Commandant’s Professional Reading List

- *Military Innovation in the Interwar Period – Why This Book?*

The study shows and tells us that modernization will design doctrine; the design could be either used in the air or at sea. Doctrine creates a legacy. During the Interwar Period, Marine aviators began to experiment with close air support. This innovation allowed the Marines on the ground to become the focus of the aviators and this became aviation’s primary mission. At the same time, the Corps saw a need to develop landing craft for amphibious operations. The Corps saw that Japan posed a threat to the Pacific and needed to have a viable plan to get Marines to the beach. Both of these concepts created a template and doctrine for the Marine Corps. This study will neither attempt to establish any grand theory of innovation nor create a model for explaining innovation. Rather this work emphasizes the complexities and ambiguities inherent in innovation, which defined its framework during the interwar period.

This is a study, not a book. This book, and a study of how innovation improves operations and TTPs, is important to the company and battalion level senior NCOs and officers because the study demonstrates how innovation is closely related and tied to creating doctrine. The tie-in is applicable in that invention tells us how we got there and where we are heading. Our experience and time in the Corps makes this study appropriate.

Readers should think of the parallels between the interwar period of WWI and WWII and the period the United States is entering with the conclusion of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM and forthcoming conclusion of Operation ENDURING FREEDOM. In the WWI/WWII interwar period, consider the massive land warfare, including the trenches across Europe, but also the in-war development of the tank and employment of aviation, leading to *blitzkrieg* in WWII, and the combined land and air forces of the United States. Think of the late 20th and 21st century recognition and study of irregular warfare and what forces are capable of fighting with a foot in the conventional and a foot in the irregular warfare scenarios. The study also describes much of the tactical and operational performance of the Axis and Allies in WWII. How is this relevant for us today? Currently, the United States has been at an extended period of war. The Nation as a whole is tired and wants it to end. We have taken many casualties. But we must remember not to make the same mistakes as other countries, post-WWI or post-WWII. The French had taken a great number of casualties from WWI that France’s leaders were bent on imposing their views and restrictions onto the military. Their leaders did not create an atmosphere that encouraged debate, and therefore hampered innovation/improvement, and their military capability suffered for these restrictions. We cannot allow that to happen to the American military, post-Iraq and Afghanistan.