

ceed in “high end” combat versus a peer adversary.

Amphibious capabilities will remain a critical enabler for this approach, however, the amphibious team that has been optimized for *efficiency* in an era of presumptive maritime superiority needs to be re-designed for *effectiveness* in a contested environment.

Working with our Navy counterparts, we need to think through the details of how we deploy and employ new formations that provide the requisite characteristics, capabilities, and capacities. This will entail complementing the existing family of big, multipurpose ships with smaller, specialized, less expensive vessels to improve capacity, resilience, dispersion, and the ability to operate in complex archipelagoes and contested littorals without incurring unacceptable risk.¹⁹

We also need to develop a host of mobile, low-signature, manned and unmanned sensors, weapons, and shore-to-shore landing ships/craft to increase lethality, capacity, and sustainability. Force design and capability development must be conducted as an integrated naval effort to ensure that Navy and Marine Corps initiatives and investments are mutually supporting. Furthermore, we must orient our security cooperation activities on establishing the force posture, international partnerships, and operational conditions that are essential to countering the range of aggression by potential adversaries.

Conclusion

Samuel Huntington’s observation about threats to the United States emanating from the “oceanic areas and the nations bordering on those oceans” remains as true today as in the 1890s. The Marine Corps is once again at an institutional inflection point, trying to evolve to meet new challenges in a manner consistent with our Title 10 responsibilities. As our history demonstrates, during each strategic era our force development activities may have focused on one aspect of those responsibilities, but our force commitments have usually demanded the versatility to do multiple missions effectively. We therefore need to evolve in a manner

Recommended Naval Reading

The last five Commandants of the Marine Corps have increasingly called for a greater degree of “naval integration.” Surprisingly, however, the current Commandants’ Reading List does little to promote understanding of maritime strategy, naval operations and tactics, or of the Navy itself. Of the more than 100 titles on the present list, less than ten address naval topics. Of these, two are the most pertinent today. *Neptune’s Inferno: The U.S. Navy at Guadalcanal*, by James D. Hornfischer, demonstrates that anti-access/area denial is not a new problem and integrated air-sea-land operations are not a novel solution. In describing the sacrifices the Navy made in the waters around Guadalcanal and the skies above, Hornfischer also gives Marines reason to shut up about “the Navy running away.” *Ghost Fleet*, by P.W. Singer and August Cole, provides a sobering prediction of the potential outcome of future U.S. naval combat versus a peer adversary. Five more titles that ought to be on the list include:

To Rule the Waves: How the British Navy Shaped the Modern World, by Arthur Herman. Mahan and Corbett may have been the prophets of sea power, but their prose may be tough for 21st century readers. Herman provides a highly readable primer on sea power and how evolving economic interests, strategic objectives, technology, and resources drive capability, capacity, organization, doctrine, and application.

One Hundred Years of Sea Power: The U. S. Navy, 1890–1990, by George W. Baer. There is no reason to have a Marine Corps without a Navy, yet few Marines today understand why and how U.S. sea power has evolved or what part Marines have played in it. If we do not understand these things, how can we understand the emerging demands and keep ourselves relevant? Baer’s history should be read by every Marine officer.

Testing American Sea Power: U.S. Navy Strategic Exercises, 1923–1940, by Craig C. Felker. The interwar period is looked upon as the hallmark of successful naval innovation—although it was far from perfect. Felker explains the context for innovation during the interwar period and how the different naval warfare communities interacted. Marine readers will gain a better understanding of the Navy, how the fleet drives innovation, and how to make ourselves understood by, and relevant to, the Navy.

Fleet Tactics, by Wayne Hughes. The author lays out a conceptual framework for understanding naval operations based on both historical and technical analysis. Hughes explains six cornerstones of maritime warfare, followed by an examination of the “great trends” and “great constants” of naval combat. The original edition was published in 1986, with second and third editions published in 2000 and 2018 to incorporate additional material on missiles and information warfare.

One Hundred Days: The Memoirs of the Falklands Battle Group Commander, by Admiral Sandy Woodward. A personal account of the decisions and associated rationale for them by the senior officer present afloat fighting a naval campaign in the missile-age. Woodward provides great insights regarding the effects on terrain and hydrography on naval operations in the littoral.

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