

THE ROAD TO FMFM 1: THE UNITED STATES MARINE CORPS AND
MANEUVER WARFARE DOCTRINE, 1979-1989

by

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Abstract

In 1989, the United States Marine Corps published the document *Fleet Marine Force Manual 1, Warfighting*. Its appearance signaled the official adoption of maneuver warfare as the Corps's organizational philosophy and the basis of its doctrine for preparing and conducting operations. The decade of debate and experimentation that preceded the publication of *Warfighting* has not received detailed examination, but merits such for the insights it can provide to understanding intellectual change and military reform.

Beginning in 1979, Marine Corps officers engaged in an intraservice debate over the issue of maneuver warfare, a new concept that began to circulate among military reformers in the latter half of the 1970s. A group of Marine officers known as "maneuverists" began meeting in unofficial seminars to study, refine, and promote the idea. Maneuverists believed that maneuver warfare was a more fluid and dynamic way of fighting because it stressed flexibility, creativity, and a focus on enemy behavior. They also thought the new idea offered a more effective alternative for fighting war than contemporary practices, which they thought focused too much on rigid application of standardized procedures and methods of existing manuals. The intellectual transformation of the Marine Corps involved three main mechanisms. The first was a theoretical mechanism centered on public debate in the pages of *Marine Corps Gazette* to introduce and defend maneuver warfare to Marine audience. The second was a functional/practical mechanism that involved educational and training initiatives at the Amphibious Warfare School and Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. The third mechanism was the use of institutional authority made possible with the appointment of General Alfred M. Gray, a senior and vocal maneuver warfare champion, to the position Commandant of the Marine Corps. Using the authority of his office, Gray directed the writing of a doctrinal manual encapsulating the ideas of maneuver warfare to provide the Corps organizational focus and direction. The resulting manual *FMFM 1, Warfighting*,

officially adopted maneuver warfare as service doctrine and organizational warfighting philosophy.

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Dedication

To my family, friends, teachers and mentors, and fellow Marines.

CHAPTER 1 - Introduction

On March 6, 1989, Marine Captain John Schmitt drove to the Marine Barracks, Washington D.C., the official residence of the Commandant of the Marine Corps (CMC), General Alfred M. Gray. The purpose of Schmitt's visit was to receive Gray's final approval and signature on a document that the Commandant had personally commissioned, *Fleet Marine Force Manual 1, Warfighting (FMFM 1)*. Schmitt was a junior captain serving in the Doctrine Division of the Marine Corps Warfighting Center located in Quantico, VA when he received the assignment to write the Commandant's new doctrinal manual. He was also a member of a generation of post-Vietnam War Marine officers who had been exposed early in their careers to the ideas contained in the manual he was tasked to write, maneuver warfare. *Warfighting* defined maneuver warfare as: "a warfighting philosophy that seeks to shatter the enemy's cohesion through a series of rapid, violent, and unexpected actions which create a turbulent and rapidly deteriorating situation with which he cannot cope."¹

Gray's foreword to the text communicated his intentions for the new document:

This book describes my philosophy on warfighting. It is the Marine Corps's doctrine and, as such, provides the authoritative basis for how we fight and how we prepare to fight.

By design this is a small manual and easy to read. It is not intended to be a reference manual, but is designed to be read from cover to cover

... You will notice that this book does not contain specific techniques and procedures for conduct. Rather, it provides broad guidance in the form of *concepts and values* [emphasis mine]. It requires *judgment in application*.

I expect every officer to read--and reread--this book, understand it and take its message to heart. The thoughts contained here represent not just guidance for actions in combat *but a way of thinking in general*. This manual thus describes a *philosophy* for action which, in war and in peace, in the field and in the rear, dictates our approach to duty (emphasis mine).²

¹ John F. Schmitt, Unpublished telephone Interview by author, 10 October 2006. Schmitt was the principal author of *Warfighting*. *Idem*, E-mail to author, 20 September 2006. United States Marine Corps, *Fleet Marine Force Manual 1, Warfighting* (Washington, D.C. 1989, reprinted as *Warfighting: The U.S. Marine Corps Book of Strategy* (New York: Currency/Doubleday, 1995), 75-76.

² General Alfred M. Gray, foreword to United States Marine Corps, *Fleet Marine Force Manual-1, Warfighting* (Washington, D.C. 1989), reprinted in *Warfighting: The U.S. Marine Corps Book of Strategy*.

The Marine Corps between the end of the Vietnam War and the Persian Gulf War of 1990-1991 was predominantly a peacetime organization and its operational activities consisting of limited interventions such as in Lebanon in 1982-1983 and in Grenada 1983. The absence of sustained conflict did not mean that war was far from the minds of Marines who were looking ahead to prepare for future battles. It was during this interval between wars that the Marine Corps became involved in a heated organizational discussion over maneuver warfare.

After a decade of internal debate and experimentation, maneuver warfare became in 1989 not only an official doctrine, but also the capstone doctrine for the Corps, the guiding principle of the organization. Because of this, a study of the years between maneuver warfare's introduction and adoption can offer one possible answer to the question: How do new ideas enter and gain subsequent adoption into a military organization? An alternative way of stating this question: How do you change the way a military organization thinks?

Any understanding of the Marine Corps as a peacetime and wartime organization since 1989 demands a basic understanding of *Warfighting* because it remains at present the capstone doctrine. A revised edition re-titled *Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1, Warfighting (MCDP 1)* appeared in 1997 at the direction of another CMC, General Charles C. Krulak. However, this new version did not fundamentally alter the underlying concepts outlined in the original. In the nearly two decades since the manual appeared, the Marine Corps has participated in three major conflicts: the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War and the ongoing Operations Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan and Iraqi Freedom. The Corps has also participated in numerous small-scale interventions. In all of these actions, maneuver warfare has guided the actions of Marines from the rank of private to general. Given the prominent role played by Marines in America's wars and other military operations of the last twenty years, an understanding of the origins of its official doctrine merits close examination

There is much more to this case study though than a simple question of how the Marine Corps developed and adopted maneuver warfare. Studying the Marine Corps and its relationship with maneuver war provides an opportunity to examine a relatively unstudied aspect of American military history, namely the years bounded by post-

Vietnam period and 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War. By studying the intellectual aspects of a 1980s United States military organization, it also looks at American military history from a different perspective than the operational perspective that has traditionally dominated the field. Even as military history began to explore non-operational topics in recent decades, studies of the Marine Corps have remained predominantly operational. The intellectual changes that took place in the Marine Corps were only one aspect of a process of rebuilding and reconstituting American military power in the wake of Vietnam. In this context, the publication of *Warfighting* had greater implications for the Corps and United States military history beyond the addition of a new doctrinal publication.

The popular stereotype of military organizations and the Marine Corps is that they are intellectually monolithic organizations that deemphasize new things that challenge convention, a consequence of the dominance of the military virtues of obedience, discipline, and loyalty to established hierarchy in the public perception. Within the service cultures of the United States military there is a strong tendency to play down the intellectual aspects of the military profession because of the association of scholarly pursuits as unmanly and unessential to the tasks of a warrior. Intellectual pursuits, because they are predominantly mental in nature, seem inconsistent with the popular image of the military professional as a physically courageous man of action.

What this study will show is a military organization can have a thriving dynamic intellectual culture. Marines, and by extension, professional American military men, do participate in intellectual discourses, that are just as vibrant, exciting, and engaging as other environments usually associated with intellectual activity such as the university. The discussions within the Corps produced intense emotions and lively discussions, some of which bordered on the polemical, driven by disparate visions of what kind of organization the Corps should become following Vietnam.

Maneuver warfare polarized the Marine Corps, producing two camps defined by their respective positions: “maneuverists” and “attritionists.” Who coined these terms and when they first entered into circulation is unknown, but within the specific context of the maneuver warfare debate between 1979 and 1989, there was some pejorative connotation applied to the use of either term. Outside of these pejorative uses, these

terms indicate two fundamentally opposed intellectual conceptions of warfighting and organizational behavior.³

A maneuverist, for the purpose of this study, was in the broadest sense anyone openly in favor of the adoption and implementation of maneuver warfare by the Marine Corps. Dissatisfaction and lack of confidence in the capability of the dominant doctrine, education, and training practices of the Marine Corps to prepare adequately for combat provided much of the motivation for maneuverists. What the maneuverists saw in maneuver warfare a more viable alternative that corrected the perceived deficiencies of the Corps.

This case study is an analysis of how the maneuverists intellectually transformed the Marine Corps and brought about the adoption of maneuver warfare. The study will focus primarily on the actions of key maneuverists who were actively involved in maneuver warfare's development, promotion, and defense that led to its eventual adoption, individuals such as Michael D. Wyly, G.I. Wilson, William Woods, William Lind, and Alfred M. Gray. Identification of the key ideas of the maneuverists is a relatively easy proposition because they actively circulated their ideas for public debate, most notably in the pages of *Marine Corps Gazette*. Ultimately, *Warfighting's* publication meant the beginning of the formal institutionalization of the ideas that they had advocated and experimented with for over a decade. This study will demonstrate that what transformed maneuver warfare from a fringe concept to organizational capstone doctrine was an active, multi-dimensional campaign by its maneuverist advocates. These individuals explained, promoted and defended the concept to the Marine Corps; developed methods for educating and training Marines in the new concepts; and used institutional authority to effect an overall intellectual change to a military organization.

The problem with identifying and defining attritionists is that the term attrition warfare and its interchangeable analogues firepower warfare and firepower-attrition warfare were the creations of the maneuverists. William S. Lind, a civilian legislative

³ Kenneth McKenzie and Peter Cary have both identified the pejorative connotations associated with use of the term maneuverist. McKenzie has also identified a negative tone attached to the term attritionist when used to identify maneuver warfare's opponents. When the terms maneuverist and attritionist appears in this text it is without the denunciatory intentions originally attached to either. Peter Cary, "The Fight to Change How America Fights," *U.S. News and World Report*, 6 May 1991, 31; Kenneth F. McKenzie, Jr., Major, USMC, "On the Verge of a New Era: The Marine Corps and Maneuver Warfare," *Marine Corps Gazette* (July 1993): 64.

aide and military reform advocate, popularized these terms and a purported dichotomy between them. Under this framework Marines who did not adopt maneuver warfare or were unreceptive to it, those who remained wedded to the established and conventional, were attritionists.

Another problem with this characterization is that it is too broad, encompassing a spectrum of attitudes that ranged from ambivalence to hostility. The maneuverists faced the daunting task of gaining the adoption of their ideas in an organization made up of individuals who were unaware, ambivalent, had reservations, or openly opposed to them. Among the issues that this study will explore are the criticisms that emerged to maneuver warfare, and not all of these objections originated from an outright hostility to the concept. In the narrowest sense, attritionists were those openly and vocally opposed to maneuver warfare, and in the broadest sense, anyone who simply had not embraced the new ideas. The more extreme of the criticisms against attritionists, usually voiced by Lind, characterized them as hidebound conservatives resisting change due to their closed-minded parochialism. Yet opposition to maneuver warfare was more nuanced and included Marines whose professional experience had validated a conservative outlook towards new, untested ideas.

This is a study without heroes or villains. It is unfortunate that the dialog that took place within the Corps resulted in statements that bordered on the polemical. On the other hand, the intensity of the debate is understandable considering the stakes involved. What must remain in the forefront in studying the intellectual activity of a peacetime military organization is that the discussion ultimately centers on war and violence. The discussion was more than academic because it concerned the life or death of Marines, operational success or failure, and battlefield victory or defeat. This aspect of the discussion in many respects accounts for the intensity of the activity and emotions from 1979 through 1989. If the Corps rushed too quickly or failed to move fast enough in adopting maneuver warfare, the consequences these actions would be borne by Marines on the battlefield. The Corps could not afford to “get it wrong” in deciding whether to reject or accept maneuver warfare.

Ultimately, the maneuverists achieved their goal of changing how Marines think. The process that led to maneuver warfare’s adoption was a multi-dimensional approach

that took place over the course of a decade. Maneuverists used three mechanisms to bring about the intellectual transformation of the Marine Corps. First, they published their ideas and answered their critics in the pages of the *Marine Corps Gazette*. This constituted the theoretical component of the maneuver warfare movement, centered on increasing awareness, gaining acceptance, and defending maneuver warfare on its conceptual strengths and weaknesses. Publishing these ideas allowed maneuver warfare to reach Marines who had not yet encountered the ideas, as well as offering a vehicle for addressing specific concerns of Marines who had reservations regarding the concept. Second, maneuverists used a functional/practical component. Maneuver warfare needed to be not only words on paper but also a set of skills and abilities employable by Marines in operational units. In addition to learning the new doctrine, Marines had to train to apply and execute it in the physical realm. The final mechanism used was institutional authority. No idea can become doctrine without the sanction of the organizational leadership. The willingness to adopt maneuver warfare by a senior leader who possessed the necessary authority was what finally completed the process of intellectual transformation.

Within the text of *Warfighting* are phrases that make an explicit connection between organizational doctrine and intellectual processes. The manual defines doctrine as:

a *teaching* advanced as the *fundamental beliefs* of the Marine Corps on the subject of war, from its nature and theory to its preparation and conduct. Doctrine establishes a particular *way of thinking* about war and a way of fighting, a *philosophy* for leading Marines in combat, a mandate for professionalism, and a common language

... Marine Corps doctrine is made official by the Commandant and is established in this manual. Our doctrine does not consist of procedures to be applied in specific situations so much as it requires *judgment* in application. Therefore, while authoritative, doctrine is not prescriptive (emphasis mine).⁴

The appearance of the terms “teaching,” “philosophy,” “fundamental beliefs,” and “judgment” clearly demonstrate that this new document was closely tied to organizational thinking and that Gray, in his position as Commandant, was making a statement that he was trying to institutionalize a change in this area by adopting maneuver warfare.

The challenge faced by the maneuverists in the 1980s was to convince Marines of the need to adopt a new philosophy and a new way of thinking. Not all Marines agreed

⁴ *Warfighting*, 56-57.

on the need for such a philosophy, nor did all Marines agree that maneuver warfare was necessarily the correct philosophy.

A critical tenet of maneuver warfare and the cause of much of the disagreement between surrounding the concept posited the existence of two “distinct styles of warfare,” “*attrition*” and “*maneuver*.” According to *Warfighting*, these styles of conflict could exist simultaneously at strategic, operational, and tactical levels of war. What defined attrition was that it “seeks victory through the cumulative destruction of the enemy’s material assets by superior firepower and technology.” *Warfighting* defined an “attritionist” as someone who saw the enemy as “targets to be engaged and destroyed systematically.” They focused on “efficiency,” which led to a “methodical, almost scientific approach to war.” Attritionists looked to quantification to gauge progress: “battle damage assessments, ‘body counts,’ and terrain captured.” From this emerged the belief that inflicting the highest degree of damage to an opponent required direct attacks against where the enemy was strongest. The attritionists sought battle under any set of conditions and measured the results as proportional to effort expended, that is, more resources employed would inherently produce, greater destruction of the enemy, and with it, more success. This mode of thinking led to a preference for “centralized control” to achieve the greatest possible concentration and quantity of fire, and an “emphasis on efficiency” produced an “inward focus on procedures and techniques.” The essence of success in attrition is not “military competence” “but sheer superiority of numbers in men and equipment.”⁵

According to *Warfighting*, what distinguished a maneuver-based based doctrine from attrition was that maneuver, involved the temporal and psychological components in addition to its counterpart’s single-minded focus on the physical dimension of the battlefield. Instead of attacking an enemy head on as in attrition warfare, maneuver looked to apply “strength against selected enemy weakness” through the use of “speed and surprise.” It used “tempo” as “a weapon.” The emphasis on speed meant decentralized control in an organization. While, attrition operated primarily in the physical dimension of war, maneuver also involved the moral, that is the psychological. The aim was not physical destruction but to “shatter the enemy’s cohesion, organization,

⁵ *Ibid.*, 35-36. Italics in original.

command, and psychological balance.” Instead of relying on numerical superiority in men and equipment, maneuver required the ability to identify and exploit enemy weakness. The ability to exploit vulnerabilities that appeared in a timely fashion could result in success that could be disproportionate to the effort made. A small force, or a component of a force could bring about the defeat of the enemy, if could seize upon opportunities when they arose. However, this required an increased reliance on the judgment of individual leaders who would be required to make decisions quickly in the face of the changing conditions of battle. The drawback to this is while maneuver offered a chance for potential greater success, it also made the consequences of poor or ill-timed decisions more devastating. One of the great attractions of attrition was it involved less risk, through stringent controls by higher commanders, detailed planning, and emphasis on following procedures.⁶

Warfighting outlined what it saw as the criteria for an organizational warfighting concept, one that was “consistent with our understanding of the nature and theory of war and the realities of the modern battlefield.” First, the concept needed to function in the friction, uncertainty, chaos, and fluidity of war. The concept also had to have applicability across the full spectrum of conflict. Marines would need to employ the concept in both high-intensity conflicts between modern state armies and in limited, small-scale interventions. It had to be useful in exploiting opportunities quickly before they disappeared. The concept had to account for the moral and physical forces of war and recognize the greater importance of the former. The concept also had to give a numerically outnumbered force the chance for success. Finally, the concept had to make it possible to win quickly and with minimal expenditure of resources. *Warfighting* explicitly rejected attrition and adopted maneuver as the basis for doctrine because the latter met the above criteria.⁷

A key point of dispute for Marines during the maneuver warfare debate was whether maneuver warfare was even appropriate for the Marine Corps, because of its traditional role as an amphibious force. *Warfighting* adopts the position that the maneuver warfare met the Corps needs, but Marines were far from unanimous in

⁶ *Ibid.*, 36-38.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 73-74.

agreeing with this assertion. During the maneuver warfare debate, some Marines would argue that organizationally, the Marine Corps was incapable of executing the new doctrine because they did not see it as consonant with the traditional missions and organizational structure of the Corps. The Marine Corps would not be the Marine Corps if it became a maneuver warfare organization, which would begin to bear a greater resemblance to the United States Army. This issue was, and remains, of particularly sensitivity to Marines, who pride themselves on their distinctiveness from other service branches. This notion of uniqueness is more than a matter of pride. Many saw the very existence of the Corps as contingent upon its ability to perform functions that other service branches cannot do as well it can. If those distinctions were lost, the Corps believed it risked possible elimination by a budget-conscious Congress.

Maneuver warfare was more than a theoretical proposition of how to fight. It also involved a corpus of associated skills necessary to execute the envisioned style of battle. *Warfighting* outlined five concepts needed to practice maneuver warfare. The first was “Mission Tactics” where a senior commander assigned a mission to his subordinate, but allowed him the latitude to determine the actions necessary to accomplish that mission. The second was “Commander’s Intent.” By clearly specifying intentions to his subordinates, a commander allowed his subordinates to exercise initiative without compromising the commander’s goals. The third was “Focus of Effort” where a commander identified which elements of the mission was most critical to achieving his desired aim. This harmonized the efforts of subordinates by guiding their decisions and actions in working towards the desired results. The fourth concept was “Surfaces and Gaps.” In battle, leaders needed to identify weaknesses to exploit, “the gaps” and enemy strengths to avoid, the “surfaces.” If weaknesses could not be located or identified, a force would need to create them by some means. Finally, “Combined Arms” looked to developing an officer’s ability to maximize combat power by using all available weapons assets and maximizing their value through close integration. An enemy could not counter the threat posed by one asset without leaving him vulnerable to the threat posed by another.⁸

⁸ *Ibid.*, 91-98.

According to maneuverists, the Marine Corps of 1979--the starting point of this analysis--was an attritionist organization. The move to maneuver warfare from attrition was part of a gradual evolution in warfighting first identified by John Boyd and expanded by his followers into the "Four Generations of War" paradigm. The first generation began with the emergence of modern state militaries in 1648; its key traits are an emphasis on order and control, the tactics of line and column. Attrition was the second generation of warfare that began in the American Civil War and culminated in World War I. The emphasis on order and control continues into the second generation, but with the addition of an emphasis on the employment of overwhelming firepower and physical destruction on the battlefield. Maneuver warfare is the third generation, which eschews the characteristics of the previous generations in favor of decentralized control, local initiative as a means of achieving the mental and morale collapse of the adversary, rather than his physical destruction. The most notable examples of third generation warfare in the 20th century are the German *blitzkrieg* of World War II and guerilla warfare, employed by the likes of T.E. Lawrence in the Arab Revolt that occurred during World War I and Mao Zedong during the Chinese Civil War. Maneuver warfare was not a new form of warfare, but the change the maneuverists advocated was the active adoption of this style of fighting by an American military that was strongly entrenched in the second generation. Maneuver warfare itself was only a step in the eventual progression to the fourth generation of war. The objective remained the same, the mental and moral collapse of an adversary. What had changed are the actors. The closing years of the twentieth century has seen the emergence of non-state entities such as criminal syndicates and terrorist organization as threats to the monopoly of warfighting held by nation-states since 1648.⁹

The transition to the new way of thinking advocated by *Warfighting* took place over time and after considerable inter-organizational debate and discussion. In the decade prior to *Warfighting*'s publication, the tension between attrition and maneuver was the cause of a heated public debate within the Marine Corps, especially within the

⁹ See John R. Boyd. Colonel, USAF, Ret., "Patterns of Conflict," Unpublished briefing, version dated December 1986 located at <http://www.d-n-i.net/boyd/pdf/poc.pdf>. Last accessed 12 April 2007 and William S. Lind, Keith Nightengale, Colonel, USA, John F. Schmitt, Captain, USMC, Joseph W. Sutton, Col, USA, and Gary I. Wilson, Lieutenant Colonel, USMC, "The Changing Face of War : Into the Fourth Generation," *MCG* (October 1989): 22-26.

pages of the *Marine Corps Gazette*. Marines also experimented with methods for training and educating necessary to execute the new doctrine. The publication of *Warfighting* was the culmination of these efforts.

No single mechanism alone can account for the Corps's move to a maneuver warfare doctrine. The published arguments of maneuverists could only convince Marines to accept the new doctrine. Convincing Marines to adopt the new ideas still required a system for educating and training with the new doctrine. Published arguments also suffered from the stigma of being "academic discussions." Talking about maneuver warfare could not convince everyone, but seeing it employed during training exercises could assuage some of the concerns of the skeptics. On the other hand, a new but unofficial concept could be popular, but if the senior echelons of an organization refuse to institutionalize it, its adoption is piecemeal and haphazard. Long-term survival is also uncertain because it may encounter leadership that is less than committed to tolerating, let alone advancing, the new thinking within the organization. Without an adequate system for educating and training Marines in maneuver warfare, the concept could never make the transition from appealing concept to having practical operational value. The unilateral declaration of a new doctrine without some confidence in the new ideas from the rank-and-file also has limitations. The personnel tasked with implementing the doctrine must believe in it in order to execute in any meaningful fashion. A new doctrine carries with it the challenges of training and education to ensure that personnel can learn and execute it.

Doctrinal and intellectual changes in this period were not limited to the Corps, The United States Army also underwent a significant intellectual transformation that was also embodied in the publication of new doctrinal manuals, the 1976 and 1982 editions of its capstone manual *Field Manual (FM) 100-5 Operations*. Some comparison between what took place in the Corps and what happened in the Army is worth exploration.

Major Paul H. Herbert, USA, chronicles the work of the General William E. DuPuy, Commanding General, United States Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) and his role in its intellectual transformation. DuPuy, according to Herbert, thought that the United States Army needed to reorient Army thinking away from Vietnam and towards a potential NATO-Warsaw Pact conflict in Europe. The 1973 Yom

Kippur War between Israel and its Arab neighbors, who received arms from the United States and the Soviet Union respectively, also convinced DuPuy that doctrine needed to reflect the increased lethality of new weapons systems such as improved tanks, surface-to-air missiles, and anti-tank guided munitions. DuPuy was also convinced that mechanized operations would dominate the next conflict. Herbert outlines how DuPuy used the full bureaucratic apparatus of TRADOC in a centralized process to create a new doctrine to reflect these conceptualizations. The result was the 1976 edition of *FM 100-5* that promulgated a doctrine known as Active Defense that provoked a considerable amount of criticism and discussion, and another iteration of *FM 100-5*.¹⁰

John L. Romjue's *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle* continues the story of the Army's doctrinal development by beginning with the criticisms of Active Defense that emerged after its adoption. Intended for application in a conflict with a numerically superior Warsaw Pact, many within the Army criticized Active Defense for its defensive mindset, an overemphasis on battle with the enemy's front-line forces, and overreliance on firepower. To address these criticisms, General Donn Starry, DuPuy's successor at TRADOC, employed the same centralized, bureaucratic development process used for Active Defense. In the process Romjue outlines, creating the new doctrine involved subject matter experts from the Army's combat and supporting arms and full use of intellectual capital available from Army schools such as the Command and General Staff College. The result was *AirLand Battle*, a doctrine that emphasized combined arms, speed, flexibility, and mobility and deep penetration attacks into the rear of the enemy's battlespace.¹¹

Soon after the publication of his version of *FM 100-5*, Starry outlined his vision for "effecting change" in a military organization during 1982 address to the US Army War College. He described seven requirements that served as a framework that was

¹⁰ Paul H. Herbert, Major, USA, *Deciding What Has to Be Done: General William E. DuPuy and the 1976 Edition of FM 100-5, Operations, Leavenworth Papers Number 16* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1988).

¹¹ John L. Romjue, *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle: The Development of Army Doctrine 1973-1982* (Fort Monroe, VA: Historical Office, United States Training and Doctrine Command, 1984); *Idem*, "The Evolution of the AirLand Battle Concept" *Air University Review* (May-June 1984) located at <http://www.airpower.maxwell.af.mil/airchronicles/aureview/1984/may-jun/romjue.html>. Last Accessed 6 July 2007.

“necessary to bring to bear clearly focused intellectual activity in the matter of change, whether in concepts for fighting, equipment, training or manning the force.” What particularly concerned Starry was that without an effective framework for systematizing the development and adoption of new ideas, a military organization risked the possible imposition of change by agents from outside the organization. Starry’s criteria were:

There must be an institution or mechanism to identify the need for change, to draw up parameters for change and to describe clearly what is to be done and how that differs from what has been done before.

The educational background of the principal staff and command personalities responsible for change must be sufficiently rigorous, demanding, and relevant to bring a common cultural bias to the solution of problems.

There must be a spokesman for change. The spokesman can be a person one of the mavericks; and institution such as a staff college; or a staff agency.

Whoever or whatever it may be, the spokesman must build a consensus that will give the new ideas, and the need to adopt them, a wider audience of converts and believers.

There must be a continuity among the architects of change that consistency of effort is brought to bear on the process.

Someone at or near the top of the institution must be willing to hear out arguments for change, agree to the need, embrace the new operational concepts and become at least a supporter, if not a champion, of the cause for change.

Changes proposed must be subjected to trials. Their relevance must be convincingly demonstrated to a wide audience by experimentation and experience, and necessary modifications must be made as a result of such trial outcomes.¹²

What this brief overview reveals is that while parallel intellectual transformation and doctrinal development can occur, the mechanisms through which they take place can be different. The main point of difference between the independent developments of AirLand Battle and maneuver warfare was the role of official organizational apparatus in the process of change. In the AirLand Battle example, a strong bureaucratic entity was present, the Army’s TRADOC, that served driving and controlling force for intellectual change and retained full control of the development process. In contrast, much of maneuver warfare’s development took place external to the Corps’s formal doctrinal development apparatus, and centralized direction within the Marine Corps played a relatively minor role in the process. The parallel developments by the Marine Corps and Army of maneuver warfare and *AirLand Battle* suggest that there are alternative paths to arriving at similar doctrines. The Marine Corps and Army cases converge in one significant aspect; intellectual change eventually requires support from a person with substantive authority within the organization. In the Army’s case that support was

¹² Donn A. Starry, General, United States Army “To Change and Army,” *Military Review* (March 1983): 20-27.

present from the beginning, while in the Marine Corps, maneuver warfare lacked the support of such authority until the appointment of Gray to Commandant.

A consensus has developed that the United States military underwent significant intellectual changes in the years between the Vietnam War and Gulf War, yet operational histories dominate studies of the post-Vietnam military. The most notable examples are works on the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War such as Rick Atkinson's *Crusade* and Michael Gordon and Bernard Trainor's *The Generals' War*. There is a growing body of operational literature dealing with the current situation in Iraq such as Gordon and Trainor's *Cobra II* and John Keegan's *The Iraq War*. A Marine-specific example of this emphasis on post-Vietnam operational history is Bing West and Ray Smith's *The March Up* chronicling the 2003 invasion of Iraq and West's *No True Glory* dealing with the 2004 battle for Fallujah.¹³

The problem with this emphasis on operational history is that it tends to minimize the significance of the peacetime years. It is during these years that many the critical organizational decisions that will influence the prosecution of the next conflict are made. In the years of peace, services recruit troops and develop new weapons systems, units conduct training exercises, enlisted men and officers receive education and training, and organizations write the doctrinal manuals and publications that will guide the conduct of future operations.

In his 1998 overview of the state of Marine Corps scholarship, Graham A. Cosmas has noted "[m]ost post-1980 Marine operations institutional developments need thorough study and analysis." Cosmas has also observed that what literature that does exist on the Marine Corps tends to be written by Marines or former Marines, and published by official house organs of the Corps. No work comparable to those of Herbert and Romjue exists that examines intellectual developments within the Marine Corps in

¹³ Rick Atkinson, *Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War* (Boston: Mariner Books, 1994); Michael R. Gordon and Bernard E. Trainor, General, USMC (Ret.), *The General's War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf*. (Boston, New York and London: Little, Brown, and Company, 1995.); *Idem*, *Cobra II: The Inside Story of the Invasion and Occupation of Iraq* (New York Pantheon Books, 2006); John Keegan, *The Iraq War* (New York: Knopf, 2004); Francis J. "Bing" West and Ray L. Smith, *The March Up: Taking Baghdad With the 1st Marine Division*. (New York: Bantam Books, 2003); and West, *No True Glory: A Frontline Account of the Battle For Fallujah* (New York: Bantam Books, 2005).

the same period, let alone examinations of other critical organizational developments such as changes to recruitment and training policies, new weapons development and procurement. Key social developments with organizational implications such as the transition to an all-volunteer force, increased involvement of women, or the struggle to address the racial tensions and drug abuse problems that are generally agreed to have taken place in the post-Vietnam military also remain to be explored.¹⁴

The Marine Corps's adoption of maneuver was only one aspect of greater trends and developments in the military history of the United States in the post-Vietnam era. There is general agreement among those who served in the military that the end of the Vietnam War marked a nadir for the American military plagued by racial tension, alcohol abuse, illegal drug use, sagging morale, reduced budgets, and the stigma of military defeat. During the 1980s, conditions steadily improved through a combination of stricter recruitment policies, expedited discharges for disciplinary problems, and increased budgets for new weaponry and training. The culmination of this period was military success during the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War, which highlighted the substantial resurgence in American military power.¹⁵

In the current standard general history of the United States military, Allan Millet and Peter Maslowski's *For the Common Defense* use the term "military renaissance" to describe the 1980s, since it produced in a military that once again constituted a credible

¹⁴ For an assessment of Marine Corps historiography since 1973 see Graham A. Cosmas *A Guide to the Sources of United States Military History: Supplement II*, edited by Robin Higham and Donald J. Mrozek (Hamden, CT, 1986), 230-240; *Idem*, *A Guide to the Sources of United States Military History: Supplement III*, edited by Robin Higham and Donald J. Mrozek (Hamden, CT, 1993) 321-337; *Idem*, *A Guide to the Sources of United States Military History: Supplement IV*, edited by Robin Higham and Donald J. Mrozek (Hamden, CT, 1998), 391-410; Entries for the Army, Navy, and Air Force have also identified the same general opportunities for new scholarship.

¹⁵ No detailed historical analysis of this period exists. James Kitfield's *Prodigal Soldiers: How the Generation of Officers Born of Vietnam Revolutionized the American Style of War* (Washington, D.C.: Brassey's, 1997) adopts a journalistic approach and chronicles the careers of several officers during this period from their service as junior officers in Vietnam to general officer rank in the Gulf War. *Prodigal Soldiers* is inadequately documented and lacks critical analysis. Al Santoli's *Leading the Way. How Vietnam Veterans Rebuilt the U.S. Military: An Oral History* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1993) is a collection of oral interviews of officers who remained in service through the Gulf War. Interviews with maneuverists such as Wyly and Wilson echo the sentiments that there was a period of significant intellectual development following in the interval between Vietnam and the Persian Gulf War. Contemporary media counts immediately following the Persian Gulf War also observed a change in military service thinking in the Army and Marine Corps. See Cary, *Ibid.*, and Frederick Kaplan, "The Force was with them," *Boston Globe* 17 March 1991: A21.

conventional military counterbalance to the Soviet Union. Among the key developments they identify are the procurement of modern weapons systems such as the Abrams tank and Bradley fighting vehicle that began under the Carter administration, and increased defense spending under Reagan to improve conventional capabilities through equipment modernization and training improvements. In terms of intellectual developments, Millett and Maslowski note that this period produced a “newly-assertive and rearmed U.S. Army and Air Force” which “pushed their European counterparts toward a concept of high-technology deep battle in which all elements of the Warsaw Pact would be attacked simultaneously.”¹⁶

Millett and Maslowski did not comment of the Marine Corps’s development of maneuver warfare, but contemporary independent accounts following the Persian Gulf War by historian Frederick Kagan and journalist Peter Cary noted the parallel development of Army *AirLand Battle* and the Marine Corps maneuver warfare. Kagan and Cary both observed that the two services shifted their doctrine away from a reliance on firepower and direct assaults to greater emphasis on speed and mobility. Both authors also noted that in either service, maneuver warfare began as an idea with its followers constituting a minority. Both authors also observed that a key intellectual influence to these changes was the ideas of a retired Air Force colonel, John Boyd, but that Boyd’s ideas exerted a greater direct influence on the Corps.

Maneuver warfare can be seen as an intellectual reaction by the military to the Vietnam War and its aftermath. Within this context, maneuver warfare is an umbrella classification for military doctrine that eschews a methodical, firepower-intensive way of fighting focused on physical destruction of opponents in favor of speed, mobility, flexibility to achieve the collapse of an opponent to act cohesively. What is apparent though is that there is no single way to practice a maneuver-based doctrine, the Army and the Marine Corps each have their own version. To avoid confusion between the Army and Marine forms of maneuver doctrine, for the purposes of this text and unless otherwise identified, the appearance of the term maneuver warfare and maneuverist refers to the context of the Marine Corps

¹⁶ Allan R. Millett and Peter R. Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America*, Revised and Expanded (New York: Free Press, 1994), 607-646.

There has been one significant book-length attempt to study post-Vietnam intellectual developments of the United States military, Frederick Kagan's *Finding the Target: The Transformation of American Military Policy*. Kagan uses the post-Vietnam recovery as the starting point and main impetus for change in American military thought, noting developments such as AirLand Battle, as well as changes in Navy and Air Force thinking. He dubs 1980s as the "Reagan Revolution" for the American military because increases in defense spending made physical reality the intellectual propositions of thinkers such as John Boyd. Kagan then carries his study forward to the 1990-1991 Persian Gulf War and the "Transformation" and "Network Centric Warfare" paradigm that came into vogue with the currently on-going Global War on Terror.¹⁷

The most significant problem with Kagan is the timeframe of his work. Events after the 1990-1991 Gulf War are simply too close to analyze. What is more surprising his omission of intellectual developments in the Marine Corps that he himself identified in his 1991 *Boston Globe* article. Another significant flaw is that while acknowledging some debt to Boyd in the development of *AirLand Battle*, he treats Boyd's contributions as part of a "Revolution in Airpower Theory." Kagan's placement of Boyd in this section limits his influence to the realm of air combat, while the reality is that Boyd's ideas also had a significant influence on ground combat as well. Much of how maneuverists conceived of ground combat, amphibious operations, training, and education was based on Boyd's ideas and the maneuverists in their writings and interviews openly acknowledged their intellectual debt to the retired Air Force colonel.

Another flaw in Kagan's work is his neglect of the grass-roots nature of intellectual developments in favor of policy-makers, generals, and senior political figures. Maneuver warfare in the Corps began through the individual initiatives of officers, many of whom were still in the junior grades of their careers. Many of the developments needed in changing Marine Corps thinking took place independent of senior leadership, with the most notable exception being Gray's direction to write a maneuver warfare manual.

John Boyd's life and ideas have attracted some attention and have provided the subject of several publications. Much of this literature on Boyd, such as Hammond's *The*

¹⁷ Kagan, *Finding the Target: The Transformation of American Military Policy* (New York: Encounter Books, 2006).

Mind of War and Coram's *Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War*, highlights his role as one of the intellectual leaders of a military reform movement that emerged in the 1970s and 1980s. Most of these works deal with the struggles of Boyd and his supporters to achieve reforms in U.S. defense policies based on his ideas. While these works mention the influence of Boyd on the Marine Corps, these works generally lack a detailed explanation as to how Boyd-inspired individuals effected change within the Marine Corps, with Coram's biography being the most notable exception.¹⁸

There is no doubt that events in the 1970s and 1980s produced a resurgent United States military. The armed forces received new equipment and better quality personnel because of increased spending, but they also developed new ideas and ways of thinking. The similarities and differences between the Army and the Marine Corps in the development of their respective doctrines are worth a more detailed exploration. An examination of inter-service budget competitions and its relationship to the intellectual developments of this period also deserves examination. Since defense spending and policy-making is ultimately a political issue, the role of Congress and the Department of Defense as institutions promoting or impeding intellectual changes and military reform in the United States military should receive further attention. There was a civilian-led and dominated military reform movement and a Congressional Military Reform Caucus active from the late-1970s through the late 1980s. The role played by the reform movement and the Caucus in effecting change in the United States military needs to be examined in greater detail. The focus of this study though is the internal organizational trends and developments within the Marine Corps, an attempt to understand one limited, but significant component of much larger patterns and trends in United States military affairs following Vietnam.¹⁹

¹⁸ Robert Coram, *Boyd: Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2002); John G. Burton, *The Pentagon Wars: Reformers Challenge the Old Guard* (Annapolis, MD: Naval Institute Press, 1993); and Grant T. Hammond, *The Mind of War: John Boyd and American Security* (Washington D.C: Smithsonian Books, 2001).

¹⁹ Contemporary accounts of the major issues of the time do exist such as James G. Fallow's *National Defense* (New York: Random House, 1981), a collection of conference papers presented at 1982 military reform conference sponsored by the United States Military Academy edited by Asa. A Clark IV et. al entitled *The Defense Reform Debate; Issues and Analysis* (Baltimore, MD, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1984) and Gary S. Hart's book co-authored with William S Lind, *America Can Win: The Case for*

There are two earlier examples of doctrinal development within the Marine Corps's organizational history that provide internal historical points of comparison to doctrinal development. The first and best known was the development of amphibious warfare doctrine. Between the two world wars, the Marine Corps committed itself to the development and refinement of the techniques, tactics, and procedures needed to conduct an opposed landing of forces from the sea on a hostile shore. Commandant of the Marine Corps, Major General John Lejeune and his successors during the interval between the world wars committed the Corps as an institution to the development of amphibious warfare.²⁰

The second doctrinal development in Marine history originated in the experiences of the "Banana Wars" of the first half of the twentieth century and resulted in the publication of the *Small Wars Manual* in 1940. Keith Bickel in *Mars Learning* argued that until 1940, small wars doctrine existed informally within the Corps. What the 1940 manual represented was the codification and institutionalization of twenty-five years of techniques and recommendations that had been developed and transmitted in an informal process that involved student coursework done at the Marine Corps's professional military schools in Quantico, VA. Students drew upon their operational experiences in the Caribbean and Central America in developing papers dealing with counter-insurgency and civil affairs, identifying methods they found successful and providing recommendations to other officers. While some of these student papers saw publication in formal military journals, what created a continuity of ideas was that these papers remained on file for future students who encountered them while conducting own research for their own papers. These future students then compared and analyzed the ideas of previous classes in relation to their own operational experiences and created recommendations of their own.²¹

Military Reform (Bethesda, MD: Adler & Adler, 1986). James G. Burton's *The Pentagon Wars* is his memoir of his involvement in the military reform movement and the internal politics of the Pentagon.

²⁰ Jeter A. Isely and Philip A. Crowl, *The U.S. Marines and Amphibious War. Its Theory and Its Practice in the Pacific.*, 2003 Paperback Edition, (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1951).

²¹ Keith B. Bickel, *Mars Learning. The Marine Corps Development of Small Wars Doctrine, 1915-1940,* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2001).

The development of maneuver warfare does not entirely match either of these earlier experiences. Unlike amphibious operations, maneuver warfare developed for nearly a decade without the centralized direction and active support of the central Marine leadership. More significantly, the development of amphibious thinking did not produce a significant shift in Marines thinking, only the development of formal set of techniques and procedures related to a specific type of operation. Maneuver warfare did share the informal nature of small wars doctrine, but the process Bickel identified was also primarily oriented towards transmission of techniques and methods, instead of trying to produce a radical shift in thinking on the scale the maneuverists were trying to achieve. The organizational influence of small wars was also significantly reduced because of World War II, which pushed amphibious operations to the forefront.

Allan Millett briefly mentioned the publication of *Warfighting* in his organizational history *Semper Fidelis* in a subsection chronicling General Alfred M. Gray's tenure as the twenty-ninth Commandant of the Marine Corps (1987-1991). In *Semper Fidelis*, the publication of *Warfighting* appears in the larger historical context of the Marine Corps rebuilding itself in the aftermath of Vietnam. According to Millett, the Corps overcame the challenges of substandard recruits, substance abuse, racial tensions, and outdated equipment through stringent recruiting standards, disciplinary actions, and an equipment modernization program. In Millett's analysis, Gray's immediate predecessors as Commandant achieved a material reconstitution of the Marine Corps, but Gray's tenure completed the task by achieving its spiritual renewal, which was flagging when he assumed his post due to a series of scandals under his immediate predecessor, Paul X. Kelley. Gray's solution to revive organization morale was to emphasize the "warrior" ethos of the Corps through tougher training, educational reform, and reinforcement of the Marine identity. Part of this warrior identity involved how Marines would train and fight. According to Millett, Gray directed the creation of *Warfighting* to disseminate his own thoughts on "operational concepts" in published form to the Corps at large.²²

²² Allan R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps*. Revised and Expanded Edition (New York: The Free Press, 1991).

The main problem with Millett's brief description of *Warfighting's* publication is that he omits a decade of development, debate, and experimentation involving the ideas expressed in the text. He also omits any mention of maneuver warfare. While Gray's endorsement of these ideas was crucial, he was not alone in this process and other individuals played crucial roles in spreading and teaching these ideas throughout the Corps.

Terry C. Pierce uses Gray's adoption of maneuver warfare as one of his case studies in *Warfighting and Disruptive Technology, Disguising Innovation*. Pierce bases his analysis on the work of Stephen Rosen who had studied the introduction and sustaining of innovations in the intellectually conservative climate of military organizations. Pierce classifies maneuver warfare as an example of a "disruptive innovation," which is a change in how a service employs one of its combat arms or creates a new one that produces improved performance along lines never previously considered as effective. According to Pierce, the key to Gray's successful introduction of maneuver warfare was that he disguised its innovative nature. Gray accomplished this by emphasizing maneuver warfare's links to earlier Marine Corps practices, namely amphibious warfare in World War II.²³

Pierce's model, while useful for describing what military change is, is inadequate to describe why and how the specific example of maneuver warfare took place. While Pierce is correct that Gray tried to tie maneuver warfare to Marine history as a means of building a consensus within the Corps, maneuver warfare had circulated and gained some acceptance in the years before Gray became Commandant. As this study will show, Gray could not have made the adoption of maneuver warfare possible without the efforts of the ten preceding years that prepared the Corps to accept maneuver warfare as a theoretical and functional premise.

There has been an attempt provide a brief history of maneuver warfare's relationship with the Marine Corps. Major Kenneth Mackenzie's "On the Verge of a New Era: The Marine Corps and Maneuver Warfare," describes three distinct periods in that relationship. The first is "Experimentation" where "Marines tried, adopted, and

²³ Terry C. Pierce, *Warfighting And Disruptive Technologies. Disguising Innovation* (London and New York: Frank Cass, 2004), 1, 85-103, 110-115; Stephen P. Rosen, *Winning the Next War. Technology and the Modern Military* (Cornell, NY: Cornell University Press, 1991).

discarded tactics and techniques seeking to find a measure of equilibrium between fire and maneuver on the battlefield” took place in 1980-1989. The second, “Acceptance and Employment,” took place in 1989-1993. This phase began institutionalization of maneuver warfare began with the publication of *FMFM-I* and ended with the recognition that maneuver warfare never fully worked out the problems of aviation integration. The third period, “A Mature Doctrine,” began in 1993 where “maneuver warfare doctrine ... has moved beyond the partially formed visions of its founding enthusiasts to becoming a workable nuts and bolts doctrine.”

The boundaries of this study fit within Mackenzie’s “Experimentation” period. He is correct that significant work was required to develop and integrate the doctrine within the Corps once Gray began the process of institutionalization. What this study does is to examine the process that led to maneuver warfare’s adoption and understand how and why it happened.

Mackenzie’s “Experimentation” period was analogous to what Thomas Kuhn described in his *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* as a paradigm shift. Throughout scientific history, certain scientific achievements known as paradigms tended to gain a significant number of adherents and attract them away from competing alternatives, while at the same time leaving sufficient room for exploration and development. Over time though, the process of addressing the unresolved issues of the dominant paradigm leads to what Kuhn has called a “crisis.” The older paradigm is no longer able to answer questions that arise and leads to dissatisfaction and doubt over the paradigm’s validity. Scientists who are less willing to limit themselves to the established confines of the older paradigm begin to push past the boundaries and by re-conceptualizing the parameters of the problem, create a new paradigm that subsequently replaces the older model.²⁴

What happened in the Marine Corps was conceptually similar Kuhn’s model, with the military thinking substituting for scientific thinking. Before the adoption of maneuver warfare, attrition was the dominant paradigm in the Marine Corps. In the period after the Vietnam war, an intellectual crisis emerged as doubts emerged over the attrition model’s validity. Marine who were unsatisfied with attrition warfare began to

²⁴ Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. 3rd edition (Chicago and London: University of Chicago, 1996).

look elsewhere and saw in maneuver warfare a new paradigm, which they believed would more adequately address the needs of the organization. The years 1979-1989 were the years of the paradigm shift from attrition to maneuver.

There are other models in military history, but they fail to address completely what took place in the Marine Corps. Barry Posen's *Sources of Military Doctrine* is a comparative analysis of the development of French, German, and British doctrines of Maginot Line, *blitzkrieg*, and air defense respectively during the years between world wars. Posen's model of analysis incorporated balance of power theory and organizational theory. Balance of power theory posits that the recognizable patterns of behavior in states, combined with geopolitical context, explain the development of military policy. Organizational theory, on the other hand, looks to recognizable patterns of behavior common to military organizations, namely their relationship with external agencies such as civil government, for the explanation of doctrinal developments. Posen's conclusion was that balance of power provides a better vehicle than organizational theory to understanding doctrinal developments between the two World Wars.²⁵

Posen's model describes doctrine as an organizational reaction to geopolitical considerations. His model is correct in that geopolitical considerations do have an effect on doctrine. Concern over a possible conflict with the Warsaw Pact definitely influenced the maneuverists. There was also significant discussion in the Corps over the potential effects maneuver warfare would have in the ability to execute its strategic mission as an amphibious force. Because of these concerns, there were geopolitical considerations that factored into the maneuver warfare discussion. What Posen's model does not deal with though, is the process involved in adopting and institutionalizing doctrine.

There is a model that more closely fits the Marine Corps case, the example of the Prussian military reformer Gerhard von Scharnhorst discussed by Charles White in *The Enlightened Soldier*. The Scharnhorst example demonstrates how and why military change can begin at the lower levels of an organizational hierarchy. The seminar group during which maneuverists developed most of their ideas bears similarity with Scharnhorst's creation, *Militärische Gesellschaft*, which was active in Prussia from 1801

²⁵ Barry R. Posen, *Sources of Military Doctrine. France, Britain, and Germany Between the World Wars* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1984).

to 1805. Many of the reforms following the defeat of the Prussian Army at Jena-Auerstadt had their origins in ideas developed by the society.²⁶

Like Scharnhorst and the members of the *Militärische Gessellschaft*, the maneuverists were a reform movement trying to initiate changes to how their respective organizations trained and fought that allowed for greater individual judgment and initiative. Both groups encountered resistance from militarily conservative elements in their organization who resisted changes to established practices. They shared similarities in the types of reforms they advocated such as a more rigorous education for officers. They also shared many similar ideas, such as stressing the use of individual judgment and initiative by lower-level commands. The methodology of both groups was similar, both relied on the use of professional military journals to increase exposure for their ideas.

The key difference though between the two is that Scharnhorst and his associates began making the case for reform before a substantial military disaster, while the maneuverists began pressing their case for reform after Vietnam. More important though were differences in the size and scope of the reforms. The stakes involved for Scharnhorst included the survival of the Prussian state itself. What Scharnhorst and his associates advocated had implications not only for the Prussian army, but Prussian society as well, such as the practice of universal conscription. While the maneuverists argued for reform in the context of Cold War struggle for survival and were connected through Lind and Boyd to civilian and political reformers advocating larger changes to the Department of Defense, the scope of their proposed reforms was principally internal to the Marine Corps and of limited scope.

Another model of reform that bears similarity to the Marine example is the case of British General Sir John T. Burnett-Stuart in as described in Harold Winton's *To Change an Army*. Winton uses Burnett-Stuart as an example to highlight the crucial role played by institutional patrons in military reform. Burnett-Stuart encouraged the experimentation with mechanized and armored doctrine in units he commanded. Winton notes that Burnett-Stuart had to tread carefully a middle ground between the conservative elements of the British army and the proponents of armored warfare who advocated more

²⁶ Charles Edward White, *The Enlightened Soldier. Scharnhorst and the Militarische Gessellschaft in Berlin, 1801-1805* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1989).

ambitious changes. Burnett-Stuart provided protection for Britain's armored warfare visionaries, allowing them to write and experiment and shielding them from organizational retaliation. Winton's work demonstrates the value of support from individuals with significant organizational authority in fostering intellectual development and doctrinal reform.²⁷

Burnett-Stuart has a parallel in the maneuver warfare case study, General Alfred M. Gray. Both generals fostered innovation and experimentation in the formations they commanded. Unlike Gray, Burnett-Stuart did not reach a position in the British Army comparable to that reached by Gray, who as Commandant of the Marine Corps ascended to the highest statutory position within his organization and used his authority to foster innovation throughout the Corps. Burnett-Stuart's example also reveals the limitations faced by an organizational patron of reform. Reform and innovation existed only where Burnett-Stuart exerted direct control, but his authority to do so in the British army at large was ultimately quite restricted.

Gray's institutional authority to adopt maneuver warfare would have been moot if maneuver warfare was a mature and viable concept by the time of his ascendance to Commandant. A reform-minded authority figure like Gray needs not only a developed idea, but also one acceptable to his organization. In Gray's case, the work of the maneuverists eased his path somewhat since maneuver warfare had been circulating and gaining converts among the Corps's officers for a decade before he initiated its official adoption. If the ideas had been altogether too unfamiliar, Gray's ability to institutionalize maneuver warfare might have been diminished. In this specific case though, Gray used his authority to overcome the last obstacles to maneuver warfare's official adoption.

The principal sources for this study of maneuver warfare were the writings of the maneuverists, combined with interviews and correspondence. This is only one side of the story, but it deals with the side that ultimately succeeded. The perspective of the attritionist side of the story is undoubtedly different and deserves future exploration. What the sources do tell us is that how Marines thought about and trained for war was the subject of significant discussion within the Corps. What the sources also tell us is that

²⁷ Harold R. Winton, *To Change An Army: General John Burnett-Stuart and British Armored Doctrine, 1927-1938* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988).

proponents of maneuver warfare devoted significant time and effort to developing and promoting the concept.

Within the larger question of how the intellectual change came about in the Marine Corps are a number of smaller questions. How did maneuver warfare come into the Marine Corps? How did conditions in the Marine Corps contribute to or hinder maneuver warfare's reception. Who were the Marines that tended to favor maneuver warfare as the best course of action for reform? How did a viable maneuver warfare movement come about? How did the reformers develop and refine their ideas? How did they promote their ideas? What were maneuverist criticisms of contemporary doctrine? What did non-maneuverists think of the concept? Which Marines tended to oppose maneuver warfare? How did maneuverists rebut these criticisms? What was different about the Marine Corps of 1989 from that of 1979 that made adoption of maneuver warfare possible? The answers to these questions as well as the overall question of how the Marine Corps became a maneuver warfare organization enhance the overall understanding of the process of military reform and intellectual transformation.

Chapter one of this study will look at the maneuver warfare seminar where many of the key maneuverists met regularly in the early-1980s to develop and refine maneuver warfare for the Marine Corps. In this chapter, we will see how emerging trends within the Corps contributed to maneuver warfare's reception by the Corps. Chapter two of this study will look at the theoretical aspect of the intellectual transformation by studying the public debate between maneuverists and attritionists in the pages of the *Marine Corps Gazette*. Chapter three will look at the functional/practical component of the maneuver warfare movement and the initiatives to educate and train Marines to execute a maneuver-based doctrine. Chapter four will look at how Alfred Gray used his authority in his position as Commandant of the Marine Corps to complete the process.

CHAPTER 2 - Genesis of a Movement

In 1979 maneuver warfare was a concept on the periphery of the Marine Corps. An identifiable movement of Marines would soon emerge that was devoted to the promotion of maneuver warfare in the Marine Corps, initiating a process that moved it from the fringes to official acceptance. The appearance of maneuver warfare was the consequence of several emerging trends within the Corps of the late 1970s. First, new ideas on war began to permeate the Corps from the outside. Second, within the Corps there was dissatisfaction with Vietnam War veterans over how Marines fought and prepared to fight in that conflict. Third, an organizational vacuum existed within the Corps that left it without an organizational mechanism for innovative doctrinal development. Fourth, there was a discussion in the years prior to the maneuver warfare debate over the Corps future direction as an organization. The emergence of a movement in support of a new doctrinal formulation cannot be understood without taking into account this context. All of these trends came together in the early 1980s and found expression in the form of the maneuver warfare movement.

The Marine Corps in 1979 was in the midst of a Kuhnian crisis that emerged from dissatisfaction with the attrition paradigm. Many Marines had questions regarding how their organization would fight in the future, yet were questioning the old doctrines ability to supply the necessary answers. There were some Marines who developed concerns over whether what they were teaching and how they were training were adequate for the needs of the battlefield. Other Marines had doubts over the future direction of the organization emerged, while some Marines grew concerned whether the Corps even had a future. The organization's official hierarchy proved unable to provide answers to these questions. As a result, some Marines began to look elsewhere to find answers for themselves. A movement emerged centered on an idea that these Marines believed successfully answered the questions which the Corps faced, maneuver warfare.

Some officers who began seeking answers for themselves began meeting and discussing their ideas with each other. Students at the United States Marine Corps

Amphibious Warfare School located at Marine Corps Base Quantico, VA organized a maneuver warfare seminar from which emerged the maneuver warfare movement. This seminar was critical to the overall development of maneuver warfare. Several of the key figures to the development of maneuver warfare, such as Michael Wyly, G.I. Wilson, William Woods, and William Lind, were regular participants. These individuals were among maneuver warfare's most active promoters and defenders in the Corps, especially in the pages of the *Marine Corps Gazette*. In addition to publishing articles, these Marines developed the techniques and methods for training and educating a maneuver-based doctrine at the individual and unit-level.

What brought these men together was a shared interest in the ideas of a retired Air Force colonel, John R. Boyd, dubbed the "Godfather of Maneuver Warfare" by Jeffery Cowan. Boyd's area of interest was in the relationship between human mental processes and their relationship to war. Boyd presented his ideas in a briefing that he began giving in the mid-1970s called "Patterns of Conflict" in which he analyzed 2,500 years of human conflict. The conclusion he reached was that the key to defeating an opponent was to disrupt his capability for cohesive action by achieving mental and morale collapse. Central to a military force's ability to act cohesively was the ability to "Observe-Orient-Decide-Act." Boyd argued that at all levels of conflict both combatants observe their opponent's actions, they process the information and orient themselves to make a decision based on filters such as training, education, culture, personality, they make a decision, and then act on the decision. The process then begins anew. Using this model, Boyd posited that the combatant who completes their Observe-Orient-Decide-Act process faster and disrupted the ability of his opponent to complete his own process developed an advantage by compelling him to react to a rapidly changing environment with which he is increasingly unable to cope so that he becomes increasingly isolated.²⁸

²⁸ Jeffery E. Cowan, Major, USAF, *From Air Force Pilot to Marine Corps Warfighting: Colonel John Boyd, His Theories on War, and their Unexpected Legacy*, Unpublished Master's thesis, United States Marine Corps Command and Staff College, (Marine Corps University: Quantico, VA, 2000). The oldest known version of "Patterns of Conflict" dates from September 1976. Boyd continually revised and updated "Patterns of Conflict" well into the 1980s. However, "Patterns of Conflict" is conceptually complete by late 1977. Observe-Orient-Decide-Act is normally described as the Boyd Cycle or OODA Cycle/Loop. Colonel Frans Osinga's thorough study of Boyd's work has pointed out that this constitutes an oversimplification and fundamental misunderstanding of Boyd. Observe-Orient-Decide-Act was never intended to be a simple, closed-sequential cycle it has been typically portrayed, but an open system of constant inputs and feedback. John R. Boyd, USAF, Ret., "Patterns of Conflict," Unpublished briefing ,

Boyd identified a general progression in human conflict from warfare based on attrition to one based on maneuver. His discussion included topics as diverse as hoplite warfare, the Mongols, Sun Tzu, Guibert, Napoleon, Clausewitz, Jomini, Mao, the German 1918 Operation Michael, T.E. Lawrence, the German *blitzkrieg* and demonstrated the methods employed by one side to triumph over their opponent. Boyd's work also introduced many of maneuver warfare's key concepts: focus of main effort, mission-tactics, commander's intent, objective, reconnaissance-pull versus command push.²⁹

Boyd's ideas were especially influential for one individual who actively promoted the retired colonel's ideas through talks and publications, William S. Lind. Lind was a civilian legislative aide to Senator Gary S. Hart, as well as an extremely vocal critic of the military services and an advocate of military reform. While he had no personal military experience, Lind did have a strong interest in military history, particularly German military history. Before becoming a legislative aide, Lind was a student in a doctoral program at Princeton University.³⁰

In early 1976, Lind's "Some Doctrinal Questions For the United States Army" in *Military Review*. Lind criticized the concept of Active Defense in the forthcoming 1976 revision to the United States Army's *Field Manual 100-5, Operations*. In the article, Lind divided doctrine for "mechanized and armored forces" into two "basic types": "attrition/firepower" and "maneuver."

Both doctrines employ fire and maneuver. However, in the attrition/firepower doctrine, maneuver is primarily for the purpose of bringing firepower to bear on the opponent to cause attrition. The objective of military action is the physical reduction of the opposing force. In the maneuver

version dated December 1986 located at <http://www.d-n-i.net/boyd/pdf/poc.pdf>. Last accessed 12 April 2007. For Osinga's study on Boyd's ideas see Frans Osinga, Colonel, Royal Netherlands Air Force, "A Discourse on Winning and Losing: Introducing Core Ideas and Themes of Boyd's 'Theory of Intellectual Evolution and Growth' Unpublished briefing, 13 July 2007, located at http://www.d-n-i.net/boyd/2007_conference/osinga_2007_boyd_conference.ppt, Last accessed 19 July 2007. For more on Boyd and his ideas, see Grant T. Hammond, *The Mind of War: John Boyd and American Security*. See also Robert Coram Boyd: *The Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War* and Cowan, "Warfighting Brought to You By ...," *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* (November, 2001), 61-63.

²⁹ Authors note: Some of these terms Boyd mentioned explicitly, others he discussed using different terminology. Boyd, *Ibid*.

³⁰ William S. Lind, Telephone interview by author, 22 January, 2007. Lind continues to promote Boyd's ideas to the present day.

doctrine, maneuver is the ultimate tactical, operational and strategic goal while firepower is used primarily to create opportunities for maneuver. The primary objective is to break the spirit and will of the opposing high command by creating unexpected and unfavorable operational or strategic situations, not to kill the enemy troops or destroy enemy equipment.

The traditional American military model, he argued, fit into the attrition/firepower category.³¹

The basic dichotomy Lind identified in this article between attrition/firepower and maneuver doctrine would remain at the heart of the maneuver warfare debate in the Marine Corps, especially in the pages of the *Marine Corps Gazette*. Lind used attrition and maneuver to describe behavioral characteristics associated with how an organization used the physical actions of fire and maneuver. Attrition doctrine uses the act of maneuver to enable the “physical reduction” of the enemy. On the other hand, maneuver warfare as a mindset makes fire the subordinate to maneuver of maneuver, where the goal was not to just to kill the enemy, but to achieve a psychological collapse.

Lind’s position as a legislative aide allowed him access to military installations. He periodically traveled to different commands to observe training and promote a move to a maneuver based doctrine. According to Lind, the Army was generally unreceptive to his calls for a shift to maneuver doctrine, but the Marine Corps in the late 1970s appeared to offer a more receptive climate. Lind attributes this responsiveness to the political sensitivity of the Marine Corps to Congress. Maneuver warfare was appearing in a climate of increased political attention to the sphere of military affairs and there was a growing bipartisan military reform caucus in the latter half of the 1970s that was questioning the doctrinal practices of the armed forces.³²

Maneuver warfare made its first documented appearance in the Marine Corps as a featured concept in a two-article series entitled “Winning Through Maneuver Warfare” published in the *Marine Corps Gazette* in October and December of 1979. The author, Captain Stephen Miller, was clearly familiar with the work of Boyd and cited the dichotomy between attrition and maneuver styles of battle. Miller argued in favor of decentralized, high-tempo offensive and defensive operations that maximized the

³¹ Lind, “Some Doctrinal Questions for the United States Army,” *Military Review* (March 1977), reprinted in *Military Review* (Jan/Feb 1977), 135-143. See also Fallows, *National Defense* and Gary Hart *America Can Win*.

³² Lind, Telephone interview.

initiative of lower-echelon commanders in a potential conflict against the Warsaw Pact. Miller specifically mentions the Boyd OODA cycle as the cause of maneuver warfare's superiority. Curiously, after the publication of these two-articles, Miller disappeared from the scene.³³

Although how Miller encountered the work of Boyd is unknown, it was more than likely he heard Boyd deliver one of his presentations. His work is significant in that it was the first mention of the concept by a Marine who was trying to urge its adoption by other Marines. Boyd's ideas would prove especially appealing to Marines who were dissatisfied with training and education in the Marine Corps due to their personal experiences in Vietnam.

Just as Boyd and his ideas were beginning to filter into the Marine Corps in the autumn of 1979, Lieutenant Colonel Michael D. Wyly, another key figure to the development of maneuver warfare in the Corps, began teaching tactics at the Marine Corps Amphibious Warfare center located at Quantico, VA. In August 1979, Wyly had assumed the post of Head, Tactics Division, Amphibious Warfare School (AWS). A veteran of two tours in Vietnam, first as a psychological operations officer in 1965-66 and as a rifle company commander in 1968-69, he observed firsthand what he perceived to be the deficiencies to the Marine Corps's approach to war. Marine officers were good at the technical and procedural aspects of war such as the proper emplacement and employment of machine gun and mortar positions, but what they lacked were the tactical skills necessary to defeat the enemy in battle. Rather than focusing outward towards the enemy and his actions, Wyly instead observed that Marine actions focused on inward procedures and processes; the most important consideration in planning and executing operations was ensuring that they were in accordance to doctrinal manuals and proper procedures employed. He observed that across all ranks, but especially among senior officers, there was insufficient attention paid to the study of war and military history. Many of the challenges of Vietnam could have been anticipated had there been

³³ Terry Terriff suspects he eventually left active service. Terry Terriff, "Innovate or Die': Organizational Culture and the Origins of Maneuver Warfare in the United States Marine Corps." *The Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol. 29, no. 3 (June 2006): 475-503. G.I. Wilson, who was acquainted with Miller before he published these articles, is also unaware of his subsequent activities. G.I. Wilson, Colonel, USMC (Ret.), Telephone interview by author, 23 January 2007

more time and effort devoted to the study of warfare. Wyly's tour as a company commander also left an impression on his thinking. He observed his Marines using their formal training as the foundations to developing their own tactics that deviated from the manuals and proved generally successful for dealing with the opponent.³⁴

In assessing Wyly's personal experiences, it is clear that he was an individual whose thinking approached maneuver warfare before it existed as an articulated concept. One of his most significant contributions to the overall development of maneuver warfare was that his combat experience lent credibility to the maneuverist cause. Another significant contribution he made was in developing an educational curriculum for maneuver warfare. For Wyly, Vietnam served as irrefutable evidence that military success depended on more than technical or procedural proficiency, and he was determined to teach his students differently. What Wyly lacked though was a clearly articulated alternative model to teach to his students and it was in that search for an alternative model that he encountered Boyd and his ideas.

Wyly was not alone in his assessment of the tactical deficiencies he observed in Vietnam. Anthony Zinni shared his recollections of the 1970s Marine Corps with Tom Clancy in *Battle Ready*. In 1971, Zinni as a captain was assigned to the 2d Marine Division. Zinni noted that among officers he observed and interacted with it was captains with Vietnam experience who "were more interested in war fighting than the senior officers." Zinni recalls that he and his peers "loved talking about operational issues ... coming up with new ideas." What supplied the motivation to these discussions was that they "suffered through all the lousy tactics, the poor policies, and the shitty things that went on in the field" during the Vietnam War.³⁵

Zinni sharply criticized senior officers because he expected more from them. He had hoped that these officers with extensive prior experience in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam would have passed their knowledge down to junior officers. What Zinni observed instead was that for these more senior officers "war fighting was pretty far

³⁴ Michael D. Wyly, Telephone interview by author, 20 September 2006; *Idem*, E-mail to author, 13 September 2006. See also Robert S. Coram, *Boyd: The Fighter Pilot Who Changed the Art of War* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 2002), 373-378 and Wyly in Santoli, 124-128.

³⁵ Tom Clancy with General Tony Zinni, USMC (Ret.) and Tony Koltz, *Battle Ready* (New York Berkley Books, 2004), 134.

down their agenda. Operational competence was simply not as valued or demanded as much as administrative competence.” Senior officers valued “management” not “tactical skills.” According to Zinni, it was “rare, in fact, to find anyone above the rank of captain who talked about tactics and war fighting.”³⁶

We cannot determine the precise numbers of officers discontented by the conduct of the Vietnam. What we can infer is that one of the possible reasons why maneuver warfare gained traction in the Corps is that it resonated with at least some of the Marines of Wyly and Zinni’s generation. Maneuver warfare offered a possible solution to rectifying the deficiencies in tactical abilities that some relatively junior officers felt that the senior leadership was neglecting.

During a training exercise at AWS during the fall of 1979, Wyly first met Lind, who was present as an observer. It was through his contact with Lind that Wyly heard of John Boyd and his ideas. Based on Lind’s recommendation, Wyly invited Boyd to Quantico to speak to his students at AWS, informing him that he had two hours available for the presentation. Boyd responded that he required five hours. Wyly then went to Major General Bernard Trainor, the Director of the Marine Corps Education Center, which oversaw AWS, for authorization to change the schedule. Trainor expressed some concern over changing the schedule to accommodate a speaker with whose subject matter neither he nor Wyly was familiar, but he gave his consent on the premise that the students would be able to exercise their own judgment to decide whether they agreed with Boyd’s ideas. According to Wyly, the general reaction from the students was positive. Several students were so intrigued by Boyd’s ideas they remained after class to continue their discussion with him well into the evening.³⁷

Boyd’s initial visit to Wyly’s tactics class sparked an interest among his students, but it was students from his second class in 1980-1981 who would play a key role in developing and spreading the new maneuver warfare ideas to the rest of the Marine Corps. During that academic year, Wyly invited Lind to deliver a maneuver warfare lecture to his AWS tactics class, despite some resistance from the rest of faculty to having

³⁶ *Ibid.* 134-135.

³⁷ Michael D. Wyly, Colonel, USMC (Ret.), Telephone interview. Other accounts of the Boyd’s AWS presentation appear in Coram, 378-79; Burton, 54-55; and Santoli, 126.

Lind address the school due to his vocal criticism of the armed forces. After Lind spoke, several students became interested in maneuver warfare and wanted to pursue their study of it further. With Wyly's encouragement, Captain William Woods along with a few others of Wyly's students who heard Lind's presentation approached him and asked if he would lead an off-duty discussion group on maneuver warfare, which he did.³⁸

Because of the formation of this study group, the 1980-1981 academic year was a watershed for maneuver warfare's evolution within the Corps. While officers like Miller were calling for the adoption of maneuver warfare as early as December 1979, several factors inhibited its adoption. First, it was a new concept whose main intellectual developer and its key promoter was an Air Force colonel and a civilian with no military experience. For maneuver warfare to succeed within the Corps, Marines would need to become involved in developing and promoting it. Miller's articles were the first step in that direction. Second, maneuver warfare's earliest supporters tended to come from the junior grades. Although, Wyly was a colonel, for maneuver warfare to have any success it would eventually need more supporters within the Corps from the senior grades, especially from the general officer ranks. While company- and field-grade officers are generally allotted a great deal of responsibility within the Corps, the influence they can exert pales in comparison to that of a general officer. Third, while Miller introduced the term in print in the *Gazette*, more Marines would need to become aware of maneuver warfare, understand it, and come to support it. Increased support would only be possible from increased awareness and understanding and by successfully addressing the objections to it that would arise. Maneuver warfare itself required more development in order for Marines to understand and execute its tenets. Boyd had introduced a substantial amount of new terminology in his work such as *schwerpunkt*, *aufstragtaktik*, and commander's intent. More Marines would need to understand the meaning of these terms and learn how to apply them in an operational context. This could only be possible through the existence of a developed system of education and training. Fourth, maneuver warfare needed to be more than an appealing idea; maneuverists would need to demonstrate that it was a practical and viable operational concept. Maneuver warfare had

³⁸ Lieutenant Colonel William S. Woods, USMC (Ret.), Statement to author, 11 April 2007. The precise month/day of Lind's presentation is unknown.

to be more than an academic discussion and its supporters had to demonstrate that Marines could learn it and, more importantly, employ it. Maneuverists needed to develop some mechanism for demonstrating that Marines could employ the new doctrine.

With the formation of the maneuver warfare study group, the process that would address these issues began. Wyly, several of his students, other interested Marines, and Lind constituted the core membership of this group, which met over the course of the 1980-81, 1981-82, and 1982-83 academic years at AWS. The number of regular participants was small, ranging at times between a half-dozen and a dozen individuals, the fluctuating numbers reflecting the informal nature of the group. Personnel fluctuated as AWS classes graduated, Marines received new duty assignments, and new students arrived. One of the key figures in this group, Captain William Woods, continued to participate even after he graduated in the summer of 1981 and received orders assigning him to the Second Marine Division based at Camp Lejeune North Carolina. Woods drove regularly to Virginia, accompanied by a close friend, G.I. Wilson, who although not one of Wyly's AWS students, had also become interested in maneuver warfare. Of the participants of this study group during its most productive period between 1980-1982, the key intellectual contributors were Wyly, Wilson, Woods, and Lind.³⁹

The maneuverists held their meetings during weekends at Lind's home in Arlington or at Wyly's base quarters in Quantico. These meetings were not random or haphazard, but serious weekly gatherings with a general set of expectations for its attendees. Among the requirements for participants was preparatory reading and weekly papers on maneuver warfare for submission to the rest of the group. A requirement for attendees was that they actively participate in the discussions. On certain occasions, Lind arranged for guest speakers for their expertise in military affairs. During the seminar, the maneuverists developed maneuver warfare increased their knowledge of the concept by studying in closer detail many of the historical cases presented by Boyd in *Patterns of Conflict*. They paid close attention to twentieth-century German military history: the development of stormtrooper tactics and Operation Michael of 1918. The seminar participants also studied the development of *blitzkrieg* in the interwar years, its initial

³⁹ Wyly, Telephone interview; Lind, Telephone interview; G.I. Wilson, Colonel, USMC (Ret.), Telephone interview; Woods, Statement.

triumphs during the early years of World War II, and the battles of the Russian front. Among other examples they looked at were the tactics of the Mongols under Genghis Khan, the 1939-1940 Russo-Finnish War.⁴⁰

These seminars were the genesis of the maneuver warfare movement within the Corps. The officers who participated were the first committed maneuverists. With the exception of Wyly, maneuver warfare in its early phase was a junior officer movement. Maneuverists were captains with no direct experience with Vietnam, most having entered active service after the period of the Marine Corps's greatest involvement. This is understandable given the fact that the attendees of these meetings drew from Wyly's AWS students. According to Wyly, the fact that they were captains was fortuitous to the movement, for while lieutenants often lack the personal experience to make an informed decision, captains on the other hand have more professional experience that they could use to assess the practicality of what they learned in the classroom. Captains were also much more confident about thinking for themselves than lieutenants were. While they were more senior than lieutenants, captains have not progressed so far in their careers that they are resistant to new ideas. As Lind observed, officers above the grade of captain, specifically those in the field grades, are often less open to supporting new ideas. Field officers, having progressed further along in their careers, tend to have a greater vested interest in continuing the existing system they understand. Lind commented that field grade officers are much more hesitant to adopt change because new ideas "invalidate their experience."

The Marines participating in these groups had a number of motives. As Wyly recalled, there was a sense of duty and professionalism motivating the participants. Wilson identified the scarce financial resources of the Marine Corps during the 1970s as also influencing the development of their ideas. What the Corps lacked in material assets, the maneuverists hoped to overcome in the development of innovative ideas and development of individual skills. Woods noted that participants came out of a desire wanted to improve their sense of understanding of war itself and to study it in a serious, professional manner. Wyly also noted an underlying sense of urgency in their activities,

⁴⁰ Wyly, Telephone interview; *Idem*, E-mail to author; Lind, Telephone interview; Wilson, Telephone interview; Woods, Statement.

believing that if they did not work hard enough, they would be unprepared for the next conflict. Wyly also noted that attendees tended to not be career-oriented. For these Marines promotions and management of their careers were secondary to their achieving a greater understanding of war. Wyly also observed that their sense of commitment, duty, and shared belief the value of their work also added to the productivity of these meetings, and their minority status in the Marine Corps only increased their resolve to work harder. They understood that they were promoting ideas not part of the mainstream in the Marine Corps. They knew they would have critics and answering them required well-articulated defense.⁴¹

The initial maneuver warfare seminar in Quantico produced satellite groups throughout the Marine Corps. According to Woods, as AWS graduation approached in 1981, the seminar participants agreed that they would work to promote maneuver warfare in their future duty assignments. At least two groups for the promotion of maneuver warfare existed outside of the Washington, D.C area. Woods and Wilson were among the founders of one group located at Camp Lejeune. Their group gained official sponsorship from their commanding general, Alfred M. Gray, and became the Second Marine Division Maneuver Warfare Board. A second group made up of First Marine Division officers known as the Junior Officers Tactical Symposium emerged at Camp Pendleton, CA.⁴²

The Marines who were developing the ideas that would become the Corps future doctrine were doing so absent from any centralized direction or guidance from the organizational hierarchy. This is in stark comparison to the Army, which would publish its own doctrinal manual, *Field Manual 100-5, Operations* to promulgate its own capstone doctrine, *AirLand Battle*. The development of *AirLand Battle* used the full resources of TRADOC in a centrally directed, bureaucratic process. Unlike the parallel

⁴¹ Wyly, Telephone interview; Lind, Telephone interview; Wilson, Telephone interview; Woods, Statement.

⁴² Woods, Statement.

developments in the Army that produced *FM 100-5*, there were no Marine equivalents to a General Starry or TRADOC guiding the development of the new doctrine.⁴³

One possible reason why these two doctrines developed along such fundamentally different lines can be deduced from a 1983 article establishing the Doctrine Center at Marine Corps Development and Education Center in Quantico (MCDEC). Prior to January 1983, doctrinal development did not have a separate and coequal subcomponent of the MCDEC which in addition to overseeing the fielding on new systems and the education of Marines, had responsibility for doctrine development. The creation of the Doctrine Center was based on a

recognition that doctrinal development has not been a dynamic activity in the Corps in recent years. Many believe that the effort has not been well coordinated, and has not kept pace with the rapidly changing demands of the modern battlefield. Instead of providing basic concepts that guide development, education, and training, it has tended to follow these activities. Part of the reason for this has been a basic organizational deficiency.

The new Doctrine Center would serve as the central organ responsible for the development of new doctrinal concepts, the revision and updating of all publications, ensuring standardization throughout the Corps.⁴⁴

New doctrine for the Corps emerged from outside of the formal bureaucracy in large part because the Corps lacked an entity capable of developing new concepts. The lack of a Doctrine Center suggests that such development had not been a high priority for the Marine Corps since it did not merit its own separate and coequal section. It is telling though that Headquarters Marine Corps established the doctrine center after the maneuver warfare movement had begun to gain momentum and support in the Corps. There is a strong possibility that the move to gain institutional control over doctrinal conception and development may have been a reaction to the activities of the maneuverists, who by the time of the development of the Doctrine Center had been writing articles for a few years promoting their ideas. Another possibility for why the Corps established the Center was to replicate the success enjoyed by Army and its TRADOC in developing *AirLand Battle*, which appeared the previous year. The Army model may have influenced the Marine Corps to develop its own doctrinal development

⁴³ For more on the development of *AirLand Battle* see Romjue, *From Active Defense to AirLand Battle*.

⁴⁴ "Doctrine Center Established at MCDEC," *MCG* (1983): 10.

apparatus in order to remain competitive in the development of innovative thinking in the 1980s.

The Corps lacked an effective apparatus for the developing innovative doctrinal concepts at a time there was growing concern over its organizational future. In 1976, the Washington, D.C. based-policy think-tank the Brookings Institution published its analysis of the Marine Corps's post-Vietnam organizational future in *Where the Does the Marine Corps Go From Here?* The study proceeded on the premise that the Corps' organizational emphasis World War II-style amphibious operations threatened its relevance in prospective conflict. The study argued that for the Corps to remain relevant as a service it had to "shift its principal focus from seaborne assault ... the gold age of amphibious warfare is now the domain of historians, and the Marine Corps no longer needs a unique mission to justify its existence."⁴⁵

This is not an easy choice for an organization like the Marine Corps to make. The Corps prides itself on its distinctive character, that it is different from the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. If the Corps departed from its traditional amphibious role, the distinctions between it and the Army begin to disappear, and with it the rationale for maintaining its existence as a separate service. The Corps found itself in an organizational dilemma: it could do nothing and risk elimination due to irrelevance or change and risk elimination by losing the unique identity that has preserved the organization's existence.

Terry Terriff's "Innovate or Die" argues that maneuver warfare was born in this climate. Terriff examines two possible choices the Corps faced: maintain an emphasis on its amphibious character or adopting a more mechanized posture for a potential European conflict. According to Terriff, the appearance of maneuver warfare as a new tactical and operational concept offered a possible solution to this internal tension by offering the Corps a means to increase its relevance in a war involving an extended ground campaign, yet without compromising its amphibious character.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ Martin Binkin and Jeffrey Record, *Where Does the Marine Corps Go From Here?* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1976).

⁴⁶ Terry Terriff, "'Innovate or Die': Organizational Culture and the Origins of Maneuver Warfare in the United States Marine Corps." *The Journal of Strategic Studies* Vol. 29, no. 3 (June 2006): 475-503.

The Corps of the late-1970s was ready for a Kuhnian paradigm shift. An intellectual crisis was emerging, as Marines began to question the validity of the old model for a number of reasons. The extent of the doubt cannot be precisely measured, but given the volume of publication and intensity the maneuver warfare debate would generate, it is safe to infer that it was sufficient to produce an intellectual crisis within the Corps. Some Marines from the Vietnam generation with combat experience and junior officers who joined afterwards, who were both looking ahead to future battlefield, were beginning to identify deficiencies in the existing model which produced doubt regarding its battlefield efficacy. Other Marines questions also emerged over the future of the Corps. Would it remain amphibious or would it become mechanized? In addition, the official hierarchy appeared to lack the means to supply answers to these questions through innovative ideas, a void that the maneuverists were able to fill.

Maneuver warfare and AWS emerged at an opportune time as Marines were in search of new ideas. Boyd and his ideas offered a resolution to the intellectual crisis by offering a new paradigm of the battlefield. In the absence of centralized direction from the higher echelons of the organizational hierarchy, new doctrine would emerge in a decentralized manner from the lower echelons of the organization. The Marines who participated in the AWS seminar and its satellites who became maneuverists believed they had found an answer to the questions posed by the major issues of the 1970s Marine Corps. Not all Marines were ready to change their way of thinking or thought that maneuver warfare was the answer. As will be shown in the next chapter, they articulated ideas of their own that challenged the maneuverist way of thinking. The maneuverists faced three critical challenges. First, in order to resolve the intellectual crisis and advance the paradigm shift, maneuverists would need to convince fellow Marines that the older model was no longer valid to the organization's needs and that maneuver warfare could successfully replace attrition. Second, in order to advance the paradigm maneuverists would need to move maneuver warfare from the conceptual to the practical level. Maneuverists would need to develop a methodology to teach maneuver warfare to other Marines demonstrate its efficacy in training exercises. In the pages of

the *Marine Corps Gazette*, the maneuverists began to make their case for maneuver warfare, while they simultaneously developed the techniques for educating and training for maneuver warfare at Quantico and Camp Lejeune. Third, in order to complete the paradigm shift the Marine Corps would need to find someone in the organizational leadership willing to make the transition to a maneuver doctrine official. Fortunately for the maneuverists there was a general officer, Alfred M. Gray who was receptive to new ideas and willing to make changes to the organization.

CHAPTER 3 - The Maneuver Warfare Debate

Although maneuverists thought they had the solution to intellectual crisis of the late-1970s Marine Corps, there were still those who were less eager to accept their solution. In the early part of the 1980s, maneuver warfare was the subject of heated public debate in the pages of the Marine Corps's professional journal, the *Marine Corps Gazette*. In 1993, the editors of the *Gazette* commented, "Few topics" in its publishing history "have engendered such a lively debate." According to one estimate, fifty articles appeared between 1979 and 1989 on the topic.⁴⁷

The *Gazette* was only one component of the maneuver warfare movement. Concurrent with the debate in the pages of the *Gazette*, maneuverists were also devising training and education methods for maneuver warfare. Colonel Michael Wyly was refining a curriculum to teach maneuver warfare to Marine officers at Amphibious Warfare School. At the Second Marine Division commanded by Major General Alfred M. Gray, two participants of the AWS seminar, Captains William Woods and G.I. Wilson, were teaching the division's commands the tenets of maneuver warfare, devising training exercises, and integrating maneuver warfare with division's operating procedures.

The *Gazette* played a different role in effecting an intellectual transformation in the Corps. The central issue of the debate in the *Gazette* was to convince fellow Marines to accept maneuver warfare and to abandon attrition warfare; a goal only partially achieved by mid-decade. In its pages, maneuverists had to convince fellow Marines that the old model of attrition was invalid and inadequate to the Corps' needs. With the old model invalidated, the next step was to convince others that maneuver warfare was a viable replacement.

⁴⁷ "Maneuver Warfare Articles," *MCG* (July, 1993): 65; Cowan, 64. The total of fifty also appears in an editorial comment to Captain Kevin R. Clover, "Maneuver Warfare: Where Are We Now?," *MCG* (February, 1988): 59. Cowan's number is more than likely taken from the *Gazette* editorial comment.

The *Gazette* provided the maneuverists a forum to present their case for a move to maneuver doctrine and to rebut the arguments of critics. The first articles that appeared from late 1979 through 1981 identified the dichotomy between attrition warfare and maneuver warfare, demonstrated why maneuver was superior to attrition, and made the case that the Corps could adopt maneuver warfare. The arguments of maneuverists produced a series of counter-arguments in 1982-1983 from attritionists as to why the Corps should not adopt a maneuver-based doctrine, followed by a series of rebuttal articles from maneuverists. It was clear though that some Marines were willing to accept some aspects of maneuver warfare, but were also hesitant to adopt it wholesale and by the end of 1983, it appears that the debate had stalled with neither side gaining a clear upper hand.

The *Gazette* was crucial to the process of intellectual transformation because it exposed readers to the new concept and allowed readers to develop their own informed opinions. The maneuverists and the attritionists were able to make their respective cases on the merits and defects of maneuver warfare in a public forum. It was clear from the repeated appearances of maneuver warfare articles in the pages of the *Gazette* that the subject was engendering a great deal of attention and interest in Marines, whether they viewed the concept favorably or not.. It is also clear that over time, the readers of the *Gazette* and Marines in general were gradually accepting at least some aspects of maneuver warfare. The journal was also significant in preparing the Corps for the eventual move to a maneuver-based doctrine by gradually introducing Marines to the idea and accustoming readers to its terminology and key tenets. By the time the Marine Corps published *Warfighting*, maneuver warfare was not a new and controversial topic, but an idea that had achieved some general acceptance within the Corps.

The *Gazette* was the best venue for a public professional debate over doctrine and the Corps's future. One reason was it was the only forum solely devoted to discussing Marine professional issues. Unlike the Army, which had multiple professional journals such as *Parameters* and *Military Review* published by the U.S. Army's War College and the Command and General Staff College, the only publication devoted to Marine Corps issues capable of reaching large numbers of Marines was the *Gazette*. While it has a sister publication, *Leatherneck*, this latter publication devoted its pages to reporting on

contemporary news and events and was not intended as a forum for professional discussions. The journal *Proceedings*, published by the United States Naval Institute, while it occasionally featured material devoted to Marine Corps concerns, was devoted predominantly to issues concerning the United States Navy.

Although it is a private publication of the Marine Corps Association, the *Gazette* has always been the acknowledged professional journal of the Corps, serving as an outlet for the discussion of relevant issues and topics. Its readership has tended to consist of Marines who thought seriously about professional issues, from “former Commandants and long-retired senior officers through the commissioned and noncommissioned ranks, both regular and reserve, to brand new officer candidates and to many faithful outside these wide parameters.” Readers could turn to the *Gazette* and remain abreast of new trends and developments as well as offer a forum for those seeking to promote or defend new ideas.⁴⁸

The maneuverists began submitting their articles just as retired Marine Colonel John Greenwood, became the *Gazette*’s editor. Several of the key maneuverists credit Greenwood’s willingness to provide a forum for their controversial topic as instrumental to their eventual success. As the editor of the *Gazette*, Greenwood could have simply refused to publish the articles of the maneuverists or insisted in changes in content as conditions for publication. The fact that he did not is also of critical importance. Wyly recalls that for the most part, Greenwood did not exercise this editorial prerogative.⁴⁹

Greenwood justifiably deserves the credit ascribed to him for his willingness to publish new and controversial material, but he was also continuing the policies of his predecessor, Robert W. Smith. When he assumed the editorial responsibilities in March 1980, Greenwood informed *Gazette* readership that he would continue Smith’s stance that the publication’s “*raison d’être*” was to “provide a forum for open discussion and a free exchange of professional ideas.” According to Greenwood, the “success of the publication was contingent on the actions of its readership, to ‘share their ideas, report their successes and failures, offer comments and suggestion, call attention to problems,

⁴⁸ John Greenwood, Colonel, USMC (Ret) “Editors and Authors,” *MCG* (March 1980): 31.

⁴⁹ Wyly, Interview; Lind, Interview; Wilson, Interview.

propose new approaches ... on the willingness of readers to contribute to the professional dialogue.” While the *Gazette*’s editorial board would try to publish articles that would appeal to the diverse scope of its readership, the readership would determine what “the priority interests” for the publication. These priorities would be what the readership saw as “fit to raise” in “articles, letters and calls; the subjects you think are affecting the well-being of the Corps.”⁵⁰

In a June 1980 article, Smith identified the challenges associated with serving as the editor of a military professional journal. Before Greenwood assumed control of the *Gazette*, its editorial committee had struggled for “more than a year” over editorial policy. Smith noted that the *Gazette* faced criticism from two sides. Some criticized for being “merely a house organ” that shied away from controversial material that deviated from the Marine Corps’s official positions. Others criticized the *Gazette* for publishing controversial material because it undermined Headquarters Marine Corps by providing too much space to “those who accent the Corps’ shortcomings.” Smith and the editorial board reached the conclusion that “If the *Gazette* pronounces itself an open forum and then published nothing critical of the Corps when all things are not ‘right’ with the Corps, then it has not fulfilled that purpose honestly.” Smith believed that senior Marine leadership was “strong enough to swallow an occasional article that presents hard and unpleasant criticism” and sufficient favorable material appeared to offset the criticism. He also concluded that motives behind critical articles “came from highly motivated individuals whose only purpose was to make the Corps better.” There was a long-term institutional benefit to an open editorial policy because “critical articles often surfaces information previously unknown in high places and offer suggestions for improvement in the Corps.”⁵¹

Greenwood’s willingness to continue the work of his predecessor and publish controversial material highlights what is possibly an underappreciated aspect of an intellectual debate, the role of editors. Greenwood had control over what work saw print in his publication and what ideas would reach his readers. Moreover, while Greenwood may or may not have agreed with the maneuverists, his willingness to publish the work

⁵⁰ Greenwood, *Ibid.* Italics in original.

⁵¹ Robert W. Smith, Lieutenant Colonel, USMC (Ret.) “Keep Telling It Like It Is,” *MCG*, (June 1980): 63-66.

aided the movement by providing their ideas public exposure. The *Gazette* exposed maneuver warfare to readers who may have been unfamiliar with the concept or to some who were interested, but did not have access to information on the subject. Publication also meant that the ideas of the maneuverists were subject to peer review and comment. This allowed maneuverists to address readers' specific concerns and doubts by crafting specific responses to issues raised. Without Greenwood's willingness to provide them a forum, maneuverists might have had little means to spread their ideas.

Why did Greenwood provide the maneuverists a forum? One reason may have been simply in keeping with his stated belief that the purpose of the *Gazette* was to serve as an open forum for the exchange of new ideas. He may have not agreed entirely with the maneuverists, but to deny them a forum would have betrayed the purpose of the publication. Another possibility is Greenwood could have been reader reaction to the maneuver warfare articles. Whether favorable or unfavorable, maneuver warfare was creating a response among *Gazette* readers and spurring discussion within its pages. As an editor, Greenwood could not have ignored the interest the maneuver warfare articles and the responses were creating. While his exact motives in relation to maneuver warfare may never be known, what remains undisputed is the contribution he made to the intellectual transformation of the Corps by providing maneuverists a forum to disseminate and defend their ideas.

Over the course of the doctrinal debate, the polarization between maneuverists and attritionists became readily observable. Kenneth McKenzie noted that the debate was "personalized and emotional" and that the rhetoric used by both sides reflected their deep investment:

Who wanted to be labeled an attritionist with all the bloody baggage of Passchendaele, static warfare, and heavy casualties? Conversely, to be called a "maneuverist" implied a giddy, carefree vision of flitting about the battlefield—moving for the sake of movement alone. The overexuberant and confrontational arguments advanced by proponents of maneuver warfare tended to further polarize the issue.⁵²

On the surface, the debate appeared decidedly one-sided. The number of articles published by the maneuverists far exceeded those produced by their opponents. The attritionists, however, had the advantage of being the established model and

⁵² McKenzie, 64.

champions of the naturally conservative mindset associated with the military professional. The challenge faced by the maneuverists was to argue convincingly that there was a need for change and that adoption maneuver warfare represented the future direction for the Corps.

These first identifiable maneuver warfare articles appeared in the *Gazette* in October and December of 1979. The author, Captain Steven Miller, argued that maneuver would allow a materially inferior force such as the Marine Corps to defeat Warsaw Pact formations. Miller analyzed Soviet doctrine and demonstrated how Marines could apply the concepts of maneuver in defensive and offensive roles to achieve victory. He noted an established record in military history of commanders from Alexander the Great to Nathan Bedford Forrest who were able to defeat opponents while outnumbered because they were able to disrupt the cohesion of their opponents.⁵³

Miller's second article argued that maneuver warfare itself was not conceptually new, elements of it having existed in the campaigns of ancient military commanders and the writings of military thinkers dating to the Enlightenment. Miller then noted the versatile nature of maneuver that made it applicable in a variety of operation, and suggested that it had applications to amphibious warfare. Miller concluded that in the face of numerically superior opponents armed with weapons of increasing technological sophistication, maneuver warfare offered the best hope for the Corps. A new doctrine would "propel the Marine Corps into the 21st century where it will again, as in World War II, provide the leadership to this revolution in warfare"⁵⁴

While Miller championed the adoption of maneuver warfare as a course of action for the Corps, the organization in 1979 was in no position to accept the concept. The term maneuver warfare itself was still relatively unknown to most Marines. Few Marines had heard the term, and an even smaller number fully understood what it was. On the other hand, Miller's articles contained elements that resonated with his fellow Marines. The Marine Corps in the post-Vietnam period had doubts over its future and its ability to remain viable on the modern battlefield beyond a strictly amphibious role. Maneuver warfare offered an operational concept that would allow the Corps to have a

⁵³ Miller, "Winning Through Maneuver Part I," *MCG* (October 1979): 28.

⁵⁴ Miller, "Winning Through Maneuver Conclusion," *MCG* (December 1979): 63.

NATO role, a means to offset the fact that the Corps would be outnumbered tactically and operationally. Maneuver warfare could offset the technological advantages of opponents through tactical and operational ingenuity, an important consideration for a fiscally conscious service. Maneuver warfare was also a flexible operational concept, one that the Corps could employ in a spectrum of possible uses worldwide, without compromising the unique amphibious nature of the service.

In March 1980, William S. Lind's "Defining Maneuver Warfare" appeared.

Lind's article highlighted the dichotomy between maneuver warfare and attrition:

Firepower-attrition is warfare on the model of Verdun in World War I, a mutual casualty inflicting and absorbing contest where the goal is a favorable exchange rate. The conflict is more physical than mental. Efforts focus on the tactical level with goals set in terms of terrain. Defenses tend to be linear ("forward defense"), attacks frontal, battles set-piece and movement preplanned and slow.

In contrast, maneuver warfare is warfare on the model of Genghis Khans, the German blitzkrieg and almost all Israeli campaigns. The goal is destruction of the enemy's vital cohesion—disruption—not piece-by-piece physical destruction. The objective is the enemy's mind not his body. The principal tool is moving forces into unexpected places at surprisingly high speeds. Firepower is a servant of maneuver, used to create openings in enemy defenses and, when necessary, to annihilate the remnants of his forces after their cohesion has been shattered.

Lind then pointed out that maneuver warfare was more than a system for conducting battle, but represented a different way of thinking about war. Maneuver warfare was more than just physical movement on the battlefield. He then urged the Corps continue its tradition as a forward thinking service by adopting maneuver warfare.⁵⁵

The *Gazette* printed a single response to Lind's article by Colonel John C. Studt in June 1980. Studt praised the piece as "brilliant and thought-provoking." He also noted that Lind's proposals entailed more than shifting from attrition to maneuver warfare, but involved the "dramatic reeducation of our officer corps to develop a much higher level of self-reliance, individual initiative, and creative thinking which will result in flexible command on the battlefield." Studt was also impressed with Lind's use of history and was not surprised that it took a "military historian, rather than a military

⁵⁵ William S. Lind, "Defining Maneuver Warfare for the Marine Corps," *MCG* (March 1980): 55-58.

practitioner, who is proposing a radical change in tactics.” Finally, Studt urged the Marine Corps to “rise to the challenge” posed by Lind.⁵⁶

Studt’s response highlighted one of the difficulties the maneuverists faced. Employing maneuver warfare required more than just changing the battlefield actions of Marines to include more movement on the battlefield. It also required that Corps fundamentally change how its officers thought. In addition to convincing Marines to change their thinking, another challenge maneuverists faced was convincing them to accept the dichotomy between maneuver and attrition-based styles of fighting.

In 1981, articles from the participants of the AWS maneuver warfare seminar began appearing in *Gazette* that continuing the theme that what defined maneuver warfare were not the physical actions, but the mental processes and mindsets behind them. The first such article was “The Maneuver Warfare Concept,” a collection of smaller articles by Wilson, Wyly, Lind, and General B.E. Trainor grouped under a single editorially appended title. Wilson reiterated several points raised in earlier articles--dichotomy between maneuver and attrition, the psychological aspects of maneuver warfare, its relationship to Boyd’s ideas--but Wilson also identified several deficiencies in the Corps which needed addressing before it could adopt maneuver warfare.

First, Wilson identified the Marine Corps as risk averse and unwilling to take chances--what he called a “bureaucratic mindset.” Second, he questioned the privileging of managerial ability over combat ability in officers. Third, he called for increased flexibility and responsiveness in two areas--logistics and command--as necessary for the rapidly changing conditions of maneuver warfare. Fourth, Marines needed to show more initiative on the battlefield.⁵⁷

Wilson then reminded readers of the wide applicability of maneuver warfare and that it offered “the only substantial hope for success” in combat situations where Marines would most likely be outnumbered. He then reminded readers that maneuver warfare was not just synonym for armored or mechanized warfare. Technology was not central to

⁵⁶ Given the tone of the letter and its timing, this is probably before Studt established his own meeting group to study and discuss maneuver warfare. John S. Studt, Colonel, USMC, “Letter to Editor,” *MCG* (June 1980):12. Studt would later write the foreword to Lind’s *Maneuver Warfare Handbook*.

⁵⁷ G.I. Wilson, Captain, USMC, Michael D. Wyly, Lieutenant Colonel, USMC, William S. Lind, and Bernard Trainor, Major General, USMC, “The ‘Maneuver Warfare’ Concept,” *MCG* (April 1981): 49-51.

the definition of maneuver warfare. Instead, it was the ability to move and act more “consistently and rapidly than the opponent,” quoting an earlier piece by Lind. Wilson warned his fellow officers that the exigencies of the global situation were such that the “the time is now for actively accepting, teaching, and training for maneuver warfare.” What the Corps lacked to make maneuver warfare a reality was a manual outlining how the Corps would practice a maneuver-based doctrine. The Corps “could no longer wait to develop an effective maneuver warfare capability,” and it “desperately needed ... a doctrinal publication on maneuver warfare, a manual of maneuver war!”⁵⁸

Wilson’s call for a maneuver warfare manual was prompted by a recently released publication *Operational Handbook 9-3(Rev. A), Mechanized Combined Arms Task Forces (MCATF)*. Although document did include maneuver warfare concepts, Wilson contended, “the treatment ... is extremely brief, inadequate, and isolated from the rest of the text.” According to the Wilson, the handbook accomplished its task of detailing how to organize MCATF, but “fails ... in its handling of the maneuver concept itself.” While maneuver appeared in the *OH 9-3 (Rev. A)*, Wilson’s criticism was that it appeared “isolated” in the text, which suggested that maneuver warfare was not originally organic to the text and inserted afterwards. The result was “one ends up with only half the equation.” The solution Wilson advocated was that “a complete doctrine of maneuver warfare must be developed.”⁵⁹

The appearance of *OH 9-3 (Rev. A)* indicated maneuver warfare concepts were gaining traction within the Corps. Maneuver warfare was appearing in Marine Corps Development and Education Command publications, but the nature of the publication it appeared in reflected its status as unofficial. The *OH* series were “publications promulgating information and instructions relating to doctrine, tactics, techniques, and organizational structure” but they were not authoritative. The publications in the *OH* series circulated to Marine Corps units and schools for “field and academic use, evaluation, and refinement,” which meant they were effectively trial versions of new ideas and concepts. After a period of evaluation and comment by the Corps and

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 51.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

“resultant modification,” the concepts contained in an *OH* publication would eventually find incorporation into the Fleet Marine Force Manual (FMFM) series of publications.⁶⁰

OH 9-3A was not the only Marine Corps publication to begin to incorporate maneuver warfare concepts. It was joined in January 1981 by *Educational Center Publication 9-5, Marine Amphibious Brigade Mechanized and Counter-mechanized Operations*. Excerpts of its passages addressing maneuver warfare appeared as part of the “The Maneuver Warfare Concept.” Among the concepts *ECP 9-5* promulgated was that “the primary objective of the force employed should be the force’s cohesiveness,” “stereotyped operations” should be avoided, commanders should be able to rapidly mass or disperse forces as necessary, command and control should be decentralized and mission orders used, and all components of a force needed to be as mobile as the assault elements.⁶¹

ECP 9-5 represented a minor advancement for maneuver warfare, but was far from an authoritative organizational adoption of the concept. The editorial comment accompanying the short excerpt of *ECP 9-5* noted that it was only an instructional publication “for student use and field consideration,” which meant that like, *OH 9-3A*, it was not authoritative doctrine for Marines. Another flaw of *ECP 9-5* was it provided little explanation or elaboration on how to enact the document’s recommendations. A final flaw was the context of the document. Appearing in an educational publication on mechanized and counter-mechanized warfare seemed to suggest that maneuver warfare was simply synonymous with those terms and not a drastic reorientation in thinking.⁶²

The perceived defects of in the treatment of maneuver in *OH 9-3A* and *ECP 9-5* ultimately centered on two differing perceptions of what maneuver warfare was. These publications defined maneuver warfare in terms of physical actions. They contained recommendations for how a force should be organized and employed but ultimately failed to defined maneuver warfare. For maneuverists, it was not actions that were at the

⁶⁰ Marine Corps Order 5600.20H Change 2 quoted in Commanding General, Marine Corps Development and Educational Command, *Operation Handbook 9-3 (Rev.A.), Mechanized Combined Arms Task Forces (MCATF)*, (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Development and Education Command, 1980).

⁶¹ Wilson, et al., “Maneuver Warfare Concept,” 51-52.

⁶² *Ibid.*

heart of maneuver warfare. Instead, it was the thought processes that underlay those actions. The same could be said of attrition. What defined the attrition type of fighting was ultimately not the preference for firepower or static warfare, but the thinking that formed the subtext of those actions.

In his contribution to the “Maneuver Warfare Concept,” Wyly articulately criticized the attrition mentality based on his observations of training exercises that used a simulation computer called the Tactical Warfare Simulation, Evaluation and Analysis System (TWSEAS). The TWSEAS function was to determine the relative casualties for both sides during training exercises based on the actions of the participants. For Wyly, the use of the computer created a false impression that winning was simply a matter of creating a favorable exchange with the enemy in casualties and destruction of assets. It was how Marines conceived of defeating that enemy that disturbed Wyly, especially the use of the phrase of “attriting the enemy” when Marines explained their plans and actions during the exercise. According to Wyly, the phrase itself was not only poor use of the English language, but more importantly, it reflected a defect in the tactical mindset of Marine officers who practiced attrition warfare. Wyly observed that since these exercises determined winners and losers based on quantitative criteria, exercise participants began to see this as the goal of the exercise. Wyly proposed that as an alternative “war games should focus on meaningful things such as destruction, not attrition. We destroy the enemy when we destroy his will to resist, unless he is woefully short on resolve.” Wyly then cited the examples of the Soviet Union in World War II and the North Vietnamese as two cases where the victorious side in the conflict sustained higher casualties than their opponents, but whose will to resist remained strong despite the losses.⁶³

At the heart of Wyly’s observations was that these simulations failed to account for the fact war was as much an art as it was a science. Simulations and wargames had no value if they failed to account for the “value of surprise, deception, attacking the flank as contrasted against the front, striking weak points compared to strong.” What Wyly called for were computer simulations that did not just count the casualties, but taught

⁶³ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

participants to “discover where the decisive point is, what disarms the opponent when denied him, and what dilemma can put him on its horns.”⁶⁴

Lind’s September 1981 article “Tactics in Maneuver Warfare” continued the theme that a reassessment in thinking was necessary to practice maneuver warfare, because they misunderstanding what tactics meant in a maneuver context. They perceived maneuver doctrine as just change in physical actions, a different way of attacking or defending, and not the shift in thinking required. Lind also observed that Marines were looking in vain for a formula or checklist to guide them in execution in maneuver tactics. He reemphasized to Marines maneuver warfare is “not a new formula, but a *replacement for formulas*.”⁶⁵

Lind reminded Marines that the key to tactics in maneuver warfare was a mindset—“not just a way of moving, but a way of thinking.” Lind then defined what constituted the maneuver mindset: “A *process* of combining two elements, techniques and education, through three mental “filters” or reference points—mission-type orders, the search for enemy surfaces and gaps, and the focus of our own main effort—with the object of producing a *unique* approach for the specific enemy, time, and place. To cultivate these skills, Lind called for institutional and doctrinal changes: “We must give officers time to read, think, and reflect. We must devote our schools to educating officers in the art of war, not just more training in techniques. And we must rewrite FMFMs so they cannot be read as recipe books.”⁶⁶

Wilson’s January 1982 article, “Maneuver/Fluid Warfare: A Review of the Concepts,” recapitulated many of the ideas and themes of earlier articles but treated two issues in particular which had not received significant attention in the earlier pieces: logistics and artillery. He argued that would need to change how it employed both to be effective maneuver warfare. Artillery would need to become more mobile, capable of rapid displacement, and located as close as possible to forward elements. Logistics would need to become more mobile and flexible in maneuver warfare. Wilson went as far as to say, “The successful execution of maneuver warfare will hinge in a great part on

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 53.

⁶⁵ Lind, “Tactics in Maneuver Warfare,” *MCG* (September 1981): 36. *Italics* in original.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 37-39. *Italics* in original.

logistics ... though not glamorous, logistical planning is the foundation of maneuver warfare.”⁶⁷

In that same month, Captain P.J. Klepper II published an article “Food Service and Maneuver Warfare,” which dealt with the issue of feeding a military force in the rapid, high-tempo environment of maneuver warfare. Klepper argued that the Marine Corps lacked “a food service concept that can meet the flexibility” needed for maneuver warfare. Klepper noted that most discussions on maneuver warfare failed to account for the challenges of feeding a force while on the move. According to Klepper, Marine food service assets were too wedded to a static mentality and incapable of providing mobile food service. The training of line and food service units alike would need to adjust to reflect the challenges of feeding troops in a maneuver warfare environment.⁶⁸

The narrower focus of subject matter continued in Chief Warrant Officer-2 Bryan Lavender’s April 1982 article “Current Training and Maneuver Warfare.” Lavender observed an inconsistency between how Marines trained and how they were expected to fight. He warned *Gazette* readers, “You fight the way you train. If you train with misconceptions those misconceptions will follow you into combat, where reality will disabuse you of them at a severe price.” He noted that training scenarios were unrealistic because Marines rarely lost against their opponent, and were heavily scripted, which negated their value.

Lavender drew from his observations of three types Marine Corps training exercises, the Combined Arms Exercise (CAX), the Marine Corp Combat Readiness Evaluation System (MCCRES), and Command Post Exercises (CPXs). Lavender criticized all three for being “scenario-driven” since success in these exercises depended on the ability of participants to follow procedures or successfully accomplish tasks on a checklist. He argued that while the Corps was talking maneuver warfare, it was actually training attrition. Lavender recommended many of solutions identified in earlier maneuver warfare articles such as cultivating an organization willingness to take greater

⁶⁷ Gary I. Wilson, Captain, USMC, “Maneuver/Fluid Warfare: A Review of the Concepts,” *MCG* (January 1982): 54-61.

⁶⁸ Paul J. Klepper II, Captain, USMC, “Food Service and Maneuver Warfare,” *MCG* (January 1982): 26-27. Klepper’s connection with the AWS seminar group is unknown.

risks and increased study of military history. He also requested the development of exercises where outcomes were not predetermined.⁶⁹

What must not become lost in this analysis of the maneuverists and the debate in the *Marine Corps Gazette* were their parallel activities to advance the intellectual transformation of the Marine Corps. Wyly was continuing to implement a maneuver warfare tactics curriculum at the Amphibious Warfare School. In the summer of 1981 Woods and Wilson were beginning to disseminate maneuver warfare in the Second Marine Division. What is noteworthy is that these Marines were continuing to promote maneuver warfare in other venues, all the while publishing print articles, in addition to their professional responsibilities. Even more noteworthy is the willingness of these Marines continued to champion maneuver warfare and participate in the public debate despite the attacks they and their ideas would receive.

The debate did not begin in full earnest until 1982 when letters and articles critical of maneuver warfare began to appear. Over two years had gone by without any meaningful criticism of maneuver warfare appearing. Why no criticisms appeared for so long is puzzling. The editorial policies of the *Gazette* were such that they would have most likely printed any that they received. On the other hand, this was highly beneficial to the maneuverists who were able to discuss their views in print without rebuttal.

The fact that it was the maneuverists that initiated the discussion gave them an advantage in the progression of the overall debate. Publishing first gave them the advantage of framing the discussion. *Gazette* readers were discussing the advantages and limitations of the concepts the maneuverists advanced. Critics who wished to enter into the dialog were in a position of reaction, which meant that they would have to rebut the maneuverist arguments.

The critics, primarily field grade officers, tended to be outright dismissive of maneuver warfare as an untenable concept that lacked solid grounding in reality. These critics first began to use the term “maneuverist” to describe maneuver warfare advocates. Their work can be seen as representative of the “attritionist” arguments against maneuver warfare. One of the charges laid by attritionists is that none of the ideas maneuverists

⁶⁹Bryan Lavender, CWO-2, USMC, “Current Training and Maneuver Warfare,” *MCG* (April 1982): 63-64. Lavender’s connection with the AWS seminar group is unknown.

advocated were particularly innovative and that their work was derivative from that of other military thinkers. There was a tone of condescension when they discussed maneuver warfare concepts. Another common theme in their criticism of maneuver warfare was that maneuverists had unrealistic expectations. These critics hoped to counter the maneuverist criticisms of contemporary doctrinal procedures and methods and that adoption of maneuver warfare would result in greater combat effectiveness. The attritionists countered with their own assertions that maneuverists were unrealistically optimistic in their predictions that they could bring about the enemy's collapse. They also thought that maneuverists underestimated the skill levels and resolve of opponents.

Major C.J. Gregor criticized maneuver warfare for being unoriginal in a January 1982 *Gazette* letter. In particular, Gregor singled out the work of Lind, describing his work as "hardly original." The ideas Lind advanced were "rewordings of classic Liddell Hart, von Mellinthin, Balck, von Manstein and Guderian whom he doesn't even credit for their origins."⁷⁰

However, Gregor, never criticized the merits of maneuver warfare, directing his anger primarily at the lack of historical study and analysis among Marine officers. For Gregor, "the deference and praise heaped on Mr. Lind as some modern master of military thought and analysis" only revealed the intellectual deficiencies of the Corps. The fact that an outsider was a key intellectual contributor only "goes to show what intellectual and historical cripples we are, bordering on professional incompetence" because Marine officers "don't study war and history" and "let some congressional, civilian staffer tell us about it." Gregor closed with a warning that unless the Corps did more internally to foster intellectual activity, "civilians" would "do it for us and make decisions by default."⁷¹

While not a direct attack on maneuver warfare itself, Gregor's letter reveals some of the criticisms held by Marine officers. Its concepts were not especially original. More importantly, Gregor's letter reveals some of the discomfort that Marines felt that organizational outsiders were involving themselves in Corps' affairs and risked increased intrusion.

⁷⁰ C.J. Gregor, Major, USMC, Letter to the Editor, *MCG* (January 1982):16.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Lieutenant Colonel R.H. Voigt's "Comments on Maneuver Warfare" provided a clearly defined summation of the criticisms against maneuver warfare. Voigt referred to a *Gazette* editorial comment that the discussions of maneuver warfare "are naïve (and divorced from the realities of the battlefield." He concurred with this assessment and noted that:

Most discussions fail to give the professionals on the enemy side their due. It should not be assumed that enemy commanders will lose control of the situation and their forces disintegrate when faced with rapidly changing situations. I might suggest that our commanders will be as affected by rapidly changing situations as the enemy commander in spite of the fact that the fluid situation is self-imposed."⁷²

Also problematic for Voigt was the psychological emphasis of maneuver warfare. Voigt pointed out that "all American attempts at this strategy have met with failure and at a minimum have prolonged the conflict and increased our casualties, perhaps unnecessarily." He then cited Stalingrad, Tobruk, Dresden, Chosin, and Khe Sanh as examples of military forces continuing to fight on despite the near hopelessness of the situation, noting that a "professional and determined enemy will continue to fight in spite of being faced with a disastrous logistics or command and control situation."⁷³

Voigt also argued that maneuver warfare also appeared to produce a "gross overemphasis on mission-type orders." He believed that this emphasis "well-intentioned "but thought it "fails to grasp the true confusion that will exist on any moderate (or greater) intensity battlefield." Given this uncertainty, Voigt did not "believe that any relaxation of command and control will be appropriate." Uncertainty mandated increased control: "Without a 'big picture' planning and control apparatus, subordinate units will attack low priority targets, will be easily misled by enemy deception tactics, will outrun logistics and supporting arms capabilities, and perhaps will not be available to the commander when a high priority objective presents itself."⁷⁴

Voigt also doubted the predictions of maneuverists that they could achieve battlefield penetrations. For Voigt, maneuverists were presuming that the enemy lacked

⁷² R.H. Voigt, Lieutenant Colonel, USMC, "Comments on Maneuver Warfare," *MCG* (March 1982): 20.

⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

any skill or ability of his own to would leave vulnerabilities open, allowing the type of battlefield exploitation that maneuverists claimed was possible. According to Voigt, this perceived ability to achieve a deep penetration was also inconsistent with the argument that potential opponents would outnumber American forces numerically on the battlefield. Given this projected superiority, Voigt argued that the enemy would have ample resources to secure his vulnerable areas and prevent meaningful penetrations.⁷⁵

Voigt did agree that the empowering of subordinates advocated by maneuverists was worth further pursuing, but with a caveat:

Those authors whose FMF experience is limited might benefit from an onsite observation of a battalion or regimental exercise including our much vaunted combined arms exercises. A realistic appraisal of the tactical proficiency of the average small unit leader will show deficiencies in many *basic* areas of expertise required to command successfully in fast-moving, fluid situations. Let's start dealing reality and not with an ideal.⁷⁶

Voigt concluded, "I feel that many maneuver warfare concepts are valid to some degree. We must, however, base our future discussions on this topic on reality—on battle as it had proven to be and not on the battle as we would like it to be."⁷⁷

Another criticism of maneuver warfare, "Reexamining Maneuver Warfare," appeared in the *Gazette's* April 1982 issue. The author, Lieutenant Colonel Gordon Batcheller, felt "uneasy" about all the attention devoted to the subject in the pages of the *Gazette*. Batcheller was uncertain about how maneuver warfare "proponents conceive of its application to a given body of troops." What Batcheller wanted "to hear more about is how this technique or doctrine is superimposed upon an entire division, or in our case, a MAF without a certain amount of chaos resulting. Somewhere in the organization, training, and employing of forces, all the trappings of 'cookbook recipes' so lightly dismissed by the maneuverists are required." If the maneuverists opposition to "cook book recipe" meant "good-old flexibility" and "boldness," Batcheller was left "bewildered by the all the fuss over something so obvious." On the other hand, Batcheller was concerned that maneuverists "are advocating some dramatic new doctrine that rejects fire team, squad, platoon, company, and battalion formations, or recognizable patterns of maneuver." The issue was for him was exercising control over troops on the

⁷⁵ *Ibid.* Curiously, Voigt uses mission-type orders, not mission tactics.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

battlefield. “Genius,” he pointed out, was a rarity in military history usually appeared only in the highest command echelons. Batcheller had “difficulty with a concept that appears to presume this level of competence down to and including the small unit level.” Given the rarity of genius in military organizations, the old doctrine would have to suffice as a means of providing some order and control to the battlefield.⁷⁸

A second problem that Batcheller identified with maneuver warfare was the type of command and control maneuverists promoted was inconsistent with a force’s ability to coordinate all its assets effectively. Batcheller identified an apparent inconsistency in maneuverists’ arguments to employ “mission order tactics” and relaxed control, on the one hand, with calls for “completely integrated logistical and tactical considerations” on the other. In his opinion, the type of command and control advocated by the maneuverists limited a force’s ability to integrate logistics and tactics. He also thought that maneuverists failed to consider the level of detail needed to ensure proper coordination with supporting arms and between adjacent units. For Batcheller it was difficult to see how to coordinate tactical units and these other arms without the traditional control measures. The Marine Corps did not have many logisticians and “very few of them were mind readers.” The only way to ensure the close integration between maneuver units and supporting arms was through, “unfortunately, detailed control of all elements of the MAGTF, and all its subordinate units.” Maneuverists also failed to account for the “demands placed on communicators by the freewheeling approach.”⁷⁹

Batcheller conceded that the current system in place in the Marine Corps had limitations: “the need to command, control, and support certainly inhibits flexibility, but need not destroy it, nor render imagination and genius ineffective.” On the other hand, he felt that maneuverists had not adequately thought through the implications of their proposals, noting that he had yet to see a “thoughtful examination of the ramifications of the ‘turn them loose’ approach.”⁸⁰

⁷⁸ Gordon Batcheller, Lieutenant Colonel, USMC, “Reexamining Maneuver Warfare,” *MCG* (April 1982): 22-23.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

Batcheller's third concern was the maneuver warfare would compromise the Corps amphibious identity. He was concerned that maneuver warfare could lead to a "fascination for land vehicles and tactical 'mobility' for sustained land warfare that is inconsistent with our primary mission and statutory area of responsibility." Instead of Marines looking to increase their mobility, they should have devoted their efforts to finding a light, effective, and reliable way or ways to decrease the enemy's mobility."⁸¹

His final concern was that the move to a maneuver doctrine to promote mobility at the tactical level could potentially compromise it at the Corps's strategic level. He noted that insufficient attention had been paid to the examining "relevancy" of maneuver at either level to the Corps's "primary mission." Batcheller cautioned that the "simplistic embrace of maneuver warfare leads inevitably to more mechanization as a means of *tactical* mobility," but with inadequate consideration of its effects on "*strategic* mobility". Maneuver warfare he felt was incompatible to the Marine Corps because of its strategic mission: "What the relevance of all this tactical mobility is to a Service structured for violent assault, short operations, and stubborn defense is not clear." Batcheller questioned the ability of Marine combat service support units to provide the "flexible" and "responsive support" called for by the maneuverists given the strategic role of the Marine Corps as an amphibious expeditionary force.⁸²

Another criticism of maneuver warfare appeared in April 1982. Lieutenant Colonel J.P. Glasgow, Jr. wrote a letter to editor critical of Wilson's January 1982 article "Maneuver/Fluid Warfare: A Review of the Concepts." Glasgow spoke derisively of Wilson's work as a "regurgitation of Messrs. Boyd and Lind." Glasgow's main criticism of maneuver warfare itself was that he did not think it was "germane to every conceivable combat environment." He also criticized maneuver warfare for paying insufficient attention to the defense, inquiring whether "is maneuver warfare symbolic for always being on attack?" He echoed Batcheller's concerns that maneuverists had not fully thought through the implications of maneuver warfare for supply and the proper employment artillery.⁸³

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ J.P. Glasgow, Lieutenant Colonel, USMC, "Letters to the Editor." *MCG* (April 1982): 17.

What these criticisms of maneuver warfare shared in common was that they conceived of maneuver warfare not as a way of thinking as the maneuverists did, but as only a method or technique. This was ultimately the major point of departure between maneuverists and attritionists in the maneuver warfare debate. In their arguments in favor of maneuver warfare, the maneuverists conceived of maneuver warfare as a way of thinking which informed and guided actions on the battlefield, and as physical actions and methods. On the other hand, attritionists defined maneuver warfare solely in terms of actions, but omitted the line of thinking which governed those actions.

The criticisms against maneuver warfare prompted a series of rebuttal articles from maneuverists. The *Gazette's* June 1982 issue printed letter from Michael Wyly under the heading "Defending the 'Maneuverists'" in which he responded to criticisms which he felt were "way off the mark." First, he rebutted the contention that the maneuverists had paid insufficient attention to the issues of artillery fire control and supply. Wyly noted that the "officers who devote the extra time studying the history of how man has out-maneuvered man are the same whom I see being most conscientious in studying how to control fire and ensure optimum combat service support." Wyly also countered the notion that maneuver warfare had only offensive applications, and noted that "some of maneuver warfare's best applications are in the defense." Another charge he rebutted was that maneuverists were not taking into consideration that combat involved casualties on both sides and that maneuverists were overly one-sided and optimistic in their predictions. Wyly responded that maneuver warfare required "boldness and acceptance of risk. Clearly, this means acceptance of casualties *when necessary*." The final charge that Wyly countered was Batcheller's April 1982 argument that maneuverists had unrealistically high expectations for Marine proficiency at all levels of command down to the small unit. Wyly responded: "Should not we set out standards at the highest level and work up to them?"⁸⁴

Wyly closed by saying that both maneuver warfare's critics and its advocates needed to "study more" and urged maneuverists to keep writing despite the increasing criticism. He also came to the defense of Wilson against the Glasgow's criticism that

⁸⁴ This heading was most likely appended by the editorial board. Wyly, "Letter to the Editor," *MCG* (June 1982): 12.

Wilson's work was nothing more than the "regurgitation" of Boyd and Lind's ideas. He countered that an "interpretative article" and that its purpose was to spark discussion. Wyly took issue with Glasgow's personally directed comments against Wilson saying that he "did not deserve to be insulted."⁸⁵

Wilson and Woods' rebuttal to Batcheller appeared in August 1982. They attributed much of Batcheller's criticism to a "too casual reading" of the maneuver warfare articles appearing in the *Gazette*. A full understanding of maneuver warfare required "careful, thoughtful reading and reflection." To counter Batcheller's charge that maneuver warfare was inapplicable to the small-unit level, they called attention to the fact that the conceptual basis of maneuver warfare in the twentieth century originated in German infiltration tactics for trench assaults during World War I. As a concept, maneuver warfare was employable by Marine units as small as the fire-team and as large as a Marine Amphibious Force.⁸⁶

Wilson and Woods also made it a point to draw clear distinction between techniques and tactics: "Techniques are those things that all armies must learn to do well to succeed, e.g., movement to contact, assault on a fortified position, and weapons proficiency." Tactics were different, "the imaginative combination of those techniques allowing forces to move into unexpected places at unexpected times, with unexpected speed, deception, and surprise." What Wilson, Woods, and their fellow maneuverists opposed was the repeated use of same technique, "because stereotype tactics lead to predictability and defeat." Wilson and Woods also countered Batcheller's contention that maneuver warfare negatively affected the ability of units to perform their basic battlefield skills effectively. Wilson and Woods's response was that were not opposed to battle drills only the "combining of such drills into dull, repetitious, and rote tactics."⁸⁷

Wilson and Woods countered the charged that mission tactics compromised the ability for units to act together as part of a coordinated plan, lacking any effective command and control by pointing to features in maneuver warfare that enabled units to

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ G.I. Wilson, Major, USMC, and W.A. Woods, Major, USMC, "Defending Maneuver Concepts," *MCG* (August 1982): 34.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

act cohesively. They agreed that effective command and control was necessary. The lack of it would “lead to total chaos and a possibility of defeat in detail.” Maneuver warfare allowed for “Maximum flexibility and initiative” for subordinates without compromising effective command and control. What maneuver warfare required of a senior commander was: “clearly expressing his overall tactical intent, by tailoring the mission-type orders to support that intent, and by designating a point of main effort, for combat, combat service, and combat service support units. These mechanisms ensured that “the senior commander can retain enough control to ensure a cohesive, coherent effort from his force.”⁸⁸

Finally, Wilson and Woods rebutted charges that maneuver meant a move away from the Corps historic role as an amphibious force and increased mechanization. They argued that amphibious operations were not “an end in themselves” and ultimately were “merely a means of arriving on the battlefield.” Marines would still need to fight once ashore, commenting, “We do not fight decisive battles in the surf.” Maneuver warfare advocates never called for increased mechanization as the sole means to increased maneuver. What they advocated was “maneuver in relationship to our enemy, and this is something that is not dependent on mechanization or tied to machines.”⁸⁹

Wilson and Woods concluded that what “maneuver warfare advocates are attempting to institutionalize fighting smart.” When the next war came, it would be too late for the Marine Corps to reconsider its tactical doctrine. Maneuver warfare was much more than Batcheller’s dismissive characterization as just “good old flexibility and boldness.”⁹⁰

What Wilson and Woods in effect had argued was that critics of maneuver warfare had achieved only a superficial understanding of the concept. The use of the phrase “institutionalize fighting smart” again highlights that central to maneuver warfare was particular way of thinking that informed decision-making and actions and not the decisions or the actions themselves. The phrase also pointed to the scope of the change that was necessary to adopt maneuver warfare, the Corps as an institution would need to

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

undergo a fundamental change in thinking at all levels to execute maneuver doctrine properly.

This exchange of articles and letters highlighted the increasing polarization that maneuver warfare was causing in the Corps. The language used only increased the divide. When maneuverists said their objective was to “institutionalize fighting smart,” one could interpret that as implicitly saying that the Corps and any Marine who thought differently was doing the opposite. Attritionists, in some respects, were dismissive of maneuver warfare because junior advocates made up most of the maneuverists. While both sides raised valid issues and concerns, the issue would continue to polarize Marines because both camps had thought of maneuver warfare in conceptually different terms.

One of the strongest arguments against maneuver warfare was Major J.D. Burke’s “Maneuver Warfare & the MAGTF” which appeared in September 1982. Burke’s argument was that while maneuver was applicable to the conduct of amphibious operations, once ashore Marines would need to employ an attrition style of fighting. As a service, the Marine Corps was not suited for maneuver warfare because of how it organized itself for operations. According to Burke:

The MAGTF is organized and equipped to fight firepower attrition warfare, not maneuver warfare. This is not really surprising because (a) the MAGTF will be committed as a limited, defensive response to the threat, and, (b) since the MAGTF builds its combat power from zero, it is logical to look to the tactical defense as a probable solution.

Burke was not claiming that attrition was “inherently superior to maneuver warfare ... or vice-versa,” but that as an organization the Marine Corps lacked the assets to fight a maneuver style of battle once it was ashore, but the organic assets available to an infantry battalion were well suited for a defensive style battle and should be augmented. Burke closed his article: “Marines can *talk* maneuver warfare all they like. However, MAGTFs are not structured to fight maneuver warfare and are unlikely to be given an offensive combat mission while employed before the outbreak of general war.”⁹¹

⁹¹ J.D. Burke, Major, USMC, “Maneuver Warfare the MAGTF,” MCG (September 1982): 67-71. *Italics* in original. The MAGTF consists of four elements, The Command Element, Ground Combat Element, Aviation Combat Element, and Combat Service Support element. Depending on the size of the MAGTF its components can range in size from a battalion to a division. The smallest MAGTF the Marine Expeditionary Unit (at the time Marine Amphibious Unit) is centered on an infantry battalion while the Marine Expeditionary force (then known as Marine Amphibious Force) contains at least one infantry division.

Burke's contention that the MAGTF was best suited for the defensive along attrition lines "inspired considerable discussion" according to *Gazette*, which published several of the responses in December 1982 under the heading "Mission and 'The Offensive Spirit.'" Major Edward J. Robeson IV concurred with Burke that the MAGTF was not suited for maneuver warfare on land. Maneuver warfare was only applicable at the "amphibious task force level." By this, he meant at the operational and strategic level. At the tactical or landing force level, the Marine Corps should be their "traditional selves... assault troops trained and equipped to seize and defend advanced naval and air bases." One critic, Captain R.S. Moore, pointed out that the "real weakness in Major Burke's analysis rests in the idea that doctrine must conform to organization." Burke's contention that the MAGTF was not suited for offensive operations as the basis for his argument of a defense posture based on attrition was "a bureaucratic argument." Moore urged fellow Marines to continue to develop new doctrine concepts. Wyly responded by asserting that once ashore Marines should not maintain the defensive stance Burke urged. Wyly contended that the Soviets stood a good chance of countering a static, firepower/attrition-based defensive posture. Wyly also noted the Marine Corps's history of amphibious assaults followed by a swift push inland citing World War II and Korean War campaigns as examples of Marines pushing inland, instead of assuming defensive postures once ashore.⁹²

The *Gazette* printed Burke's response in the same issue. Burke reiterated that the Marine Corps "was not organized and equipped to fight a protracted ground campaign." It did not make sense to devote time and effort to a concept that the Marine Corps was inadequately organized to employ. He countered the historical arguments by noting that successful campaigns of the past offered no guarantee that future campaigns would be equally successful. Burke cautioned his fellow Marines that a "mismatch between doctrine (strategy) and force planning" was equivalent to bringing "the wrong team to a

⁹² Edward J Robeson IV, Major, USMC, L.G Karch, Lieutenant Colonel, USMC, R.S. Moore, Captain, USMC, Michael D, Wyly, Lieutenant Colonel, USMC. "The Mission and the 'Offensive Spirit,'" *MCG* (December 1982), 24-27.

game we knew we had to win.” He closed by reiterating that the Marine Corps was capable of executing a tactical defense and should improve on its capabilities to do so.⁹³

Wyly published a detailed response to Burk in January 1983 titled “Thinking Beyond the Beachhead.” According to Wyly, Burke’s argument of the assumption of a tactical defensive following an amphibious landing failed to achieve any decisive results, which were only possible with a rapid advance inland. He invoked the Anzio Campaign of 1944 as an example of the dangers of an amphibious assault that failed to push inland quickly and rapidly once ashore. Wyly disputed Burke’s claim that organizationally a MAGTF was incapable of executing maneuver warfare at the tactical level. While it was in need of “streamlining and improvement,” the MAGTF “should be and can be the most maneuverable force in the world.” The reason Wyly gave was that the MAGTF employed combined arms, placing ground and air assets under a single commander. Because of this the MAGTF “is easily well ahead of other military forces in maneuverability.” The challenge according to Wyly was “to make the MAGTF maneuverable.” The solution to this Wyly proposed was to be found through a synthesis of the ideas posited in “MAGTF& Maneuver Warfare” and “Mission & the Offensive Spirit.”⁹⁴

Wyly concluded his article by noting that the ability to conduct amphibious operations was not a capability unique to Marines, Army units were equally as capable of conducting landings. The value of the Marine amphibious capability he argued was its

ability to land from the sea and move inland, immediately, with our own all arms team. We can do far more than get on the beach. We can get off it and go beyond it We are an intervention force than can do what was not done at Anzio we can keep the battle flowing and destroy the enemy. That is the essence of our being-our *raison d’être*.⁹⁵

Amidst the exchange of criticisms between maneuverists and attritionists, there were Marines who were attempting to build a consensus among Marines with respect to maneuver warfare. One such work was Colonel Bruce Brown’s two-part series “Maneuver Warfare Roadmap.” Among Brown’s suggestions was to deemphasize the “psychological aspects.” What Brown meant was, to build consensus, the Corps needed

⁹³ *Ibid.*

⁹⁴ Wyly, “Thinking Beyond the Beachhead,” *MCG* (January 1983): 34-38.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

to downplay the maneuverist emphasis that maneuver warfare was in the end a particular way of thinking about war. The reason Brown cited was that it was “very difficult for most Marines to embrace that aspect at the tactical level.” It was more important to Brown that Marines focus on aspects about which they could agree: a focus on the defeat of an enemy, being unpredictable, an offensive orientation, and mission orders. Brown most likely meant that it was easier for Marines to understand and agree with maneuver warfare if they treated it as tangible actions. Brown also noted that for the Corps to accept and implement maneuver warfare it would need to be “built by Marines, for Marines—a style that will fit Marines.” What he effectively said was that, ultimately, maneuver warfare would need to conform and adapt itself to the Corps as an organization, rather than forcing the Corps to change to adopt maneuver warfare.⁹⁶

Brown then surveyed Marine *Landing Force Manuals* and *Fleet Marine Force Manuals* to identify aspects that were inconsistent with maneuver warfare. Brown concluded that the inconsistency between Marine Corps doctrine and maneuver warfare meant that the Corps would have to rewrite its entire doctrine. He noted that disparity between maneuver warfare and preexisting doctrinal publications “suggests that it is foolish to expect an immediate, or ‘miracle’ *LFM* on maneuver warfare.” In comparison to Wilson’s April 1981 article from April calling for maneuver warfare doctrinal manual, Brown concluded that more work was needed beyond a single manual. He agreed in principle with Wilson, but the scope of the task required “a deliberate and comprehensive approach to the challenge.” Anything beyond that Brown argued would be detrimental. “A rapid, frontal assault on the doctrine will only result in inconsistency at best, and chaos at worst.”⁹⁷

Brown’s arguments shared a similarity with those of maneuver warfare’s critics in that he thought that organizational characteristics of the Corps incompatible with all aspects maneuver warfare. His solution was to focus on what the Corps could adapt to suit its purposes and deemphasize the drastic reorientation of organizational thinking urged by the maneuverists. Brown’s paper was in effect a compromise between attrition

⁹⁶ Bruce G. Brown, Colonel, USMC, “Maneuver Warfare Roadmap. Part I Trends and Implications,” *MCG* (April 1982): 43.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

and maneuver, by identifying what parts of maneuver were compatible with attrition warfare.

Brown was not the only author trying to build consensus around ideas with which Marines could agree. As a follow-on to “Thinking Beyond the Beachhead,” Wyly published “War Without Firepower” in March 1983. Unlike Brown who thought the “psychological aspect” of maneuver inhibited acceptance of maneuver warfare, Wyly made the case for why he accepted the maneuver as the basis for an organizational way of thinking and hoped to find common ground between maneuverists and attritionists by showing that firepower was a central aspect of maneuver warfare. The maneuver warfare debate, he noted, had been a beneficial experience for the Corps: “Losses of temper, perceived insults, hare-brained arguments notwithstanding, Marines are concerned about how we are going to fight the next time around.” He also reaffirmed his affiliation with the maneuverists, saying that he “willingly allowed myself to be categorized with the ‘maneuverists’ because I have seen in their ideas, refreshing ways of thinking by which we can profit. I have accepted the ideas because I have found them to be validated in history and logical in the context of my combat experience.” Wyly attributed much of the disagreement surrounding maneuver warfare to a misunderstanding over the role of firepower. Many in the Corps, has mistakenly believed that maneuver warfare neglected or dismissed the importance of firepower on the battlefield. This misunderstanding “has stirred emotions and prevented those who have gravitated to one camp from learning from the other.” Wyly argued that fire and maneuver were both important on the battlefield and that maneuver warfare recognized this relationship. He hoped his invocation of his combat experience would grant credibility to the case for a move to maneuver warfare.⁹⁸

Wyly then proceeded to outline why he opposed attrition. He observed in his experiences that fire and movement had taken place in an attrition context, which proved “too expensive and indecisive.” Wyly then cited his tour as a company commander in Vietnam where he “saw maneuver work.” His Marines “completely baffled the enemy by applying our brains:” surprising and ambushing them. He then urged Marines to study history and learn from past practitioners of maneuver such as the Mongols, the Germans

⁹⁸ Wyly, “War Without Firepower,” *MCG* (March 1983): 17-18.

of World War II, and the Israelis. The maneuver he spoke of was much more than the physical dimension; it was again a mindset, a way of thinking and acting. Wyly closed with a call for reform “Old ways of doing things will not do. ‘We’ve always done maneuver’ is a hollow phrase. Major changes are called for. Resistance to new and foreign concepts must be overcome.”⁹⁹

What Wyly was attempting to do was to draw clear distinctions between maneuver and firepower as battlefield actions, and maneuver and firepower as mindsets (firepower being synonymous with attrition). Unlike the arguments advanced by Lind, Wyly was less willing to pronounce a clear-cut dichotomy between firepower and attrition as ways of fighting. He hoped to bring Marines to a consensus by agreeing that a move to maneuver doctrine did not mean the adoption of an unrealistic vision of war that hoped to defeat an enemy by exclusively using physical maneuver to achieve his surrender.¹⁰⁰

What is clear from the pages of the *Gazette* was that the situation that emerged by 1984 was a compromise between maneuver and attrition. That did not mean that maneuverists ceased to make the case for the institutionalization of maneuver warfare, nor did attritionists cease to publish critical articles. What the print debate did demonstrate were the limitations of what publishing in the *Gazette* could accomplish. The *Gazette* was a forum for discussing ideas, but what the maneuverists were proposing was to change how Marines fought. This meant that more was necessary than talking about maneuver warfare. Mechanisms were necessary to educate and train Marines in the new doctrine.

In June 1984, Lind published “Preparing for Maneuver Warfare.” He noted that “It seems to be about time take the next step: to discuss how the Marine Corps must change” in order to execute a maneuver based doctrine. Lind noted that there was a difference between accepting and understanding an idea and the ability to implement it. Lind cautioned about the dangers of becoming an organization with an “*academic*” understanding, but “entirely incapable of doing it in combat.” Lind was warning against an organization developing a false notion that it could execute maneuver warfare just by

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

understanding its concepts. Understanding a concept was not enough, the Corps needed to adopt practices conducive to assimilating maneuver warfare into the organization. Among several reforms that he recommended on subjects ranging from NCO promotions criteria to personnel policies, Lind also outlined a program to institutionalize maneuver warfare based on reforms to officer education. In his assessment, Marine officer education was inadequate to the task of teaching the skills relevant to modern warfare. Lind proposed a more prominent role for military history in the curriculum, modifications to training exercises that made them less scripted and predictable, and a reading program to increase the breadth of officer's knowledge.¹⁰¹

The *Gazette* printed several of the responses to Lind's article in September 1984 under the heading "Preparing for Maneuver Warfare." The responses were, for the most part, favorable. One reader, Major C.J. Gregor, called Lind's piece "well-thought out, well-written, and perceptive of some of our problems and possible solutions." Another respondent, Captain S.G. Duke, was "incensed" with Lind's generalizations on the state of Marine officer education but "did agree with many points," he raised. The comments made in the September 1984 *Gazette* suggest that for the most part, Marines were receptive to many of the institutional changes that Lind and other maneuverists had recommended.¹⁰²

One response in particular, by fellow maneuverist William Woods, stood out because it pointed to a significant obstacle to the institutionalization of maneuver warfare. Woods described the reforms in officer education that Lind proposed as "substantial and far reaching" and said that "to institute even the minimal would require a monumental redirection of our thoughts on war." The key to make the sweeping changes was senior leadership: "Those seniors who possess the power to make such changes will have to be of exceptional character—officers who can struggle through the suffocating muck of bureaucracy and break free into the clear brilliant light of reason."¹⁰³

¹⁰¹ Lind, "Preparing for Maneuver Warfare," *MCG* (June 1984): 47-55.

¹⁰² L.C. Carter, C.J. Gregor, Major, USMC, S.G. Duke, Captain, USMC, William Woods, Major, USMC, H-C Petersen, Major, USMC, J. Manter, and William C. Curtis, Lieutenant Colonel, USMC, "Preparing for Maneuver Warfare," *MCG*, (September 1984): 18-20.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

While Michael Wyly had implemented an educational program for tactical instruction at AWS along the lines recommended by the maneuverists, Woods was correct in his assessment that the support of senior officer leadership was needed to create wholesale organizational change. Woods was fortunate to have served in the Second Marine Division under Alfred M. Gray, a general who was not only receptive to maneuver warfare, but had taken the significant step of adopting it as doctrine for his division. Gray was at the time serving as Commanding General, Marine Force Atlantic, but in 1987 he became Commandant of the Marine Corps and used his authority to deal with Woods's "suffocating muck of bureaucracy" to institutionalize maneuver warfare.

The need to build a Marine consensus on maneuver warfare reflected its new position in the Marine Corps. Maneuver warfare was no longer the fringe doctrine it was in 1979. Many in the Corps were now familiar with terms maneuver warfare, even if there was not a complete understanding of it. Marines were employing maneuver warfare in training exercises, most notably the Second Marine Division, whose Commanding General adopted it as the basis for division doctrine in 1981. Maneuverists such as Wyly, Wilson, and Lind were regular contributors to the pages of the *Gazette*. Coincidentally, this attempt build an organizational consensus in the *Gazette* paralleled the ebbing of maneuver warfare in other parts of the Marine Corps. By February of 1982, Wyly has been removed from his position as the head of the tactics department of AWS. Maneuver warfare had a place in the Marine Corps, albeit one that was not completely defined.

In order for the paradigm shift to take place, the rest of the Corps needed to accept, either voluntarily or through compulsion, that maneuver warfare satisfied the organizational needs. By 1983, the progression of the debate in the *Gazette* suggests that it was accepted by Marines, but with certain limitations. Some Marines had accepted maneuver warfare because they were convinced that maneuver warfare was the Marine Corps's future. Others were willing to accept maneuver warfare, but with certain caveats. Some needed reassurances that maneuver warfare would not compromise Marine identity. Some needed convincing that maneuver warfare was practical on the battlefield. By the middle years of the decade, the Marine Corps was in the midst of an Kuhnian paradigm shift, but it is clear that the transition was far from complete. Whether

this shift would continue was a point of uncertainty. A successful paradigm shift was impossible without the involvement of senior leadership. Support from the highest echelons of the Marine Corps was necessary to effect greater change to entire organization. Outright hostility could possibly result in the undoing in the gains made by the maneuverists. Maneuver warfare would have been nothing more than an appealing idea that had attracted some support, but subsequently fading from the scene.

In a 1984 interview with John Scharfen, Gray commented that the “controversy that has been generated on the pages of our professional journals like the *Marine Corps Gazette* over the value and feasibility of maneuver war has been one of the healthiest things that could have possibly happened in the evolution of Marine Corps tactical doctrine. It has stimulated some controversy and some potent thought on how we should fight our forces.” The *Gazette* alone did not bring about the organizational adoption of maneuver warfare, but it did play a key role in laying down the foundation. Because of the *Gazette*, the tenets and the terminology of maneuver warfare were no longer foreign concepts to the Corps. More importantly, as Gray observed, maneuver warfare spurred serious discussion in the Corps on the current state of its tactical doctrine and on its overall organizational health.

In their articles, maneuverists were able to address some of the concerns that hindered the adoption maneuver warfare. Much of the attritionist criticism of maneuver warfare hinged doubts of the ability of Marines to learn and implement a maneuver based doctrine. Maneuverists such as Wyly, Wilson, and Woods were able to develop methods and techniques that demonstrated that Marines could learn and implement the new doctrine.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ John Scharfen, Interview with Major General Alfred Gray “Tactics and Theory of Maneuver Warfare,” *Amphibious Warfare Review* (July 1984) reprinted in “Warfighting Principles and Concepts Volume II Course 8511 (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps University year unknown), Annex H-24.

CHAPTER 4 - Educating and Training for Maneuver Warfare

The maneuverists were incapable of achieving an intellectual transformation of the Corps solely through the public debate in the pages of the *Gazette*. The attritionist critics of maneuver warfare were right to bring attention to the organizational challenges of having to train the Corps to execute a maneuver doctrine. The maneuverists were also aware from the beginning that organizational changes were necessary to execute a maneuver-based doctrine. It would require Marines capable of functioning in the operational environment it was seeking to create.

The intellectual transformation of the Marine Corps and of any military organization in general requires more than acceptance of a new idea. Maneuverists had to perform the detailed work of taking maneuver warfare from the level of the abstract to the functional, from a concept to a practical set of skills and capabilities. For the Corps to execute maneuver warfare they would have to develop a curriculum for educating Marines as well as a program for training operational units to execute the new doctrine. Members of the maneuver warfare seminar group were again crucial to this process, the very same individuals who published articles and defending maneuver warfare in the *Gazette*. The key figure in developing a maneuver warfare curriculum was Michael D. Wyly. G.I. Wilson and William Woods, through the sponsorship of their division commander, Alfred Gray, would bring maneuver warfare to an operational unit.

Any understanding of Wyly and his educational reforms requires returning to the beginning of the 1979-80 academic year at AWS, his first year as Head of Tactics. Prior to his assignment to AWS, Wyly, he served as junior lieutenant colonel on the support staff of the Marine Corps Education Center at Quantico. He concurrently enrolled in a master's program in history at George Washington University. Wyly's reassignment to AWS was the result of his sharing some of his coursework with the Director of the Education Center, Major General Bernard Trainor, who shared Wyly's interest in military

history. Wyly's paper analyzing the tactics employed at the Battle of Tarawa sufficiently impressed Trainor that the general placed him in charge of tactics instruction at AWS.¹⁰⁵

Trainor reassigned Wyly with a mandate to "fix tactics" at AWS. Its tactics curriculum had been suffering from lackluster instruction in recent years and the student evaluations consistently remarked that this component of the overall curriculum was "boring." Trainor told Wyly to be creative and to "not hide behind doctrine" in his instruction.¹⁰⁶

Several details can be inferred from this sequence of events that resulted in Wyly's assignment. First, Trainor had reached the conclusion that tactics instruction at AWS was not adequate to the needs of the Corps in preparing these officers for their duties. Second, Wyly demonstrated to Trainor through his Tarawa paper that he had an approach to tactics that the general responded favorably to. Trainor must have seen in the paper that Wyly had an intellectual approach to tactics that junior Marine officers could have benefited from. Fourth, Trainor must have also had some dissatisfaction with contemporary doctrine, or at the bare minimum, disapproved of how it was being taught to AWS students..

Trainor and Colonel Frederick Vanous, Wyly's immediate supervisor, granted him leeway to teach as he saw fit, allowing for deviation from what was traditionally taught in Marine Corps schools. Wyly himself was a product of that system, and had graduated from The Basic School (TBS) as lieutenant, AWS as a captain, and Command and Staff as a major. Wyly's assessment of the instruction he received from these institutions was that it was not particularly challenging for him intellectually. Instructors taught material coming primarily from the doctrinal manuals, and the curriculum stressed the knowledge and use of proper terminology and procedures. Testing assessed the ability of the students to recall the contents of the pertinent manuals. The schools were lacking in teaching students skills needed in actual operations. Wyly's criticism of the curriculum was that, while it purported to prepare Marine officers for combat, it did so without any analysis of actual battles or study of military history. Wyly recalled that the

¹⁰⁵ Wyly, Telephone interview by author. See also Coram, 377 and Santoli, 126.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.* See also Coram, 377.

lack of intellectual rigor in the schools left him with more than sufficient spare time to study military history on his own.¹⁰⁷

Wyly's Vietnam tours significantly influenced his attitudes toward training and education. He observed firsthand the consequences of following doctrinal manuals too rigidly without consideration for the enemy and the situation at hand. The results were inevitably disastrous for American forces that were too slow to adapt and create new methods not found in the doctrinal manuals as the enemy learned to develop counter-tactics of their own. Wyly also had another set of observations as a rifle company commander seeing his Marines learning to deviate from rigid doctrinal manual practices and adapting what they learned as necessary to meet local conditions. His Marines were successful against their opponents because of their instinctive ability to adapt and their intuitive understanding that war was not just about following a set formula or process outlined in a doctrinal publication, but required focusing on the enemy and his actions as well.¹⁰⁸

Elements of a paradigm crisis were clearly in place when Wyly assumed his instructor responsibilities at AWS. As noted in an earlier chapter, Wyly was already dissatisfied himself with contemporary Marine doctrine and educational practices. Wyly had turned to the ideas of Boyd to resolve his own intellectual dissatisfaction. Trainor to some degree was also dissatisfied and believed some form of change was necessary

Wyly's critique of the training and education system was essentially based on the perception that the instructional systems methods turned the manuals and the doctrine into ends of themselves rather than means. In the old attrition paradigm, following the text of the manual as though it were entirely prescriptive was seen as a viable way of war on its own right. Since students were required to demonstrate their knowledge of the doctrinal manuals, the consequence was they would execute what they learned in schools, but losing sight of why they employed a particular procedure or tactic. This becomes especially problematic though when an enemy learns which tactics and procedures are normally used in a given situation and devises methods and tactics to exploit his knowledge of doctrine. Wyly was, in effect, in a personal paradigm crisis. The old way

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*; *Idem*, E-mail to author, 12 September 2006; *Idem*, E-mail to author, 18 September 2006.

of training and preparing for war was no longer valid for him. His observations of the educational system preceded his introduction to maneuver warfare and his critique predated his acquaintance with the maneuverist critique of the attrition model. Until his contact with John Boyd, Wyly lacked a new paradigm to replace the old one that longer intellectually satisfied him.

Inviting Boyd to speak was only part of Wyly's attempts to revitalize the tactics curriculum during his first academic year as the head of the Tactics Department 1979-1980. One of his predecessor's plans for an offensive tactics lesson contained a recommendation to follow the example set by Napoleon during the Battle of Austerlitz without any further elaboration. Wyly modified the lesson into a case study of Napoleon's actions and decisions during the battle with discussion of how his actions during the battle illustrated the tactical lessons that Wyly wanted to convey. Another change Wyly made to exercises was to require students to use their own powers of decision-making. He first attempted this approach with a student exercise entitled Battalion Tactical Planning. As the title indicated, the exercise emphasized planning, but lacked any real test of the students' ability to execute their plans. Wyly renamed the lesson Battalion Tactical Execution and transformed it into a free-play radio communications exercise where Wyly and his instructors served as the opposing force. His final major innovation was what he called the "Red/Green Exercise." In this lesson, another free-play exercise, Wyly separated his students into two teams, with Wyly and his staff serving as the umpires. Conceptually, the game was similar the children's game "Battleship." Each side would inform the umpires of their course of action, the umpires would then decide the outcome of those actions.¹⁰⁹

A practice that Wyly especially opposed was the use of the "yellows." The yellows were solutions devised in advanced by AWS instructors to tactical exercises given to students and distributed at the end of the problem. The benefit of having a yellow was that the instructor had answer on hand to give to his students. Wyly disapproved of the practice because it sent a false message to the students: that the

¹⁰⁹ Wyly, Interview, 20 September 2006.

instructor's predetermined solution was the only one, since any solution that deviated from the yellows was implicitly treated as incorrect.¹¹⁰

Wyly's changes to the curriculum during his first year can be seen as the beginnings of the paradigm shift away from attrition towards maneuver, though they predate the existence of an identifiable maneuver warfare movement. Attrition warfare placed a premium on efficiency brought about through detailed planning, strict adherence procedures, and centralized decision-making at the expense of individual initiative and flexibility. On the other hand, maneuver warfare conceptualized the tradeoff differently, seeing the potential gains of decentralized control, individual initiative, and flexibility as more beneficial than the possible loss of efficiency. Striking a balance in a military organization between the advantages gained through the efficiency provided by uniformity in thought and action with those that result from flexibility and use of individual creativity is a difficult task.

Wyly's actions can be seen as an attempt to redress an imbalance that favored efficiency too much to the detriment of flexibility. The extent to which the practices he introduced were truly innovative or original is of secondary concern to the intentions behind them. Wyly's first year was dominated by his efforts to inculcate the skills he felt the educational system had failed to produce. Success in war for him required more than mastery of doctrinal publications. His experiences taught him that officers needed to do more than to master the procedures and processes found in the doctrinal manuals; they needed to use their own intellect and judgment as well. Mastering the terminology and symbols of planning used in the planning could only go so far. The students were learning the process involved planning, but at they were not learning that situations arise when deviation from a plan is necessary.

Wyly continued to develop his curriculum during his second year as a department head. During that year, acting on the suggestion of a British Royal Marine attached to Marine Corps Education Command, Wyly deviated from normal AWS practices and took his students outside of the classroom into the field. In the Virginia countryside, Wyly and his students conducted Tactical Exercises Without Troops (TEWTS) to discuss operations by using actual pieces of terrain rather than an abstract discussion conducted

¹¹⁰ Wyly, Electronic correspondence to author, 19 January 2007.

using only maps. Another innovation Wyly implemented was to develop a reading list of books that he considered worthwhile for an officer's professional development as a supplement to the field manuals. Wyly determined that students and Marines in general, should read books relevant to their profession, just as serious students of any other discipline. The initial list grew and expanded over Wyly's tenure through recommendations from students and colleagues and was the precursor to Commandant's Reading List initiated by General Alfred M Gray in 1989. Wyly's final innovation to the curriculum was a series of tactical "lecture-exercises" he designed to teach the principles of maneuver warfare, the conceptual precursors of the Tactical Decision Games that appear regularly in today's *Marine Corps Gazette*.¹¹¹

While these modifications to the curriculum were not particularly original and had been in common use in institutions such as the Prussian *Kriegsacademie*, they were absent from AWS at the time. Even when removed from the context of Wyly's increasing involvement at the time with maneuver warfare, these curriculum changes were still in line with Wyly's own ideas that the education of an officer required skills that could not be acquired through mastery of publications alone. The second year's changes, like those of the first, integrated well with maneuver warfare because they inculcated skills necessary to conduct maneuver warfare--the ability to adapt and improvise to changing conditions, to let actual conditions dictate actions, and reliance on individual judgment to make decisions.

In the fall of 1981, Wyly was about to begin his third year as the head instructor for tactics at AWS. He had also begun his involvement with the emerging maneuver warfare movement in the Corps. Wyly had begun his involvement with the AWS maneuver warfare seminar and the first *Gazette* articles had made their appearance. As identified in an earlier chapter Wyly and his fellow maneuverists had taken the ideas of John Boyd as their starting point and refined them further through their study of military history. A significant transition had been made in moving the Marine Corps from an attrition to maneuver-based paradigm. Wyly and others like him who were dissatisfied

¹¹¹ Wyly selected Robert Heinl's *Victory at High Tide*, Robert Chew's *White Death*, Robert O'Ballance's *No Victor, No Vanquished*, Walter Lacquer's *Guerrilla*, for the first version of his list. The list continued to grow and expand and would include among other titles Erwin Rommel's *Attacks*, Timothy Lupfer's *Dynamics of Doctrine*, and Martin Van Creveld's *Fighting Power*. Wyly, Telephone interview with author 27 September 2007; *Idem*, E-mail with author, 1 October 2006.

with the old model, now had an alternative that they could now work towards. Through his interaction with Boyd and the other maneuverists, Wyly had worked out a tactics instructional program designed to teach maneuver warfare to his students. The situation had moved by dissatisfaction and crisis, and a genuine shift had to maneuver had begun.

Wyly collected and reprinted his fall 1981 lectures designed to specifically to teach maneuver warfare concepts as the appendix to Lind's *Maneuver Warfare Handbook*. These lectures were based on the ideas that had been formed and developed through Wyly's involvement with the maneuver warfare seminar group. These five lessons: "Surfaces and Gaps," "Mission Tactics," "The Main Effort," and "The Concept of the Objective," he collectively titled "Fundamentals of Tactics," and they represent the oldest extant instruction for teaching maneuver warfare to Marine Officers.¹¹²

Boyd in his work had indicated that these ideas were key to destroying an enemy's cohesion and achieving his collapse, and Wyly now took them from ideas took and turned them into skills that Marines could develop and use to defeat an enemy. For Marines to practice maneuver warfare these ideas needed to be more than just concepts, they needed development and elaboration into functional and implementable skills.

Wyly chose the title "Fundamentals of Tactics" for the course because, as he explained, "it endeavors to ferret out and present in their simplest form those things that are most basic to the successful conduct of battle." According to Wyly, his lessons departed from the traditional method of teaching tactics because his course unlike others did not emphasize student knowledge of the vocabulary and symbology, such as the definitions and map symbols for a "line of departure" or "axis of advance," what he called "the language of tactics." For Wyly, the consequence of approach was that it limited tactical options, and he "found it difficult to maneuver freely, to think creatively, and to do things that would be most destructive to the enemy."¹¹³

According to Wyly, what was fundamental in tactics instruction was "that which dealt with defeating the enemy. The answer to the question of what will work to undo the opposing force is what we must be searching for in tactics ... what the student comes to

¹¹² Wyly, "Fundamentals of Tactics" reprinted as an appendix to William S. Lind's *Maneuver Warfare Handbook* (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 2005).

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 71-72.

grip with when he studies tactics. All else is peripheral.” The older form of instruction with its emphasis on vocabulary and symbology produced, “instead of soldiers, structured mechanics, who find it difficult to think without rules.” According to Wyly, the “art of war has no traffic with rules.” Wyly had observed that one consequence of the emphasis on format and terminology was that Marines would “reject their best tactical ideas” because they could not find a way to express them using the proper “format” they learned. The language and format of tactics were subordinating and taking precedent over the tactics themselves.¹¹⁴

Each lesson consisted of two parts. The first was a lecture detailing the historical background of the concept being taught. The second part was a tactical scenario designed to teach the student how to employ the concept taught during the lecture. Surfaces and Gaps is based on German term called *Flaechen und Luekentaktik* (the tactics of surfaces and gaps), the infiltration tactics used by German storm troopers to breach Allied trench defenses during World War I. This lesson taught students to avoid enemy strengths and attack his weaknesses by creating or locating vulnerabilities. The point is to look actively for enemy weaknesses and to exploit them quickly. Mission Tactics were based on the German concept of *Auftstragtaktik*. Mission tactics is a contract between the commander and his subordinate. The commander assigns a task, but he allows the subordinate the latitude to accomplish the task as that subordinate finds appropriate. What links the two is the commander’s intent. The “Main Effort” is based on the German idea of *Schwerpunkt* (focal point). In any operation, whether offensive or defensive, at any level of war, a commander designates one of his units, as the main effort. All units of that command should conduct their operations of the main effort in mind, ensuring the whole unit is working towards a common goal. The main effort does not need to remain constant throughout the operation, as conditions change, a commander can designate a different main effort. Wyly defined Objective as the “physical end towards which our efforts are directed.” The mistake of the past had been to focus on terrain features and physical location in an operation. A commander should instead make decisions based on a physical result he wants to accomplish with his enemy. In Wyly’s final lesson, “The Concept of the Reserve,” he taught his students to use the reserve as

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*

means of achieving a decision on the battlefield, i.e., to reinforce success and not failure.¹¹⁵

Wyly conceived of his map lessons differently from others used in the Marine Corps. One difference he highlighted was that the “problem exercises are without boundaries and lines of departure. The time of attack is the student’s call. He bases it on the enemy, what the enemy is doing now, not two hours ago when the order is given. The student can indicate what he would do off the edges of the map. Does he know how the terrain is formed there? No. But will you always know in combat? Not always. It is up to the student to think about the possible terrain forms and, more importantly, enemy activities might hinder or help his execution of his operation.” There was no right or wrong answer in this type of problem. What mattered more to Wyly was that students learned to think through their decisions and be able to articulate clearly others the rationale for the courses of action they developed.¹¹⁶

Wyly’s curricular initiatives at AWS were made possible because he enjoyed a high degree of freedom and latitude that would eventually disappear. When the 1981-1982 school year began, Wyly found himself with a chain of command that was less than supportive of his deviation from teaching standard doctrine. General Trainor received a promotion and a new assignment and Colonel Vanous was no longer the head of AWS. According to Wyly, their respective replacements were hostile to maneuver warfare and wanted him to return to teaching the old doctrine. By February 1982 Wyly’s friction with his chain of command deteriorated to the point that in he was removed from his position as head of the Tactics Department and reassigned to a mundane staff position, delivering briefings on the conduct of Marine amphibious operations to non-Marines. Ironically the plan for these operations relied on the old outmoded attrition tactics which Wyly’s disapproval of led had him toward maneuver warfare. Wyly managed to obtain a transfer to the Pentagon and continued his promotion of maneuver warfare in his subsequent assignments. He commanded the University of Kansas’ Naval Reserve Officer Training Corps Unit from 1984-1987. He periodically travelled to Fort Leavenworth at the invitation of Colonel Huba Wass de Czege, the head of the School for Advanced Military

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 73-133.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 72.

Studies and the principal author of *FM 100-5*, to deliver lectures on maneuver warfare and amphibious operations to the students at the Army's Command and Staff College. In addition to his educational activities, Wyly also continued to submit book reviews and articles to the *Gazette*.¹¹⁷

Maneuver warfare remained in the curriculum at AWS. Materials assigned for the 1982-1983 academic year included a programmed text, a form of self-study guide, for maneuver warfare entitled "Fundamentals of Common Sense Tactics (Maneuver Warfare)" by a graduate of the previous AWS class, Captain John Sweet. What was substantially different was the style in which maneuver warfare was presented. While Wyly had consciously avoided the traditional tactical terminology and references to doctrinal publications in his lessons and exercises, the Sweet text was full of references to *Joint Chiefs of Staff Publication 1*, *Fleet Marine Force Manuals*, and *Operational Handbooks*. Also missing from the Sweet text were the historical examples and references that Wyly used to teach his ideas. The exercises at the end of Sweet's text appeared to be a hybrid of Wyly's exercises and traditional tactical problems.¹¹⁸

It is unclear what else of Wyly's instructional program for tactics remained in the 1982-1983 academic year, but information exists from the following class year. Captain Brendan Ryan, a 1984 graduate of AWS, wrote an article on his experiences as a student. Many of Wyly's innovations as an instructor evidently remained in place after his departure: the study of battles and campaigns, a professional core reading program, free-play exercises, TEWTs, and the Red/Green Exercises. Students were also learning the ideas of John Boyd. Ryan's article also indicates that these methods were intended to teach students to act along maneuver warfare lines.¹¹⁹

Indeed, Wyly himself commented favorably on the state of affairs in AWS in an article for the *Gazette*. Following a visit to AWS in the summer of 1985, he concluded from his visit that "nothing equal to the quality of instruction and methodology now at

¹¹⁷ Wyly, Telephone interview by author, 5 October 2006.

¹¹⁸ Amphibious Warfare School, "Fundamentals of Common Sense Tactics (Maneuver Warfare)" Marine Corps Schools Collection, Amphibious Warfare School Collection, Box 33, Folder Six. General Alfred M. Gray Research Center Archives, Quantico, VA.

¹¹⁹ Brendan P. Ryan, Captain USMC, "AWS: A Graduate's Perspective," *MCG* (September 1984): 20-23.

AWS was in being before. It is a different and far better school than the one in which I taught. This summer I interviewed faculty and students and received the same picture from both groups. The Marine Corps has moved ahead in professional education.”¹²⁰

There appears to have been a change in hierarchal attitude towards maneuver warfare in the interim between Wyly’s reassignment in 1982, and Ryan’s experiences as a student in 1983-84 and Wyly’s visit in 1985. One possibility is that official attitudes towards maneuver warfare had changed or that other unidentified factors led to an official Marine Corps reappraisal of its position. A 1983 official Marine Corps report sent to the House Armed Services Committee stated that the “Marine Corps does not subscribe to any exclusive formula or recipe for warfare,” but “the concepts of maneuver warfare are evident throughout the Marine Corps.” The Corps was working to “integrate further the concepts of maneuver warfare and amphibious warfare.” The Sweet text’s explicit integration of preexisting doctrine publications with maneuver warfare with was congruent with the official position of this report. This suggests the possibility that AWS and the Marine Corps hierarchy were willing to approve maneuver warfare, but it would be in a form it approved of and could control.¹²¹

This acceptance of maneuver warfare into the curriculum at AWS and the other changes that Wyly commented favorable on, were manifestations the Kuhinan paradigm change which was taking place in the Corps. Maneuver warfare was moving from fringe positions to coexistence with the older paradigm in the Corps’ educational realm. Through Wyly’s work at AWS, maneuver warfare had made advances in the overall intellectual transformation of the Marine Corps. The maneuverists had sufficiently defined the concept and associated teaching methods that it could be taught to a large number of Marines. In addition to creating a program to teach maneuver warfare itself, the other changes Wyly introduced to the AWS curriculum also contributed to the process by changing how Marines thought in general. Wyly was moving his students away from a reliance of solutions based solely on the texts of the manuals in their tactical thinking, that limited their ability to adapt on the battlefield. He was also moving his students away from a focus on internal processes, the slavish following of checklists as

¹²⁰ Wyly, “New Era Emerging At Quantico,” *MCG* (October 1985): 80.

¹²¹ Unidentified Marine Corps report to House Armed Services Committee, 1983, cited in Clover, 54.

the guide to actions, instead of using enemy behavior as the guide. Marines were learning how to make decisions, to adapt to changing conditions, to focus their attentions outward towards the enemy and their actions. This is an equally critical component of the intellectual transformation because in order to execute maneuver warfare Marines would need to think differently than they had in the past.

Wyly's educational reforms were only one aspect of the larger move to a maneuver-based doctrine. The Second Marine Division based at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina also played a critical role by demonstrating that maneuver warfare was more than an idea debated in the pages of the *Gazette* and taught in the AWS classroom. The actions of this division demonstrated that operational units within the Corps could in fact adopt, train with, and employ maneuver warfare on a large scale.

There was a direct connection between the activities of the Second Marine Division, Wyly's AWS classroom, the maneuver warfare seminar, and the *Gazette* debates. According to William Woods, as graduation approached several students of Wyly's 1980-1981 AWS class who were among the original participants of the maneuver warfare seminar, made an agreement with each other that they would spread the ideas of maneuver warfare in their future duty assignments in the Marine Corps. Woods was assigned to Second Marine Division in the summer of 1981. A close friend of Woods, Captain G.I. Wilson, who was also interested in maneuver warfare, was also assigned to the Second Marine Division. Woods, Wilson and several fellow captains who had participated in the AWS maneuver warfare seminar with Woods agreed to establish a similar group at Camp Lejeune for the study and promotion of maneuver warfare.¹²²

Wilson and Woods both agreed that they would approach the division's commanding general, Major General Alfred M. Gray, to tell them of their group's activities and invite him to attend a meeting. In the summer of 1981, after their first session, Woods and Wilson approached the General at the Camp Lejeune Officer's Club and invited him to attend a dinner meeting of their maneuver warfare group.¹²³

¹²² Woods, Statement. The other names of the officers who established a maneuver warfare group in Camp Lejeune were Captains Denny Long and Bob Semmler, and Majors Dick Dietmeier and Jim Maripoti. Rather than make assumptions regarding the formal names of these officers, the author has elected to mention them as he received them from his source.

¹²³ Wilson, Telephone interview; Woods, Statement, 11 April 2007.

Gray's own career began in 1950 as an enlisted Marine in Korea, where he reached the rank of sergeant before obtaining a commission in 1952. After his commissioning, he served as an artillery and infantry officer. He saw service in Vietnam in 1965, 1967, and briefly in 1969. In 1975, while commanding the 33d Marine Amphibious Unit, he oversaw the evacuation from South Vietnam as it fell to the North Vietnamese. Gray commanded the Fourth Marine Amphibious Brigade from 1976 to 1978. From 1978 to 1981, he was the Deputy Director for Development and Director, Development Center for the Marine Corps Development and Education Command, before assuming command of the Second Marine Division in 1981.¹²⁴

When Wilson and Woods approached Gray to discuss maneuver warfare, he was already familiar with the term. While commanding the Fourth Marine Amphibious Brigade, Gray had heard John Boyd deliver his "Patterns of Conflict" briefing. According to Wilson and Lind, Gray was also an avid reader of military history and was known for an open mind. According to Lind, he was also rare among the senior leadership of the Marine Corps in that he was receptive to maneuver warfare. Wilson suspects that this was because he naturally tended to think along maneuverist lines before a coherent doctrinal concept appeared.¹²⁵

At the dinner meeting, Wilson, Woods, and the other members of their group outlined their goals to the Gray. The first goal was self-education of its members. The second goal was to educate their fellow officers by inviting guest speakers to Camp Lejeune, as well as by having maneuver warfare classes, and discussion groups at the unit level. They also wanted to produce a maneuver warfare handbook for the division to use during field exercises. After hearing the group's proposal, Gray announced to them their study group was now the division's official Maneuver Warfare Board. He also told them he would appoint a senior officer to head the board, since most of its initial members were relatively junior in grade.¹²⁶

¹²⁴ United States Marine Corps Historical Division, "Who's Who In Marine Corps History" located at http://hqinet001.hqmc.usmc.mil/HD/Historical/Whos_Who/Gray_AM.htm, last accessed 7 April 2007.

¹²⁵ Lind, Telephone interview; Wilson, Telephone interview. See also Coram, 382.

¹²⁶ Woods, Statement.

In 1981, presumably following the board's establishment, Gray sent the following letter to the Marines of his division:

Realizing that many of our potential enemies could bring superior numbers of men and good equipment against us in a distant theater, it would be foolhardy to think about engaging them in firepower-attrition duals. Historically, maneuver warfare has been the means by which smaller but more intelligently led forces have achieved victory. It is, therefore, my intention to have us improve upon our understanding of the concepts behind maneuver warfare theory and to train our units in their application.¹²⁷

Under Gray's sponsorship Second Marine Division Maneuver Warfare Board became another instrument through which the paradigm shift in the Marine Corps took place. The Maneuver Warfare Board served as a vehicle that demonstrated to the rest of the Marine Corps that operational units could adopt and employ maneuver warfare successfully. In addition, the existence of the board allowed maneuver warfare to reach the entire division's complement of officers and Marines. Gray's actions in the summer of 1981 were of great significance because they made the Second Marine Division the largest unit to embrace maneuver warfare. The adoption of maneuver warfare by the Second Marine Division coincided with other significant gains for maneuver warfare, the growing debate in the pages of the *Gazette* and Wyly's development of a maneuver warfare curriculum at AWS.

The establishment of the board received attention in the pages of the *Marine Corps Gazette* in its October 1981 issue. According to the article, the Maneuver Warfare Board would serve as "a focal point for the tactical ideas now being emphasized throughout the division." The "approximate" membership of the board was fifteen officers spanning all ranks. The bulk of the membership though would come from company and junior field-grade. Heading the Board was Lieutenant Colonel Shawn W. Leach, the Commanding Officer, Second Reconnaissance Battalion. Major General Gray, along with Major General K.A. Smith, Commanding General of the Second Marine

¹²⁷ Major General Alfred M. Gray, untitled correspondence, date unknown, cited in Kevin R. Clover, Captain, USMC. "Maneuver Warfare: Where Are We Now?" *Marine Corps Gazette*, (February 1988): 54-59.

Aircraft Wing, and Brigadier General, R.E. Moss served as a “steering committee that oversees the activity.”¹²⁸

According the *Gazette*, the board’s task was to “take the lead in collecting, receiving, and disseminating theoretical and practical information regarding maneuver warfare. Its purpose is to improve upon the understanding of maneuver warfare concepts and encourage their refinement and test in field exercises.” Specifically, the board’s duties were:

- Publish a reading list of books that provide the historical and theoretical basis for modern maneuver warfare thought.
- Distribute current articles dealing with maneuver warfare concepts and techniques.
- Publish terminology associated with maneuver warfare theory.
- Develop and present a series of lectures and seminars about maneuver warfare.
- Develop a maneuver warfare training guide.
- Publish a periodic newsletter to disseminate information on maneuver warfare theory and training.¹²⁹

Over the course of the summer, Woods traveled to the staffs of the Second Marine Division’s sub-units to give presentations on maneuver warfare, and Gray promoted maneuver warfare at every possible opportunity. The board also expanded to include officers from the Marine Corps combat arms other than the infantry to give them representation on the board. The Maneuver Warfare Board also invited John Boyd and William Lind to Camp Lejeune to make presentations to the division’s officers. According to Woods, not all of their ideas were fully understood by their fellow officers, but maneuver warfare was gaining increased support throughout division.¹³⁰

Gray also directed the division staff to prepare for a Combined Arms Operations exercise later that year at Fort Pickett, Virginia that would be the centerpiece of Gray’s maneuver warfare training. At Fort Pickett, the division would test the employment of maneuver warfare by a Marine Amphibious Brigade size force. The CAO was also going to be a “free-play” type that maneuverists had advocated. The first of the Fort Pickett Combined Arms Exercises that the division conducted under Gray’s command took place in the fall of 1981. According to the Division Command Chronology for July to

¹²⁸ Maneuver Warfare Board at Lejeune,” *MCG* (October 1981): 6; Corroborated by Woods, Statement.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*

¹³⁰ Woods, Statement.

December 1981, this exercise was part of the Division's "efforts to integrate and infuse maneuver style fighting into all major CPXs and FEXs" (Command Post Exercises and Field Exercises). The chronology commented, "the common understanding of the basic principles" of maneuver warfare was "such that progress towards a higher and demanding plateau has commenced." According to the *Gazette* feature, the exercise began in early September with the forces "undergoing field training and refining a variety of maneuver warfare concepts." It culminated with a "three-day war" from October 13 through 15, 1981 that involved the 6th Marine Amphibious Brigade conducting a command post exercise. The 6th MAB exercise was superimposed over a "free-wheeling regimental level exercise" by Regimental Landing Team 2 which pitted two infantry battalions and its supporting elements against a lone battalion and its support elements. Among the specific maneuver warfare functions practiced were "bridging and river crossing operations and employment of a mobile combat service support detachment."¹³¹

There was also an exercise control group made up of umpires and observers, drawn from the membership of the Maneuver Warfare Board who reported their findings at the end of the exercise. The exercise was heavily promoted as the first maneuver warfare exercise, attracting not only Marine observers but also representatives from government agencies and other branches of the armed forces. The editor of the *Gazette*, John Greenwood, also traveled to Fort Pickett to observe the exercise. According to Woods, the exercise was declared a success and served as a template for future training for the entire division. He also commented that although the division would hold additional CAOs at Fort Pickett, none equaled the first "size, scope, or interest level."¹³²

What the maneuvers at Fort Pickett demonstrated was that Marine formation could conduct operations employing maneuver warfare. It showed that an operational unit within the Corps could employ the concepts of mission orders, surfaces and gaps, and focus of main effort. Experiments with concepts that maneuverists had promoted in the pages of the *Gazette*, such as developing a mobile and flexible supply system capable

¹³¹ "Maneuver Warfare Training," *MCG* (November 1981): 14; Second Marine Division, Command Chronology for the period 1 July-31 December 1981, dated 24 March 1982, Marine Corps Research Archives, Quantico, Virginia.

¹³² Wilson, Telephone interview; Woods, Statement.

of supporting rapidly moving combat units, were also attempted. Since the CAO was also a free play exercise, it demonstrated that exercises did not have to be heavily scripted or scenario based, while still remaining an effective method for assessing combat effectiveness.

While the exercise was pronounced a success, improvement was still needed. After the exercise, General Gray led an after-action critique of the entire operation. Leaders of all the units involved in the exercise from the battalion level down to the squad level participated in the critique, and there were instances where the observers and NCOs contradicted the perceptions of senior officers as to the events that had taken place.¹³³

What Gray was trying to cultivate was a type of organization where subordinates could speak honestly to their superiors without fear of recrimination. Commanders also had to learn that honest criticism was not a sign of disrespect. The purpose of these critiques was not to embarrass specific individuals, nor to degenerate into finger pointing by participants, but to help teach and reinforce the concepts of maneuver warfare. They were intended to improve the proficiency of units and to highlight the importance of having a common understanding at all levels of the chain of command. Every leader had made mistakes made during these exercises, but what was important was that leaders of all ranks learned where they had occurred in order to improve their abilities. For a force to fight in maneuver warfare style, the ability to speak honestly among all echelons at the chain of command was essential. The ability to make frank criticism without repercussion and acknowledge that mistakes could be forgiven fostered common understanding and mutual implicit trust that were needed to conduct a style of war that stressed the initiative of subordinate commanders, mission tactics, and surfaces and gaps.¹³⁴

According to Woods, the Maneuver Warfare Board lasted until the summer of 1982. Maneuver warfare received less emphasis as the Division prepared for an impending deployment to Lebanon. Most of the board received orders transferring its membership to other duty stations. The board devoted its final months to producing a

¹³³ Wilson, Telephone interview; Woods, Statement; Santoli, 130.

¹³⁴ Santoli, 130.

maneuver warfare handbook and it soon dissolved shortly after the handbook's completion and adoption in the summer of 1982.¹³⁵

This handbook, or "Battle Book," outlined specific tasks a force was required to execute, but along maneuver warfare lines. This type of detailed work was essential for maneuver warfare to work in the division. How did a maneuver warfare unit establish and maintain and establish communications with other units? How did a maneuver warfare unit receive supplies? What did operations in Nuclear, Biological and Chemical environment look like for a maneuver warfare unit? By producing the Battle Book, the Second Marine Division Maneuver Warfare Board was able to answer questions dealing with maneuver warfare at the unit level of actual employment instead of the theoretical level that had been the focus of the debate at this point in other venues.¹³⁶

Although the life of the Second Marine Division Maneuver Warfare Board was brief, it played a critical role in transmitting the ideas of maneuver warfare to an entire division of Marines. For as long as Gray was Commanding General of the Division, he continued to hold the Fort Pickett exercises on a semi-annual basis, and to develop and refine the concepts of maneuver warfare.

The best summation of Gray's ideas on maneuver warfare in relation to his command of the Second Marine Division is in a published interview he conducted with John Scharfen for the *Amphibious Warfare Review* in 1984. Gray acknowledged that as a division commander he was in a "position to exercise the theory in practice." Gray also pointed out that the "maneuver warfare initiatives have not been taken in isolation of the other components of the Second Marine Amphibious Force." It was a "coordinated effort" undertaken with the "concurrence" of the Second Marine Air Wing, the Second Force Service Support Group, and the Headquarters of the Second Marine Amphibious Force.¹³⁷

Through his position as a division commander, Gray had some freedom to experiment with maneuver warfare. It was his prerogative as a commanding general to train his Marines as he saw fit. Gray's comments suggest that the action was undertaken at his

¹³⁵ Woods, Statement

¹³⁶ Wilson, Telephone interview by author.

¹³⁷ Scharfen, H-19.

own initiative, but in consultation with his fellow generals in the Second Marine Amphibious Force and his own higher headquarters. What he omitted though was any indication of the degree to which there was approval from his peers, his superiors, or from Headquarters Marine Corps.

Gray then pointed out that maneuver warfare was a “style that many Marines have employed over the years and that it was at the conceptual core of some of our most successful amphibious operations.” He then discussed the definition of maneuver warfare, agreeing with Lind that he considered “maneuver warfare is as much a state of mind as it is theory.”¹³⁸ Gray himself was unsure about the term maneuver warfare itself. He was “not certain that it was the proper title” for the style of fighting it represented. The term carried “a lot of questionable baggage” such as that it meant mechanization or was applicable only to ground operations. Maneuver warfare, he argued, “has applications across the spectrum of war from air to surface, from tactics to strategy, from operations to logistics.” The problem with the “title” maneuver warfare was that it “has generated some semantic confusion and excessive debate over terms.” Gray also commented on the public debate over maneuver warfare. It was gaining acceptance as a valid concept for the “training and organization of MAGTFs” because of the requirements to fight a war against opponents with “superior raw combat power.” It was not just the “fixation of the military intellectual.”¹³⁹

Gray then directly addressed his own training initiatives and their relationship to the Marine Corps at large. The Second Marine Division was the first Marine unit of significant size to adopt maneuver warfare. However, before his division and its subordinate commands could employ maneuver warfare on an exercise, it would first need to ensure a common and uniform understanding of it to avoid confusion. According to Gray his division devoted a great deal of time to “indoctrinating our officers and men in the dynamics of the battlefield to insure that we all have the same mindset—that they know what to expect of me and my staff and what I expect among them.” The training taught his Marines the “attitude that the only thing certain on the battlefield will be the uncertain, the unexpected.... to expect to find no recipes or formulas which will

¹³⁸ *Ibid.*

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, H-20

guarantee success in battle.” Gray then identified some of the specialized skills he tried to develop: logistics; Nuclear Biological Chemical training; air defense employment and suppression; intelligence, surveillance, and reconnaissance; command, control and communications; electronic warfare; and counter-terrorism.¹⁴⁰

Gray made it a point to tell Marines that adopting maneuver warfare in no way negated or invalidated any of their other training, or any of the Corps’ regular practices. Maneuver warfare was not:

alien to the fundamental training, operations or administrative routines of the Marine Corps ... The training and experience our Marines get in our depots, centers and schools equip them to participate in and contribute to the maneuver warfare objectives of this Division.”

The training Marines had received was the starting point from which Gray hoped to build to “raise them to the next plateau of integrated tactical concepts in the operational environment.”¹⁴¹

Many of Gray’s positions were first articulated in the pages of the *Gazette* by other maneuverists such as Lind, Wyly, Woods, and Wilson. The difference though was that Gray was speaking with the authority of a commanding general of a division and a man with a distinguished professional record dating back to the Korean War. During his command of the Second Marine Division, Gray consistently promoted maneuver warfare. His advocacy might be one of the reasons why outright criticism of maneuver warfare began to die down. Also important was the language Gray used. He was able to mitigate the concerns of some Marines who thought that maneuver warfare meant a drastic change for the Corps by arguing that a move to maneuver warfare did not mean a complete restructuring of the system, and that it could be built on top of the system that already existed.

Gray use tangible operational success as evidence to validate his belief in maneuver warfare. He pointed to the performance of Battalion Landing Team 2/8 made up of Second Marine Division Marines in Grenada, October 1983. According to Gray, Grenada was a “real ‘come as you are operation’ that demanded the type of independent judgment and initiative without detailed prior planning that is characteristic of what was expected in a maneuver war.” According Gray:

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, H-21

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, H21-H22

Maneuver warfare tactics demoralized the Cubans and the People's Revolutionary Army. One Cuban officer the BLT captured said that he surrendered to the Marines because they kept popping up in the most unexpected places and he figured further resistance was futile. His comments speak volumes about the psychological impact of well-executed maneuver warfare operations.”¹⁴²

According to Wyly, Gray's efforts at Camp Lejeune were mutually reinforcing with Wyly's own warfare initiatives in Quantico. He recalled that Gray traveled to AWS to address the students, and one of the items the general discussed was maneuver warfare's place in the Second Marine Division. Gray communicated to the students that maneuver warfare was more than theoretical. In his command they would be required know it and be able to execute it. Wyly's maneuver warfare curriculum assisted Gray by providing the Second Marine Division with recent AWS graduates who had already received instruction in maneuver warfare.¹⁴³

What happened in the Second Marine Division was critical for maneuver warfare's eventual adoption. In the first place, it demonstrated that maneuver warfare was more than a theory. Gray would travel to Quantico to speak to Wyly's tactics class students. His presence signaled to students that Wyly's maneuver warfare instruction was more than academic. An AWS student who received assignment to the Second Marine Division would actually be required to employ maneuver warfare doctrine in the Fleet Marine Forces.

The work done by Wyly at AWS and the Second Marine Division Maneuver Warfare Board and Gray at Camp Lejeune were both crucial to the intellectual transformation of the Marine Corps. This work in was done in parallel to their publishing efforts in the *Marine Corps Gazette*. While the *Gazette* made the ideas of maneuverists accessible to the Corps, this dealt with maneuver warfare as a theoretical abstraction. There is more involved with the adoption of a new idea than the acceptance of an intellectual premise. Adoption of a new doctrine also involves practical details of educating personnel and conducting training to enable Marine to execute the doctrine under the condition of combat. Gray, Wyly, Woods, and Wilson took maneuver warfare from a concept and made it reality.

¹⁴² *Ibid.*

¹⁴³ Wyly, Telephone interview by author, 5 October 2006.

This functional and practical work was a crucial aspect of the overall paradigm shift taking in the Corps. In order for the collective thinking of the Corps to change, Marines would need some mechanism to learn the new model. Classroom lectures, war games, reading lists, field exercises, and discussions were just as important as the *Gazette* articles in transforming the Marine Corps into a maneuver warfare organization. Training and education initiatives reinforced the arguments of the maneuverists in the pages of the *Gazette*. This was facilitated by the fact that those who were actively involved in making maneuver warfare an operational reality in the Marine Corps were the very same individuals who were writing articles to promote and defend maneuver warfare in the pages of the *Gazette*.

The paradigm shift was not complete however. On the theoretical level, the paradigm shift was incomplete, since maneuver warfare coexisted with attrition but had not replaced it. On the practical level, the efforts to advance maneuver warfare in Quantico and Camp Lejeune were predominantly localized efforts. Unlike the scientific community, where ideas rise and fall through community acceptance and rejection, the Marine Corps was a hierarchal organization. As this point, there was no systematic mechanism for the wholesale institutionalization of maneuver warfare. Such an initiative could only be undertaken through the active direction of the highest echelons of the Marine Corps, specifically the office of Commandant of the Marine Corps. This office was the sole agency capable of ensuring that maneuver warfare was thoroughly adopted by the organization because only the Commandant had the authority to direct all the commands to adopt maneuver warfare.

CHAPTER 5 - Adoption

On their own the public debate in the *Gazette* and the education and training initiatives of Wyly and Gray could not effect the adoption and institutionalization of maneuver warfare and complete the paradigm shift. By mid-decade, it appears that the general momentum of the maneuver warfare movement in the Marine Corps had stalled when compared to the initial gains made in the early-1980s. The goal of the maneuverists to transform the Marine Corps into a maneuver warfare organization ultimately required action from the top. What maneuver warfare needed was a senior officer in the Corps who had the authority and the will to bring about the necessary changes.

What enabled maneuver warfare to supplant attrition as the dominant paradigm was the use of institutional authority and the power associated with it. The ascent of Alfred M. Gray to the post of Commandant of the Marine Corps in 1987 was the fortuitous development that completed the process begun earlier in the decade. In addition to the intellectual crisis of the old paradigm, there was a cultural crisis within the Corps as well. Due to a combination of factors such as leadership and public scandals, Marines began to think the organization lacked focus and direction. Gray saw in maneuver warfare a concept that could successfully address these concerns. Using the authority of his office, Gray made the case that the Corps as an organization needed a philosophy of war to unify the organization and provide it guidance. The official acceptance by the Marine Corps completed the change in Marine thinking that had begun in the late-1970s.

In July 1985, William Lind co-published an article with Jeffrey Record in the *Washington Post* that commented on the stalled momentum of reform in the Corps. The article provided a brief summary of maneuver warfare's progress to date, mentioning the seminar groups, the *Gazette* debates, the AWS curriculum changes, and the Second Marine Division's training experiments. Lind and Record pointed to the Commandant of the Marine Corps, General Paul X. Kelley, as the source of the stagnation. According to the authors Kelley's predecessor, General Robert H. Barrow who held the position from

1979-1983, the years when maneuver warfare had made significant gains, had permitted the experimentation from below. When Kelley assumed the post, there was some hope from maneuverists that he would “provide the leadership from above the movement would need to succeed fully.” According to the authors, “Kelley had given many people inside and outside the Corps the impression that he was sympathetic to the need for change. Many believed he would build on the ground work laid by his juniors.”¹⁴⁴

According to Lind and Record, those hopes were not realized: “expectations have proved sadly misplaced. Instead of being a time of reform and renewal, the last two years have seen a virtual counter-reformation.” According to Lind and Record, Marine Schools were no longer teaching maneuver warfare. The Corps “downplays it in the schools.” Kelley “in speeches to Marines has repeatedly denounced ‘little groups that meet in people’s basements in Washington,’ i.e. the groups of Marine officers that have sought to explore and spread the maneuver concept.” The general in command at Quantico had also banned civilians from the base, including Lind, preventing them from speaking on maneuver warfare as they had in earlier years. The authors also criticized the Marine Corps Schools for their “failure to move forward in reforming Marine education” and failing to initiate the administrative changes along the lines Lind had been advocating.¹⁴⁵

According to Lind and Record’s unnamed sources within the Corps, the underlying reason for what they dubbed Kelley’s “counter-reformation” was an atmosphere of “‘followership’” he was creating that “‘seems to come across as an ill-camouflaged thrust for greater personal loyalty, conformity and blind obedience.’”¹⁴⁶

Lind’s observations of Marine Schools are inconsistent with Ryan’s from 1983-1984 and Wyly’s from 1985. One possibility may be that the curriculum had not changed enough to suit the extreme calls for change that Lind advanced in his article 1984 “Preparing for Maneuver Warfare.” Another possible reason is that maneuver warfare was indeed on the “backburner” because the schools had adopted the trappings of maneuver warfare, but substantively remained focused on attrition. A final possibility

¹⁴⁴ William Lind and Jeffrey Record, “The Marines’ Brass Is Winning Its Battle But Losing the Corps,” *Washington Post* (23 July 1985), B1-B2.

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* Woods has also attributed the basement statement to Kelley.

¹⁴⁶ Unidentified colonel’s correspondence to Lind and Record, *Ibid.*

came from the results of a 1983 official Marine Corps report sent to the House Armed Services Committee which stated that the “Marine Corps does not subscribe to any exclusive formula or recipe for warfare,” but “the concepts of maneuver warfare are evident throughout the Marine Corps.” The Corps was working to “integrate further the concepts of maneuver warfare and amphibious warfare.” Marine Captain Kevin Clover’s interpretation was that the “Marine Corps considers maneuver warfare to be one of many theories included in the repertoire of Marine commanders on both the tactical and strategic levels.”¹⁴⁷

Clover published a February 1988 *Gazette* article, “Maneuver Warfare: Where Are We Now?” which summarized the results of 1986 survey conducted in the Second Marine Division. The survey asked 375 Marines “to determine the level of dissemination of maneuver warfare concepts among these Marines and to appraise their attitudes about those concepts.” The study selected the Second because “of its reputation as a leader in the area of maneuver warfare.” Survey participants ranged in rank from sergeant through sergeant major and second lieutenant to lieutenant colonel. Those selected came from combat arms military occupational specialties -- “infantrymen, artillerymen, tankers, assault amphibian vehicle (AAV) and light armored vehicle (LAV) crewmen, and reconnaissance Marines.”¹⁴⁸

Clover drew several conclusions from the survey results. First, that the Marine Corps needed “a considerable amount of educating to do throughout the ranks” regarding maneuver warfare. There was not a uniform understanding of maneuver warfare and its terminology. Second, in the Marine Corps there was confusion whether or not maneuver warfare was official doctrine. Clover’s recommendation was to “reassert” that the Marine Corps “supports the use of maneuver warfare tactics.” Maneuver warfare was only “one style of warfare the Marine Corps intends to keep in its repertoire.” Another of Clover’s conclusions was that “maneuver warfare advocates should be encouraged by what “appears to be a doctrinal base within the 2d Marine Division that favors a maneuver warfare style of fighting” and that although many Marines were unfamiliar

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*; Ryan, “AWS: A Graduate’s Perspective” and Wyly, “New Era Emerging at Quantico.” Unidentified Marine Corps report to House Armed Services Committee, 1983, cited in Clover.

¹⁴⁸ Clover, 55.

with the “terminology,” “a large percentage of Marines throughout the division are following the basic tenets of maneuver warfare theory.” Clover then proposed a number of measures to ensure greater uniformity within the Corps regarding maneuver warfare: standardized training, greater emphasis on educating lower echelons commanders at the platoon level and below, increase education of maneuver warfare in the Marine Corps schools, addition of the definitions of maneuver warfare terminology to publications¹⁴⁹

What was necessary to complete the intellectual transformation of the Marine Corps was the elevation of a maneuverist to the position of Commandant of the Marine Corps. Regardless of the reasons, it is clear that in 1985 the paradigm shift was not complete. Indeed, Lind and Record’s article suggests that outside of the most committed maneuverists, the perception in the Corps was that maneuver and attrition could coexist with each other. The organizational changes advocated by Lind could have been seen as not necessary given the existing intellectual environment. The appointment of General Gray to the position of Commandant and his use of the institutional authority of the office was what finally completed the transformation.

In part, Gray’s selection to serve as the twenty-ninth Commandant of the Marine Corps was a reaction to Kelley’s tenure. Although Kelley was directly responsible for none of them, three crises in particular produced a climate of low confidence in the highest echelons of Marine Corps leadership: the 1983 bombing of the Marine Barracks in Beirut, Oliver North’s invoking the Fifth Amendment during the Iran-Contra Hearings in his service uniform, and a scandal involving Marine Security Guards trading information for sex. According to a *Time Magazine* article:

Critics of the Corps say it suffers from a lack of leadership at the top. The Marine commandant sets the tone, and Kelley, who was once perceived as a possible innovator, has been aloof and reclusive, almost solely interested in pursuing bigger budgets. Military critic Edward Luttwak says the Corps is “wallowing in complacency.” Some officers serving under Kelley at the Pentagon claim that the prevalent attitude is bureaucratic defensiveness. “Semper Fi,” grouses an officer at Marine headquarters, “means don’t say anything critical because it’s going to reflect on Kelley.” Self-criticism is precisely what the Corps needs, say some experts. What they have instead, says one of Kelley’s subordinates, is a “lot of bumper-sticker bravado.”¹⁵⁰

Secretary of the Navy James Webb understood that the “Marine Corps was really reeling” and in need of new leadership, someone who could restore its morale and regain

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Walter Shapiro, “And to Keep Our Honor Clean,” *Time* (20 April 1987).

its confidence. Webb also thought that part of the problem was Kelley's leadership style. According to Webb, "After Beirut, P.X. Kelley basically killed off many of the real combat leaders of the Marine Corps," because they had criticized his handling of the situation. The men Kelley put in place around him "hadn't made their reputations as combat leaders." Webb also stated that that in the two years before he became Secretary of the Navy, nine Navy Cross and two Medal of Honor recipients were turned down for promotion to brigadier general, a reflection on the style of leadership Kelley valued. Kelley responded "I don't know who he's talking about. I think that's an outrageous statement." ¹⁵¹

Webb described his search to find a successor for the retiring Kelley as "a real brawl" and a "battle for the 'soul of the Marine Corps.'" The two front-runners for the job were Lieutenant General Thomas R. Morgan, the Assistant Commandant of the Marine Corps, and Lieutenant General Ernest C. Cheatham, Jr. Morgan was seen as the candidate Kelley preferred to succeed him, while Webb saw in Cheatham the "warrior image" he was looking for to take charge of the Corps. ¹⁵²

The selection of Gray was seen as a compromise. Webb had first become aware of Gray through Wyly, who was Webb's company commander in Vietnam. In 1984, when Gray was Commanding General, Marine Forces Atlantic and Webb was Assistant Secretary of Defense for Veterans Affairs, Wyly for the two to meet in Norfolk. Coordinating with G.I. Wilson, who was serving at the time on Gray's staff, Wyly arranged Webb's transportation for the meeting. According to Thomas Ricks, Webb met with Gray regularly during the winter of 1986-1987. Webb saw in Gray someone who understood the nature of the problems the Marine Corps was facing and reached the conclusion that he was the candidate that could solve the Corps' problems. ¹⁵³

The adoption of maneuver warfare was only one of the many initiatives undertaken by Gray to revitalize the Marine Corps. According to Wyly, Wilson, and

¹⁵¹ Thomas E. Ricks, *Making the Corps*, (New York: Scribner, 1997), 142-143.

¹⁵² Unidentified sources cited in Molly Moore, "Marines End Fight Over Kelley's Job," *Washington Post* (4 June 1987), A21; Millett, 631; John H. Cushman Jr., "Activist General In Line For Top Marine Post," *New York Times* (5 June 1987), A14; Wyly, Telephone interview, 5 October 2006.

¹⁵³ Cushman, A14; Millett, 631; Moore, A21; Ricks, 142; Wyly, Interview, 5 October 2006; Wilson, Telephone interview.

Schmitt, the general perception in the Marine Corps was that the selection of Gray as Commandant was a victory for maneuver warfare. During his Senate Armed Services Committee confirmation hearing, Gray listed as one of his “priority goals” to “improve our understanding of the art, as well as the science of war. Maneuver and the thought process that go with the practice and execution of ‘winning through combinations of maneuver and firepower’ must be improved.”¹⁵⁴

Gray received his fourth star and assumed his post on July 1, 1987. He immediately began to visit Marine commands to tell Marines his vision for the Corps’ future. One need he identified was for “common operating procedures, common doctrine, common instructions covering warfighting ... This is a must, and we are going to make it happen.” Another need he identified was to “get far better than we are today at matters involving maneuvering warfare and firepower. I happen to believe that you win by putting together combination of firepower and maneuver and want to be sure that everybody understands that.”¹⁵⁵

With a Commandant openly embracing maneuver warfare and committed to providing the Corps a common operational focus, the concept gained new momentum. There was an intellectual “renaissance” atmosphere in Quantico that extended into the pages of the *Gazette*. Lind published an article in January 1988 that advanced no new ideas, but did revisit many of the ideas discussed during the debate of the earlier part of the decade.¹⁵⁶

In April 1988, a *Gazette* article by R. Scott Moore echoed the Commandant’s statements for a “common doctrine” and “common instructions covering warfighting.” Moore identified that the Corps “lacks a concise battlefield philosophy.” The Marine Corps had a generally accepted ‘approach to combat’ ... this amounts to little more than

¹⁵⁴ Schmitt; Telephone interview by author; Wilson, Telephone interview by author 23 October 2006; Wyly, Telephone interview, 5 October 2006; United States Senate Committee On Armed Services *Hearings Before the Committee on Armed Services United States Senate One Hundredth Congress, 100th Cong., 1st Session., 1987, 155. For more on Gray as Commandant and the effect of his tenure on the Marine Corps see Millet, 632-635 and Ricks, 144-149.*

¹⁵⁵ United States Marine Corps History Division, “Who’s Who in Marine Corps History”; Alfred M. Gray, General, USMC, “29th Commandant Speaks to Corps,” *MCG* (September 1987): 18.

¹⁵⁶ Both Wilson and Schmitt used the term renaissance to describe Quantico under Gray Lind, “Misconceptions of Maneuver Warfare,” *MCG* (January 1988): 16-17.

an inbred combat aggressiveness that has overcome disaster ... Perhaps in the assumption that this aggressiveness is sufficient to meet future challenges, Marines have singularly failed to codify a set of concepts upon which to build doctrine.” Moore argued that the modern battlefield would be fast-paced and chaotic, Marines might not have the overwhelming superiority in firepower they typically held, and adversaries would have modern weaponry at their disposal as well. Modern weapons “dictate a type of combat in which victory will be decided by the actions of small units acting independently.” Marine units could not rely on “extensive control systems.” According to Moore, the “glue” “will be a common thought process, grounded in basic doctrinal principle that will enable them to conduct operations in a cohesive manner while remaining highly flexible in rapidly changing conditions.” Moore identified five principles that considered essential to a “common sense battlefield philosophy”:

- Know the Commander’s Intent
- Focus on the Enemy
- Create a Dilemma
- Maximize Combat Arms
- Be Unpredictable.¹⁵⁷

While Moore makes no mention of maneuver warfare, his calls for a philosophy echoed many of the earlier arguments of maneuverists that maneuver warfare offered a mindset that would allow Marines function effectively on the battlefield. Many of the principles had been preached by the maneuverists in the early part of the decade. Either Moore was a maneuverist, or by this time maneuver warfare had reached a sufficiently wide audience that its terms and ideas now part of the common language of Marine officers.

The month before Moore’s article, the Marine Corps had published *Operational Handbook (OH) 6-1, Ground Operations*. Section 1303 listed principles of maneuver warfare:

- Focus on the enemy; not on terrain objectives
- Act more quickly than the enemy can react.
- Support maneuver by fire.
- Issue mission-type orders
- Avoid enemy strength and attack enemy weaknesses
- Exploit tactical opportunities developed or located by subordinate units.
- Always designate a main effort.
- Avoid set rules and patterns.

¹⁵⁷ R. Scott Moore, Captain, USMC, “Bridging the Doctrinal Gap,” *MCG* (April 1988): 47-49.

Act boldly and decisively.
Command from the front.¹⁵⁸

An editorial comment in the *Gazette* that printed the excerpts of OH 6-1 relevant to maneuver warfare noted that it “represents a major shift in emphasis and approach to warfare.” *OH 6-1* moved the Marine Corps closer to making maneuver warfare its warfighting philosophy. As the title states, the purpose of *OH 6-1* was to govern ground combat operations. Earlier doctrinal publications in the 1980s did not adopt maneuver warfare to this extent scale.¹⁵⁹

This publication with its explicit statement of maneuverist ideas would probably not have been possible under Kelley. With Gray as Commandant who personally endorsed the new concept in speeches and interviews, the evidence suggests that maneuver warfare was gaining renewed momentum in the Corps. So long as Gray was the Commandant, maneuver warfare would have at least a temporary ascendancy over attrition. What was missing though was an official and outright adoption of maneuver and rejection of attrition.

Wyly wrote a review of *OH 6-1* where he identified what he considered the flaws in the document and made an explicit call for a formal maneuver warfare doctrinal manual. He commented favorably on the brief section on maneuver warfare which “flows beautifully ... a description of the art of war that should be read and reread by everyone.” Wyly echoed Moore in calling for a “book on the art of war for Marines.” He cited the Army’s *FM 100-5, Operations* as “the best example of the decade.” What he called for was a Marine Corps equivalent which

would be unique, designed to fight the Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF). We need a book that recognizes that the MAGTF is not three forces—ground, air, and combat service support—but one force with many facets, all directed toward the same end, undoing the enemy. *OH 6-1*, our rough draft, gives an uneven view of the ground side with a bit of combat service support thrown in. Much work remains.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁸ Commanding General, Marine Corps Combat Development Command, *Operational Handbook 6-1, Ground Combat Operations* (Quantico, VA: Marine Corps Combat Development Command, 1988), Section 1303.

¹⁵⁹ “Fundamentals of Maneuver Warfare: Extracts from OH 6-1” *MCG* (April 1988): 50.

¹⁶⁰ Wyly, Review of “Operational Handbook 6-1, Ground Combat Operations” *MCG* (July 1981): 30-31.

The Commandant had also voiced his opinion that the Marine Corps needed a common single guidance for warfighting. Gray wanted the Corps to have a capstone document similar to the Army's *FM 100-5* to provide this common organizational guidance. The original capstone manual the Doctrine Division was preparing was supposed to be *Fleet Marine Force Manual 2* a work dealing with the Marine Air Ground Task Force. However, the document failed to meet Gray's intent, because he did not want the capstone document to focus on the MAGTF. What the Commandant wanted instead was a philosophical document that guided the actions of the entire Marine Corps. Gray's criteria for the manual specified that

It had to be short to the point, and highly readable—in a different style from the usual manual. He wanted a “keystone” document, a general statement of commander's guidance that would reflect combat and leadership philosophy and serve as a foundation for other, more detailed doctrinal publications—and ultimately as a guidebook for all Marine Corps endeavors.

Gray also wanted his keystone manual to receive the designation *Fleet Marine Force Manual 1* to indicate its position at the apex of Marine doctrine.¹⁶¹

The captain from the Doctrine Division selected for the task, John F. Schmitt, was in many respects an excellent candidate to draft the Gray's manual. He had served under Gray's command in the Second Marine Division as a platoon commander and a participant of the Fort Pickett Exercises. Schmitt was an avid student of military history and theory, as well as possessing a background in journalism. He was also a maneuverist and did his best to read the available materials on maneuver warfare. Schmitt also had written *OH 6-1*, and the generally favorable reviews it had been receiving probably led to his assignment to the project. The readability and simplicity of the final text came from Schmitt's position as an “everyman.” He was a Marine writing for other Marines, trying to convey to them a philosophy of war.¹⁶²

Schmitt wrote a manual fundamentally different from *OH 6-1* because from the beginning it was conceived as maneuver warfare manual. Schmitt had been writing *OH 6-1* before word circulated that Gray would be the next Commandant. The passages on maneuver warfare in *OH 6-1* were not part of the originally intended final draft. Schmitt

¹⁶¹ John Greenwood, Colonel, USMC (Ret.) “*FMFM 1: The Line of Departure*,” *United States Naval Institute Proceedings* (1990): 155; Schmitt, E-mail to author, 20 September 2006

¹⁶² Schmitt, Telephone interview; *Idem*, E-mail to author.

had tried to insert passages on maneuver warfare before, but his supervisor had told Schmitt to remove them. When it became clear that Gray would become the next Commandant, his supervisor told Schmitt to include maneuver warfare material in the text just as the publication was going to press. As a result, the maneuver warfare passages appear out of place within the text of *OH 6-1* as a whole.¹⁶³

By the time he received the *FMFM-1* assignment, Schmitt had a new supervisor, Colonel Mastrion, who took Schmitt to Major General Michael Sullivan, Commanding General of the Warfighting Center. Sullivan told Schmitt that he was working directly for General Gray. Schmitt talked to Gray on only a handful of occasions about the project. In each of those meetings, the Commandant did not give Schmitt any specific instructions about what to write, the phrasing, the terminology, or how to write. Schmitt suspects that Gray was being consistent with maneuver warfare principles. This was his way of making it known that he was giving Schmitt a great deal of latitude to write the manuals.

For several months, Schmitt immersed himself in the works of military theorists such as Sun Tzu and Clausewitz. In addition to the works of these earlier military thinkers, Schmitt also cited John Boyd's work as a significant influence. During the writing process, Schmitt primarily consulted three individuals for advice and suggestion: Colonel Paul Van Riper, the director of the Marine Corps Command and Staff College, Michael Wyly, and William Lind. Even though he consulted others for advice, Schmitt wrote the text in its entirety.¹⁶⁴

By March 1989, Schmitt had completed a draft for Gray's approval. He drove to the Commandant's home at the Marine Barracks located at Eighth and I streets Washington, D.C. Gray looked at the page proofs, made no changes and signed the document, and approved it for distribution to the rest of the Marine Corps

Gray's endorsement of maneuver warfare carried considerable weight within the Corps. *OH 6-1* was rewritten because of his known preference for maneuver warfare. On the other hand, his actions could not have been possible without the prevailing conditions within the Corps. Flagging organizational morale under his predecessor, combined with

¹⁶³ Schmitt, Telephone interview; *Idem*, E-mail to author.

¹⁶⁴ Schmitt, Telephone interview; *Idem*, E-mail to author. According to Greenwood, Schmitt received the assignment in mid-1988.

Gray's own personal reputation within the Corps, gave him a mandate to make changes, which he used to maximum effect. He observed that what the Corps lacked was a common organizational focus and direction. The coexistence of attrition alongside with maneuver was just a symptom of this lack of overall focus. It is clear that developments in the Army influenced the publication of *Warfighting*. Since 1982, *FM 100-5, Operations* had provided the Army a common organizational focus and direction. Gray saw the organizational benefits of such a document and believed that the Corps a similar.

While Gray used an officer from the Doctrine Center to draft the new manual, curiously he did not use the full apparatus of the Center to develop it. The Marine Corps organized the Center precisely to serve as the lead organization for the development of doctrinal concepts. Given the significance of the type of manual the Commandant wanted, one with an organizational impact on the scale of *FM 100-5*, the Center and the full resources available to it would have appeared the most likely agency to undertake the project. According to the Schmitt, *Warfighting* was not "staffed," that is the text was not vetted by the hierarchy of the Doctrine Center, which Schmitt was allowed to bypass so that he contacted the Commandant directly.

Using the apparatus of the Doctrine Center risked the possibility of miring the new doctrinal publication in conflicts by reviewers and contributors over wording and content. Schmitt recalled that such wrangling factored heavily into the originally intended capstone document *FMFM-2*. Also, during the draft stages of *OH 6-1* his supervisors had originally excluded any material related to maneuver warfare, and only included it at a relatively late stage when the news began to circulate that a maneuverist was going to become Commandant.

Given the intentions for the document to serve as the capstone doctrinal manual for the entire Marine Corps, it is likely that using the bureaucratic process of the Doctrine Center would have produced considerable discussion and debate over phrasing of sentences, content, and terminology as drafts circulated for review and comment. The *Gazette* presented two critiques of *Warfighting* which provide some indication of the criticism and scrutiny which Schmitt's text would have been subjected too had it been subjected to the normal doctrinal creation process. One critic, Lieutenant Colonel Jeffrey

C. Lloyd, USMC, praised the text for its “succinct, readable style, which is all too rare in official prose.” What Lloyd found “most disagreeable” with *Warfighting* was:

its penchant for depicting maneuver warfare as one of but two options in a maneuver warrior (good guy) versus attrition (bad guy) debate. To the extent that it supports this fiction of two camps, it ill serves its readers.

Another critic, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Robeson IV, provided a detailed analysis where he outlined what he determined to be flaws of specific lines and passages in the text. Robeson saw the criticism of attrition as an “attack” on Marine Corps history as well as an over simplification: “The past giants of the Corps might not agree that all warfare can simply be dumped into one of two piles, i.e., that is either “attrition style” or “maneuver style,” and that they belong in the first pile.”¹⁶⁵

The statements of Lloyd and Robeson demonstrate that Marines by 1989, even as it was adopting a maneuver doctrine, had not come to full agreement that a distinct dichotomy existed between a maneuver approach and attrition approach to warfare. There were still elements in the Corps that still perceived maneuver warfare as a way of acting, but not as the way of thinking that informed these actions. The compromise situation that viewed maneuver and attrition in terms of actions and not the underlying ways of thinking behind them required a person with sufficient organizational authority to implement maneuver warfare as the organizational philosophy that would guide Marine thinking.

As the Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gray sat at the apex of the Corps organizational hierarchy. He was determined to give the Corps a common organizational focus. His endorsement of Schmitt’s text demonstrated that he saw the maneuver warfare way of thinking as the best option for an organizational philosophy of the Corps. The fact that no one besides Gray had the opportunity to review the document before it became official, probably caused a considerable shock and reaction among Marine officers. In some respects, maneuver warfare became official doctrine through Gray’s

¹⁶⁵ Jeffrey J. Lloyd, Lieutenant Colonel, USMCR, “Our *Warfighting* Philosophy” *MCG* (November 1989): 24-25; Edward V. Robeson IV, Lieutenant Colonel, USMC, “Critique of *FMFM I, Warfighting*,” *MCG* (November 1989): 27-29.

personal fiat. According to Lloyd, Gray delivered the document with the “force of a papal bull” that sent “heretics diving for cover.”¹⁶⁶

It was Gray’s authority as Commandant that enabled maneuver warfare to become the basis of organizational orthodoxy in the Marine Corps, completing the process that first began in 1979 and gained momentum in the early years of the 1980s. The maneuverists had made the case for maneuver warfare and had developed the methods for its education and training. Now that the doctrine was official and paramount in the Marine Corps, the challenge was to begin the process of institutionalization throughout the Marine Corps, taking the ideas and methods of the maneuverists and instilling them throughout the organization.

¹⁶⁶ Lloyd, *Ibid.*

CHAPTER 6 - Conclusions

This study examined how the Marine Corps adopted maneuver warfare by examining the actions of the maneuverists. This study has argued that the maneuverists achieved a fundamental paradigm change in Marine Corps thought through a campaign of innovative development and promotion of a new concept that involved three critical mechanisms. The theoretical component consisted of the debate in the pages of the Marine Corps Gazette. The practical aspect involved a new educational curriculum and training methods. While the institutional component that used the formal authority of the Commandant of the Marine Corps. Examining this process has produced several conclusions regarding intellectual reform and military organizations.

Much of maneuver warfare's success owes to the circumstances under which it appeared and developed. For the lack of a more elegant phrase, it was the right idea at the right time for the Marine Corps. While it did take a decade, the Corps adopted maneuver warfare as the solution to perceived problems within the organization. The Marine Corps of the late-1970s was eager for a new doctrine that would enable it to remain amphibious, yet capable of participating in a continental campaign against mechanized forces. Other Marines were motivated by a desire to devise a better way of fighting because of their personal experiences on the battlefield. The Marine Corps of the late-1980s needed a common organizational focus. There were greater organizational forces at work that moved the Corps towards maneuver warfare and this suggests that the reception of new ideas is connected to the context prevailing when they appear. These organizational trends were manifestations of a general intellectual crisis in the Marine. The older paradigm had proven inadequate to resolving the doubts developing among Marines. Maneuver warfare provided an alternative intellectual model that satisfied the needs of Marines. In satisfying those intellectual needs, maneuver warfare was also able to capitalize on broader, internal organizational trends.

This does not mean that the individual personalities and actions do not matter. The maneuver warfare study group that formed out of AWS was a direct consequence of

Wyly's attempts to revitalize the curriculum. The Maneuver Warfare Board might not have received official status had someone other than Gray been the division commander. Under a different editor with a different editorial philosophy, maneuver warfare articles may have not seen the light of day. While the conditions were favorable for new ideas to develop and spread in the Marine Corps, the adoption of maneuver warfare still required the actions of individuals at critical junctures. Maneuverists happened to be in positions, or gained the support of Marines who were, that were conducive to reform. Good timing alone is insufficient, the proper personal need to be present and capable of interacting with each other.

The ability of the maneuverists to work together in pursuit of their common goal was also crucial to the movement's success. Maneuver warfare was defined in the Marine Corps by a small group of individuals who met and discussed their ideas with each other. They used each other as sounding boards for ideas, and they were aware of the work being done by their fellow maneuverists. Their published work and their training and educational initiatives were remarkably consistent and reinforced each other.

The fact that maneuver warfare was spread through multiple venues in the early 1980s was also crucial. Maneuver warfare was a regular topic of discussion in a monthly professional journal, the basis for a program of instruction at a professional school, and the official doctrine for an entire division of Marines. No one venue was the center of maneuver warfare in the Marine Corps, yet all three worked in close conjunction with each other. Under these circumstances maneuver warfare was able to grow as a movement beyond the half-dozen to dozen individuals who were its earliest adopters. Wyly had students, the maneuverists had the *Gazette* readership, Gray, Wilson, and Wyly had an entire division of Marines. It is impossible to determine what percentage of these audiences adopted maneuver warfare. However, it is unlikely that maneuverists made contact with such a large body of people without gaining additional supporters and from this we can infer that at least some of the readers adopted maneuver warfare.

Maneuver warfare began as a grass-roots movement with only a small, but dedicated, number of supporters. The maneuver warfare example demonstrates that not all paths to reform are necessarily initiated from the "top-down." Support from more

powerful quarters eventually emerged over time, but nonetheless this study suggests that bottom-up movements can succeed.

In this particular instance, what was crucial to the success of this initially small movement was having forums for their ideas, such as the *Gazette*, Amphibious Warfare School, and the Second Marine Division. One cannot ignore however, the ability of individual to permit or deny that access. The willingness of individuals such as John Greenwood allowing maneuverists to reach a wide audience by allowing them to publish in the *Gazette* or General Trainor permitting Wyly to innovate his own curriculum cannot be underestimated.

Also crucial to the success of maneuver warfare as a grass-roots movement was an organizational vacuum for innovative thinking. New doctrine in a military need not come from the highest levels or as a product of a formalized, bureaucratic process. Unlike the United State Army and AirLand Battle, maneuver warfare was developed entirely outside the bureaucracy of the Marine Corps. Maneuver warfare did not arise from the Marine Corps's organizational apparatus, but instead initially emerged from the labors of individual Marines who were its earliest adopters. The administration of Marine Corps did not initiate the development of maneuver warfare or exert absolute control over intellectual work that maneuverists were doing. Even when their work with maneuver warfare placed them in professional disfavor, maneuverists such as Wyly continued to promote the concept when possible. The final act of writing *Warfighting* itself also occurred through a non-bureaucratic process. With the coming of official adoption, the administration of the Marine Corps took ownership of the concept. Even so, much of the work of developing maneuver warfare as a concept occurred outside of official organizational sponsorship

That is not to say that rank and position did not matter to maneuver warfare's success, had Gray not become Commandant the course of events would have been remarkably different. What did happen though is that the new ideas were developed and debated for the most part in a forum where rank was secondary and ideas were developed free from the pressure of being vetted by immediate superiors. There was no chain of command to exert a positive or negative influence on the development of ideas. In a sense, once the first articles on maneuver warfare appeared in the *Gazette*, it was the

Marine Corps at large that became the audience and had to be convinced to adopt maneuver warfare.

The maneuver warfare example also highlights the value of a healthy intellectual climate in a military organization. Even maneuver warfare's harshest critics would not advocate an intellectually stagnant officer corps. Marine officers were studying military history, seriously discussing and thinking about how they could improve their skills as professional military officers. In reading about, writing, and discussing maneuver warfare, Marines, regardless of their perspective, were thinking seriously about the state of the Corps and their profession.

Maneuver warfare was the last major intellectual change, the last paradigm shift that the Corps underwent. The publication of *Warfighting* in 1989 ensured that maneuver warfare would guide the future of the Marine Corps into the next decade and it remains to the present day the organizational guiding concept that Gray had envisioned it would be. Marine operations in 1990-1991 Gulf War and Operation Iraqi Freedom were maneuver warfare operations. The wartime actions of Marines in those years cannot be understood without examining the peacetime actions of the Marines of the 1980s.

Just as maneuver replaced attrition, the replacement for maneuver will eventually manifest itself. Indeed, there are probably Marines today who are dissatisfied with maneuver warfare and its ability to address the needs of the battlefield. There will be Marines with questions about the Corps and its future. Marines will grow dissatisfied with the dominant intellectual paradigm and another Kuhnian-type crisis will emerge. A new model may emerge outside of the formal bureaucracy or it may emerge from within. What is certain is that a new idea will emerge, and another paradigm shift will take place. Marines will find ways to increase awareness of this new idea. Criticisms will inevitably arise. Marines will experiment with new educational curricula and new ways of training. The new idea will eventually gain the acceptance of the official hierarchy, and the Corps will then institutionalize the new doctrine and employ it until the cycle begins anew.

There is still much work left to be done on maneuver warfare and the Marine Corps, the relationship between developments within the Corps and its sister services, and how events in the Corps related to other major trends of this period in American history. The Corps is only one military service among four, and it is clear that the Army,

the Navy, and Air Force underwent significant transitions of their own after Vietnam. Identifying the shared features of these transitions and as well as understanding how the differing organizational contexts of these services created differences would make for a fascinating study. Such a study would increase our knowledge of how and why those organizations propose and adopt revision to their organizational doctrine. The relationship between the dominant political, social, economic, and cultural trends of the time with the significant changes taking place in the American military is also worth further consideration.

The emergence and adoption of new ideas is an inevitable aspect of history. The story of maneuver warfare is just one attempt to understand this process within the context of an American military organization. Ideas are as much the product of the times as they are of the individual personalities involved. New ideas challenge the old and, if they are successful, supplant them until the time eventually comes when they themselves are challenged and replaced. This study was a limited attempt to show that examining military organizations can contribute to our understanding of this process.

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