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# Why the Army and the Marine Corps Should Be Friends

ALLAN R. MILLETT

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**S**oldiers and Marines are cowmen and shepherders. Remember the cowmen and the shepherders of the Old West? They battled one another with unbridled contempt and ferocity over the grasslands of the open range, strewing the bodies of their animals and drovers everywhere. In the meantime, the banks, the farmers, the railroads, and the Plains winters put the independent cowmen and shepherders out of business, even though everyone knew that Americans wanted both beef and wool. The US Army and US Marine Corps should learn that your enemies are not necessarily your enemies when you get into a turf fight.

To address the current issues of roles, missions, and budgets for a strategic future that offers little more than regional conventional wars and lesser interventions, the Army and Marine Corps should call a truce, and they should form an alliance that stresses the complementary capabilities of the two services and their partnership in joint operations. To do so will require a retrograde movement down memory lane and some new thinking about the relations of the two services during the course of the 20th century. The Chief of Staff and the Commandant already have formed an effective association, but they should have the full support of the officer corps of both services. We have met the enemy, and it is not us—or you.

## *Why Real Soldiers Do Not Like Jarheads*

The officer corps of the US Army sometimes fears that the Army exists only to make the Marine Corps look better to the public and Congress. They believe, as Brigadier General Frank A. Armstrong, Jr., said in a speech

in 1945, that the Marine Corps “is a small, bitched-up army talking Navy lingo. We are going to put those Marines in the regular Army and make efficient soldiers out of them.” General Armstrong could be ignored—perhaps—but General of the Army Dwight D. Eisenhower thought the same thing. So did General of the Army George C. Marshall, and he, too, thought the Marine Corps should just fade away.

Why did these distinguished officers regard the Marine Corps with fear and loathing? The tension between the Army and Marine Corps started in the War with Spain, flamed in the Boxer Rebellion and Philippine Insurrection, and exploded in World War I. While Major General William R. Shafter’s Eighth Corps fought, sickened, grumbled, and died in the trenches at Santiago de Cuba, a small Marine battalion waged a neat little campaign at Guantanamo Bay—reported brilliantly by Stephen Crane—and got off the island in time for a victory parade in Washington, D.C. The soldiers came home to quarantine camps. The Marines who fought for the legation quarter in Peking in 1900 also got plenty of ink—and later a Charlton Heston movie. No one was gentle with the kind folks of Samar after the Balangiga Massacre (1901), but the punitive campaign cost General Jacob H. Smith, USA, his career, not Marine Colonel L. W. T. Waller. When the State Department announced it wanted a legation guard in Peking, it chose Marines. The Army received the less glamorous task of keeping the transportation routes open from Tientsin. In the Philippines the soldiers moved on to fight the Moros while the Marines paraded about the new naval stations at Subic Bay and Cavite.

In World War I the senior officers of the American Expeditionary Forces, including General John J. Pershing, opposed the formation of the 4th Brigade (Marines) of the 2d Division and resisted additional plans to form an all-Marine division in 1918. When the four most experienced divisions of the AEF went into serious action in May 1918, the American press found high drama in the 4th Brigade’s battle for Belleau Wood and gave pallid coverage to the stiff fights by the Army at Cantigny, Vaux, Chateau-Thierry, Seicheprey, and the south bank of the Marne. For the rest of the war General Headquarters AEF tried to minimize the role of the Marine brigade, regarded as publicity-crazed. Rela-

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tions did not improve in peacetime, despite the gallant efforts of Major General James G. Harbord, USA, who had commanded the Marine brigade at Belleau Wood. During the Hoover Administration the War Department sent out at least one proposal to sink the Marine Corps as an economy move. The move died in Congress, again proving that Marines had too much influence on the Hill.

If Army-Marine relations had taken on a burned odor by 1941, they became absolutely noxious in World War II. The War Department, including General Marshall, resented FDR's close ties to the Corps, cemented by his son James, a Marine reserve officer, and his personal friendship with Commandant Thomas Holcomb. The Army did not want to share its scarce materiel with the Marines in the mobilization period, but FDR ruled otherwise. It did like having Marine staffs running the two ad hoc joint amphibious corps on both coasts, formed in 1941. The Army resented the fact that the Marine Corps took only volunteers in 1941 and 1942 when it was coping with draftees. The press again seemed prejudiced toward Marines and insensitive to Army performance in the South Pacific, 1942-1943. Guadalcanal became famous, but who cared about New Guinea except the MacArthur idolaters? Everyone knew the 3d Marine Division assaulted Bougainville and the 1st Marine Division took most of New Britain island, but what of the Army divisions that finished both conquests?

The focal point of Army-Marine hostility—for such it was—in the Pacific war became Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith, US Marine Corps, first commander of V Amphibious Corps and then Fleet Marine Force Pacific. A Marine partisan of terrible temper, Holland Smith treated almost everyone the same—including Marine officers—and that was not gently. He put himself at odds early with Lieutenant General Robert C. Richardson, Jr., USA, roughly his Army counterpart in the central Pacific theater. Holland Smith—so the Army thought—showed a wretched degree of incompetence and intolerance, which he inflicted upon Army units in operations in the Gilberts and Marshalls. He then relieved Major General Ralph C. Smith, USA, a very nice man and CG of the 27th Infantry Division, during the Saipan campaign. Always the cavalryman, Richardson rode to the rescue, but the relief stuck, and Smith vs. Smith boiled all the way to Washington for General Marshall, Commandant Holcomb, and Admiral Ernest J. King to adjudicate. The Army laid down the law: no more Army troops would serve under Holland M. Smith. The corollary became: no Marine general should or could command a corps or field army.

In the locust years of 1945-1950 the Army argued that (1) no future major war would require amphibious landings or that the nuclear threat made such ventures suicidal, a glowing Gallipoli; and (2) the Army could make any necessary amphibious landings since it had done so many times not only in the Pacific, but in the European theater as well. Although the Marines had made some minor doctrinal and equipment contributions, they no longer

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monopolized expertise in the amphibious specialty. Whatever Marines thought they could do, good old infantrymen, combat engineers, and assault amphibious transportation battalions could do as well or better. General of the Army Omar N. Bradley, Chief of Staff and then Chairman, JCS, went on the record: the United States did not need even one division prepared for amphibious assaults. But once again the Marines struck back through Congress and arranged for their preferred roles and missions to be written into the National Security Act of 1947, an act of rank treason toward poor old Captain Harry S. Truman, the Commander in Chief. The President was right when he said the Marines and Russians had similar propaganda machines.

When hard-pressed by circumstances beyond its control to fight in Korea and Vietnam, the US Army found the Marines to be reluctant allies and uncharitable comrades. The Marines, as always, got too much unearned publicity. They saved the Pusan perimeter, seized Inchon, recaptured Seoul, and fought their way out of the Chosin reservoir area. The 1st Marine Division then became a focal point of criticism of 8th Army's conduct of the campaign of 1951. In Vietnam the Marines got to fight their war in the I Corps area and made too much of their hard service along the DMZ. In both wars the Marines did not want to share their tactical aviation for close air support, and their conduct of helicopter operations showed more hubris than skill. Marine generals like Victor H. Krulak made life miserable for General William C. Westmoreland because of their obsession with pacification and working with the Vietnamese military and paramilitary forces.

In both wars the Marines always seemed to require more logistical support from the Army: transportation, engineering equipment and supplies, communications equipment, and ordnance. They always went into battle without enough artillery and tanks. They took what appeared to be excessive casualties because of their aggressiveness and poor use of supporting arms. They seemed to measure success by their own dead, not the enemy's. A little Army joke took root in Vietnam: Why are Marines like bananas? Answer: they grow green, turn yellow, and die in bunches. Marine Corps field staffs plan with all the care and foresight of teenagers, and they expect instant miracles from a tactical approach that resembles a rugby scrum. Marine

battalions go into battle with too many flags (where's the next Suribachi?), cameras, and bodybags. In the operations large and small that followed in the 1980s and 1990s, soldiers thought they saw the same behavior in Lebanon, Grenada, Panama, and the Gulf War. Army officers knew that Marines studied maneuver warfare, talked the nuances of AirLand Battle, and even started to act like professionals in the fields of logistics and intelligence, but might it only be the Marine version of Russian deception operations?

Army officers—and I base my impression on 25 years of teaching them—often believe that the Marine Corps conducts a shameless guerrilla war upon the Army in Congress and extracts every additional budget increment from funds that should rightfully go to the Army. They resent the fact that the Douglas-Mansfield Act of 1952 mandates a Fleet Marine Force of three divisions and three aircraft wings. They wait each recurring cycle of defense reorganization as an opportunity to check Marine access to influential civilians in the executive branch and Congress. They do not like the current practice of rotating the job of Commander-in-Chief Central Command between the Army and the Marine Corps. (How can a Marine command a field army if he is not an honor graduate of the Army Command and General Staff College?) The generations of Army officers pass with the years, but the rap on the Marine Corps lives on. Why do the myths persist? In part, they exist because they are true. But whatever the unhappiness of the past, the Jarheads' sins are exaggerated and invariably overlook the fact that the Marine Corps has a good case against the US Army.

### *Why Real Marines Do Not Like Doggies*

All real Marines know that the US Army would rather plan than fight and that when it comes to slaughter, it stays away from water. The Army has never seen an amphibious operation it likes—or at least can conduct with any degree of skill and ardor. Yet the Army is perfectly willing to throw its soldiers out of perfectly good airplanes or ferry them into hot LZs in mini-helicopters that cannot carry enough troops to give the grunts on the ground a fighting chance. The Army officer corps talks as if it reveres Patton and the panzer generals, but the soul of the Army is artillery-red and thrills only as the barrels of massed howitzers begin to glow. The perfect campaign is one that can be fought with a few FIST teams and battalions of mobile artillery. Marines think the Army really would like to fight a Verdun without the infantry.

Marines believe that the Army is paranoid and disingenuous in its criticism of Marine operations. Since late in the 19th century Marine officers have attended Army branch, intermediate, and senior schools, and they often learn their trade from Army manuals, from Army instructors, using Army-developed weapons and equipment. The only distinctive operational difference is the amphibious mission, which the Army never wanted and said so in writing

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as early as 1927 in a joint action manual adopted by the Army and Navy. The Army knows how to criticize amphibious assaults whenever the Marines plan and execute them, but not its own landings. The Army has been fortunate that it had a few fine soldiers who could save such bungled operations as the landings at Salerno, Anzio, and Omaha Beach. The Army lost more dead at Omaha Beach in one day than the Marines lost on Tarawa in three.

Marines are suspicious that Army generals, under whom they have often served, are much too careless with Marines' lives. This suspicion started in World War I when General Harbord forgot about artillery and reconnaissance at Belleau Wood. The battle of Soissons and the Meuse-Argonne campaign simply reinforced this impression. (Just whose idea was it to attack across the Meuse on the morning of Armistice Day?) It continued in World War II. If Douglas MacArthur loved the 1st Marine Division, it did not reciprocate his admiration then or in Korea, and Marines pitied the soldiers who fought and died for the greater glory of the American Caesar. Holland Smith had no monopoly of disdain for the 27th Infantry Division, but Marines remember all the other Army divisions with whom they worked well: the Americal and 25th Infantry Divisions on Guadalcanal, the 37th Infantry Division on Bougainville, the 77th Infantry Division on Guam, the 81st Infantry Division on Peleliu, the whole XXIV Corps on Okinawa (except, again, the 27th Infantry Division). The aviation squadrons of the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing relished the opportunity to provide close air support for the US 6th and 8th Armies in the Philippines. The biggest residual unhappiness left from World War II, in fact, has nothing to do with Smith vs. Smith, but the refusal of Lieutenant General Simon Bolivar Buckner, Jr., USA, to envelop the Naha-Shuri Castle-Yonabaru line on Okinawa. With the veteran 2d Marine Division available and willing to conduct an amphibious envelopment of the Japanese 32d Army, Buckner decided instead to plunge ahead in great AEF fashion and sent thousands of Marines and soldiers to their deaths, including his own.

If Major General Edward M. Almond had a difficult time in Korea as the X Corps commander, he had Buckner in part to blame for his tense relations with the 1st Marine Division. The fact that he was MacArthur's corps commander of choice did not help either. But the real difficulty was

that MacArthur and the rest of the Army would not accept Lieutenant General Lemuel C. Shepherd, Jr., USMC, a star performer in the field since Belleau Wood, as the X Corps commander. Many Marine officers knew that Holland M. Smith was not a great corps commander and that he depended upon Brigadier General Graves B. "Bobby" Erskine to make things work. But what about the splendid World War II performance of Lieutenant General Roy S. Geiger, Jr., USMC, who proved in four campaigns that he could command anything that flew, walked, and shot, regardless of uniform? Lem Shepherd and Roy Geiger were certainly better than many of their Army counterparts in both wars.

In Vietnam and the Gulf War, Marine officers believed they saw the same callous Army generalship at work again and the same unfair criticism of Marine operations. "Search and destroy" and "body count" were created at MACV, not at the headquarters of the III Marine Amphibious Force. Holding Khe Sanh was not a Marine idea, but a requirement from General Westmoreland. The bloody operations along the DMZ in 1967 and 1968 came with Operation Dye Marker, the creation of the McNamara Line, a concept from a former Air Force officer who confused the PAVN with Algerian guerrillas. And whose brilliant idea was it to introduce the M-16 in the middle of a shooting war so the troops could get battlefield on-the-job training on rifle cleaning and disassembly? And if the 1st Marine Aircraft Wing did not fly enough close air support missions for *anyone* in South Vietnam, please check with the wizards of 7th Air Force and Washington who thought that air interdiction wins wars. As for the Gulf War, the I Marine Expeditionary Force accepted the grim task of fixing the Iraqi army in Kuwait while the 3d US Army (Patton lives!) drove to glory, only to be criticized by CINCCENTCOM because it did too good a job. (Don't let the Mother of All Briefings fool you about feelings!) Accounts of the war written by Army officers who should know better hardly admit that I MEF was in-theater, had tanks and heavy guns, and supported itself.

Marines believe that the Army refuses to acknowledge that it owes anything to Marine innovation. Although Army officers will concede that individual Marine officers with whom they've served can be quite clever and bold, they cannot accept the fact that the US Army has borrowed concepts from the Marine Corps, just as the Marine Corps has borrowed concepts (and much more) from the Army. For example, the Marine Corps first broke the infantry squad into fire teams in World War II. It championed the amphibian tractor, which worked well in European river crossings, if not landings. The Marine Corps developed doctrine for effective close air support; the problem for the Army is getting the Air Force to accept the doctrine. The Marine Corps made the first institutional commitment to make the helicopter an instrument of tactical mobility. The first tests of this experiment came in Korea in 1951 by Marines. It is now pioneering in tilt-rotor development with the V-22A



“Osprey.” The Army even moved toward Marine concepts of recruit training and made its trainers wear the old “Smokey the Bear” campaign hat. It is not the Marine Corps’ fault that the Army cannot apply the gentle personal touch known to the graduates of Parris Island.

The Army continues to grouse about Marine Corps political influence in Washington, but it badly exaggerates Marine clout. For example, Presidents and cabinet officers since FDR have been more pro-Army than anything else. The real problem is that they tend to be anti-military. The Army complains because George Shultz, Jim Baker, Don Regan, John Warner, John Chaffee, John Glenn, Bud McFarlane, Paul Douglas, Mike Mansfield, George Smathers, and many others are former Marines. What is one to make of the fact that former Army officers and enlisted men who held high places include Harry S. Truman, Louis Johnson, George C. Marshall, Dwight D. Eisenhower, Maxwell D. Taylor, Alexander Haig, Ronald Reagan, Caspar Weinberger, Henry Kissinger, James Wadsworth, Sonny Montgomery, Robert Dole, and many other distinguished members of Congress? The answer is quite simple: these men retain some service fondness, but their job descriptions do not allow them to advocate service positions. Was Les Aspin a special friend of the Army, Ron Dellums a great champion of the Marine Corps? Marines believe the key to effective lobbying is with members of Congress who have no military experience (or bias) at all, regardless of party affiliation.

Marines resent the fact that the Army is jealous of Marine aviation. The Marine Corps has paid a high price to preserve a fully capable fixed wing and helicopter force of around 1000 aircraft. This price is not paid just in dollars, but in personnel training and assignments, constant tension with the Navy’s aviation leadership, constant conflict with Marine traditionalists who do not like fat aviation technicians and pilots who don’t want to shoot rifles, and in dealing with an Air Force which will hardly concede any expertise to naval aviation, yet wants to control it in every operation, large or small. As long ago as the 1920s Marine planners saw that tactical aviation and ground forces could be integrated in combat to enhance each other’s capabilities. Marines wonder why the Corps should be punished for discovering what is now a truism of modern warfare. The Marine Corps managed to hold on to its aviation force in the reorganization battles of the early Cold War, and it knows that the Army wishes it had, too.

In truth, there is much about the modern Army that Marines do not understand. One is the stress of mobilization and expansion. It is one thing to create six divisions for the Fleet Marine Force from two small brigades; it is quite another to field 89 divisions on an active-duty division base of 11 divisions. In 1941 the Army had about 130,000 officers with *any* peacetime training to lead a wartime Army (including the USAAF) of more than 11 million. The Marine Corps has a Select Reserve smaller than the active-duty force; the Army’s is larger. The Marine Corps does not and never will deal

with a reserve component with the political influence of the Army National Guard. The number of Marine Reserve generals cannot even make up a squad, and the most influential of them in Congress is a staff director, not a Congressman. Marines do not fully appreciate how much of the Army is dedicated to administrative and logistical functions, some of which helps the Marine Corps—or used to. They also do not fully understand the feudal relationships between Army senior generals. In the Marine Corps the Commandant is the Pope, but in the Army the Chief of Staff is the king only by the grace of the nobles. Marines do not understand the Army fixation with planning and documentation. They do not appreciate that the Army's 19th-century icon is Helmuth von Moltke the Elder, while the favorite Marine general of the era is Stonewall Jackson. Marines seize the hour, and soldiers seize the week. The heart of the matter is that one service has always been seven to ten times larger than the other.

Marines actually know a great deal about the Army from joint service, schooling, and reading. They wish the Army knew more about the Marine Corps because almost every day they see Army officers saying things that clearly show that they haven't a clue about how the Fleet Marine Force is organized and does business. Instead they believe all the Army has to offer is tired Marine Corps jokes.

### ***Why the Marine Corps and the Army Should Be Friends***

Like the cattlemen and the shepherders, the Army and the Marine corps have much more in common—win or lose—than they are ready to admit. The good health of both services depends upon a case for their mutual existence that cannot be made in Washington and at the headquarters of the unified and specified commands until the Army and the Marine corps band together *at every level*. Our shared problem at the end of the Cold War is much like that at the end of World War II. We are faced with a perceived strategic environment in which major war is unthinkable and conventional military forces in large numbers are too costly. Even though nuclear weapons are no longer the lethal currency of the hour, we are again being told that men with rifles on the ground, supported by tactical aviation and supporting arms, are as irrelevant as the knights of old. Advanced electronics, airframes and seaframes, and precision-guided munitions will do the job. The United Nations can provide the global police force.

Perhaps, but we have heard this siren's song through the ages, and it never quite works that way. The Army and the Marine Corps share a common insight about the nature of war, and since it tends to be the minority opinion, it needs constant and articulate expression. War is the collective expression of the will of people to fight for something they hold dear and for which they are willing to die. Who holds those values, what those values are, and just how much those values will call forth in sacrifice may vary with time, place, and people. Clearly,

the Iraqis are not the Somalis or the Serbians. Destroying places and people either with nuclear weapons or precision-guided munitions means nothing unless it destroys the enemy's will to wage war.

Most 20th-century American political leaders know nothing about the relationship of violence and politics, unless they have been big city mayors or represent a minority urban constituency. Some governors, but not many, might qualify. The average American politician, if faced with an inescapable decision on war and peace, would rather throw dollars than lives at the problem. It was no accident that the United States spent the most money and lost the fewest lives in World War II. Yet there are plenty of crises in which military force is the unavoidable option and in which we must be prepared to lose lives and to do so over an extended period of time. That was not the case in the Gulf War, but it was certainly the case in Korea, Vietnam, Central America, Afghanistan, and the Horn of Africa. The number of lives lost may not be large in absolute terms, but they may be proportionately large when compared with the number of people deployed. Such is a characteristic of counterinsurgency and peacekeeping operations. Who is ready to teach this lesson to American politicians if not the Army and the Marine Corps?

Another lesson that our political leadership needs to hear is that the American public needs constant reassurance and nurturing when it comes to matters military. The Army and the Marine Corps cannot dodge this problem in recruiting or any other phase of public relations by claiming that they are really only a place where young men and women learn technical skills without hazard, a sort of global technical institute in which the students only happen to wear uniforms. The Air Force and the Navy, at least in recent memory, expose only career-committed officers who fly to the threat of death on a routine basis. Even if every service death is tragic, it is somehow less traumatic if the deceased is a 30-year old captain, not a 20-year old PFC. If this observation seems callous, walk around Arlington National Cemetery and test your reaction. Army and Marine officers know what it is like to write many letters, not one or two, or to reconstitute a platoon that has disappeared in a firefight, not just rearrange a squadron flight schedule. American politicians have a way of forgetting about what war costs, and Army and Marine Corps senior officers are the best prepared to remind them. During the Missile Crisis of 1962 the Kennedy brothers had almost ordered an invasion of Cuba when Marine Commandant David M. Shoup conducted a little tutorial on Tarawa and the comparative vastness of the proposed objective area.

Together we face a political elite who act on the apparent belief that force is either anachronistic or, if necessary, can be applied cheaply and painlessly. We can only hope that the critical educational process now underway, directed by the veterans of World War II and Korea, will have some influence on the politicians whose intellectual and emotional roots remain fixed in the illusions of the 1970s. Our problem is that we share the national

defense arena with two other services, the Air Force and the Navy, who are predisposed institutionally to represent a different vision of warfare. I think that as long as the Soviet Union was the principal threat, the Air Force and the Navy held the strategic high ground. We did not want to occupy Russia; we did not really want to reform Soviet society or dismember the Soviet empire. What we required was the deterrence or destruction of Soviet nuclear forces and those conventional forces poised to overrun western Europe. Unless the Air Force and the Navy assured that nuclear deterrence would hold, we could not hope to wage and win a conventional war in Europe. The Navy and the Air Force are now attempting to reposition their forte in strategic deterrence to a neo-romantic view that airpower and seapower can have equal effect on regional conflict.

For the Navy this strategic faith goes all the way back to the Mahanian era of the late 19th century, if not before. Much of the Navy's statement about the wonders of projecting military power inland from the sea sound like the musings of Rear Admiral Robert Shufeld in the 1880s. For the Air Force the time window is less dramatic, but no less decisive. In a 1943 version of the Army's manual of operational doctrine, the Army Air Forces asserted that airpower and land power were now co-equal, but this argument included some hopeful notions about the effect of strategic bombardment. For the first time during the Korean War—and echoed thereafter through the Gulf War—the Air Force has argued that tactical aviation could win wars with ground forces playing a subordinate role. Giulio Douhet lives, but he has returned without his strategic clothing. The inspired application of airpower in the Gulf War offers an interesting lesson: the destruction looked worse than it was when one balanced the actual reduction of Iraqi capability against the vivid images of exploding structures and mangled civilian bodies. Filtered through television, airpower has become a force for peace through premature negotiation.

At the moment American defense analysts have brought scenario-generation to a level of imagination we once reserved for Robert Heinlein and Stephen Spielberg. Such exercises have some value, but we must remember—and remind others—that the essential nature of war is its unpredictability. We are likely to fight next someone we do not now identify as a great threat. The only enemy we identified correctly in this entire century was Japan. However, one common thread runs through all our wars and lesser engagements in this century. None of them involved only air and naval forces, and none of them were decided by air and naval forces alone. If you are ready to show the flag, you had better be ready to show something else, too, since the street gangs of the globe are not easily impressed by air and naval parades. The Army and the Marine Corps learned these truths long ago; they must preserve the wisdom that only the dead have seen the end of war. □