclear warheads for the short-range missiles. As noted above, this decision greatly increased the risk of nuclear weapons use.

The Influence of Emotion in Decision-making

In the past 10 years, political psychologists have made great progress in illuminating the hidden role of emotion in foreign policy decision-making. For years many foreign policy analysts have used a Rational Actor Model (RAM) as their default approach.⁷³ RAM assumes that states and the leaders of states assess options by rationally weighing the pros and cons and choosing the option that provides the most advantage. In other words, states or the leaders of states use *expected utility theory*—another concept from economics—to compare options and choose the one with the most benefit. RAM is a deliberative, logical approach.

What role might emotion or biases play? In his recent book, *Thinking, Fast and Slow*, Daniel Kahneman describes cognition as having two systems, or tracks. System One is unconscious heuristics, prizing speed, gut feelings, hunches, emotions, and the like. System Two is consciously slow, deliberative measurement of pros and cons. System One allows a big role for emotion and biases; System Two is akin to RAM.

But some of the latest writing in political psychology claims that emotion plays a role in every decision or perception, even in the supposedly factual deliberation of Kahneman's System Two. Emotion unconsciously influences what one accepts as evidence, how one interprets that evidence, and what action one chooses. In short, emotion is everywhere, skewing factual assessment, minimizing or maximizing threat perception, fostering emotions such as fear and anger.⁷⁴

Khrushchev and Kennedy were both influenced by emotion. Khrushchev's decision to send strategic

⁷⁰ Daniel Kahneman and Amos Tversky, "Prospect Theory: An Analysis of Decision under Risk," *Econometrica* 47, no. 2 (1979): 263–91, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1914185>. A classic article is Jonathan Mercer, "Prospect Theory and Political Science," *Annual Review of Political Science* 8, no. 1 (15 June 2005): 1–21, <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.polisci.8.082103.104911>.

⁷¹ Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, "The Pitsunda Decision," *CWTHP Bulletin*, no. 10 (March 1998): 223–27.

⁷² Document 411 Editorial Note, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963*, vol. 10, *Cuba, January 1961–September 1962*, ed. Louis J. Smith and David S. Patterson (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1997).

⁷³ For an extensive explanation of the Rational Actor Model, see Allison and Zelikow, *Essence of Decision*, 13–47.

⁷⁴ Janice Gross Stein's masterful overview is a good place to start: "Threat Perception in International Relations," in *The Oxford Handbook of Political Psychology*, 2d. ed., ed. Leonie Huddy, David O. Sears, and Jack S. Levy (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013), 364–88. Kahneman's two systems may well operate simultaneously, meaning both emotion and rationality would somehow blend. This suggests that complicated decisions have both emotional and rational elements. An excellent case study is Jonathan Mercer, "Emotion and Strategy in the Korean War," *International Organization* 67, no. 2 (April 2013): 221–48, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818313000015>. See also Jonathan Mercer, "Human Nature and the First Image: Emotion in International Politics," *Journal of International Relations and Development* 9 (2006): 288–303, <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.jird.1800091>.

nuclear weapons to Cuba was partly an emotional payback for the U.S. deployment of Jupiters to Turkey. Kennedy's anger at Khrushchev when the missiles were discovered was partly emotional, reflected in his purported first reaction: "He can't do this to me." Castro's mid-crisis letter to Khrushchev urging use of the nuclear weapons was clearly emotional. Emotion underlay the motivated thinking of LeMay and other hard-core invasion advocates. When one views the details of the Cuban crisis through this "emotion is everywhere" lens, one finds plenty of examples. Richard Ned Lebow, who along with Janice Gross Stein was one of the first to explore emotional aspects of the Cuban crisis, argues that "Khrushchev acted out of a sense of desperation. He made a high-risk gamble in the belief that inaction would further erode Soviet strategic and foreign policy interests." Lebow asserts that "Khrushchev also acted out of anger. His emotional arousal clouded his judgment and made empathy with President Kennedy and the constraints under which he [Kennedy] operated all but impossible. It also ruled out a thorough and dispassionate evaluation of the likely repercussions of a Cuban missile deployment."⁷⁵

While Kennedy did not understand Khrushchev's motives before the crisis, during the crisis he sought to understand the Soviet leader's reasoning. He sometimes escaped the mirror-imaging problem that afflicted Khrushchev. The executive committee transcripts often reveal Kennedy raised the question of Khrushchev's motivation and asked others for their assessment.⁷⁶ He knew that if he could correctly understand Khrushchev's real motives, he could devise a more effective policy to counter them. By the end of the crisis, Kennedy was the leading peacenik in the room, convinced that a settlement was best reached by giving Khrushchev a way out that allowed him to portray the settlement as a win.

Among several excellent, recent studies of the role of emotion in threat perception and decision-

making, Robin Markwica's remarkable book *Emotional Choices* stands out because it examines the Cuban crisis as one of his two case studies (the other is the 1990–91 Gulf War). Markwica asserts that an emotional model operates simultaneously in the decision-maker's mind with two other approaches, a rationalist model (RAM) and a social constructivist or identity model. The rationalist model uses expected utility, advantages and disadvantages, and cost-benefit calculations to formulate decisions. An identity or social constructivist model privileges the ideas, accepted norms and standards, and practices of the decision-maker's society or nation. Markwica's emotional model postulates that five emotions—fear, anger, hope, pride, and humiliation—influence decision-making. He assesses the importance of emotions in eight major Khrushchev decisions in the missile crisis. He finds that fear influenced Khrushchev in half of his decisions. Markwica wisely resists the temptation to claim fear as the most important determinant in those decisions. Rather, he persuasively explains why the decisions cannot be fully understood without including emotional aspects.⁷⁷

Markwica correctly observes that difficulty of use is a disadvantage of an emotional model. A RAM analysis uses factual evidence, mainly material factors, to weigh expected utility. A RAM analyst examines such known or collectable material factors as the size, location, and capability of troop deployments, the location of missile installations, and weapon ranges and destructive power. From those factors, the RAM analyst makes rational inferences to uncover motives and drivers. But an emotional model requires much more information about a leader or leadership group's patterns of thought, fears, hopes, and other emotions.

⁷⁵ Lebow, "Domestic Politics and the Cuban Missile Crisis," 490.

⁷⁶ Ernest R. May and Philip D. Zelikow, *The Kennedy Tapes: Inside the White House during the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1997).

⁷⁷ Robin Markwica, *Emotional Choices: How the Logic of Affect Shapes Coercive Diplomacy* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2018). See also Keren Yarhi-Milo, *Who Fights for Reputation: The Psychology of Leaders in International Conflict* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018); Robert Jervis, Keren Yarhi-Milo, and Don Casler, "Redefining the Debate Over Reputation and Credibility in International Security," *World Politics* 73, no. 1 (January 2021): 167–203, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0043887120000246>; and Janice Gross Stein, "The Micro-Foundations of International Relations Theory: Psychology and Behavioral Economics," *International Organization* 71, S1 (2017): 249–63, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0020818316000436>.

Much of that information is unknown when a crisis arises and is not immediately collectable by intelligence operations. Only later, as recordings, letters, oral histories, and archival documents emerge is it possible to more accurately assess the impact of emotion, hence Markwica's justifiable caution about claiming too much for an emotional model.⁷⁸ That said, despite unsatisfactory access to Russian and some American archival material, enough is known about the Cuban missile crisis to demonstrate that emotion played an important role.

The Inseparable Nature of Military Advice and Political, Cognitive, and Emotional Factors

This event demonstrates the crucial relationship between military force and diplomacy. It mattered that the crisis occurred just off American shores, so that immense military power could be assembled quickly. Moreover, that military capability had been well-exercised in the preceding year, most prominently in the spring 1962 Caribbean exercises. And from Army general Maxwell D. Taylor, his senior military advisor, and General Walter Sweeney, commander of the Tactical Air Command, Kennedy got accurate, as opposed to overly optimistic, estimates of the percentage of strategic missiles that airstrikes might destroy. Kennedy ultimately chose blockade while pursuing a diplomatic solution and simultaneously readying airstrikes and an invasion. American conventional military dominance subtly but powerfully shaped the decisions made by both sides during the crisis.

It also shows the failure of the Joint Chiefs of Staff to provide high-quality military advice. Already mentioned was the failure of the Joint Chiefs as well as civilian analysts to imagine that an invasion might encounter tactical nuclear weapons, which would hugely escalate the crisis. Military advice in a sudden international crisis may need to be different from military advice in a theater campaign.

In the Cuban missile crisis, best military advice and diplomatic and political advice were inseparable.

Airstrike, invasion, blockade, diplomatic bargaining, or simply accepting the Soviet missile deployment (inaction) each required assessment of a broad range of nonmilitary as well as purely military factors. Assessing Soviet motivation for missile deployment was crucial to finding a suitable give-and-take. A strongly motivated Soviet Union would require a major American compromise in a deal, or perhaps the Soviets would not deal at all. Best military advice had to consider the mindset and motivations of Khrushchev and other Soviet leaders. How would they react? Would pressure on Cuba cause the Soviets to attack Berlin or some other vulnerable point? Would an airstrike trigger a broader nuclear exchange? Could the missiles be removed by negotiation rather than by force? And so forth.

What Kennedy got from the Joint Chiefs was advice derived from predisposition toward—or a belief in—certain kinds of actions regardless of circumstances and context. An example was the Joint Chiefs of Staff meeting with the president and McNamara in the cabinet room of the White House on Friday, 19 October. At this stage, Kennedy was considering the air strike and blockade options. Stating that an American response to the missile deployment was necessary, he said, “The question is, what kind of response?” General LeMay said he did not share the view that an invasion of Cuba would trigger a Soviet invasion of Berlin. The Soviets would not move if Kennedy simply told Khrushchev that invading Berlin meant war. “This blockade and political action I see [as] leading to war. . . . This is almost as bad as the appeasement at Munich. . . . I just don’t see any other solution except direct military intervention, right now!” Admiral Anderson said the Navy could execute a blockade but that he did not think “there is any solution to the Cuban problem except a military solution. . . . It’s the same thing as Korea all over again, only on a grander scale.” General Earle Wheeler insisted that airstrikes, blockade, and an invasion were needed: “I feel that the lowest risk is the full gamut of military action by us.” LeMay asserted: “I think that a blockade and political talk would be considered by a lot of our friends and neutrals as a pretty weak response to this.

⁷⁸ Markwica, *Emotional Choices*.

And I'm sure a lot of our citizens would feel that way too." The president observed that a limited airstrike would be less of an escalation than a major airstrike coupled with invasion and made the key point that "we have to assume that the Soviet response to each of these would have to be different." After Kennedy and McNamara left the room, and the Joint Chiefs were alone—and unaware that Kennedy's taping system was still running—they vented their displeasure about the president's reluctance to commit to a full-scale military action. Marine Commandant David M. Shoup praised LeMay for pulling the rug from under Kennedy's arguments: "When he says 'escalation,' that's it. If somebody could keep them from doing the goddamn thing piecemeal . . . that's our problem. You go in there and friggin' around with the missiles. You're screwed." "That's right," LeMay growled, "You're screwed, screwed, screwed." Kennedy later told his aides Kenneth P. O'Donnell and David F. Powers that LeMay was dead wrong in his certainty that Khrushchev would do nothing if the United States bombed the missiles and killed many Russians. "These brass hats have one great advantage in their favor," the president remarked. "If we listen to them and do what they want us to do, none of us will be alive later to tell them they were wrong."⁷⁹

General officers creating the best military advice during the Cuban missile crisis needed the same range of skills as policymakers and civilian analysts. The Joint Chiefs of Staff should have seen that the military options on the table had potentially significant political and diplomatic consequences that in turn would affect future military options, but their advice showed no signs of such reflection. Senior civilians had the converse requirement of making policy with a sensitive assessment of military factors. The intertwining of all essential factors—military, political, cognitive/emotional, etc.—in strategic level decision-making is the essence of true "Jointness."

Other senior commanders understood this imperative. Vice Admiral Alfred G. Ward, who ran the Navy's blockade forces, noted that although in war-

time blockades local commanders decided which enemy ships would be boarded and searched, in the Cuban crisis "we asked instructions on whether or not we should stop a Soviet ship." Ward agreed with making the decision "at a political level because it was a political decision rather than a military one."⁸⁰

Where Are We Headed?

The Cuban missile crisis will always be worth studying because we know more about it than we do almost any other crisis, so we have greater insight into the challenges faced by the United States, the Soviet Union, and Cuba. This is not to say that we know everything that we need to know. As more documents are unsealed, especially in Russia and Cuba, many aspects of the crisis can be further fleshed out. For example, both deterrence failure and success marked the crisis. Khrushchev was not deterred by Kennedy's warnings of "the gravest consequences" of sending offensive weapons; indeed, the premier doubled his gamble, sending more tactical nuclear warheads. Kennedy was not deterred by the possibility that U.S. action in Cuba would provoke a Soviet assault on Berlin. Both men were deterred from stepping over the brink by their justified fear of the existential threat of global nuclear war. Further scrutiny of the Cuban crisis may sharpen our understanding of deterrence theory.

In addition, continued work by political psychologists in the hopefully larger pool of primary sources may give us greater insights into the most basic level of analysis: the cognitive processes of leaders and leadership groups, and the role of emotions in their decision-making.

Last, analyzing the crisis with a broader range of analytical tools, some derived from the intelligence community, will surely bring rewards. For example, premortem analysis is an excellent technique for stimulating imagination and fresh thinking by analysts. The technique of placement described by Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May in their classic *Thinking in Time*, coupled with greater use of strategic empathy,

⁷⁹ Stern, *The Week the World Stood Still*, 67–71.

⁸⁰ Alfred G. Ward oral history, U.S. Naval Academy, as quoted in Robert M. Beer, *The U.S. Navy in the Cuban Missile Crisis*, Trident Scholar Project Report no. 165 (Annapolis, MD: U.S. Naval Academy, 1990), 159.

could prove useful in assessing when, in the future, leaders might be making an atypical, out of the norm move, such as when Khrushchev decided to send strategic nuclear weapons to Cuba.⁸¹

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⁸¹ Richard E. Neustadt and Ernest R. May, *Thinking in Time: The Uses of History for Decision Makers* (New York: Freedom Press, 1986), 157–95.

BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

Daniel R. Hart

War in the Villages: The U.S. Marine Corps Combined Action Platoons in the Vietnam War. By Ted N. Easterling. (Denton: University of North Texas Press, 2021. Pp. 272. \$29.95, cloth and paperback.)

Spreading Ink Blots from Da Nang to the DMZ: The Origins and Implementation of US Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Strategy in Vietnam, March 1965 to November 1968. By David Strachan-Morris. (Havertown, PA: Casemate, 2020. Pp. 158. \$49.95, cloth.)

There is a battle today about the future direction of the U.S. Marine Corps. In response to the growing threat from the Chinese Navy, Commandant General David H. Berger is seeking to return the Marines to their “historic role in the maritime littoral” by restructuring the Corps into smaller, more technologically advanced units. To accomplish this, Berger has proposed reducing the tank, artillery, and infantry capabilities of the Corps. Many prominent Marine veterans—including retired generals Charles C. Krulak (31st Commandant), Anthony C. Zinni, and John J. Sheehan, as well as former U.S. senator and Marine officer James Webb (D-VA)—have disagreed with what they deem a shortsighted move to abandon the multitude of roles the Marines have performed so well in the past.¹

This disagreement about the strategic direction of the Corps is instructive context in analyzing the role of the Marine Corps during the war in Vietnam. Two recent books—*War in the Villages: The U.S. Marine Corps Combined Action Platoons in the Vietnam War* by Ted Easterling and *Spreading Ink Blots from Da Nang to the DMZ: The Origins and Implementation of US Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Strategy in Vietnam, March 1965*

to November 1968 by David Strachan-Morris—detail the strategic underutilization and misuse of the Corps during the conflict. During this time, there was not an inter-Corps struggle over the direction of the institution, but an internecine one that pitted the Corps against the Army.

War in the Villages is an analysis of one of the counterinsurgency approaches, the Combined Action Platoons (CAPs), employed by the Marine Corps in the Vietnam War. CAPs were mixed American and South Vietnamese units of approximately 50 men, ideally 14 Marines, 1 Navy corpsman, and 35 members of the South Vietnamese Popular Force (PF) militia. The CAPs lived and worked in South Vietnamese hamlets, supporting the villagers through civic and economic development while simultaneously defending them against National Liberation Front (NLF, commonly referred to as the Viet Cong) guerrillas. Easterling’s accessible tome is divided into nine mainly chronological chapters, exclusive of the introduction and conclusion. His aim is to fill an existing gap in the research by using counterinsurgency principles to analyze the performance of the CAPs. Easterling is a former history professor at the University of Akron and served in the U.S. Marine Corps during the Vietnam War.

Easterling provides a foundation for his study by detailing the relevant aspects of guerrilla warfare and Communist revolution as it pertained to the situation encountered by the Marines in South Vietnam in 1965. Easterling describes a range of options available to a U.S. military faced with this unconventional dilem-

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¹ David H. Berger, *Commandant’s Planning Guidance: 38th Commandant of the Marine Corps* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Marine Corps, 2019); Charles Krulak, Jack Sheehan, and Anthony Zinni, “War Is a Dirty Business. Will the Marine Corps Be Ready for the Next One?,” *Washington Post*, 22 April 2022; and Jim Webb, “Momentous Changes in the U.S. Marine Corps’ Force Organization Deserve Debate,” *Wall Street Journal*, 25 March 2022.

ma after more traditional combat scenarios in World War II and Korea, then he settles on the two plans that continue to dominate the debate on the military strategy of the Vietnam War: a war of attrition using search-and-destroy operations or a hearts-and-minds program of pacification using counterinsurgency tactics to gain the loyalty of the local population. The commander of the U.S. forces in Vietnam, Army general William C. Westmoreland, chose the former, and though he permitted some autonomy to the Marines in using counterinsurgency in selected areas, he had a continuous disagreement over the direction of the war with Lieutenant General Victor H. Krulak and Major General Lewis W. Walt.²

Easterling provides a utile history of the evolution of the CAPs, detailing the successes of the units in their three-pronged mission: to provide security to the village, to destroy the enemy through military maneuvers and intelligence gathering, and to foster civic and economic development. He also describes the shortcomings of the program related to the selection and training of Marines, the problem of adequate staffing (there were rarely the prescribed 15 Americans in a CAP), and the lack of Vietnamese language skills that hindered communication. In 1967, the program had achieved a modicum of success through the 57 CAPs in existence, and the program was given a separate command structure with the goal of creating 114 CAPs by January 1968.

But Easterling contends that the program was disdained by Westmoreland for its perceived lack of initiative, and the Marines were ordered to engage in large-unit operations, hindering the progress of creating new CAPs. The issues of recruitment, staffing, and language persisted, as did ongoing logistical concerns, and only 22 new CAPs were created in 1968. The Marines did reach their goal of 114 CAPs in August 1969,

but a change in strategy to Vietnamization led to the end of the program.

Easterling provides a favorable review of the CAPs, asserting that the shortcomings of the program were mostly due to factors beyond their control. He gives the CAPs excellent grades for security, intelligence-gathering, and civic action and economic development and a grade of very good or good for preventing guerrilla recruitment, eliminating NLF infrastructure, strengthening local government, and psychological operations. A negative aspect of the program was the inability to translate these local gains to the national government by linking together pacified villages, a shortcoming for which Easterling completely, if paternalistically, blames on the government of South Vietnam. Easterling does not examine the possibility that the South Vietnamese PF became too reliant on the Marines—a byproduct of the Marines not recognizing their own inclination to seize the initiative—and ultimately not fulfilling the goal of turning over village security to the PF. This is best evinced by the fact that the casualty rate of Marines was 2.4 times that of the PF.³ Conversely, there is a point that Easterling does not make strident enough: no CAP village was ever overtaken by the NLF or North Vietnamese Army.

Long ignored in general histories of the American experience in Vietnam, Easterling's book is a welcome addition to the historiography of the CAPs, a field mostly dominated by single-perspective accounts of an individual platoon or village.⁴ Easterling's history is a constructive operational history, but his focus on the internecine strategic battle between the Army and Corps over the direction of the war hinders his main objective of evaluating the effectiveness of the CAPs.

² George Daddis in *Westmoreland's War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014) contends that Westmoreland chose a triad approach of attrition, rural pacification, and military training of indigenous forces. Easterling contends Westmoreland "refused to support the [CAP] program" (p. 183). A dispassionate defense of Westmoreland is A. J. Birtle, *U.S. Army Counterinsurgency and Contingency Operations Doctrine, 1942–1976* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2006), 399–400.

³ Ismael Fournier, "Hybrid Warfare in Vietnam: The U.S. And South Vietnamese Success Against the Viet Cong Insurgency," *Marine Corps History* 7, no. 1 (Summer 2021): 66–74, <https://doi.org/10.35318/mch.2021070104>; and Thomas C. Thayer, *A Systems Analysis View of the Vietnam War 1965–1972: Pacification and Civil Affairs* (Washington, DC: Department of Defense, 1975), 10:19–38. The CAPs accounted for 3.2 percent of all Marine casualties.

⁴ Books ranging from George Herring's seminal account, *America's Longest War* (New York: Wiley, 1979), to Lewis Sorley's revisionist tome, *A Better War* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1999), do not include any mention of CAPs.

The CAPs, it must be reiterated, were the preserve of Marine sergeants and privates—no American officers served in a CAP unit—rendering a focus on the most senior military leadership counterintuitive. The heterogeneity of CAP experience—former chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff Maxwell D. Taylor once remarked that in Vietnam “there were really 44 different wars”—and Easterling’s reliance on mainly anecdotal evidence from secondary sources and memoirs, hinders the purely qualitative evaluation he undertakes.⁵ The narrative could be strengthened by a quantitative analysis above the number of CAPs per annum. For example, 1.5 percent of all Marines in Vietnam served in CAPs, but accounted for 8 percent of total enemy casualties.⁶ At the CAP peak in 1969, 2.5 percent of Marines were in CAPs, but they covered 20 percent of the villages in I Corps.⁷ Further, for a book that relies on secondary sources, there are some notable omissions, including the work of John Southard, Ronald E. Hays, Jeannie L. Johnson, and Lawrence Yates, all of which would have strengthened his thesis.⁸

Despite these quibbles, and a writing style that, while accessible, can be cluttered and repetitious, Easterling has provided a concise history of the CAPs and has performed an effective job in evaluating their performance. It must be noted that *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* called the CAPs “a model for containing insurgency.”⁹

Whereas *War in the Villages* focuses on the Corps’ CAPs, David Strachan-Morris, in *Spreading Ink Blots from Da Nang to the DMZ: The Origins and Implementation of US Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Strategy in Vietnam, March 1965 to November 1968*, takes a more holistic approach in examining the Corps’ counterinsurgency efforts in Vietnam, using the timeframe of the landing of the first Marines in the spring of 1965 to the election of Richard M. Nixon in the fall of 1968.

Strachan-Morris explains that the Marines’ concept of counterinsurgency relied on the theories and practices of their European counterparts—the British Robert Thompson and the French David Galula and Robert Trinquier—to develop a plan that united the civil and military efforts by working with indigenous forces to provide security and intelligence and to use economic and political programming to pacify an area. Per the French concept, pacified areas would gradually expand those areas under the control of the local government, spreading akin to an ink blot. Given the Corps’ culture of innovation, its history of counterinsurgency during the Banana Wars of the 1920s, and the conditions on the ground in 1965, a strategy of counterinsurgency was the best strategy for the Marines’ mission. Strachan-Morris, currently a lecturer at the University of Leicester, began *Spreading Ink Blots from Da Nang to the DMZ* as a doctorate dissertation. This concise book is a mere 158 pages, divided into five chronological chapters, exclusive of an introduction and a conclusion.

Like Easterling, Strachan-Morris finds the inter-Service conflict over military strategy impossible to ignore, observing of Westmoreland, “Unity of command is one of the U.S. Army’s principles of war and in Vietnam it was largely ignored” (p. 62). Though he grades the Corps’ counterinsurgency efforts as a limited tactical success, he asserts it was hampered by a lack of resources and a command structure that created confusion not only among the Services but also with their South Vietnamese allies. Though Strachan-Morris credits the CAP program for its successes, he believes that the popularity of CAP-inspired memoirs, specifically by Bing West and William R. Corson, have contributed to an exaggerated importance of

⁵ Interview with Maxwell D. Taylor, 1979, produced by Richard Ellison, *Vietnam: A Television History* (Boston: WGBH, 1983).

⁶ Micheal Clodfelter, *Vietnam in Military Statistics: A History of the Indochina Wars, 1772–1991* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 1995), 107, 147.

⁷ John Southard, *Defend and Befriend: The U.S. Marine Corps and Combined Action Platoons in Vietnam* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2014), 10.

⁸ Ronald E. Hays, *Combined Action: U.S. Marines Fighting a Different War, August 1965 to May 1971* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University Press, 2019); Jeannie L. Johnson, *The Marines, Counterinsurgency, and Strategic Culture: Lessons Learned and Lost in America’s Wars* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2018); and Lawrence Yates, “A Feather in Their CAP?,” in William Roberts and Jack Sweetman, eds., *New Interpretations in Naval History: Selected Papers from the Ninth Naval History Symposium* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1991), 309–27.

⁹ *The U.S. Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), 185–87. Neither are as optimistic as Curtis Williamson, who posits a widespread CAP strategy would have won the war. Curtis Williamson, “The U.S. Marine Corps Combined Action Program (CAP): A Proposed Alternative Strategy for the Vietnam War” (master’s thesis, Marine Corps University, 2002).

this component of overall Marine counterinsurgency strategy (p. 77).¹⁰

Strachan-Morris must be commended for his extensive research, making solid use of primary source material from the Marine Corps, though he could have used more caution in his use of self-serving memoirs and tendency to repeatedly cite the same source. The book's origin as a dissertation is evident in its prose and use of graphs, which prove to be unwieldy in an otherwise accessible book. The book also contains several inexplicable errors of fact: American advisors were first sent to Vietnam in 1950, not 1959; the first helicopter units were sent in 1958, not 1962; and though Ho Chi Minh remained a public face of the North Vietnamese Communists, Le Duan was the political leader of North Vietnam starting in early 1964. Nonetheless, *Spreading Ink Blots* is a welcome addition to the historiography and provides a valuable overview of the Marines' counterinsurgency efforts in Vietnam.

Australian Army captain Robert O'Neill noted in 1966, "The Vietnamese village is the closest equivalent to a front line in this war, and without victory in the villages, the war can drag on." The Marines understood this. When Westmoreland complained to Krulak that his counterinsurgency approach would take too long, Krulak shot back, "Your way will take forever."¹¹ Both books examined here underscore the fact that the Marine Corps counterinsurgency efforts in Vietnam, though limited in scale and never reaching their full potential, were successful. Conversely, two other recent books, *Tiger Papa Three: Memoir of a CAP Marine* by Edward F. Palm, and *Clear, Hold, and Destroy: Pacification in Phú Yên and the American War in Vietnam* by Robert J. Thompson, an analysis of the pacification of the province of Phu Yen, are decidedly less sanguine about American counterinsurgency efforts during the Vietnam War.¹²

The debate continues.

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¹⁰ Bing West, *The Village* (New York: Pocket, 1972); and William R. Corson, *The Betrayal* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1968).

¹¹ Ashley Ekins, "Vietnam: A Winnable War?," in Daniel Marston and Tamara Leahy, eds., *War, Strategy and History* (Canberra, AU: ANU Press, 2006), 16; and Robert Coram, *Brute: The Life of Victor Krulak, U.S. Marine* (New York: Little, Brown, 2010), 290.

¹² Edward F. Palm, *Tiger Papa Three: Memoir of a Combined Action Marine in Vietnam* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2020); Robert J. Thompson, *Clear, Hold, and Destroy: Pacification in Phú Yên and the American War in Vietnam* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021); and Daniel R. Hart, review of Robert Thompson, *Clear, Hold, and Destroy, The Strategy Bridge: Pacification in Phu Yen and the American War in Vietnam*, 9 January 2022.

BOOK REVIEWS

Alex Beckstrand

Forging the Trident: Theodore Roosevelt and the United States Navy. Edited by John B. Hattendorf and William P. Leeman. (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 2020. Pp. 320. \$52.00, cloth; \$32.20, e-book.)

Readers may be familiar with the consequential role played by Theodore Roosevelt in the growth and development of the modern U.S. Navy. Roosevelt was not shy about his naval admiration in his writings, such as *The Naval War of 1812* (1882), or in his actions, including sending the Great White Fleet on its international voyage. The editors of *Forging the Trident*, both located in Newport, Rhode Island (John B. Hattendorf is at the Naval War College and William P. Leeman is at Salve Regina University), have compiled an impressive collection of essays to form this book that is certain to shed new light and arguments on the naval episodes before, during, and after Theodore Roosevelt's presidency.

Professor Hattendorf provides the introduction to the book, which discusses Roosevelt's pursuit of improved naval professionalism at the Naval War College in Newport. Not least influenced by his associations with Alfred Thayer Mahan and Naval War College founder Rear Admiral Stephen B. Luce, and his own personal experiences, Roosevelt as both assistant secretary of the Navy and president championed the idea of naval and strategic education. The chapter fittingly introduces readers to some common themes laced throughout the book, including relationships (such as that with naval officer William S. Sims) and Roosevelt's advocacy of naval preparedness.

Following the introduction, Sarah Goldberger's chapter on the Southern influence over Roosevelt and the Navy is a truly fascinating look at sectional politics in the post-Civil War period. Roosevelt's "complicated" (p. 15) relationship with the South and

the Navy begins with his uncle, James Bulloch, who helped build the CSS *Alabama* (1862) during the war and was not amnestied for his role following Confederate defeat because he was considered a spy. The *Alabama* famously became the subject of a landmark postwar case when the U.S. government sued the British government for its involvement and received a \$15-million indemnity. Roosevelt's various talks with Bulloch importantly steered his outlook on his research of the War of 1812. Yet, he was able to thread the racial and sectional needle occasionally by, for example, his acquaintance with Booker T. Washington and his visit to the Tuskegee Institute in Alabama, while keeping in mind the politics of his naval agenda and Congress.

Chapter 2, written by Kevin D. McCranie, discusses Roosevelt's book, *The Naval War of 1812*, and his use of history as advocacy for naval preparedness. In this he concluded, as the author writes, "that even a small navy, state of the art and well trained, can produce outsized strategic effects" (p. 43). Edward J. Marolda looks at Roosevelt's time as assistant secretary of the Navy in chapter 3, during which he not only took a very activist role (famously maneuvering Commodore George Dewey's Asiatic Squadron in preparation for conflict on the eve of war with Spain—in the absence of Navy Secretary John D. Long) but also continued advocating for the Naval War College to ensure its "continued existence as a center of strategic analysis and war planning" (p. 60). Naval education is a theme in chapter 4 as well, written by Leeman and showcasing Roosevelt's actions regarding the Naval Academy and the War College in achieving his vision for a more professional, highly trained officer corps, as also observed in Jon Scott Logel's chapter 5.

Matthew Oyos, in chapter 6, discusses another

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truly intriguing new look inside Roosevelt's relationship with the Navy, this time through the lens of technology. Roosevelt's personal infatuation with technology was perfectly suited to an era of rapid technological change in the naval arena, such as operationalized submarines, bigger and more powerful ships, bigger guns with improved sights, and the beginnings of a shift from coal to oil, all outlined in Oyo's chapter. But the author makes a larger argument on the "nexus between technology and cultural power" (p. 128), which fit neatly into Roosevelt's view of American primacy and imperialistic tendencies. This chapter again brings Roosevelt in contact with William S. Sims, who rose in his professional naval career during his presidency and later commanded the U.S. Navy in European waters during World War I.

The final chapters include David Kohlen's essay on the use of the Navy in both peace and war (chapter 7), a personality discussion of Roosevelt and his various secretaries of the Navy by Branden Little (chapter 8), and the Navy as a mechanism of deterrence in James R. Holmes's chapter 9 and Jason W. Smith's chapter 10, both of which encompass reviews of the Great White Fleet amid rising competition with Japan. Craig L. Symonds closes out the essays in chapter 11 with a comparative review of Roosevelt and future assistant secretary of the Navy and president—and cousin—Franklin D. Roosevelt. Symonds discusses the influence Theodore Roosevelt had on Franklin Roosevelt as both advocate for preparedness and a politician, and on their similar view that America "had an important role to play on the world stage" (p. 259).

This collection of essays nicely provides an up-

dated and wider array of interpretations regarding the pivotal involvement of Roosevelt in naval development. A shortcoming of the book is linked to just that point: while all the authors agree on Roosevelt's important role in the making of a modern navy, there is little questioning whether this naval advocacy was a disservice to U.S. foreign policy goals or resulted in negative or unsatisfactory consequences. Could such a level of naval preparedness, as championed by Roosevelt, have led to further the imperialistic gunboat diplomacy of his administration as well as William Howard Taft's and Woodrow Wilson's? Was such a disproportionate increase in naval building and spending appropriate for the country during an era of high domestic social inequality and unrest? What results came from Roosevelt's simultaneous bolstering of the Navy and his jingoistic and hyper-masculinized outlook on U.S. actions in the world? These are deeper questions that the editors could have asked essays to address to provide a more holistic view of the era. Lastly, the editors could have expanded the naval focus by including essays on the Navy's influence on Roosevelt's decision to mediate the Russo-Japanese War, a conflict with dramatic naval implications (something mildly touched on in a few essays) or on his role in removing Marines from ships during his presidency, or his views of the Marine Corps overall. These areas of criticism notwithstanding, Hattendorf and Leeman both deserve credit for pursuing such a unique collection of essays and a powerful and diverse group of authors. This book was not only greatly interesting and fun to read, it also is an extremely useful tool for scholars and enthusiasts of the era and the Navy in general.

Major Peter L. Belmonte, USAF (Ret)

“Devil Dog” Dan Daly: America’s Fightin’est Marine. By Charley Roberts. (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2021. Pp. 242. \$35.00, paperback.)

“Come on you sons of bitches! Do you want to live forever?” Most students of the U.S. military in World War I will be familiar with Sergeant Major Daniel Joseph Daly and his famous exhortation to his Marines during the Battle of Belleau Wood. Daly was truly a fighting Marine, serving in combat in China, the Philippines, Mexico, Haiti, the Dominican Republic, and France. Along the way, he managed to earn two Medals of Honor for separate actions, one of only two Marines to accomplish this (the other was Major General Smedley D. Butler). Author Charley Roberts, a journalist and military historian, wrote this book to bring Daly’s story to more Americans. As he writes, “Daly’s fame and accomplishments made headlines at the time, but today he is largely forgotten by Americans outside the Marine Corps. As a journalist and military historian, I felt Daly deserved better” (p. 2). Daly was a private man and not one to seek attention; he kept no journals, and any letters he wrote have not been discovered. Instead, Roberts relies on official records and statements others made about Daly.

The book covers Daly’s life chronologically, from his birth in Ireland (which Roberts determined is Daly’s actual birthplace rather than Glen Cove, New York, which is what appears on his enlistment records) through his youth, enlistment, and subsequent service. The combat in which Daly earned his Medals of Honor (the Boxer Rebellion in 1900 and Haiti in 1915) are thoroughly covered, as are his tours of duty in Mexico and the Dominican Republic. Roberts also covers Daly’s climactic service in World War I as part of the U.S. Army’s 2d Division. Daly was actually recommended for an unprecedented third Medal

of Honor for his actions at Belleau Wood; the recommendation was downgraded to a Distinguished Service Cross. Roberts reviews the actions of a few others who were awarded the Medal of Honor for the same action, and he feels that Daly certainly deserved a third award. Roberts feels this might have been due to inter-Service rivalry between the Army and the Marine Corps, but nothing can be proven for certain.

Not all was bravery and medals during Daly’s military career. Readers might be shocked to learn that Daly was not always the ideal Marine. For about the first 10 years of his service, Daly intermittently, but regularly, ran afoul of military regulations. He received punishment, including confinement in the brig and loss of pay, for such infractions as overstaying his leave, drunkenness, and “using obscene, threatening and abusive language toward a sergeant of the guard” (p. 48). Thankfully, Daly eventually put away such behavior.

This book is best when covering the small unit actions in which Daly was involved prior to World War I. Historians have not devoted a lot of attention to most of these expeditions. The descriptions of combat in China, Mexico, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic add to our knowledge of early twentieth-century American military history. Suitable to his journalistic background, Roberts brings out what the Marines experienced. Consider this description of the situation in Beijing (then Peking):

[The men] had little opportunity to bathe, and in the searing summer heat and humidity, reaching 110 degrees in the shade if one could find any, the body odor of the troops packed together atop the wall began to rival the stench from the piles of corpses, garbage and sewage in the street below.

Maj Peter L. Belmonte, USAF (Ret), holds a master’s degree in history from California State University, Stanislaus, and is the author of several books including *Days of Perfect Hell: The US 26th Infantry Regiment in the Meuse-Argonne Offensive, October–November 1918* (2015) and (with Alexander F. Barnes) *United States Army Depot Brigades in World War I* (2021).

Adding to the misery and tensions, the defenders had to contend with diarrhea from a disgusting diet of horse meat and rice, a dwindling supply of ammunition, and a declining hope of rescue, despite repeated assurances that help would arrive soon. [p. 31]

In addition to describing the small conflicts in which Daly participated, Roberts brings out the paternalism, self-interest, and occasional racism that was common of most nations' international relations during this era.

Since no letters or other writings by Daly have been found, the result is less a deep biography than a

detailed sketch of important moments in Daly's life and how he impacted events at crucial moments. That we do not learn firsthand what his thoughts and feelings were at these important moments is a pity. The author has done a fine job with the available sources. Roberts includes several photographs and maps, as well as official citations for Daly's Medals of Honor, Army Distinguished Service Cross, the Navy Cross, and the silver citation star that later became the Silver Star medal. Supporting material includes endnotes, a fine bibliography, and an index. The book is highly recommended for those who want to learn more about Sergeant Major Daly and the many engagements in which he fought.

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Captain James M. Berry, USA

The United States Marines in the Civil War: Harpers Ferry and the Battle of First Manassas. By Major Bruce H. Norton and Master Sergeant Phillip Gibbons. (Washington, DC: Academica Press, 2021. Pp. 175. \$99.95, paperback.)

Bruce H. Norton and Phillip Gibbons, both retired U.S. Marines and historians, propose to correct the historic record of the Marine Corps at the onset of the American Civil War. Neither was satisfied with the existing accounts concerning the participation of Marines at the Battle of First Manassas, actions that have been “overlooked or completely misinterpreted” by historians (p. 62). To tell this story, Norton and Gibbons expand their scope to include Marine Corps involvement in suppressing John Brown’s 1859 raid on Harpers Ferry, West Virginia. By examining the Marine Corps’ performance at both Harpers Ferry and First Manassas, the authors effectively demonstrate the challenges of training, equipping, and leading in the mid-nineteenth century. Their publication is the most detailed and well-researched account of the Marines during these two specific events in American military history.

When John Brown attacked the federal arsenal at Harpers Ferry, the impromptu deployment of 88 Marines under the command of Army colonel Robert E. Lee quickly ended the standoff. Although Lee is remembered for his role in capturing Brown and his coconspirators, few realize that it was Marines who executed this short-notice and dangerous deployment. After Brown’s men killed several townspeople, the Marines rushed the building, breaking through a barricaded door and rescuing the hostages inside. One Marine was killed and another wounded, but the assault succeeded. The Harpers Ferry mission was a testament to the competence and courage of the Corps on the eve of war, when few other federal units were ready to fight.

As the nation split apart, the Marine Corps lost almost half of its fighting strength to Confederate recruitment. Suffering from attrition of personnel, the Department of the Navy rushed replacement personnel to the Marine Barracks Washington, DC, but the raw recruits lacked proper equipment and training. Although unprepared for campaigning, the Marines were sent into Virginia under the command of U.S. Army general Irvin McDowell. Norton and Gibbons demonstrate how the mismanagement of the Marine battalion under Army leaders contributed to their inability to accomplish their mission at First Manassas and to their joining in the Army’s general retreat from the field. In an embarrassing episode, the Marines were forced to surrender ground to the advancing Confederates and returned to Washington, DC, in shameful defeat.

This book incorporates an abundance of primary sources, including dozens of letters and reports from participants to shed new light on the experience of the Marines. Reading personal letters from these men in the book reveals their apprehensions about fighting with so little preparation or training. Combat leaders like Major John F. Reynolds used their wartime experience to best prepare their formation for its first trial by fire, but they recognized the risk of fighting before their men were ready. The narrative also follows junior officers like Lieutenant Robert E. Hitchcock, a young officer whose correspondence reveals his thoughts about the campaign. Among the first casualties of America’s deadliest war, Lieutenant Hitchcock lost his life at First Manassas.

The reader is left with a better understanding of the challenges faced by the Marines at the start of the Civil War. Despite the presence of a small cadre of experienced Marines and officers, especially of Major Reynolds, the Marine Corps lacked the training or

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the resources to contribute any decisive tactical advantage during the war's first large battle. Considering the way in which the Marines were deployed and used as attachments to U.S. Army divisions, the results of the Marines' efforts at First Manassas are no surprise. Although the "at all times ready" Marines were willing and able to respond quickly to end John Brown's attack at Harper's Ferry, they were not yet prepared for large-scale combined arms operations. The Battle of First Manassas demonstrated the capability gaps and limitations of the Marines in the nineteenth century.

The book ends with the aftermath of 21 July 1861, the chaotic rout and retreat of the Army from the battlefield. The participation of the Marine battalion in this retreat remains a dark spot in the history of the Corps. Although members of the Marine Corps fought and died at First Manassas, their efforts were insufficient to compensate for the U.S. military's unpreparedness for war and for the underestimation of Confederate resolve and combat power in 1861. Fortunately for the Marines, the story does not end with the shameful retreat from Virginia. Norton and Gibbons deliver precisely what they promised, an extremely detailed account of two specific episodes of Marine Corps history: the raid at Harper's Ferry and the battle at First Manassas.

Despite the narrow scope of this book, other historians have discussed the exploits of Marine units in the American Civil War and their contributions to the overwhelming defeat of Confederate warfighting power. Marines manned federal warships throughout the war. They fought in riverine campaigns and conducted daring amphibious assaults against Confederate strongholds. One of the most memorable and consequential episodes witnessed the capture of New Orleans, the Confederacy's largest city, by the coordi-

nated efforts of the U.S. Navy under Admiral David G. Farragut and brave Marines who rushed into the city. If contemporary representation of the Civil War omits Marines and their contributions to Union victory, it is not because the Corps was absent or because their role was negligible. Marines fought on land and sea, alongside both the Army and Navy, to defeat the Confederacy and to earn the respect of subsequent generations for their sacrifices.

For Civil War bibliophiles and scholars of Marine Corps history, this book fills a niche: it frames the turning point between nineteenth century peacetime and the demands of full-scale conflict. It provides the context to better understand how the Marines operated at that time and explains why they performed in the manner described. It builds on primary documents and on previous, older works from historians like Bernard C. Nalty, who also published a short book on the Marine Corps' actions at both Harpers Ferry and First Manassas. Where Norton and Gibbons succeed is in the expansion of that narrative by providing rich details and well-researched information. Highlights include an accurate sequence of events, including the tactical maneuvers and consequential moments before, during, and after the battle.

This publication could have benefited from an explanation from the authors regarding why they decided to limit the scope of their study to Harpers Ferry and First Manassas only. Also, the book incorporates a staff ride plan for First Manassas, a useful tool for anyone planning to visit the battlefield, but incongruous to the remainder of the narrative about the Marine Corps during the early Civil War. The book is a thought-provoking and informative read. It serves best as a supplemental text, an addition to any Civil War or Marine Corps history library.

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Matthew J. Flynn, PhD

Napoléon's Enfant Terrible: General Dominique Vandamme. By John G. Gallaher. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2021. Pp. 380. \$34.95, cloth; \$24.95, paperback.)

This book profiles General Dominique Vandamme and his service in the French Army during the French Revolution and then in Napoléon Bonaparte's *Grande Armée* during the empire. The author's challenge in writing this book stems from justifying a focus on a mid-level performer as worth the effort. For enthusiasts of the military aspects of this period of European history, author John G. Gallaher largely succeeds. He covers the familiar ground, and in the process the period of the French Revolution gains much-needed attention, leaving Vandamme more than merely a follower of Napoléon. The general then becomes a valued commander during many of Napoléon's campaigns. In either respect, Gallaher portrays Vandamme as a fighting general. While this adage rings true, there was but a limited return on the effort. His chief accomplishment remained leading a key portion of the attack at Austerlitz. Since that success reflects more favorably on Napoléon, the intertwining of the two continues as one of master to subordinate, and not much more than this.

When Napoléon faltered, Vandamme appeared part of this misfortune as well. Vandamme recused himself from the Russian invasion of 1812, after he rebuffed Napoléon's brother, Jérôme. That clash of personalities helped undermine the leadership of this wing of the army, hamstringing a campaign that needed all the favorable circumstances it could muster. Later, after Russia, Napoléon named Vandamme a corps commander during the 1813 campaign. Vandamme again helped blunt Napoléon's designs, this time in spectacular fashion. The general failed to extract his

soldiers from the fleeing allied forces Napoléon had defeated at Dresden, and Vandamme ended up isolated and forced to surrender at Kulm. This failure undid Napoléon's just-completed success. In 1813, too many of these setbacks prevented Napoléon from retaining control of central Germany. The blame for this defeat can rest on the trajectory from top to bottom, from emperor to general. Napoléon could well have prevented Vandamme's capture had he overseen the pursuit of the defeated allied army. Be this as it may, Vandamme could have contributed mightily to Napoléon's success had he held his ground and forced a portion of the allied army to surrender.

The near-miss underscored how the fortunes of war never seemed to align between these two, and so it came from first to last all the way to Waterloo. In his final campaign, Napoléon again put Vandamme in command of a corps, and he did so when he was short of key players at higher levels of command. A disgruntled Vandamme, passed over for independent command, followed Marshal Emmanuel de Grouchy's arm of the French Army tasked with preventing the Prussians from supporting the duke of Wellington and his army at Waterloo. That wing failed to do so. Vandamme now shared in the defeat of the emperor, finding himself exiled from France.

Vandamme never received from Napoléon or from France the marshal's baton, the senior recognition of military service to the state. That failure points to Napoléon's lack of trust in the man and spells the main importance of this book. Vandamme reminds us why he remained a general: marshals favorably turn the tide of war on the battlefield, something he never could do.

All this presentation reads well and reinforces the story of so much of what happened in early nineteenth-century Europe. Beyond the familiar, however, little

Dr. Matthew J. Flynn serves as professor of military history at the Command and Staff College, Marine Corps University, Quantico, VA. His publications include *Settle and Conquer: Militarism on the Frontier of North America, 1607–1890* (2016), *Washington and Napoléon: Leadership in the Age of Revolution* (as coeditor, 2011), and *First Strike: Preemptive War in Modern History* (2008).

else comes forward to make Vandamme a figure worth the focus. The limitation speaks to a lost opportunity. How his experience represented a larger view of the French Army becomes a worthwhile question. Vandamme's story could be that of a number of other figures. In this sense, should one be impressed with Vandamme, one must think of other French leaders at the time. For this reason, Napoléon's successes become a larger measure than that man alone. Rather, he had inherited an army that already possessed formidable qualities, enabling it to threaten Europe, if in the right hands. Napoléon certainly was that man, so long as he could rely on subordinates to execute his designs.

Similarly, Napoléon's fall from power must place in question those around him. The empire's collapse calls into question the wisdom of presenting a book centered on a person who must be labeled a mediocre figure. Again, there are reasons to do so—Vandamme should have become a marshal, and had he achieved

that status, perhaps the fortunes of France and Napoléon would have unfolded differently and more favorably. Gallaher does not say so, however. The book only advances that conclusion by suggestion. Of course, a different tack in this regard must contend with a Napoléon remaining in power in France one way or another, a less than inspiring conclusion in its own right.

That is where this book leaves us. To come to terms with the *enfant terrible* that is Vandamme, leaves one entangled in the legacy of Bonapartism and weighing what might have been. To see France as the entity that mattered most in having given rise to Bonaparte and to men like Vandamme, that focus merits the effort and promises the best returns. The dynamic between them may well register as unique, begging the question should it be repeated. These men led France to defeat, an answer onto itself.

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Charles Grow

Valor in Action: The Medal of Honor Paintings of Colonel Charles Waterhouse. By Jane Waterhouse. (Atglen, PA: Schiffer, 2020. Pp. 384. \$100.00, cloth.)

Valor in Action is a big beautiful book. It is the result of a partnership between a father and daughter, a death-bed promise that netted a remarkable read. It tells the story of Colonel Charles H. Waterhouse's development as a Marine and artist, and quickly broadens to explore a remarkable collection of paintings that record the heroic deeds of America's Marines and Navy corpsmen who earned the Medal of Honor. In the spirit of full disclosure, this reviewer knew Charlie Waterhouse and considered him a dear friend and mentor.

Late in life at the age of 82, Colonel Waterhouse committed to painting every Marine who earned the Medal of Honor and the sailors who earned the medal while serving with Marines. From the outset, time was Waterhouse's biggest enemy. He painted every day, pushing himself hard. He raced the calendar, painting day and night, and did a remarkable job interpreting heroic events. In the end, however, he ran out of time before he could complete his self-appointed task. He painted more than 220 scenic canvases portraying individuals in the midst of the actions for which they received the Medal of Honor, and more than 120 small oval portraits. The book looks only at those Medal of Honor recipients that Colonel Waterhouse painted.

Jane Waterhouse, Colonel Waterhouse's eldest daughter, wrote this volume with a novelist's approach to storytelling, and she footnoted throughout so researchers could pick up where she left off. She delves into her father's journey as a combat-wounded Marine, shot on Iwo Jima, and his lifelong passion for creating narrative art. The first part of the book weaves

together the passions that filled Colonel Waterhouse's life: the Marine Corps, family, and his artwork.

Colonel Waterhouse's artistic journey began before World War II with lots of talent and enthusiasm. He aspired to be an illustrator, like his heroes of the golden age of illustration. However, it was thanks to his service in the Marine Corps and his subsequent GI Bill benefits that he was able to go to art school. Jane Waterhouse ties her father's artistic pedigree back to Howard Pyle and the Brandywine School. She chronicles the colonel's experience as a commercial illustrator, highlights his service as a combat artist during Vietnam, and underscores his unique and remarkable decades as the Marine Corps' first artist in residence.

Jane Waterhouse also explores their family life and gives great credit to her mother, Bobbie, for freeing the colonel to focus on painting. Bobbie did all manner of domestic chores to keep the painting schedule clear. She did all of the driving so the colonel could maximize his drawing time. Their loving relationship lasted until she passed away six decades later in 2009. After Bobbie's passing, the colonel was shaken to his core and took a hiatus from painting. After months of grieving and fighting health issues, he resumed his position at his trusty old easel. Work resumed.

The larger second part of the book highlights Marines and sailors earning the Medal of Honor. Unlike an official history, which would be filled with award citations, *Valor in Action* presents a biographical vignette for each recipient. Jane Waterhouse tells each story and includes some of the details of the citation so that the reader can better know each individual as a person. She tells their stories before and after their time in uniform, and does so with passion and compassion. They come to life in her prose. Meanwhile, Colonel Waterhouse's artwork provides a visual inter-

Charles Grow served a career in the Marine Corps as an enlisted warrant officer and commissioned officer from 1982 through 2003. He was a combat camera officer and a combat artist. Grow continued to serve the Marine Corps as the art curator, deputy director, and interim director at the National Museum of the Marine Corps from 2003 through 2020.

pretation of their Medal of Honor feats, along with an oval portrait of many of the Marines and sailors.

Both the artist and the author faced unique challenges in developing the artwork and text for the volume. The colonel had to contend with how to uniquely interpret a number of scenes wherein Marines shielded their comrades from grenades. Somehow, he was able to pull off this feat, paying tribute to each individual's mortal scenario. By contrast, Jane wrote about several young men who posthumously earned their Medal of Honor at very young ages. She did a great job researching their short lives and painting a word picture sufficient for the reader to get to know them as people. The artwork and prose complement each other to portray the individual beyond the medal and how his character and background served him as he courageously ran toward danger.

This volume fills a unique niche, documenting

the intersection of art and America's bravest heroes. It also provides a glimpse into the development of an elder artist over his final seven years. As Charlie Waterhouse neared his end, his work became looser, more expressionistic. His palette changed, and his focus on rectangular compositions gave way to more use of negative space. One wonders how his painting would have changed if he had another decade to paint.

Valor in Action is an engaging read for military readers and art enthusiasts alike. It is beautifully written and handsomely illustrated. Learning about the Marine Corps' first artist in residence and many of the men who earned the Medal of Honor was both entertaining and enlightening. It's an enduring look at the best of us as presented by an impassioned father and his loyal daughter who kept her promise to publish this fine volume.

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Daniel R. Hart

Foreign Friends: Syngman Rhee, American Exceptionalism, and the Division of Korea. By David P. Fields. (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 2019. Pp. 264. \$40.00, cloth.)

Sometimes it takes a foreigner to best understand and explain the United States. The exemplar of this is Alexis de Tocqueville, the French aristocrat and philosopher whose perceptive and prescient *Democracy in America* (1835) still resonates to this day. Though separated by a century, a continent, and widely different circumstances, Syngman Rhee was another outsider who also possessed a keen understanding of American culture. While de Tocqueville aimed to compare the nascent American democracy to that of its European counterparts, Rhee used his insights of America to further the cause of Korean independence.

Employing a deft combination of biography and diplomatic history, David Fields has produced an excellent monograph on how Syngman Rhee was able to influence and cajole the United States into becoming an ally in the cause of Korean independence. *Foreign Friends: Syngman Rhee, American Exceptionalism, and the Division of Korea* is an accessible and precise book, organized into five chronological chapters, exclusive of an introduction, conclusion, and epilogue, with 187 pages of text supported by 36 pages of notes. Its relative brevity is a testament to Fields's skillful prose and erudition. The associate director of the Center for East Asian Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Fields is the editor of *The Diary of Syngman Rhee*. The book is an edition in the Studies in Conflict, Diplomacy, and Peace series.

Before introducing the central protagonist of his work, Fields clarifies a term—*American exceptionalism*—that is both familiar and ambiguous. To Rhee and his supporters, the integral aspect of American

exceptionalism was the idea that the United States has a special mission in the world. Fields uses this aspect not as a description of American identity, which can be arrogant and grandiose, but of the opportunities that are unique to America. As an opportunity—or “a mission” as Fields posits—American exceptionalism is harder to criticize and more difficult to debunk through empirical data. Though Americans expressly believe in this exceptionalism, for Fields's purposes, it is not an ideology but a genus of ideas, its essential vagueness giving it its resonance. This is the cultural ethos that Rhee exploited in the name of Korean independence.

Harkening back to Horatio Alger, Rhee transformed his life story into a distinctly American one. His tale was one of how an oppressed and sickly Korean child benefited from American largesse; how a soulless foreigner found Christianity through the selfless work of American missionaries; how a blind child—both literally and figuratively—was able to see thanks to American innovation, expertise, and altruism. The story was almost too good to be true. And while some of Rhee's tales were apocryphal, and some were embellished and tailored to his audience, their essence was true and Rhee's sentiments genuine. In the pre-World War I and interwar years, Rhee was not a charlatan exploiting Americans, nor a despot hungry for power, but a Korean patriot with a certain genius on how to use the best of what Americans thought of themselves to achieve Korean independence.

After an imprisonment in Korea, Rhee was exiled to the United States at age 29. While still learning English, he completed his undergraduate studies at George Washington University, followed by a master's at Harvard and a PhD at Princeton, where he was a frequent guest of then-university president Woodrow Wilson. Like the American missionaries he encoun-

Daniel R. Hart earned his bachelor's degree in history and government from Bowdoin College and a master's degree in history from Harvard University. His book on the relationship between John F. Kennedy and Henry Cabot Lodge during the Vietnam War is scheduled to be published in 2023.

tered in Korea, whose work was overtly religious but tinged with a distinct American sociopolitical ethic, Rhee's conversion to Christianity was genuine but distinctly American. Rhee could frame Korea's struggle in spiritual terms that were accessible and sympathetic to American Christians.

The 1882 Korean-American treaty, which Rhee and other Koreans alleged that the United States had violated by not defending Korea against Japan, provided Rhee with a legal argument to complement his moral one. In his speaking engagements, Rhee would cleverly chide America for its moral failing and hypocrisy in not fulfilling its obligations under the treaty, but he would not lose his crowd or his message on these charges of American immorality. Despite this transgression, Rhee argued that America still had a chance at redemption. He thus merged two American fables that proved irresistible: the underdog who overcomes great odds to achieve success, and the sinner who redeems themselves through selfless action. There was no instant metamorphosis though; Rhee was like a slow-moving river, using his 40-year exile to slowly shape the rock of American perceptions and policy toward Korea. Fields cheekily points out that while most Americans could not locate Korea on a map, through Rhee's work, they could place it in their "moral geography" (p. 2).

Because of this compelling story, framed in such a manner to appeal widely to Americans, and his own personal charisma, Rhee was able to find many American patrons who devoted themselves to him and his cause. These advocates, including Fred Dolph, George Benedict, and Henry Chung, among others, provided financial, legal, and political support to Rhee and the Korean cause. Rhee appropriated the March First Movement, so named for the indigenous Korean protest against Japanese rule in early March 1919, exploiting it to bolster his own credentials and to persuade the framers of the Versailles Treaty to insert a clause recognizing Korea's independence. The measure failed, as did Rhee's attempts for Korean representation at the 1921 Washington Naval Conference, and his 1933 plea to the League of Nations to condemn the Japanese invasion of Manchuria. These failures were indicative

of Rhee's work: not decisive, but not inconsequential either. In the interwar years, Rhee's nascent League of Friends of Korea would grow to 25,000 members in 14 branches across the United States.

Luck, the saying goes, is when preparation meets opportunity. As if guided by providence, in the fall of 1941, Rhee published *Japan Inside Out*, a book that exposed Japanese totalitarianism and militaristic perfidy. After the attacks on Pearl Harbor, the now-prophetic Rhee pushed the United States to recognize the Korean Provisional Government and to bring Korea into the war against Japan. Rhee attracted high-profile Americans, from Senator Wayne L. Morse (R-OR) to crooner Bing Crosby, to the Korean independence movement. When Korea was divided after the war, Rhee viewed the separation as both a personal failure and a failure of the Korean independence movement, though Fields contends that the division of the country was a victory for Rhee and the movement he led. Without him, Americans would not have cared about Korea.

Fields's greatest contribution is in providing this context to debunk the claim that the separation of Korea was a hasty decision done as a compromise to Soviet Communists. Future secretary of state Dean Rusk, then-colonel Rusk, was one of the architects of the division of the country and explained that it was done not to appease the Soviets but as an intragovernmental compromise between the State Department—which, thanks to Rhee and others, wanted as much of the country as possible—and the Defense Department, which wanted none. Rusk conceded that the division of the country was not a strategic one, but a symbolic one, done to placate the political clamoring incited by Rhee and his compatriots. Fields concedes that burgeoning Cold War considerations were important in the division of the country but provides compelling evidence that it was Rhee and the Korean independence movement that put Korea on America's map.

Some readers may be disappointed that Fields only briefly explores Rhee's governance of the new nation of South Korea or how his long struggle influenced his rule of the new country. But building on the artful biographies of Rhee in Chong-Sik Lee's *Syng-*

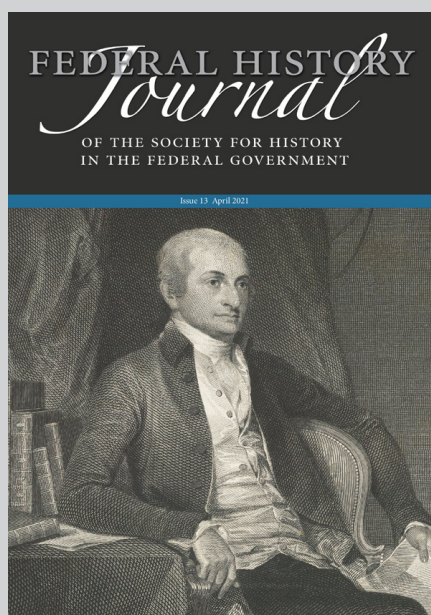
man Rhee: The Prison Years of a Young Radical (2001) and Young Ick Lew's *The Making of the First Korean President* (2013), he has decisively and efficiently supported his thesis, artfully weaving a transnational history with

biography. It is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand the dynamic relationship between the United States and South Korea.

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William M. Morgan, PhD

The Road Less Traveled: The Secret Battle to End the Great War, 1916–1917. By Philip Zelikow. (New York: Public Affairs, 2021. Pp. 352. \$30.00, cloth; \$18.99, paperback and e-book.)

It is always a delight to read a fresh and novel re-think of a supposedly settled historical issue. Philip Zelikow's *The Road Less Traveled* is just such a book. The standard view of why World War I ground on—despite horrendous casualties and a strategic stalemate—until Germany collapsed in late 1918 is that the combatants never abandoned their expansive war aims or their beliefs in ultimate triumph. In a highly readable account, Zelikow finds this interpretation wanting. He persuasively argues that by late 1916, politicians within Germany, Britain, and France might have accepted a mediated peace if skillfully orchestrated by President Woodrow Wilson, the only major leader not part of either alliance. A professor of history at the University of Virginia, Zelikow worked on international policy for several administrations, including serving as counselor of the State Department in 2005–7. Deeply researched in primary and secondary sources, this book reflects an insightful synergy of academic and practitioner expertise. Zelikow deftly explains how diplomatic ineptness prevented Wilson from achieving the peace conference he fervently sought during the crucial months before the Germans renewed unrestricted submarine warfare on 1 February 1917, a step which soon brought the United States into the war.

The peace window opened in August 1916. Even after two bloody years of strategic stalemate, none of the British, French, or German generals could imagine a path to victory other than grinding repetitions of offensives that so far had failed to win the war. However, by late summer, elements within German, French, and British governments began to think of a

negotiated settlement. Fearing that a direct approach would be seen as weakness and encourage enemies to fight harder, they looked to Wilson as a mediator.

Germany made the first move. With the kaiser's blessing, Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg secretly requested that Wilson involve himself in the peace process and declared that Germany would happily accept mediation. The request included a note from the kaiser (p. 4). Appalled by the immense loss of life, Wilson greatly desired an end to the war. He was campaigning for reelection in November 1916 on the grounds that he kept the United States out of the war. A “peace without victory”—a return to something close to the status quo antebellum—would end the carnage and prevent America from being dragged in, which was Wilson's great fear.

War fatigue hit the British and French as well as the Germans. As Wilson pondered Germany's mediation request, French president Raymond Poincaré met with Britain's King George V, who was visiting British troops in France. Poincaré declared that he favored a quick end to the war, which by the end of 1916 had cost the lives of 5 percent of French males, some 927,000 individuals. He thought Wilson might soon offer to mediate the conflict. Poincaré urged that the Allies should be prepared to state their bottom-line peace terms. The king relayed these sentiments to his cabinet. Most British leaders knew victory was far off. Despite fierce internal debate about war strategy and peace ideas, Prime Minister Herbert H. Asquith could not forge a consensus. Party strife complicated a decision, with the ambitious secretary of state for war, David Lloyd George, portraying himself as a strong man who could lead Britain to a grind-it-out victory. In late 1916, as British war finances hit rock bottom, Lloyd George replaced Asquith as prime minister.

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Andrew Salamone, PhD

The Wilson Circle: President Woodrow Wilson and His Advisers. By Charles E. Neu. (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2022. Pp. 296. \$49.95, cloth and e-book.)

In *The Wilson Circle: President Woodrow Wilson and His Advisers*, Charles E. Neu introduces the reader to 10 individuals who were confidants to the 28th president of the United States during his two terms in office. Neu seeks to step away from the historical debate that he acknowledges still swirls around Wilson's legacy nearly a century after his death, and instead focus on the personalities of the diverse team of men and women whom he contends provided the president with advice on the pressing political issues of the day. Synthesizing information from the published works of these advisors, Wilson's personal papers, and scholarship from a number of historians, Neu succeeds in painting a picture of a "remarkable" though admittedly flawed man who relied on an equally flawed group of people to help him deal with the stresses of navigating the tumult of a world war and a changing domestic landscape. While Neu falls short in presenting compelling evidence to demonstrate that these members of Wilson's inner circle provided political advice that helped him make decisions, his work provides a useful study in the way in which interpersonal dynamics between leader and advisor, as well as among the advisors, shapes decision-making.

Wilson's wives, Ellen from 1885 until her death in 1914 and Edith from 1915 until Wilson's death in 1924, occupy separate chapters in Neu's analysis of Wilson's inner circle of advisors. He portrays Ellen as a pillar of stability and encouragement during her husband's tenure as the president of Princeton University and again when he entered politics and was elected governor of New Jersey in 1910. Neu describes Edith as

being singularly focused on protecting and nurturing Wilson, particularly after he suffered a stroke that left him virtually incapacitated in October 1919. Neu states that Edith and other members of the administration worked to conceal the president's illness from the public, and he contends that "she became a kind of surrogate, immersing herself in the workings of the government" (p. 208). Neu convincingly demonstrates that Ellen and Edith played a critical role in all facets of Wilson's life, but evidence that either woman offered advice on domestic or foreign policy is scant.

Neu devotes separate chapters to describing the relationship Wilson maintained with his secretary of war, Newton D. Baker; his press secretary, Ray Stannard Baker; the chairman of the War Industries Board, Bernard Baruch; the secretary of the Navy, Josephus Daniels; and White House physician Cary Grayson during his time in office as well as following his departure in 1921. These men, according to Neu, formed the nucleus of his key advisors with unswerving loyalty to Wilson seeming to be the main quality. Neu, for example, contends that Daniels, "gave his friendship on Wilson's terms, supported him without question" (p. 68). Neu quotes Grayson as stating that his "emotional bond with Edith and Woodrow ran so deep that I could not imagine challenging their decision" (p. 169). Few examples are offered to show how advice from these men shaped Wilson's decision-making on topics such as his pursuit of the set of progressive policies known as the New Freedom. Neu contends that Wilson made "shrewd political adjustments and revealed a gift for political leadership" (p. 37), but he is content with crediting Wilson alone, rather than highlighting any role that his advisors played. In fact, it seems that Wilson ignored the advice of many of these confidants, most notably their near-unanimous recommendation against his decision to embark on a

Dr. Andrew Salamone is an independent scholar living in northern Virginia. He is currently working on a book analyzing the changing content and tenor of Independence Day celebrations in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi between 1820 and 1906. His other academic interests include the study of strategic culture and British colonial history in South Asia.

nationwide speaking tour in the fall of 1919 and Baruch's counsel to compromise with Congress over the League of Nations.

The complicated relationships that Wilson had with the secretary of the treasury William G. McAdoo, Edward M. House, and Joseph P. Tumulty are the subjects of three additional chapters, each culminating in a discussion of the events that resulted in these men falling out of Wilson's favor. In the case of House and McAdoo, Neu asserts that both men's desire to be seen as the real power behind Wilson eventually strained the relationships to the breaking point. The friendship between Wilson and House broke in the winter of 1919 after the president discovered that House had gone against his stated position by supporting French calls for German reparations during the treaty negotiations of 1919, when House represented Wilson because the latter had fallen sick. Wilson's relationship with McAdoo, who was also his son-in-law, had long been rocky, but it finally broke when the latter made known his intentions to seek the Democratic nomination for president in the election of 1920. Neu also highlights that House and McAdoo separately lobbied Wilson to fire Daniels, Newton Baker, and Tumulty in an attempt to gain more power for themselves.

Neu unquestionably succeeds in presenting the reader with an image of Wilson as a man with "extraordinary gifts and disturbing weaknesses" (p. 253), with an overpowering ego and uncompromising idealism as his main flaws. Neu argues, for example, that Wilson "romanticized friendships and expected to dominate those who drew close to him" (p. 31). The result was that the diversity in opinions that Wilson sought from his advisors evaporated over time as the men with whom he surrounded himself appeared more concerned with maintaining their friendships and positions with the president than providing objective advice, especially if that advice contradicted Wilson's viewpoint. Neu points out that Secretary of State Robert Lansing noticed this quality in Daniels and Newton Baker, remarking that "after the president has taken a decision, these two always endorse it; they seem to have no minds after the president has made up his" (p. 75). The flaws that Neu describes are obviously not unique to Wilson and serve as a warning to leaders of all stripes. Diversity in experience does not always result in diversity in viewpoints, especially when advisors are dominated by a charismatic or idealistic leader such as Wilson.

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Eric Paul Totten, PhD

The Compleat Victory: Saratoga and the American Revolution. By Kevin J. Weddle. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021. Pp. 544. \$34.95, cloth.)

The Saratoga campaign of the American Revolutionary War is widely regarded as the key turning point in the conflict, where Patriot victory brought about international recognition necessary to secure independence from Great Britain. While numerous historians have described the battles and campaign, most have narrowly focused their attention on the events in 1777 in isolation from the broader strategic events that preceded it. Furthermore, no scholar has attempted to provide a comprehensive and comparative strategic analysis of the critical decisions made by the American and British leadership. Kevin J. Weddle's monograph seeks to remedy this oversight in what is likely the definitive account of the origins, execution, and aftermath of this fateful campaign. Weddle's impressive credentials make him the perfect candidate for such an effort. Weddle is a West Point graduate who served 28 years on active duty with deployments in Operations Gulf Storm and Enduring Freedom, and he is currently the professor of military theory and strategy at the U.S. Army War College.

Weddle's work closely examines the personalities in the American and British high command. Lord Germain, the secretary of state for the colonies, is depicted as a micromanaging courtier whose inability to properly coordinate with his generals across the vast Atlantic Ocean seriously undermined the war effort. The British commander in chief, General Sir William Howe, was the sole official cognizant of the fact that victory could only be obtained with the destruction of George Washington's army. Despite this insight, Howe became hyperfocused on his own offensive. His failure to synchronize his actions with General John Burgoyne

ensured that neither campaign could succeed. Burgoyne comes out worst of all. Despite being "experienced and popular," in reality, he was simply a man "out of his depth" (p. 3). While the personalities and conduct of Germain, Howe, and Burgoyne certainly produced disastrous results, Weddle argues that the seeds of British defeat were the result of "inadequate military strategy" conducted in London, Quebec, and New York (p. 72).

By contrast, though the American leadership also made mistakes, they were able to overcome such missteps thanks to the efforts of George Washington, Benedict Arnold, and many of the junior officers in the Northern Army. Major General Philip Schuyler, the commander of the northern department, laid the groundwork for a successful campaign, though his lack of confidence and depressing communications became his undoing. The benefactor of his removal was Horatio Gates, a man of intense ambition whose prickly attitude certainly caused numerous headaches for Washington, Congress, and the officer corps. Despite this, he managed to build on the framework Schuyler left behind, which complimented his talents. Despite an inglorious beginning, Benedict Arnold's irresistible energy raised morale and won the day during the final assault at Bemis Heights. However, his own volatile temper made him difficult to work with. Though typically glossed over, Weddle correctly highlights that George Washington's role as commander in chief has been profoundly downplayed by other historians. Washington managed to soothe the ruffled feathers of his subordinates, entreat the New England politicians to contribute more forces to the theater, and placed his best officers in positions where their strengths were most effectively utilized. Unlike Howe, Washington's ability to juggle his own command while ensuring that the northern department was properly supported helped secure American victory.

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With the current Russian invasion of Ukraine, this work is highly prescient for scholars of warfare in general. *The Compleat Victory's* emphasis on the implication of environmental factors, poor communications, troublesome logistics, and unrealistic strategic goals should be familiar to those who are monitoring the situation abroad. Weddle's work perfectly illus-

trates the important insights that can be gained from staff rides and research of past military campaigns, which can then inform how military officers and scholars analyze contemporary conflicts and prepare for future contingencies.

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Chaplain Bowen Woodruff

Pursuing Moral Warfare: Ethics in American, British, and Israeli Counterinsurgency. By Marcus Schulzke. (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2019. Pp. 256. \$179.95, cloth; \$59.95, paperback and e-book.)

Ethical decisions are especially important in counterinsurgency contexts, Marcus Schulzke contends in *Pursuing Moral Warfare*, because they advance or undermine the gaining of legitimacy and the building of effective institutions. The brunt of these ethical decisions falls on enlisted soldiers and junior officers, and thus the importance of the “strategic corporal” and the need by armed forces to harness them as an asset. *Pursuing Moral Warfare* investigates how three such armies have pursued this goal and how their ethics training shapes their soldiers’ response to ethical challenges.

The book can be divided into two parts. Part one (chapters 1–4) is a clear, succinct introduction to moral theory, military ethics, and the role of the strategic corporal. Part two (chapters 5–10) examines the ethics tradition, training, and practice of the American, British, and Israeli armies—two chapters on each. Schulzke chose these three countries because they all act as belligerents, they all train foreign combatants, and they all have differing approaches to ethics education. He focuses on counterinsurgency operations because the United States, Britain, and Israel have become “preoccupied with fighting wars against unconventional adversaries” and because counterinsurgencies “exacerbate the moral challenges of war” (p. 4). Counterinsurgencies have produced an ethical crisis for each of the three militaries.

Schulzke contends that the U.S. Army’s ethical system is virtue-based and relies on a virtue ethic; the British Army’s is utility-based and relies on a pragmatic ethic; and the Israel Defense Forces’ (IDF) is rule-based, supplemented by consequentialism (what lies in Israel’s best interest). Part two contrasts each military’s ethics doctrine with the real-life experienc-

es of its soldiers, and therein lies its value and interest. Part two lacks, however, part one’s clarity and force, and becomes progressively muddled.

Schulzke bases his research on interviews with American, Israeli, and British soldiers, military publications, veterans’ published narratives, and studies of military ethics.

The author does a number of things well. Part one presents a smooth, comprehensive overview of the emergence and evolution of military ethics, from its religious roots to the political realm to the duty of the individual soldier. He effectively shows how the decentralization of warfare has necessitated that soldiers think independently, which, in turn, has demanded an ethics system to guide and govern their decision-making. Likewise, Schulzke’s overview of moral theories—with the pros and cons of each—is clear, with minimal jargon.

Part one ends with chapter 4, “Ethical Decisions in Counterinsurgency Operations,” which covers combat dilemmas (but offers no real solutions), escalation of force decisions (soldiers’ greatest stressor), child soldiers, the effect of cultural differences on counterinsurgency, “agentic regret” (regret for a state of affairs one caused or failed to cause), and “role strain”—acting in a role for which a soldier is not prepared, such as police officer. Schulzke also addresses the tension that ethical challenges can create with the Law of Armed Conflict (LOAC). Soldiers from divergent countries, for example, may share a commitment to LOAC, yet respond differently to ambiguous threats in escalation of force decisions. Differing countries have differing ways of reasoning about ethics, Schulzke asserts, and therefore have dissimilar ethics training and, as a result, divergent responses to unexpected ethical problems. This gives rise to part two’s case studies of ethics doctrine and training in the U.S., British, and Israeli armies.

Schulzke argues that the U.S. Army's virtue ethic creates a devotion to the Army that is religious in nature. Most of his interviewees said they experienced an "identity shift" during their careers from an "individualistic orientation" to a "collective one," leading them to think more about the interests of other soldiers and of the Army as a whole. "The defining moment of the transformation came when they began to consider themselves soldiers before all else, which is to say, when membership in the Army became their defining identity" (p. 88). Over time, the soldier identifies with the Army much like a postulant identifies with a particular religion or church; his putting the Army over self reflects the essence of religious belief.

The book fails to connect, however, the soldiers' religious—usually Christian—beliefs and the religious-like identification with the Army *as a body*. Might not soldiers see the Army in terms of a religious community because the Army's virtue ethics are grounded in religion? Interestingly, although almost all the soldiers Schulzke interviewed were religious, most thought it unprofessional to rely on religion as the primary source of morality when acting on behalf of the Army. This intriguing inconsistency went largely unexplored.

To the extent that Schulzke does look at the connection between religion and morality in the U.S. Army, the results are wanting. For example, he cites research that finds that Christian morality reinforces the military's character education and, therefore, soldiers' ethical sensibilities. "In particular, [Christian morality] discourages moral relativism and emphasizes the importance of treating morality as part of personal identity rather than simply a matter of producing good effects or following institutional norms" (p. 96). And yet, Schulzke does not expand on the role of Christian morality in shaping the strategic corporal's reaction to ethical challenges.

American soldiers describe their ethical reasoning in terms of personal judgments: "Whenever [the soldiers'] stories of specific incidents reached a moment of choice—the point at which the soldier was forced to resolve an ethical challenge—soldiers said they used 'judgment' to determine the right course

of action" (p. 97). To what extent was this judgment influenced or shaped by a soldier's religious beliefs? Schulzke does not say. On page 99, when discussing "nonmilitary sources of guidance," he leaves out religious belief—perhaps the most fundamental and universal "source of guidance." He tells stories of soldiers who perform heroic acts of courage motivated by the "value of life" without considering religious belief as the basis for holding that life has such supreme value.

Thus, the book's examination of virtue ethics as the guiding system of the U.S. Army neither adequately explores what makes conduct "virtuous" or "ethical," nor adequately develops religious belief as a source (and for some, it is *the* source) of a soldier's values, ethics, and conduct.

Another critique concerns Schulzke's treatment of the IDF (chapters 9 and 10). His discussion of how Israel's strategic position shapes its warfighting ethos is interesting and informative, as is his analysis of institutional and cultural forces that have caused the IDF to adopt deontology and consequentialism over virtue and pragmatism. Yet, he dismisses Israel's perception that it faces existential threats: "Over the past half-century Israel has been continually attacked by its neighbors and threatened with total annihilation. However, the belief that no war can be lost is likely inaccurate" (p. 170).

"Likely" but not "certainly." Given the stakes, the history of the region, and the enemies aligned against Israel, Israel's belief that no war can be lost seems rational and justified. Yet, Schulzke writes it off as "ethically disconcerting" (p. 170). Further, he lists "morally questionable practices" of the IDF, but not of its foes, and he details reports from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) critical of Israel, but none from NGOs that support it. An anti-Israel tilt shades the book's analysis of IDF's ethics.

In his conclusion, Schulzke writes, on page 196: "Given the pervasiveness of asymmetric wars, it seems misguided for the American, British, and Israeli militaries to continue investing so heavily in ethical preparations for conventional wars against states." Then, on page 197, he laments the militaries' "lingering desire to subordinate lower-ranking soldiers to central-

ized control—another relic of conventional warfare that creates problems in counterinsurgency.” The Ukrainian conflict, however, reminds us that conventional warfare is alive and well. As Daniel Michaels has noted, “The fighting in Ukraine has been a devastating war of attrition, waged with heavy artillery, evoking memories of fighting in the two world wars.”¹ Is conventional warfare returning to replace counterinsurgency? Will “relics of counterinsurgency” create problems in conventional warfare?

Pursuing Moral Warfare is an intriguing and valuable analysis of ethical challenges in counterinsurgency

operations, but one has to wonder to what extent Schulzke’s findings will be eclipsed by the resurgence of ethical challenges in conventional war. One assumes that the U.S. Army, British Army, and IDF would adopt the same ethical system in fighting a conventional war as in fighting counterinsurgencies. How those systems would address the ethical challenges of a war like the Ukrainian-Russian conflict would make an interesting comparison with *Pursuing Moral Warfare*, and one Schulzke may wish to consider.

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¹ Daniel Michaels, “Lessons of Russia’s War in Ukraine: You Can’t Hide and Weapons Stockpiles Are Essential,” *Wall Street Journal*, 4 July 2022.

Thomas Zacharis

The Rise and Fall of an Officer Corps: The Republic of China Military, 1942–1955. By Eric Setzekorn. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2018. Pp. 256. \$34.95, cloth; \$21.95, paperback; \$29.95, e-book.)

The People's Republic of China is the only large country in the world that does not have a national military. Somehow that previously had occurred in China's past, during the last Manchu dynasty. The Manchus, like the Mongols before them, had come down from the northeast to conquer China and establish the Qing dynasty (1644–1912) in spite of the Han Chinese populace's unrelenting tendency to view them with suspicion as foreigners. In the nineteenth century, however, new foreign threats arose as China reeled under the humiliating defeats of the Opium Wars and the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95. These, combined with the spectacle of the Russo-Japanese War with up to 500,000 Russian soldiers engaged in battle with 300,000 Japanese from 1904 to 1905, finally compelled the Imperial Chinese government to modernize its army and to create military schools. With the fall of the Manchu empire in 1912, the modernization effort was continued on a larger scale by the republican Kuomintang (KMT) regime. In *The Rise and Fall of an Officer Corps*, Eric Setzekorn, historian with the U.S. Army Center of Military History in Washington, DC, follows the KMT's fortunes in developing a viable national army.

China's program in the early twentieth century can be distinguished by two lines of military education: Soviet and Prussian. In 1927, many young Chinese went abroad to study military science.

The central representative character in Setzekorn's narrative is General Sun Li-jen. Sun entered

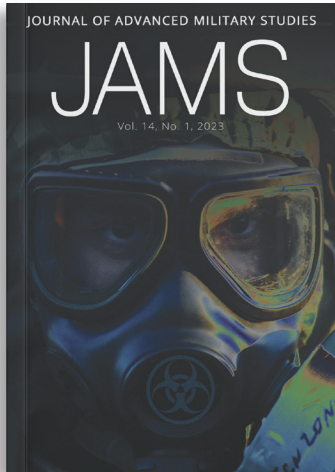
the Virginia Military Institute (VMI) as a senior-level cadet in 1925. VMI's 1927 yearbook described him as someone who would become an excellent soldier, albeit with the hope that he would not use his military knowledge to foment any more revolutions in his native country. Sun justified his trainers' confidence while assigned to Burma in 1941 when, as commander of the Chinese 38th Division in the Battle of Yenangyaung, he opened an escape corridor for the British rear guard and sabotaged the oil refineries before the Japanese seized them. For this success, he was made a commander of the Order of the British Empire by King George VI. His division finally retreated with the British in India. There, Chinese units regrouped and reorganized with the help of American instructors and supplies. Setzekorn regards the period from 1942 to 1955 as a sort of golden age for a cosmopolitan, highly educated officer corps that made its greatest progress toward creating a real national army for China. The arrest of Sun in Taiwan as a suspect for mutiny in 1955 by orders of Generalissimo Chang Kai-shek closed that period.

The author concludes his book with the statement that "a desire for status, and professional identity have outlasted political domination in Taiwan, and perhaps eventually they will also do so in China" (p. 174). We can see this as both a hope and a veiled threat. In any case, anyone interested in the very timely subject of Chinese military history will find this excellent book an important addition to their library.

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Thomas Zacharis was born in Thessaloniki, Greece. An enthusiast of history, particularly of the Napoleonic era, he is the author of many book reviews and articles on this and other subjects in several journals. For his writings about the Napoleonic era, he was decorated by the president of International Napoleonic Society.

Call for Submissions



Spring 2024:

Militarization of Space

This issue addresses the increasing interest in and threat of militarization of space by a myriad of nations. The U.S. Department of Defense's 2020 Defense Space Strategy recognizes space as a unique sphere of national military power: "Space is now a distinct warfighting domain, demanding enterprise-wide changes to policies, strategies,

operations, investments, capabilities, and expertise for a new strategic environment."

China, Russia, and India are just a few of the countries involved in the militarization of space. They are developing or have developed weapons such as antisatellite missiles, jammers and cyberattacks, satellites intercepting other satellites to disrupt or destroy them, as well as other types of kinetic and nonkinetic weapons. Authors are encouraged to explore this issue from a variety of

perspectives, such as whether it is possible at this date to deescalate the situation or whether outer space has now become the new domain of warfare. Additionally, authors are encouraged to explore both contemporary and historical facets of the militarization of space. A discussion of new and emerging technologies related to the militarization of space is also encouraged, including discussions of astro-politics, crowd funding and private corporation involvement, the commercialization of space technologies, and nonstate and small state efforts.

Given that the United Nations treaty on space, colloquially called the Outer Space Treaty, what are the implications for the current militarization of space? Considering contemporary and historical examples of space-based military conflict and potential conflict, are there solutions—diplomatic and military—that can be explored by the United States, its allies, and its adversaries?

Deadline for submissions: 1 January 2024

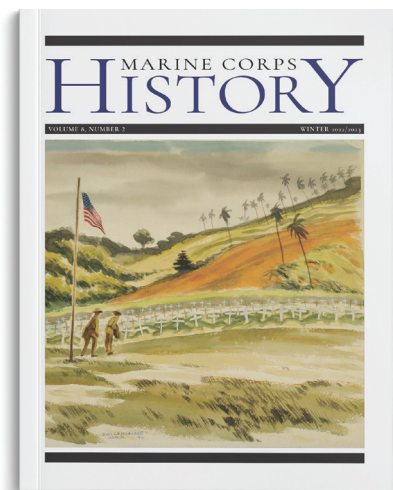
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- 1 December 2023 (Summer 2024 issue)
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