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Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps

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alone are well worth a serious reading of Dubbs's wartime U-boat operations.

The revolution in military affairs created by U-boats in the First World War had a dramatic effect on the public, the conduct of the war, and the near attainment of German strategic aims. According to Dubbs, German U-boats were a major focus in negotiating the armistices that ended the war.

Dubbs chronicles the debate by American Navy leaders on the benefits of taking U-boats as war prizes. They had to be convinced that there were benefits to crewing U-boats with American submariners and crossing the Atlantic. Dubbs also introduces American submariners in his account of these events. Those officers would later emerge as leaders of the submarine force in the Second World War. Their efforts to inject First World War U-boat technology into U.S. submarines formed the basis for the U.S. Navy's undersea warfare dominance today.

America's U-boats is an important book for naval warfare professionals and submariners. It conveys a near-complete history of the origins of submarine warfare and the revolution in military affairs that submarines have delivered to maritime and strategic warfare then and now.

WILLIAM F. BUNDY



O'Connell, Aaron B. *Underdogs: The Making of the Modern Marine Corps*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press, 2012. 400pp. \$18.95

In *Underdogs*, Aaron B. O'Connell (U.S. Naval Academy) presents a cultural history of the U.S. Marine Corps from 1941 to 1965. A lieutenant colonel in the Marine Corps Reserve, O'Connell explores

how mistrust among the Marine Corps, other military services, and civilian policy makers often motivated Marines to distinguish themselves. In response, Marines cultivated relationships with formidable allies in the U.S. Congress, media, and even Hollywood to disseminate their narratives to the public, which ultimately benefited the institution. Students, scholars, and general readers interested in military culture or the Marine Corps should find the volume useful.

O'Connell's purpose is to explain the Marine Corps's rapid growth from an undersized force of fewer than twenty thousand Marines in 1939 to a force peaking at nearly five hundred thousand Marines in 1945 and settling around two hundred thousand Marines by 1965. His thesis is that culture forms a vital tool for military organizations. O'Connell argues three main points: that Marine Corps culture was unique, that it helped the group thrive, and that it impacted American society as well. To his credit, O'Connell presents both positive and negative implications of these dynamics, highlighting subjects ranging from esprit de corps to alcohol abuse.

The author supports his arguments with extensive sources, examining archival material such as military and government records, personal papers, letters, and diaries, as well as published sources such as newspapers, magazines, films, and recruiting commercials. He makes good use of the *Marine Corps Gazette* and *Leatherneck* to present stories that Marines told. He also scrutinizes surveys, public opinion polls, memoirs, and oral history transcripts. A major strength of the volume is the inclusion of interviews that O'Connell conducted with Marine veterans, which personalize the broader narratives of the book.

First, O'Connell explores the massive expansion of the Marine Corps that occurred during World War II and the resulting stories that comprised the group's culture. He explains that Marine Corps culture functioned much like a religion in that it "bound people together in a system of shared obligations and beliefs." World War II reinforced those ties, since most Marines served in the Pacific, and the Corps suffered more than twice the casualty rate of other military services.

Second, he considers the dissemination of these stories to American society between World War II and the Korean War. Brigadier General Robert L. Denig's public relations specialists, known colloquially as Denig's Demons, eventually worked with nearly five thousand newspapers across the country. Other examples included the Toys for Tots program, which started in 1947, and the Marine Corps's collaboration with Hollywood in Republic Pictures' *Sands of Iwo Jima*, which included participation by more than one thousand Marines.

Third, the author studies the Marine Corps's mobilization of political power in the U.S. Congress. He explores avid supporters of the institution such as Paul H. Douglas (D-Ill.) and Joseph R. McCarthy (R-Wis.) and explains how their efforts protected Marine Corps missions and budgets. O'Connell rightly points out the irony that Marines' political efforts often "argued against militarism and excessive military influence in politics, even as they became the most politically activist branch of the armed services." For example, a nebulous group of influential supporters known as the Chowder Society led Marine Corps congressional efforts from relative obscurity.

Next, O'Connell explores American culture and civil-military relations after the Korean War. He analyzes stories about participants in the iconic Marine Corps battle at the Chosin Reservoir during the winter of 1950 and then investigates problems resulting from Marine Corps culture after the Korean War. Central among these difficulties was the 1956 Ribbon Creek scandal. This incident caused the deaths of six Marine recruits and resulted in the court-martial of Staff Sergeant Matthew C. McKeon for marching them through swamps around Parris Island, South Carolina.

Finally, the author considers the influence of culture on military strategy. He details the rise of Marine air-ground task forces (MAGTFs), which had both positive and negative implications. This novel structure provided scalable and relevant power projection capabilities focused on low-intensity conflict, but also risked militarization by making deployments easier to initiate for civilian policy makers.

Underdogs is a valuable addition to an understanding of military culture and illustrates how military organizations are unique. O'Connell contributes useful concepts such as "narratives of Marine exceptionalism"; "cultural discipline"; and "cultural politics," which relate culture to military institutions, militarization, and power. Ultimately, *Underdogs* explains how and why the Marine Corps created a distinctive identity after World War II and illuminates the dynamic and symbiotic relationship between the Marine Corps and American society.

WILLIAM A. TAYLOR