### 4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE
The Future of Warfighting: Time to Update MCDP-1.

### 14. ABSTRACT
MCDP-1 Warfighting was the product of intense study, the synthesis of ideas, and an active debate that contributed to the doctrine’s growth as well as a broad understanding of its core concepts, strengths, and potential limitations. This doctrine stagnated for 15 years while the Marine Corps gained a breadth of combat experience and scholars advanced new theories of warfare. It is time for renewed doctrinal invigoration to determine if maneuver warfare is the correct doctrinal philosophy for the future security environment.

### 15. SUBJECT TERMS
Maneuver Warfare, doctrine, Fourth Generation Warfare, Irregular Warfare, Hybrid Warfare
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Title: The Future of *Warfighting*: Time to Update MCDP-1.

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Thesis: It is time to evaluate MCDP-1 *Warfighting* using recent combat experiences and modern theories of warfare to ensure the doctrine's continued relevance in the future war environment envisioned by the strategies meant to guide the force in the coming decade.

Discussion: The Marine Corps' doctrine of maneuver warfare has its origins in an era where interstate conflict represented the greatest threat to national security. The aftermath of the 1973 Arab/Israeli war and the post-Vietnam shift in strategic priorities from Asia to Europe presented the defense establishment with a clear picture of what future war would look like on the plains of Europe or the deserts of the Middle East. The Marine Corps adapted to these realities by increasing the mobility, lethality, and survivability of the Marine Division. It also developed a doctrine for a smaller force to win against a technologically advanced and numerically superior opponent.

While state-on-state war remains a credible threat to national security, the United States' dominance in large-scale conventional warfare will likely continue to deter this style of confrontation and encourage adversaries to employ methods designed to offset these strengths. The character and forms of warfare employed by future adversaries are not easily defined, but the experience gained fighting dissimilar enemies and the concepts of fourth generation warfare, irregular warfare, and hybrid warfare provide useful points of departure to begin an intellectual discussion about the relevance and shortcomings of the Marine Corps' current doctrine.

Conclusion: MCDP-1 *Warfighting* was the product of intense study, the synthesis of ideas, and an active debate that contributed to the doctrine's growth as well as a broad understanding of its core concepts, strengths, and potential limitations. This doctrine stagnated for 15 years while the Marine Corps gained a breadth of combat experience and scholars advanced new theories of warfare. It is time for renewed doctrinal invigoration to determine if maneuver warfare is the right philosophy for the future security environment.
In the 1997 forward to Marine Corps Doctrinal Publication 1 (MCDP-1), *Warfighting*, then-Commandant of the Marine Corps General Charles Krulak wrote that doctrine should not stagnate and must continue to evolve based on growing experience, advancements in theory, and the changing face of war. MCDP-1 itself represented such an evolution by revising the original *Warfighting* published eight years earlier as Fleet Marine Force Manual 1 (FMFM-1). Finalized after nearly ten years of debate, FMFM-1 codified the Marine Corps' fundamental thoughts on the nature and theory of war and described the maneuver warfare philosophy that would guide how the organization prepared for and waged war in the future. The Marine Corps gained a breadth of combat experience in the decades following the publication of *Warfighting* while scholars simultaneously advanced new theories of warfare. More than twenty years after the original publication and fifteen years since the last revision, it is time to once again evaluate the Marine Corps' foundational doctrine against these developments to ensure its continued relevance in the future war environment envisioned by the assessments and strategies meant to guide the force in the coming decade.

The Marine Corps' search for a new doctrine began in the post-Vietnam era as the United States shifted its strategic priority from the Asia/Pacific region to the defense of Europe. Rather than revisit their respective experiences in Vietnam, both the Marine Corps and the Army turned to the Middle East for a model of future war. For sixteen days in October 1973 the Israeli Defense Force and the combined armies of Syria and Egypt waged a highly mobile, exhausting, and deadly war that demonstrated the lethality of precision ground weapons, accurate aerial bombing, and mobile air defenses. The 1973 Arab/Israeli War also represented the first large-scale confrontation between two forces equipped with modern weapons found in NATO and the Warsaw Pact. The war's aftermath illustrated to Marine Corps and Army leaders that any
future conflict against the Soviet Union in Europe or its client states in the Middle East would
involve fighting against a numerically superior foe equipped with technology equal to or better
than its U.S. equivalent. For the Marine Corps these facts represented a vexing problem:

The Marine Corps at the time was still a light infantry force organized, trained, and
equipped for vertical envelopment and amphibious operations. With ample experience in
vertical envelopment accrued during more than six years of operations in the jungles Vietnam,
thousands of Marines were woefully inexperienced in amphibious operations. Furthermore, the
post-Hogaboom Board Marine infantry division lacked the organic mobility demonstrated on the
Sinai Peninsula and in the Golan Heights. These shortfalls prompted more than one officer at the
time to speculate on the potential ineffectiveness of the contemporary Marine battalion against
its Soviet or Middle Eastern counterpart in head-to-head combat on the modern battlefield.

The issue of mechanizing the Corps figured prominently in the pages of the *Marine
Corps Gazette* throughout the 1970s along with what role, if any, the Marine Corps should have
in reinforcing NATO. Both topics encroached on spheres traditionally dominated by the U.S.
Army: armored warfare and the defense of Europe. For an organization with no desire to
become a second land army, the central challenge for the Marine Corps during the mid to late
1970s concerned how to reclaim its unique amphibious character while still maintaining
relevance in an era of shifting security priorities and shrinking defense budgets.

As the decade 1970s and ‘80s unfolded, the Marine Corps gradually embraced both
mechanization and its newly-assigned role guarding NATO’s northern flank by reconciling its
expeditionary amphibious mission with these changes. A series of programs such as the Near
Term Prepositioning Force (later the Maritime Preposition Force), the Marine Corps
Prepositioning Program-Norway, and, in early 1980, the Light Armored Vehicle (LAV)
program, helped ensure the Marine Corps’ continued relevance in the new strategic environment while simultaneously maintaining distinction from the U.S. Army, which was pursuing its own heavier weapons initiatives. With Corps-wide modernization underway, the debate over force structure and equipment began to shift towards developing a doctrine to fight future wars.

Marine Captain S.W. Miller began the maneuver warfare discussion in earnest in late 1979 with two-part series in the Gazette entitled “Winning through Maneuver.” In his articles, Miller analyzed Soviet doctrine and developed two fictional scenarios in which an amphibious force encountered a numerically superior foe equipped with sophisticated weapons, but lacked freedom of action due to a centralized control system. In his scenarios, the landing force operated at a high tempo and fluidly harmonized air and ground action to overwhelm the opponent’s control, cohesion, and ultimately will to resist. Miller evoked history’s great captains to illustrate the timelessness of maneuver and acknowledged the more recent works of J.F.C. Fuller, Heinz Guderian, and retired Air Force Colonel John Boyd, but his articles were only the first in the Gazette to advocate a maneuver doctrine for the Marine Corps.

William S. Lind followed Captain Miller with an article in the March 1980 Gazette that provided a clearer definition of maneuver warfare. Lind, the aide for military affairs to Senator Gary Hart, never served a day in the military but was a frequent contributor to the Gazette and an early proponent of modernization and mechanization in the Corps. In his article, Lind described maneuver warfare as a style of war that is the opposite of a firepower-attrition style. The latter was familiar to officers with Vietnam experience who witnessed firsthand the futility of rigidly applying superior firepower on a fast-moving and fluid battlefield, while the former was experiencing a revival in military circles based in part on John Boyd’s comprehensive theory of the nature of war.
Beginning in 1977, John Boyd began briefing his “Patterns of Conflict,” a six-hour presentation of 193 slides purporting to unveil the character of conflict and conquest. Already an established theorist, Boyd expanded his ideas of fast transients and the Observe-Orient-Decide-Act decision cycle (OODA loop) into a broader theory of ground combat based on historical examples and the ideas of Sun Tzu, J.F.C. Fuller, T.E. Lawrence; B.H. Liddell Hart. Boyd used history to illuminate three categories of conflict and their implications for operational art and strategy: attrition conflict, maneuver conflict, and moral conflict. Lind called “Patterns” the modern theory of maneuver war and described the concept’s goal as the destruction of the enemy’s vital cohesion—disruption—not by physical set piece destruction. The object is the enemy’s mind, not his body. The principle tool is moving forces into unexpected places at surprisingly high speeds. Firepower is the servant of maneuver [and] maneuver conflict is more psychological than physical...often [the enemy] suffers a mental breakdown in the form of panic and is defeated before he is physically destroyed.

Like Miller, Lind used a fictional scenario wherein maneuver warfare offered the Marine Corps a way to defeat a numerically superior, well-equipped enemy lacking operational and tactical flexibility. The publication of Lind’s article sparked a decade of open debate in the pages of the Gazette marked by no less than 35 articles on the subject of maneuver warfare. Lind and Boyd gained prominence (some would say notoriety) among what became known as the “maneuverists,” but they were only two of many influential personalities that helped move the Marine Corps towards a maneuver warfare doctrine.

In 1981 Major General A. M. Gray assumed command of the 2d Marine Division and began a maneuver warfare initiative of his own that would culminate when he became Commandant six years later. Gray published a “battle book” for subordinate commanders that codified four ideas central to maneuver war: the OODA Loop, mission tactics, commander’s...
intent, and the point of main effort. Gray encouraged experimentation and learning within the division by creating the 2d Marine Division Maneuver Warfare Board and by hosting daily after-action reviews during division free-play field exercises. The 2d Marine Division did not monopolize the maneuver warfare discussion and a Junior Officer’s Tactical Symposium in the 1st Marine Division resembled the east coast’s Maneuver Warfare Board. At Quantico, Major General Bernard Trainor, the Director of Marine Corps Education Command, facilitated the spread of maneuver warfare ideas by placing Colonel Michael Wyly in charge of tactics at the Expeditionary Warfare School. Wyly, an associate of William Lind, soon contacted John Boyd and brought the controversial theorist to the school to deliver his six-hour “Patterns” brief.

Maneuver warfare ideas spread throughout the Corps, but dissemination was not acceptance. The doctrinal debate of the 1980s became personalized and emotional and suffered from a disproportionate association with the polarizing personalities of outsiders William Lind and John Boyd. Critics offered counter examples where opponents endured disrupted cohesion and pointed out the unlikelihood of an amphibious force facing an enemy of superior numbers finding, much less exploiting, enemy weak points. At least one author challenged the assertion that maneuver warfare applied to what were at the time termed low-intensity conflicts such as the civil war in Lebanon, the Soviet intervention in Afghanistan, and the U.S. counterinsurgency effort in El Salvador. This particular argument gained traction as the maneuver warfare debate continued, but General Gray’s selection to Commandant in 1987 signaled the effective end of the maneuver revolution within the Corps.

In 1989, maneuver warfare became the official doctrine of the Marine Corps with the publication FMFM-1 Warfighting. Drafted by a young captain and closely reviewed by General Gray, Warfighting represented the Commandant’s philosophy of waging war and the
authoritative basis for how the Marine Corps would prepare to fight. Less than 100 pages in length, *Warfighting* blended the classical works of Clausewitz and Sun Tzu with the more contemporary ideas of maneuverists John Boyd and William Lind. The succinct text described foundational ideas on the nature of war and its theory as well as prescribed how to prepare for and wage maneuver war. Despite its polished presentation and official adoption, controversy continued over the concept’s validity, prompting FMFM-1’s author, Captain John Schmitt, to further explain maneuver warfare in a *Gazette* article the following year.

In “Understanding Maneuver as the Basis for a Doctrine,” Schmitt expounded on the concepts contained in FMFM-1 to further understanding and dispel misconceptions. Schmitt borrowed from science the concept of leverage to explain the decisive position maneuverists sought over their opponents. Arguing that, in its “perfect form,” this advantage is so great that the enemy capitulates without fighting, Schmitt used Napoleon’s turning movement at Ulm in 1805 as an example where positional advantage so mentally overwhelmed the “unhappy” General Mack that he surrendered his army of 30,000 without a fight. Historical examples of Sun Tzu’s maxim “to subdue and enemy without fighting is the acme of skill” are rare, but Schmitt evoked the strategic thinking of Liddell Hart to illustrate that an advantageous position, exploited through battle, had the potential to limit the fighting required to reach a decision.

Central to maneuver warfare is the idea that advantage transcends the spatial dimension and Schmitt dedicated the bulk of his article to explaining how to maximize advantage through the selective application of effort against enemy critical factors and vulnerabilities. Applying combat power to vulnerabilities was not novel; the concepts of indirect approach and surfaces and gaps were common in the lexicon of contemporary military professionals. However, Schmitt expanded upon these ideas by writing about them as a function of attention and argued
that an enemy’s vulnerabilities included not only physical weaknesses but also any possibility for which he was mentally unprepared. Similarly, attacking physical objects considered valuable by the enemy lacked originality. Clausewitz’s center of gravity and Jomini’s decisive points were common, if not frequently debated and misunderstood ideas at the time. Schmitt suggested that “attacking” could include constructive acts that denied enemy access to a critical location, capability, function, or moral characteristic in lieu of destructive acts aimed at their physical elimination. Complementary to the notion of creating advantage for friendly forces was the idea of placing the enemy at a disadvantage through surprise, distraction, and unpredictability intended to disrupt the opponent’s cognitive processes. The final component of maneuver warfare that tied together Schmitt’s ideas on advantage and disadvantage was tempo.

Borrowing from Boyd’s work on fast transients and the OODA loop, Schmitt applied maneuver concepts to the temporal dimension and argued that advantage compounded as a friendly force quickly and fluidly altered the situation in such a manner that the enemy could not physically or mentally cope with the rapidly changing situation. Tempo could be fast or slow so long as it was relatively quicker than the enemy and used to create advantage. Synthesizing the ideas of advantage and disadvantage with tempo recognizes the inherent value of speed as a weapon and offers a means to quickly and economically defeat opponents across the full spectrum of conflict. In the end, Schmitt’s article responded to the ongoing debate over maneuver warfare by provided additional clarity and depth to the elegantly simple Warfighting, but it was the actions of Marine forces during Operations DESERT SHIELD/STORM that elevated the concept of maneuver warfare from an academic dialog to battlefield application.

The Iraqi Army occupying Kuwait in 1991 typified the enemy force the Marine Corps had been preparing to fight for over a decade. Outnumbering the I Marine Expeditionary Force
(I MEF) by a factor of three to one, the Iraqis also enjoyed a five to one advantage in armor and
fielded modern T-72 main battle tanks sporting armor and firepower comparable to the Marine’s
Vietnam-era M60-A1 tanks. The Iraqis arrayed their estimated 18 divisions behind two
defensive belts that the Marines dubbed the “Saddam Line,” a formidable engineering effort
designed to ensnarl the attacker in a “kill sack” where indirect fire from more than 1,000 modern
artillery pieces would annihilate the invaders. An additional three divisions occupied similar
positions along the Kuwaiti coast in preparation for an anticipated amphibious assault by the
Marines. The Iraqi dispositions left little room for maneuver in the spatial dimension forcing the
Marines to either wage a bloody frontal assault or seek non-positional advantages and exploit
them through battle.

The Marines chose to create advantage. In conjunction with a broader joint air campaign
designed to incapacitate Iraqi leadership and destroy key military capabilities, the Marines
devised their own localized operations to gain a mental advantage over the Iraqis. Artillery
was a critical factor in the Saddam Line, but the Marines lacked the aviation ordnance necessary
to destroy each piece of equipment prior to the ground attack. To overcome this limitation, the
Marines focused on defeating rather than destroying the Iraqi artillery. In a series of nighttime
combined-arms raids, the Marines used friendly howitzers to provoke counter-battery fire from
the Iraqi artillery. An airborne forward air controller would then identify the Iraqi positions by
the cannon’s muzzle flashes and direct circling “wolfpacks” of Marine F/A-18s and AV-8Bs in
for the kill. The target of these raids was the enemy’s mind more than his equipment as Marine
air repeatedly delivered the message that firing artillery was inviting a death sentence. The raids
had the desired effect and by the third week of operations the enemy artillerymen would abandon
their guns at the sound of aircraft overhead. The Marine approach applied maneuver warfare
concepts to defeat the enemy’s will and eliminate a key component of his defensive plan prior to
the ground offensive without requiring the physical attrition of each artillery battery.

The next element of the Marine campaign was to capture and hold the enemy’s attention
in a direction other than the planned attack. A large amphibious force in the Persian Gulf caused
the Iraqis to concentrate a reinforced corps along the coast which permitted the Marines to shift
forces west to exploit an exposed flank.27 The Marines also conducted a massive deception
operation employing explosive-laden vehicles, broadcasts of battlefield noises, and artillery
preparation to deceive the enemy into thinking the ground attack had begun prematurely.28
Leaflet and loudspeaker psychological operations reinforced these efforts to destabilize the
frontline Iraqi units in order to create conditions favorable for exploitation once ground
operations began.

The final piece of the plan was to compound the effects of the pre-invasion shaping
operations by using tempo as a weapon once the ground assault began. In the words of the 1st
Marine Division Commanding General: “Our focus was not on destroying everything. Our focus
was on the Iraqi mind and getting behind them.”29 To quickly envelop the enemy, the Marines
infiltrated two regiments past the first defensive line prior to G-day, then swiftly advanced
towards objectives deep in the Iraqi rear after breaching the second obstacle belt. Marine
aviation supported the advance, acting as “flying artillery” when ground units outran their
artillery coverage, while a separate task force handled captured Iraqis to facilitate the
unencumbered advance of the mechanized lead elements.3031

By employing maneuver warfare ideas during the planning and execution of DESERT
SHIELD/DESERT STORM, I MEF routed the Iraqis so quickly and achieved the liberation of
Kuwait so swiftly that some questioned whether the Marines had moved too fast.32 The Marines
of I MEF exploited enemy weaknesses through the successful application of maneuver warfare tenets in the mental and temporal dimension to overcome lack of spatial maneuver opportunities. In doing so, they validated the concepts found in FMFM-1 and helped the Marine Corps' foundational doctrine achieve near universal acceptance in the coming decade.

The Marine Corps incorporated the lessons of maneuver warfare gleaned from DESERT SHIELD/STORM into doctrine and professional military education curricula throughout the 1990s. In contrast to the lively exchange of the previous decade, the post-Gulf War era was notable for its lack of debate over the core concepts of maneuver warfare. Instead, the discussions in the Gazette have focused on the post-Cold War role of the Corps and how to expand upon maneuver warfare through emerging technology.

In 1996 a new operational concept entitled Operational Maneuver From The Sea (OMFTS) adapted traditional maneuver warfare ideas to the littorals in response to emerging threats and enhanced enemy capabilities in coastal regions. OMFTS spawned a new tactical concept for forcible entry called Ship To Objective Maneuver (STOM), which offered the possibility of projecting maneuver forces inland without any pause to build combat power ashore. A modest revision to Warfighting appeared around the same time which provided additional clarity and enhancement to the original FMFM-1 but added nothing radically new to the basic tenets of maneuver warfare.

The decade of debate that preceded the Gulf War gave way to a decade of acceptance and advancement with little discussion about whether maneuver warfare was the correct philosophy or doctrine for future conflicts. Indeed, the Marine Corps in 2001 fused OMFTS and STOM with an updated Warfighting to produce a revised capstone concept for the future called Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare. Right or wrong, the ideas developed and carried forward
from the 1990s were what the Marine Corps went to war with in its first conflicts of the 21st century.

The same month that Headquarters Marine Corps published *Expeditionary Maneuver Warfare*, Marines from Combined Task Force 58 (CTF-58) were already executing its concepts in combat. CTF-58, an amalgamation of the 15th and 26th Marine Expeditionary Units, conducted a deep “strategic” penetration and landed behind enemy positions in southern Afghanistan to support Task Force DAGGER’s Anti-Taliban forces advancing from the north. Launched from amphibious ships in the Arabian Sea, the Marines went ashore to undermine the Taliban’s command and control network and bring about an early moral and mental collapse of the enemy by unhinging their defenses in the spiritual capital of Kandahar. CTF-58 operated at an unprecedented distance of more than 300 nautical miles from its naval support, which demonstrated new operational applications of maneuver warfare concepts. The bold actions of the Marines and Sailors involved in CTF-58 contributed to the swift downfall of the Taliban government, but the vacuum left in their wake gave way to a rocky peace that erupted in violence as the Taliban regrouped and fought an insurgency to regain control of the country.

The Marine Corps barely had time to reflect on the early lessons of CTF-58 and Afghanistan before being called into action again in early 2003 to topple the regime of Saddam Hussein. Alongside the Army’s 3d infantry Division, Marines from the I Marine Expeditionary Force charged across 350 miles of hostile territory to capture Baghdad in one of the swiftest advances of heavy forces in modern history. To maintain tempo, the Marines used deception to pin down or bypass major Iraqi units which were left to die on the vine or were neutralized by Marine aviation. Major combat operations in Iraq were conducted with fewer than half the
number of troops and equipment used in the 1991 Gulf War and were carried out with such speed, precision, and audacity, that the Iraqi capital fell within a matter of weeks.

Unlike the first Gulf War, Operation IRAQI FREEDOM proved to be more than a head-to-head engagement of conventional forces. Soldiers and Marines discovered that regular Iraqi units quickly capitulated, but fierce resistance came in the form of paramilitaries dressed in civilian clothes who waged a close in war of ambush and deception. Known as the Saddam Fedayeen, these Ba'ath party loyalists were a decentralized opponent, not dependent on rigid command and control and whose bases of operations were dispersed throughout towns and cities in Iraq. While unable to stop the coalition advance or prevent the fall of Baghdad, the Fedayeen were able to disrupt operations and formed the core of the insurgency that followed, hampering Coalition occupation and accounting for the bulk of casualties years after President Bush had declared the end of major combat operations.

OPERATION DESERT STORM and the opening gambits of ENDURING FREEDOM and IRAQI FREEDOM validated the concepts of maneuver warfare against opponents it was designed to defeat: tightly controlled armies of superior numbers fielding modern weapons. However, as the U.S. military attempted to consolidate its gains in both Iraq and Afghanistan, these seemingly swift victories yielded protracted and bloody campaigns. Enemy forces bypassed during initial combat operations had a chance to regroup, reorganize, and reemerged as fighters who hid amongst the population, employed low-tech weaponry, and operated under decentralized command and control structures. Added to the tempo and precision that marked the early phases of both wars, persistence and mass became paramount as U.S. forces struggled to defeat an enemy that perpetuated episodic violence and occasionally engaged in major clashes when they could muster local superiority against thinly spread Coalition forces. The style of war
experienced in Afghanistan and Iraq resembled less the quick and decisive campaigns envisioned by maneuverists and more like the type of conflict foreseen by their early critics.

Perhaps recognizing the validity of their critic’s arguments or the potential shelf-life of their own theory, notable maneuverists Lind, Schmitt, and others published in late 1989 an article posing questions about warfare in the post-maneuver era. In “The Changing Face of War: Into the Fourth Generation,” Lind et al. delineated modern warfare into three generations: massed manpower, massed firepower, and maneuver. While offering no definitive description of the next generation of war, the authors postulated that the fourth generation battlefield could be widely dispersed, include the whole of the enemy’s society, and blur the distinction between what is civilian and what is military.42

Retired Marine Corps Colonel T.X. Hammes expanded upon this generational theme in his 2004 book, The Sling and the Stone, by claiming that an evolved form of insurgency represented the next generation of warfare. Hammes defined his version of Fourth Generation War (4GW) as the use of “all available networks—political, economic, social, and military—to convince the enemy’s political decision makers that their strategic goals are either unachievable or too costly for the perceived benefit.” Critics derided 4GW as an oversimplification of the evolution of a complex endeavor that compartmentalized means of war and implied their natural progression led to the eventual displacement of the preceding generation.44 Despite a critical reception, Hammes’ work reflected a growing interest in understanding the battlefield dynamics playing out in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other conflicts around the globe where warfare was increasingly described as “irregular.”

The term irregular warfare has nebulous origins, but its central concepts are present in wars dating back thousands of years. In 1996, defense analyst Jeffery White called irregular
warfare the oldest form of warfare, alternately referred to as tribal warfare, primitive warfare, small wars, and low-intensity conflict. White’s article represented one of the earliest uses of the term irregular warfare within the Department of Defense, but by the mid-2000s the phrase had worked its way into national security documents and was prolific among security professionals trying to describe dissimilar opponents and the challenges they posed to traditional military and intelligence establishments. Definitions of irregular warfare are many, but most commonly include a dissimilarity between opponents and the laws (or lack thereof) that govern both the belligerent’s style of warfare and their conduct on the battlefield. The Marine Corps hosted several conferences on irregular warfare in the mid-2000s and formally recognized the concept with the creation in 2007 of the Center for Irregular Warfare. Essentially an internal think-tank for developing irregular warfare initiatives, the Center for Irregular Warfare was just opening its doors when a new concept of “hybrid” warfare was gaining increased attention.

Similar to irregular warfare, the concept of hybrid warfare has varying definitions and is an increasingly popular term used to describe wars other than those waged by two similarly organized and equipped opponents. The 2005 National Defense Strategy recognized that U.S. forces dominated traditional forms of warfare and predicted that future adversaries would present a range of traditional, irregular, catastrophic, and disruptive challenges. Lieutenant General James Mattis and retired Lieutenant Colonel Frank Hoffman described the merger of these modes and means of war as hybrid warfare in a 2005 Proceedings article and predicted this synthesis would represent the future of war. Exemplified by the 2006 Israeli-Hezbollah war in southern Lebanon, hybrid warfare pits a state’s conventionally equipped and trained force against an opponent deftly blending irregular elements with conventional tactics and modern weapons left over from the remnants of a failed regime or supplied by an external source.
The concepts of fourth generation, irregular, and hybrid warfare present a different design threat than the opponents envisioned by Captain Miller and William Lind when they started the Marine Corps' maneuver warfare dialogue more than three decades ago. Enemies like those described in these concepts are increasingly included as part of the dynamic future security environment depicted in the strategic documents meant to guide the U.S. armed forces in the coming decades. This environment arose in the aftermath of the Cold War when non-state actors empowered by increased interconnection, economic prosperity, and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction created rival challenges to the world order previously defined by a rigid security competition between opposing blocs.

Maneuver warfare has its origins in an earlier world order where interstate conflict represented the greatest threat to national security. The aftermath of the 1973 Arab/Israeli war and the post-Vietnam shift in strategic security priorities presented the defense establishment with a clear picture of what future war would look like on the plains of Europe or the deserts of the Middle East. The Marine Corps adapted to this reality by integrating the heavier equipment needed to increase mobility, lethality and survivability on the modern battlefield into its amphibious mission. It also developed a doctrine for smaller force confronted by technologically advanced and numerically superior opponent in force-on-force battle.

While state-on-state war remains a credible threat in the modern world, the United States' dominance in large-scale conventional warfare will likely continue to deter this style of confrontation and encourage adversaries to employ methods designed to offset these strengths. The character and forms of warfare employed by future adversaries are not easily defined, but the experience gained fighting dissimilar enemies and the concepts of fourth generation,
irregular, and hybrid warfare provide useful points of departure to begin an intellectual discussion similar to the one that preceded the adoption of maneuver warfare as official doctrine.

*Warfighting* was the product of intense study, the synthesis of ideas, and an active debate that contributed to the doctrine’s growth as well as a broad understanding of its core concepts, strengths, and potential limitations. After the spectacular success of I.MEF during DESERT STORM, this doctrinal renaissance gave way to a period of acceptance that was conspicuously devoid of critical thinking. When the Marine Corps encountered enemies that did not fit the maneuver warfare design threat or new ideas about future warfare, the response was to defend the doctrine’s universal applicability rather than debate its potential shortfalls against enemies prepared to fight an opponent skilled in maneuver.54

There are notable similarities between the post-Vietnam era and today. The United States is once again reorienting its security priorities and facing an era of economic austerity that will affect the Marine Corps for decades to come.55 The Marine Corps is also trying to distance itself yet again from the second land army moniker and returning to its amphibious roots by reconciling the capability of its middle weight force with the capacity of the amphibious fleet. The difference between the post-war periods is the lack of a clearly defined security environment. As the Marine Corps begins the second decade of the 21st century, it is confronted by a wide range of security challenges and potential adversaries that were unimagined in the 1970s and ‘80s.

Contrary to General Kulak’s guidance, the doctrine of maneuver warfare was allowed to stagnate despite 15 years of experience, advancements in theory, and the changing face of war. It is time to re-evaluate maneuver warfare against these conditions rather than extol its virtues by stretching it to fit every situation and enemy. The results of a renewed doctrinal invigoration
may in fact be that maneuver warfare is a panacea to all forms and styles of war. A more likely, and more useful, outcome will be a broader understanding of our current doctrine’s origins and concepts as well as ways to advance it to better suit the challenges of the future security environment.


3 Israeli losses during the war were listed at 400 tanks destroyed, 102 aircraft downed, 2,656 dead and 7,250 wounded. Arab losses were estimated at 2,250 tanks destroyed or captured, 434 aircraft shot down or destroyed on the ground, 8,528 dead and 19,540 wounded. See: Abraham Rabinovich, *The Yom Kippur War: The Epic Encounter That Transformed the Middle East* (New York: Schocken Books, 2004), 496-7.


8 Started under Army Chief of Staff General Creighton Abrams, the Army’s modernization program became known as the “Big Five” and included five major new weapons systems: The UH-60 Blackhawk transport helicopter, the AH-64 Apache attack helicopter, the M1 Abrams tank, the M2 Bradley armored fighting vehicle, and the MIM-104 Patriot surface-to-air missile.


10 S.W. Miller, “Winning through maneuver. Conclusion—Countering the defense.” Marine Corps Gazette, Dec 1979, 63.


The idea of fast transients originated with Boyd's observations of aerial combat in the Korean War. Boyd observed that pilots flying the American F-86 held an advantage over the superior speed, climb rate, and turning radius of their opponents MIG-15s due in part to the F-86's ability to transition from one maneuver to another faster than the MIG. A bubble canopy, better pilot training, and hydraulic assisted control surfaces helped F-86 pilots see their opponent first and initiate a series of maneuvers that would force the MIG-15 out in front of the F-86. See: Frans P. B. Osinga, *Science, Strategy and War: The Strategic Theory of John Boyd* (London: Routledge, 2007), 25.

Lind. “Defining maneuver warfare for the Marine Corps.”


The 1st Marine Division Operations Officer summarized the importance of tempo in the overall plan by stating: “Going through as fast as we did made every action [the Iraqis] took irrelevant, especially when we were behind them already...If you go where the enemy isn’t and then get behind him, their morale is beaten to nothing and you are going to have a lot of EPWs (enemy prisoners of war).” See: G.I. Wilson, “The Gulf War, Maneuver Warfare, and the Operational Art.” 24.

Gordon. 374.

"MCDP-1 Questions." Message to the author from LtGen Paul K. Van Riper, USMC (ret). 17 Nov. 2011. E-mail.
Updated by the original FMFM-1 author, John Schmitt, the new Warfighting enhanced the description of the nature of war, clarified descriptions of styles of war, and refined the concepts of commander’s intent, main effort, and critical vulnerability. See: Headquarters U.S. Marine Corps, Warfighting, MCDP1 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Marine Corps, 1997), Forward.

One exception was LtCol G. Stephen Lauer’s April 1995 Gazette article: “Warfighting: A Leap of Faith.” Lauer called maneuver warfare “wishful warfare” and claimed it was the basis for tactical dogma that ignored the Corps’ practical experience against opponents who continued fighting despite being surrounded, cut off, or disrupted. Lauer’s article received an Honorable Mention in the 1994 Chase Prize Essay Contest but failed to renew the debate within the pages of the Gazette. See: G. Stephen Lauer, “Warfighting: A Leap of Faith.” Marine Corps Gazette, Apr 1995, 52.


Antulio J. Echevarria II, Fourth Generation War and Other Myths. Strategic Studies Institute, 2005. 10.


There exist varying definitions and descriptions of irregular warfare (IW) even within DoD. JP 1-02 defines irregular warfare as “a violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant population(s). Irregular warfare favors indirect and asymmetrical approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capacities, in order to erode an adversary’s power, influence, and will” (JP-1-02, p. 246). JP-1 and the 2010 Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept (JOC) remove the state versus non-state component from the JP 1-02 definition and respectively define IW as “[warfare in which] a less powerful adversary seeks to disrupt or negate the military capabilities and advantages of a more powerful, conventionally armed military force” (JP-1, p. x) and “[warfare in which] adaptive adversaries such as terrorists, insurgents, and
criminal networks as well as states will increasingly resort to irregular forms of warfare as effective ways to challenge conventional military powers. (IW JOC, p. 4). Strategist and professor, Colin Gray, adopts a different approach, opting to define IW in terms of the rival belligerent’s legal status (Gray, p. 214).


Hezbollah’s forces in southern Lebanon operated in autonomous squad-sized units that more closely represented an irregular network of fighters than a traditional military force. However, these squads fought from sophisticated bunker complexes and employed combined arms tactics using a mix of small arms, machine guns, anti-tank weapons, mortars, and small rockets to stymie Israeli ground forces. A rocket campaign against Israeli cities also resembled a conventional operation, but Hezbollah’s use of unconventional firing methods and caches hidden in populated areas frustrated and prevented Israeli efforts to stop the attacks. To capitalize on its tactical success, Hezbollah exploited the information environment to its strategic advantage. Using its own television network, al-Manar, Hezbollah exaggerated its own tactical victories while broadcasting Israeli attacks on Lebanon’s infrastructure and civilian population to influence international opinion in Hezbollah’s favor. See: Matt Matthews, We Were Caught Unprepared: The 2006 Hezbollah-Israeli War (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 2008), 47.

Asymmetrical enemies like those described in 4GW, irregular, and hybrid warfare are included as part of the future security environment described in the latest Quadrennial Defense Review Report, National Security Strategy, National Military Strategy of the United States of America, Department of Defense strategic guidance Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership, and the Chairman of the Joint Chief of Staff’s 2012 “Mission Command” White Paper. Additionally, Marine Corps publications Vision Strategy 2025 and the 35th Commandant of the Marine Corps Commandant’s Planning Guidance both reference a complex future security environment containing conventional and unconventional challenges. With few exceptions, most of these documents directly refer to asymmetrical, irregular, or hybrid threats.


President Obama and Defense Secretary Panetta describe the present period as a moment of transition as U.S. forces conclude the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan and return home to an environment of reduced spending to improve the country’s long-term economic health. This moment of transition also marks a strategic turning point as the U.S. adopts a policy of global presence emphasizing Asia and the Middle East while still maintaining commitments to allies in Europe. See: Panetta, Leon E., and Barack Obama. Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership Priorities for 21st Century Defense (Washington, D.C.: Dept. of Defense, 2012).


"MCDP-1 Questions." Message to the author from LtGen Paul K. Van Riper, USMC (ret). 17 Nov. 2011. E-mail.


