Commandant’s Professional Reading List

- Why Read *Revenge of Geography*? -

Why read *Revenge of Geography*? Because Marine Corps leaders need to understand the purpose of strategy; how strategy is made; and the role the Marine Corps in executing the US National Military Strategy. Kaplan’s *Revenge of Geography* reminds us that the physical face of the world we live on, as much as the flow of competing religions and ideologies, economics and empires, has shaped human conflicts in extraordinary ways.

Specifically, Marine Corps doctrine states:

*There are three important reasons to develop a fundamental understanding of strategy:*

- Marines will find themselves working for senior leaders who participate directly in the development of strategy....
- An understanding of how strategy is made allows Marines to see the larger picture....
- By the very nature of their profession, all Marines are engaged in the execution of strategy...

- *MCDP 1-1, Strategy* (pg.4)

In recent years, policy makers and strategist have focused a tremendous amount of effort on identifying, developing and exploiting advantages of the “information age” and rightfully so. Our “shrinking” and “flattening” world has intensified the interactively complex nature of international relations. However, as MCDP 1-1 reminds us, there are certain “Strategic Constants and Norms” that are enduring:

*Despite the complexity of interactions in the political realm, it is possible to discern elements that are present in any strategic situation. These elements are at the core of the strategic environments and are the base from which the strategist develops an understanding of a specific set of circumstances....*

*Geography and its related aspects are a constant in any strategic situation. All parties in a conflict must cope with the physical environment.*

- *MCDP 1-1, Strategy* (pg.20-21)

*Revenge of Geography* was written with the aim of demonstrating the value of understanding geography and its importance in the formulation of strategy. The author demonstrates this by reviewing previous theories from past geographers and showing their enduring usefulness even in the age of jet airliners and the internet. From Kaplan’s perspective, because the world is now “smaller”, “real estate” has become even more important.

*Revenge of Geography* brings a new focus on the importance of geography as both an enduring and limiting factor in the planning and executing of strategy in an ever increasing interactive complex strategic environment.